

The Glittering Thread

THE 1954 ROYAL TOUR OF AUSTRALIA

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the
University of Technology, Sydney.

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certificate

I certify that this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being submitted as part of candidature for any other degree.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me and that any help that I have received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

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Jane Connors

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abstract

This thesis is a broadly-based historical study of the 1954 Royal Tour of Australia. In presenting an anatomy of this important but neglected event, it attempts to restore its place in history, to explain the nature of the enduring popular attachment to the British Royal Family, to examine the self-portrait that Australia presented to its Royal visitors in the post-war era and to investigate the political and cultural processes by which it did so. The primary theoretical aim of this detailed case study is to interrogate the means by which the State (represented by the Parliament and the state and federal bureaucracies, with the cooperation of the media) was able to secure the willing participation of an overwhelming majority of the population. The elements of this study are drawn principally from government archives, the vast media coverage of the day, extensive oral history interviews with participants, and academic literature in the areas of Australian history (with particular reference to the nineteen-fifties), popular royalism, popular culture, public memory, civic ritual and spectacle. It was my final objective that these elements and aims might be synthesised into an enjoyable, 'popular' account of this chaotic, surprising and memorable event.

introduction

Armchair non-empirical critiques spectacularly miss the point. As Bourdieu says of such critics: 'they cross the borders with empty suitcases — they have nothing to declare'.

Richard Harker, Cheleen Mahar and Chris Wilkes, *An Introduction to the work of Pierre Bourdieu*.¹

When Queen Elizabeth II was crowned on 2 June 1953, she became the first British monarch to be styled 'Head of the Commonwealth'. Commentators noted her commitment to this new persona, and strove to prepare her British subjects against her inevitable journeys from home.² The first of these came all too quickly, as the Queen and her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh were gone from England by November and absent then for half a year, making their way through Bermuda, Jamaica, Fiji, Tonga, Australia, New Zealand, the Cocos Keeling Islands, Ceylon, Uganda, Libya, Malta and Gibraltar. 'Never in the history of the world had a reigning monarch undertaken such a journey,' wrote one of the British journalists who followed her around the world (and never has there been one since).³

This thesis is about the Australian leg of this tour — its longest single part at fifty-seven days — and how the summer of 1954 was swallowed in a blur of landscapes and faces, as the Queen and her husband, their substantial entourage, their drivers, the police, a hefty media contingent, and a parcel of

¹ Richard Harker, Cheleen Mahar and Chris Wilkes, 'Editors' Introduction', in *An introduction to the work of Pierre Bourdieu*, R. Harker, C. Mahar & C. Wilkes (eds), Macmillan, London, 1990, p. x.

² *Royalty Annual* (G. Talbot & W. Vaughan Thomas (eds), Preview Publications, London, 1953, p. 19), told readers that they must expect 'to see Her Majesty spending as much time outside Britain as within our shores'.

³ Neil Ferrier, *The Royal Tour*, Ltd. Robinson, London, 1954, unpaginated.

politicians and miscellaneous dignitaries fulfilled the obligations of a relentless itinerary that drove them on through seven capital cities and seventy country towns. Their journey covered twenty-seven thousand miles by car, train, aeroplane and boat, with never an accident and rarely a delay to keep them from the six or seven million people who were also participants in the most anticipated, the most witnessed and the most intensively chronicled journey ever undertaken through this continent.⁴

The frenzy with which Australia greeted its Queen made daily headlines in the local press, and was closely followed in both Britain and America. Australians drove hundreds of miles and slept in the streets overnight to see their visitors arriving and departing from civic receptions, church services, parliamentary occasions, commemoration ceremonies for returned servicemen, school children's displays, parades and the inspection of industry and the arts — the nation's finest achievements were laid out in endless display. While much of this activity was planned and regulated by the state, its efforts were fully complemented and enhanced by the time that ordinary people devoted to arranging public and private celebrations. With no perceptible public dissent around, politicians of all persuasions spent their time pursuing space at the Royal elbow, towns and cities sought to devise the most memorable tribute, children gathered in formation on ovals, songs were composed, souvenirs purchased, and the interest of many individuals was entirely absorbed for the months before and during the Queen's appearance. It was widely felt at the time that the country was experiencing a significant 'historical' moment — although the record, as it has since emerged, does not bear this confidence out — and many of the people I have heard from or spoken to in the course of research tell me that they remember this event with more clarity and emotion than any other *public* occasion during their lifetime.

David Chaney has written of British public ceremonies of the same era that 'civic rituals offer the chance to study the terms on which the public participate in the collective life of the nation', and I want to demonstrate in this thesis that the 1954 Tour was an event in Australian history which offers unusually rich

⁴ Travel statistics from Lyn Harrison, *Me Too!*, Oswald Ziegler, Sydney, 1954, p. 28. There can be no precise figure, of course, but the contemporary estimates were of around six to seven million attendees, at a time when the total population was just on nine million people. Peter Spearritt ('Royal Progress: The Queen and her Australian subjects', *Australian Cultural History*, no 5, 1986, p. 88) cites corroborative evidence from a poll taken just after the Tour in which 75% of people reported having seen the Queen at least once.

opportunities for a study along these lines.⁵ There have been very few other occasions during which the political establishment, the media and an active citizenry have taken such conscious stock of the nation, in order to display it to itself and to the world (although many elements of the 'Australian way of life' were either exaggerated or repressed for the occasion). An entire society was mobilised towards the single purpose of this event whose appeal to the white majority, to all classes, all ages and both genders was confidently assumed; which spread in apparent harmony from the political to the fashionable; in which forms of mass participation were closely proscribed by the state to apparent approval; and to which the many means of formal and informal communication available at the time were fully devoted.

Statement of claims

The *Argus* newspaper wrote of Melbourne in 1901, in the midst of an earlier Royal tour, that

a city does not burst into a blaze of banners and illuminations, span its streets with triumphal arches, and crowd its buildings to the very parapets with spectators, unless at the core of all demonstrations there is a sentiment, and an energy also, not to be gainsaid.⁶

The ostensible reason for Melbourne's celebrations and for the presence of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York (the son and daughter-in-law of King Edward VII), was the inauguration of the Commonwealth Parliament of Australia in 1901. But the *Argus* was most deliberately suggesting that this popular energy owed very little to enthusiasm for this milestone in indigenous democracy, and almost everything to the participation of Royalty. This thesis is an investigation of the survival of that same sentiment into 1954, and of why it was that Australian towns and cities were so stimulated by the presence of another Royal couple as to make them blaze forth again in a later age.

As such, it will involve a journey through the enormous primary records generated by such an event — in addition to seeking out memories left behind and tucked away over forty years, taking in ideas about the nature and survival

⁵ David Chaney, 'A symbolic mirror of ourselves: civic ritual in mass society' in *Media, Culture and Society*, D. Collins (ed.). Sage, London, 1986, p. 247.

⁶ *Argus*, 7 May 1901, quoted in *Australian Nationalism: a documentary history*, S. Alomes & C. Jones (eds), Angus & Robertson, 1991, p. 124.

of a monarchy in a modern democracy, ideas about popular culture and enjoyment; theories of public spectacle, and research on the nature of Australia in the nineteen-fifties. It has been my most basic intention to produce a thesis which would, in the first instance, tell an engaging story about this specific event, and in so doing, reclaim it as a 'lost' event in Australian history. Beyond this immediate aim, I have hoped that such a large and complex case study might contribute something back to scholarship across a number of fields. In addition to my broad desire to make an original contribution to the study of post-war Australia, this work has also been intended to contribute to thinking on the reasons for the longevity of British connection, or 'the scarlet thread of kinship', amongst Australians of British descent; to present a detailed case study of means by which conservative ideologies are reproduced in specific historical circumstances (this question is at the core of contemporary cultural studies), and the politics of the processes by which state-fostered planning gains mass consent and participation; and to illuminate the processes by which events are constructed in private and public memory. Through this last intention I hope to advance our understanding of collective remembering.

Sources

The scope of these aims and the breadth of the available sources meant that in the course of primary research for this thesis I uncovered more material than I could possibly hope to incorporate. The immediate press coverage was absolutely daunting, as the Royal party was accompanied at all times by a corps of one hundred journalists filing reams of daily copy. During the Queen's week in Sydney for example, the city's four daily newspapers contained little other than tour news (the proportion fell away as she toured rural New South Wales and then again after she had left for other states) and this was repeated in each capital city in turn. Although I read a great many newspapers in full, I was also given a number of scrapbooks compiled from newspaper and magazine clippings — including one very comprehensive set of seven, compiled in Melbourne and therefore a useful counterbalance for a Sydney-based researcher — and decided to draw heavily on the articles in these, on the grounds that contemporary enthusiasts could give me a useful lead into what was considered particularly interesting or significant at the time. The tour was also covered, in very diverse ways, by hundreds of specialist and general magazines and I have read widely amongst these.

The larger newspaper companies recycled their reportage into hardback, illustrated, commemorative publications soon after the end of the tour. They competed for sales in a market already saturated with various pre-tour publications, a book of record produced by the Federal Government, the official commemorative publications of each state government and the elaborate pamphlets produced in nearly every town on the Royal route. My primary interest in these lay in their efforts to transform the prose of daily news into serious 'historic' narrative.⁷

The other major media source available from the Tour is the printed record of radio news bulletins put to air by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. The ABC, in co-operation with commercial wireless organisations, provided live coverage of all official engagements during the two months of the tour, and although very little of it remains (radio archives were only established in 1971 and holdings from earlier times are patchy) its Federal Reference Library holds two bound volumes of transcripts of the special tour bulletins, of which there were nine every day.

The visual record of the Visit is equally comprehensive. The Commonwealth Government Archives office in Canberra holds seventeen thousand official photographs taken during the Tour. Press photographers also took an enormous number of shots, which were not only reproduced in the daily papers, the magazines, the colour supplements and the commemorative books, but were also sold as individual prints to the public in great volume (and in whose possession many still remain). Film cameramen were also part of the media caravan as each day's events were recorded for the newsreels (it was rumoured that the Royal couple arranged private showings during their rest days) and the Commonwealth Film Unit was hard at work on its first full-length colour feature film, *The Queen in Australia*. I have also been given, or have seen, the little fuzzy black-and-white snaps of ordinary spectators, and these feature not a well-framed smiling Queen, but the tip of a waving glove, and so give a very different impression of the actual view from the crowd.

⁷ There were also one-off publications, including *The Sunburnt Country*, Ian Bevan (ed.), Collins, London, 1953 (a social 'profile of Australia' prepared for the Queen by expatriate authors); Marion Crawford, *The Queen Visits Australia and New Zealand*, Dymocks, Sydney, 1954 (Miss Crawford was the Queen's former governess, turned royal scribe); and Rex Ingamells, *Royalty and Australia*, Hallcraft Publishing Co., Melbourne, 1954. Lyn Harrison's *Me Too!*, was a first-hand, but terribly discreet account of life on tour by the wife of the Federal Government's Minister-in-Charge and the profits were donated to the Society for Crippled Children.

I have also plundered the Archives offices of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory for the minutes and planning papers of state and Federal organising committees, and accompanying files of correspondence from politicians and disgruntled members of the public. These are particularly valuable for the insight into the breadth and minute detail of the organisation underpinning the Queen's every move and are also the only source of information about the cost of specific events associated with the tour. They are rarely explicit about the political motivations behind decisions made about the itinerary, the guest lists, or other matters that became publicly controversial, but something of these can be picked up in Hansard, which contains many references made prior to the Visit in 1953, when it was often invoked with great ideological feeling during debate on seemingly unconnected motions.

The material culture of the Tour was abundant, and academic literature on the role of ritual and souvenir objects in public rites points to a number of ways in which their importance and use can be interpreted — anthropologist Richard Dorson, for example, has argued that the possession of related material objects is crucial to the individual's sense of participation in a big event.⁸ Although very little of the memorabilia produced for 1954 was of particularly high quality, much of it survives today. Its current prevalence in opportunity shops, in good condition, suggests that it is just now being thrown out by the children of the generation who treasured it.

To solicit the memories of that generation, I advertised for 'clear and unusual' recollections of the visit in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Australasia Post* in 1990, and in the newsletter of the Australian Republican Movement in 1993, and received a total of about fifty letters. These took many forms, as some correspondents seemed wildly eccentric, two were suspicious about my motivations and my *bona fides*, and a number of others actually remembered very little but wrote out of obvious loneliness or good-heartedness. A couple of people sent in commemorative pamphlets from small towns, or photographs from their own albums and I received copies of two letters that had been written to family members at the time, which I found especially interesting. The majority of correspondents had had one point of interaction with the tour which they remembered as significant, and these have added greatly to my understanding of its impact on the lives of ordinary Australians.

⁸ Richard M Dorson, 'Material Components in Celebration' in *Celebration: Studies in Festivity and Ritual*, Victor Turner (ed.), Smithsonian Institute, Washington, 1982, pp. 33—57.

Advertising also led to one very kind old man turning up at my doorstep very early one morning with a pile of newspapers from 1954 which he thrust into my arms ('I always thought my kids would be interested, but they're not, so I'd like you to have them') and then took off without leaving his name. I was soon afterwards contacted by a lady from the central lakes district of New South Wales who wished to give me two bulging scrapbooks — one was devoted to the life story of the Queen from her birth in 1926, and the other to the Tour. These were the first in a collection then augmented by another scrapbook from a friend (who'd never thought anyone would be interested in 'that old thing'), a cousin's school projects, and the set of seven loaned by the aunt of a friend. I have also looked through scrapbooks belonging to the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney and one belonging to an acquaintance who was only six years old when she constructed this gorgeously messy little album out of her favourite colour pictures of the Queen. From this evidence the scrapbook seems to have been a female form, and also one confined to younger women.⁹

The core source of personal information about the tour comes from taped interviews and other conversational interactions. This includes cassette copies of seven hours of 'talkback' radio. The first three of these were hosted by Tim Bowden and Peter Spearritt for Radio National's Social History Unit in January 1986, and these inspired me to make four appearances of my own on ABC regional radio.¹⁰ Talkback has strange benefits as a form of research, as it delivers access to people who wouldn't want to take part in formal academic research procedures. Of all the material I've collected some of the stories from talkback have surprised me most and made me change the way I thought about the tour (perhaps oral historians need to give more thought to this particularly focussed and modern form of communication where somebody will hang on a phone for forty-five minutes in order to tell the world a precious, and almost always polished, three-minute anecdote).

⁹ Of the three sets I was given, two came from their creators, Margaret Ryan and June Leonard. Mrs Leonard's scrapbooks were handmade from brown paper and were elaborately layered. She had kept her clippings in the spare bedroom, which was out of bounds to her young children for months. Angela Nordlinger's seven scrapbooks, which consisted of clippings stuck into purchased scrapbooks with portraits of the Queen and Duke on the covers, were made for her by her elder sister, Jane Lawry. Margaret lived in Sydney, Mrs Leonard on the Central Lakes and Jane was also from New South Wales, although temporarily resident in Melbourne.

¹⁰ Since this project began I have been the guest speaker on eight ABC talkback sessions. I have been able to use tapes from four of these — one hosted by Julie Derritt from Canberra in 1990; by Ken Short in Hobart in 1991; and by Elizabeth Heath from Lismore in 1990 and again on 10 February 1994.

A favourite, one-off tape in my collection was recorded by Helen Ferry, a friend who discovered the universality of a royal tour story when she was travelling from Broken Hill to Sydney on a train, the Indian-Pacific, in 1989. She had a cassette recorder with her, and was sitting in a carriage full of senior citizens, so she thought she might do me a favour by collecting some tales. As you listen you can hear intense suspicion give way to laughter and enthusiasm and Helen begins to sound something like an auctioneer as she moves down the aisle taking bids from people who are calling out 'Adelaide!' and 'Lismore over here!' and swapping stories with each other as they wait for the microphone. The tape ran out long before the memories did, and Helen got off the train with a burning passion to become an oral historian. Not every topic makes you that popular, of course, but the goodwill I've found during the course of this project *has* been one of its finer features. Hundreds of people have offered me their Tour stories over the years, and although comparatively few of them appear in detail in the text, they have nonetheless helped to shape and sustain it.

I have recorded twenty-two formal interviews myself, and have been given four others from the archives of the Social History Unit.¹¹ These interviews varied between twenty minutes and an hour in length, and, as I was not operating from a set questionnaire, they moved outward in different directions from the opening request, to 'tell me the story of the day you saw the Queen'. In keeping with the nature of the memory of the Tour, as I came to understand it, the request for a narrative was greeted with a comfortable nod and the anecdote begun (of course, some stories were considerably more elaborate than others). During subsequent discussion, I also asked each person for their own analysis of the reasons behind the success of the tour, and almost all articulated strong opinions. The information gathered has been incorporated into the thesis in several ways, which are discussed throughout this introduction.

Of these twenty-six, fifteen participants are female and eleven male; eight were children at the time (aged between six and twelve) while the adults ranged from eighteen to fifty years; fifteen of them have active republican sympathies today, and the other eleven are either staunchly or moderately in favour of retaining a constitutional monarchy. All but one were born in Australia, all but

¹¹ These last four, with Keith Dunstan, Clyde Cameron, Lady Clarke and Paul Raffaele, were recorded for use in a series of three talkback radio programs hosted by Tim Bowden and Peter Spearritt in 1986. I also conducted two interviews and edited two others for a short video made to accompany the exhibition *Australians and the Monarchy*, devised by the National Centre for Australian Studies and the Powerhouse Museum in 1993, and have drawn on these in passing for this thesis.

that one have Anglo-Celtic ancestry, and most belonged to one or other section of the broad Australian middle-class. In these important respects this group of interviewees is not conspicuously diverse, but this has been very much by design. Every project requires parameters, and throughout most of this one, I have seen the Tour as a quintessential event of middle Australia — its creature even — and have been more interested, as a primary focus, to interrogate it from within than from without.

Amongst other reasons for choosing such an approach, I am always aware of my own place in the world. I am middle-class and Anglo-Celtic, and while all history-writing involves a leap beyond one's own experience, I'm more confident that my interpretative and intuitive powers work better close to home. I have also found that during the course of a long piece of work, my questions and concerns have evolved or changed in prominence. At an earlier stage — the stage when most of the interviews were conducted — I was particularly interested in historiography on the recent past and how one wrote about an era just before your own; and also keen to make the role of the author more transparent than has been usual for historians. Kate Lilley has written in poetry that some daughters understand their own lives through constructing fictive biographies of their mothers, and so, agreeing with her and finding the enthusiasm for the Tour mysterious at first, I was keen to understand how someone like my own mother had experienced it.¹² With this in mind, I found my interviewees as if by sending slow ripples out from my immediate circle, with the initial intention of finding women whom I might have been like or have known in 1954. Most of those I spoke to therefore were relatives, acquaintances, friends of relatives or relatives of friends. The major thing that I discovered, of course, was that it may shimmer brightly enough to me but that certain understandings are ultimately obscured from someone who didn't grow up in post-war, pre-television Australia.

This places my work at variance to much other current scholarship on the nineteen-fifties, which was once regarded as the most homogenous of decades, but has lately been examined with an emphasis on difference and margins. Articles about the decade in the 1994 collection, *Memory & History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, for example, included an account of life in the brutish migrant camp at Bonegilla and another of desert Aboriginal communities

¹² Kate Lilley, *Fabula*, in *The Penguin book of Australian women poets*, S. Hampton & K. Llewellyn (eds), Penguin, Melbourne, 1986, p. 262.

endangered by atomic testing.¹³ A majority of the papers given to a conference on the nineteen-fifties held at Charles Sturt University in January 1994 also took this tack, so much so that they were sufficient to fuel two lengthy radio programs on 'the stories from the margins' :

Stolen Aboriginal children, put on missions or given to white families to raise; working-class families who couldn't afford to buy into the white Australian dream; burgeoning mental health statistics, juvenile delinquency, Cold War paranoia and the persecution of communists; migrants dumped in transit camps and forced into domestic and slave labour...*The Lost World of a Vegemite Childhood* is a selection of stories from people who didn't live out the nineteen-fifties dream ...¹⁴

Historian Janet McCalman has decried the effects of this yearning for the marginal, in a strongly worded review of another edited collection, *Beasts of Suburbia* (also 1994). Her criticism of this book (which refers specifically to its attitude towards the suburban culture of the nineteen-fifties) is based on her view that the authors are contributors to the 'postmodernist project on Australian culture' which fiddles around with the unusual while refusing to engage with the mainstream.¹⁵ The consequence of this, she argues, is that we have an insufficient number of histories prepared to engage with the 'various, interesting, contradictory, passionate, timid, admirable, frightening, liberal and conservative' people who have occupied the central places in Australian culture and politics.¹⁶ A counter argument might run that it is the marginal histories which constitute the backlash against the previous hegemony of the centre, but I think it is true that as far as 'new history writing' is true, there is a need to turn some of the attention back to the centre once again.¹⁷

¹³ Glenda Sluga, 'Bonegilla and Migrant Dreaming'; and Heather Goodall, 'Colonialism and Catastrophe: contested memories of nuclear testing and measles epidemics at Ernabella', both in *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, K. Darian-Smith and P. Hamilton (eds), Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994.

¹⁴ Advertising material for 'The Lost World of a Vegemite Childhood', (broadcast 3 July 1994), *24 Hours*, July 1994, pp. 129—30.

¹⁵ McCalman argues that this is a direct legacy of the marginalisation of bourgeois left intellectuals during the 1950s. They took refuge in cultural snobbery — despising the banal suburban aspirations of their neighbours — and this refuge was slowly transformed into revenge through the trivialisation of the suburban mainstream by the next generation of scholars. These arguments appear in Janet McCalman, 'Suburbia from the Sandpit', *Meanjin*, October 1994, pp. 548—53 (a critical and polemical review of *Beasts of Suburbia: Reinterpreting cultures in Australian suburbs*, S. Ferber, C. Healy & C. McAuliffe (eds), Melbourne University Press, 1994).

¹⁶ McCalman p. 550.

¹⁷ Exceptions to this reluctance include Jean Duruz, whose work is a subtle and interesting investigation of those who most 'appeared to embrace' the world of suburban bungalows — in

The influence of cultural history

My historiographical aims clearly place this thesis within the related realms of 'cultural history' and 'the new historicism'. As described by Lynn Hunt in her introduction to the 1989 collection, *The New Cultural History*, the former involves the investigation of past cultural practice through models influenced by, among other things, anthropological discourse and the historians of the *Annales* school.¹⁸ Cultural historians have begun to subject their traditional source of primary evidence, documents, to readings that have been influenced by literary and linguistic theory. Many share the assumptions described by various authors in *The New Historicism*, another significant collection of essays, also from 1989. These are: the use of the technique called 'cross-cultural montage' or the juxtaposition of literary and non-literary texts (this is based in the belief that we experience the world through its representation in all kinds of texts, that these representations have the force to 'make things happen', and that as forces they must be read in relation to each other)¹⁹; a refusal to put forward fixed hierarchies of cause and effect; and the view that 'no discourse, imaginative or archival, gives access to unchanging truths nor expresses inalterable human nature'.²⁰ As another step in the long retreat from positivist history-telling, I have found these approaches valuable in helping me to think about the ways in which I would like to consider and present the discourses surrounding the Royal Tour. (This is tempered by a lingering belief that a complete surrender of materialist to textual analysis leaves the practice far too vulnerable to conservative ends.²¹ It also concerns me, in the specific terms of my own project, that there is no work in either volume that addresses the recent past, and that the question of oral testimony, which surely extends and subtly alters the question of montage is therefore given no explicit consideration.)

what ways were they able to find 'pleasure within consent' to the great Australian dream? See 'Suburban Gardens: Cultural Notes', in *Beasts of Suburbia*, pp. 198—213; and 'Suburban Homes Revisited', in *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, pp. 174—91. See also David Hilliard, 'God in the Suburbs: the religious culture of Australian cities in the 1950s', *Australian Historical Studies*, no 97, October 1991, pp. 399—419.

¹⁸ Lynn Hunt, 'Introduction', in *The New Cultural History*, L. Hunt (ed.), University of California Press, 1989, pp. 1—10.

¹⁹ Judith Lowder Newton, 'History as Usual? Feminism and the "New Historicism"', in *The New Historicism*, H. Aram Veesser (ed.), Routledge, New York, 1989, p. 152. I haven't been able to find representations of the tour in fiction, but am nonetheless juxtaposing other varieties of text.

²⁰ H. Aram Veesser, 'Introduction', in *The New Historicism*, p. xi.

²¹ Veesser (ibid.) makes the point that a number of works of 'specious propaganda' (he refers specifically to Joan Peters' *From Time Immemorial*, which utilises fabricated data to 'prove' that the Palestinian people do not exist), utilise the techniques of new historicism, and that the practice has no theoretical basis on which to call them to account.

There has been enormous discussion in recent years about the challenge of postmodernist ideas to the writing of history. At the furthest edges of debate, as summarised by film historian Robert Rosenstone, the historical canon has been decried as the last of the metanarratives, or the true heart of darkness. But Rosenstone has also pointed to the survival of history in the 'sympathies' of scholars such as Linda Hutcheon and Pauline Rosenau, and has derived from their work the following synthesis of the aspirations of the very latest 'new historians' for

*History that problematizes the entire notion of historical knowledge. That foregrounds the usually concealed attitude of historians towards their material. That reeks with provisionality and undecidability, partisanship and even overt politics. That engages pulse and intellect simultaneously... That does not aim at integration, synthesis and totality. That is content with historical scraps. That is not the reconstruction of what has happened to us in the various phases of our lives, but a continuous playing with the memory of this. That is expressed not in coherent stories but in fragments and collage.*²²

This thesis certainly engages with these ideas. The materials I use constitute a wider range of popular sources than was once considered appropriate (including the tabloid press, cartoons, scrapbooks, souvenirs and, where it survives, the memory of gossip), and I frequently make obvious my role as author by remarking on my own reaction to the information thus disclosed. I have also been wary of 'narrative closure'. At the level of commonsense, the tour had a middle, a beginning and an end — but while I use these basic indicators as narrative parameters, I also use other devices to stop the clock and to indicate myriad individual experiences of time and spectacle. I attempt to replicate something of the contemporary experience of the tour through 'kaleidoscopic' means, or refracted fragments — and strict chronology is in any case abandoned at the point where it restricts my ability to point the attention of the reader in the directions I desire. But in the final instance, I do consider that the boundaries of history are indubitably bound by Western narrative conventions²³ and that the limits of new history are found at the point of

²² Robert Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past*, Harvard University Press, 1995, p. 201. Author's emphases.

²³ For a comprehensive discussion of the place of narrative in history-writing see Hayden White, *The Content of the Form*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1987. White commences his exploration with the observation that in 'contemporary historical theory the topic of narrative has been the subject of extraordinarily intense debate'.

interrogation and reflexivity rather than abandonment (Jill Julius Matthews has recently observed—and Rosenstone too, although less forcefully — that the historians with the very highest intellectual investment in theory are usually those who cease to write history at all).²⁴ Most Australian historians today negotiate a path between new and old histories.

These new hybrid forms do not necessarily appeal to a popular audience. This has certainly been of concern to me, and much of this work has therefore been trialed on friends and general audiences.²⁵ Their responses guided me to two conclusions: first, that it would be wrong-headed to present work on a topic such as this in a manner which would alienate the people most interested, and second, that as most sources pertaining to the tour came to me in narrativised form, it would be perverse to render them otherwise. This is why, although this is a thesis which respects and conforms to academic conventions, it is written in a voice which leans towards the popular.

Aside from this, I like stories. As Robert Rosenstone has observed, the last two decades have bought repeated breakthroughs and innovations in historical research, the generation of so much new data and the incorporation of values and methodologies from other professions. But are academically-trained historians utilising them to bring the public the stories it wishes to read — the kind of stories that might constitute 'that web of connections to the past that holds a culture together, that tells us not only where we have been, but also suggests where we are going'?²⁶ Paula Hamilton has described such stories or popular representations in another fashion, as a mirror in which people might find something of their own memories but which is in any case open to divergent experience.²⁷ It has been a great pleasure for me, at Rotary lunches and other such events, to realise that I can construct an account of this overwhelming event in which people of another generation and a different social experience can still find something of their own participation.

²⁴ This observation was made by Jill Julius Matthews in a paper given to the conference 'Twenty Years On', celebrating twenty years of feminist history in Australia, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, 14–17 July 1995. See also Rosenstone, pp. 201–3.

²⁵ I have given papers to a variety of community groups during the course of writing. My most recent audience was a lunch time meeting of the Kings Cross branch of Rotary in 1995.

²⁶ Rosenstone, p. 23.

²⁷ Paula Hamilton, 'The Knife Edge: Debates about Memory and History', in *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, p. 25.

Popular monarchism

Despite these populist intentions, a major aim of mine in writing this thesis is to contribute to an *intellectualised* understanding of the importance and the meaning of the role of the British Royal Family in Australian cultural life. This will naturally concentrate around the 1954 tour, but will also include something of its longer history in this country and its enduring place in popular memory.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there have been two distinct 'conversations' about the British Crown in Australia: one has concentrated on the constitutional role of the monarchy and the other on its popular appeal. My interest is almost entirely with the latter, and I will use the terms *popular monarchism*, *popular royalism* and *royal-watching* (interchangeably) to refer to it. By popular monarchism I mean the familiar, but actually little-studied presence of widespread admiration or affection for the occupant of the Throne, of the kind that has found expression in public through effusive celebrations and in private through collections of memorabilia, or from active seeking of royal 'news'. This modern phenomenon of close, personal attention paid to members of the Royal Family as admirable individuals is distinct — though not entirely severed— from much earlier, religious beliefs in the infallibility and rights of kings. It is intimately linked to the rise of the popular press and can be traced from around the middle of the nineteenth-century, with developments in Britain being ever echoed in Australia. Genuine popular monarchism (that which was approving and straightforward in comparison to the often ironic, ambiguous, or disapproving attention paid to the Royal Family today) probably reached its zenith in both nations in the decade after the end of World War II.²⁸

Popular monarchism has exasperated generations of Australian republicans, and yet these two opposing forces have rarely met in formal debate. The preferred meeting point of royalist and republican, to this day, has been over the role of the monarchy in the constitution. This has much to do with an enduring split among the supporters of the Crown, illustrated recently for me by a member of the organisation 'Australians for a Constitutional Monarchy' who expressed the hope in conversation that I was not going to concentrate in this thesis on the 'trivial aspects' of the royalist cause in preference to the 'real issues' which he characterised as those revolving around the exercise of the

²⁸ Spearritt (p. 86) has described the 1954 Tour as the 'acme of British monarchical symbolism in Australia'.

Reserve Powers of the Crown (he was then enraged by my counter-assertion that whether he liked it or not, popular monarchism is the 'wind beneath the wings' of his own movement). This dichotomy is enhanced by the fact that these trivial aspects have been associated primarily with women, and the real issues with men. These two royalist tendencies, constitutional and popular, were probably never closer than in 1954, but were nonetheless distinguishable at the time and the distinction remains in memory.

Whatever their political views, all Australians from an English-speaking background (and probably many more) are on speaking terms with popular monarchism. We either have, or have had, an interest in members of the Royal Family that is more than casual; or we are familiar with someone else's interest. Most of us have a working knowledge, often reluctant or involuntary, of the ins and outs of the Buckingham Palace 'soap opera'. We have images and stories embedded in our brains. This is true for me and for all the people with whom I spoke when researching this thesis.

At latterday moments of crisis in the Palace — the latest being the televised 'Diana interview', in November 1995, which garnered terrific ratings in Australia — the question of why it is that people retain their fascination with the monarchy rises to the fore. Editorials are devoted to it, along with feature stories on television current affairs and hours of talkback and drivetime radio. The 'talent' for these stories are usually royal correspondents or the editors of women's magazines, but rarely academics. This means that journalists are almost entirely responsible for the immense number of words written about the British Royal Family every year both in Britain itself and in Australia. Most public knowledge here, as has been the case throughout this century, comes from the best-selling women's magazines such as the *Woman's Day* and the *New Idea*.²⁹ Over the last thirty years, but especially in the last decade, these magazines have shed their old respect for the privacy of the Royal Family (and possibly for the monarchy itself) and their royal reportage today is prurient, reliant on anonymous and possibly fictional 'sources close to the Palace', and hungry for scandal.³⁰ They make increasingly little distinction between Royal

²⁹ The weekly circulation for both of these magazines hovers around the million mark. *Who Weekly* and *New Weekly* also feature royal news and each of these sells several hundred thousand copies.

³⁰ 'Royal' reporters, such as Andrew Morton (the author of the best-selling *Diana: Her True Story*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1992) are often asked by other journalists to consider whether their activities might not 'kill the goose that lays the golden egg' through overexposure of the frailties of the Royal Family. Their answers are rarely articulate, but they seem to believe

persons and showbusiness identities, although they do employ specialist royal scribes, a small band of London-based correspondents who file for publications all over the world, endlessly rehashing the same information but altering their tone as they move between tabloid newspapers, general magazines and specialist royalty publications.³¹ Much of their writing is further recycled, along with the work of the *paparazzi*, into cloth-bound annuals celebrating the 'Royal Year' just past. These are sold in Australia, and local publishing companies also issue them periodically, most usually after a royal tour.³²

In the nineties, the avalanche of scandal has come so quickly that analysis of its impact and meaning is also performed on the run — and usually by a second tier of 'serious' journalists commenting on the work of their colleagues.³³ Scots author Tom Nairn pointed out almost a decade ago that neither the world's most famous family nor its massive audience was being paid their deserved tribute of sustained attention from the academy, and despite the subsequent consolidation of cultural studies as a discipline, and scholars devoted to the deconstruction of popular pleasures — such as sport and romance fiction — there are still very few who seek to understand the massive appeal of royalty as a source of public entertainment.³⁴

In the course of *The Enchanted Glass* (1988), an ambitious and idiosyncratic left-wing study of the Throne, Nairn noted how little previous study there had been

that as long as the Queen herself survives as the symbol of royalty, the scandals engulfing other members of her family will not permanently affect the standing of the Throne.

³¹ Specialist titles from the United Kingdom available in Australia include *Majesty*, *Royalty* and *Royalty Monthly*. These are expensive and glossy and respectful of the institution of monarchy. They print official photographs in preference to *paparazzi* shots, stories about the Queen's more obscure relatives or European royalty and articles about the constitution and constitutional history.

³² Royal biography was a respectful genre until the late 1980s, a haven of tepid hagiography, as the traditional prerequisite for authors was that they accepted both the fundamental worthiness of the institution and the essential merit of the individual. This longstanding 'gentleman's agreement', which had been wavering, was finally shattered with the publication of Andrew Morton's expose of Princess Diana's suicide attempts and extramarital affairs in 1992. For a critical overview of royal biography, see Tom Nairn, *The Enchanted Glass*, Radius, London, 1988, especially pp. 36—43.

³³ The 'Diana interview' in November 1995 inspired commentary pieces in Australia such as those by Peter Ellingson, 'Monarchy a dead duck without Di', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 December 1995, and Julianne Schultz, 'Diana lives through magazines', *Courier* (Brisbane), 29 November 1995.

³⁴ Nairn, *passim*. Nairn's study moves from modern Britain to the Civil War of the seventeenth century in an attempt to understand why 'permanent and unshakeable adoration' has become the uniquely 'happy lot of the British Crown'. In very crude summation, his explanation is that the glamour of the Royal Family compensates for immature nationalism in a society whose bourgeois revolution came too early.

— brief flutters from sociologists excited by the Coronation in 1953, from political scientists in the nineteen-seventies, and some very few articles by cultural theorists in the following decade — and found it inadequate to the task of explaining the enduring success of the monarchy.³⁵ He was also scathing of the traditional line from the political left (though not necessarily from left-leaning academics who were more likely to leave the subject alone) — which he characterised as a 'bad faith' argument:

The assumption continues to be that the mass is a passive, wholly manipulable entity: not just plain idiots, but fooled (or poisoned) into idiocy or (another favourite) 'mindlessness'.³⁶

This line of argument has also been popular with Australian politicians and writers over the years. Nairn began his own study from the opposite premise, that 'popular Royalism is visibly *not* passive and mindless. It has something highly positive about it — an apparently inexhaustible electric charge'.³⁷ This had in fact already been noted by one academic author, but to little effect. In 1983, in the course of a general article on the mass appeal of supposedly conservative cultural forms, cultural theorist Colin Mercer identified a change of feeling amongst the British left prompted by the extraordinary public interest in the marriage of the Prince of Wales in 1981. He argued that their traditional disdain for the popularity of the big royal events was being replaced by regret that they couldn't offer a viable alternative.³⁸ In following years, feminist essayists Rosalind Coward and Judith Williamson each published an article attempting to articulate the appeal of the Royal Family to female audiences, and historian Carolyn Steadman's biography of her mother (describing her yearning for the Prince of Wales) drew attention to the traditional role of the monarchy

³⁵ This argument runs throughout *The Enchanted Glass*. The work to which Nairn refers includes an influential article by sociologists Ernest Shils and Michael Young in which the Coronation was described as an act of 'national communion'. This prompted a series of responses. See especially Ernest Shils and Michael Young, 'The Meaning of the Coronation', *Sociological Review*, 1, 1953; and Norman Birnbaum, 'Monarchs and Sociologists', *Sociological Review*, 3, 1955. There are, of course, whole generations of British historians, who have written biographies and other histories about the Kings and Queens of the distant past, but Nairn's argument is confined to the last twenty years.

³⁶ Nairn, p. 53. For the best-known examples, see Andrew Duncan's *The Reality of Monarchy*, Heinemann, London, 1970; and Willie Hamilton, *My Queen and I*, Quartet, London, 1975. Duncan was a journalist with the self-appointed task of exposing the 'make-believe and irrational attitudes' that lay beneath the monarchy, and Hamilton was a Labor MP obsessed with the cost of maintaining the Royal Family.

³⁷ Nairn, *ibid.*

³⁸ Colin Mercer, 'A Poverty of Desire', in *Formations of Pleasure*, Formations Editorial Collective, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1983, pp. 84—100.

in female dreaming for a better life.³⁹ But the only subsequent British studies to take popular monarchism seriously have been those spearheaded by Professor Michael Billig. Billig's longest work, *Talking of the Royal Family* (1992), presented and discussed the results of an extensive survey into the attitudes of ordinary Britons, which he believed to confirm that everyday conversations about the Royal Family are more than 'trivial chatter' but are in fact means by which people organise ideas about privilege, nationality, morality and family.⁴⁰

Popular royalism in Australia

These works offer valuable insights into the appeal of royal-watching, but they cannot, of course, be transferred simply from contemporary Britain to a study concentrating on the nineteen-fifties and on Australia, where many different conditions apply.

Few authors here (in either fiction or non-fiction) have portrayed the role of the monarchy in everyday Australian life, and even fewer have attempted to explain its popularity as a cultural phenomena. Perhaps its very success has left the monarchy vulnerable to neglect, so familiar as to repel formal examination, as it is striking to realise that we really have no intellectualised account of how popular monarchism has been enacted at the everyday level or from what sources it has been fuelled.⁴¹ This is in stark contrast to the amount of time being expended on the discovery or recovery of republicanism.

³⁹ Rosalind Coward, *Female Desire*, Paladin, London, 1984, pp. 163—171; Judith Williamson, *Consuming Passions*, Marion Boyars, London, 1986, pp. 75—89; and Carolyn Steadman, *Portrait of a Good Woman*, Virago, London, 1986, p. 37. In Drusilla Modjeska's *Poppy* (McPhee Gribble, Melbourne, 1990, p. 18), the grandmother, China, tells the little girls to remember that her one dance with the Prince of Wales *could* have ended in marriage and they *could* have been princesses.

⁴⁰ Michael Billig, *Talking of the Royal Family*, Routledge, London, 1992. Billig's earlier articles include 'Common-places of the British Royal Family: a rhetorical analysis of plain and argumentative common sense', *Text*, 8, 1988; 'Collective Memory, Ideology and the British Royal Family', in *Collective Remembering*, D. Middleton and D. Edwards (eds), Sage, London, 1990; and 'Stacking the cards of ideology: the history of the *Sun Royal Souvenir*', *Discourse and Society*, 1, 1990, pp. 17—37.

⁴¹ The notable exceptions here are those few publications on previous royal tours: Barry McKinley, *The First Royal Tour*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1970; Kevin Fewster, 'Politics, Pageantry and Purpose: the 1920 Tour of Australia by the Prince of Wales', *Journal of Labour History*, no 38, May 1980, pp. 59—66; and (an upmarket coffee-table book by) Philip Pike, *The Royal Presence in Australia*, Royalty Publishing, Adelaide, 1986. Keith Amos has devoted a chapter of *The Fenians in Australia*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 1988, to the Royal Tour of 1867—8. The general scarcity of publications is not confined to history: political scientist John Warhurst lamented the dearth of study into the role of the monarchy in Australian political life at the annual conference of the Australasian Political Studies Association in Auckland in 1987. This address was published as 'Political Studies and the Monarchy', *Politics*, 23(1), May 1988, pp. 1—

Since 1991 interest in the idea of a republic being founded in time to mark the new millennium has swung upwards — and has spawned a rash of publications, including Donald Horne's *The Coming of the Republic* in 1992, and Tom Keneally's *Our Republic*, Al Grassby's *The Australian Republic*, and Wayne Hudson and David Carter, *The Republicanism Debate* in 1993.⁴² These books range from serious political science to potboiler (which is not too unfair a description of Grassby's unlikely tales of continuous republican derring-do) but the same plaintive cry breaks forth from the heart of each: why have Australians clung to the anachronistic, foreign and anti-egalitarian institution of constitutional monarchy for so long?⁴³

This question has been alive for many years: it was already teasing the nationalist writers of the eighteen-nineties, and it burned the born-again republicans of the nineteen-sixties, such as the poet Max Harris, who was fulminating against the *mysteriously strong grip of the monarchist idea* in 1966:

The remarkable historical observation to be made concerns the tenacious hold the monarchist concept has held over this distant continent from the day Captain Cook made Australian landfall until the day Sir Robert Menzies did but see her passing by...⁴⁴

It was still taxing Bruce Grant in 1983, when he devoted an entire book, *The Australian Dilemma*, to an attempt to understand why a country with 'a chip-on-the-shoulder egalitarian tradition' had refused for so long to abandon the both the 'British legacy' and a top-heavy, imperial system of government.⁴⁵ Like others before and after, Grant was able to 'prove' to his own satisfaction that the relationship with Britain has been the cause of economic and military disaster

7. Among the exceptions in this field is Bob Connell, *The Child's Construction of Politics*, Melbourne University Press, 1971 (especially pp. 9—23), a study of the political understanding of Australian children which found that they recognised the Queen more readily than any other political figure.

⁴² Donald Horne, *The Coming of the Republic*, Pan Macmillan, Sydney, 1992; Tom Keneally, *Our Republic*, Heinemann, Sydney, 1993; Al Grassby, *The Australian Republic*, Pluto, Sydney, 1993; and Wayne Hudson & David Carter (eds), *The Republicanism Debate*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 1993.

⁴³ Keneally for example (*Our Republic*, p. 3) characterises the monarchists of 1900 as comparatively hard-headed and sensible. The conditions of the day make the reluctance to abandon Britain explicable. But he finds the monarchists of today 'rootless and visceral' and their enduring convictions mysterious.

⁴⁴ Max Harris, 'Monarchy and the Australian Character', in *Australia and the Monarchy*, Geoffrey Dutton (ed.), Sun Books, Melbourne, 1966, p. 107. The clause in italics has been paraphrased by me from Harris' actual words.

⁴⁵ Bruce Grant, *The Australian Dilemma*, MacDonald Futura, 1983.

(etc) for Australia, only to find that he had very little to fall back on by way of positive explanation for its continued existence. Jenny Lee fell into the same hole in 1988, in an article titled 'The Apron Strings of Empire' (in which she ignored the fuller implications of her own domestic metaphor), when she concluded that the imperial connection not only left the colonies economically underdeveloped and vulnerable to financial crises, but also resulted in damaged social, racial and gender relationships. Its survival was therefore a mystery for which she did not attempt to find an answer.⁴⁶ It is not my point here to argue that such analyses are 'wrong' but rather that they are lacking in explanatory force. I hope to demonstrate, by strong inference, that a large part of the answer so passionately sought lies with popular monarchism, which is a cultural relationship, semi-autonomous from economic and other ties, and that ignoring a phenomenon with such depth of cultural penetration has led to academic shadow boxing and to the frustrating inability to explain this country's continuing attachment to the British throne.

As a potential object of historical study, popular monarchism slips through many nets. You will look in vain in Clark or Ward or Blainey or almost any other for more than a passing mention of the House of Hanover (lately Windsor).⁴⁷ Conservative historians, including the authors of the triumphalist text books I dimly remember from school, were far too interested in constitutions or patriotic imperialism (and its galvanising effects on our explorers) to have time for the trivialities of Buckingham Palace news. Radical or nationalist historians have preferred to ignore the popularity of the British royal family altogether than to confront it, or attempt to reconcile it with an anti-imperial agenda. For a long time, in addition, the priorities of all were dictated by the conventions of the profession. Before the nineteen-seventies, the discipline of history relied on criteria for determining significance that privileged economic or political studies over all others. Although our relationship with Britain, for better or for worse, has traditionally been understood to include intangible elements — race sympathies and sentiment, for example — these were not the kind of thing that attracted the scholarly gaze. The result of this is that almost all attention to royalty, from whatever kind of historian, has been to matters other than to the realm of family and

⁴⁶ Jenny Lee, 'The Apron-strings of Empire' in *A Most Valuable Acquisition*, J. Lee & V. Burgmann (eds), Penguin, Melbourne, 1988, especially pp. 121—2.

⁴⁷ Manning Clark, for example, does refer briefly to the Royal Visit of 1867 but only to characterise Australians who attended as 'grovellers'. See Michael Cathcart (ed.), *Manning Clark's History of Australia*, Melbourne University Press, 1993, pp. 321—24.

personality where it has had most appeal, and arguably most relevance. Even when Geoffrey Dutton published a collection of popular essays on the monarchy in 1966, all but two discussed it with reference to national defence, the constitution, electoral matters and judicial systems. The exceptions were articles written by Max Harris and Richard Walsh which attempted to prove that royal-watching has been an exclusively female occupation and which bitterly condemned it as a trivial but embarrassing symptom of a national 'immaturity'.⁴⁸ Post social-history Australian historians have treated popular monarchism in much the same manner as their predecessors, which indicates that there are additional reasons for enduring distaste. (One of the other most significant of these, as suggested by the attitude of Harris and Walsh, is the fact that royal-watching has been labelled a female interest with hysteric tendencies. Among other objections to this position, I think that it is simply inaccurate. While it is conducted mostly within the clearly marked terrain of women's media now, this doesn't mean that it was always so. Royalty's pitch to male and female audiences has been different but equal — in the nineteen-fifties, for example, the close association of the Royal Family with national defence and the Cold War provided a focus for a specifically masculine interest.)⁴⁹

Such unexamined familiarity has left monarchism with an amorphous form in academic history-writing. Royalism is understood merely to have been 'embarrassingly profuse', as F. G. Clarke describes the 'idolatry' of Queen Victoria towards the end of the nineteenth century, and so its details have not been isolated.⁵⁰ In Humphrey McQueen's *A New Britannia*, for example, 'an argument concerning the social origins of Australian radicalism and nationalism' rages across 236 pages without referring to popular monarchism once. Yet in my view it permeates the book like a ghostly enemy.⁵¹ This pretty much happens again, almost twenty years later, in John Rickard's major work, *Australia: a cultural history* (1988) where explanation is left at the most rudimentary level. Rickard's consideration of royalty takes place within a single paragraph primarily devoted to a discussion about the withering of the

⁴⁸ Harris, 'Monarchy and the Australian Character'; and Richard Walsh, 'The monarchy as a Valid Social Symbol', both in *Australia and the Monarchy*, op. cit.

⁴⁹ As they always had done, if Manning Clark's description of the tour by the Duke of Edinburgh in 1867 is anything to go by. 'Country men who spent their lives with sheep shook the hands of a royal visitor with a mad fire in their eyes and poured out to a bewildered young man what they felt in their hearts for his dear mother, their Queen, God bless her'. See Cathcart, p. 322.

⁵⁰ Frank Clarke, *Australia: a concise political and social history*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1989, p. 114. My emphasis.

⁵¹ Humphrey McQueen, *A New Britannia*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1970.

republicanism of the eighteen-nineties. While I understand the political impulse to confine a discussion of Australian history to internal stimuli, it has nonetheless led to such inadequate explanations as these:

perhaps the death of Queen Victoria and the succession to the throne of the jaunty Edward VII *encouraged a more relaxed acceptance of the monarchy*; but overall it would seem that rising Imperial enthusiasm in Britain was *transmitted* to Australia, stifling any residual republicanism in the process.⁵²

If Australia is to become a republic by the turn of the millennium, then it only adds impetus to our need to understand more about these very processes of acceptance and transmission, as it remains a major task of the historian to explicate the past in the interests of the present. Western Australian historian Matthew Allen, who has been working on a history of Royal visits and ceremonies from 1867—1988 in order to explore the powerful symbolic meanings that have been attached to the monarchy over time, has raised the argument that it is very difficult (or at least, that it ought to be difficult) to discuss our future relationship with the British crown without 'first knowing more about the cultural realm of royalty' in Australia's past.⁵³

Scholarship on the 1954 Royal Tour

As I embarked on this thesis in the early nineteen-nineties, I regarded the scarcity of existing, secondary accounts of the Tour as a mixed blessing — it was exciting, but unnerving to walk down an untrammelled path. After grasping its magnitude, and realising the extent to which it was a touchstone event of the nineteen-fifties in popular memory, I had assumed I would find a similar situation in print. Extensive searching, however, revealed only that between the souvenir books of 1954 and the appearance of a significant article by Peter Spearritt in 1986, references to the Royal Tour were infrequent, fragmentary, and often slighting.⁵⁴

⁵² John Rickard, *Australia, A Cultural History*, Longman, 1988, p. 115. My emphases.

⁵³ Matthew Allen, 'Significant and Spectacular: Royal Visits and Ceremonies in Australia, 1867 - 1988', unpublished paper, 1992. Other scholars now interested in the history of the royal presence in Australia include Dr Bob Bessant (who has encouraged others as editor of the *Journal of Australian Studies*) and Dr Peter Cochrane of the University of Sydney who is currently re-examining the question of English culture in Australia.

⁵⁴ The most popular of the hard-back souvenir books from 1954 were *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand in Pictures* which emanated from the Herald and Weekly Times Group in Melbourne, *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand* from Consolidated Press and *Royal Visit 1954*, which was published by Angus & Robertson for the Federal Government.

Since the beginning I have been struck by the idea of an event which generated so many words in its day having so little said about it since. There are many explanations for this, including the reticence over royalty just canvassed and also, the fact that historians have been chary of devoting analysis to single events. Another obvious reason for this omission seemed to be that there had really not been that much written on the period in general. The nineteen-fifties had not yet receded back far enough into 'the past' to become a proper target for historical inquiry, and the scholarship there was had been long dominated by the towering presence of the Cold War. Some historians and political scientists did begin to look back to the period from the sixties, but in line with prevalent academic practice and concerns their work was mostly confined to the areas of international relations and domestic politics, and particularly to the split in the Australian Labor Party in 1954-55.⁵⁵ This broad early trend certainly explains something of the exclusion of the tour, but even in those fewer works with a social bent, it barely featured. For example, when chasing up a dim, classroom memory that Humphrey McQueen had mentioned it in *Social Sketches of Australia* (1972), I found it referred to only as the Prime Minister's prize 'election stunt'. This attitude had barely advanced by 1988, when Stephen Alomes described the Visit as 'the biggest travelling circus in our history'. Alomes dismissed it entirely, in fact, as

the culmination of a century of imperial indoctrination. Like colonial natives in imperial fiction, Australians were drunk beyond belief with the romance of royalty. They had been taught to love the Royals...⁵⁶

This degree of contempt was already unusual in the context of academic work on society and culture, and illustrates the intransigence of attitudes amongst historians towards popular monarchism.

General studies of the nineteen-fifties began to broaden by the middle-eighties, as was particularly apparent in two collections of essays edited by Ann

⁵⁵ See Ann Curthoys and John Merritt, 'Introduction', in *Better Dead than Red*, A. Curthoys & J. Merritt (eds), George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1986, p. xi.

⁵⁶ Humphrey MacQueen, *Social Sketches of Australia*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1978, p. 200; and Stephen Alomes, *A Nation At Last? The Changing Character of Australian Nationalism 1880-1988*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1988, p. 155. Valerie Lawson, *Connie Sweetheart*, Heinemann, Melbourne, 1990, pp. 282—301, characterises the Tour as 'the last gasp of Empire'; and Stephen Alomes, Donna Hellier and Mark Dober mention it only as a 'sideshow' to the 1954 Federal election campaign in 'The Social Context of Postwar Conservatism', in *Australia's First Cold War*, A. Curthoys & J. Merritt (eds), George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1984, p. 25.

Curthoys and John Merritt: *Australia's first cold war* in 1984 and *Better Dead than Red* in 1986. Contributors to these books examined the domestic experience of communist and anti-communist politics in the period 1945-53, through aspects such as economic policy and the referendum over the *Communist Party Dissolution Bill* of 1951, but their lines of inquiry broadened to include consideration of such things as the Olympic Games of 1956, ideological pressures towards home ownership and the effects of a prevailing masculinist ethos in public life. Ann Curthoys has told me that she sought an article on the 1954 Tour for inclusion in the first of these volumes, but to no avail.⁵⁷

Popular historians were equally reticent at the time. Stella Lees and June Senyard had great success in 1987 with their pop-history *The 1950s ... how Australia became a modern society and everyone got a house and a car*, but included only two throwaway remarks about the tour, and even great tomes on sport, play and politics, such as *This Fabulous Century* put out by journalist Peter Luck, say either very little or nothing at all. If these books were really the mirror balls of popular memory, then the Petrov defection, the Olympic Games of 1956 and the Beatles' tour would have to be accepted as occasions of greater significance.⁵⁸

An APAIS search conducted towards the end of 1994 showed how the lines of inquiry into the fifties slowly proliferated in the latter half of the nineteen-eighties and through into the nineties, when the traditional study of politics began to lose ground to a new interest in culture, particularly through the examination of art movements, education, religion, and youth. There was also a significant increase in the number of personal memoirs published. These developments have brought with them somewhat more attention to the Tour than I initially encountered (although it still falls far short of the point where a work of this length and concentration has become redundant), and have clearly taken a similar turn across the Tasman, where New Zealand historian Jock Phillips published *Royal Summer* in 1994, a short history of the Queen's time in New Zealand prior to her arrival over here.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Ann Curthoys, interview, 1989.

⁵⁸ Stella Lees and June Senyard, *The 1950s... how Australia became a modern society and everyone got a house and a car*, 1987, Hyland House, Melbourne, 1987; and Peter Luck, *This Fabulous Century*, Lansdowne Press, Sydney, 1980.

⁵⁹ Jock Phillips, *Royal Summer*, Daphne Brasell Associates, Wellington, 1993.

In Australia, popular studies of the nineteen-fifties have been dominated by biography and (particularly) autobiography. It is not surprising that the Tour has popped up in several of these, including Kathy Skelton's amusing account of her life in a small town, *RG Menzies, Miss Gymkhana and Me* (1990); Toni Mackenzie's collection of letters, *Mother Stayed at Home* (1989); and Valerie Lawson's *Connie Sweetheart* (1990), a biography of famous 'lady editress', Constance Robertson. Judith Brett has also mentioned it in *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People* (1994), her rich, scholarly portrait of the Prime Minister so associated with the decade.⁶⁰ Remaining in academic circles, historian Jill Roe contributed an article on aspects of popular royalism, which included an account of her own participation in the events of 1954, to the magazine *Editions* in 1993, and the *Journal of Australian Studies* published two articles specifically on aspects of the Tour in succeeding years (one by Ewan Morris in 1994, and the second by David Lowe in 1995. The latter piece was an examination of attitudes towards the Cold War, modernisation and decolonisation revealed during the course of the celebrations).⁶¹ The most recent edition of this latter journal, which is devoted to the question of 'feminism and the republic' contains three articles focusing on attitudes towards the monarchy during the eighteen-nineties and the nineteen-fifties.⁶²

A guiding hand throughout this period of burgeoning scholarship has been that of Peter Spearritt. In recent years Spearritt has maintained his interest in the long history of the monarchy in Australia through the instigation of the ABC 'Open Learning' television series *Out of Empire* (1993) and an exhibition, *Australians and the Monarchy*, which was devised at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney in 1993. In both of these productions, the Tour was featured as the high

⁶⁰ See Kathy Skelton, *R.G. Menzies, Miss Gymkhana and Me*, McPhee Gribble, Melbourne, 1990; Toni MacKenzie (ed.), *Mother Stayed at Home*, Pan, Sydney, 1986; Lawson, op. cit.; and Judith Brett, *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People*, Macmillan, Sydney, 1992. I think it is interesting that memoirs of members of the political left such as Zelda D'Aprano, Oriel Gray and Roger Milliss have ignored the tour — but cannot say whether this is prompted by genuine indifference or active suppression (see Zelda D'Aprano, *Zelda*, Spinifex Press, Melbourne, 1995 (rev. ed); Oriel Gray, *Exit Left: memoirs of a scarlet woman*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1985; and Roger Milliss, *Serpent's tooth*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1984).

⁶¹ See Jill Roe, 'Miles, the monarchy and me', *Editions*, August 1993, pp. 3—5; Ewan Morris, 'Forty Years On: Australia and the Queen 1954', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no 40, March 1994, pp. 1—13; and David Lowe, '1954: The Queen and Australia in the World', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no 46, September 1995, pp. 1—10. See also Jane Connors, 'The 1954 Royal Tour of Australia', *Australian Historical Studies*, no 100, March 1993, pp. 371—82.

⁶² See Judith Brett, 'From Monarchy to Republic: Into the Symbolic Void?'; Jane Connors, 'Betty Windsor and the Egg of Dukemburg: Men, women and the monarchy in 1954'; and Helen Irving 'Thinking of England: Women, Politics and the Queen', all in *Vox Re/publicae*, D. Goodman & J. Hoorn (eds), a special edition of the *Journal of Australian Studies*, no 47, 1996.

watermark of popular royalism, and each spawned a publication in which it received some further attention.⁶³ It was Spearritt who had first realised the potential of the Royal Tour as an object for study, which he surveyed in the article, 'Royal Progress: the Queen and Her Australian Subjects' in the journal *Australian Cultural History* in 1986. I was referred to this piece just after attending a rally for Aboriginal Land Rights directed against the Government and Her Majesty during the official opening of the new Parliament House in Canberra in 1988. I had noticed that large sections of the protest crowd — including me — had felt a strange reluctance to actually shout at the Queen, and this led to conversations with older friends and relatives about the history of Australian respect for the monarchy, and ultimately to 1954, an event of which I had only the haziest knowledge. Peter Spearritt's 'royal progress' served as the inspiration to set out on one of my own.

'Royal Progress' is a broad, descriptive account of the Tour, based on contemporary textual sources such as Hansard and the major newspapers, and embedded in its author's own experience of, and respect for, Australian popular royalism. Spearritt acknowledges his grandmother as the source of his own interest in matters royal:

My grandmother often talked of the coronation and the 1954 tour as if they were the most important events of this century. In the semi-tropical climate of the ancestral home in Queensland all [her] royal paraphernalia impressed itself on my psyche.⁶⁴

This statement had particular resonance for me, as one of my great-aunts had never really recovered from her distress over the abdication of Edward VIII in 1936 – much to the amusement of other family members. But unlike Peter Spearritt's grandmother, her love for the Royal Family was no indicator of generally conservative politics or of any anglophilia. Her other two passions were Labor Party politics and rugby league football, and so I saw early that popular monarchism was a complex phenomena.

⁶³ The *Out of Empire* series, ABC Open Learning Television, has been repeated several times and is believed to have been seen by about two million people. The *Australians and the Monarchy* exhibition, for which I was a consultant, was a joint project between the Powerhouse and the National Centre for Australian Studies and travelled to other museums, including the National Museum of Australia in Canberra, after its initial staging in Sydney.

⁶⁴ Spearritt, p. 76. The coronation in question was the crowning of Queen Elizabeth II on 2 June 1953.

The nineteen-fifties

One of royalism's complexities, of course, is its changeable nature, its conformities to the mores of particular eras. The royalism evident in this case study is that of the post-war era, and this thesis is therefore also a study of those times to a certain extent. Although it has neither been conceived or realised as an historiographical work it is embedded within the existing literature on the nineteen-fifties and I have examined this major event of the decade with close reference to current trends and arguments.

A specific, historic portrait of Australia emerges through my own presentation of this tour. I use the word 'specific' to indicate that I do not believe that there is one true snapshot to be taken of any period, even if it is only of eight weeks duration. There are always, and were then, many 'Australias' in existence. But the tour was nonetheless a significant creation of the dominant culture of the day, which spoke to prevailing, popular beliefs about the nature of the country, albeit heightened for this special event. After completing this narrative account, I was almost disappointed to realise that the Australia I had constructed around the Royal Visit comes across as rather provincial and unadventurous. I was particularly struck by my own depiction of such a congruent relationship between the leading character of 'the Queen' and the beliefs and practices dominant in the public (and pretty much the private) culture of the country to which she was coming and the remarkable ease with which they came together in that first visit, in a precise, if temporary moment of conflux. By the time she returned in 1963, the nation had changed if she had not. But in 1954, compatibility took her from the table to the turf. If we enjoyed bland cuisine, then so did she. Her religiosity was solid but not excessive, her behaviour was discreet, her personal wardrobe modest, her intelligence not intellectual and her tastes in art were middle-brow. Perhaps our political battles were fought too stridently for her liking, and (just possibly) her views on race relations were a little more advanced, but as she spoke on neither topic they hardly registered among the welter of consensus. And yet, and I hope this is apparent in the body of the thesis, the tour was stalked by the fear and uncertainty which also existed in the wider Australia. This apparent, and barely contained contradiction is entirely in keeping with the dichotomous nature of the decade in current history-writing.

If there was such a thing as 'the fifties', then it lasted well into the following decade. As Julie Stephens has observed, apropos of the nineteen-sixties, 'periodising notions' are not only elastic in that they defy 'precise

correspondence' to the decade whose name they bear, but also because they signify more than a 'set of dates'.⁶⁵ The nineteen-fifties undoubtedly suffered from retrospective periodisation, at least from the mid-sixties to the mid-eighties, in that they became for a long while a dull and stagnant time in order to support the 'very heaven' of the swinging sixties, the decade of youthful protest and social liberation.⁶⁶ Certainly by the mid-eighties, commentators were claiming to be able to identify a prevailing tendency in popular characterisations of the period. John Docker offered one of these in 1984, in an article on culture and the Communist Party of Australia, observing that 'we were inclined to think of the nineteen-fifties as 'a period of quiescence, riven by little passion and no great conflicts'.⁶⁷

One of the most influential and enduring sources of this characterisation came early, from the accounts of those who felt they suffered in a moribund cultural climate. Our most famous expatriates — such as feminist Germaine Greer, television critic Clive James and satirist Barry Humphries — had explained to the world at length why they were compelled to flee their homeland for more exciting and appreciative *milieux*. Many of their contemporaries who stayed at home also spent the sixties describing Australia variously as a dull or philistine place and these included the best-selling author George Johnson, Professor Donald Horne and a number of the contributors to *Meanjin's* famous 'Godzone' series in 1966-67.⁶⁸ Such depictions were still in vogue when the time for this generations' memoirs arrived in later decades. Roger Milliss, for instance, offered a scathing description in his acclaimed autobiography, *Serpent's Tooth* in 1984:

⁶⁵ Julie Stephens, 'Up against the wall revisionists!', *Arena magazine*, June—July 1994, p. 23.

⁶⁶ In addition, this nominal decade has come to stretch to a moment of rupture which might be any one of a number of significant points during Australia's slide into the Vietnam war, or the resignation of the long-serving Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, in 1966, or which may even have come as late as 1972 when the Labor Party pleaded successfully with the electorate to lay the era to its final rest with the 'Its Time' campaign. If attitudes towards the British monarchy were a defining criterion, then perhaps 'the fifties' ended in March 1963 when the satirical magazine *Oz* (no 1, April 1963) took a prolonged and controversial broadside at the Queen.

⁶⁷ John Docker, 'Culture, Society and the Communist Party', in *Australia's First Cold War*, p. 183.

⁶⁸ George Johnson, *My Brother Jack*, Collins, London, 1964; and Donald Horne, *The Lucky Country: Australia in the sixties*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1964. The contributors invited to define or to describe contemporary Australian society in the 'Godzone' series were Ian Turner, Owen Webster, Allan Ashbolt, Noel McLachlan, Bruce Miller, Geoffrey Serle and Geoffrey Blainey. Their views were varied, but Webster, for example, wrote that 'if the established intellectual climate of Godzone is Victorian, then its spiritual climate is medieval' (*Meanjin Quarterly*, vol xxv, no 3, p. 253) and Allan Ashbolt that the prevailing intellectual atmosphere was not conducive to 'adventurous thought' (*Meanjin Quarterly*, vol xxv, no 4, p. 383).

It was an age of dull conformity, politically and intellectually, an era of Pavlovian response to cold-war histrionics and the soporific rhythms of the boom...⁶⁹

This same vision of the fifties was kept alive in later times by members of the following cohort, the 'baby-boomers' born after the war. Caty Kyne offered a typical description in 1986, in the opening paragraph of her article, 'The sixties saved me':

Ideals, community, a transformed world: such concepts were meaningless and unthinkable to those who had been through the mass education of the grey fifties.⁷⁰

The central target of all such critics was Australia's predominantly suburban culture. If there is a single image associated with the nineteen-fifties, it is the impression of 'suburban stability' — boundless and varying definitions of which have been offered over the last forty years, all woven around the standard component parts of a nuclear family with a mortgage, a backyard, a car and a limited cultural horizon. Suburbia was denounced by luminaries such as architect Robin Boyd, author Patrick White and Barry Humphries, on the grounds that it encouraged (or embodied) insularity, conformity and banality — death to art or genius, in other words. Less exalted individuals have made lesser accusations, which were distilled by Lees and Senyard in *The 1950s* into a charge-sheet of bad memories headed by long boring Sundays, the 'barbarism of the six-o'clock swill [and] the "haute cuisine" of mashed pumpkin and stewed fruit'.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Milliss, p. 224.

⁷⁰ Caty Kyne, 'The sixties saved me', in *Sweet Mothers, Sweet Maids*, Kate & Dominica Nelson (eds), Penguin, 1986, p. 149. The book is a collection of reminiscences by women who grew up in Catholic households in the forties, fifties and sixties. Kyne's description reminds me of an interview I conducted in 1991 with a woman who had been active in the Vietnam moratorium movement, and who spoke with great passion of the 1950s — which she also called a 'grey time' — as if a straitjacket had been ripped from her very body at their conclusion.

⁷¹ Lees & Senyard, p. 1. Looking back over them now of course it seems as if Australia's cultural credentials went every which way. There may have been a strong whiff of philistinism in the low-brow nature of most radio and television programming, in the censorship of many magazines and novels from abroad, in widespread addiction to alcohol, gambling and sport, and in the dominant distaste for modern art — but yet there was also a string of significant artistic achievements, a strengthened literary culture supported by new journals, continued preeminence as one of the world's most literate populations and a new interest in Australian history. These contradictions were noted by Geoffrey Bolton (*The Oxford History of Australia*, vol 5, 1942—1980, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1990, see especially pp. 111—38). For discussion of the issue of Australian philistinism, see also Humphrey McQueen, *Suburbs of the Sacred*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1988; and Tim Sowden, 'Streets of Discontent: Artists and Suburbia in the 1950s' in *Beasts of Suburbia*, op. cit., pp. 76—93.

In 1993, historian Richard White warned against accepting such assertions. In his opinion, our view of the decade as a particularly conservative time has been too much derived from that of its youthful escapees, who fuelled their sixties rebelliousness with a *de rigueur* denunciation of their parents' tastes and politics, whereas actually

those aspects of the nineteen-fifties that came to be seen as conservative later — the Americanism, the consumerism, the faith in suburban security — were at the time seen as new and progressive values.⁷²

Janet McCalman extended his caution in her vehement denunciation of 'bad' babyboomer memory in 1994, arguing that it constructed the world only as it was witnessed by children: a 'psychologically regressive' memory of 'legs and car wheels and vegetables and wood shavings, all impressed with the sameness imposed on the perceptions of a protected, uncomprehending child'. The world was neither as safe nor as dull as it appeared from the shelter of the family home, but they mistook and then despised it.⁷³ McCalman's argument is with the 'boomers' of middle Australia, but might not work so well against the recent addition of memories from the margins. The children who might have welcomed the very tedium of affluence finally began to talk about the fifties in the late nineteen-eighties, including Aboriginal and immigrant children and were also joined by some of those whose nightmares happened right in the eye of the Australian 'dream'.⁷⁴

Other commentators share McCalman's frustration at the endurance of the grey ghost of the fifties. When Peter Lewis re-issued his book *The Fifties: Portrait of a Decade* as long ago as 1989 (it had first been published in 1978), he remarked that it had been fashionable until very recently to describe the times 'as a dull or dreary decade of naive and conformist attitudes'.⁷⁵ Yet Raymond Evans clearly thought that things were hardly any better by 1992 when he welcomed the

⁷² Richard White, 'The shock of affluence: the fifties in Australia', in *The Australian Dream*, J. O'Callaghan (ed.), Powerhouse Publishing, Sydney, 1993, p. 20.

⁷³ McCalman, p. 549. This is also the opinion of the baby boomer 'expert' Helen Townsend (*The Baby Boomers*, Simon & Schuster, Brookvale, 1988, p. 204), who wrote, 'It may have been the predictability and security that made the baby boomers think there must be more to life. They began to look at society critically and demanded the end to the White Australia policy etc'. The differences between McCalman's and Townsend's baby boomers is that the former look back in anger and the latter with indulgence.

⁷⁴ Stories of physical and sexual abuse in homes and institutions have only recently begun to circulate in public discourse, and it is my impression that many of those coming forward now are talking about the nineteen-fifties and early nineteen-sixties.

⁷⁵ Peter Lewis, *The Fifties: portrait of an age*, The Herbert Press, London, 1989 (rev. ed.), p. 7.

publication of Jon Stratton's book about the bodgies and widgies of the nineteen-fifties *The Young Ones*, as yet another necessary demonstration that 'Australia was hardly an homogeneous place in this period and that its culture was far from monochromatic and inert.'⁷⁶ In 1993, Sydney's Powerhouse Museum devised *The Australian Dream*, an exhibition about design in the nineteen-fifties (architecture, decor, crafts and clothing) and contributors to the accompanying book of articles referred to the continued existence of prevailing though inaccurate 'truths' about the period. Kylie Winkworth, for example, noted a popular image of 'monotonous prosperity' before going on to reveal how little that description tallies with the 'relentless innovation' that actually characterised the fashion scene.⁷⁷ *Sydney Morning-Herald* columnist Gerard Henderson offered praise to this collection for this very feature, its part in the process of demolishing 'once fashionable myths about the nineteen-fifties', although the perceived need for a demolition job was clearly far from over in September 1993 when the *Australian* devoted its weekend magazine to a vigorous rescue operation, snatching the decade back from the 'fashionable' opinion that it was 'bland, complacent, sterile' and a time 'when nothing happened', or even by October 1994 when a belated reviewer of *The Young Ones* opined that the 'media-driven, folksy image of youth in post-war Australia' was still to be displaced.⁷⁸

These commentators have differing motives for concern about depictions of the nineteen-fifties, and yet they agree that there is a common thumb-nail portrait of the age in popular circulation. But it doesn't come only in a grey watercolour wash, as it is true that many people do also regard the same picture in a rosy light (and always have done). A writer for the *Australian's* weekend magazine put this side of the argument thus in 1993:

Certainly compared with what followed — the watershed years of the sixties — the decade was not thrilling. But the times were stable. Happiness was not unknown. Indeed life was very good for most and unquestionably interesting.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Raymond Evans' remarks appear on the cover of Jon Stratton, *The Young Ones*, Black Swan Press, Perth, 1992.

⁷⁷ Kylie Winkworth, 'Followers of Fashion: Dress in the Fifties', in *The Australian Dream*, p. 60.

⁷⁸ Gerard Henderson, 'Labor Split capped an unstable age', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 February 1993, p. 11; Editorial, 'Back to the Fifties', *The Australian Magazine*, 18-19 September 1993, p. 5; and Jennifer Laurence, review of *The Young Ones*, *Australian Historical Studies*, 103, October 1994, pp. 331—2.

⁷⁹ 'Back to the Fifties', *The Australian magazine*, 18—19 September 1993, p. 5.

The same data therefore fuels opposing depictions of the 'good' fifties and the 'bad' fifties, depending on whether the author feels that they were a pleasant or a repressive time in which to live (or the speaker, as I certainly heard about both the good and the bad fifties during interviews). When Richard White considered the reputation of the nineteen-fifties in an introductory article to *The Australian Dream* catalogue, he identified this dichotomy in general parlance. 'We are told' he said, 'two very different stories about the nineteen-fifties'. The happier story roams across a wide range of variables, over a clean, prosperous, innocent country, free of crime or conflict; while the second vision of the decade says that society was dull, conformist, sexist, xenophobic and unsettled by such minor acts of cultural rebelliousness as drinking wine.⁸⁰ Stella Lees and June Senyard perceived a related bifurcation, observing that the memories of the babyboomers (from which they clearly believed that contemporary images of the decade had been derived) had become simplified by time into one of two directions. Their own friends and colleagues, when questioned, had either dismissed the entire period as the most boring time of their lives, an era hedged with political and cultural restriction ('the arbitrary censorship of books and films, the Cold War') or had 'come alive with enthusiastic recollections of the new car and fridge'.⁸¹

This happier take on the fifties, which had been supported through the seventies by American TV and film nostalgia (such as 'Grease' and 'Happy Days'), kicked again in the second half of the nineteen-eighties, with a discernible trend in popular literature in which stories from the good nineteen-fifties were presented as if in backlash against more negative depictions. The most famous of these was Helen Townsend's *The Baby Boomers: Growing up in Australia in the 1940s, 50s and 60s*, a book which re-established the term in common parlance, especially with younger generations. It was first published in 1988, and reprinted five times before the end of 1989, and was a compendium of brief excerpts from the memories Townsend gathered from her contemporaries, strictly limited to their immediate experiences of home and

⁸⁰ Richard White, p. 12.

⁸¹ Lees and Senyard, pp. 1—3. *The 1950s... how Australia became a modern society and everyone got a house and a car* was a popular paperback aimed right across the senior secondary market to the general reader, and because of its misleading title (the element of irony has been overlooked) and its proximity to the publication of *The Baby Boomers* in the following year, it has sometimes been seen as an offending text in the perpetuation of easy myths. But as much as anyone, Lees and Senyard saw it as their job to introduce complexity into the picture. They rarely offered a 'label' on any aspect of the 1950s, as their primary focus was always with the 're-making of the material conditions of Australian society', which they considered to have been both rapid and profound.

school.⁸² Her introduction established a tone which remained consistent throughout the book:

The babyboomers childhood was the childhood of billycarts, Vicks VapoRub, box-pleated tunics and Smoky Dawson. It was the childhood of cubbies, the Argonauts, musk sticks and 'God Save the Queen'... it no longer exists. A whole generation of Australians shared that childhood.⁸³

As Lees and Senyard had observed in their own interviewees, this genre of memory relied on a large number of *things* (in her very dedication, Townsend thanks her parents for providing the '26 inch Malvern Star, the hula hoop and lots, lots more'). History of this kind reduced memory of the nineteen-fifties to a celebration of personal consumer experience and excluded other forms of private or collective remembrance.⁸⁴

Journalist Hugh Lunn, who has reprocessed his boyhood into a couple of nostalgic and successful books about the period — *Over the Top with Jim* (1989) and *Head over Heels* (1992) — reported in 1993 that he had been congratulated by his contemporaries for telling the truth about the good old days. Ann Moloney from Patchewollock in Victoria, for example, had written to him to say,

I guess I'd not thought that my own childhood was in any way special, but on reflection I realise how very privileged we were to grow up in such innocent and unsophisticated times.⁸⁵

The claim of innocence has been another feature of popular reminiscence of the nineteen-fifties. It has been used variously to indicate the absence of disruptive ways of thinking (such as feminism); innocence of deviant sexual practices — whether hetero- or homosexual — and the absence of certain forms of crime or corruption. In 1993 for example, journalist Greg Sheridan described the decade

⁸² This is clearly a danger within the genre of childhood memory but is not inherent to it — some other memoirs from the era acknowledge that the wider world often intruded even into an infant consciousness. Kathy Skelton, for example, came from a home where politics were forever being fought out, and spent a lot of time pondering the 'sewers' crisis in the Middle East.

⁸³ Townsend, p. 7.

⁸⁴ This trend reached its lowest point with the publication of Steve Bedwell, *Suburban Icons*, ABC Books, 1992, a vapid reification of the consumer goods from the post-war era through to the 1970s.

⁸⁵ From Hugh Lunn, 'Melting moments from the good old days', *The Australian magazine*, 18-19 September 1993, p. 46.

in the *Australian* as a 'time of innocence' because you could leave your door open at night and allow your daughter to walk home alone without fear of molestation.⁸⁶

The good fifties are found in popular literature more often than the bad, and certainly it is academic authors who are accused of promoting the latter through their works (as a cohort rather than as individuals). Greg Sheridan who thought that average men and women had had quite a nice time in the fifties, felt that they would be surprised to learn that 'cultural historians' describe it as a period of unrelieved cultural impoverishment. Barry Oakley, *litterateur* and fellow-contributor to the *Australian*'s fifties special, also went for experience over book-larnin', telling readers not to believe 'the historians' that the decade meant 'suburbia incarnate', because, really, they were 'a pretty lively time for me'.⁸⁷

Oakley is at least wrong to imply that historians have got the fifties wrong through lack of personal experience, as a majority of those who have written about the period to this date are of his own vintage, and he and Sheridan are also mistaken to suggest that recent historical writing would characterise any period so baldly. You would probably have to go back to 1973, to the publication of Geoffrey Serle's history of high culture, *The Creative Spirit in Australia*, in order to find really magisterial pronouncements. In Serle's straightforward language, Australia had been a threatened and constricted society with a crass, materialist ethos — although he concedes that 'cultural standards unquestionably improved' in the years after World War II.⁸⁸ More recent historical writing is less concerned with absolutist description than with detailed exploration of specific aspects of the era and is unlikely to stray into overt judgement. Nonetheless, Sheridan and Oakley are right to the extent that there does seem to be consensus amongst historians that there was a great deal of general pressure towards conformity and conservatism in political, social and cultural affairs and that it was succeeded by a time of greater public passion and pluralism.

Until recently, this attitude has been particularly obvious in the work of feminist historians looking backwards to the lives of women in the fifties.

⁸⁶ Greg Sheridan, 'A Time of Innocence', *The Australian magazine*, 18-19 September 1993, p. 6.

⁸⁷ Greg Sheridan, *ibid.*; Barry Oakley, 'The Education of Youngish Barry', *The Australian magazine*, 18-19 September 1993, p. 28.

⁸⁸ Geoffrey Serle, *The Creative Spirit in Australia: a cultural history*, Heinemann, Melbourne, 1987 (rev. ed.), pp. 178—9.

Feminist social history has been highly critical of the social and spatial relationships which flourished in suburbia because of their especially damaging effects on girls and women.⁸⁹ However, the very latest work has been critical in turn of an earlier narrative which sees women 'awake' from their oppressive, confined lives in the succeeding decade. Lesley Johnson and Jean Duruz, for example, have both insisted through their work that young women in the fifties were capable of negotiating complex lives, much as in later decades, with Duruz issuing a general call for 'broader stories of women's social positioning'.⁹⁰ I hope that I may provide something of this within this thesis, as I pay considerable attention to the spaces occupied by men and women during the Tour, to their differing responses to the presence of the monarch, and to the survival of these distinctions in memory. Feminist historians have also neglected popular royalism, and yet it has been an influential source of representations of gender, and at no time more so than in the post-war years, when the Queen, her husband and their young children were held up to the English-speaking world as the very essence of a model family.⁹¹ Her Majesty's choices addressed the choices made by all women in the course of their lives.⁹²

⁸⁹ The history of this scholarship has recently been reviewed by Jean Duruz in 'Suburban Houses Revisited', in *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, op cit. Duruz cites Beverley Kingston, *My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann*, Nelson, Melbourne, 1975; Sophie Watson, *Accommodating Inequality: Gender and Housing*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1988; Carolyn Allport, 'Women and Suburban Housing: Post-War Planning in Sydney 1943—61', in *Social Process and the City*, Peter Williams (ed.), George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1983; and Ann Game and Rosemary Pringle, 'Sexuality and the Suburban Dream', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, vol 15, no 2, July 1972.

⁹⁰ Duruz, 'Suburban Houses Revisited', passim. See also Lesley Johnson, *The Modern Girl*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1993, for an investigation of girlhood and feminisation in Australia in the fifties; Jill Matthews, *Good and Mad Women: the historical construction of femininity in twentieth century Australia*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1984; and Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, Penguin, New York, 1994, for a discussion on 'growing up female with the mass media' in America in the 1950s and 1960s.

⁹¹ See Alison Light, 'Writing fictions: femininity and the 1950s', in *The Progress of Romance*, Jean Bedford (ed.), Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1986, pp. 139—65; and Janice Winship, 'Nation before Family', in *Formations of Nation and People*, Formations Editorial Collective, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1984, pp. 188—211, for work on post-war feminisation. Both authors mention the Queen as a central figure in definitions of 'good' womanhood. I have always thought that Jill Julius Matthew's definition of the top rung of the 'social hierarchy of the good woman' in Australia across these years (*Good and Mad Women*, p. 16) was a peculiarly accurate description of the Queen: '... of British stock, heterosexual and monogamous, happily married with several lovely children, comfortably off, living in her own home, perhaps working in a service occupation... careful of her appearance, clean and tidy, abstemious but hospitable, moderately religious (Protestant)'.

⁹² Judith Williamson (p. 76) made this observation in the 1980s, while discussing the role of the Royal Family's unique role in social representation. She described the modern royals as 'ourselves writ large, they are the ordinary held up for everybody to see', and I believe that this was equally true, if not more so, during their heyday in the 1950s.

The Oakley/Sheridan consensus was also illustrated throughout the articles collected in the volume *Australia's first cold war*. As most contributors were also members of the political and/or the academic left, the book did present an oppositional stance to the activities of the conservative state, whether represented by Menzies or ASIO, but not one based on simplistic or blanket characterisations of the period. The opening article by Stephen Alomes, Mark Dober and Donna Hellier ('The social context of postwar conservatism'), presented a country where there was indeed quietude on the surface, but turbulence below. Their purpose was to establish that Australian society was 'officially' conservative — in the employment practices and culture of public institutions, in gender relationships, and in most of the other ways already discussed — but that it was a conservatism born of fear, in a country about to enter the 'vortex of modern life'.

It was as if suburban Australians lived happily,
hermetically sealed in a comfortable cocoon, but outside
there were vicious forces which would tear its soft fabric
apart.⁹³

(Several speakers at the 1994 Albury conference on the nineteen-fifties referred to their childhood memories of the post-war decade as a fearful time. Some were referring to the 'global' fears generated during the Cold War, and others to the fearfulness imposed on the young by harsh adult attitudes or transgressive behaviour). In this sense, Alomes *et al* and others have bought into the 'bad' fifties, but not because they consider it to have been a boring time. The net result of their paradox is a country hardly progressive, but hardly dull.

It is interesting to note, just nine years on, that these conclusions were obtained with little reference — and none directly sought — to the question of whether or how the tensions and ambivalency so described were experienced in the lives of ordinary Australians. Until very recently this was not a question for overt consideration in any academic writing. It has only been with the general acceptance of oral history as a serious intellectual methodology and personal reminiscence as a respectable source of information that historians have been able to attempt an answer to Greg Sheridan's question — was life for the ordinary man and woman 'really so awful'? Geoffrey Bolton, for example, used memoirs and a personal account of his own parents' modest aspirations in order to 'people' his general history of the central years of the twentieth

⁹³ Alomes, Hellier & Dober, p. 8.

century, *The Middle Way*, while oral history has become increasingly common in specialised studies: Jon Stratton has identified his interviews with former bodgies and widgies as the 'second major source of primary material' for the *Young Ones*, while Garry Wotherspoon has relied heavily on the memories of homosexual men for *City of the Plain*, and Jean Duruz on the life stories of middle-class women.⁹⁴

Popular memory (or why I've never been a girl for the *longue duree*)

Each of my interviews was ostensibly recorded around the specific experience of heading off to see the Queen in 1954. But they are also replete with information about the current attitude of the interviewees towards Australia and the lives they were leading here at the time — and on both counts constitute a valuable repository of information about the participation of ordinary people in public life (rather than about private lives) and about collective characterisations of 'the past'.

This is a magpie's thesis, and not so much the result of any outstanding influence as the product of slow synthesis. For more than twenty years — since my pre-adolescent imagination was captured by royalty, biography and popular history together in the BBC television series, 'The Six Wives of Henry VIII' — I have been drawn toward histories which attempt to explicate relationships between individuals and society, and latterly, their expression in memory. E. P. Thompson was an early hero, for *The Making of the English Working Class*, but the position of the individual in history has come into sharper focus in an era where oral history is an accepted academic methodology — and especially in the most recent times when memory is not so much prized for its reliability but for its elaborate social nature, its intimate relationship with identity, and its centrality to the past-present relation.

I am indebted to many writers in this area known as 'popular memory'. I remember clearly the excitement of discovering the Popular Memory Group (from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies) and their early investigation of the impact of public histories on individual memories, and then the work of Italian oral historians Luisa Passerini and Alessandro Portelli in the

⁹⁴ Geoffrey Bolton, op. cit.; Stratton, op. cit.; Garry Wotherspoon, *City of the Plain*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1991; and Jean Duruz, 'Suburban Houses Revisited', op. cit. and 'Suburban Gardens: Cultural Notes', op. cit.

nineteen-eighties.⁹⁵ In this decade where the field has grown enormously — Paula Hamilton has pointed out that memory has now become a subject of intense scrutiny⁹⁶ — Australian scholarship has been as interesting and as innovative as any, exemplified by the articles in the recent collection *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, by Alastair Thomson's *Anzac Memories* and by Drusilla Modjeska's hybrid, *Poppy*.⁹⁷

There are no Australian studies on the memory of royalty, but Michael Billig has written extensively about the collective memory or regal encounters in Britain. In the early nineteen-nineties his research team found that most English families were able to produce an anecdote about a chance or somehow elevated meeting and that these stories were well-known and oft-repeated within each family's own repertoire. One woman had grown up with the story of how her mother had defied the police to remain on her doorstep when Princess Margaret was coming past, and that the Princess had not only said 'What a beautiful baby' but had taken her right out of her mother's arms and held her for a bit. This tale provided a 'special moment in the family history'.⁹⁸ As there has been no study of this kind undertaken in Australia I can only speculate as to whether a similar phenomenon exists (the likelihood of an encounter has been much lower here, of course, although that could mean that a meeting takes on an even greater significance), but it does seem significant that I have not found one person alive at the time who does not have a memory or an anecdote about the royal tour, as even those who were too young to remember it themselves have been told a story about their own participation.



Peg O'Brien ... that was when she waved to the crowd and Elizabeth was on her father's shoulders calling out 'I'm Elizabeth, I'm Elizabeth too!' And at the appropriate moment the Queen waved. And Elizabeth

⁹⁵ Popular Memory Group, 'Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method', in *Making Histories: Studies in History Writing and Politics*, R. Johnson, G. McLennan, B. Schwartz & D. Sutton (eds), Hutchinson, London, 1982; Luisa Passerini, 'Work Ideology and Consensus under Italian Fascism', *History Workshop Journal*, 8, 1979, pp. 82—108; and Alessandro Portelli, 'The Peculiarities of Oral History', *History Workshop Journal*, 12, Autumn 1981, pp. 96—107.

⁹⁶ Hamilton, 'The Knife Edge', p. 10.

⁹⁷ Alastair Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994; and Drusilla Modjeska, *Poppy*, op. cit.

⁹⁸ Billig, *Talking of the Royal Family*, pp. 77—8.

cried: 'She waved to me, she saw me,
she knew who I was!'

Liz O'Brien She did too.

Peg & Liz O'Brien, interview, 14 April 1992.

.....

There is clearly considerable variation in the place of a tour story in the family repertoire, as some interviewees had clearly taken their 'royal stories' — which in Australia invariably means a story from the 1954 tour — off the main playlist many years ago.⁹⁹ But even they were able to retrieve these tales with ease, in the knowledge that an anecdote about royalty was still a good one (and irresistibly funny for some). There is still heightened interest in a royal encounter even among those opposed to their continued role in our parliamentary system.

The memories of ordinary spectators differ little from person to person in essence, which is of a piece with the restricted ways in which the Tour was experienced at the time. It was enacted through a limited range of events which were repeated across the country. In each rural or regional stopover there was only a little room for regional creativity (although some would grasp the nettle more boldly than others) within an otherwise rigid format of mayoral addresses, presentations and the National Anthem.¹⁰⁰ In retrospect it seems obvious that as the tour was intended to highlight and to reward the fact that the new Britannias were stable, homogenous societies built on a high degree of conservative social and cultural consensus, its ceremonies could hardly have taken any form other than those in which such consensus was repeatedly enacted, but there were a range of other — and not incompatible — explanations offered. The journalist Keith Dunstan ascribed the unrelenting similarity to a failure of 'civic imagination'.¹⁰¹ It may have been that, but it was

⁹⁹ This correlation between 1954 and 'royal' memory in general was clearly made during a talkback session on ABC metropolitan radio on Boxing Day 1995. The segment was advertised as being on all tours, but all but two of twenty calls were about 1954.

¹⁰⁰ Jock Phillips points out in *Royal Summer* (p. 9) that the Queen went to forty-six towns or cities in New Zealand and the format took the same form in every single place. 'The National Anthem would be played, a bouquet of fresh flowers would be presented to the Queen, the mayor would read an address of welcome and the Queen would read her reply, the local councillors would be presented, the mayor would call for three cheers, and to more high-speed flag waving and cheering the Queen would depart for the next town. The ten 'never-to-be-forgotten' minutes would be over'.

¹⁰¹ Keith Dunstan, *Supporting the Column*, Cassell, Melbourne, 1966, pp. 41—4.

also believed by other reporters that the security of the tried and true was intended to guard against a colonial *faux pas* that might amuse the watching world. Another argument was made by the editor of the *Australian Women's Weekly*, who pointed out that the Queen's job was easier when predictable. 'She knows what to expect and she is able therefore to give her full attention to her audience'.¹⁰² Critics were also reminded from time to time that each town only saw the Queen once, so that somewhere in Australia, every day, a fresh crowd was experiencing the thrill of their initial encounter. This last point is crucial for a study of popular memory as it meant that ordinary people across the nation experienced the very same tour. As a consequence, there is now a truly collective memory of the event, whether one saw the royals in Casino or in Canberra.

Similarities between interviews were not only those of content but of form. I found that most interviews had two decisive features: a moment of uncertainty when the interviewee suggested that their memories would hardly be important enough for my purposes and then the moment when they changed their mind. Secondary reactions were more diverse, as some were amazed in retrospect at all the 'hoo-ha', some embarrassed at the thought of how 'unsophisticated' Australians must have been and some full of sadness for a superseded way of life that the Tour represented to them. Everybody was struck by the fairly obvious observation that 'it couldn't happen now' and in this regard the Visit operates as an effective marker of difference between 'now' and 'then'. Paula Hamilton and Kate Darian-Smith wrote in the introduction to *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia* (1994) that 'memories enable us to inhabit our own country'¹⁰³ and it seems quite clear that the recollections of the Tour are both a useful and a particularly redolent shorthand means by which people are able to conjure up a vision of a long-gone 'Australia', or its representation through the iconography and discourse of the tour. In this sense it appears to operate as a useful reference point of the kind described by Patrick Hutton (in his exposition of the ideas of the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs):

Collective memory factors the past into structured patterns by mapping its most memorable features. That is why it appears to form its imagery around spatial

¹⁰² *Australian Women's Weekly*, 24 February 1954, p. 10.

¹⁰³ Paula Hamilton and Kate Darian-Smith, 'Introduction', *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, p 1.

reference points that emerge prominently from the surrounding milieux of perception.¹⁰⁴

The dominant 'milieux of perception' about the nineteen-fifties emerging from these interviews was definitely consistent with the image of the bland, dull fifties portrayed in much popular and academic writing. Many interviewees used terms such as 'unsophisticated', 'conservative' and 'naive' to describe Australians and explain their intense reception of the Queen. Their remembering had been quite obviously affected by dismissive general representations as much as by personal trajectories, but interestingly, very few had arrived at the point of denial or even repudiation of their own past feelings (this was especially obvious with those interviewees who are now active proponents of an Australian republic, as their memories of the tour and their nostalgic affection for it seem to be unaffected by their contemporary politics). I was also interested to realise — given that it suggests some limits to which the preoccupations of the present may reshape our image of the past — that there are still some collective or common gaps in memory. For example, although the costs of maintaining or hosting the Royal Family are publicly discussed today, not one interviewee voluntarily raised the issue of expense in the context of 1954, nor were they particularly interested in retrospective speculation.

Two particular instances from the interviews might demonstrate the extent to which the Royal Visit operates as a spatial reference point for an otherwise amorphous era. The first of these centres around the fact that the thing best remembered about the Tour does not, in fact, belong to it at all — the near-universal belief that Prime Minister Menzies quoted the lines

I did but see her passing by,
and yet I love her till I die

to his Queen in 1954. This infamous recitation, which most people recall with some embarrassment, actually took place nine years later, in March 1963, but popular memory has steadfastly ascribed it to the earlier occasion, from whence no bleating of mine is going to dislodge it (two interviewees assured me that they had been there on the night). This is not in itself a profound example of misremembering, but it seems to me to reinforce another point described by Patrick Hutton, that

¹⁰⁴ Patrick Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, University of New England Press, Hanover, 1993, p. 79.

images recollected are not evocations of a real past but only representations of it. In that sense, they give expression to a present-minded imagination of what the past was like.¹⁰⁵

It clearly *feels* right to people that the Prime Minister should have made this speech in 1954, when the general level of sentiment might excuse his own heightened emotion. It *feels* like the sort of thing that would have happened then. They also seem to prefer to assume (especially, but not exclusively, latter day republicans) that the days in which an Australian leader was so publicly enamoured of the Mother Country were entirely confined to the fifties and not that they lingered into a decade associated with modernity, burgeoning nationalism and revolt.¹⁰⁶

My second example is that of feminist historian and trade unionist Edna Ryan, whose memory of feeling 'alien' during the tour serves as a metaphor for a broader sense of political isolation during a difficult decade for the political left — and which also illustrates her further alienation as a woman, because it was regarded as slightly more acceptable for men to be indifferent to the Buckingham Palace scene.¹⁰⁷

The final commonality in form between my interviews (with the exception of Bruce Webber, ABC commentator, and Loch Townsend, cameraman for the Commonwealth Film Unit, who travelled extensively with the Royal Party) is that memory concentrates on the one story of 'when I first saw the Queen', and sometimes on an incident reported in the media which took the fancy at the time, in preference to the larger picture. This indicates the supreme importance of that first moment of 'meeting', and also the preservation of individuality, a view of oneself as a significant presence, even within such massive mobs. Annette Kuhn, writing in the context of her own memories of the coronation in Britain in 1953, has noted this feature of the popular memory of such events.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p. 78.

¹⁰⁶ Although it is a different kind of 'misremembering', this realisation was inspired by Ann Curthoys' description of an incident in Sydney when a young woman smeared herself with red paint while watching a parade of soldiers just returned from Vietnam. This became enlarged in the memory of many veterans, who wrongly recalled her hurling paint onto the parade — and used it as evidence of extreme anti-war feeling. Ann Curthoys, 'Vietnam: Public Memory of an Anti-War Movement', in *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, especially pp. 123—31.

¹⁰⁷ Edna Ryan, interview, 6 July 1990.

Popular memory accounts are marked by the ways in which they bring together the lives of the 'ordinary' people who are its subjects and its producers with events on a grander, more public scale. Formally speaking, popular memory typically involves the rememberer, the subject, placing herself — what she did or where she was at the time of the big event — at the centre of the scene...¹⁰⁸

I was struck during recordings by how much interviewees had anticipated what I wanted from them. They understood, and appeared to approve, of the fact that I was not in search of factual information about the tour overall, but eager to hear of their one particular moment of participation. Most had constructed a moment — which they understood as an interesting fiction — of a brief relationship between themselves and the Queen as the two only people in the world. (I actually think that this willingness to articulate this sense of oneself as an historical player is quite recent. I first began conducting interviews ten years ago, on the cusp of the publishing explosion in oral history and autobiography, and have seen people become much more comfortable with the idea that their personal story might be of general interest.)

In some aspects this reservoir of memory may seem to be lacking in depth. Stories about the Tour are neither painful to recall or to recount — in fact, it seemed to constitute a positive pleasure for most of my interviewees, and for all talkback participants. And yet, with an example as large as this one, with this great concentration of universality and uniformity, the very absence of profundity might well provide new insight into the processes of popular memory — and especially into the personal memory of public celebration. Although generally useful for this project, the literature of popular memory founders somewhat on the rocks of popular culture, as studies to date have certainly prioritised the recovery of trauma over the retrieval of pleasure.¹⁰⁹ Memories of war, invasion and the survival of totalitarian regimes have predominated in the field, which has led also to a concentration on the

¹⁰⁸ Annette Kuhn, *Family Secrets*, Verso, London, 1995, p. 68.

¹⁰⁹ For discussions of pleasure, see Kuhn, *ibid.*, pp. 59—83, specifically on the Coronation in 1953; and Colin Mercer ('A Poverty of Desire', *op. cit.*; and also 'Complicit Pleasures', in *Popular Culture and Social Relations*, T. Bennett, C. Mercer & J. Woollacott (eds), Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1986, pp. 50—69) for an account of the difficulties inherent in producing intellectualised accounts of pleasure. Mercer identifies the major hurdle for scholars as the fact that 'popular enjoyment is hostile to the sort of distancing implicit in the strategy of deconstruction'.

interpretation of 'life histories' as long, unfolding sagas.¹¹⁰ The memories here, in contrast, are similar to those retained by Kuhn from 1953, including a

fairly strong memory-image of the Coronation decorations in my own street and ... the frock that was in its own way part of the decorations. The fragmentary, anecdotal quality of my recollections is characteristic, as well: popular memory — indeed most memory account — unfolds less as a fully rounded narrative or drama than as disjointed flashbacks, vignettes, or sketches.¹¹¹

While I do think that Kuhn has somewhat universalised her own experience to claim for adults what is more certain for children, I agree with her suggestion that interpretative methods for the memories of popular culture require further development. Patrick Hutton has written that the task of the historian is to 'locate the images with which the historical actors of the past represented their world' and to this end, I have attempted to utilise these often brief, imagistic memories in this study in a fashion compatible with their form.

One final, and related weakness in the existing literature shown up by this particular corpus of interviews, has been pointed out by Paula Hamilton in her introductory essay to *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, that is, that popular memory has been traditionally assumed to be oppositional to the dominant culture.

For many years, too, oral history claimed to be inherently radical — recovering the voice of those previously 'hidden from history'... And so popular memory itself was assumed to be equally oppositional, keeping alive pasts that history obliterated.¹¹²

This tendency in popular memory theory has been inherited, I think, from earlier literature on the interpretation of popular culture, which has had variously ambivalent attitudes towards the enjoyment of phenomena regarded as conservative. Royal events and royal-watching have undoubtedly been put in this basket.

¹¹⁰ For examples of the 'oral history of trauma' see *Memory and Totalitarianism. International Year Book of Oral Histories and Life Stories*, Luisa Passerini (ed.), vol 1, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992; many of the articles in *The Myths We Live By*, R. Samuel & P. Thompson (eds), Routledge, London, 1990; Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, op cit.; and Hamilton, 'The Knife Edge', pp. 20—2, for discussion on the memories of Australian prisoners-of-war.

¹¹¹ Kuhn, p. 68.

¹¹² Hamilton, 'The Knife Edge', p. 14.

'The enslaving violence of the agreeable'¹¹³

This attitude is widespread in my own circle of friends and colleagues, and some have been openly hostile to my selection of the Royal Tour as the target of serious attention. I had the feeling myself, in the beginning, that the correct approach to this topic would be to hunt through the hyperbole for the 'truth' (general disinterest at the very least, widespread republicanism if I was lucky). Much social history of the past twenty years has been motivated by such a desire for evidence of ceaseless 'contestation-from-below', and has consequently focussed on examples of overt struggle. Throughout the nineteen-seventies and eighties, as Rafael Samuel described the interests of the influential 'History Workshop' group, the preoccupation has been with underclasses and 'movements of popular resistance'.¹¹⁴ I initially thought that I could adapt this approach to this material, but now I think that this would lose not only the point, but also an opportunity to understand the success of conservative popular culture. I am still looking for opposition, but with an emphasis which accepts that the high degree of consensus which accompanied that particular event, at that particular time in Australian history, is its *central* and therefore most interesting feature.

In so far as monarchism has been addressed at all, in whatever kind of study, the temptation has been to dismiss it as the unnatural result of conservative manipulation through the press. For example, in an influential article on the British Royal Family's 'invention of tradition' in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, David Cannadine was reluctant to accept the widespread public mourning after the death of George VI in 1952 as evidence of 'strong personal feeling'. Although it *could* have arisen from 'genuine efflorescence' of collective opinion, he evidently preferred to regard it as 'evidence of the success of mobilising bias'.¹¹⁵ But as with Stephen Alomes' charge of 'imperial indoctrination' against the promoters of 1954, audiences of the magnitude involved with Royal commemoration must surely stretch this argument to the limits of sufficient explanation. Unless newspaper proprietors and government officials could guarantee such numbers to *any* cause the particular and positive appeal of the British Royal Family will have to be addressed (Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz have written of other major, public events that although they

¹¹³ This is Colin Mercer's definition of popular culture ('Complicit Pleasures', p. 60).

¹¹⁴ Rafael Samuel, 'Afterword', in *People's History and Socialist Theory*, R. Samuel (ed.), Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1981, p. 412.

¹¹⁵ David Cannadine, 'The Context, Meaning and Performance of Ritual: the British Monarchy and the Invention of Tradition 1820-1977', in *The Invention of Tradition*, E. Hobsbawn & T. Ranger (eds), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983, p. 161.

provide an idealistic portrait of society, they must also be authenticated by the public in order to work).¹¹⁶

This is not to say that I regard the Tour as a wellspring of populist creativity. Its accompanying rhetoric was permeated by explicitly conservative messages on the topics of patriotism, race, class and gender, just as a not-so-hidden agenda pushed boy scouts to the fore and trade unionists to the back. Many at the time regarded it as the Liberal Party's finest hour, and the perceived closeness of Queen and Prime Minister may well have been, as McQueen has written, instrumental to his electoral success later in the year. Ordinary participants were not supposed to indulge in individual or spontaneous gestures of welcome to Her Majesty, and the very few attempts ended in tears at the hand of the authorities. It was not an event, as cultural theorist Richard Johnson might describe it, which promoted possibilities for other lives.¹¹⁷

And yet each of these statements can be — and will be — tempered by contradiction and complexity. If the story of the Tour was as simple as I have described it above, then I could explain the joyful, excited participation of seven million Australians with easy reference to the various theories of 'false consciousness', but as it is, I find that these have very little positive explanatory force — and do not adequately engage with the interesting mess of 1954, or indeed with the considerable complications of cultural relationships in general.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, *Media Events*, Harvard University Press, 1992, p. xi.

¹¹⁷ Richard Johnson ('The story so far: and further transformations?' in *Introduction to contemporary cultural studies*, D. Punter (ed.), Longman, London, 1986, p. 307) has cautioned scholars against abandoning concern for political tendencies or results in the 'hot pursuit of pleasure'. He contends that we must continue to ask these questions, 'Do these forms, in this conjuncture, lived like this, by this social group, tend to reproduce existing forms of subordination or oppression? Do they hold down, shackle or contain social ambitions or the possibilities of social individuals?' 'Post-Birmingham' theorist Jim McGuigan (*Cultural Populism*, Routledge, London, 1992, see especially pp. 9—33) took up this call again with a long, compelling argument on the need to maintain critical analysis within popular culture studies. McGuigan's thesis was that an 'increasingly consumptionist trend' in cultural studies had led to a reification of popular culture, silence over the conditions of its production, and unsatisfactory accounts of the 'complex mediations of its audiences'.

¹¹⁸ These include, amongst other Marxist traditions, that which has come down through the 'Frankfurter School', which holds that mass culture has colonised the minds of its victims in the interests of capitalism. For a comprehensive survey of the various attitudes towards popular culture derived from Marxism see Tony Bennett, 'Introduction' and 'The politics of the 'popular' and popular culture', both in *Popular Culture and Social Relations*, T. Bennett, C. Mercer & J. Woollacott (eds), Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1986. The postmodern critic Jean Baudrillard (*The Shadow of the Silent Majorities ... or the End of the Social*, Semiotext(e), New York, 1983, pp. 12—15) criticises such strands of cultural studies for their insistence that mass displays of conservatism or indifference are manipulated, their desperate search for rare

I am happier with the challenge, taking the royal tour as an historicised case study, of attempting to identify why it is that some forms of mass culture have been more engaging than others. Was this event necessarily and only the creation of the dominant social order and did it proscribe the imagination of its audience beyond the point of contestation? If it did, how did it do so? This necessarily involves an investigation of the space that is still the most difficult in theories of culture — the space somewhere between ‘resistance’ and ‘idiocy’. What I mean by this is that within a conventional ideological framework there was very little resistance to the Tour. But this does not mean that the processes of unspectacular negotiation by women, men, children, Aboriginal people or migrants (etc) were easy or transparent — merely that they were conducted with insufficient force to alter the historical record or attract the attention of scholars.

Dana Polan, in *Power and Paranoia* (1986), explained the absence of articulated ideological resistance with reference to an analysis of social space as ‘a kind of engridding where potentially separate(d) social elements find a position, a connection, a sense’.¹¹⁹ The range of ideas and practices possible to us at any given historical moment are strongly though not entirely governed by the ‘dominant engridding’. Polan utilised the notion of a dominant field of social perception to argue against totalising approaches to history — rather, it is important to study what emerged ‘within and against’ this field, to look for representations that suggest the contemporaneous presence of other grids.¹²⁰ This suggests interesting ways of conceptualising an era, the fifties in this case, and the meaning of an obviously ideological event within it. The lack of articulated resistance signals that the discourses of the Tour sat well within the boundaries of existing social consciousness and indeed can help us to map those boundaries. But it does not indicate that they were necessarily uncontested or that individuals were unaware of this. Were the fifties simultaneously ‘lived’ as the decade of the Queen and of Marilyn Monroe or even James Dean — and can the clues to this be found around the representations of the monarch on tour in Australia during the Cold War?

moments of ‘revolutionary spontaneity’ and their depiction of ‘a mass prostrate in an unintelligible coma’. His own conclusion is to accept the ‘positive brutality’ of mass indifference and abandon all thought of revolution. John Docker provides an excellent survey of poststructuralist thought in this area in *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1984.

¹¹⁹ Dana Polan, *Power and Paranoia*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1986, p. 7.

¹²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 10.

Popular memory theory is clearly of prime importance in the investigation of such matters, but my approach has also been inspired by two other authors. Some of the most influential work of the nineteen-eighties came from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham. Birmingham scholars investigated the production of consent to the dominant social order in post-war Britain. In order to knock over the notion of 'cultural dopes', they looked to the response of mass culture's audiences.¹²¹ The constant emphasis on audience in combination with detailed work on specific processes of production took it away from a simplistic view of ideological domination. In particular, Stuart Hall's suggestions on how best to demonstrate the complexity of an audience's relationship to mass culture — stratified into dominant, negotiated and oppositional readings — have led to some wonderful work.¹²² However, and this is the problem alluded to earlier, most of this work has been conducted among resistant subcultures. In practice Birmingham models are geared towards uncovering encouraging instances where audiences are actively negotiating or resisting the messages of the dominant culture in a progressive and empowering fashion. The scholar cheers his or her subjects on.

Janice Radway's approach to her particular audience and subject group — female readers of romance fiction, the subjects of her book, *Reading the Romance* (1987) — provides a useful adjunct here.¹²³ Radway attempted to negotiate a feminist 'catch-22' as she was critical of the material in question, but politically committed to appreciate readers' accounts of pleasure and affirmation gained from such texts. While unable to actually resolve this tension she did find room to move in a number of helpful ways. First, she decided to hold more contempt for those who would treat these readers with disdain than she does for the books that they read (like royal-watchers, romance readers are well aware of a

¹²¹ Classic 'Birmingham' publications included: *The Empire Strikes Back — Race and Racism in 70s Britain*, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Hutchinson, London, 1982; *Working Class Culture — Studies in History and Theory*, J. Clarke, C. Critcher & R. Johnson (eds), Hutchinson, London, 1979; and *Resistance Through Rituals*, T. Jefferson (ed.), Hutchinson, London, 1976. The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (whose individual members frequently protested against their treatment as a single entity) attracted increasing, and diverse criticism throughout the 1980s. For example, Bob Connell (*Which Way is Up?*, George, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1983, pp. 223—30) considered that Birmingham defined culture too broadly and that its analyses were superficial, ignoring the 'deep layers of structural determination'. See McGuigan, *passim*, for the most comprehensive analysis of its place in the broader history of British cultural studies.

¹²² Stuart Hall, 'Encoding/decoding' in *Culture, Media, Language*, S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe & P. Willis (eds), Hutchinson, London, 1982, pp. 129—137.

¹²³ Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance*, Verso, London, 1987. See also her article 'Interpretative Communities and Variable Literacies' in *Rethinking Popular Culture*, C. Mukerji & M. Schudson (eds), University of California Press, 1990, pp. 468—82.

level of general scorn). Second, she adopted a 'self-consciously multivocal' approach in writing, in order to provide 'a critical analysis of the society that has put many women into a position to like formula romances but leaving room for both a critical and an appreciative view of the romance novel readers themselves'.¹²⁴ In practice this meant that her audience's own understanding of what it thought it was up to became a vital constituent part of the researchers 'data'. Radway's project has subsequently been criticised (with which she has agreed) for failing to appreciate these audience negotiations within the context of entire lives. Later developments in audience theory have attempted to understand a broader culture of consumption than that which is focussed around one particular practice.¹²⁵ I have certainly been aware of the dangers of overdetermining the importance of the 1954 Royal Tour (although I think that it is unavoidable and not necessarily undesirable in a passionate case study), with the most timely reminders of its brevity and relative significances coming from the participants themselves.

Spectacle

My own adoption of the 'Radway' approach in interviews garnered a variety of responses, but the most consistent of these was the evidence of the extent to which the contemporary media coverage had entwined itself in memory. When I asked each person why *they* had gone to see the Queen, the question sometimes seemed irrelevant and elicited only the answer that one just went. But on the question of nationwide excitement, the response was fast, remarkably consistent between interviews — and an accurate echo of the media rhetoric of forty years before. Most people recognised this last feature spontaneously, and even found it amusing (an afternoon tea *cum* interview in Canberra degenerated when someone said innocently, 'she was the first actual Queen to come, wasn't she?' and the whole table called out together, 'THE FIRST REIGNING MONARCH!' before collapsing into tears of laughter).

It was also apparent that everybody also had 'flashbulb memory' in that they remembered the most-reproduced media images as clearly — or sometimes more clearly — as the things they saw with their own eyes.¹²⁶ (There was also

¹²⁴ Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson, 'Introduction' in *Rethinking Popular Culture*, *ibid.*, p. 52.

¹²⁵ For criticism of Radway see McGuigan, pp. 138—9; and for a survey of later developments in audience theory, see Ien Ang, *Desperately Seeking the Audience*, Routledge, London, 1991.

¹²⁶ Paula Hamilton ('The Knife Edge', p. 26) borrows the term 'flashbulb memory' from Ulric Neisser.

evidence of the converse phenomenon — the fact that popular memory needs to be supported or validated by the public record in order to survive. I found that oral history yielded very little about the informal, and therefore ephemeral means by which information circulates through the community. I was after rumour, humour, and gossip, as sources of non-official information and evidence of 'real' attitudes towards the tour but although people remembered that these had existed, the actual content had long since evaporated.) With one interviewee a large press photograph of the Queen disembarking at Farm Cove bought immediate recognition while a smaller shot taken by an amateur photographer from a distance did not, even though the latter better replicated the view that she had had on the day itself. I also found that everybody remembered the omnipresence of the media (press, radio and newsreels) and recalled their own consumption of media as an integral part of the event itself. Annette Kuhn noted this in her memories of 1953:

I recall the setting and the circumstances in which I watched the Coronation on television far more vividly than what I saw on the screen.¹²⁷

It seems typical that memories of popular culture must also involve memory of the media through which it was originally broadcast.¹²⁸ This has become even more pronounced, axiomatic even, in the subsequent age of television, when collective ritual has become indivisible from, and is often created by, the act of broadcasting.

This new media genre – encompassing events such as the televising of the moon landing in 1969, and the royal wedding of 1981 — is the topic of a recent study by Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz (*Media Events*, 1994). Although their attention is restricted to another era, their analysis of the nature of public

¹²⁷ Kuhn, p. 68.

¹²⁸ Kate Darian-Smith, Alastair Thomson and Ann Curthoys have recently written about other ways in which the media 'intervenes' in memory. See Curthoys ('Vietnam: Public Memory of an Anti-War Movement', p. 131), for the impact of miniseries on the later memory of the Vietnam era. Darian-Smith analyses the effects of 'The Sullivans' and 'Come in Spinner' (popular television shows of the 1970s and 1990s respectively) on ideas about the civilian experience of WWII in 'War Stories: Remembering the Australian Home Front during the Second World War', in *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, pp. 137—57. Thomson — whose entire book is about the relationship between public and private remembering — airs specific suspicions that the 1980s film 'Gallipoli' influenced even the memories of the original Anzacs (*Anzac Memories*, pp. 7—8).

ceremonies provides a useful introduction to my final port of call: the literature of rites and spectacles.¹²⁹

Despite a subtitle affirming their interest in the 'live broadcasting of *history*', Elihu and Katz find themselves dependent on anthropologists for insight into the operation of celebrations and commemorations in modern western societies.¹³⁰ They turn particularly to the social anthropologist Victor Turner and his many followers. Turner's major influence in the study of rites was to invert an earlier wisdom that rituals merely reflected social relationships by looking for the ways in they actually influenced the shape of these relationships.¹³¹ This insight has been further extended by the French theorist Guy Debord who insists that national spectacles (such as the tour) *are* social relations, mediated by images.¹³²

It would be very tempting to pick off the 'answers' to the 'what-did-it-all-mean' questions surrounding the Tour from this literature, as so many descriptions of festivities and spectacles from other cultures and decades seem to 'fit' the data (although its applicability is limited by anthropology's traditional emphasis on the observation of otherness from beyond the culture which produced the phenomena in question, and by its lack of interest in the 'conditions of production'). David Chaney's study of civic, and royal, ritual in Britain in the nineteen-fifties (which also draws on the Turner material) has obvious applicability, especially for his focus on communality and nationalism, but all ritual theory is valuable for its insistence that there are layers of meaning

¹²⁹ I had originally expected to find some inspiration among the extensive literature of carnival (such as the work of Mikhail Bakhtin) but its not actually appropriate to this topic because of its assumptions of licence and inversion. Annette Kuhn (p. 72) has written about the Coronation that, 'in carnivalesque manner, the people's revels mix high with low, sacred with profane, lofty with vulgar, in a fusion which releases new energy and vitality. Unlike carnival, though, there is neither mockery of nor disrespect for the 'high' here', and this description holds very well for the Royal tour.

¹³⁰ The need to look beyond history has been commented on by many other historians. Stephen Alomes, for example, complained in 1985 that 'in Australia parades and festivals have mainly been treated as peripheral subjects, drawn on for evidence and colour in studies of religion, politics and nationalism'. The few exceptions include his own article, 'Parades of Meaning: The Moomba Festival and Contemporary Culture', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no 17, November 1985; Julian Thomas, 'Past and present in an elaborate anniversary', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol 23, no 91, October 1988; Ken Inglis, 'Australia Day', *Historical Studies*, vol 13, no 49, October 1967; and Kevin Fewster, *op cit*.

¹³¹ Some of the more significant collections in this oeuvre include *Celebration: Studies in Festivity and Ritual*, V. Turner (ed.), Smithsonian Institute, Washington, 1982; *Secular Ritual*, S. Moore & B. Myerhoff (eds), Van Gorcum, Amsterdam, 1977; and *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle*, J. MacAloon (ed.), Institute for the Study of Human Issues, Philadelphia, 1984.

¹³² Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, Black and Red, Detroit, 1983, p. 4.

somewhere below the obvious. A seemingly mundane point within the Queen's itinerary may be heavy with ritual action, through stylised behaviour, repetition, acting and the self-conscious manufacture of 'tradition-like effects'. 'Myths of cultural unity' may be propagated in symbolic form, and hierarchy and equality may be asserted within the same performance. Even Roberto da Matta's description of the transformation of public space in Brazil during religious ritual has a strangely powerful resonance with Sydney's day of welcome, and it is difficult to read the fevered newspaper accounts of those first few days when it seemed as if the Royal visit extended into every corner of Australia, not to think of Debord's angry denunciation of a modern spectacle as one which 'covers the entire surface of the world and bathes endlessly in its own glory'.¹³³ Victor Turner and John MacAloon have also suggested useful directions with their extensive work on the twin notions of 'liminality' and 'communitas'. Liminality and communitas are conditions experienced by the community at large during those events which 'halt the nation'. The former describes the sensation that ordinary notions of time have been disrupted, that the world has temporarily entered a 'subjunctive' mode; while the latter refers to the usually-accompanying upsurge of fellow-feeling (usually amongst people on the street), which overcomes everyday feelings of dispersal and atomisation. That such conditions operated during long periods in 1954 was apparent enough from the contemporary record on the page, but I found that they also lived and breathed in memory.¹³⁴ But as with other aspects of this work, the effects of this reading will permeate the narrative, rather than appear in 'set piece' analyses.

This narrative, to conclude, will commence with two necessary chapters providing the historical background which helps to explain the great triumph of 1954. In Chapter one you will find a brief account of the place of the Royal Family in public affections in Australia in the years 1788—1939, and in Chapter two a description of the immense popularity of the House of Windsor in the years before and after World War II. The third chapter moves to the specific preparations for 1954 and is primarily concerned with the processes by which a particular portrait of Australia was selected for presentation. Her Majesty

¹³³ Roberto da Matta, 'Carnival in Multiple Planes', in *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle*, op. cit., pp. 208—40; and Debord, p. 13.

¹³⁴ Victor Turner provides neat definitions of both terms in 'Liminality and Communitas', *Culture and Society*, J. Alexander & S. Seidman (eds), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 147—54. See also John MacAloon, 'Olympic Games and the theory of spectacle in modern societies', in *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle*, op. cit., pp. 241—80, for a case study of the operation of *communitas*.

actually arrives in Chapter four, which she spends in Sydney, before heading off into the smaller capitals and the bush in numbers five and six. The conclusion presents the explanations offered by my interviewees for the success of the Royal Tour and for the subsequent diminution of support for the Royal Family, which I consider in conjunction with my own final reflections on the meaning and significance of the entire event.

CHAPTER 1

An Embarrassing Profusion¹

Be seen is a rule sovereigns neglect to their peril.

Richard Garrett, *Royal Travel*.²

This chapter sketches a history of popular royalism in Australia between 1788—1939. Within it, I pay most attention to the six immensely popular tours by members of the British Royal Family prior to 1954. The first and simplest of my reasons is that the tours stand out from 'white noise' of burgeoning popular royalism through the course of nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Tensions and contradictions in the resolution of national identity came to the surface on every occasion when an Anglo-Australian populace greeted an English visitor, and the continuing fervour of welcome suggests an enduring sense of isolation (the particular role of the Royal Family as a conduit for these anxieties is also discussed). It also becomes clear that there was an early separation in Australian minds between the British government and the monarchy.

During the Royal Tour of 1954, these earlier visits were regarded as a marker of history and continuity (which royalty also personified). People often referred back to having seen the Queen's parents and grandparents on previous occasions. Journalists harked back to the Royal Tour of 1901 — in which the future King George V and Queen Mary presided over the opening of the first Australian Parliament — to remind readers that each stage of our history, another generation of the Royal Family had come to view and share the triumph. The first tour of 1867, which was shambolic and fraught with

¹ Frank Clarke described the 'idolatry of Queen Victoria and other British royals' in the latter years of the nineteenth century as 'embarrassingly profuse'. See Clarke, *Australia: A Concise Political and Social History*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1989, p. 114.

² Richard Garrett, *Royal Travel*, Blandford Press, Dorset, 1982, p. 7.

shame, was also turned into a lesson, in which the chaos of the past and the order of the present day was used as a metaphor of the country's progress from colony to modern nation.

The reinvention of the British Royal Family

At the time of the European occupation of Australia in 1788, and for many years after, the reputation and the popularity of the British monarchy was at a low ebb. The third King George was battling periodic episodes of madness, and warring with Parliament over the extent of his sovereignty in the years between, while his many sons were infamous for their scandalous behaviour. They laid themselves open to satire and condemnation of a manner unimaginable to later generations.³ Victoria, who came to the Throne in 1837, fared only a little better, weathering years of ridicule and criticism. It was only in old-age that she came to enjoy the show of veneration that is associated with her image today, when suddenly recalled to centre stage. By the end of a century that had begun rather badly, the Royal Family had, most unexpectedly, been forgiven and all their sins forgotten.

British historians are broadly agreed on the explanations for this rehabilitation, and these were welded together into a definitive account by David Cannadine in his article, "The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: the British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition' c.1820-1977", in 1983.⁴ Cannadine's model is both elaborate and evolutionary — involving the confluence of many variables, including the growth of the popular press, the demise of other European monarchies, and improvements in the technical standards of royal ceremonials — but there are two fundamental factors in his analysis of the resurrection of the Royal

³ David Cannadine, ("The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: the British Monarchy and the "Invention of Tradition" c. 1820-1977", in *The Invention of Tradition*, E. Hobsbawn & T. Ranger (eds), Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 109) reports that on the death of George IV in 1830, for instance, the obituary in the *London Times* concluded that 'there never was an individual less regretted by his fellow creatures than this deceased king'.

⁴ Although historians Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson did make a tangential criticism of Cannadine's thesis when complaining about the premise behind *The Invention of Tradition*, in which his article was published: 'Anglo-Saxon historians seem happiest at work puncturing legends ... showing the artificiality of myth and its manipulable, plastic character. Highland dress was invented by a canny lowland tailor; the modern monarchy by far-seeing political strategists'. See 'Introduction', in *The Myths We Live By*, R. Samuel & P. Thompson (eds), Routledge, London, 1990, p. 4.

Family: the steady diminution of its actual political authority, and the success of the British empire.

As the franchise was extended, after the eighteen-thirties, the powers of the sovereign were successively weakened and parliament released from fear of Royal intervention in the nation's affairs. Politicians were finally able to appreciate instead the symbolic potential of the monarchy.⁵ This was most famously realised by a constitutional lawyer, Walter Bagehot, who was one of the first people to consider what the country needed from a crown confined to its ceremonial functions. In *The English Constitution*, first published in 1867, he recommended that the British polity should be divided between its 'dignified' and 'efficient' parts. The dignified sector should work to divert attention from the activities of the efficient areas. If politicians busied themselves with affairs of state, royalty could then concentrate on more exalted matters.⁶ Although Victoria actually made continual efforts to intervene in political issues, the myth of royal impartiality was deliberately and successfully established. It was also agreed that the primary function of the monarchy ought to be to represent morality, especially domestic morality, at the highest level. Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, in particular, spoke often on the importance of domestic virtue in the life of the nation and recommended the Royal Family, which was now comparatively well-behaved, as a model.⁷

This ideological make-over was negotiated during a twenty year period which coincided, to royalty's further advantage, with a major era of consolidation in the British Empire. Although size of the Empire had been steadily increasing since the beginning of the century, it was only in the eighteen-sixties — after the formal annexation of India and the Princely States — that British politicians and entrepreneurs perceived the need to look beyond mere subjugation of their foreign territories. Colonial policy, hitherto confined to military administration and economic exploitation, began to turn to 'moral and political considerations', as Disraeli described them. In his 'Crystal Palace' address of 1872, he committed the Conservative

⁵ Cannadine, pp. 120—1.

⁶ Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution*, Fontana, Glasgow, 1965 (orig. 1867).

⁷ Benjamin Disraeli, as Leader of the Conservative Party, was Prime Minister in the years between 1866—8, and again from 1874—80.

Party to respond to those 'distant sympathies which may become the source of incalculable strength and happiness to this land'.⁸

Given the new role of the Royal Family in personifying those sympathies, it was felt that there might be strategic value to be gained from the spiritual (and later the physical) presence of the Crown in various of the colonies. Disraeli's domestic metaphor was thereby extended, beyond the individual nation to the 'family of nations'. The aging Queen was brought out of mourning in 1876 to be reincarnated as the Empress of India, and later as the 'Mother of the Empire' (although David Cannadine pays no attention to gender in his analysis, Dorothy Thompson has argued that this was crucial to the Queen becoming more, or other, than a ruler, as 'a mother-figure who stood in a kind of moral holy ground above the coarse realities of day-to-day politics'. This 'strongly feminine quality of maternal devotion and disinterested family loyalty' with which she became associated, particularly 'impressed itself on subjects of many races and nations'. These factors operated as strongly in the popularity of her great-great grand daughter, Elizabeth II, in the following century.)⁹ Royal events became imperial events and vice versa, with the Queen's Golden and Diamond Jubilees, in 1887 and 1897 respectively, providing crowds at home and throughout the British diaspora with two particularly ripe occasions on which to celebrate their racial supremacy. The monarchy by this stage had become a cornerstone of 'Anglo-Saxon race imperialism', the racially-based patriotism which arose from, and then contributed to, the success of Great Britain's imperial mission.¹⁰ The style and the scale of these events made them something 'quite new in the popular presentation of the monarchy': large numbers of children were brought together in parks and ovals, soldiers in the exotic uniforms of the Empire marched through streets heavy with bunting and loud with cheers, and as the jubilee years coincided with the arrival of mass-produced consumer items, the face of the Queen went around the world on souvenir crockery, handkerchiefs and chocolate wrappers.¹¹

⁸ Disraeli's speech quoted by Neville Meaney, 'Australia and the World', in *Under New Heavens*, N. Meaney (ed.), Heinemann, Melbourne, 1989, p. 394.

⁹ Dorothy Thompson, *Queen Victoria: Gender and Power*, Virago, London, 1990, p. 125.

¹⁰ John MacKenzie describes this 'new imperialism' as militaristic, romantic, heroic, imbued with bastardised ideas about the 'survival of the fittest', and devoted to the Crown (see John MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: the manipulation of British public opinion 1880—1960*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1984, pp. 1-12).

¹¹ Thompson, p. 132.

This successful reincarnation survived beyond Victoria's death in 1901 (even Edward VII, once dismissed as an 'unemployed youth', died in 1910 as 'England's dear old Dad'), and through to the other side of the Great War. While many continental dynasties were swept away, the House of Windsor emerged with an attractive air of anachronistic grandeur, and its upward spiral continued steadily under the stewardship of George V from 1910 to 1936. Under 'Grandpapa England' the monarchy achieved great popularity as a living symbol of 'continuity in a period of unprecedented change'.¹² Its profile in the domestic and foreign press rose annually, along with the size of the crowds willing to line the streets for any royal occasion, at home or during any of the staggeringly successful tours staged in the British Dominions in the years before World War II.

Australia and royalty: the first century

This peak was still a sesquicentury away when New South Wales was founded. For many years the only non-religious occasions with official status in the colonies were royal birthdays and other royal events, but the call was muted by time and distance.¹³ Both Princess Charlotte (d. 1817) and her grandfather, George III (d. 1820) were five months dead before the news reached Sydney — although once he had heard of both events, Governor Macquarie ordered all mourning to be observed. Shops and places of amusement were closed and the courts suspended for the duration of a solemn procession through town.

Manning Clark's assessment of the meaning of such rituals was that the Protestant community in the colonies at that time was committed to the performance of public ceremonies of veneration for the monarchy as part and parcel of their general attachment to the British constitution and its accompanying institutions. Loyalty to the crown was an official matter and he found no evidence of affection or admiration for members of the Royal Family as such.¹⁴ This seems to have changed before or during the eighteenth-forties (at the same time as the reputation of the monarchy in Britain was

¹² Cannadine, p. 139. This popularity was demonstrated in the enormous public sorrow expressed at the death of George V in January 1936. Royal biographer Philip Ziegler (*Crown and People*, Collins, London, 1974, p. 34) wrote that the veneration for George rested on the 'heady mixture of public grandeur and private probity' that he perfected.

¹³ Ken Inglis, 'Australia Day', *Historical Studies*, vol. 13 no. 49, October 1976, p. 25.

¹⁴ Manning Clark, *A History of Australia*, vol. 1, Melbourne University Press, 1962, p. 352.

slightly improved) when colonial agitators began to articulate a rudimentary distinction between the throne and the British Government. Robert Hughes has made the observation of the anti-transportation movement in New South Wales, that

no bunyip Demosthenes preaching abolition would open his mouth against the pollutions of English crime without unfurling a long red-white-and-blue preamble assuring Her Gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria, of his undying, wholehearted and grovelling fealty to the British Crown.¹⁵

Mark McKenna has noted that the same distinction was maintained by the republicans of the early eighteen-fifties. Their arguments in favour of self-rule were 'predominantly loyalist' and 'rarely anti-monarchical'.¹⁶ After they gained their objective of self-government in 1856, they retired from the field, and republicanism then languished for the best part of the following three decades, until its revival in a new movement of a radically different nature, propelled by bitter opposition to 'the monarchy, imperialism and British society'.¹⁷

Historian Luke Trainor has nominated the years from 1880—1900 as a crucial time in the development of a mature Australian nationalism, as 'the period sees a cluster of issues which raised the question of national identity sharply'.¹⁸ In his description, an ambiguity at the heart of Australian identity was stretched to breaking point throughout the eighteen-eighties as British imperialist interests were insistently advanced and just as strongly resisted, before the seeming retreat of nationalist and radical movements in the following decade.¹⁹ Trainor has little time for popular royalism, as his interest in the colonial relationship is primarily with the issues of investment and defence, but notes in passing the increasingly racial rhetoric of British imperialism, which he concedes to have worked as well in

¹⁵ Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore*, Pan, London, 1988, p. 559.

¹⁶ Mark McKenna, 'The First Century: Republicanism in Australia 1788—1901', in *Australians and the Monarchy*, P. Spearritt & A. Shiell (eds), National Centre for Australian Studies, Melbourne, 1993, p. 12. An interesting exception here was Henry Parkes, future Premier of New South Wales, who described the monarch as a 'public servant' of the people. He dropped this stance later in the century, when his public utterances, at least, became very loyal.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ Luke Trainor, *British Imperialism and Australian Nationalism*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1994, p. 67.

¹⁹ *ibid.* See especially pp. 59—61 on the 1880s, and pp. 184—8 on the 1890s.

Australia as in Britain.²⁰ Such rhetoric played upon the widespread fear of Asia (given domestic expression through anti-Chinese paranoia), which first awoke in Australia during the eighteen-fifties.²¹ For many white Australians, 'fearful of the coloured races fast creeping down the Malayan peninsula and isles', it became increasingly desirable, as the nineteenth-century rolled on, to stay within the Anglo-Saxon fold.²² It became feasible, too, as the speed of travel and telegraphic communication was improving just at the right time to carry a veritable wave of imperial propaganda, mostly but not entirely originating from England.²³ The story of the triumphant white race was disseminated in Australia through the theatre, the education system, juvenile literature, imperial exhibitions, youth movements and imperial organisations. It was embraced and propagated by governments, state institutions (particularly schools), the media, and many ordinary Australians.²⁴ Probably, it made them feel less alone in the southern seas — and important too, as it commended the bravery of the explorers and the pioneers and applauded the primary producers of the far-flung settlement colonies. The rhetoric of family was rendered particularly poignant by distance, and the symbolic role of the Royal Family as the highest representatives of the British people remained crucial. As described by Neville Meaney, the crown in Australia during the last years of the nineteenth century 'personified the spirit and traditions of the race', and in that way, much as in Britain, popular monarchism came to Australia on the back of race imperialism.²⁵

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 60.

²¹ This paranoia is described by Beverley Kingston, *The Oxford History of Australia*, vol. 3, 1860–1900, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1988, pp. 133–7.

²² *Argus* (Melbourne), c.1901, quoted in Trainor, p. 162.

²³ See MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, *passim*, for descriptions of nineteenth-century colonial exhibitions in which produce of the colonies were displayed to disbelieving English audiences, and also of the books, picture shows and eventually films that were sent out from London across the world. Neville Meaney (p. 395) points out that Australians were both consumers and producers of this material, citing the example of *Deeds That Won The Empire*, by the Rev W. Fitchett of Melbourne, which was bought by the British Admiralty and placed in the library of each British ship.

²⁴ Frank Crowley describes the indoctrination of imperial loyalty through public school curricula in the 1880s ('history, geography and literature were British, jingoistic and openly racist, loyalty to the Queen and Empire was axiomatic') in *A New History of Australia*, Heinemann, Melbourne, 1976, p. 210. For descriptions of the imperial literature aimed at juveniles, see Jackie Hollingworth, 'The Cult of Empire — Children's Literature Revisited', in *Mother State and her Little Ones*, B. Bessant (ed.), Centre for Youth and Community Studies, Melbourne 1987, pp. 90–117.

²⁵ Meaney, p. 396.

.....

The Crown was the most important symbol of the new imperialism... Queen Victoria acquired an exalted, almost sacred, place in national life. She covered the colonies with the mantle of her name.

Neville Meaney, *Under New Heavens*.²⁶

.....

The Jubilee years

Australian governments after the eighteen-seventies promoted the celebration of monarchy more profusely than their predecessors. If it was obvious earlier in the century that the maintenance of law and order in the colony would be assisted by a generalised loyalty to British institutions, it is not as easy to see why later, more independent parliaments would vigorously propagate monarchism (although the likely explanation is that conservative patriotism — to which the Crown was central — was in the interests of all governments).

One of the most pervasive and lasting means by which royalism was fostered by the state (though usually initiated by individuals) was through the names with Royal or imperial connections bestowed on features of the natural and human environment. This practice peaked in the second half of the nineteenth century and survived until the nineteen-fifties, at which time the poet and author Rex Ingamells noted that 'street names and memorials in our capitals and towns [are] constant reminders of the Royal connection.'²⁷

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ Rex Ingamells, *Royalty and Australia*, Hallcraft Publishing, Melbourne, 1954, p. 91. Rex Ingamells was one of the original 'Jindyworobaks', a small group of writers and poets who came together in the 1930s on a quest for the true Australian spirit and found their inspiration in the bush and in Aboriginal culture. In 1938 he published a book called *Conditional Culture*, in which he said that a fundamental break 'with the spirit of English culture' was 'the prerequisite for the development of an Australian culture' (*Conditional Culture*, F. W. Preece, Adelaide, 1938, quoted in S. Alomes and C. Jones (eds), *Australian Nationalism*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1991, p. 230). But he clearly didn't include the English throne in this injunction. In 1954, as a contribution towards the Royal Visit, he wrote *Royalty and Australia*, which Peter Spearritt ('Royal Progress: the Queen and Her Australian Subjects', *Australian Cultural History*, 5, 1986, p. 75) described as 'the only serious attempt I have been able to find to explain the role and function of the Crown'.

The names and symbols of British civilisation were exported to all corners of the Empire, as an integral component of colonial strategy. While the most spectacular effects were achieved through public ceremonial, and the most profound through the taming of exotic landscapes, such as Australia's, they were supported by the successful penetration of everyday life. The Royal imprimatur (used as proxy for the Empire) was everywhere applied, even to coins and stamps and to public utilities such as the Royal Mail. 'Her Majesty's mails carried her crest and likeness into the narrowest streets and remotest settlements.'²⁸

The homes in these streets and settlements were likely to hold further evidence of regal infiltration. Royal portraits, books and china were once too common to warrant mention, but authors such as Ingamells and Gilbert Murray (approvingly, in the nineteen-fifties) and Max Harris (scornfully, in the following decade) looked to such things to support their various accounts of the history of popular royalist sentiment. Murray, the President of the Australian Society of Authors in 1953, was also able to draw on memory, recalling conversations from his boyhood in the eighteen-eighties in which people spoke about the person of the Queen in preference to abstractions like the Empire and the colonies:

unless my memory deceives me, though there was at that time not much talk about the Empire or about 'common policies with the English-speaking world', there was a widespread personal attachment to Queen Victoria: a great feeling that she was not only a great Queen, she was a kind and good one; a conviction, when things were wrong or unjust, that they would soon be put right if the Queen knew.²⁹

Rex Ingamells had childhood memories too, from the Burra region of South Australia in the nineteen-twenties:

I entered many homes in which pictures of King George V and Queen Mary hung; and many of the older folk preserved, too, those of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra.³⁰

²⁸ Kingston, p. 59.

²⁹ Gilbert Murray, 'Introduction', in *The Sunburnt Country*, I. Bevan (ed.), Collins, London, 1953, p. 12.

³⁰ Ingamells, *Royalty and Australia*, p. 88.

Ingamells maintained that a portrait of the reigning sovereign had always hung in pride of place above the mantelpiece in many Australian homes, and always would.

No review of our sociological history can fully grasp the temper of our past without reference to the ubiquitousness of prints of Queen Victoria in outback homesteads all over the country.³¹

Frank Crowley has also called upon those portraits from the nineteenth century to serve as evidence of the extent to which the loyalties of some Australians of Irish-Catholic descent had become confused under the weight of race imperialism in a new country.

In Irish homes pictures of the Queen [and] Parnell ... mingled indiscriminately, and at Catholic gatherings the Anglo-Saxon Protestant Queen was toasted — even if after the Pope.³²

Ingamell's approving claim of ubiquity was confirmed in the displeasure of another poet, Max Harris. Harris found the source of Australia's regrettable attachment to the monarchy in the 'little women' of the Western districts and the Darling Downs, who attempted to recreate 'the English county class system in rural Australia' through their unwillingness to let go of the 'English ideal' and their 'superstitious reverence for the idea of monarchy.'³³ In their 'pathetic snobbery', their futile dreams of knowing the Queen 'in person', these women turned their backs against the 'brutal Australian environment' and created their sad little shrines to royalty indoors.³⁴

³¹ *ibid.*

³² Crowley, p. 209. One of my interviewees, Rachel Grahame, saw the Queen in 1954 with her grandmother, 'a *real* royalist', who had expensively framed photographs of George VI and Elizabeth II, and their consorts, hanging in her sunroom. She also had portraits of Presidents Eisenhower and Roosevelt. Rachel isn't sure how the Democrat, Roosevelt, snuck into that line-up, but she remembers her father referring to the whole arrangement as 'the rogues gallery'.

³³ Harris, 'Monarchy and the Australian Character', in *Australia and the Monarchy*, G. Dutton (ed.), Sun Books, Melbourne, 1966, p. 112.

³⁴ Harris drew on male and female memoirs to 'prove' that men had few thoughts beyond economic survival. Their minds were narrow but properly uninterested in class distinction or the English ideal. 'Old Tom Patterson from the One-Tree Plain' knew that he was better off than the shearers he employed — but he only felt socially superior once 'someone got at him.' Harris, p. 111.

Leaving aside Harris's gender bias and vituperation, he may well be correct to argue that monarchism was a symptom of a fundamental identity crisis. The diaries of Harriet Douglas, who lived in Darwin in the eighteen-seventies, record that even amidst 'dreadful privations' her family killed a bullock for the Queen's birthday and for Christmas.³⁵ That they continued in such circumstances indicates both the universality and the significance of these commemorations. They do not speak to any necessary personal affection for the Queen, but I think that they do indicate the extent, in something of the manner Harris describes, to which she was a 'signifier' of Anglo-Australian culture. To celebrate her birthday in the wilderness of northern Australia was to celebrate survival and conquest.

These fragmentary representation of domestic popular royalism in the nineteenth-century are just about all that remains of that 'embarrassing profusion' deplored by Clarke.³⁶ Extracting further details would be like peeling the wallpaper off the dining-room walls, as it was entrenched to the point where it probably ceased to be particularly meaningful for many. John Ritchie, for example, has described the public celebration of royal birthdays as events that the citizens of Australian towns and suburbs simply attended, much as they did sporting fixtures, the circus and other entertainments.³⁷ But the everyday, as Harris recognised, takes a 'tenacious hold'. As Pierre Bourdieu has said, 'the most fundamental principles of construction and evaluation of the social world' are those which are successfully and most deeply embedded in the automatic, 'natural' universe of the everyday.³⁸

This is not to say that support for the Throne — or even quiet acquiescence — was universal at this time. There was always opposition from members of the Irish community, and the new republican movements of the eighteen-eighties and nineties had many members who were also socialists and therefore objected to the monarchy on both national and egalitarian grounds. Nor did one have to be either Irish or a committed republican to decry the Crown, as opposition was never as outlandish in the nineteenth century as it could be said to have become in the twentieth. As Beverley Kingston has remarked, referring specifically to the unsuccessful festivities

³⁵ Harriet Douglas's diary is quoted in Eve Pownall, *Australian Pioneer Women*, Viking O'Neill, Melbourne, 1988 (2nd. ed.), p. 228.

³⁶ Clarke, p. 114. My emphasis.

³⁷ John Ritchie, *Australia as once we were*, Heinemann, Melbourne, 1977, p. 184.

³⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1984, p. 466.

for the Golden Jubilee in Sydney in 1887, public ceremonies honouring the Crown in Australia 'could be relied upon for an outburst of anti-monarchist or anti-imperialist sentiment'.³⁹ But in line with the rising veneration for the Royal Family in Britain at the time, personal derision of its members became increasingly out of the question (a newspaper proprietor from Bendigo learned this the hard way when he was horsewhipped for referring to his Queen as 'an obese old woman fond of whisky')⁴⁰ and the more usual stance of radicals and republicans was to decry the unchecked monarchism of their fellows. The *Bulletin's* greatest scorn in 1887 went towards the 'fools who applaud', 'the Jubilee lunatics' and 'the loyal drivellers of Australia' who were 'worse than a cageful of chimpanzees'.⁴¹

The chimpanzees were actually a little subdued during the Jubilee itself, but they had already rattled the cage with some vigour during the first two royal tours to Australia in 1867—8 and 1881, and would madden the *Bulletin* even further through the third, in 1901. Although there were an increasing number of public events with royal overtones in the second half of the nineteenth century (such as imperial exhibitions and even otherwise indigenous ceremonies such as the opening of significant buildings)⁴² the rarity and the special nature of the tours provide the best opportunities to 'quantify' the extent of popular interest in royalty at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries.

.....

It is remarkable to find a community like ours, freed from aristocratic restraints and influence, ready to shout and sing with joy, and decorating our streets over the visit of a Prince.

The Age, 1867.⁴³

.....

³⁹ Kingston, p. 106. See also Trainor, pp. 67—70, for description and agreement that these festivities were scuttled by strong anti-imperial feeling.

⁴⁰ Geoffrey Serle, *The Rush to be Rich*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1963, p. 284.

⁴¹ *Bulletin*, 9 April 1887. This whipping took place in 1887.

⁴² This was observed by Matthew Allen, 'Spectaculars and Significations: the signs of the Royal in Australia', unpublished paper, 1992.

⁴³ Barry Mackinlay, *The First Royal Tour, 1867—68*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1970, p. 59.

The first Royal tour of 1867—68

Jan Morris has written of royal tours and parades in the colonies that it was a 'maxim of British imperial method that ostentatious effect was not only necessary to survival, but essential to domination too'.⁴⁴ Although actual military and economic power maintained the Imperial edifice, it had also been built upon effrontery and braggadocio. 'The manner of the Empire in its heyday had its beginning in those lonely early years, when to show hesitation was to court disaster, and the grander you were, the safer'.⁴⁵ For Morris, spectacle lent style to power, but Matthew Allen, through his study of the Royal Tour of 1901, has attributed to it even greater force within Empire. In his formulation royal events were part of the system of signs through which the imperial relationship was actually articulated. For Allen, after Saussure, the British Empire existed only as it was constructed through its signifiers. In other words, imperial spectacle was no mere portrayal of a continuing phenomenon, but a strategic means through which the Empire was 'partly created'.⁴⁶

The modern era of Royal touring opened in 1860, when the Prince of Wales was despatched to the British Dominion of Canada and the United States of America. The next major visit was made to Australia over five months in 1867—8 by his younger brother, Prince Alfred, the Duke of Edinburgh. In *Royalty and Australia* Rex Ingamells described his presence as a blessing bestowed upon Australians by Britain, a reward for having put their rougher days behind them in order to embrace responsible and democratic government.⁴⁷

Although it is not possible to assess whether this was the meaning placed on the tour by the people who participated, similar sentiments were expressed in official speeches and newspaper reports. The congregations that gathered in every centre from Adelaide to Brisbane were enormous and greatly exceeded the expectations of organisers. One hundred thousand people welcomed the Prince to Ballarat, for instance, and the same number to a free public banquet by the Yarra River in Melbourne. There was only food enough for one-quarter of that number, and the day ended in mayhem, not

⁴⁴ Jan Morris, *The Spectacle of Empire*, Faber & Faber Ltd, London, 1982, p. 11.

⁴⁵ *ibid.* Morris is probably referring here to India — where the British population was minute in relation to the 'natives' — rather than Australia, but I think that her description is relevant.

⁴⁶ Allen, pp. 1-5.

⁴⁷ Ingamells, p. 79.

surprisingly, when disgruntled 'louts' threw food around the grounds and drained the wine-fountains with fire buckets.

These larrikins probably had other motives for attending (free refreshment and the excitement of a mob perhaps) and bring to mind Luke Trainor's reluctance to impute 'loyal motives' to the members of such crowds. Trainor's warning is by implication, as his actual example is of the large working-class attendance at the Golden Jubilee celebrations in London in 1887, which he thinks as much explained by a love of street-theatre. There is a useful caution here, but also a perverse refusal to concede that an obvious motivation might actually hold part of the answer.⁴⁸

The enthusiasm of Australian crowds during this first tour was nothing if not obvious. Communications between England and Australia were so slow at the time that the tour had been announced for four weeks and the Prince was on his way before anyone in Australia knew of his approach. The organisers never really caught up, and the motor for the tour was the immense desire of the people who kept clamouring for more and more occasions on which to view their visitor. Engagements were staggering in number and poorly coordinated, and almost all preparations blew out to glory. One contemporary commentator described Melbourne's efforts as 'almost Babylonian.'⁴⁹ This rather casual young Prince, whose own desires were to 'hunt and whore' his way around the country,

was subjected to public entertainments on an overwhelming scale, intensity and pomposity; his colonial hosts spared no cannon-volleying or kettle-drumming in their desperate eagerness to please and be praised for their patriotic reception of Queen Victoria's second son.⁵⁰

No wonder then that the whole thing descended to tragicomedy. A volunteer naval rating lost his hand loading a cannon for an official salute, a dance hall burnt down on the day of a scheduled function, and three small boys died during a fireworks display. A 'disgraceful scene of great disorder' took place in St Andrew's Cathedral in Sydney where the winners of Sunday School Alliance examinations were to be presented with Bibles. The local

⁴⁸ Trainor, p. 69.

⁴⁹ Mackinlay, p. 55.

⁵⁰ Ritchie, p. 127. The 'hunt and whore' remark was made by Clarke, p. 118.

elite took up all the seats in church, leaving four thousand disappointed urchins outside in a deluge. Their attempts to gain shelter led to an inadvertent but terrifying stampede.⁵¹

Sectarian violence flared several times over the five months. A Protestant hall in Melbourne was festooned for the tour with an illuminated depiction of William of Orange smiting the Catholic armies of King James, and provoked a brawl in which another boy died from gunshot wounds.⁵² There was also a scrimmage between Protestant and Catholic schoolchildren in Brisbane, during a visit to Queensland which was generally so disastrous that the Prince protested by refusing to dine with the Premier (who had made a blatant attempt to use the tour for his own political purposes). But the *piece de resistance* came right at the end of the tour, on 12 March 1868, when a gunman hit his famous target during a demonstration of boomerang throwing on Clontarf Beach in Sydney. Only the thickness of his coat and leather braces diverted the bullet away from the spine and the fallen prince was taken away to convalesce under the superior care of Nightingale nurses from London. He left for home and Mother as soon as decency allowed. A local poet, Judge Francis, bade him farewell thus:

He goes, pursued by blessing and regret,
To pour a true tale into trusting ears —
To clasp fond arms round a mother's neck
And sum all mem'ries of Australia's sons
In one brief record, 'Oh, they love us well!'⁵³

But 'regret' was far too tepid a word to convey the agony of feeling left behind. 'To say the whole affair created a sensation' said Philip Pike, 'would be an understatement. The news of the homicide attempt echoed and re-echoed around Australia'.⁵⁴ Six special editions of the *Sydney Gazette* were printed to record the 'petitions of loyalty and expressions of abject shame that poured in from all parts of New South Wales'.⁵⁵ Public services and rallies and the public subscription that built Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney were also used as outlets for mingled guilt and relief. But 'the image

⁵¹ Beverley Earnshaw, 'Rioting children on royal tour', *Sun* (Sydney), 7 August 1980, p. 32.

⁵² Philip Pike, *The Royal Presence in Australia 1867—1986*, Royalty Publishing, Adelaide, 1986, p. 3.

⁵³ Nigel Palethorpe, "The great Clontarf 'assassination'", colour magazine supplement, *Sunday Sun*, 11 January 1948, p. 7.

⁵⁴ Pike, p. 12.

⁵⁵ Palethorpe, p. 7.

of colonial Australia,' says historian Beverley Earnshaw, 'was tarnished for many decades in the eyes of an outraged British public'.⁵⁶

The would-be assassin was a deranged Irishman named Henry O'Farrell, who falsely claimed to have been acting with the imprimatur of the Fenians, the Irish-Catholic nationalist movement. The Government of New South Wales had him tried with haste and hung at Darlinghurst Gaol on 21 April, despite the fact that the Prince himself appeared to favour clemency and had suggested that the death sentence should be referred to the government in Britain, where attempted murder was no longer a capital offence.⁵⁷ It also used the opportunity provided by the public outrage to strengthen existing legislation governing treason and felony so that it became a punishable offence to use language disrespectful of the Queen, or to refuse to take part in a loyal toast.⁵⁸

The Roman Catholic community was quick to distance itself from O'Farrell. Its leading members were prominent in public meetings and other expressions of outrage, probably for reasons that were both genuine and pragmatic. But their actions were not sufficient to avert a wave of anti-Fenian hysteria, despite the fact that no conspiracy existed nor was ever proved. There could have been no more potent proof, as Keith Amos has put it, of 'the long-held ultra-loyalist fears and suspicions that radical Irish nationalism constituted the most dangerous subversive influence in Australia', nothing more outrageous than an attempt on the life of a member of the Royal Family who had been entrusted to colonial care.⁵⁹

By 1954, when nobody seemed to fear that such a terrible act might be repeated, the shame of 1868 had faded almost into humour, as a rollicking incident from less civilised times. But I think that many of the underlying elements in the reception of royalty had actually endured through the decades following this first encounter, although they had undoubtedly become muted. John Ritchie's summation of this first Royal tour included the observation that

⁵⁶ Earnshaw, p. 12.

⁵⁷ Keith Amos, *The Fenians in Australia*, New South Wales University Press, Sydney, 1988, p. 71.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 68.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p. 77. Amos devoted a chapter of *The Fenians in Australia* to the assassination attempt because it laid bare the 'racial, religious and nationalist tensions deeply embedded in colonial society' (p. 76).

beneath the Australian's desire to impress there lay feelings of inferiority and insecurity, beneath the pageantry there lurked coarseness, beneath a show of loyalty skulked the Irish grievance.⁶⁰

These three elements, either in truth or in fear, were certainly present throughout subsequent royal tours. Even during the nineteen-fifties, sectarianism remained a site of possible disruption, while many Australians were still vulnerable to the censure of the English press over the unseemly exuberance of their welcome to the Queen.

During the preparation period for 1954, the editors of the women's magazine the *New Idea* asked readers to contribute personal stories about previous Royal Tours, 'some sidelight of the Tour that has been noticed only by *you*.' They were 'rather surprised' to be sent a letter about 1867 from a lady of ninety-six. Perhaps they hadn't reckoned on a woman so elderly remaining an active reader of the magazine, as it shouldn't have been strange that an event so famous in its day would linger in the mind of an eyewitness. This reader, Rebecca, had been a Bendigo schoolgirl in a white dress when she saw the Duke. She remembered the assassination attempt in Sydney through a personal association, because O'Farrell had been hung on her birthday. She could also recall the fireworks tragedy (although she thought that there had only been one death), and a story that had circulated at the time:

After the Duke went down a mine he went home to the mine manager's home to wash. It was a common story that the mine manager scrutinised the comb and hairbrush in the hope of finding some hairs to keep as souvenirs.⁶¹

Another reader of the *New Idea* recalled that her father had planted a tree on the beach at Clontarf to mark the spot where the Prince was wounded, and that her husband had served with the special guard for the tour of 1901.

⁶⁰ Ritchie, p. 128.

⁶¹ *New Idea*, 24 February 1954, p. 17. This tale might have originated as a joke, told against an over-enthusiastic public official, which may not have been apparent to a child. There is a long tradition of such stories. Valerie Lawson (*Connie Sweetheart*, Heinemann, Sydney, 1990, pp. 194–5) claims that patrons of the Hotel Gollan in Lismore were able to take home sheets of unused toilet paper from the lavatory destined for the Queen in 1954.

She also had her own memories of the second tour, thirteen years later, when she had stood on a fence in Toorak Road, waving a billy of milk toward two 'much amused' young princelings and thus felt herself to 'have links with the first three Royal visits'.⁶²

1881

Those boys she saw were the Princes Albert and George, adolescent sons of the Prince of Wales, who were here for three months between May and August in 1881.⁶³ They were actually training as midshipmen with the Royal Navy, but their journey somehow turned into a tour after their arrival on the *Bacchante* in Perth. They travelled slowly across country from Western Australia but were so fazed by the size and ebullience of the crowds and the length of the makeshift itineraries that most activities planned for the east coast had to be curtailed. The great disappointment felt by many Sydneysiders was faithfully reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.⁶⁴

The only other serious complaint to emerge was that the public were everywhere separated from the visitors by a solid phalanx of mayors and other local dignitaries, who were abused by the *Australasian Sketcher* as the 'accidental somebodies of the hour'. The *Sketcher* maintained that the young Princes' real interest was with the 'unprivileged many' whom they were being prevented from meeting.⁶⁵ This complaint and the accompanying belief in a thwarted relationship between crown and commoner was repeated during all Royal visits prior to the nineteen-seventies.

1901

Prince George returned for the third Royal visit in 1901, in the company of his wife. The Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York — later George V and Queen Mary — left England just after the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, for a lengthy voyage around the Empire. The major reason for their visit to Australia from May to July was the inauguration of the first Federal

⁶² *New Idea*, 24 February 1954, p. 17.

⁶³ The younger of these Princes was later to succeed his father as George V, becoming the heir after the death of the elder, Albert, in 1892. Prince Albert, better known as the Duke of Clarence, was suspected at one time of being Jack-the-Ripper. Dorothy Thompson (p. 127) has described him as 'pathetic and degenerate', yet Philip Pike (p. 13) reports a contemporary opinion of his speech-making in Australia as 'capable and modest'.

⁶⁴ Pike, p. 17.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p. 15.

Parliament in Melbourne, but they also travelled to each of the other capital cities, on a tour where stifling officialdom and ceremonial overkill (there were several hundred 'addresses of welcome') contrasted with the tumult on the streets.⁶⁶ The response of the crowds, which involved a consistently high proportion of the population in each centre, was reported to have ranged between enthusiasm and ecstasy. Philip Pike has provided an extraordinary account of the tour's finale, a day of collective pathos on the foreshores of Fremantle which came to a close with 'hundreds of thousands of people in highly emotional states' breaking down in tears as the Royal boat pulled away to the strains of 'God Save the King', 'Auld Lang Syne', 'Rule Britannia' and, finally, 'Home Sweet Home'.⁶⁷

This was a very imperially-minded tour, and only a small minority of events had a deliberately colonial flavour. These included a bush picnic and a stockman's exhibition, sandwiched between endless municipal receptions. The decorations erected on the streets of every city had mostly Anglo-Saxon and Imperial themes, although a lengthy Chinese dragon made an obeisance to the visitors in Perth.⁶⁸ The only reference to Aboriginal involvement I have found is in Pike's description of an archway built in Brisbane which featured naked adults and children standing high above the street, daubed in ochre and holding spears and boomerangs.⁶⁹ Commemorative programs and souvenirs produced for the event united English and Australian symbols and decorative devices — one very beautiful postcard, for example, depicted the Duke and Duchess on a pedestal supported by the lion, the emu and the kangaroo.

Generalised descriptions do not allow for nuanced readings of the crowd reaction, and the chance to gather oral testimony has been lost. But in 1954, the *West Australian* published an article about the 1901 tour which relied on the accounts of two spectators. Both stories, one based on the reminiscences of an eighty year-old woman and the other taken from a personal letter written in 1901 by the Deputy Director of the Perth Royal Mint, show that the boundaries of loyal behaviour and thought may have been clearly marked but were not overly repressive. Mrs Vaughan and Mr

⁶⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, Royal Tour supplement, 31 January 1954, p. 15. The number of speeches was recorded by Richard Garrett, (*Royal Travel*, Blandford Press, Dorset, 1982, p. 198) who commented that the stamina of the Duke and Duchess must have been considerable.

⁶⁷ Pike, p. 30.

⁶⁸ *West Australian*, 27 February 1954, unpaginated clipping, June Leonard scrapbook.

⁶⁹ Pike, p. 27.

Allum attended both public parades and gatherings by invitation and Mr Allum met the Royal Couple on several occasions. His letter, reprinted at length, is cool in tone ('they were kind enough to gratify our loyal vanities by shaking hands with everyone') but warm with detail, as he followed them everywhere, even going so far as to talk his way on to a launch which followed the Royal boat out to sea.⁷⁰ He observed the glory and the muddles, but the latter did not appear to diminish the former in his eyes.

Mrs Vaughan was also able, in her memory at least, to reconcile a moderate range of responses to the visit. She admired the Duchess excessively. She had 'the most glorious golden hair and the bluest eyes I have ever seen'. Yet she was also amused by the sight of Her Royal Highness's brother, Prince Alexander of Teck, riding a horse that was little bigger than a pony. The reception at Government House was a 'most brilliant affair' but the thing that lingered in her memory was the rebuke to a fellow guest.

One woman who had recently been presented at Court was determined to show off her deep curtsey instead of the far less formal bob, but she was hastily interrupted by one of the aides, who quietly asked her not to keep the other guests waiting, so to our great delight she was hurried on.⁷¹

Although constructed more than fifty years apart, these two accounts make the same essential points about the conditions of participation in this event. Both Mrs Vaughan and Mr Allum distinguished between dignified and demeaning behaviour towards royalty, and also took equal pleasure in Australian 'informality' (within strict limits of course). This belief that there was a peculiarly Australian and therefore egalitarian tradition of welcoming royalty, and that it was, moreover, a breath of fresh air to the dignitaries concerned, has been yet another motif of tours to this country.

But this was nonsense to the staff of the *Bulletin*, who were driven to fury and despair in 1901 by open expressions of imperialist sensibility. As Jill Roe has suggested, the radicals of the eighteen-nineties regarded the monarchy as a risible anachronism whose use-by date was looming,⁷² so consider their distress when the long awaited day of Federation rolled around — surely the

⁷⁰ *West Australian*, 27 February 1954, unpaginated clipping, June Leonard scrapbook.

⁷¹ *ibid.*

⁷² Jill Roe, 'Miles, the monarchy and me', *Editions*, August 1993, p. 4.

dawning of an independent Australia — and the central ceremonial role was given to a 'small, accidental prince', whose presence distracted both the press and the people from the 'true' meaning of the event.

Among the circumstances which attended the union of a continent and the beginning of a nation there moved a thin, undersized man who has never done anything save be born ... and exist by breathing regularly ... and in the public eye, he was, apparently, about three-fourths of the pageant.⁷³

The contrast displayed between the *Bulletin* and the *Argus* on the import of the Royal presence illustrates the two extremes of contemporary opinion. Where the former raged against such a 'purposeless, unproductive existence' as the Duke's dropping 'casually into Australia's history', the editorial in the *Argus* described the Royal visit to Melbourne as a pageant more significant than 'any staged by Caesar or Alexander', because it demonstrated the peaceful, imperial genius of the British heritage. The success of Federation was testament to the strength of the Empire before it became a matter for distinct Australian pride, and so, as the bonds of Empire were represented in Royalty's actual travels between St James and the antipodes, the celebrations would have been meaningless without the presence of the Prince.⁷⁴

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In usually stolid Melbourne people fought, wept, threw kisses and trampled on each other to get close enough to touch him. Young girls kissed the Prince's photograph and stormed his railway car to pat the pillow on which he slept...

In Sydney the arrival of 'Prince Charming' caused something close to a riot and at times it seemed as if the hero-worshipping crowd would sweep him off his feet.

Daily Telegraph, 31 January 1954.⁷⁵

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⁷³ *Bulletin*, 18 May 1901, reproduced in *Australian Nationalism*, p. 120.

⁷⁴ *Argus*, 7 May 1901, reproduced in *Australian Nationalism*, p. 124.

⁷⁵ *Daily Telegraph*, Royal Tour supplement, 31 January 1954, p. 15.

1920

The most conspicuous of all the tours was that of Edward, Prince of Wales in 1920, as he was just reaching the height of his considerable personal appeal. From the moment of his landing in Melbourne in May, until the day of departure from Sydney in August —via 110 towns and cities in the 75 days between — he was the dominating presence in the country. In his first week in Victoria, his official itinerary included

balls, investitures, and an official levee, presentation of addresses of welcome, a Commonwealth official dinner, a naval review, a people's reception, dinner parties, a state government reception, a visit to the Royal Agricultural show, church services, a review of men of the RAN, a schoolchildren's demonstration, a visit to the Caulfield Military Hospital, a returned soldier's smoke night ... country tours, garden parties, a race meeting and a gala performance at Her Majesty's Theatre.⁷⁶

Little wonder it was a maxim with this generation of the Royal Family that one should 'never refuse an invitation to sit down or any opportunity to relieve oneself'.⁷⁷ Although the pace of touring was never quite as frantic again, this range of functions was very much the same as in 1954. By the nineteen-twenties, the format of royal ceremony had been truly codified.⁷⁸

This bachelor gay was a real heartthrob amongst young women (a bold party of girls in Bendigo gave him a pair of yellow silk pyjamas into which each had put one stitch) but he also attracted unprecedented enthusiasm from the general population, and was generally so pulled at and even mauled by his admirers that he had to take time out on medical advice. As with the tours of 1967 and 1954, the crowds in 1920 continually threatened to break the banks, to move beyond acceptable fervour into something wilder.

The newspapers gave this tour saturation coverage, and so his name and face were everywhere, even in advertisements for Abdulla cigarettes (a 'right royal smoke'), Clements pick-me-up (the 'Prince of Tonics') and

⁷⁶ Pike, p. 31.

⁷⁷ This maxim was attributed to Queen Mary. Nic Van Oudsthorpe, *The Royals: the inside story*, Century Publishing, Sydney, 1989, p. 27.

⁷⁸ Cannadine, pp. 143—54.

'Royal Welcome' biscuits.⁷⁹ He also appeared in a funny little fictional children's book, *Our Digger Prince with the Australian Kiddies*.⁸⁰ The 'Digger Prince' travelled to the 'Out Back' to attend a bush carnival, where he won the stockman's race. The children in this story especially wanted to meet him because of his role in World War I.

'My Daddy knows him,' said Billy Jones proudly. 'He was fighting in France when the Digger Prince was there.'

'I'm sure he knew MY Daddy, too,' piped Girlie Green, 'cos he went to the Big Fight, only he didn't come back to tell us.'⁸¹

In its juxtaposition of bush and war, the *Digger Prince* illustrated two particular features of this tour. The itinerary, more than in 1901, displayed the belief of the organisers that the essence of 'real' Australia was found in the bush,⁸² and the military alliance with the Empire was heavily emphasised as well. A 'digger prince' was very much at home in a nation busily building monuments to the Great War. He spent much of his time at service rallies and other functions, and concentrated on themes of victory, loyalty and praise for the Australian war effort in all of his speeches.⁸³

The political temperature in the years immediately after the war was running high. By 1920 the joy of victory had been painfully eroded by the discontent of returned soldiers, rampant inflation, rolling strikes, the bitter aftermath of the conscription referenda, and a long and vicious epidemic of the Spanish flu, which had killed twelve thousand people and forced most venues of public entertainment to close. The Royal visit was therefore the first occasion on which people could gather for public celebration, and as

⁷⁹ This last was the kind of commemorative merchandising that also flourished in 1954, but the first, at least, would have been far too racy for association with the Queen.

⁸⁰ *Our Digger Prince with the Australian Kiddies*, no author (although signature on illustrations is A. Gladys Holman), John L. Bennett, London, 1921.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, unpaginated.

⁸² Pike (p. 35) reports that the Prince spent time in Queensland mustering cattle, shearing sheep and riding in a bush race meeting (this was probably the inspiration for the *Digger Prince*), and whilst in Western Australia was taken to see a corroboree organised by Daisy Bates.

⁸³ By the middle of the 1920s almost every municipality and country town had built a memorial to its local war dead (see Ken Inglis, 'Memorials of the Great War', *Australian Cultural History*, 6, 1987, pp. 5–17). For descriptions of the Prince's attention to ex-servicemen see Kevin Fewster, 'Politics, Pageantry and Purpose: the 1920 tour of Australia by the Prince of Wales', *Journal of Labour History*, no 38, May 1980, pp. 62–3; and Pike, pp. 31–40.

Kevin Fewster (the lone academic to publish on the events of 1920) has speculated, they probably felt an extra fillip of enthusiasm for that reason.⁸⁴ The tour's promoters had certainly been hoping for something of that kind. The Governor-General, Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson, shared two burning concerns with many other conservatives of the day: that burgeoning Anzac sentiment might take an independent turn and away from the alliance with the Mother Country, and that the industrial situation might worsen into Bolshevism. It seemed imperative that a popular representative of the Empire come out to stop the rot. King George agreed with the urging of Munro Ferguson, but surpassed his expectations with the offer of his heir.⁸⁵ They were then exceeded again by the outcome, as the tour was regarded as a roaring success by all at the time — and later by Fewster, who concluded that it was decisive in helping to ensure that the future 'would be an Imperial one'.⁸⁶

However, the extent of the triumph could not have been safely predicted until the visit was actually underway. Of all tours prior to the nineteen-sixties, this one attracted the most organised opposition. Many branches of the Australian Labor Party voted to boycott festivities, as members believed the money would be better spent addressing the needs of the workers and the unemployed.⁸⁷ But the ALP was undone by two internal failings: the call from the rank-and-file went largely unheeded by elected representatives and officials, who were unable to resist the invitation to come and meet royalty in person (this Achilles heel aches still); and by the continuing support of the majority for the White Australia Policy. Royalty may have been the class enemy, but to many, an English Prince was still 'the embodiment of the spirit of the race, symbolic of a British Australia and through that a White Australia'.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Fewster, p. 66.

⁸⁵ Fewster (pp. 60—1) quotes from a letter sent by the King's private secretary Lord Stamfordham to Munro Ferguson, in which he explained: 'The psychological moment for these visits is as soon as possible after the return of the troops to the different Dominions'. The Prince had been to Canada in 1919.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p. 66.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 61—62.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p. 65. Fewster has based his opinion on contemporary arguments from editorials in Australian newspapers. The Prince of Wales' most notable success was with the 'Red Rag' government of Queensland, who decided after some hesitation that they rather would stand with the British than the Japanese and the South Pacific nations.

.....

'I remember being taken to see the Prince of Wales the day he landed in Sydney and I've never forgotten it ... I can still see him looking like a story-book prince, with his gold hair and his blue eyes, waving to the crowd with Billy Hughes beside him.'

*Woman waiting for the Queen to arrive in Sydney, 1954.*⁸⁹

.....

In 1954, when the Prince Charming of yesterday had become something of a blot on the landscape, the media referred seldom to his visit and officialdom not at all. The many comparisons drawn between tours were confined to 1867, 1901 and 1927. The Queen made mention of her family connection with Australia too, but not of her errant uncle.⁹⁰

But popular memory cannot be denied. Radio man Bruce Webber told me that the older journalists working on 1954 were particularly vocal in their regard for the Prince of Wales. His own mother too — well, he 'got on well with the Australian feminine gender' — remembered him very affectionately, though of course, she also had the 'fondest memories of the tour by the Duke and Duchess of York in 1927 when Parliament House was unveiled'.⁹¹

1927 & 1934

This tour of 1927 was a little shorter than those before it at a bare two months, but just as busy and immensely popular. The crowds appeared to be growing with the population, and the multitude which greeted the Duke and Duchess off the boat in Sydney Harbour was estimated at a million people.⁹² Prime Minister Stanley Bruce had requested a second visit from the Prince of Wales and was 'openly appalled', according to royal biographer Robert Lacey, to be offered his stammering younger brother.⁹³ But Bruce

⁸⁹ *Australian Women's Weekly*, 10 January 1954, p. 17.

⁹⁰ The Prince of Wales acceded to the throne in 1936 on the death of George V, but abdicated prior to his coronation in order to marry the twice-divorced Mrs Wallis Simpson. The unfolding scandal was covered in immense detail by the Australia media.

⁹¹ Bruce Webber, interview, June 1993.

⁹² Pike, p. 41.

⁹³ Robert Lacey, *Majesty*, Hutchinson, London, 1977, p. 47.

hadn't reckoned with the star quality of the young Duchess — later Queen Elizabeth and now the Queen Mother — who appeared to command all eyes and all hearts. She had left behind her baby daughter, the 'Empire's little Princess', but returned home with three tons of toys in the hold of the ship, most of which had been thrust at her by eager Australian hands.⁹⁴ The presence of the Duchess and the passage of the years shifted the emphasis away from the war front and towards the home, family and fashion.

The presence of royalty still had the capacity to divide the Labor Party. The visit to Sydney coincided with a branch conference and Edna Ryan remembers that much of the leadership 'scrambled' to get invitations to the Royal Ball at the Town Hall, which left her faction 'absolutely disgusted'.⁹⁵ Even so, and this story illustrates how difficult it was for individuals to escape the cult of royalty in those years, it was only seven years later that Edna's son Patrick performed for the Duke of Gloucester in the garb of a native bird:

Edna: The showground had all these marvellous displays with one hundred schools in it, and Pat was a parrot.

Margaret Ryan (Patrick's wife): He was a sulphur-crested cockatoo, wasn't he?

Edna: No, he was a galah.⁹⁶

Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester, younger son of George V, and future Governor-General of Australia (in 1945—7), made another lengthy, well-received excursion across the country in 1934, for the primary purpose of attending the Victorian centenary celebrations. The novelist Miles Franklin, who had recently returned to Australia after many years away, wrote to an American friend that it was a 'sad spectacle' to see 'how the crowd worships its bread and circuses':

One could blaspheme God without much notice being taken, but a word of criticism of a royal prince wd [sic] put one in an unpleasant light.

⁹⁴ Dermot Morrah, *Princess Elizabeth*, Odhams Press Ltd, London, 1947, p. 37. The Princess had also been given a score of live parrots.

⁹⁵ Edna Ryan, interview, 6 July 1990.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*

As Jill Roe puts it, 'she had discovered that it was bad manners to criticise royalty in Australia in the 1930s'.⁹⁷

Australia and royalty: before World War II

The 1934 tour proceeded peacefully and with few distinguishing features. My great-aunt, Nell Hannon, saw the Duke in Sydney, but by 1989 her memory was entirely occupied by the later vision of the Queen. Loch Townsend remembered that the visitor had 'had the great privilege of witnessing me doing flag drill on the Melbourne Cricket Ground', and I think it was also Loch who told me (in conversation rather than on tape) of a defiant fire inspector in Canberra who refused to give permission for the guest of honour to smoke inside the Albert Hall.⁹⁸ However the final entry in the *New Idea's* 'Royal Memories' competition commemorated a higher sense of reverence, that of a country lady from New South Wales whose brother-in-law was the local Shire President:

The president and his lady welcomed the Duke, and when Madam's sister heard of the hand-shaking, she rang Mrs President.

'Don't wash your hand, Grace, until I've shaken it', she begged.⁹⁹

This anecdote might well be apocryphal, and it was clearly intended to amuse, even in the climate of 1954 where people were making even more passionate gestures every day on the streets. I think that stories such as this were intended to regulate the behaviour of monarchists when it threatened to exceed the limits of middle-Australia. When his wife's relations fell to pieces during the Abdication Crisis in 1936 and sat around in tears for days on end, my exasperated though politically conservative grandfather made a vulgar attempt to restore sanity by calling out, 'the way you go on about them, you'd think they peed lavender water'.

Neither the Crown nor its presence in the constitution were the primary targets of such jokes and remarks. Very few people then could imagine a world in which the monarchy was not an institutionalised part of Australian life. But there were those who disliked the ways in which their

⁹⁷ Roe, p. 4. Stuart Macintyre (*The Oxford History of Australia*, vol. 4, 1901—1942, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1986, pp. 297—324) described the cultural and political climate of the 1930s as one of 'repressive conformity'.

⁹⁸ Loch Townsend, interview, 24 October 1991.

⁹⁹ *New Idea*, 24 February 1954, p. 17.

fellow citizens chose to express their support. These people fell into two camps, united by their distaste for the sight of their neighbours or their elected leaders bowing and scraping before the Throne. For some people these feelings were inspired by their politics, and for some by a more cultural egalitarianism. The latter group were especially unlikely to blame the Royal Family for any excesses: a proud Australian could admire the British Crown without necessarily embarrassing anybody, but a sycophant bought shame on everybody.

Memories of the royal presence in state and Protestant schools (and in some Catholic institutions as well) between the wars and through into the nineteen-seventies have, once again, been almost too commonplace to record. It was noteworthy to Amirah Inglis only because she was an outsider — she arrived here from Europe in the nineteen-thirties to discover that King George and Queen Mary looked down over the classroom, and that every Monday morning the school would assemble in the playground to cheerfully intone the words,

I love God and my country. I honour the flag. I salute
the King and cheerfully obey my parents, teachers and
the laws.¹⁰⁰

On that very pledge, which he also remembered word for word, Loch Townsend remarked, 'Now, there's a lovely lot of obedient people and that's why we went to the war'.¹⁰¹ Keith Dunstan remembered that his attitude to the monarchy as a child was 'always one of considerable awe and wonder' because of being taught to 'worship' and salute.¹⁰² While his main encounter with royalty, like Loch's, was 'official', June Lindsay got a very strong dose at home in the twenties. Her grandmother was so interested in the news from Buckingham Palace that she bought special illustrated picture books directly from England,

¹⁰⁰ Amirah Inglis, 'Every Monday morning we saluted the flag', in *Australian Childhood: an anthology*, G. Dow and J. Factor (eds), McPhee Gribble, Melbourne, 1991, p. 274.

¹⁰¹ Loch Townsend, interview, 24 October 1991.

¹⁰² Keith Dunstan, interviewed by Tim Bowden for the Social History Unit, 1986. For a historical account of school-based Empire celebration see Stewart Firth and Jeanette Hoorn, 'From Empire Day to Cracker Night', in *Australian Popular Culture*, P. Spearritt and D. Walker (eds), George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1979, pp. 17–38.

and of course it was all royalty, the whole thing was royalty, and we'd sit there and drool over these princesses and all the what have you.¹⁰³

Later on, June started listening to stories about the Royal Family, especially the little Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret, on the wireless — probably one very like the one on which the future historian of the ABC, Ken Inglis, heard the coronation of George VI re-broadcast on short wave from London, a 'Philips console which had a Magic Eye, a device like a green electronic marble to show when you were right on the station.'¹⁰⁴ Once comparable broadcasting services had been established throughout the Empire in the early nineteen-thirties, the British Broadcasting Corporation had been able to extend its charter and its reach through the development of programming that would keep both centre and periphery 'in touch with the infinite'.¹⁰⁵ Royalty was of course at the heart of Empire broadcasting — John Mackenzie, David Cannadine and David Chaney have each written about the symbiotic relationship between the BBC and the Crown in its early days— especially after the first Royal Christmas Day address was made by George V in 1932.¹⁰⁶ 'I speak now from my home and my heart to you all', he began. 'To men and women so cut off by the snows, the desert or the sea, that only voices out of the air could reach them'.¹⁰⁷ The Chairman of the ABC, Charles Lloyd Jones, informed his counterpart in London that it 'created a profound impression' in Australia.¹⁰⁸ Certainly, Gilbert Murray wrote some twenty years later that to hear the King's voice from London had 'seemed like a fairy story'.

¹⁰³ June Lindsay, interview, 1989.

¹⁰⁴ Ken Inglis, *This is the ABC: the Australian Broadcasting Commission 1932-1983*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne 1983, p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ The annual Empire Day program was called *News From Home*, and in 1934 it was made in Australia — 'an hour-long tour of characteristic ... homes and institutions.' Canada, South Africa, India and Ceylon had a turn in later years. The primary purpose of these broadcasts was to inform the British public of the far-flung wonders of their Empire; the second was to keep Britain in the minds of those unfortunate enough to live elsewhere; and last, they were intended to act as an adhesive *between* these outposts, where they were also broadcast. For a description of Empire Day broadcasting at the BBC, see John MacKenzie, 'In touch with the infinite', in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, J. MacKenzie (ed.), Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1986, pp. 165-191.

¹⁰⁶ MacKenzie, *ibid.*; Cannadine, p. 142; and David Chaney, 'A symbolic mirror of ourselves: civic ritual in mass society', in *Media, Culture and Society*, R. Collins, J. Curran, N. Garnham, P. Scannell, P. Schlesinger & C. Sparks (eds), Sage, London, 1986, pp. 258—63.

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Derrick Mercer (ed.), *Chronicle of the Royal Family*, Chronicle Communications, London, 1991, p. 511. This speech was written by Rudyard Kipling.

¹⁰⁸ Inglis, *This is the ABC*, p. 33.

I was told afterwards how some children in Sydney had listened with tears in their eyes, as I confess there had been in mine.¹⁰⁹

It was during this period between the wars that the old British Empire slowly gave way to the British Commonwealth of Nations through a lengthy series of administrative agreements negotiated between the Mother Country, her Dominions and her colonies.¹¹⁰ In Australia itself, there was a related, parallel process as imperial sentiment, which had been very strong in the early years of the century, was steadily replaced by a new nationalist consciousness. In making this argument, historians such as Ken Inglis, Stewart Firth and Jeanette Hoorn have looked especially to the evident decline in popular sympathy for Empire Leagues and Empire Days over the period. Inglis wrote in 1967 that 'a student of Empire Day could observe in microcosm the waning of Australian attachment to the Empire over the past sixty years'.¹¹¹ But in making this point he failed to observe the interesting fact that there was no corresponding diminution in feeling for the Royal Family, at least until the decade in which he was writing. Instead, it remained the case that the phenomenon of sentimental attachment to the individuals clustered around the Throne, established as we have seen in the second half of the nineteenth century, was only continuing to grow in inverse proportion to their influence in the sphere of conventional and nationalist politics. It was still to reach a giddy crescendo in the decade after the end of World War II.

¹⁰⁹ Murray, pp. 11-12.

¹¹⁰ For many years the terms 'Empire' and 'Commonwealth' were practically interchangeable in popular discourse. In the eyes of many, the Empire only came to a definitive halt in 1953 when Elizabeth II became the first monarch to be crowned 'Head of the Commonwealth' (her father had been crowned as 'Emperor' in 1937).

¹¹¹ Ken Inglis, 'Australia Day', *Historical Studies*, vol. 13 no. 49, October 1967, p. 20. The demise of Empire Day was described by Firth and Hoorn in 'From Empire Day to Cracker Night'. *op. cit.*

CHAPTER 2

*The most dearly loved people in
the world¹*

A family on the throne is an interesting idea. It brings the pride of sovereignty down to the level of petty life.

Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution*, 1867.²

There was natural affection for them. I mean people like my mother would have felt that — that at least they were decent.

Lyndsay Connors, 1989.

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the immense popularity of the Royal Family in Australia and in Britain in the years immediately prior to the Tour, and to illuminate the foundations on which it rested. In the years surrounding World War II, Australians saw the Empire's little princess grow up to become the Head of the Commonwealth. During the early nineteen-fifties, through the 'royal-book' publishing phenomena, she became a model of all that was exemplary in a woman and a monarch. To the crowds who greeted her in 1954, the Queen was achingly familiar from photographs, but maddeningly unknown in the flesh — the only visitor who could have aroused such passion.

¹ This quote was taken from an illustrated booklet prepared for the cancelled tour of Australia by the King, the Queen and Princess Margaret in 1949. *The House of Windsor*, anonymous, Raphael Tuck & Sons, London, 1949.

² Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution*, Fontana, Glasgow, 1965 (orig. 1867), p. 85.

The little princesses

Princess Elizabeth of York was born in April 1926, just days before the general strike of that year was finally called (one of her biographers wrote of this propinquity that 'royal births have a happy knack of coinciding with less agreeable events which are then put into a proper perspective').³ A large crowd soon gathered outside her parents' London home and she was held up for them to see within hours of her birth. Her official baby photos appeared in papers across the world, and she first made the cover of *Time* when only three. Interviewee June Lindsay, who is four years older than the Queen, remembers 'watching her from birth'.⁴

Her fame was further increased during the Abdication Crisis in 1936, when the pressing need arose to divert attention from the sex scandal about to break over the head of the new king. Journalists and photographers were invited into her home and provided with material for trivial but heart-warming stories about two happy little girls — Princess Margaret had been born in 1930 — surrounded by their loving family and pets. A longstanding 'gentleman's agreement' between the Throne, the government, the press barons and the BBC wobbled only a little during the crisis, and not at all thereafter. From the nineteen-twenties to the fifties newspaper photographs and newsreel footage were 'sympathetically edited', cartoons were restrained and *paparazzi* were unknown.⁵

The avid interest in the children certainly helped the monarchy pick up again in 1937 and to roll forward under George VI. His sober personality was felt to be particularly admirable after the shallow panache of his brother, and his reign was underscored by the public knowledge that he had not wanted the job but had selflessly decided to 'sacrifice personal considerations on the altar of the nation's need'.⁶ I have had this story repeated to me many times

³ Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd, *Her Majesty the Queen*, Antler, London, 1985, p. 11.

⁴ June Lindsay, interview, 1989.

⁵ For discussion of the relationship between government, palace and the media see Robert Lacey, *Majesty*, p. 74; Stuart Hall, 'Popular Culture and the State', in *Popular Culture and Social Relations*, T. Bennett, C. Mercer & J. Woollacott (eds), Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1986, pp. 41—9; David Chaney, 'A symbolic mirror of ourselves: civic ritual in mass society', in *Media, Culture and Society*, R. Collins, J. Curran, N. Garnham, P. Scannell, P. Schlesinger & C. Sparks (eds), Sage, London, 1986, pp. 249—58; and David Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: the British Monarchy and the "Invention of Tradition" c. 1820-1977', in *The Invention of Tradition*, E. Hobsbawn & T. Ranger (eds), Cambridge University Press, 1983 pp. 142—61.

⁶ *The House of Windsor*, op. cit.

in Australia in recent years, and always with admiration, even from people who cannot imagine why they would still care.

More than previously, the new Royal Family was successfully presented as quintessentially middle-class. The vast majority of portraits and photographs of the King and Queen with their daughters were domestic in setting and orientation, and complemented articles lauding the modest simplicity of their private lives. When the novelist Virginia Woolf wondered why it was that she wanted to see photographs of a 'child-princess feeding a bear with a bun', she realised that it was partly that the Royal Family held out the promise of domestic paradise. If people could not be happy in the Palace, then what hope was there for anyone?⁷ Judith Williamson expressed this another way many years later, observing that royalty in this era seemed uniquely able to symbolise both the extraordinary and the ordinary. They were special by virtue of position but not in themselves. The lives they actually led were pretty much like those in the rest of the landed gentry, but the lifestyle they represented to the people was middle-class.⁸

World War II

In the dark and faltering days at the beginning of war in 1939, the Crown suffered a temporary eclipse. The 'Mass Observation' organisation, which pioneered qualitative polling in Britain in the nineteen-thirties, reported that people felt kings and queens to be a 'bit silly' in wartime, and preferred to put their trust in politicians.⁹ But unlike other aristocrats who sought safety in America, the Windsors stayed home, and their continued presence soon became a powerful symbol of British civilian resistance. They were photographed visiting the victims of the Blitz, and their faces were on mugs with the inscription, 'The King is still here'. Later in the war, eighteen year-old Elizabeth became eligible for the draft and enlisted with the Auxiliary Territorial Service for training as a Mechanical Transport Driver. Pictures of a princess in overalls earnestly dismantling engines and changing wheels became part of British propaganda, and when she toured here as Queen a decade later, that year in uniform was still standing her in good stead with

⁷ Virginia Woolf, *Collected Essays*, vol. 4, Hogarth Press, London, 1988, pp. 212—15.

⁸ Judith Williamson, *Consuming Passions*, Marion Boyars, London, 1986, pp. 75—9.

⁹ Phillip Ziegler, *Crown and People*, Collins, London, 1974, pp. 69—76.

servicemen and women.¹⁰ Australian Unice Atwell (author of a book of reminiscence, *Growing Up in the 40s*) remembered watching newsreels featuring the King and Queen in conversation with people whose houses had been bombed:

I was very impressed with the way they had insisted on staying in London even though they could have gone somewhere safe.¹¹

Jill Roe records that even Miles Franklin was 'impressed by the way the King and Queen stuck to their job'.¹²

The monarchy emerged from World War II in better shape than ever. King George and his Queen became identified as a crucial component of the victory of a freedom-loving people over fascism. They also came to serve as a guarantee of certainty and continuity, just as their predecessors had in earlier times. The anonymous author of an Australian souvenir book, described the feeling thus in 1947:

Many things that were but lately cherished and held to be permanent and enduring, have crumbled or been swept away, but the Crown, the symbol of the unity of free peoples, remains as firmly established as ever it was. The deep affection that all British people feel for their Majesties is the stronger for being ingrained with faith that, under them, England and the Commonwealth will continue to be the hope and exemplar of the world.¹³

In this context, and again in new conditions as hostility between east and west deepened during the Cold War, its constitutional impotence and carefully cultivated neutrality further enhanced the potential of the monarchy to serve as a symbol of Western political freedom. It was free of the sometimes tainted processes of parliamentary democracy, and could therefore be sent heavenward into the highest ranks of the holy war against the Reds (the process of substituting communists for Nazis as the enemy had been subtly completed well before the accession of the Queen in 1952).

¹⁰ Louis Wulff deals thoroughly with the years in the ATS in the chapter 'Princess in Khaki', in *Queen of Tomorrow*, Sampson Low, Marston & Co, London, 1949, pp. 112—27.

¹¹ Unice Atwell, *Growing Up in the 40s*, Kangaroo Press, Sydney, 1983, p. 38.

¹² Jill Roe, 'Miles, the monarchy and me', *Editions*, August 1993, p. 5.

¹³ *Our Princess Weds: a souvenir of the Royal Romance*, S. Evelyn Thomas, London, 1947, p. 95.

The wedding of Princess Elizabeth to Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten in 1947 caused terrific excitement across the Western world. It was treated by the media as a sign of the world returning to normal. More than seven thousand congratulatory telegrams arrived at Buckingham Palace within hours of the official announcement of the engagement, and on the eve of the wedding, crowds larger than those for the victory celebrations in 1945 gathered in the street calling for the Princess to come out and wave. The BBC broadcast the marriage service around the world, in forty-two languages, to an estimated audience of two hundred million.¹⁴ The *Melbourne Age* reported that 'Australia's greatest radio audience of all time' tuned to the ceremony, which was described by the *Sydney Morning Herald* as one of 'the most moving broadcasts of a world event' ever heard in this country.¹⁵ Parliament adjourned early so that members and senators could catch the full service. It was a public event for some, who went out to listen in hotels or restaurants, and a private moment for others. June Lindsay told me that she sat up by herself all night, listening to the radio in the kitchen and crying her eyes out.¹⁶



In their pink quilted dressing-gowns, with rosebud pattern, the little girls would watch the Royal procession form to enter the throne room. We could hear the music from the band faint and far away ... 'Never mind, Margaret,' Lilibet said comfortingly, 'one day you and I will be down there sharing all the fun. And I shall have a perfectly *enormous* train, yards long.'

Marion Crawford, *The Little Princesses*.¹⁷



Royal-books

If popular monarchism was the 'ersatz religion' of the post-war era, as British television pundit Malcolm Muggeridge wrote in 1955, then its Bibles

¹⁴ Vivian Batchelor, *Her Most Gracious Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II*, vol. 1, Pitkins, London, 1953, p. 17.

¹⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 November 1947, pp. 1—4.

¹⁶ June Lindsay, interview, 1989.

¹⁷ Marion Crawford, *The Little Princesses*, Cassell & Co, London, 1950, p. 54.

were the 'royal-books'.¹⁸ Royal-books came in several categories (but can be grouped under the one term because of fundamental similarities), including biographies of individual royal subjects, some predominantly in pictures and others in words; 'Crawfie' books, the best-selling reminiscences of the Queen's former governess; and pictorial souvenir books and annuals released by speciality royal publishing houses, in which popular news photographs were recycled into a more permanent form (many royal-books advertised on the cover the number of photographs within as a selling point). They were usually written or compiled by journalists and they defined the language, the narratives and the values of an self-contained 'royal world'. Royal-books spearheaded the concentrated, repetitive presentation of an idealised Royal Family, and as such, they had a bearing on the character of the 1954 Tour, and the particular reception granted by Australians to the Queen. The images within their covers burned into the minds of their readers.

The men and women behind the articles and books about the Royal Family in the post-war period were confident that they wrote in a climate of unambiguous mass affection and support, and the existence of people who did not actively wish royalty well was not contemplated. This was an easy position to sustain at the time. One of the many sociologists fascinated by the Coronation in 1953, Sebastian Haffner, wrote that the monarchy appeared to enjoy an 'immeasurable prestige and grip on the national imagination'. It 'would be a poor psychologist who failed to notice the deeply, solemnly, helplessly serious core of feeling in the British monarchist revival'.¹⁹ It was only in 1955, after the Queen had returned from her tour of Australia and other Commonwealth countries, that criticism and examination of the Royal Family, which had not appeared in the British press for decades, suddenly re-emerged. Malcolm Muggeridge expressed the hope that the 'tedious adulation' of the previous decade might cause the monarchy to die of 'acute anaemia', while the angry young playwright John Osborne later described it as 'the gold filling in a mouth full of decay'.²⁰ Such remarks sparked a barrage of protest but they marked a change in the public

¹⁸ Malcolm Muggeridge, 'Royal Soap Opera', *The New Statesman and Nation*, 22 October 1955, p. 499. 'Royal-books' is a generic description of my own invention.

¹⁹ Sebastian Haffner, 'The Renaissance of Monarchy', in *Twentieth Century*, vol CLIII (January-June 1953), pp. 414—24.

²⁰ Muggeridge, p. 500. Malcolm Muggeridge was banned from appearing on the BBC after his article appeared. John Osborne's remarks were made on the television program *Encounter* in October 1957, and were quoted by Robert Lacey, *Majesty*, Hutchinson, London, 1977, p. 256.

climate nonetheless. It seems significant that I can't find any illustrated royal-books published after 1954. They flourished only in that brief time of one in, all in, as theirs was not a combative fantasy, but one dependent on the easy appearance of unanimity.

Pitkins Pictorial of London was the biggest specialty publisher of royal-books and had hundreds of titles available. *Princess Elizabeth's Wedding Day*, *Princess Margaret's Nineteenth Birthday Book*, *Their Royal Highnesses The Princess Elizabeth & The Duke of Edinburgh And Their Children, Volume 1*, *The First Golden Gift Book of Prince Charles & Princess Anne*, *The Story of Buckingham Palace and the Royal Household*, *The Royal Tour of Kenya*, *All the Queen's Horses* — little pictorial souvenir books such as these sold for 2/6- and hardback gift books from 7/6-. In their 1953 catalogue, Pitkins advised that five million of their books had already been sold around the world:

This Christmas many people will be sending Pitkins Royal Family Souvenirs as 'Gifts-and-Greetings Cards' combined ... inscribing their names and greetings inside the books. This happy thought may also appeal to you.

Certainly, it did appeal to Australians. These books were written and published in Britain, but they sold out here in their many, many thousands. Most of those I have either bought or riffled through (they are a standard feature of second-hand book shops) have been inscribed, and these inscriptions indicate that they were bought to be presented as gifts *within* families, and to women and girls (*To Mum, Love from Marge & Enid 1954*; *To dear Diane, Love from Uncle Kevin Xmas 1953*). Their content, concentrating on clothes, feminine behaviour and family, indicates an assumed female audience. Kathy Skelton describes them in her autobiographical account of childhood in the early nineteen-fifties as standard items in any haul:

For birthdays and Christmas we were given Royal Booklets. They were shiny with red and blue scrolls and ornate gold coaches on the covers and inside, perfect black-and-white photos ... we cut out pictures of the Queen and the Royal Family and pasted them on the brown paper covers of our exercise books and readers.²¹

²¹ Kathy Skelton, *R. G. Menzies, Miss Gymkhana and Me*, McPhee Gribble, Melbourne, 1990, p. 93.

Ann Curthoys remembers only 'endless books and magazines' and Cheryl O'Connor that her older sister Jocelyn used the pictures from her large collection of royal-books to construct a scrapbook for the Coronation in 1953.

There was no joking about it. We could tease her by taking pictures and things like that from her because she always got upset about that sort of thing ... she was obviously at that age, where you know, it was all terribly, terribly important. It was all pretty pictures of Her coronation and Her children.²²

Many of those pretty pictures were portrait shots. Those that were not were nonetheless formal and official, taken during a public appearance. They featured the Royal family doing something royal such as arriving to open Parliament, or reviewing the troops (whereas in the nineteen-nineties it is precisely the unbidden shot of a Royal person doing something dis-royal that is prized by editors). The other images were those which lingered in Kathy Skelton's mind's eye, the familiar, familial poses that were similar to those in every Australian photo album: the Queen on a rug with her young children, the Queen's wedding day, the Queen Mother with young Charles in his christening robe, the schoolgirl princesses in frilly dresses and silver shoes.²³ It is interesting that the list Skelton reels off is not in chronological order — the Queen's wedding, for example, recalled *before* her girlhood, which was over in any case before Kathy was born — which reflects no fault in her memory, but the fact that Elizabeth Windsor's life was forever presented in review. This gave it a strangely timeless and eternal quality.

There was also room on the market for 'serious' biographies, for which there is no other word than 'hagiographical'. The majority of these were about Princess (later Queen) Elizabeth and were the work of male authors.²⁴ There were differences in style and tone between the picture books and the biographies, as the latter were less concerned with the day to day activities of the Royal Family, and more interested in its history and constitutional role.

²² Cheryl O'Connor, interview, 1989.

²³ Skelton, p. 93.

²⁴ Examples include Louis Wulff's *Queen of To-morrow*, op. cit.; Godfrey Talbot, *The Young Queen*, Hutchinson, London, 1953; Dermot Morrah, *Princess Elizabeth*, Odhams Press, London, 1947; and Ian Coster, *The First Gentleman: His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh*, Pitkins, London, 1953.

Foremost among the non-pictorial biographies, yet hardly 'serious', were the famous 'Crawfie' books penned by Miss Marion Crawford, the devoted governess of the young princesses. Once out of service (she delayed her wedding for many years so as not to disrupt Princess Margaret's education), Crawford published first one and then several other books of cloying reminiscence (whose kitsch value have only grown with the years): *The Little Princesses* in 1950, followed by *Princess Margaret Rose, The Queen Mother, Happy and Glorious*, and *Our Queen Visits Australia and New Zealand* in 1954.²⁵ The cat came out of the bag on the princesses' jokes and games, their Christmas presents from Queen Mary, and all their little ways. This teensy peek into the nursery was an international publishing sensation, and the source of enormous sales for the magazines who bid for serial rights, including Australia's *Woman's Day and Home*. Crawford became a legend to the world at large, an inspiration to her fellow scribes, but, alas, a Judas to her former employers. Her fall from grace did not inhibit an increasingly tawdry career as the Royal commentator with the inside edge, although her books became more and more obviously reliant on outdated information.²⁶



It is to the Princess that the English-speaking world looks up as the ideal of young womanhood and motherhood.

*Sir William Gilliatt, President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, 1951.*²⁷



²⁵ Marion Crawford, *The Little Princesses*, op. cit.; *Princess Margaret Rose*, Cassell & Co., London, 1951; *The Queen Mother (Queen Mary)*, George Newnes Ltd, London, 1952; *Happy and Glorious*, George Newnes Ltd, London, 1953; and *Our Queen Visits Australia and New Zealand*, Dymocks, Sydney, 1954.

²⁶ Crawford took to writing her magazine pieces in advance but was caught out one year, when a strike disrupted the races at Ascot, and so the Queen's 'bearing and dignity' did not 'cause admiration among the spectators', contrary to what readers were told. 'Crawfie Comes a Cropper!' screamed the headlines (Peter Lewis, *The fifties: portrait of an age*, The Herbert Press, London, 1989). My mother had remembered this story with great enjoyment but couldn't recall what had happened to Crawford after that.

²⁷ These remarks were made upon the occasion of the Princess Elizabeth becoming an honorary fellow of the College and were reported in *The First Golden Gift Book of Prince Charles and Princess Anne*, Pitkins, London, 1951, p. 18.

The 'Queen of To-morrow'

The most basic function of royal-books was to tell and retell, through words and pictures, the life story of the woman who came to be Queen. In the hands of popular authors like Enid Blyton, her tale came even to transcend common teleology.²⁸ One of her first biographers, Godfrey Winn, introduced his subject by announcing his intention to show that the Princess Elizabeth had understood from early childhood that her destiny was apart, her future 'already dedicated ... somehow tinged with mysticism'.²⁹ While constitutionalist biographers disliked this version of events — so incorrect as there was no reason until the point of Abdication to suppose that Edward VIII would not marry and produce heirs of his own — Winn's was the more popular rendition of the story, and more typical of the genre. Had not Mabell, Countess of Airlie, remarked of the crowds around her nursery that they saw in this infant 'something of continuity and of hope in the future'?³⁰

After the war, when her father's health was seen to fail, the 'dark shadow of the future' intruded more and more into her life. If the King's rather ordinary personality had been glorified by the Crown, then imagine the romantic opportunities offered by a young and innocent girl to the mavens of royal-book world. Louis Wulff, M.V.O., cast the *Queen of Tomorrow* (1948) in a fine dramatic role, as 'heiress to the greatest inheritance and the heaviest responsibilities in the world'. The destiny of her people would rest on her shoulders, reliant on her continuing protection of the 'love of freedom' and 'hatred of oppression' that characterised the nations of the British Commonwealth.³¹ There was no suggestion, of course, that this task would prove beyond her — that a young woman ought not take up the baton — as this would have involved a repudiation of the very basis of hereditary monarchy. It was a great public truism that Britain had always done well when a woman wore the crown, as confirmed in this reassuring letter from a reader of the *Yorkshire Post*:

Probably few people mix more widely with all sorts and conditions of men and women than I do, and for the

²⁸ Enid Blyton, *The Story of Our Queen*, Frederick Muller Ltd, London, 1953.

²⁹ Godfrey Winn, *The Young Queen: her life story from childhood to Coronation*, Hutchinson, London, 1953, p. 3.

³⁰ Hugo Vickers, 'Twenty-five years a Queen', in *Burkes Guide to the British Monarchy*, Burkes Peerage Limited, London, 1977, p. 17.

³¹ Wulff, p. 9.

last ten years I have never once heard anybody say,
'What a pity it is that the King has not got a son.'³²

Female accession was not a issue in terms of the constitutional and symbolic functions of the Crown, but only because of its possible impact on contemporary ideals of womanhood and motherhood. Louis Wulff, who first wrote about the Princess when she was in her teens, foresaw the peculiar plight of a female monarch which would cause such angst in the following decade. She would be forever torn, he predicted, between the family for which every woman longed and 'the ultimate, dread responsibility' of the Throne.³³

Monarch and mother

After Prince Charles had been born, in 1948, and especially after the death of King George in 1952, royal-book authors went into overdrive in order to explain how the Queen would resolve this potential contradiction. First, they stressed the unique nature of her job, in order to play down any chance that she might be seen as a role model for women with more ordinary occupations (they did this, however, without ever clarifying what her mysterious 'royal duties' actually entailed.)³⁴ Second, they made a sleight-of-hand insistence that she prioritised family responsibilities to the greatest extent she could, a line that had to be cunningly negotiated because loyalty to the Crown required that her work performance be seen as exemplary. This caused them to posit contradictory scenarios about the domestic arrangements in the Palace, with each author placing Her Majesty in the nursery at a different time of day.³⁵ No-one suggested that Prince Philip was expected to fill the breach caused by his wife's public commitments. Royal-books presented three separate notions: parenthood (which involved long-

³² *Our Royal Guests*, Colourgravure, Melbourne, 1952 (a substantial hardcover publication prepared for the cancelled tour of the King, the Queen and Princess Margaret in 1952).

³³ Wulff, p. 5.

³⁴ Although of course, the Queen was 'at work' in almost every photograph. In the photographs in royal-books, the functions of royalty were seen to revolve around Parliamentary pageantry, church, horse racing, the armed services, the theatre, hosting foreign dignitaries and encouraging British industry.

³⁵ For example, Lisa Sheridan claimed that Charles and Anne were with their mother between 9.15 and 10.00 am daily, but Vivien Batchelor insisted that it was the time between 5.00 and 6.30 pm that she reserved for the nursery and that she had even changed the time of the traditional Tuesday evening audience with the Prime Minister in order to accommodate this. Godfrey Winn flatly contradicted Sheridan's story by claiming that the Queen was at her desk by 9.00 each morning, and said instead that she was usually with the children over lunch. The main point, obviously, is that she did her best. See Lisa Sheridan, *The Queen and Her Children*, John Murray, London, 1953, p. 4; Batchelor, p. 84; and Winn, p. 112.

term decisions on moral values, discipline and schooling), fatherhood (mostly to do with the former) and motherhood (doing the day-to-day work). These were sacred distinctions, and division was unblurred. No wonder then that people were always walking up to Crawfie and marvelling at the energy and industry of the Queen. 'They know the strain such onerous duties must impose upon a young mother'.³⁶

In the end, these potential contradictions didn't hold any of the royal books up for long. The Queen was certainly depicted with great confidence as a model mother. Although Prince Charles and Princess Anne (b. 1950) were rarely seen in public, they were well-known through the periodic release of photographs, and in royal-book land at least, they quickly became the 'unconscious patterns for thousands of children throughout the world'.³⁷ Authors loved incidents like in Nairobi in 1952, when Princess Elizabeth was greeted at the airport by a 'small native boy' who was called Prince Salim because he had been born on the same day as Prince Charles.³⁸

.....

I have a baby daughter whom I named Margaret Elizabeth when I read that you were to arrive in Melbourne on her first birthday.

*Mrs R. Lyne, entrant in the 'What would you say to the Queen?' competition, Woman's Day and Home.*³⁹

.....

The littlest Royals were born in the middle of the post-war baby boom. In this country, there were five hundred thousand marriages in the five years between 1946 and 1951, and one million babies born (the majority of couples had their first child within two years of the wedding day).⁴⁰ Many

³⁶ Crawford, *Happy and Glorious*, p. 83.

³⁷ Vivien Batchelor, *Their Royal Highnesses The Princess Elizabeth & The Duke of Edinburgh and Their Children*, vol. 1, Pitkins, London, 1952, p. 52.

³⁸ Batchelor, *Her Most Gracious Majesty*, p. 77.

³⁹ *Woman's Day and Home*, 15 February 1954, p. 27. Interviewee Cheryl O'Connor and her older sister were given the middle names 'Margaret' and 'Rose' respectively in honour of the Queen's sister. The *Advertiser* (16 January 1954, p. 2) reported that 102 of 750 baby girls born in Adelaide in the previous three months had been named 'Anne', making it the most popular name by far. A matron noted that it had been popular since the birth of Princess Anne in 1950.

⁴⁰ This marriage and birth rate information is taken from Kevin Blackburn, "'The Consumers' Ethic" of Australian Advertising agencies 1950-1965', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no 32,

Australian parents of that era used Charles and Anne to reckon the ages of their own children, with the result that many adults today also make an unconscious comparison. I noticed this when a caller to talkback radio in Canberra said that she was still interested in Charles because he had been born in the same week as her twins. She did also say, laughingly, that she'd always thought it was a 'bit rude' that she'd had two babies without any fuss but the Queen had 'guns going off left right and centre' over her single effort.⁴¹ A friend of mine from Sydney, who is also about the same age as Prince Charles, remembers his mother making very similar remarks about her pregnancy:

My memory of that was that she was saying how she'd felt a bit of a nobody because there'd been such massive publicity at the impending birth of a prince or princess, and when I was born she felt overshadowed by that.⁴²

It probably didn't end there. The Princess was frequently recommended to other young women as a model mother. Some of her techniques were probably redundant in the Australian suburbs (royal-book authors warmly commended the way that Charles and Anne were encouraged to remain unconscious of their greatness) and the nannies were disregarded wherever possible. The words 'normal, steady, simple and routine', with the implication of middle-class normality, were used *ad nauseam* to describe Royal child care. Princess Elizabeth dressed her children in sensible shoes and clothes, and 'like any other practical mother' she saw that baby clothes with wear left in them were put away to be kept for future use. 'There is less extravagance and waste in the Clarence House household than in many other far humbler homes' as Vivien Batchelor made plain to any young readers who might otherwise have been dissatisfied with their own circumstances.⁴³

Firm moral foundations

The general austerity of the young couple's personal lifestyle also won approval from the royal-books. There was clearly a certain level of public criticism, or discussion at least, about the money they received annually

March 1992, p. 62. The 'two year' statistic was provided by Geoffrey Bolton, *The Oxford History of Australia*, vol. 5, 1942—1980, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1990, pp. 120—21.

⁴¹ Heather, caller to ABC radio talkback, Canberra, 1990.

⁴² John Fisher, interview, 21 August 1993.

⁴³ Batchelor, *Their Royal Highnesses*, p. 42.

from the Parliament, because some writers chose to raise the question in order to dismiss it. One author impressed on his readers that the newly-married Princess imposed an immediate rule upon her household, 'against extravagance, and in favour of thrift and well-balanced accounts'.⁴⁴ Her biographers, who must have had middle-class or even lower middle-class readers in mind, always referred to careful habits and dislike of ostentation. The Queen's home economies were imbued with additional moral virtue precisely because she didn't *need* to practice them, thereby proving that her wealth did not inhibit her capacity to provide an example to ordinary people. This was particularly important in the post-war period, as the children of the Depression first strove towards moderate bourgeois comfort in homes of their own and the enforced austerity of their quest became imbued with a general moral significance.

Some tension between glamour and austerity spilled over into the presentation of the Princess/Queen's work. On the one hand, royal-book writers loved to see her at her glamorous best. They described her furs and jewels with pride. On the other hand, the hard work and responsibility involved made them hardly worth having. For her twenty-first birthday in 1947, wrote Godfrey Winn, 'certainly she was showered with gifts of jewels', including a ruby and diamond necklace from her parents and a casket of eighty-seven diamonds from the Union of South Africa where she was touring. But while 'other girls would be free to enjoy themselves, as they wished on such a day, they could belong to themselves, with the key to the door in their hands', how different it was for the Princess. As the ordinary people enjoyed the holiday that her birthday afforded, she had to stand in an open car reviewing a mammoth parade and then rehearse tomorrow's broadcast to the Empire. 'How she must have longed to slip away...'⁴⁵ (Perhaps the constant reiteration of this message was successful. When the cultural studies pioneer Richard Hoggart questioned working-class people in the mid-fifties he found that they would at first speak enviously about Royalty's wealth, but would inevitably come round to saying that they wouldn't do that job for any money.)⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Wulff, p. 139.

⁴⁵ Winn, pp. 58–60.

⁴⁶ Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, Pelican, Harmondsworth, 1958, pp. 86–7. Michael Billig notes the continuance of this sentiment in Britain in the late eighties in *Talking of the Royal Family*, pp. 118–28.

The other defining component of femininity in the post-war era was appearance, and it was here that the royal-books really came into their own. Some did not comment on their subject's charms (it might have seemed too personal, too disrespectful), but most did, commending them to the skies. They said she was entrancing, and a picture of earthly charm (although also a model of majestic humanity and ineffable grace). Aesthetic standards are contextual, and the Queen's elevation into a select pantheon of beauties, which seems mysterious today, is best explained with reference to the conjunction of the monarchy and the 'good woman' of those times in her one body. Monarchism demanded admiration of the monarch's person, and it's my impression that the closer the Queen moved to the throne, the more beautiful she was said to become. Certainly she was never lovelier than during her Coronation and subsequent tour of the Commonwealth, when Australians were told by the *Sydney Morning Herald* that she was 'every woman's dream of beauty'.⁴⁷

.....

Jane So there weren't make-up tips?

Lyndsay No, not really. I mean there were her beauty hints but they were of the wholesome kind like drinking barley water, or taking walks in the Scottish Highlands, things like that.

Lyndsay Connors, 1989.⁴⁸

.....

Her Majesty's particular loveliness rested on firm moral foundations. She didn't smoke or drink and was seen to eat sparingly. Her eschewal of cosmetics was attributed to her general distaste for artifice. This much had been understood by young Kathy Skelton in the Victorian seaside town of Sorrento as she pondered her first choice of brassière and realised that the world was divided into two kinds of women — those who excited modest admiration in Ice White or Tea Rose lingerie, and those who 'took the

⁴⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 February 1954, p. 1. The words *glittering*, *entrancing*, *beautiful* and *radiant* were staple royal-book fare.

⁴⁸ Lyndsay Connors, interview, 1989.

plunge' with Hollywood Maxwell.⁴⁹ Marilyn Monroe versus Deborah Kerr, or Princess Elizabeth — young ladies, the choice was yours! The fifties was the decade when fashion really diversified, and many rejected Queen-style (such as American Freda Garmaise, who felt that the Princess grew not so much into as woman as an edifice, complete with 'that imperial monobosom so necessary for the display of the crown jewels')⁵⁰ but not so the royal-books, who ignored the shifting sands of style and clung to a world where the difference between a princess- and an empire-line still mattered.

In many ways, her political function and particularly her own 'politics' was the thing seen to matter least about her in the female world of the royal-book. This was encouraged by the stage to which constitutional monarchy had evolved by that time. The ideal situation, as explained by constitutionalist biographer Marion Laird, in 1958, was that:

the sovereign must stand for everyone. She must be above and outside of all partisan activity; she must be as impartial to the views of different sections of her community as it is possible for a human being to be.⁵¹

The authors of royal-books translated the same interpretation of the Queen's role into language that was less explicit. Her impartiality was self-evident. She was attributed with attitudes that indicated a broad and unexceptionable benevolence — *sympathy for the unfortunate; no cause is nearer her heart than the cause of youth; cruelty to children is an evil which she abhors* — but never with any opinions as to the means by which the lot of the meek might be improved. This same combination prevailed in her own public statements as Princess and as Queen, selections from which were gathered into the one volume, *Dedications*, in 1953. Many of these had already appeared over and over in the press. Her statements on modes of personal behaviour were straightforward, as would be expected from the Head of the Church of England, and marked her as an assertive traditionalist. On receiving the freedom of the city of Cardiff in May 1948, she said,

⁴⁹ Skelton, p. 32.

⁵⁰ Freda Garmaise, 'The Royal Monobosom', *Ms* magazine, November 1986, p. 38.

⁵¹ Marion Laird, *How the Queen Reigns*, Pan, London, 1961, p. 23.

It has become increasingly unfashionable to believe in fixed standards of morality, even if those standards have stood the test of two thousand years.⁵²

Her opinions on the public responsibilities of Commonwealth citizens appear today to be even more vague and bland.

There is much to do. And we, the young people of the Empire, must do it. ⁵³

Such speeches were carefully pitched above the level of the politician, up into the realm where the nation was unified through universal values. The Queen rarely referred to the factors that might divide her audience in any but the broadest terms. She never referred to race or class, and although she drew attention to the fact that there were richer and poorer nations within the Commonwealth, she was sanguine that economic development would soon ameliorate distress. Whether black or white, her subjects were equal partners in the enterprise she most particularly espoused: the building of 'a world where all men should have freedom of belief and thought'.⁵⁴

.....

I pray that God will help me to discharge worthily this heavy task that has been laid upon me so early in my life.

*From the Queen's Declaration of Accession, February 1952.*⁵⁵

.....

The Coronation — in Britain

Her Most Excellent Majesty Elizabeth by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and of Her other Realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth and Defender of the

⁵² Joan Werner Laurie (ed.), *Dedication: a selection from the public speeches of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II*, William Heinemann, London, 1953, p. 14.

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 8. From a speech made at the Empire Day Festival, Albert Hall, May 1946.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 3. To the Scottish Girls Training Corps, October 1945. This statement is illustrated by a photograph of a naked African native holding a child.

⁵⁵ Reproduced in Crawford, *Happy and Glorious*, p. 71.

Faith was crowned by the Archbishop of Canterbury on Tuesday 2 June 1953.⁵⁶ This enthronement was marked by an unprecedented outbreak of 'stephanomania' or 'coronation frenzy' among the six hundred and fifty million members of the Commonwealth, and the world beyond.⁵⁷ Even Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd, ultra-loyal royal biographer, has described it as a climate of 'almost embarrassingly excessive euphoria'.⁵⁸

The Communist Party in India showed rare immunity by demanding that Prime Minister Nehru and his daughter Indira stay away from the 'medieval mummery'.⁵⁹ But they were unsuccessful, and probably not even supported in Moscow, where Premier Malenkov and Foreign Minister Molotov were guests of the British Embassy at a Coronation Ball. In Hong Kong, the Communist banks switched on 'electric festooning' for the event, and flew the Union Jack and the Red flag in tandem. From the 'free world' the Emperor of Japan cabled his congratulations to the Queen, and even the French newspapers were unusually complimentary of the British. Individuals were moved to grand gestures, like Gerald Scholz, a Viennese dentist who attempted to get to London by paddling a canoe across the

⁵⁶ 'When Queen Elizabeth II came to the throne in February 1952, she became Queen of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, Queen of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Union of South Africa, Pakistan and Ceylon. India had become a republic during her father's reign, but acknowledged her as Head of the Commonwealth. Southern Rhodesia, a self-governing colony, many dependent territories, some colonies, some protectorates, some protected states, some in United Kingdom trusteeship, all looked to the Queen as their Head. The principal among them were Aden; the Bahama Islands; Barbados; Bermuda; British Guiana; British Honduras; Brunei; Cyprus; the Falkland Islands and its dependencies South Georgia, South Orkney, South Sandwich, South Shetland and Graham Land; Fiji; Gambia; Gibraltar; the Gold Coast, including the Trust territory of Togoland; Hong Kong; Jamaica, with its dependencies the Cayman Islands and the Turks and Caicos Islands; Kenya; the Leeward Islands, including Antigua, Montserrat, St Christopher-Nevis and Anguilla, and the Virgin Islands with their dependencies; the Federation of Malaya, consisting of the nine Malay states of Johore, Pahang, Negri Sembilan, Selangor, Perak, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, Trengganu and the two British settlements of Penang and Malacca; Malta; Mauritius; Nigeria, including the Cameroons, under UK trusteeship; North Borneo; Northern Rhodesia; Nyasaland; St Helena and its dependencies, including Ascension Island and Tristan da Cunha; Sarawak; the Seychelles Islands; Sierra Leone; Singapore and its dependencies of Christmas Island and the Cocos Keeling Islands; Somaliland protectorate; Tanganyika; Trinidad and Tobago; Uganda; the Western Pacific islands, consisting of the Gilbert and Ellis Islands colony, the British Solomons protectorate, the protected state of Tonga, the New Hebrides condominium and Pitcairn Island; the Windward Islands, comprising the colonies of Granada, Dominica, St Lucia and St Vincent, with their dependencies; and the protectorate of Zanzibar'. Laird, pp. 300—1.

⁵⁷ This term was credited to Dr. J. E. Schmidt of Baltimore in the United States, and was derived from the Greek word *stephanosis*, meaning 'coronation'. A milder complaint, *stephanophilia*, indicated a fondness for coronation procedures. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 June 1953, p. 10.

⁵⁸ Montgomery-Massingberd, p. 58.

⁵⁹ Rex Chiplin, 'The "Democratic" Monarchy', *Communist Review*, June 1953, p. 179.

English Channel. He was rescued by fishermen from high seas, and sent home.⁶⁰

Republican America was especially hit by royal fever. A.A.P reported from New York on 31 May that media hype had been such that 'it could almost be believed that Queen Elizabeth was going to be crowned Queen of the United States in London on Tuesday'.⁶¹ Many Americans went to London for the big day — an unnecessary trip according to *LIFE* magazine, which promised with 'typical Yank modesty' that its special pictorial issue would deliver 'a panoramic view that will surpass that of the Queen herself'.⁶² When the commemorative film, *A Queen is Crowned*, was released in the United States later in the year it broke house records on the eastern seaboard.⁶³

Earlier in 1953, *Time* magazine had correctly anticipated the excitement by naming the young Queen as the personality who best expressed the world's new sense of hope for the future. *Time* interpreted fascination with the coronation as evidence of a general resurgence of public belief in the ancient power of monarchs 'to represent, express and effect the aspirations of the collective sub-conscious'.⁶⁴ But the *Daily Mirror*, also of New York, wasn't so sure that one could name a single cause:

Why the world, and particularly America, is pop-eyed with interest in the Coronation we can't explain. Maybe its because of our ancient ties with Britain, or because of our secret admiration for regal panoply, or because the British are so brave in adversity.⁶⁵

The *New York Times* ascribed immense profundity to the act of crowning, as a symbol of the civilisation that would protect the world from the barbarians of 'another dark age'.⁶⁶ This is one of the most explicit statements on the meaning of the Coronation in the post-war period, but the sentiment was widely echoed. The contemporary sense of the significance of this event

⁶⁰ All information from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 June 1953.

⁶¹ *Brisbane Telegraph*, 1 June 1953, p. 2.

⁶² Chiplin, p. 179.

⁶³ The American poet Sylvia Plath took advantage of her mother's attendance at this movie to make her first attempt at suicide (Anne Stephen, *Bitter Fame*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1989, p. 45).

⁶⁴ *Time*, 1953, quoted in Lacey, p. 186.

⁶⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 June 1953, p. 10.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

has been forgotten or overlooked in the now usual presentation as a piece of anachronistic pageantry.

Journalists around the world liked the sound of the slogan, the 'New Elizabethan Age'. It is impossible in the months before the big day that any comparison between Elizabeth Tudor and the new 'Gloriana' could have been overlooked. The Queen herself was not so impressed with these abundant analogies. In a message released just prior to her departure on tour in November, she remarked that

some people have expressed the hope that my reign may mark a new Elizabethan Age. Frankly, I do not myself feel at all like my great Tudor forebear, who was blessed with neither husband nor children, who ruled as a despot and was never able to leave her native shores.⁶⁷

On 2 June 1953, London was once again the centre of the world. Even the news that Edmund Hillary (and Tensing) had climbed Mt Everest — an event which has since reclaimed autonomy — was entirely absorbed into the mood, read as a happy portent for a reinvigorated British Commonwealth. Hotels and boarding houses were full, and it was said that Americans were in exclusive occupation of the rooms overlooking the Coronation parade. This would not have been a problem for the official parliamentary delegation from Australia, as they had seats in Westminster Abbey, but it might have caused annoyance to those many other members of the Commonwealth who paid their own way over. These included Peter Spearritt's grandmother, who attended a garden party, and bought so many souvenirs that she had to ship them home in two extra suitcases.⁶⁸ The last ship to arrive in London before the Coronation was the *Strathcaird*, bringing a thousand passengers from Australia, New Zealand and the Far East. Among them were nearly two hundred members of an Australian Catholic pilgrimage who had bought seats in the stands lining the route of the procession, which they would use before setting off for Lourdes and Rome.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ 'The Queen's Message', *ABC Weekly*, 30 January 1954, p. 7.

⁶⁸ Peter Spearritt, 'Royal Progress: The Queen and her Australian subjects', *Australian Cultural History*, no 5, 1986, p. 78.

⁶⁹ *Brisbane Telegraph*, 1 June 1953, p. 6.

Seats in the stands were very expensive. The aunt of a friend of mine paid £20 for hers, although she was only earning £7 a week.⁷⁰ Last minute tickets went for up to £50 on the black market, while £3 500 bought a balcony. Lesser persons stood in the gutters on a grey day to watch the parade go by. Australia's soldiers included three recipients of the Victoria Cross. The Canadians sent their Mounties, and the Nepalese their Ghurkhas, while the South Rhodesians caused a minor sensation by including a woman in their armed contingent. The fairytale carriages that finally came rolling down the Mall carried foreign monarchs, including Queen Salote of Tonga ('with her lunch' said Noel Coward, but it was actually the Sultan of Kelantan), followed by English peers. Royalty rode last in antique golden coaches.

Street parties were held all over the country, on a day that police statistics later showed to have been unusually law-abiding. Pickpocketings and housebreakings were significantly fewer than on an ordinary day. Perhaps the felons were adding their bit to 'a great act of national communion' as it was later described in the *Sociological Review*. It wouldn't have been a good day for pinching tellies anyway, as the bulk of Britain's twenty million sets were being closely watched. The eight and one-half hour live Coronation broadcast was BBC Television's first and last great triumph as a media monopoly. It was only thirty years since a proposal to broadcast the wedding of the Queen's parents on the wireless had been quashed on the grounds that it might be heard by persons in public houses without their hats on, and in 1953 some had felt that it would be inappropriate for television viewers to have a clearer view of proceedings than Mr Churchill would get in the Abbey itself. Others got the shakes at the thought of a possible fluff-up in a semi-sacred ceremony going live around the world. However, the rights of the media's all-seeing eye prevailed, and 88 per cent of the adult population caught at least part of the live transmission.⁷¹ The service was also broadcast on television in America — with normal advertising throughout.⁷²

At a time when it was dismantling the policies of post-war social reconstruction, Winston Churchill's government spent well over £1 000 000 on the Coronation. It also recompensed local councils for some of the expense of decorations, souvenir publications, public carnivals and party

⁷⁰ Jane Lawry, interview, Sydney, 1989.

⁷¹ David Chaney, pp. 258—61.

⁷² *ibid*, p. 260.

food for the institutionalised.⁷³ On the return side, the revenue from tourism and other sources must have been enormous.⁷⁴ Spending on this scale, whatever the eventual profit, could not be entirely uncontroversial in a country not long out of ration books and utility goods. There had been no fancy pottery seen in Britain, for example, until the Coronation souvenirs were produced. The *Mass Observation* organisation, talking to people on the street, found quite a bit of grumbling in the months before June. But this lessened as the day approached, and in particular, people started to repeat the mass media's constant message that royalty kept communism at bay.⁷⁵

Intimidated or not, the British Communist Party sought to uncover the exploitation underpinning the glamour. The *London Daily Worker* carried stories such as that of a woman who nearly went blind sewing jewels onto Coronation medals.⁷⁶ They got some unexpected and belated support from *The Times* and the *Manchester Guardian*. Clearly nursing a terrible Coronation hangover, *The Times* declared on the morning after that the British people had holidayed from real life for long enough. A cartoon in the *Guardian* on the same day showed grim 'Reality' inspecting the debris of a children's party.⁷⁷ This disillusion was reported, but not endorsed, by the Australian press.

The Coronation — in Australia

Australia officialdom, the media and vast numbers of the general public went all out for the Coronation. Kathy Skelton remembers that it seemed to a child as if the country were 'obsessed with queens and crownings'.

There were Coronation Balls, Coronation processions with floats, and Coronation Cookery Books. Ladies' Guilds held Coronation Tea Parties. Golf Clubs awarded Coronation medals for Coronation holes-in-one, and there were Coronation gifts at athletic meetings and gymkhanas. Union Jack sweets were handed out at Coronation bonfires.⁷⁸

⁷³ *Brisbane Telegraph*, 1 June 1953, p. 23.

⁷⁴ For example, the *New York Journal of Commerce* estimated that an extra 50 million pints of beer would be drunk during the festivities and that the tax on this alone would more than pay for the whole affair (quoted in Chiplin, p. 179).

⁷⁵ Ziegler, p. 98.

⁷⁶ Chiplin, p. 179.

⁷⁷ *Tribune*, 17 June 1953, p. 4.

⁷⁸ Skelton, p. 92.

By the actual day, she says, excitement had turned to frenzied epidemic. Even so, the ideological saturation point of the following February had still to be achieved.

Although Ann Curthoys was very young in 1953, and although her parents were members of the Communist Party and ‘disapproved’ of royalty, she nonetheless remembers the feeling of magic in the air. I asked her if she thought her world could have been so swept up by any other form of celebrity?

I think it was the Queen thing, but I mean I couldn’t be sure. I don’t remember any other celebrity of that scale around that time, or *anything* like it really... I think I got all hung up on the Queen and the coronation and the crown and pictures of her in the carriages going through London and all sort of fairytale stuff — that’s what I *think*. But I was only seven.⁷⁹

It would have been near impossible for the Curthoys to quarantine their daughters. Non-Catholic schools, at least, and this in the years when English history was taught in preference to our own, incorporated the Coronation into the curriculum during the first half of 1953.⁸⁰ I have my cousin Janice’s project book from 6A in Peakhurst Primary school in southern Sydney which is full of nothing but clumsy coloured tracings of the coronation regalia. Everyone remembers that regalia — especially the St Edward’s Crown, the eagle-shaped ampulla, and the ancient anointing spoon — as their exact use and meaning were described in all the magazines and papers. Replicas were available for sale and given as presents. Little gold copies of the anointing spoon are quite common in second-hand shops today (and with wildly varying prices attached too).

On the night that the Queen was crowned, the students at the New England Girls’ Grammar School, where Rachel Grahame was a boarder, were allowed an unprecedented treat, to stay up all night to hear the broadcast of the ceremony.⁸¹ Every radio station in the country carried it, and it was also

⁷⁹ Ann Curthoys, interview, 1989.

⁸⁰ The Catholic school system was inconsistent in its attitude to royalty — as becomes clearer in later chapters). It seems from anecdotal evidence that the convictions of individual clergy varied. Catholic schoolchildren were almost always allowed to share the public holidays connected with royalty, including that for the coronation in 1953.

⁸¹ Rachel Grahame, interview, 1989.

played around venues like the Exhibition Grounds in Brisbane where a public celebration was being held. The full text of the ceremony had appeared beforehand in most newspapers, so that listeners would know what was going on. 'If the Archbishops had missed a word of the Coro. service, I WOULD HAVE KNOWN,' Gwen Badgery wrote to her daughter in England. Gwen Badgery's letters have been published in the book, *Mother Stayed at Home*. A fairly irreverent person by her own account, she nonetheless stayed up all night by the wireless,

praying loudly with the Archbishop of Canterbury, and only stopping to listen and sob when the Queen spoke. And of course when Philip said he'd be her liege lord I became unconscious.⁸²

Luckily, she came to by the next day, enough to poke fun at a friend who was 'a mass of British Empah'.

Australians also expressed their emotions collectively, on the streets. In the cities, festivities were organised by the bureaucracies of state and municipal government. The capital cities had illuminated decorations which caused terrible traffic jams as people came in from the suburbs for a look. In places with a population big enough to segregate there were public events and 'invitation-only', hosted by governors or mayors. The Lord Mayor of Brisbane had a back-drop of Buckingham Palace stretched across the stage at his Coronation Ball, while middling events like dinner at the Bargara Golf Club in Bundaberg just went for bunting in red, white and blue. At the bottom of the social scale, institutions run by the departments of Health and Home Affairs served special 'coronation fare' to their inmates.⁸³

The burden of organisation in small municipalities and country towns fell mostly onto volunteers. So much human energy went into illuminated archways or parades in a place like Rachel Grahame's home town of Inverell in northern New South Wales, where 'most people in the town were in it, and there were three men and a dog to watch!'⁸⁴ Nearby Narrabri too, was able to mount a mile-long parade of ex-servicemen and schoolchildren. Broken Hill's parade had to be re-routed so that it could be seen from the hospital, and whatever they did in Walcha required six

⁸² Toni MacKenzie (ed.), *Mother Stayed at Home*, Pan, Sydney, 1989, pp. 28—30.

⁸³ *Brisbane Telegraph*, 1 June 1953, p. 7.

⁸⁴ Rachel Grahame, interview, 1989.

committees to organise.⁸⁵ Coronation Queens were crowned at every ball — including Miss Phyllis Wallison in Nanango in Queensland, and Miss Lilly Prosser in Red Hill, Victoria, who was presented with a compact with a portrait of the Queen and Prince Philip on the front. The Coronation Queen in Sorrento, to Kathy Skelton's disbelief, was overweight. 'Mothers and aunts were fat, queens and princesses were not'.⁸⁶

The *Sydney Morning Herald* had little other than Coronation items in its entire edition of 3 June (sporting news alone remains sacred at all times). After every conceivable report of the doings in London on the day before, it told of Sydney's celebrations. However much attention they paid to the pageantry, to the 'human interest' angles, to fashion and gossip, the press was also determined to get the deeper meanings of the Coronation across. This is true of both the broadsheet and the tabloid papers. The Coronation editorial in the *Herald* spoke of the Commonwealth nations standing like a bulwark of sanity and order in a bewildered world, while the *Brisbane Telegraph* focussed on those parts of the ceremony in which the past and the future fused.⁸⁷ Whether or not people read these bits as well as the less serious items, or which people, or what they made of it, is difficult to determine.

Organisation of the Tour was well underway by the time of the Coronation, and the celebrations in June were regarded as something of a rehearsal. Organisers must have been pleased by the large attendances at public activities in the towns and cities — in Sydney, for example, forty-five thousand people went to the Coronation Pageant at the Showground, a similar number to the Coronation meeting at Randwick, and thousands more to church, while one-half million packed around the Harbour to see the fireworks display. But there were also some ominous warnings of headaches to come: there was some brawling in the lengthy queues for public transport, and the traffic jams before and after the fireworks were said by the police to be the worst they'd ever seen, not only around the city but out to the west at Parramatta and even down near Wollongong.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Clippings from regional newspapers, File no 9/2467, Premier's Department, Archives Office of New South Wales.

⁸⁶ Skelton, p. 94.

⁸⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 June 1953, p. 2; and *Brisbane Telegraph*, 1 June 1953, p. 4.

⁸⁸ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 June 1953, pp. 1—3.

Jock Phillips has written that the Coronation celebrations in New Zealand also served as a curtain-raiser to the royal visit over there.⁸⁹ The proximity of the two events (in fact many people who were children at the time cannot distinguish the two in memory) and the ferment around the first was crucial to the success of the second. With her popularity at unprecedented levels at home, and abroad (as her tour was set to prove), the year between June 1953 and May 1954 was truly the Queen's *annus mirabilis*.

⁸⁹ Phillips, p. 15.

 CHAPTER 3

The ermine curtain

It is easier to negotiate a peace treaty than a Royal Tour.

Royalty Annual, 1953.²

Australia is a large country with a small population, far from the rest of the world. No one goes there by chance, for it is not on the way to anywhere else.

Ian Bevan, *The Sunburnt Country*, 1953.³

The operation to get the Queen before the people — and seven million people before the Queen — required an exceptional period of gestation, encompassing fifteen years of hope and five long years of on-and-off again planning. Between 1948 and 1954, a finely detailed itinerary slowly solidified out of endless consultation between the numberless committees of local, state and Federal governments, a central co-ordinating office, and the Palace in London, where each successive scheme was personally read and amended by the monarch. Its minutiae were from time to time affected by local jealousies, Prime Ministerial fiat and public criticism, and its philosophical underpinnings were subtly altered as the years advanced. The supplementary and necessary effort required from community organisations and individuals wanting to see the Queen had a shorter lead time, but was nonetheless enormous. All in all it was an unimaginably elaborate and vastly expensive undertaking, and yet it was essential that it retain the appearance of spontaneity. This chapter considers the ways in which these preparations reveal the

¹ This phrase appeared in the following sub-heading of an article questioning the direction of the preparations for the Queen's arrival: 'Tour organisers have dropped an Ermine Curtain which will stop her seeing some of our most interesting places and meeting some of our most interesting people' (Alan Milgate, 'Are we misleading the Queen?', *A. M.*, 2 February 1954, p. 19).

² Godfrey Talbot and Wynford Vaughan Thomas (eds), *Royalty Annual*, no 2, Preview Publications, London, 1953, p. 29.

³ Ian Bevan, 'Introduction', in *The Sunburnt Country*, I. Bevan (ed.), Collins, London, 1953, p. 15.

ideological and practical foundations of the tour as a particular portrait of Australia was steadily devised for the Queen's consumption.

The postponement of 1949

The visit finally paid by his daughter had been first conceived for George VI. Back in 1938, the announcement that the King would visit Canada in the following year (this would have been the first visit to a Dominion by a reigning monarch and a great coup) had led Australian and New Zealand politicians to hope that he might come south in 1940.⁴ The beginning of the war put paid to that of course, but soon after it ended Prime Minister Chifley sent a general invitation to Buckingham Palace. In March 1948 he was able to announce that the King, the Queen and their younger daughter, Princess Margaret, had 'graciously consented' to visit Australia and New Zealand in the early part of 1949. He spoke of 'the great satisfaction to all Australians' and of 'feelings of pride and affection for the Royal Family' — sentiments indistinguishable from those used by his Liberal successor, Robert Menzies, during subsequent communications in the early nineteen-fifties.⁵ This news was welcomed in the press by the leaders of many community organisations, including churches and trade unions.

It is not clear whether Chifley sought the visit in the hope of boosting public morale in the post-war period, as a matter of keeping up with the other dominions, or as a vote-winning exercise. Neville Meaney has offered a further explanation for the invitation, as a means by which the Labor government could 'prove its British credentials' (in the wake of a poll in 1947, in which sixty-five per cent of respondents had favoured the retention of British nationality).⁶ As far as the Palace was concerned, the motivation for travel was the old reason, in a new time. World War II had fundamentally affected some of the old alliances between nations, and the Commonwealth was under pressure from independence movements in a number of countries and fearful of the American influence in the Pacific. The Crown was more than ever the representational lynch-pin of the confederation, and so decided to embark, as the *New York Times* put it, on a 'Mission to the Antipodes':

⁴ Jock Phillips, *Royal Summer*, Department of Internal Affairs & Daphne Brasell Associates, Wellington, 1994, pp. 11—15.

⁵ Quotes are from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 March 1948, pp. 1—3.

⁶ Neville Meaney, 'Australia and the World', in *Under New Heavens*, N. Meaney (ed.), Heinemann, Sydney, 1989, pp. 424—5.

Ever since the fragments of the old Empire began slipping away, the Home Government has been making a determined effort to consolidate what remains of the British Commonwealth of Nations. Last year the Royal visit to South Africa was highly successful. Hope is high that this success can be repeated in Canberra and Wellington.⁷

The primary objective of the organisers of the 1949 visit was to ensure that the royal tourists would be seen by as many Australians as possible, within the limits of transport and time, and within the framework of tradition. The King, Queen and Princess would make a 'Royal progress' through the streets of the major population centres, and would then attend more specialised events. The first category of these consisted of the pattern of engagements that sprang from adherence to the Westminster system of government, such as opening parliaments, convening meetings of the Privy Council, reviewing the troops and meeting with ex-service personnel. Each state government would wish to hold a reception, dinner and ball, and so would some city councils. The second category of events included those which demonstrated community benevolence, and were intended to reward individuals and organisations devoted to the advancement of respectable civic, educational and social goals. Garden parties and women's receptions where invitees might be members of the Red Cross and like organisations would be included here. Hospital visits symbolised a society which cared about the sick and needy, and children's rallies demonstrated concern and hope for the future. The third group of activities involved the display of economic progress by visits to factories and farms, while the fourth attempted to show something of our culture — through sporting fixtures, mostly, and a minute sprinkling of the arts.

Lieutenant-General Frank Berryman, who had formerly commanded troops in the Pacific and the Western Desert, was given the task of developing a coherent itinerary out of these requirements and community expectations. As the Director-General of Royal Tour Organisation, he would be supported by State directors and a Federal secretariat, and would report to a Cabinet sub-committee headed by the Prime Minister. Berryman and his staff established a complex chain of command and started on the painful business of deciding why this regional centre, or that hospital, or factory would be paid a visit and

⁷ Neil Ferrier, *The Royal Tour*, L.T.A. Robinson, London, 1954, unpaginated.

not this other one? Local councils were especially vociferous when forwarding their claims, with a parochialism that was still evident some years later. In 1951, when the schedule was under fresh consideration, the Town Clerk from Lithgow (a small town just beyond the Blue Mountains in New South Wales) told the press,

We would like the Royal Couple to visit Lithgow. We regard Lithgow as one of the important centres of Australia — the centre of the western coalfields and with the small arms factory here, we have an interest in the Empire's defence.⁸

And later still, in May 1953, the distress of Glen Innes (an even smaller town to the north) was reported in the *Tamworth Leader*. The District Commissioner of Girl Guides said that her girls were very sorry that Glen Innes had been omitted from the itinerary, and that it was unfair because 'its airfield facilities were among the best in the country'.⁹ Claims such as these suggest the strength of local or regional consciousness, as it wasn't enough that the Queen should be in Australia, but she had to see Glen Innes. It became evident in 1954 how much communities craved the royal gaze to provide validation of their particular achievements.

In March 1948, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reproduced without comment an unsourced estimation that 'the Australian tour will cost at least £500 000'.¹⁰ When the visit was called off in November, because the King was suffering from obstructed circulation through the arteries in his legs, Sydney's *Sun* newspaper reported that the Commonwealth Government had already spent around £10 000 on official travel to London and other miscellaneous preparations. Many businesses were said to be 'staggered' by the news of an indefinite postponement. For some commercial operators, such as hoteliers, it ended the dream of a bonanza. Others had to swallow actual losses. One of the big suppliers of street decorations, Walders Pty Ltd, took a dive of £20 000, of which only half was covered by insurance. The plight of high society's couturiers and milliners received a curious amount of attention from the *Sun* (a tabloid paper with a working-class audience), which reported on the likely

⁸ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 December 1951, p. 1.

⁹ *Tamworth Leader*, 8 May 1953. From an unpaginated press clipping, File no 9/2467, Premier's Department, Archives Office of New South Wales.

¹⁰ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 March 1948, p. 1. I presume that this sum included both government and business expenditure. In today's terms it is roughly equivalent to \$10 million.

cancellation of hats intended for Lady Duggan, the wife of the Victorian governor; and the miseries of a woman who had cornered the market on ostrich feathers and could no longer unload them.¹¹

These lamentations were published with caution. The *Sun* insisted that the concern of the business community was chiefly for the health of His Majesty, although this sentiment was conspicuously absent from the reported remarks of those affected. It stood on firmer ground when it described the mood of the wider community as one of 'bitter disappointment, but concern for King'. Politicians and church leaders issued statements to this effect, though none as fervent as that of the Sydney County Council, which declared that its extensive plans for the visit had faded 'into insignificance with the news of the King's indisposition'.¹²

The postponement of 1952

In the following year, 1949, newly-elected Liberal Prime Minister Robert Menzies renewed the invitation to tour. He was hoping to secure the attendance of the Crown at the celebrations for the anniversary of Federation in 1951. The Festival of Britain took precedence in the royal diary, but the Prime Minister was soon able to announce with great pride that the original party of King, Queen and Princess Margaret had agreed to come in 1952. General Berryman resumed his duties, and planning re-commenced. The 1949 itinerary was revised in order to accommodate the King's continuing ill-health, and would be more or less confined to the capital cities, with some regional centres to be compensated by a visit from the Princess.

But near-disaster struck again towards the end of 1951, with the news that the King, who had recently had a lung removed, was simply too sick to travel at all. Officials denied at first that there was any likelihood that Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh might come instead, but General Berryman was already in London to discuss the possibility, and speculation ended on 11 October with an announcement that the substitution had been approved. There was no regret publicly expressed for the fact that Australians were yet again denied a glimpse of the reigning monarch. The Princess and her husband were very popular, as the premier young couple of the English-speaking world, and preparations took on a new vigour more befitting their youth and energy.

¹¹ All information from the *Sun* (Sydney), 23 November 1948, pp. 1—3.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 2.

Schedules were thrown open as country towns who had been down for 1949 and then removed, submitted their applications for re-inclusion.¹³ As the Town Clerk in Lithgow put it, they didn't just want a brief stop-over either — fifteen minutes or so as laid down in the original itinerary — they wanted a proper visit.¹⁴

.....

This is a wonderful occasion for all Australians. Princess Elizabeth will one day be our Queen. To Their Royal Highnesses all Australians give a loyal and affectionate welcome.

Text of official memento card distributed to schoolchildren by the Commonwealth Government in 1952.

.....

Buckingham Palace advised the Director-General on all matters of royal protocol and on the personal preferences of the Royal Couple.¹⁵ Much of this information appeared in the papers, which enabled millions of people, for whom it would never be an issue, to know that Princess Elizabeth never ate seafood and never wore magenta clothing.

The breadth and depth of the decisions required from organisers is displayed in the files retained in state and Commonwealth archives. In the Archives Office of New South Wales, much of the paperwork pertains to travel arrangements, and is concerned with such matters as the state of the automobiles that would carry the Royal party and the size of rural aerodromes. Activities were broken down into their component parts and committees of six to eight persons drawn from the military, the bureaucracy and the community were charged with finding the answers to such questions as whether the platforms at country

¹³ The State-Director of the Royal Tour in NSW was immediately besieged with such requests from Broken Hill, Lismore, Coffs Harbour, Orange, Lithgow, Molong, Casino, Katoomba, Wagga, Maitland, Dubbo, Grafton and Cessnock — as reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 October 1951, p. 3.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁵ Some minor changes were necessitated because Princess Margaret had been going to do some things that would be inappropriate for her sister. She was to have been crowned Queen of the Vintage Festival in South Australia, for example, but the Palace did not consider this appropriate for a married woman. Minutes of meeting, State Directors and Commonwealth Staff, Royal Tour Directorate, 25 October 1951, File no 9/2437, Premier's Department, Archives Office of New South Wales.

stations would need to be lengthened, and whether the Health Officer had made 'sanitary arrangements' for those times when the train would be stationary.¹⁶ These committees often devolved into further units. The 'Landing and Reception' committee appointed by the Director of Tour Activities in New South Wales, for example, proliferated into a 'sub-committee re laneways of boats to landing pontoons', a 'sub-committee re control of Harbour traffic and provision of patrol services', and a 'sub-committee re Arrival and Departure of Invited Guests travelling by water'. It is difficult to imagine the sum total of effort expended by such committees, official and voluntary, of which there were thousands across the country.¹⁷ As this minutiae was being sorted out, General Berryman met with State Directors and Commonwealth staff every couple of months to review the progress of regional plans, to discuss the delineation of financial and other responsibilities between the three tiers of government, and to take advice on matters of broader policy (such as whether wives would be automatically included on invitations to official functions).¹⁸

Preparations had entered their final stage when the Duke and the Princess left England at the end of January 1952. They flew first to Africa and would arrive in Perth at the beginning of March. But on 7 February, Australians woke to solemn newspapers. The King had died, and the new Queen was going home. She had sent a message to the governments of Australia and New Zealand, to reassure them that her visit would merely be postponed. It would have been grossly disrespectful to betray either annoyance or regret at this latest frustration, but in the midst of a front page that was heavy with grief, the *Sydney Morning Herald* paused to calculate the minimum period of the interruption, with requisite mourning included, at around eighteen months. This proved to be fairly accurate.¹⁹

Rehearsals for pageants, displays and ceremonies were abandoned and decorations put away. Fewer businesses had taken out cancellation insurance than in 1949, and Lloyd's of London paid out only small amounts against the

¹⁶ State Marshall's note, File no 9/2437, Premier's Department, Archives Office of New South Wales.

¹⁷ Papers of the New South Wales Landing and Reception Committee, File no 9/2438-1, Premier's Department, Archives Office of New South Wales.

¹⁸ Minutes of meeting, State Directors and Commonwealth Staff, Royal Tour Directorate, 25 October 1951, File no 9/2437, Premier's Department, Archives Office of New South Wales.

¹⁹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 February 1952, p. 1. My mother remembers 'the terrible shock when the headline said "The King is Dead". It just looked like a disaster. Now, it had no effect whatsoever on the life of an Australian child, I mean, that the King had died, but I was struck with awe at that'. Lyndsay Connors, interview, 1989.

loss. Thousands of copies of commemorative publications had to be disposed of somewhere (although most of the illustrated booklets that the Commonwealth had prepared for schoolchildren had already been distributed). The state and federal tour directorates went into temporary hiatus and paperwork and plans were once again retained for the next occasion. Most of the instructions that had been issued by the Palace were combined with the local research into the substantial and detailed guide for planning that was issued by General Berryman before the 1954 Tour.²⁰

New Zealand historian Jock Phillips has written that the frustrations of 1949 and 1952 'heightened expectations for the royal visit when it finally eventuated'.²¹ This observation also holds true here. In addition to the inflammatory effects of the Coronation, these two painful episodes of tour *interruptus* had brought the desire to see a reigning monarch actually here at last and standing on Australian soil almost to boiling point.

.....

I want to show that the Crown is not merely an abstract symbol of our unity, but a personal and living bond between you and me.

The Queen's Christmas message, 1953.²²

.....

Preparations in the Palace

Australia spent years getting ready for the Queen, but she herself had been preparing to come here over most of her life. As the future head of the Empire, her early lessons had included a detailed study of the history and geography of the four Dominions, incorporating the political, legislative, judicial and economic development of each. If Australians thought that sounded a bit dull for a young girl, they could be reassured by Crawfie that Princess Elizabeth had also had a romantic interest in their dry, brown land from a very young age. Crawfie's own tour book *Our Queen Visits Australia and New Zealand*, was little

²⁰ F. H. Berryman, *Notes for planning the Visit of Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh*, 1953. This booklet was only available to officials connected with Tour organisation at the time, but copies are now available in most State libraries.

²¹ Phillips, pp. 14—15.

²² Queen's Christmas Message, 25 December 1953. Quoted in the *ABC Weekly*, 30 January 1954, p. 7. This message was delivered from New Zealand.

more than a rehash of her previous works — although she had plundered her store of memories for those with an antipodean twist — but what she could do, with an authority that no other writer could muster, was assure her faraway readers that the Queen really had, always, wanted to see them:

As children, the two little Princesses were immensely intrigued with the idea of a country on the other side of the world. 'If we dug right through the earth, would we come out in Australia, Crawfie?' the girl who is now Queen asked of me. And, 'Why, if it's day in England, is it night in Australia?'²³

It was very important for Australians to remember that the Queen thought of their country as one of her homes — 'for home is where the heart is, and her heart is always among the people of our great Imperial Family'.²⁴

In addition to these preparations, the Royals made specific efforts to expand their knowledge of things Australian. They received official briefings and sought advice from persons familiar with the country, while the Duke of Edinburgh showed his much-admired streak of independence by including Frank Hardy's controversial novel about the Melbourne underworld, *Power Without Glory*, on his reading list. On the boat coming over from New Zealand he embarrassed Talbot Duckmanton from the Australian Broadcasting Commission by asking whether it was really 'the true story of that fellow John Wren?' Duckmanton, who was the ABC's future Managing Director, recalled later that the whole incident had been 'rather difficult, but that it was a test of his diplomacy' (the Duke was finally reduced to seeking information from willing students at the University of Melbourne).²⁵ As a good government employee, Duckmanton clearly understood that his masters did not wish stories of murder and corruption to be circulating in the presence of the

²³ Marion Crawford, *Our Queen visits Australia and New Zealand*, Dymocks, Sydney, 1954, pp. 11—12.

²⁴ According to Crawfie (*ibid.*, p. 2) the Queen became aware of Australia as a very little girl because of a thick blue cloth and sheepskin rug that she wore around her knees when motoring. It had been given to the Duke and Duchess of York during their tour here in 1927, and was embroidered with the names of Australian towns and cities. Crawfie would refer to it when teaching the young Princesses about Australian agricultural produce and other imports and exports. 'There was no need to fear that such odd-sounding names as Warrnambool and Wirrabara, or Wollongong or Murwillumbah, which some Australians think are strange to British ears, would be strange to the ears of the Queen'.

²⁵ The ABC reporter was its future Managing Director, Talbot Duckmanton, and he told this story personally to Bruce Webber (interview, June 1953). I was told about the incident at Melbourne University by Alex Castles (in conversation, 14 December 1995) who was the editor of the student newspaper *Farrago* at the time.

visitors. Nor, specifically, according to one Liberal member of Parliament, did they wish unions to take industrial action or the tabloid papers to run scandalous headlines for the duration of the tour — 'let us present to Her Majesty the country that we would like her to see'.²⁶

.....

We think of it as a wide-open land; wide open for adventure, construction, development; wide open for living. We think of it as a wonderful place — not perfect, but wonderful ...

Ian Bevan, *The Sunburnt Country*.²⁷

.....

Imagining Australia

The plans for the Royal visit in 1954 were laid in the knowledge that 'Australia', or a version thereof, would be laid open to the eyes of the world. The country was re-imagined as an elaborate tableau for the sovereign's eyes, and the media was invited to witness the reciprocal encounter (one author wrote that Australia would receive 'much lustre from her visit in the eyes of the world').²⁸ In addition to the daily representations coming through the media from politicians, journalists and community leaders, there were several lengthy portraits of Australia generated especially for the Tour, including those of Rex Ingamells in *Royalty and Australia*, and the authors of *The Sunburnt Country*, which gathered together many facets of the wider presentation.

As a former 'Jindyworobak', Ingamells' gaze across the country was concentrated on its unique environment. The Queen would see how this unkind continent had been forced to yield the 'ultimate splendid reward' of mineral and agricultural wealth to its happily 'acclimatised British stock'.²⁹ In this respect, Ingamells' view was similar to that of most other commentators — the image of Australia as a giant farm and quarry was hardly challenged

²⁶ Speech made by a Mr Leslie, who also suggested that 'Australian newspapers could ... tone down their headlines of scare and scandal during the Royal visit'. *Hansard*, House of Representatives, 11 November 1953, p. 45.

²⁷ Ian Bevan, 'A New Nation I', in *The Sunburnt Country*, I. Bevan (ed.), Collins, London, 1953, p. 15.

²⁸ Rex Ingamells, *Royalty and Australia*, Hallcraft Publishing Co., Melbourne, 1954, p. 102.

²⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 93—5.

during the Tour.³⁰ But his evidence for 'genuine satisfaction' with the state of the nation was wider than that, comprising Australian accomplishments in science, social legislation, culture and the arts; and he also drew attention to 'our aborigines' who were now renowned for an 'intelligence and morality which our materialism has been slow to appreciate'.³¹ This sentiment took him out on a limb, but when it came time to conclude he returned to the fold. Rex Ingamells' final description of 'Her Majesty's Kingdom of Australia' was also a ringing summation of a thousand newspaper articles and other attempts to define the essence of this country:

Land of the Wattle-gold; of the picturesque rough-and-tumble past of squatters, explorers, cattlemen, gold-diggers, bushrangers, swagmen; of the modern frontiers where men toil and sweat for the radioactive minerals at Rum Jungle, the air beef of Western Australia, the oil at Exmouth Gulf, the pastoral wealth of the Atherton Tablelands, the minerals requiring deep drilling at Broken Hill and Zeehan ... a vast country with impersonal and sometimes savage uniqueness; with its distances and its variety, its lands of poverty and lands of wealth; with its untold potential; with its indigenes and its new race of British stock.³²

This concentrated rhetoric of the 'real' Australia of the bush continued throughout the tour, despite the fact that most of the money, much of the time and the bulk of the glamour and excitement belonged to the cities. The suburbs may have been expanding, but it was taking them a long time to displace the country from its centrality in myth and legend. The author George Johnston noted this at the time, in his article on the 'Australian Way of Life' in the other custom-writ volume of the visit, *The Sunburnt Country*.³³

This last was a 'profile of Australia' written by expatriate authors (united in their regret that they would be away when the 'the two people in the world whom they would most wish to welcome are visiting') about aspects of the

³⁰ The pre-tour volume *Australia's Royal Welcome* contained an article reviewing the districts on the Queen's route which concentrated on natural resources and industrial development ('What Her Majesty will see', *Australia's Royal Welcome*, Colourgravure, Melbourne, 1953, unpaginated).

³¹ Ingamells, p. 101.

³² *ibid.*, p. 102.

³³ George H. Johnston, 'Their Way of Life', in *The Sunburnt Country*, p. 150.

Australian way of life.³⁴ The Queen was presented with a copy before leaving on her tour, but it was no mere travel brochure. The war correspondent Chester Wilmot wrote a forthright article on foreign policy, Ian Grey referred to the 'shameful' treatment of Aborigines by British settlers, while Johnson described the harsh welcome sometimes meted out to migrants and defended the existence of trade unions. But just as these issues intruded only fleetingly into the tour, they were also peripheral to the overall picture of the country and its inhabitants that emerged during the course of the entire book. There was consensus on the following matters: that the real interest in Australia lay in its future rather than its past; that its wide-open spaces had given rise to an expansive way of life, a sanguine outlook and casual manners; that it was differentiated from the 'old world' by its vitality and modernity; and that it was, when all was said and done, a 'wonderful place'.

Of all the features of contemporary discussion this is the one most at odds with subsequent portrayals of the decade, as the energy and confidence found within the sources around the tour has often been missing from later accounts. 'Modernity' was a key note in 1954, in a country that saw itself striding out into a brave new future. Amongst other firsts, Australia joined the South-East Asian Treaty Organisation. Electric typewriters, hula hoops, seamless stockings and telex machines made their first appearances (along with rock'n'roll venues, an hysterical welcome for American singer Johnny Ray in Melbourne, and other recognisable traits of a fully-fledged and oft deplored youth culture). The Royal Australian Academy of Sciences and the Nuclear Research Foundation were both established, and the first nuclear treatment plant was opened at Rum Jungle. The Queen herself was to say that only 'a pessimist' would place limits on Australia's potential — and like almost everyone else to address the topic in 1954, she imagined it riding on science and technology, but relying on the fundamental factors of affluence, ethnic monopoly and political homogeneity.³⁵

Geoffrey Bolton has noted the nineteen-fifties still enjoy a 'nostalgic reputation for prosperity'.³⁶ The economy had picked up quickly after the war, much more

³⁴ Gilbert Murray, 'Introduction', *ibid.*, p. 11. Other chapters included those by Russell Braddon, 'The Australian Serviceman'; Judy Fallon (whose husband was a friend of Prince Philip), 'The Australian Woman'; and Martin Boyd, 'Their Link with Britain'.

³⁵ David Lowe ('1954: The Queen and Australia in the World', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no 46, September 1995, p. 1), has written that 'even as the Queen stepped onto Australian shores there was a sense among Australians that their country was being "born modern", and that the Queen was there both to confirm the process and mediate its ramifications'.

³⁶ Geoffrey Bolton, *The Oxford History of Australia*, vol 5, 1942—1980, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1990, p. 89.

so than had been expected, and continued to grow at a steady if not spectacular rate over the twenty years that followed. Domestic manufacturing had benefited from industrial development during the war, the increase in population immediately afterward, and import restrictions after 1952. Most people were able to measure the swell in national productivity through their pay-packet. In a decade when unemployment never rose above two per cent, real wages grew by about four per cent per year (although that average conceals the lesser advances made by unskilled, female and migrant workers).³⁷ The average household had more disposable income than ever before, and led to marked changes in the basic patterns of spending.³⁸

The general appearance of prosperity led many middle-class Australians to believe that financial hardship had been more or less abolished.³⁹ The people to whom I have spoken about the Royal tour have often mentioned the sense of affluence prevailing at the time. Rachel Grahame felt that the Queen's visit had 'coincided with a fairly new feeling of confidence in this country', which was just beginning to enter 'the most prosperous period we ever had'. Lyndsay Connors, another adolescent, also remembered it as the 'beginning of a very affluent period' and thought that this very sense of well-being was a factor in the tour's success. It had occurred during a 'little interlude in Australian history' when cohesion from the war effort still lingered, while the 'new complexities' of modern life were yet to arise, and when 'there was sufficient affluence, I think, for people to feel a togetherness'.⁴⁰

These inclusive feelings were further enhanced by racial similitude. The migration that had been more or less continuous since 1788 had slowed during the nineteen-thirties and forties, and the effects were seen in the census of 1947, which revealed that a higher percentage of Australians than ever before (or since) had been born in the country. An overwhelming proportion claimed to be of British origin.⁴¹ It was naturally British immigrants therefore, who were

³⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 89—90.

³⁸ Kevin Blackburn, 'The "Consumers' Ethic" of Australian Advertising Agencies 1950-1965', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no 32, March 1992, p. 68.

³⁹ This wasn't true, but somehow even the much-publicised findings of the Henderson enquiry into poverty in 1966 weren't able to affect a widespread perception to the contrary. Henderson found that about 4% of Melburnians lived at a level below his nominated 'poverty line' (Bolton, pp. 207—8)

⁴⁰ Rachel Grahame, interview, 1989; and Lyndsay Connors, interview, 1989.

⁴¹ Richard White, 'The shock of affluence: Australia in the Fifties', in *The Australian Dream*, Judith O'Callaghan (ed.), Powerhouse Publishing, Sydney, 1993, p. 21. George Johnston wrote in *The Sunburnt Country* (p. 155) that Australians were of 'slightly purer stock than the British themselves'.

most fervently sought and generously assisted from 1947, after it had become apparent that the post-war boom was generating a stronger demand for labour than the existing population could meet.⁴² But as they alone were not sufficient, the number of nationalities on the 'A-list' steadily expanded until, by mid-1949, it basically included any Europeans under the age of forty-five.⁴³ The philosophy behind the resettlement programs for these people was assimilationist. The Chifley and then the Menzies governments were as one in their intent to preserve Anglo-Australian mores and institutions, and their general concerns were articulated by Governor-General Sir William Slim in 1952, who told a Citizenship Convention that he feared two things from mass immigration: first, that newcomers would form separate communities — 'foreign bodies in the flesh of the nation' — and second, that through sheer weight of numbers they might force changes to the 'Australian national character and outlook'.⁴⁴ Just prior to the Queen's arrival it was announced that 100 000 people would be arriving in the course of the year (the highest level yet) and this seemed to make it even more important that the loyalty of New Australians be determined. *The Good Neighbour* — 'the monthly bulletin of the Department of Immigration to assist migrants' — ran enthusing articles on the 'strong assimilation aid' which would be offered by the Tour:

A good deal has been arranged for migrant participation by way of displays, decorations and arrangements for migrants to man strongpoints from which they may pay their loyal respects to Elizabeth II in whose Australian realm they have been given a new home and a chance of a new life of liberty and happiness.⁴⁵

⁴² The publicity that the Tour received in the United Kingdom in 1954 was used by the Department of Immigration as an excuse to re-issue its standing invitation to 'family men', and the number of inquiries made to Australia House in London did in fact rise sharply during the time that the Queen was here (ABC, 17 February 1954, 7 pm bulletin).

⁴³ This 'baby boom' kick started serious population growth but the arrival of nearly two million migrants over the next fifteen years provided a greater visible boost to the overall tally and a significant twist in its ethnic composition. There were almost 11 million people living here by 1963, of whom those who had come from 'continental' Europe, together with their Australian-born children, made up more than 10 per cent (all figures from Stephen Alomes, Mark Dober and Donna Hellier, 'The Social Context of Post-war Conservatism' in *Australia's First Cold War*, J. Merritt & A. Curthoys (eds), George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1984, p. 13).

⁴⁴ Quoted by Andrew Markus, *Australian Race Relations 1788—1993*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1993, p. 158.

⁴⁵ *The Good Neighbour*, February 1954, p. 1.

While she was here, the media looked for foreign faces in the crowd, making it plain that the reception of the British monarch was a litmus test of their commitment to the 'Australian way of life'.⁴⁶

The depiction of Australia as a politically placid nation was the most perilous of all defining statements. While there was little electoral change throughout the decade, with a Liberal Prime Minister entrenched in Canberra and Labor Premiers in several states, there were industrial and ideological battles a-plenty. The Liberal Party waged unceasing war against organised labour, which fought back with mixed success, while other forms of left-wing activism declined under pressure.⁴⁷

The political climate in the years immediately after the war and into the middle-fifties was influenced by the fear of further warfare sparked by Soviet expansion, and dominated by debate over communism. Historians continue to debate the real effects of anti-communist activity but in Geoffrey Bolton's judicious assessment it did result in intensifying pressures 'against nonconformity and dissent' which were also felt beyond the realm of organised politics. 'Unorthodox opinion or behaviour could bring penalties both in employment and in social acceptance'.⁴⁸

.....

It is strange that the Crown, which appears to yield to its Ministers, has a reputation, a glamor and authority denied to the most distinguished statesman.

Bulletin, 3 February 1954.⁴⁹

.....

⁴⁶ New arrivals were constantly exhorted to adapt themselves to the all-encompassing concept of the 'Australian way of life', which was 'one of the great discoveries of the 1950s', according to Richard White ('The shock of affluence: Australia in the Fifties', p. 21), although *what* it was, other than a bulwark against change, was never satisfactorily defined. In a recent article about life in the Bonegilla migrant 'training and reception' camp outside Albury on the New South Wales/Victorian border, Glenda Sluga wrote that lessons in the Australian way seem to have been entirely confined to instruction in hygiene and housekeeping for the women ('Bonegilla and Migrant Dreaming', in *Memory and History in Twentieth Century Australia*, K. Darian-Smith & P. Hamilton (eds), Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994, p. 196).

⁴⁷ Ann Curthoys & John Merritt (eds), *Australia's First Cold War*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1984, pp. *xiii-iv*.

⁴⁸ This recollection from former South Australian Premier Don Dunstan is quoted in Bolton, p. 134.

⁴⁹ *Bulletin*, 3 February 1954, p. 6.

'The sovereign must stand for everybody'.⁵⁰

At 3 pm on Tuesday 10 November 1953, the Governor-General, Sir William Slim, called members of both Houses into the Senate in order to open the second session of the Twentieth Parliament of Australia. At the head of his speech, he reminded his listeners that the Queen would be in Australia shortly. 'The devotion of Australians to the Throne is both deep and warm,' he said, adding with emphasis that it was

not the special prerogative of any political party, or of any creed, or of any section of the Australian people.⁵¹

If the Tour had one catch-cry, this was it. In the weeks before 'Q-Day' on 3 February, the country was awash with similar statements from public individuals such as the Prime Minister, and public organisations such as the Country Women's Association, enunciating a common belief — or was it a hope? — that the visit of the Queen would bring the nation together. It seemed to be essential that she be welcomed by the entire country, as near enough was not good enough.

Mary Ryan has described the 'open to all comers' civic parade of nineteenth-century America as an expression of social pluralism.⁵² In contrast, the royal rituals of the middle years of the twentieth-century were instead intended to engender feelings of commonality — David Chaney argues of the Coronation in Britain that it spoke to a feeling of national unity, 'which is normally too big to be contemplated' and Guy Debord has also written of modern civic spectacle as an 'instrument of unification'.⁵³ These intentions were a matter of open discussion at the time, and in the mind of the Prime Minister, they were as real and as possible in Australia as in England.

As Judith Brett has argued, much of Mr Menzies' electoral success in the fifties was due to his vision of society as a 'centred unity' (in contrast to Marxism's 'divisive' insistence on the barriers of class), and his awareness that the public

⁵⁰ Marion Laird, *How the Queen Reigns*, Pan, London, 1961 (2nd. ed.), p. 23.

⁵¹ *Hansard*, House of Representatives, 10 November 1953, p 5.

⁵² Mary Ryan, 'The American Parade: Representations of the Nineteenth-Century Social Order', in *The New Cultural History*, Lynn Hunt (ed.), University of California Press, 1989, p. 137.

⁵³ David Chaney, 'A symbolic mirror of ourselves: civic ritual in mass society', in *Media, Culture and Society*, R. Collins, J. Curran, N. Garnham, P. Scannell, P. Schlesinger & C. Sparks (eds), Sage, London, 1986, p. 249; and Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, Black and Red, Detroit, 1983, p. 3.

imagination may look beyond the everyday, to 'things a little higher'.⁵⁴ For the Prime Minister, the Queen was a symbol, *the* symbol, of transcendent unification, and his most ardent statement of belief was written immediately prior to her arrival in 1954, for publication in the major newspapers:

It is a basic truth that for our Queen we have within us, sometimes unrealised until the moment of expression, the most profound and passionate feelings of loyalty and devotion. It does not require much imagination to realise that when 8 million people spontaneously pour out this feeling they are engaging in a great act of common allegiance and common joy which brings them closer together and it is one of the most powerful elements converting them from a mass of individuals to a great cohesive nation. In brief, the common devotion to the Throne is part of the very cement of the whole social structure.⁵⁵

Menzies had first observed with delight the 'effect of royal pageantry' on a trip to Britain in 1935, where, after the trooping of the colours for the King's Birthday, he had written in his diary, 'These are poor days in England for the reds!'⁵⁶ He kept his glee to himself in 1954, but some in the media used the participation or discomfiture of the 'reds' as a useful indicator of the Queen's pulling power. In a souvenir supplement published on the weekend preceding her arrival, the *Sunday Telegraph* took the time to reflect on the multifarious delights that lay before the royal couple.

They will see all the picturesque contrasts that make up New South Wales — from the sun-baked, yellow sands of Bondi to the rugged mountain scenery of Leura and Katoomba, and meet such diverse personalities as Dianne Heydon, Wagga's little Legacy girl, and Tom Wright, one of Sydney's two Communist aldermen.⁵⁷

Little Dianne, whose father had died in a car accident, was going to present Her Majesty with a bouquet. She was photographed in a pretty lace collar and hair ribbon. Mr Wright presented a menacing contrast on the opposite page, looking flinty and shouting into a microphone, above the caption — 'HE, too, will meet

⁵⁴ Judith Brett, *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People*, Pan MacMillan, Sydney, 1992. See especially Part I, 'Public Language', pp. 31—125.

⁵⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, Royal Tour Supplement, 4 February 1954, p. 2.

⁵⁶ Brett, p. 149.

⁵⁷ *Sunday Telegraph*, Royal Tour Supplement, 31 January 1954, pp. 12—13.

the Royal Couple'.⁵⁸ They would meet before the Crown in a realm where earthly difference ceased to matter.

The *Bulletin* magazine, its radical days a distant memory, also insisted that loyalty to the Crown was an unarguable point of consensus between Australians. It smugly anticipated the 'reality' of the next few months, which was that

not socialism nor anarchical principles, nor professed contempt for the flag or for the Throne and for its 'baubles and gewgaws' ... will prevent the surliest demagogue, the sourest iconoclast from rushing to catch a glimpse of the Royal Couple or to bow the knee on a crimson carpet if he gets the chance.⁵⁹

This reference to persons known or suspected to hold views antithetical to monarchy was rare. But even when their presence was acknowledged, their commitment was doubtful. However much Australians might be divided by 'personal nature, by political belief, by circumstance or by experience', the *Bulletin* did not believe that there could be anybody immune to the 'instinctive loyalty' that would send a shout of 'God Save the Queen' around the country in the weeks to come.⁶⁰

.....

We had a couple of mothers there who said, 'Well I'm not going to go out and watch. I wouldn't even cross the road' ... particularly one, who was really a red-ragger. I've never forgotten her, because her house was in Currong Street, and she said, 'Well I'm not going to come out of the house', and of course she did, and there she was. I took particular notice to see if she did come out.

*Kitty Peisley, memory of the Royal Progress in Canberra, 16 February 1954.*⁶¹

.....

⁵⁸ The *Telegraph* was still gloating over his 'capitulation' when it published its commemorative book after the tour was over, in *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand*, p. 36).

⁵⁹ *Bulletin*, 3 February 1954, p. 6.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

⁶¹ Kitty Peisley, interview, 30 September 1992.

Politicians serving under the Westminster system of Government in the nineteen-fifties were supposed to keep their distance from the monarchy. It was not the done thing to imply that the sovereign's opinion on any given matter might be in sympathy with one's own, but this did not stop many Australian parliamentarians. Liberal members of Parliament believed that theirs was the party of the true Queen's men, and enjoyed making hay with the Labor Party's *bona fides*. Although the vast majority of Labor members were genuinely enthusiastic at the prospect of seeing the Queen (not least future Prime Minister Gough Whitlam), a small number demonstrated sufficient ambivalence to allow their opponents an opening.⁶²

Hugh Robertson, a Liberal member from the Riverina, was one of several speakers to refer to the words of the Governor-General, in a sectarian attack that quite defied their original meaning. He claimed to be encouraged to hear 'the obviously sincere expressions of loyalty' that were coming from the other side of the House, because he was one who could recall, only too vividly, the days when most 'class-conscious socialists' had been 'either mildly or violently opposed to the Monarch'. The pity of it was that their criticisms had wrought such 'incalculable harm among the credulous and the uniformed' that repentance was 'not a matter of great importance'. Mr Robertson was elusive on the nature of the damage, but moved quickly on to invoke the name and standing of the Queen in a blatantly political speech on compulsory trade unionism.⁶³ His colleague Mr Bowden, the member for Gippsland, had been even more direct on the same topic earlier in the day, regretting that the Queen, 'the protector of traditional British freedom', would have to confront an Opposition in favour of the 'sovietisation ... of the whole work force of Australia'.⁶⁴

The ALP was not above making use of the Queen's good name. The member for Hindmarsh, Mr Cameron, employed the rhetoric of unity to argue for the inclusion of working-class areas on the itinerary for the Royal Couple. He also coupled an allegation that the Government had 'studiously avoided any possibility that the Queen will meet the people who make this country tick',

⁶² Spearritt ('Royal Progress: the Queen and Her Australian Subjects', *Australian Cultural History*, 5, 1986, p. 82) observed that Whitlam shared Menzies' 'particular fascination' with the monarchy, which he expressed with customary erudition.

⁶³ *Hansard*, House of Representatives, 12 November 1954, pp. 146—7.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p. 130.

with a call for the nationalisation of General Motors Holden.⁶⁵ (Complaints about the Royal route came from all quarters, but I think that in the end, the elaborate planning mechanisms and the sheer size of the tour probably meant that the chances of the itinerary being hijacked were slight). Mr Cameron's speech was so directed towards an immediate political end that the attitude of the speaker towards the presence of the Queen was not entirely apparent. But whether he believed it himself or not, he was using the rhetoric of a popular belief that the Queen herself really did wish to meet 'real people'.

Like other publicists for the monarchy, Crawfie maintained that the Royal Family was more egalitarian in outlook than its servants. In *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand* she told of how King George and Queen Elizabeth had always checked the invitees to Garden Parties to make sure that a sufficient number of 'ordinary people' would be present. The new Queen, likewise,

always insists on seeing and meeting ordinary, homely, workaday people as well as the local dignitaries ... she is especially interested in meeting men and women who have served in any of the services.⁶⁶

This question of invitations would certainly draw as much fire as any other issue to arise throughout the tour. Journalists and members of the public would complain about local officials and 'toffs' hogging the Queen's time and attention — always with a rider to the effect that this was not the fault of Her Majesty and nor to her liking. This much was predicted in Parliament in November by Mr Mullens, a Labor man from Gellibrand, who prophesied that invitations would be monopolised as ever, by 'those who like to bask in the reflected glory of the great'. Echoing the *Bulletin* of the eighteen-nineties, Mr Mullens' directed his contempt towards local toadies, and he was hoping to be spared a tour of

prancing politicians, shire bumbles and heavyweights, ponderous, boring people and brass hats to drive the Queen and her entourage into the ground and weary them with their inanities and reiterations.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *Hansard*, 12 November 1954, pp 149-50. Mr Cameron's creative juxtaposition was noted by Spearritt, p. 82.

⁶⁶ Crawford, *Our Queen visits Australia and New Zealand*, p. 6.

⁶⁷ *Hansard*, House of Representatives, 12 November 1953, p. 146.

had been scanty.⁷¹ He referred especially to two commemorative books available prior to the Tour, *Our Royal Guests* (1952) and *Australia's Royal Welcome* (1953) which certainly 'conveyed monarchical values', but through a personal focus on the life of the Queen. '[I]n terms of the actual working of monarchy and its relevance to Australia this literature had little to offer.'⁷² I agree that this was generally true of the popular press (those two volumes were both from the Herald & Weekly Times stable), and that much of the observable public interest was focussed on the person of the Queen — but I wouldn't underestimate the circulation of more philosophical material in ephemeral forms (such as talks on the radio by religious leaders), or the publications of significant organisations such as the Catholic Church or women's groups, in which the meaning of the forthcoming tour was being interpreted and promoted. There was also ad-hoc instruction through such things as a public lecture series by a Professor of History and Political Science on 'The Crown and the People' which was sponsored by the Workers' Educational Association in Adelaide.⁷³ In the heightened climate of the Tour it was also the case that any and every aspect took an ideological dimension. This was apparent over issues such as clothing, on which more column inches were probably devoted than any other single factor, both before and during the Tour.

In the women's magazines and the women's pages in the newspapers, the personal side of the Queen's preparations for a lengthy journey were of paramount interest. Her dresses had been custom-made by the famous trio of bespoke couturiers, Norman Hartnell, Hardy Amies ('Norman for the beads and Hardy for the tweeds') and Miss Avis Ford. Royalty did not buy its working clothes off-the-peg because of the rigours of a day or night spent under scrutiny, and most of the Queen's frocks, however simple they were intended to look, were actually quite complex in structure and able to remain crisp throughout a long day. Their hemlines were also stiffened or weighted with 'atoms of lead' in order to repel all breezes (I don't think that a newspaper would have published a photo of the Royal skirts in a high wind anyway but they were not to be put to the test). These clothes were decreed to be the height of style, and their attractiveness enhanced by the level of organisation and care, that was, as ever, imbued with moral significance. The *Australian Women's Weekly's* seasoned palace scribe Anne Matheson, informed her readers that Her

⁷¹ Spearritt, p. 80.

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ This series of talks by Professor G. V. Portus from the University of Adelaide was advertised in the *South Australian Countrywoman*, 1 February 1954, p. 2.

Majesty would be travelling with more than one hundred dresses, and that three of her female attendants, including a sewing-maid, would have 'nothing to do but look after her enormous wardrobe'. The fact of these three dedicated staff indicated the importance attached to the Queen's faultless appearance — way beyond an ordinary significance. Miss Macdonald, the chief dresser, kept an eye on the Queen at all times in case a hemline 'dipped or a sleeve wrinkled'. She was also expected to obtain details of the terrain to be encountered over the course of each day, to know whether a day of grassy lanes or official carpets lay ahead, and to advise on appropriate footwear.⁷⁴ Whichever shoes Miss Macdonald chose, they would have been made by Edward Rayne, who had already come to Australia on reconnaissance. The *South Australian Countrywoman* reported in March 1954, that he had preceded the Queen in order to study 'local conditions and climate'.⁷⁵ (In total, the Royal Couple would be accompanied on tour by an entourage of thirty-three staff members bought from England, or thirty-eight including naval personnel. They would also be served by Australians, including the staff of each Government House.⁷⁶ The entourage were divided between secretarial and household staff — the latter including the Queen's three intimate assistants, a maid for each of the ladies-in-waiting, the Duke's valet, Her Majesty's page, three footmen and a hairdresser — and was supervised by ten very uppercrust and much decorated members of senior staff.⁷⁷ Although the press was fascinated by the rank and title of these secondary tourists, they preferred to describe their duties as 'numberless', rather than to enumerate them. I think it was felt that it might

⁷⁴ Anne Matheson, 'She chooses her gowns with unerring care', *Australian Women's Weekly*, 24 January 1954, pp. 19 & 30.

⁷⁵ *South Australian Countrywoman*, 18 March 1954, p. 2.

⁷⁶ A friend of mine remembered that a girl from her home town, near Lakes Entrance in Victoria, had won some kind of competition to be a local lady-in-waiting to the Queen. It turned out that she had served with the Queen's Flight (RAAF) as the Air Hostess to Her Majesty the Queen and replied to my request for an interview with an apology for being unable to divulge any further information because of 'having been in a position of trust' (Mrs Gay Halstead, correspondence, 6 November, 1992).

⁷⁷ The senior members of the touring party were: Press Secretary to Her Majesty the Queen: Commander Richard Colville, C.V.O., D.S.C., R.N.; Private Secretary to Her Majesty the Queen: Major Sir Michael Edward Adeane, K.C.V.O., C.B., M.A.; Private Secretary to His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh: Lieutenant-Commander John M.A. Parker, R.N.; Equerry to Her Majesty the Queen and Master of the Royal Household on Tour: Viscount Althorp (the future father of the future Princess of Wales); Equerry to His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh: Lieut. Jeremy Hall, R.N.Z.N.; Equerry to His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh: Wing-Commander Michael Cowan, R.A.A.F.; Lady-in-Waiting to Her Majesty the Queen: Lady Pamela Mountbatten; Lady-in-Waiting to Her Majesty the Queen: Lady Alice Egerton; Assistant Private Secretary to Her Majesty the Queen: Lieutenant-Colonel The Hon. Martin M. Charteris, M.V.O., O.B.E.; Surgeon specialist: Surgeon-Commander D. Steel-Perkins (from *The Royal Visit to New South Wales*, Oswald Ziegler, Sydney, 1954, pp. 12—13).

take something away from the Queen and Duke to focus on the number of people they had to support their undeniable efforts.)⁷⁸

So, knowing that the Queen would get it right, the media then turned its attention to the public, represented by the invitees. Readers who would not be attending garden parties or balls were nonetheless bombarded with instructions on appropriate wear for the lucky few (although many did stand by the roadside in new clothes). These were almost always cribbed from the Commonwealth Government's little booklet, *The Royal Visit and You*, which was also sold in paper shops.⁷⁹

The introduction to *The Royal Visit and You* demonstrates the thorough intertwining of ideology, dress, and as Spearritt observed, the person of the Queen.

The Commonwealth Government hopes that this little book may help as well as interest you. It will answer many of the questions being asked about dress and procedure during the Royal Visit.

In some measure, it will show you, too, how our young Queen brings, in Burke's words, 'the dispositions that are lovely in private life, into the service and conduct of the Commonwealth'. Our Queen is not only the symbol of a free and unique association of sovereign nations, she enshrines the simple, abiding virtues — of loving home, husband and children.

⁷⁸ The 'numberless' description comes from the *Sunday Telegraph's* Royal Tour Supplement, 31 January 1954, p. 7. The existence of the travelling secretariat, which was responsible for replying to the voluminous correspondence and gifts flowing in from Australians and for assisting the Queen with the constitutional paperwork which arrived from London every week, was rarely mentioned. The duties of other staff were either ignored or diminished. The Ladies-in-Waiting, for example, were said to have only one major problem, which was that they must 'avoid outshining the Queen while remaining smart and well-dressed!'

⁷⁹ This booklet was prepared during 1953, and before it went to print in December General Berryman recommended that the initial print run of 50 000 be doubled. He was influenced by the enthusiasm of the distributors Gordon & Gotch. Alas, in January, even in the midst of media and civic hysteria over the forthcoming tour, the Commonwealth Public Relations Officer, Mr Oliver Hogue, reported to the Director-General that early sales had been sluggish. Correspondence from much later in the year shows that Gordon & Gotch had only sold 48 748 copies, that the remainder had been destroyed, and that the Government was £1 000 short of recouping its expenses. It was concluded in October that the poor sales were the result of competition from too many other sources. All information from correspondence contained in File 825/7/7, Prime Ministers Department, Australian Archives, ACT Regional Office.

Within these paragraphs, costume became a primary means through which Australians were requested to signal their understanding of, and compliance with the principles of constitutional monarchy.

The booklet's two pages on dress codes sorted out the complexities of short afternoon frocks for garden parties and dinner jackets at balls ('which may be worn by anybody not possessing a white tie and tails'). Instructions for men and women were both preceded by Her Majesty's expressed wishes that no one go to unnecessary expense, nor stay away because they had not the correct clothes. The *Catholic Weekly* reproduced all of the advice word for word, under the interpretative headline 'No strict dress rules to meet the Queen'. This seemed to be summed up for the *Weekly* by its own suggestion that full twenty-button gloves would no longer be necessary in the evenings because the Queen had worn the 'more practical sixteen-button length' in New Zealand.⁸⁰ However, the articles in the social pages suggest that few Australians would be fronting up in anything but the absolute best — and also that the media would be monitoring their appearance.

The 'Women's News, Fashion and Gossip' pages in the *Sun* reported that 'Sydney women' were not ordering dresses in either black or magenta for tour occasions, except for Mrs P. J. Manley of Rose Bay who was going to wear her black lace Dior evening gown from Paris. Mrs Sylvia Quist was planning alternative outfits to suit the weather.⁸¹ But there were clearly mildly contradictory feelings in the office, as the same paper which reported these intentions straight-faced and breathless, ran a cartoon in the following week in which an anxious society matron in tiara and pearls is told by her postman, 'I'm afraid there is nothing for you again, Mrs Trimble'.⁸² The *Bulletin*, whose 'Women's Letters' page exuded admiration for ladies planning the most sumptuous ensembles, also published a cartoon in which a bored husband remarks of his wife's new dress, 'I don't suppose the Queen will even notice it!'⁸³

Although fashion was a bigger issue for women, Queen and commoner, men were also expected to make themselves presentable. Prince Philip would be

⁸⁰ These specifications were standard for public functions in the fifties. See Kylie Winkworth, 'Followers of Fashion: dress in the fifties', in *The Australian Dream*, op. cit., especially pp. 64–7, for a discussion on formality in dress.

⁸¹ *Sun*, 20 January 1954, pp. 35–7.

⁸² *Sun*, 26 January 1954, p. 23.

⁸³ *Bulletin*, 9 February 1954, p. 9.

bringing with him fifteen suits, sports clothes, the service dress of each of the armed forces and every kind of hat.⁸⁴ 'Fashion experts' in the *Sun* advised that 'Mr Sydney's Royal rigout' should not include suede shoes, spats, gloves or fancy waistcoats. Again, while these remarks were written in a tone implying that this information was of direct interest to many readers, other parts of the same article take a dig at those who would be fraternising with the visitors. It had just been announced that the Duke had changed his mind about dressing up for a race meeting at Randwick three weeks hence. He would be appearing in a lounge suit, rather than in the more formal morning suit previously indicated, and as the one real *faux pas* that one might make was to outdress royalty, it would be lounge suits all round. The *Sun* told its readers to watch out for the members of the Australian Jockey Club thus affected:

If, on the big day, some of them seem down in the dumps, remember that they have spent about £100, which is what a morning suit costs.⁸⁵

Having captured the 'toffs', the *Sun* also set out to catch another of its favourite targets in the sartorial trap. Communist Alderman Tom Wright was in trouble again when he announced that he would be adhering to the Queen's instructions and making a somewhat informal appearance at the City of Sydney's Royal Ball on 5 February:

'I can't wear a dinner suit because I haven't got one and I've never had one,' he said.

In an article headed 'RED TO WEAR LOUNGE SUIT AT ROYAL BALL', the *Sun* enlisted another member of the Party, ex-alderman Thompson, to reprove his colleague. Mr Thompson had purchased the correct gear. 'I think its the right thing to do,' he said, because 'Labor traditions have changed with the times and there is no reason why any genuine Labor supporter should not wear clothes as good as anybody else's.'⁸⁶ This exchange offers a neat encapsulation of a very real dilemma for the worker's movement, which was played out on other occasions in 1954, and it illustrates the symbolism associated with attire.

⁸⁴ Ian Coster, 'Journey across the world', in *Australia's Royal Welcome*, unpaginated.

⁸⁵ *Sun*, 14 January 1954, p. 21.

⁸⁶ *Sun*, 14 January 1954, p. 3.

Ideological preparation in the press

There was certainly 'ideological' discussion in magazines and newsletters associated with significant communities, and although the extent to which such messages were read can only be a matter of speculation, they were definitely in widespread circulation.

One of the communities I looked to were the Catholics, as the likely opposition of many to the visit of a Protestant Queen suggested that they would have to tackle the Tour 'ideologically'. This yielded uneven results. The *Catholic Advocate* said very little until the tour was due to reach Melbourne, its home city, in early March. Its editors extended many warm greetings towards the Royal Couple, but they had little interest in light-hearted Tour 'news', and were in fact fearful that the emotions being aroused in Australia would prove ephemeral, unless they were harnessed to a 'revival of true teaching about Christian kingship and Christian allegiance' (they referred only to Christianity and Catholicism and the Queen's own religion, Anglicanism, was never named).⁸⁷ The *Advocate's* sturdy support for the monarchy was often expressed in the form of anti-Communist rhetoric, and the conviction that the 'new evils of godless "total" tyranny' were confounded by its popularity.⁸⁸

Sydney's *Catholic Weekly* was more cheerful and earthly, and more concerned to see that the contribution of Catholics to the nation was sufficiently recognised in the form of invitations. It announced with jubilation in January that many prominent Catholics and their wives were going to meet Her Majesty.⁸⁹ Its formulation of the Crown's political value was also more benign than that of the *Advocate*. Since the 'crucible of two world wars' had fused the interests of the sympathetic and dutiful members of the House of Windsor with those of the people, the *Weekly* was looking forward as much as the Prime Minister to the unifying effects of the Royal presence. The warmth of greeting would burn away the signs of political, racial or religious division — 'Labor and Liberal, Old Australian and New Australian, Catholic and Protestant will be indistinguishable'.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ *Catholic Advocate*, 28 February 1954, p. 3.

⁸⁸ *ibid.* See also the editorials in the *Catholic Advocate* on 11 February and 4 March.

⁸⁹ 'Children will See Queen, Nuns will attend Women's Luncheon' (*Catholic Weekly*, 28 January 1954, p. 2). See also the *Catholic Weekly* throughout February 1954 for photographs of Catholics participating in Tour activities.

⁹⁰ *Catholic Weekly*, 28 January 1954, p. 4. These sentiments are similar to those of the *Good Neighbour* (February 1954, p. 1), which wrote that 'differences of religion, social status, political persuasion and way of life disappear in the atmosphere of loyalty to Her Majesty'.

.....

Our welcome to Her Majesty is twofold — for her person
no less than for her royal status.

South Australian Countrywoman, 12 February 1954.

.....

Analysis 'by default' is a tricky business, but it seems to me that the Catholic press in general protested too much. The reality of sectarianism lingers in its politicised language, which is shown to be so in comparison to the vague, consensual, and of course, feminised style of the Countrywomen's Association, a white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant organisation from the heart of 'real Australia'. The CWA knew that it stood within the enchanted circle and didn't need to point it out. Prior to the tour, the South Australian members of the CWA (whose newspaper came my way by chance at the National Library) were mostly concerned with assisting their sisters from the outback to see the Queen in Adelaide, and ran fundraising activities such as a 'Royal afternoon tea' in Nuriootpa. Although there were one or two items on royal fashion, it was not of lesser interest than the Queen's 'fundamental' qualities, identified in the editorial in the December 1953 edition, as her goodness, discipline and dutiful nature. 'She has asked for our assistance in the pursuit of great ideals and practical objectives', which Australian women (who were also referred to as 'British people') could provide by acting to protect and develop their country, maintaining law and order and cultivating 'harmonious relations between all classes of the community'.⁹¹

As a 'non-political' paper, the *South Australian Countrywoman* would not have considered itself the target of the strict press protocols during the Tour. But other publications with obvious political affiliations felt the pressure to modify their style in order to present the temporary appearance of consensus. The price of this fell more heavily on those with a left-wing bent, but even a Cold War warrior like the *Bulletin* was toned down for the occasion. The *Bulletin's* greatest interest in the early fifties was in reporting political controversies, industrial unrest and bureaucratic mistakes, and preferably those which embarrassed the Labor Party. Naturally, it was those facets of the tour that would interest it most, but its editors had to be careful lest they go too far. From January to

⁹¹ *South Australian Countrywoman*, 11 December 1953, p. 1.

April, the *Bulletin* resembled a muzzled dog. Just once in a while it would chew through the restraints and have a good bite.

This led to very mixed reportage, as illustrated in the edition of 3 February. The editorial was rather elevated, an instructional essay on the history and longevity of the Throne. Since Australia's first foundation as a 'civilised country' it had only known the constitutional monarchy as its mode of rule, and it was 'remarkable in itself' that a relationship between Crown and people should survive so long, particularly through a period of 'democratic evolution'. In latter days the remarkable contemporary popularity of the Royal Family, was maintained 'by means of something which cannot be put exactly into words', but was something akin to sentiment, tradition and obligation.⁹² It was only three pages on that this reverent note dropped away. The 'Plain English' page presented some of the 'serio-comic highlights' of tour preparations: an arch above the road at Crows Nest wouldn't arch, and a runaway elephant from the circus had crashed into a rehearsal of some startled Scottish pipers. The 'serio' sandwiched between the comic was an item on police bribery and whether the Premier would be dealing with it before the tour (even the *Bulletin* didn't think it should arise while Her Majesty was here), which returned the reader temporarily to the real world. There was recognition here of the double significance of the Queen's arrival — it would mark not only the temporary cessation of the political rough-and-tumble, but also an associated halt in reporting.⁹³

Further through the magazine, the 'Women's Letters' page reported on pre-tour griping, claiming that Sydney was drowning in 'complaints, protests, grievances and letters to the editor'.⁹⁴ 'Women's Letters' differed in this respect from the women's sections of other general publications and the women's magazines in this regard, as other reporters ignored the existence of any blemishes. The only flaws admitted by the editor of the *Women's Weekly*, who thereby corroborated the impression given in the *Bulletin*, were those caused by people who might be less vocal when complaining,

⁹² *Bulletin*, 3 February 1954, p. 3.

⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 6. In its edition of 6 January 1954 (p. 7) the *Bulletin* also published one of the tiny number of political cartoons pertaining to the tour — before the Queen's arrival of course — depicting Premier Cahill trying frantically to clean up the spills and leaks of scandal and incompetence before Her Majesty can use the bathroom ('Preparing for Visitors', signature of cartoonist illegible).

⁹⁴ *Bulletin*, 3 February 1954, p. 18.

if they realised the amount of organisation involved. Even the paper work is intimidating. Mountains of it. And every sheet of it is necessary.⁹⁵

Although 'Women's Letters' reported extensively on the details of the civic preparations being made, such as the street decorations, it never really mentioned the Queen. Much in line with Spearritt's assertion, its attention was confined to the clothes and coiffures of the society ladies of Sydney and Melbourne. On these pages, the Tour was going to be nothing more or less than a magnificent, public, social event — complete with gossip and illuminated buildings and the chance to wear long evening coats of pearl-grey *velours de laine* and suits of duck-egg blue shantung to garden parties.⁹⁶

The *Australian Women's Weekly*, the best-selling of the women's magazines, saw itself very much as part of the tour, and was pleased to let it be known that it numbered the Queen among its readers. Its writers did not anticipate that their audience would be attending garden parties, so instead it gave them tips on what to look for from the streets — such as the details of the Queen's wardrobe, evidence of her happy marriage and the signs that she was missing her children. The *Women's Weekly* asked not why the Queen cometh, as the value of the tour was self-evident, beyond the possibility of doubt or question, and also veering towards the light and sunny, a 'pleasure trip, not a marathon'.⁹⁷ But the froth and bubble was poured over solid ideological foundations. The *Weekly* might give the impression that Elizabeth Windsor was welcome in Australia on the strength of her personality and wardrobe, but in fact, it was absolutely aware that a reader would never make that mistake, as the Queen's goodness and beauty were inextricable from her position .



'You know, Crawfie, I'd never realised just how much work went on when Papa and Mummie visited some place until I saw it myself behind the scenes. We were polishing and scrubbing and tidying up all day long. Now I know what must go on when they go everywhere. It's something I'll never forget'.

⁹⁵ Dorothy Drain, 'It seems to me', *Australian Women's Weekly*, 27 January 1954, p. 27.

⁹⁶ *Bulletin*, 24 February 1954, p. 18.

⁹⁷ Anne Matheson, 'The Queen tired? Nonsense!', *Australian Women's Weekly*, 20 January 1954, p. 23.

Marion Crawford, *Our Queen Visits Australia and New Zealand*, 1954.⁹⁸



Planning for spontaneity

If the ideological groundwork for the royal presence had been truly apparent since the Coronation, the physical preparations became the stuff of regular news by the end of 1953, when the first flurries of painting, cleaning and planting began. Editors enjoyed the sight of the country on the go, and journalists were sent out and about, including rural areas, to report on refurbishments. The ABC sent a reporter to Lismore in New South Wales to see 'how a township prepares for a Queen', and another to a property in Tasmania where the Royal Party would stop for the night, while *A. M.* magazine described how a lick of paint had transformed Bathurst's Town Hall from a 'muddy little horror' to a 'French *chateau*'. Reporter Ian Lindsay concluded that it was

a pity the Queen doesn't come to Australia every year to give a much-needed facelift to our drab cities and country towns.⁹⁹

The story of the Goorambat Railway station hints broadly at the extent of the bustle. The Queen was to sleep overnight in the Royal train in a siding at Goorambat (a tiny town in northern Victoria) on 4 March but would not be alighting from her carriage. Even so, the Victorian Railways Dept. would send a team of men out to give the station a lick of paint before her arrival, and had truckloads of attractive white gravel brought in from sixty miles away and spread over the tracks.¹⁰⁰ The papers were full of little else but such stories throughout January: the erection of decorations and illuminations, rehearsals for pageants, preparations for parades and carnivals in every town and municipality, the selection of little girls to present bouquets, and the purchasing of clothes. *A. M.* columnist Alan Milgate struck a rare dissenting note with the observation that there was 'something a shade dishonest' about all the spit and polish being applied. The Queen would not be seeing everyday

⁹⁸ The young Princess made this remark after the King and Queen had inspected her ATS unit during the war.

⁹⁹ Ian Lindsay, 'City of the Plains gets Royal facelift', *A. M.*, 9 February 1954, pp. 24—5.

¹⁰⁰ *Herald* (Melbourne), 5 March 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook.

Australia, and to his mind this constituted a 'criticism of our general community way of life'.

We're prepared to slummock along and it actually needs the advent of the Queen, a most rare event, to induce us to pull our socks up, even in a limited way.¹⁰¹

Although this argument may contain a twist — a sarcastic reproach against this very way of life — Milgate argued that the 'ermine curtain' of pomp and paint would diminish the enjoyment of Queen and people. He claimed that this was a widely held view in the community.

It is interesting that the day of the Queen's arrival was also the day that the attention to physical foundations and underpinnings ended. From then on, the presentation of the tour was as if it transcended elbow-grease, and was powered instead by the spiritual majesty and popularity of the monarchy. The hardback souvenir books subsequently issued, the self-constituted 'historical records' of the Visit, also confined themselves strictly to the appearance of the visit and ignored the history of its inner workings. Guy Debord has written of the mass spectacles in the modern world that they defy separation into their component parts, as their 'monopoly of appearance' is all.¹⁰²

When I started conducting interviews, I didn't think to ask for recollections of the organisation, and few interviewees spontaneously supplied memories of any planning other than their own — although some referred to a general kerfuffle. Gregor Ramsay remembered the rehearsals for a flag-opening ceremony into which he had been drafted, Loch Townsend recalled the commissioning of music for the commemorative movie *The Queen in Australia*, and Bruce Webber doing his homework for the ABC, but even they were only concerned with the details of their own participation. The homemade stories in the scrapbooks of Margaret Ryan and Jane Lawry also began on the day of landing in Sydney Harbour; and while June Leonard followed the Queen's progress from Britain through the Caribbean and the Pacific (and so was, in other words, collecting material in the relevant period), she also decided against including any items on Australia's preparations, as thought they had no legitimate part in her story.

¹⁰¹ Alan Milgate, 'Are we misleading the Queen?', *A. M.*, 2 February 1954, p. 19.

¹⁰² Debord, pp. 11–12.

During her speech to the Parliament of New South Wales State on 4 February, the day after her arrival, the Queen expressed her appreciation of the welcome of the day before, 'so cordial and spontaneous' that she would always remember it.¹⁰³ 'Spontaneity' was immediately entered into the lexicon of the tour, where it not only served the interests of the Crown but also sat nicely with the image of a youthful, dynamic nation.

Expenses

The other forgotten foundation of the Royal Visit was money. The ambitious program was going to be costly, and nowhere more than in the national capital, Canberra. Commonwealth Treasurer Artie Fadden was sufficiently concerned by December 1953 to write to the Prime Minister with the information that the rough estimate for Canberra's share of the visit had already risen to almost £95 000 (the equivalent sum in 1995 would have been \$1 926 600).¹⁰⁴ This sum included substantial provisions for street decorations and illuminations, for the refurbishment of Parliament House, for the state banquet, overtime and additional staff for the Department of Parks and Gardens, while smaller amounts were allocated for street barriers, police car radios, printing, transport and fireworks. This total compared badly with the Victorian government's smaller budget for a longer visit. 'You are doubtless satisfied that the proposed expenditure is consistent with the special role of the Commonwealth in the Australian Capital Territory', wrote Fadden, knowing perfectly well that Menzies desired the finest possible display, but clearly wishing to protect his own position should 'it become necessary to seek an additional appropriation from Parliament'.¹⁰⁵

This had in fact, already happened once, as Parliament's initial allocation of \$5 million (all further figures are given in 1995 equivalences) had already been increased to just over \$6 million — of which roughly one-third was to pay for the cost of illuminating Government buildings across the country.¹⁰⁶ This sum did not include an additional \$4 million which had been the Australian

¹⁰³ ABC 4 February 1954, 12.30 pm bulletin.

¹⁰⁴ 1954/1995 dollar equivalences (for September 1995) are calculated by doubling the original figure in pounds and multiplying the resulting sum by 10.14. Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Consumer Price Index, ABS Cat 6401.0, 1954-1995 equivalents*.

¹⁰⁵ A. W. Fadden, letter to R. G. Menzies, 29 December 1953. File no 825/2/59, Prime Minister's Department, Australian Archives, ACT Regional Office.

¹⁰⁶ E. J. Harrison, letter to R. G. Menzies, 4 December 1953. File no 825/2/59, Prime Minister's Department, Australian Archives, ACT Regional Office.

Government's share of the hire of the *Gothic* from the Shaw Savill line.¹⁰⁷ The Federal Government therefore spent more than \$11 million on direct expenses, without even counting the loss of revenue from various sales tax exemptions which were intended to encourage businesses and shops to decorate their premises. State governments spent many millions more, and the public expenditure continued right down to the municipal level. Botany Council in Sydney, for example, through whose precincts the Queen merely passed, allocated \$30 000 to decorations and \$20 000 to endow a cot at the local children's hospital in commemoration of the Visit, while Lismore, on the north coast of New South Wales spent more than \$100 000 on a visit little more than an hour in duration.¹⁰⁸

It would be inconceivable today that public expenditure of so many millions would attract so very little demur as in 1954. Only the Communist Party and the Maritime Worker's Union registered any protest at the cost of playing host to the Queen, and these were confined to terse remarks in their own publications that there were surely projects of greater social value on which money could have been spent.¹⁰⁹ It was very rare for any figures at all to be circulated through the mainstream press. Not only would this have been regarded as tasteless in the presence of the visitors, but in much the same vein as with the preparations, it would also have endangered the presentation of spontaneity.

This silence continues through into memory. One of the first 'patterns' to emerge from my interviews about the 1954 Tour was how little people were concerned about its cost. The only person to raise it with me was Peg O'Brien, who felt quite strongly that it wasn't a matter I ought to be dragging up at this late stage:

Nobody ever queried it. The Queen was coming! Who cared who paid for it? I don't know who paid for it. I suppose we must have paid part of it, anyway... but on

¹⁰⁷ Noted in correspondence from W. R. Cumming, ACT Tour Director, to R. G. Menzies, 1 December 1953. File no 825/2/59, Prime Minister's Department, Australian Archives, ACT Regional Office. This figure was also reported in the *Maritime Worker*, 2 March 1954, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ Figures for Botany were given in the *Australian Women's Weekly*, 24 February 1954, p. 18; for Lismore see the *Herald* (Melbourne), 11 February 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook. The Queen and Duke actually stayed in Lismore overnight, but their official engagements lasted only for an hour and fifteen minutes.

¹⁰⁹ *Tribune* (2 February 1954, p. 1) published photographs of a 'decorated arch' contrasting with a 'sub-standard' home to make the point that all the tinsel in the world wouldn't hide the slums and the housing shortage in nearby Woolloomooloo.

the day nobody cared who was paying for what. Nobody cared at all.¹¹⁰

I was surprised that expenses were not mentioned spontaneously by any other interviewee, as these conversations took place in an era where the expense of Royal visits had become an issue of public concern, and even of protest. When the matter was put to them, many agreed that they objected to spending large sums on royalty today, but remained unconcerned and even uninterested about the price tag on 1954.

The media's own preparations

Valerie Lawson has described the 1954 tour as the 'climax of an era of press supremacy' (it was the same for radio too, of course) because it was only two years afterward that television became available to Australians and 'the power of moving pictures in the living-room' quickly superseded the old excitement of a blockbuster headline.¹¹¹

There was a close and productive relationship between the media and the state and Federal governments in Australia. The Premier of Tasmania made an explicit statement on its value in a printed letter of welcome to visiting journalists.

We know that the visit of Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh will bathe this Island in a blaze of publicity that will be reflected around the world. Of prime importance, therefore, is the work of the men and women who have the honour to record the cavalcade of pageantry against its splendid background of love and loyal enthusiasm.

Our Royal Tour staff will give you all the help you need and I hope you will take away happy memories of your stay in this other England of the Southern Cross.¹¹²

As to the other side, David Chaney has written that the mass media had already become interdependent on civic ritual (including Royal ritual) by the

¹¹⁰ Peg O'Brien, interview, 14 April 1992.

¹¹¹ Valerie Lawson, *Connie Sweetheart*, Heinemann, Sydney, 1990, p. 283.

¹¹² Constance Robertson collection, Mitchell Library (Sydney), ML MSS 1105/4.

nineteen-fifties.¹¹³ The central attraction of such events to media producers was that they took the form of spectacular displays and that their audiences were guaranteed. 'There is an easy combination of news as happening with dramatic sequencing so that the twin criteria of immediacy and relevance are self-evidently satisfied'.¹¹⁴ (This was indeed to be the case in Australia in 1954. The *Newspaper News* reported in March — halfway into the Tour — that there had been an 'extraordinary demand for newspapers and periodicals, and ordinary circulations have increased in some cases by as much as 50 per cent'.)¹¹⁵

For these reasons of mutual benefit, the presence of the press was facilitated from the beginning to the end of the tour. The Commonwealth Government had made an agreement with media proprietors that they would provide certain services for the one hundred accredited journalists. There would be cars for a limited number in Royal progresses (reporters usually made up the final third of the parade), transportation to and from functions, and 'parlour coaches' around the countryside when the Queen was in a rural area. The official in charge of the Royal Baggage was also made responsible for the luggage of journalists. Anne Matheson described it as 'sheer bliss' to 'never have to lift even my handbag if I didn't want to', although other reporters later complained that they had to have their suitcases ready by 3.30 am and had to sleep without their pyjamas.¹¹⁶

Accredited journalists were issued with general passes in each state, and with entrée cards to specific events. Mrs Connie Robertson covered the tour for the women's section of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Her collected papers are now in the Mitchell Library, in Sydney, and include an envelope containing about forty cards. These cards, prepared and issued well in advance, allowed admittance to church services, to women's receptions, schoolchildren's displays, balls, receptions, council chambers, railway platforms and to the press enclosure outside Heidelberg hospital in South Australia. Most contain information and

¹¹³ David Chaney, 'A symbolic mirror of ourselves: civic ritual in mass society' in *Media, Culture and Society*, R. Collins, J. Curran, N. Garnham, P. Scannell, P. Schlesinger & C. Sparks (eds), Sage, London, 1986, p. 249.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 250.

¹¹⁵ *Newspaper News*, 1 March 1954, p. 1.

¹¹⁶ Anne Matheson, 'Her smile makes it all worth while', *Australian Women's Weekly*, 17 February 1954, p. 20. The complaints appeared in the evidence of journalist Elwyn Spratt before the Industrial Commission during the *Metropolitan Dailies Case* (this was the popular name given to the *Australian Journalists Association v Metropolitan Dailies' Newspaper Proprietors (Associated Newspapers and Others)*, 16 December 1953- 15 July 1955). Mr Spratt's remarks were reported in *The Journalist*, August 1954, p. 3.

instructions about parking and dress requirements. It was not just a matter of one card produced for each event either: there were different passes to reflect a different level of access for officials, journalists and guests, and often there was a hierarchy of guests as well. Not everybody would be admitted to supper or to dance.

Because of their incorporation into the Tour in this way, the media were issued with instructions to wear their best at all times. But when reporters approached management for financial assistance, most were underwhelmed with the response. Connie Robertson reckoned that she would need 'three dresses, a cocktail dress, top coat, hat, suit, formal ballgown and two pairs of long, white kid gloves' to get her through the two months. She requested £200 from the *Herald* but had to make do with a quarter of that sum. Members of the Commonwealth Film Unit did better than private sector colleagues, as to their astonishment, the Department of the Interior agreed to stand the reckoning for two suits each, 'dark and sober', which were then worn by cameramen and sound recordists carting heavy equipment from one end of the country to the other.¹¹⁷



Many of our members will not have the opportunity of seeing Your Majesty, but through the medium of radio will follow Your Majesty's progress through Australia as keenly and with as loyal devotion as those in the large centres through which Your Majesty passes.

The South Australian Countrywoman.¹¹⁸



In February 1953, the Australian Broadcasting Commission established a Commonwealth Planning Committee and thus the 'biggest undertaking of its type in the history of Australian broadcasting' was commenced.¹¹⁹ The ABC and the Federation of Commercial Broadcasters agreed, for the first time, to pool their resources, and combined committees in each of the states met frequently throughout the following year with tour organisers in order to get

¹¹⁷ Loch Townsend, interview, 24 October 1991.

¹¹⁸ *South Australian Countrywoman*, 12 March 1954, p. 3.

¹¹⁹ A. N. Finlay, 'Broadcasting the Royal Tour', *ABC Weekly*, 30 January 1954, p. 2.

things right. The Post-Master General's department (the PMG) was to play a crucial role, providing custom-built equipment and landlines across the country. For the PMG, too, it would be the biggest assignment it had ever been called upon to handle, and preparations had been underway for the previous three years.¹²⁰

Wherever the Queen would go on official business, the ABC would go with her. A small team of core presenters, headed by Bruce Webber and Ida Elizabeth Jenkins would follow her around the country. These two were also going to present a nightly bulletin with highlights from the Royal day. On the first day to be spent in each of the capital cities they would be assisted by a team of public and commercial broadcasters fanned out along the route of the Queen's progress. There would be four hundred broadcasting points established throughout the country and commentators would use special landlines, modern 'walkie-talkies' and a fleet of 'fast mobile trucks' to fill an estimated seventy miles of tape over two months.¹²¹ The core commentary team was to be split in two, and the teams were to leapfrog each other from centre to centre, so that regional commentators would always be in the company of someone experienced in the protocols of Royal broadcasting. Webber and Jenkins received special coaching in these from Audrey Russell, 'a very articulate lady who could immediately launch into an intimate description of the Queen's attire from a glance', and the 'ace of British commentators', Wynford Vaughan Thomas.¹²² In the larger centres, the core commentary would be augmented by descriptions from roving reporters out among the crowds.

The ABC also sought to get the public in the mood by broadcasting 'programmes with a Royal flavour' throughout January. These included specially selected plays, a series of talks (such as 'The Queen's Contemporaries' on Sunday afternoons, in which young people described their lives and expressed their hopes for the 'new Elizabethan age'), music arranged in honour of the visit, and a children's serial, 'To See the Queen' which was broadcast four nights a week. The plot revolved around the trial of a group of outback children who wanted to see the Queen pass by the nearest railway signal box,

¹²⁰ *ibid.*

¹²¹ *ABC Weekly*, 30 January 1954, p. 12.

¹²² Bruce Webber, interview, June 1993.

one hundred miles away. On their way they had to brave a swollen river, a sinister swaggie and a bushfire.¹²³

.....

In newspaper offices the news of the rest of the world is beginning to recede as the Royal visit looms larger and larger.

Australian Women's Weekly, 27 January 1954.

.....

The journey begins

The Queen and Prince Philip departed from London airport on 23 November 1953. They said good-bye to their children on a cold and foggy Autumn night, and alighted from the plane into the brilliant sunshine of Bermuda on the following morning. Several days later, they embarked on the *Gothic*, a liner hired from the Shaw Savill company, and began their slow journey through the Panama Canal and down to the southern seas.

The countdown to Australia's Q-day — the Queen's arrival in Sydney on 3 February — began in earnest on 17 December, as the *Gothic* berthed in Fiji. News of the tour moved slowly up in importance from prominent to dominant in both papers and periodicals. These early stages were regarded as the 'exotic' leg of the trip, and the papers printed pictures of dark-skinned persons in grass skirts or other titillating garments, and patronising descriptions of native foods and customs.¹²⁴ On 23 December, the ship pulled into berth at Auckland's Central Wharf, and finally, as far as the Australian media, and probably the Australian public were concerned, the real business of the Tour was on at last. The native world was relegated to its proper place, as the happy business of

¹²³ *ABC Weekly*, 2 January 1954, p. 2.

¹²⁴ The Daily Telegraph's commemorative book, *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand*, reproduced much of this in a concentrated form. (see pp. 7—15 for hula girls, men wearing skirts, native superstitions and exotic banquets eaten with the fingers). Men's magazines such as *Man* and *Man Junior* were very keen on photographs of bare-breasted Island maidens, and children got a heavy dose of non-erotic exotica. A typical example, the *Commonwealth and Empire Annual* in 1954 (my cousin Janice received a copy as a Christmas present), had a lot of stories about earlier sovereigns and other English institutions, interspersed with articles titled 'The magic of Ceylon' and 'Buganda fetes its ruler', which had photographs of people with silly names: Mutesa II, the Kabaka, celebrating with his wife, the Nabajereka and their friend, the Omukama of neighbouring Ankore (Percy Gawthorn, *Commonwealth and Empire Annual* 1954, Gawthorn Press, London, 1953, pp. 97—101).

demonstrating the progress of the paler races commenced. The Queen and Prince spent a month amidst very large crowds of excited New Zealanders, inspecting the factories and farms of their farthest-flung dominion, performing investitures and attending a staggering number of civic receptions.¹²⁵

As if they just couldn't help themselves, the Australian tabloid papers, agitated and more than ready for Her Majesty to arrive, used the pace of the New Zealand tour as their excuse for one last sensational shot. The *Truth* began with a front page headline on 3 January, screaming 'QUEENS AUST. TOUR SHOULD BE PRUNED NOW'. The *Truth* asserted that she was feeling the strain from an incessant round of engagements, particularly those involving 'pomp and ceremony', and illustrated its point with a row of little photographs — '6 PICTURES AND NOT ONE SMILE!'

In the view of the *Truth*, the itinerary prepared by Australian organisers was nothing but a blueprint for a 'nonsensical and unpardonable' tour. The organisers had forgotten that they were dealing with a 'genteel, young Englishwoman', and not some roughened politician. 'They have set her a split-second schedule of travel by air, rail and road that would tax the hardest male'.¹²⁶ How the world would censure us if the strain should prove 'too great'! A dramatic curtain was drawn across the interesting possibilities here. The same vague fears appeared in other publications but mostly in a secondary form. English journalists and politicians were 'reported' to be alarmed by the ordeal which lay before the Queen. There was so much criticism that Eric Harrison, the Minister-in-Charge of the Tour, felt compelled to make an advance assurance to the British Government that all would be well.¹²⁷

Only the women's magazines could really control the situation, and they were absolutely sanguine about Her Majesty's endurance. In their world of palace correspondents and royal-books, the stamina of the Queen was axiomatic. It arose from her unswerving dedication to the cause of constitutional monarchy, her tireless performance of the duties required therein, and a goodly dose of traditional female endurance. The *Women's Weekly* came into town like the cavalry, and with her usual tone of womanly common sense, Miss Matheson

¹²⁵ Jock Phillips provides a full, warm and thoughtful account of the New Zealand Tour in *Royal Summer*, passim.

¹²⁶ *Truth*, (Sydney), 3 January 1954, p. 1.

¹²⁷ *The Dawn*, January 1954, p. 12. *The Dawn* was the monthly magazine of the Aborigines Protectorate board in New South Wales, and it quite often carried 'royal news' in the fifties.

reported from New Zealand that the only thing threatening to upset the Queen were these baseless stories:

Every woman knows how a well-intended remark that one is not looking well, when in fact one is feeling on top of the world, sends her rushing to the mirror. So you can imagine how the Queen feels. The reports are niggling and their repetition could be harmful.¹²⁸

The truth, said Matheson, who knew what real royal reportage looked like, was that of all the touring party the Queen was the one with the most self-discipline and energy. Supernatural stamina was sustained by the interaction between sovereign and subject: *she* was inspired by *their* adulation, which arose from their appreciation of *her* unflagging interest in *them*. However, Matheson did attempt to instruct her readers on the right way to behave in front of royalty, as there *had* been incidents of pushing, gawking and shouting in New Zealand. The *Sun*'s Frederick Nossal also felt that there were lessons from a rather 'poor show' from some of the crowds across the Tasman, which *Pix* codified into 'Dos and Don'ts for the Australian Tour', such as not talking 'the Queen blind' if introduced, not shouting or rushing at her, and not making audible remarks about her appearance.¹²⁹

This smorgasbord of practical, political and ideological matters was still being laid as the *Gothic* was pulling away from the southern island of New Zealand on the morning of 30 January. As she headed out to sea, she left behind the mingled noise of cheers and music. 'This is like a family farewell', thought one observer. 'Then you looked back over the weeks of welcome and acclaim and you realised that it had been altogether a family affair'.¹³⁰ And so, finally, it was only a matter of days before big sister could have her turn too.

¹²⁸ Matheson, 'The Queen tired? Nonsense!', p. 21.

¹²⁹ *Pix*, 6 February 1954, p. 21; *Sun*, 25 January 1954, p. 13; and *Australian Women's Weekly*, 3 February 1954, p. 9. *The Royal Tour and You* also gave advice on etiquette for those introduced to the Royal couple at functions.

¹³⁰ Phillips, p. 80.

 CHAPTER 4

Never were Sydney's flowers so fair...¹

The story of the welcome and of the royal progress through the streets of Sydney will be told in many ways and through many a lifetime, but mere words will never convey the brilliance and wonder of it all.

Catholic Weekly, 4 February 1954.

Unexpected emotion burst forth on the Queen's long-awaited arrival in Australia on 3 February, on a day of tumult, carnival and wonder which provided many of the best-remembered, or defining images of the Tour. Many of the dominant themes and patterns of the following two months emerged immediately, as the media established its interest in the reactions of migrants, women, veterans and children, and provided the first articulations of the importance of the long historic connection between Royalty and Australia.

On the eve

Sydney slept badly on the night before the Queen's arrival. People were up late, preparing food and laying out their clothes, knowing all the while that they had better be on the road by six o'clock if they were going to get a decent view. My Auntie Nell and her friends had made their arrangements weeks ago, after the route of the 'Royal Progress' had been published in the newspapers. They'd secured a vantage point on the verandah of a building where the friend of a friend was working, but they might also seek out an acquaintance who had hired a table-top truck to park by the side of the road.²

¹ From the poem, 'Queen of Australia', by Swilliam, *Bulletin*, 3 February 1954, p. 6. The poem concludes with the lines 'Such is your spell on flowers and stones and men/That Sydney mortals never may see again'.

² Nell Hannon, interview, 1989.

Some were put off by the thought of the crowds. The police and other public officials had issued so many instructions on transportation, suggestions for sensible refreshments (so many people brought Tupperware lunches into town that the restaurants had a very bad day instead of the anticipated bonanza) and warnings about safety in crowds that people began to feel they'd be taking their life in their hands to venture into town. It was daunting to learn that two thousand police, one thousand St John's Ambulance workers, twenty eight ambulances, seventy eight first aid stations, two hundred and twenty temporary bubblers and a large number of temporary public conveniences — mostly for females — were regarded as essential for the smooth running of the day.³ It certainly led many to leave their children at home. Peg and Bill O'Brien brought their two elder daughters in from Baulkham Hills (they were aged about four and six), but only because they had a place in the stands. They left the other kids with neighbours who had little ones themselves. 'If you didn't have seating I think it would have been a dreadful crush,' said Peg.⁴

My great-grandmother, seventy years old, was also fearful of this possibility. She stayed at home by the wireless with her daughter-in-law and a cousin, who were both recovering from surgery. But even some of the able-bodied were discouraged from attending — John O'Sullivan told me in a letter that he and his brother-in-law decided that 'the crowd situation would be far too difficult for our womenfolk' so they left their wives at home in Manly and soldiered forth on their behalf.⁵

Most Sydneysiders, though, could not have been kept away by wild horses. The police estimated that more than one million people saw the Queen that day, either in Farm Cove for the official welcome or along the city streets later on (and many saw her twice). The *Sydney Morning Herald* added to this figure another half million in the eastern suburbs and on the northern side of the Harbour who were crowded into 'every foreshore vantage point from the Heads to the Bridge'.⁶

³ *Sun*, 21 January 1954, p. 7. As this is the story of Sydney's day, I'm concentrating on the coverage in two of its own newspapers — the *Sydney Morning Herald* (referred to throughout as the *Herald*) and the *Sun*, an afternoon paper and one of Sydney's three tabloids. Most material from the *Sun* is from the afternoon of arrival, while the *Herald* came out on the following morning.

⁴ Peg O'Brien, interview, 14 April 1992.

⁵ John O'Sullivan, correspondence, 31 May 1993.

⁶ This one and a half million was just the number that the NSW Department of Government Transport had been using as its maximum assessment for planning purposes. *Herald*, 4 February 1954, p. 1.

This extraordinary congregation grew from a small gathering of about two hundred who arrived at Farm Cove in the middle of the afternoon with the intention of sleeping out. They had become four thousand by nightfall, with a further two thousand camping down in Hyde Park and Martin Place (lying three deep across the pavement in a 'cheerful and expectant mood' according to the *Herald*, although the tabloids, which had later editions, were able to report that they were sprayed by water carts washing the roads later on and spent the rest of the night in damp rugs and blankets).⁷ The *Sun* put the total across the city at sixty thousand, with eight of those gathered around Mrs Macquarie's Chair, several thousand more asleep on boats in the harbour, and the rest dispersed throughout the inner city. The photographs of these *al fresco* parties show people of all sorts lying cheek by jowl on a magic midsummer's eve, which was lit like fairyland by the glow of tilly lamps and the flicker of a thousand cigarettes.

Newspaper reporters roamed the streets for human interest stories. One found father and son, Mr George Gordon of Lakemba and six-year-old Allen, sleeping under a streetlight in William Street, in Kings Cross. Well, Allen was apparently sleeping peacefully enough, but his father was tossing and turning on the pavement when the journalist turned up.

'It's Allen's idea, so I had to be in it,' Mr Gordon said.
'We're holding a possie for my other two children and my brother with his four kids. They'll be along at 6 am with our breakfast.'⁸

The *Sun* also spoke to two women sleeping on the street outside their own homes in Surry Hills in order to save space for thirty-five youngsters. A Mrs Rogers told the reporter that she didn't mind the discomfort because a glimpse of their young Queen would be 'something the children will never forget'.⁹ Three large families had come one hundred miles from Cooranbong, near Newcastle, and were photographed picnicking near the Botanic Gardens among their pillows and blankets. Mrs Eileen Murray was another out-of-towner, who'd arrived with three young children from Bargo in the southern highlands. They were going to sleep out overnight, and party through the following day and evening before catching the paper train home at two o'clock

⁷ *Herald*, 3 February 1954, p. 1; and *Sun*, 3 February 1954, p. 7.

⁸ *Sun*, *ibid.*

⁹ *ibid.*

in the following morning. They were sitting near school friends Lorna Dunn and Jean Fleming, one from Tamworth in northern New South Wales and the other from central Queensland, who had decided months before to spend their annual leave together on this pilgrimage.¹⁰



People were very well-conducted. They were so overawed to think that for the first time royal people had put their foot on Australian soil.

Nell Hannon, interview, 1989.



A midsummer morning

When the sun came up the campers stowed their gear away and crowded in ten-deep behind the barriers around the official enclosure, just ahead of the rest of the city. There were already a quarter of a million people lined along the coast at half-past five, when a smudge of smoke on the horizon showed the *Gothic* on her way. Surfboat crews and lone board riders set out to sea to offer an unofficial escort (and the first of many unforeseen, boisterous gestures of hospitality to unnerve organisers in the months to come).

As the misty water-colours of dawn faded before the blazing oils of a perfect summer day, and the royal masthead drew slowly into view, authorities in the harbour whipped a rabble of boats into two great lines, a floating corridor for the Queen. Big and little ships, flying a half million flags, were so close together that she could have walked ashore. The tour correspondent for Britain's *News Chronicle* had never seen such so many ships at one time — '£7 million worth of them and all packed to the gunwales with excited Australians'.¹¹ As the *Gothic* steamed between the Heads at eight o'clock there was a thunderous roar on the water, a mighty hosanna of cheers and sirens, foghorns and whistles, and an echo overhead as six RAAF Mustangs and six Vampire jet fighters gave a Royal salute to their supreme commander. She was here at last and the rest of

¹⁰ *Herald*, 4 February 1954, p. 7.

¹¹ This had been republished by an Australian newspaper, dateline 'London, Feb 3', which I found on an unmarked clipping in a Royal Tour scrapbook in the possession of the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney.

Australia knew it from the wireless. Gwen Badgery, who had stayed at home in Collaroy on Sydney's northern beaches, wrote to her daughter —

I can hear and can picture the wonderful scenes on this *perfect* day from the time the Royal yacht Gothic came in the Heads, both on the bridge. I mean the Queen and Duke.¹²

The ABC's Bruce Webber still believes that this first day of broadcasting was 'the highlight of actuality radio in the Australian experience', a triumph for a generation of commentators able to fire the imagination through their skill at drawing pictures out of words.¹³ Talbot Duckmanton held the floor from the deck of the *Gothic* from early dawn, until handing over to commercial broadcaster Eric Baume, soaring above him in a helicopter, for a noisy, ebullient account of the progress through the Harbour. The man on Fort Denison took over as the boat berthed, and another saw Her Majesty right to the edge of the landing pontoon, before throwing to the trio of Webber, Ida Elizabeth Jenkins, and Harry Durth who would describe her landing at Farm Cove.¹⁴ Throughout the day, the ABC would make news out of its own national audience, reporting that everyday business had stopped in the Northern Territory's native settlements, in country towns like Kempsey and cities such as Melbourne.¹⁵

Webber 'was consumed with nerves', and these were made worse by a pause between nine o'clock when the *Gothic* weighed anchor in Athol Bight and the Queen leaving for the shore just after ten (the symbolism of arrival clustered around Australian soil rather than Australian waters). The Governor-General, Sir William Slim, and Lady Slim went aboard at half-past nine, and were followed by the Governor of New South Wales, the Prime Minister and the Premier. Returning to shore with members of the Royal Household, they took up position on the landing pontoon with Federal and State Cabinet Ministers, Opposition Leaders, city aldermen (including the communist, Tom Wright),

¹² Toni Mackenzie (ed.), *Mother stayed at home*, Pan, Sydney, 1989, p. 46.

¹³ Bruce Webber, June 1993.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ ABC, 4 February 1954, various bulletins (all references to ABC bulletins are to typewritten transcripts of national bulletins which have been compiled into two bound volumes titled *Royal Tour Queen Elizabeth II*. These are held in ABC Radio's Federal Reference library in Sydney). The *Herald* (4 February 1954, p. 12) also reported of Kempsey, on the mid-North Coast of New South Wales, that 'not even for a few minutes on Melbourne Cup day had there been such a lack of interest in everyday routine'.

dignitaries from the church, the law and the services, the Tour Directors and the Commissioner of Police — the first seventy-two of an estimated thirteen thousand hands to be shaken by the Queen in Australia. The gold braid of the navy stood out against the dark morning dress of Federal Ministers, the suits of New South Wales, and the robes of the council, heavy as lead under the piercing sun. Like a scene from a Shakespearian play in the fancy of the *Herald*, and the comparison was enhanced when a swarm of workmen unfurled a long red carpet patterned with the *fleur-de-llys*, and knelt down solemnly to pick out all the fluff.¹⁶

People in the ever-swelling hordes along the foreshores watched these comings and goings — and the Duke of Edinburgh prowling the deck in shorts — as they whiled away the morning. Spectators on the Harbour Bridge spilled onto the northern side of the harbour all the way to Taronga Park Zoo, where the *cognoscenti* crowded into the old monkey pit for a prime view across the water.¹⁷ My mother was over in the Domain by this time, brought in early by her step-father ('a returned soldier and terribly pro-Menzie's and Liberal Party and pro-Empire'). Nancy Ray was also there, a six o'clock arrival standing just behind the campers in the Botanic Gardens. Later in the week she wrote a lengthy and amusing letter to her parents in Bathurst about the outbreak of 'Elizabethan fever'.¹⁸

The people of King's Cross, just a mile or so away, had heard the early noise from the Harbour rise and then subside. The Cross fell with it into a potent hush, a silence laced with palpable expectation that continued over several hours even as people came out of their houses and on to the streets with kitchen chairs and portable radios. The Queen and Duke would come by on their 'Progress' around eleven, and by half-past nine there were people jammed like sardines on the footpath and in all the windows overhead. Journalist Marien Dreyer stood on the crowded balcony of a friend's cafe (the next verandah down held a newsreel camera and a radio commentator), and every roof she saw was bristling with heads, 'like birds on a fence.'¹⁹ Like other suburbs on the Queen's route, the Cross was painted and primed, and adorned with flags, paper crowns and other gay embellishments from the department

¹⁶ *Herald*, 4 February 1954, p. 1.

¹⁷ *Australian Women's Weekly*, 10 February 1954, p. 18.

¹⁸ Nancy Hunt (nee Ray) sent me a typed copy of the letter originally sent to her parents in 1954 after the Queen had departed from Sydney (correspondence, 4 July 1990).

¹⁹ Marien Dreyer, 'In 20 languages Kings Cross roared ... "Here's our Queen!"', *New Idea*, 3 March 1954, p. 7.

stores.²⁰ Ladders were everywhere, alternating with precarious towers of tables, chairs and even ironing boards and prams. The spivs raised the price on fruit boxes just before ten and latecomers paid ten shillings for their only chance to see the Queen go by. The police, contrary to instructions, let it all happen. Perhaps they hadn't the heart to intervene, or perhaps they didn't have the bottle.²¹

One of the main reasons for despatching reporters to Kings Cross was because of its rich ethnic mix. Marien Dreyer's cafe owner was Greek, and from the vantage point of his balcony she was able to see that excited New Australians made up half the crowd (the police estimated the proportion at one-third). A 'little Greek lass' confided to her that her husband knew the man who had filleted the whiting for the royal breakfast that morning, 'and was overjoyed that she had some contact with the Tour, however remote'.²² Andrea, the well-known gossip columnist for the *Truth*, was racing around the city for a word with 'Italians, Yugoslavs, Indians, Czechs, Germans, Siamese, Chinese and ONE Jap ... it was good to see and they were wildly vocal'.²³ The *Herald's* article on the 'foreign community' reported on a Polish woman who said that she was not yet naturalised but wanted to see her Queen, two Chinese sisters named Woo, and a Viennese pensioner selling balloons. Hungarian-born Joseph Losoncz had been up all night supplying hot dogs to the campers. 'We Australians certainly love our Queen', he said. 'Do you know, I never saw such patriotism'.²⁴ (One can still 'hear' the bewilderment in his voice — Rohan Rivett wrote some twelve years later that many migrants had been taken aback by the fervour of 1954, as even those who had lived here for years were startled by this surge of public emotion.)²⁵

A moment in history

Attention returned to the Harbour just after ten, when the fire float *Benelong* was sent to clear a path from the *Gothic* to the shore. The *Herald* and the *Sun*

²⁰ Decorations had been made exempt from sales tax for the occasion, and householders across the country had been exhorted by civic authorities to decorate their premises. For an example of encouragement, see November 1953 press release from the Public Works Department in Victoria, 'How people can help to complete the welcome'. Reproduced in *Australians and the Monarchy*, P. Spearritt & A. Shiell (eds), National Centre for Australian Studies, Melbourne, 1993, p. 23.

²¹ Dreyer, p. 7.

²² *ibid.*

²³ *Truth* (Sydney), 7 February 1954, p. 42.

²⁴ *Herald*, 4 February 1954, p. 7.

²⁵ Rohan Rivett, 'Migrants and the Monarchy', in *Australia and the Monarchy*, G. Dutton (ed.), Sun Books, Melbourne, 1966, p. 69.

reported screaming from the boats being tossed in the bow waves, but while the former dismissed the incident as 'no harm done', the *Sun* toyed with the delicious prospect of fatality:

The *Benelong* continued to push craft aside and one man yelled, 'Cut it out or there'll be a big loss of life!'²⁶

Patrick and Margaret Ryan, who had borrowed a launch from a yacht club, ran out of petrol, 'right in the royal passage' and were hooked against a tug by the police.²⁷ They were barely out of the way — with seasick Margaret hanging over the side of the tug — when the Royals came by on their landing barge. At 10.33 am precisely the moment the nation had been waiting for arrived, at last, as a small foot in a white peep-toed sandal came slowly down to earth, and Bruce Webber opened his microphone to inform the country, 'The Queen is now in Australia'.²⁸

A second volley of sound burst forth at this crucial moment. The people of the Cross knew exactly what had happened when they heard the ringing of church bells and the whistle of jets — 'our Queen had set foot on Australian soil at last'.²⁹ But these enormous noises of official welcome did not find immediate echo from the people ranged around the harbour. 'The first greeting as the Queen landed was not as tumultuous as one had expected', in the view of the *Herald*. 'It was a dignified, almost a restrained welcome', a moment of 'impressive silence'. The paper put it down to location, as Farm Cove, however beautiful, did 'not lend itself to the massing of crowds'.³⁰ (Nancy Ray's experience bore that out. The initial friendliness of the mob had been affected by the selfishness of a pastor and his wife who arrived late and barged through to the front, ahead of the overnight people — 'Oh for a hatpin!' As the excitement mounted others had started clambering onto seats and boxes, and she had to rely on the running commentary of the man behind them. 'Did we see her land and review the troops? Not likely.')³¹

²⁶ *Sun*, 3 February 1954, p. 9.

²⁷ Margaret Ryan, 6 July 1990.

²⁸ Bruce Webber.

²⁹ Dreyer, p. 7 Loch Townsend (interview, 24 October 1991) tells a very funny story about the official ceremony. One of the sound recordists pointed out to him that the introduction of the Cabinet Ministers was punctuated by the 21-gun salute, which made it sound as if each one was stepping forward to be introduced and then shot. 'The Hon Percival Spender! BOOM! The Hon Richard Casey! BOOM!'

³⁰ *Herald*, 4 February 1954, p. 1.

³¹ Nancy Ray, correspondence to parents, February 1954.

.....

Lyndsay: People stood for ages and they hardly got a glimpse. Or they were excited that the Queen dallied one minute longer than they'd expected where they were standing.

Jane: Were people disappointed, or would they not have said?

Lyndsay: I think you almost would have not said. You would almost have imagined that you got a better glimpse than you did.³²

.....

The *Daily Telegraph's* tour book made the suggestion later that the official welcome was subdued because the Australian dignitaries had been unsure of themselves in the presence of royalty.³³ The official souvenir publication of the Government of New South Wales declared that the crowds had 'restrained their eager voices in deference of the dignity of the occasion'.³⁴ But from other accounts, these explanations do not seem to account sufficiently for the powerful sensations evoked by this first moment of meeting. As Lyn Harrison sat in the official stand, contemplating the weight of the expectations invested in this tour, she felt that she could perceive a similar tension coursing through the surrounding crowds.³⁵ My mother certainly remembers this, within an overwhelming sensation of awe:

We'd been so built up to it that I still remember the feeling of almost being struck dumb by seeing this first foot of a reigning monarch step on to our soil. There was a very big hush, and a feeling that we were going through some amazing moment in history.³⁶

As the expectation riding on this one great moment had been building over the preceding years, so did the press attempt to cement its place in our history in the days to follow:

³² Lyndsay Connors, interview, 1989.

³³ *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand*, Consolidated Press, Sydney, 1954, p. 36.

³⁴ *The Royal Visit to New South Wales*, Oswald Ziegler, Sydney, 1954, p. 24.

³⁵ Lyn Harrison, *Me Too!*, Oswald Ziegler, Sydney, 1954, p. 17.

³⁶ Lyndsay Connors.

... for the first time in history a British monarch had landed in her southern realm.

Queen sets foot for first time on Australian soil ...

The Queen lands on Australian soil.

For the first time, a ruling British Sovereign was on Australian soil.

The great moment has come at last — the Queen is on Australian soil...

...every head was turned to catch a glimpse of the Queen of Australia alighting in this country for the first time.

Her Majesty is now stepping ashore in Australia for the first time...

... and the Queen stepped into Australia!

As she did so the Royal Standard ... fluttered for the first time over Australian soil.

..the historic moment when she stepped onto Australian soil for the first time...

Never before has this country had its ruler in residence.³⁷

In such statements the act of landing became historic, and the historicity and the physical reality of the act became completely intermeshed.

The meaning of this moment had three distinct enunciations, depending on whether it was the past, the future or the present in focus. The most obvious significance of the Visit was that it was history *now*, unfolding as one watched. The presence of a reigning monarch was significant because it was unique. Nobody, alive or dead, had seen this thing before, and to label it 'historic' was a matter of commonsense, even when most histrionic language was employed. Andrea wrote that in the week after the Queen's arrival it was as if Australians

³⁷ Selection of quotes from the media on the day, including the *Herald*, the *Sun-Pictorial* (Melbourne), the *Sun*, and the ABC; and from other publications such as the *Bulletin*, the *Countrywoman in NSW*, and *Royal Visit 1954*, Angus and Robertson for the Australian News and Information Bureau, Sydney, 1954.

were living 'in electrifying history, walking page by page through it at our Sovereign's side'.³⁸

.....

George III was on the throne when Australia's history began; the Queen's tremendous welcome this morning was the grand climax to it.

ABC Radio, national bulletin, 3 February 1954.

.....

But the monarchy was also able to serve as a glittering thread of connection to the past. The Queen's landing in Farm Cove reminded spectators of that original arrival, that of the First Fleet in 1788. The presence of the monarch was regarded by many (such as the anonymous authors of local souvenir booklets) as the seal or the consecration of the colonial experiment in the Great South Land, and her arrival was the moment at which progress towards the status of a modern nation could finally be measured. Our achievements would be laid out for her approval, as if it required the Royal imprimatur before we could believe in them ourselves.³⁹

Rex Ingamells had articulated this belief in *Royalty and Australia*, when he wrote that the record of royal visits should also be regarded as the record of our 'growth and advancement among the nations of the world'. It had been eighty years before the colony had been worthy of the 'dignified compliment' of a royal visit, and by extension, a further eighty-six before the time was right for the ultimate reward of a Queen Regnant.⁴⁰ The more usual twist, however, drew a direct line from the arrival of First Fleet to the berthing of the *Gothic*. Mrs Harrison, for example, sat looking across the harbour on the eve of the arrival, and could hardly believe that the Queen (and 'another Philip') would be landing where Governor Phillip had come ashore just one hundred and sixty-six years before. 'So short a time for a Nation to be born and grow to this maturity'.⁴¹ Look at us now, said the editorial in the *Herald*, the 'dark

³⁸ *Truth* (Sydney), 7 February 1954, p. 42.

³⁹ 'Being mortal', as the *Herald's* editorial proclaimed, 'her assembled subjects, proud of their city and proud of their country, wanted to feel that she shared their pride' (4 February 1954, p. 2).

⁴⁰ Rex Ingamells, *Royalty and Australia*, Hallcraft Publishing Co., Melbourne, 1954, pp. 76—7.

⁴¹ Harrison, pp. 15—16.

wilderness' of the eighteenth century transformed into a light modern city, the second largest white metropolis in the Empire.⁴²

This equation of the white races with modernity and the dark with either primitivism or chaos (depending on whether the reference was to Aboriginal people or to the Indian sub-continent) was frequently made during the tour. There was no need to deny the existence of Aboriginal Australians, whether in 1954 or 1788 — their original presence made a useful human reference point against which to measure the extent of material progress (the convict heritage was much more worrisome at this time, and never spoken of). As Lyn Harrison sat on the landing pontoon on the morning of the *Welcome*, she shut her eyes to imagine the thickly wooded cove confronting Phillip, and the 'peering and bewildered natives'.

I opened my eyes. The years had sped by in a flash, and there was the fascinating skyline of the City, the great arc of the Bridge, and there I was almost floating with pride. Pride in the pioneers of our Land, pride in the civic fathers, the statesmen, the engineers, the teachers, the artists, who had chiselled out of antiquity this other England in a Southern Sea.⁴³

The *Catholic Weekly* had a similar fancy, that the Queen was but the latest traveller on the trail that stretched from London to the antipodes. It had been inevitable that Royalty would one day follow 'in the wake of discoverers, explorers, pioneers, Empire builders and Empire defenders' and 'with the unique sense of history that only one who makes it can possess, Her Majesty must have realised [this]'.⁴⁴

She did seem to. In the first of her hundred speeches in Australia (in the thin, high voice that she later told the Harrisons she didn't like), she appeared to answer every need:

Only 166 years ago, the first settlement was made not far from where we stand by Captain Phillip and his small band of Englishmen, and now there stands a fine city that has become famous throughout the world. In the same short space of time we have seen the rise of Australia as a

⁴² *Herald*, 4 February 1954, p. 2.

⁴³ Harrison, p. 17.

⁴⁴ *Catholic Weekly*, 4 February 1954, p. 1.

great nation, taking her full share in the counsels of the British Commonwealth and of the world. I am proud indeed to be at the head of a nation that has achieved so much.⁴⁵

Her Tour's final claim on history rested on the certainty that it would be remembered in the future. There was so much confidence on this point. *Woman* magazine called it the visit we'd never forget. 'Ten years, even 20 years from now, we will be able to look back on this sentimental journey with pleasure and pride'.⁴⁶ The journals of the CWA also rang with the declarations of state and federal presidents that their own memories would endure forever, and in address in honour of the Queen at St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney to mark her first Sunday in Australia, the Reverend Dr. Muldoon predicted that the memory of Wednesday's joyful procession would not even expire with his own generation:

the father will describe it in vivid detail to the son; the son will repeat it to the grandson, and its light will, for generations to come, illumine the highest peaks of the greatest events in our history.⁴⁷

When I first recognised this confidence as a feature of the contemporary reaction to the Tour, I thought it was about the place of the event in the recorded annals of this country. But although the enthusiasts of 1954 did also expect that the tour would be entered in the history books, it was actually the relationship to *memory* that was being articulated. They were simultaneously more confident and more concerned that it be remembered — and particularly for its spectacular nature.



'You know,' one woman said after the broadcast, 'I've always talked about Australia being a grand place, but I've never really felt it until the Queen spoke'.

Wynford Vaughan Thomas, *Royal Tour 1953—4*.⁴⁸



⁴⁵ Harrison, p. 20.
⁴⁶ *Woman*, 'Souvenir Album of the Queen's Australian Tour', 12 April 1954, p. 1.
⁴⁷ *Catholic Advocate*, 11 February 1954, p. 2.
⁴⁸ Vaughan Thomas, *Royal Tour 1953-4*, Hutchinson, London, 1954, unpaginated. The author overheard this remark after Queen's speech to the State Banquet on 14 February 1954.

The first Royal Progress

Gwen Badgery was moved to cry as she sat listening to her sovereign's first speech, waiting for the polish to dry on the kitchen floor as the tears were pouring down her face. 'It was just as if she was in the kitchen speaking to me, saying "Australia" just as dear old Dad used to say it, almost *Orstralia*'. Later in the morning some neighbours came around ('Joe in white shorts and bare feet heavily trimmed with the biggest bunions it has ever been my misfortune to have to look at, Sylvia in yellow as usual') and were sitting there, still sobbing, when a friend phoned up to say that she had wept into three of her husband's hankies.⁴⁹ Across on the other side of town my grandmother was also listening in — although I don't think she was the crying type — with Nanna and Auntie Mona. Mona made pavlova, its first appearance in Peakhurst, because she had read somewhere that it was the Queen's favourite dessert, and they kept the wireless on all day, until the other members of the family came home full of their own stories (except poor Nell, who had spent the day by herself because the man she was supposed to go with didn't show till five o'clock. 'When the silly galoot turned up I said, "Everything is over"').⁵⁰



Darwin people, 2-thousand miles from the Royal landing, followed the Royal Progress almost to a man. Work stopped in the Northern Capital, and many women listened to the descriptions with tears running down their faces. One air hostess said later, 'I was overcome with emotion as I pictured the young Queen driving through the great city'.

ABC, 3 February 1954.



After the brief and awkward ceremony of landing had ended, my mother was dragged by her stepfather up through town to the next vantage point. The Queen had been released by officialdom into the arms of the people, and embarked on her procession, seated in the third of seventeen cars. Dignitaries, the Royal household, a mounted guard and the press drove ahead and behind, at eight miles per hour. This Progress through nine and one-half miles of city

⁴⁹ Mackenzie, pp. 46—7.

⁵⁰ Nell Hannon.

streets was a miracle of rolling pandemonium, 'of unbelievable, spontaneous ovation which roared along the streets as the Queen and Duke passed by'.⁵¹ The noise was intensified by the movement of a million waving hands, holding flags and newspapers, streamers, hats and even flapping cardigans aloft. English journalist Wynford Vaughan Thomas wrote that 'those of us fortunate enough to ride in the actual procession felt ourselves borne along in waves of joyous sound'.⁵² Children were pushed to the fore everywhere, sometimes with spontaneity and crowd goodwill, and sometimes by design. There were Legacy wards in Park Street, students from the School for the Deaf in City Road, and the children's movements — like the Guides and the Scouts — ranged along Dowling Street. In all, eighteen thousand people were placed in special reserves along the route, of which around twelve thousand were able-bodied children and the remainder were disadvantaged in various ways: through age (three hundred Boer War and pre-Boer war veterans in Macquarie Street) or disability (including two thousand five hundred 'Incapacitated ex-Servicemen and Women' and forty 'Civilian Maimed and Limbless' waiting in Moore Park).⁵³

Sydney's newspapers attempted to represent both the homogeneity and the diversity of the crowds: the country could be said to have greeted the Queen with the one song, but not everybody had sat in the central section of the choir. So, although some of the 'ordinary' people who had made heroic efforts to attend saw their stories in print, the press was more interested in two particular categories of attendee: the maimed — sick or crippled children or the elderly — and the foreign. Visiting British journalists were rather more interested in the level of support for the Queen in working class areas, but this wasn't as much of an issue for their Australian counterparts.⁵⁴

⁵¹ *Bulletin*, 17 February 1954, p. 17. This description was supplied by a reader.

⁵² Vaughan Thomas, unpaginated.

⁵³ *Police Instructions, Visit to New South Wales of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh 1954*, Appendix 4, p. 363.

⁵⁴ Vaughan Thomas wrote that 'Sydney's finest decorations on that memorable morning could not have outshone the welcome given in the little streets in the working-class quarters. Here mum, dad and the kids crowded the balconies so characteristic of the older Sydney houses and shouted "Give us a wave"'. *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand* (p. 36) attributed this observation to another British commentator: 'And it was in the poorer sectors that Elizabeth received her warmest, most heartfelt welcome.' Some Australian journalists also noted instances of working-class loyalty. The *Catholic Weekly* (4 February 1954, p. 3) remarked that inner-city Cleveland Street housed the 'proud and independent working class ... as eager as the wealthiest conservative to do honour to their Queen'; and prior to the Tour journalist Larry Boys reported in the *Sunday Telegraph* (24 January 1954, p. 5) that the excitement in the 'poorer end of town' was greater than that in wealthier areas'.

To journalists the elderly clearly spoke for history, the history of imperial patriotism especially, as their stories always revolved around military service or previous royal visits, and preferably both. When Sue Barrie, a reporter for the *Women's Weekly*, commented on the number of elderly women who had slept out in Sydney, she added that most were war widows or mothers of veterans. Barrie spoke to a Mrs Martin from Revesby who had waited sixteen hours for the Queen without a blanket or a meal because she was going into hospital in the next couple of days and wouldn't get a second chance. Two of her sons had been diggers (it wasn't clear from the article whether or not they had died in service) so she had particularly wanted to be at the Cenotaph for the laying of the wreath.⁵⁵ Another journalist found an elderly woman who had left home in Petersham at five in the morning to walk into town with the aid of her stick.

I saw the Prince of Wales in 1920 from the same spot. I am happy now to have seen the girl with the golden smile.⁵⁶

The *Herald* located a number of veterans in the crowd, including one who watched the procession from the first aid post after fainting, another who had been a member of the guard of honour for the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York in 1901, and an old man of seventy-eight who had served in both the Boer and the First World Wars.

Mr Macdonald, who is partially crippled, said his roommate, Arthur Bennett ('a young feller of 66') had helped him get out of bed about 5 am. 'I wouldn't have cared if it had been 3 o'clock, I'd still have been here to see the young Queen, God bless her,' Mr Macdonald said. 'I fought for her great-grandmother, old Queen Vickey, and I played two-up in Egypt with her uncle, the Prince of Wales — so you can see I feel pretty fond of the Royal Family'.⁵⁷

(Loch Townsend from the Commonwealth Film Unit, who had begun a gruelling day in a small, hot vantage point in a little lighthouse on Bradley's Head to record the sounds of welcome, remembers trying to drive from Elizabeth Bay into the city in a shaky jeep with a cameraman on top. All the way along, their progress was impeded by elderly soldiers trying to get a lift —

⁵⁵ *Australian Women's Weekly*, 10 February 1954, p. 18.

⁵⁶ *Herald*, 4 February 1954, p. 6.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 7.

Charitable organisations and hospitals were able to make arrangements with co-operative authorities — all across the country — to ensure that young people with special needs had places at all rallies and parades. On Q-Day in Sydney, photographers found children like thirteen year-old burns victim Sylvia Briggs, who lay face down on her bed on the balcony of Sydney Hospital for hours, with her hair plaited with tricolour ribbons and a crown pinned to her pillow, waiting for the cavalcade to pass.⁶² There were also plenty of opportunities for touching shots of children sitting out in front of the barricades. The *Sun's* souvenir supplement featured several, including a 'little spastic girl [who] forgot her pain in the joy and wonder of seeing her Queen pass by and smile'.⁶³

The spirit of national communion reached even beyond these innocents to petty miscreants. In the week before the Tour began an 'old lag' up before a magistrate in Redfern had argued for a lighter sentence on a charge of using indecent language because he wanted to see the Queen. The magistrate looked across at him from the bench. 'I doubt if the Queen will want to see *you*,' he said, 'but I'll make it four days'.⁶⁴ On the morning of 3 February, thirteen men and four women up for drunkenness in Sydney's Central Court were discharged by a magistrate because of the 'momentous occasion of the first visit to Sydney of a reigning sovereign' (it was traditional in the English courts for leniency to be shown on days of Royal celebration). They were released without penalty and given a special gift of tobacco by the Salvation Army. The favour was apparently returned too — the chief of the Criminal Investigation Bureau announced on the following day that the crime statistics for the previous twenty-four hours were 'negligible'. As in London during the Coronation, even the incidence of pickpocketing was well below what was normal.⁶⁵

At the same time, the medical statistics were going through the roof. Ambulance officers treated two thousand and seventy-five people during the course of the day and sixty were taken to hospital by ambulance. One of these was a soldier who collapsed onto his own bayonet and knocked out a couple of

⁶² *Australian Women's Weekly*, 10 February 1954, p. 18.

⁶³ *Sun*, Pictorial Souvenir of the Queen's Arrival, 3 February 1954, p. 12.

⁶⁴ *Sun*, 29 January 1954, p. 1.

⁶⁵ *Sun*, 3 February 1954, p. 7; *Herald*, 4 February 1954, p. 3. Although they were also compiled by journalists, the commemorative books carried very few of these special interest stories. They stuck instead to the 'big picture', the narrative proper, and I think this must have been because it was considered that they would be bought for posterity and should take a more elevated, 'historical' tone.

Frank Rocke and his wife also preferred to stay out of the thick of things. They were about a mile away from Rachel, on the other side of the campus, watching the parade head back into the centre of the city via Parramatta Road. 'It happened all very quickly, but we had come in all the way from Hornsby and we thought it was all worth while. In fact, we were almost excited about it'. Laconic style notwithstanding, the Rockes saw the Queen again a few days later from a railway embankment, and then Frank had a third and better glimpse when he was picking fruit in Mildura during the Victorian leg of the tour.⁷⁰

The final port of call in the progress, just after eleven o' clock was at the Cenotaph in Martin Place, where the Queen and Duke laid a wreath in honour of Australia's dead in both world wars. The excitement had built to such a pitch by this point that the throng of forty thousand was barely able to observe a minutes silence for the fallen. The *Herald* observed that 'uninhibited girls' had hoisted themselves onto the railings of the men's toilet and that many women had become quite hysterical and had to be passed over the top of the crowd. When this tribute concluded the cavalcade headed into its final leg and a full-blown ticker tape parade. Rose petals, confetti and shredded paper showered down from the lucky thousands gathered in the buildings above the street.

Many organisations with premises along the route were holding observation parties for selected staff and guests, the value of whose tickets were reflected in the level of security. Invitees of the Director of Posts and Telegraphs in the Post-Master General's Department were only allowed to enter the floor of the building specifically noted on their ticket, and were required to sign in before entry, in order that their signatures could be checked against former records. Positions at the window were allotted in advance, and enforced, however gently, by uniformed attendants. The Food Services Division was offering tea at a nominal charge, but this sounds rather dull against the mid-morning banquet provided to the three hundred and fifty guests of Anthony Horderns. The famous department store (which had been repainted from top to bottom in duck-egg blue with an outsize message in red and gold along its length) had crown-shaped gateaux and a half-dozen models of the *Gothic* carved in ice-cream decorating its enormous buffet table.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Frank Rocke, interview, 3 June 1993.

⁷¹ Memo, 'Information for the guests of Director, Posts and Telegraphs', 3 February 1954, original held in the archives of Australia Post, Sydney. Anthony Hordern's buffet also included

In fact, food and drink were flowing all over the inner-city. Larry Boys from the *Sunday Telegraph* had walked the route of the Progress a week or so earlier, seeking invitations to functions on his way. There had been a rumour that a skin specialist in Macquarie Street would be serving pheasant, hare and salmon with champagne, and although Boys didn't score on that one, he was offered sandwiches and whisky in the Cross and 'tucker' with a cup of tea in working-class Newtown. Many hotels were brewing up their own 'royal punch' for the day (there were an astounding number of references to alcohol in Boys' account — the Queen herself was pretty much a teetotaler, but as suited a celebration, the rest of Sydney was going to be as silly as a wheel before lunchtime).⁷²

.....

When the cheering and the shouting died people began exchanging opinions of the Royal Couple. One woman said, 'My, isn't she gracious? She looks just like an Australia and I bet right at this moment she would like a cup of tea'.

Sydney Morning Herald, 4 February 1954.

.....

A long first afternoon

Nancy Ray and her companions were sitting in a crowd near the gates of Government House by eleven-thirty, waiting for the Queen's return. They met a woman who was willing to share her parasol, and watched a swooning nursing sister carried away by the St John's Ambulance. After cheering at a scared kitten running down the road and a telegraph boy on a bicycle, they heard the real roar coming, and 'there she was, very pale, but still smiling and waving'. After she had gone inside, the Ray party flopped under a tree for tomato juice and hard-boiled eggs. They went home after that for a nap before the fireworks, but several thousand people stood around Government House for at least an hour after the end of the parade, chanting loudly but to no avail, 'We want the Queen' (she did slip out for a ceremonial rehearsal at Parliament House but the word passed around too slowly and only a few got a glimpse).

'Hordernian Salads' and was enjoyed by staff with 25 to 60 years service (*Journal of the Retail Traders' Association of NSW*, March 1954, p. 40). A similar function at Grace Bros' store on Broadway got off to a bad start when the tickets were stolen (*Sun*, 15 January 1954, p. 1).

⁷² *Sunday Telegraph*, 24 January 1954, p. 5.

Gwen Badgery, meanwhile, was such a wreck from the excitement of the morning that she had to recover by lying out on the lawn.⁷³

John O'Sullivan and his brother -in-arms had got in a good, long look at the Queen (remember that they had come on behalf of their wives), and then took advantage of the special licensing arrangements and enjoyed a couple of beers before braving the traffic. Back at home, their heroic tale was heard in silence and when it was through, his sister told him calmly that the girls had broken camp anyway.

She and my wife decided not to be left on the sidelines and so without any fuss had caught the Manly ferry to town an hour or two behind us; they had walked up from Circular Quay and had a good view of the Queen, before returning home without traffic problems or delays or the return of weary husbands.⁷⁴

For many in the media, including the radio commentators, it had already been the longest day of their working lives (for print journalists in particular, the strain of providing and processing mountains of copy passed into professional folklore).⁷⁵ As they finalised their assessment of the significance and meaning of that first morning, editors maintained the 'multi-vocal' approach of pre-tour days. The *Sun* did not attempt to encapsulate the day in a single phrase or even in a single article, although its writers delivered a consistent verdict that the arrival had been exciting, dramatic and triumphal. The Queen received the highest personal praise for her lovely dress, her poise and her 'inner beauty'. However, this did not prohibit the appearance of an article reporting on some unhappiness that the Progress had been too snappy. One man who had paid £5 for a seat on the stand outside Sydney Hospital complained that all he had seen was the Queen's hat and another had missed the Royal car entirely in the time it took to bend down and pick up his little boy.⁷⁶

The *Herald*, as usual, took more upon itself in terms of both commendation and disapprobation. Where the *Sun* remarked prosaically that the Queen's 'lovely

⁷³ Mackenzie, p. 47.

⁷⁴ John O'Sullivan, correspondence, 31 May 1993.

⁷⁵ For example, journalists appearing before the Industrial Commission in the *Australian Journalists Association v Metropolitan Dailies' Newspaper Proprietors (Associated Newspapers and Others)*, 16 December 1953- 15 July 1955, invariably offered their experience of this day as evidence of the stress placed on them during large and important events.

⁷⁶ *Sun*, 3 February 1954, p. 3.

dress won the warm approval of women throughout the city', its rival published a wildly effusive article under the banner 'Every Woman's Dream of Beauty Steps Ashore', in which the vision in question smoothed her hat with a 'delicious feminine gesture' that somehow reminded the writer of 'the full panoply of the Throne'. It also ran twin editorials, one looking heavenwards to the 'transcendental ties binding the Commonwealth of Nations' and the other looking to Macquarie Street and the bureaucratic doomsayers who had deterred too many people from coming into town. On this topic it also printed some fairly strong remarks from the public, including one from Bob Gowland of Concord West who said he felt that there was already too much bureaucracy and officialdom hanging over the Tour.

But this was tomorrow's news, as the first was not yet over. Weary or not, many people remained in town for the afternoon, watching while one hundred and sixty council workers cleaned one hundred and fifty tons of rubbish off the streets (three times as much as for the victory in the Pacific celebrations at the close of World War II). They strolled slowly around until the late darkness of summertime began to fall. Then, suddenly, the electricity of the morning crackled again through the illuminations of the night and the 'supercharged enthusiasm of the people became visible' once more.⁷⁷ The nation was reconvened in the early evening, as it were, when a light show began on the harbour. Police estimated that one and a quarter million people were watching by 8 o'clock when the fireworks proper commenced, including several thousand who climbed over the fences of Government House to picnic in the lawns.⁷⁸ This fabulous display concluded after nine when a burning portrait of the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh, fifty foot square, was shot into the air from Kirribilli — 'so precise were the details that the crowd could even see the Queen's earrings'. These fireworks are the only thing that four year-old Elizabeth O'Brien could really remember about the day ('we went on top of that building where Dad worked').⁷⁹

And after it was over came the slow dispersal. The first day of jubilation was over and a weary city headed home. Mrs Murray and her children sat waiting for the Bowral train and the O'Briens drove home to Parramatta. Many fell asleep on the grass waiting for public transport, and the traffic moved inch by

⁷⁷ *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand*, p. 36.

⁷⁸ ABC, 3 February 1954, 9 pm bulletin. This was an unauthorised act but the police were unable to stop it.

⁷⁹ Herald, 4 February 1954, p. 10.

inch. It was the worst ever encountered in the opinion of the police,⁸⁰ but by midnight most people had gone, leaving town to the workers — nurses and others going about their everyday business — and the small party of travellers getting ready for bed in Government House. History was still 'shining in the darkness' as the Queen's flag flew for the first time over Sydney.

⁸⁰ ABC, 3 February 1954, 11 pm bulletin; *Herald*, 4 February 1954, p. 3.

 CHAPTER 5

The emu and the unicorn

It's much nicer to have pictures of a pretty girl like that than photos of someone like Stalin all over the place.

Anonymous woman in Sydney, 3 February 1954.²

I have come to see that this tour encompassed two distinct stages. During the first five of the eight weeks, the Royal Party (which included the Royal couple, their personal entourage and secretariat, detectives, and a changing array of state and federal politicians and officials) travelled through New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and Victoria. By the time they flew to Queensland on 9 March, they had seen Australia's two largest cities in frenzy, its smallest towns in holiday mood, and something of the size and the nature of the bush. Everything had been new and different, and not only for the visitors. Their hosts had also surprised themselves.

In this chapter I concentrate on the major themes emerging from this season of 'firsts'. Both Melbourne and Sydney witnessed the temporary cessation of normal life, the disruption of normal civic behaviour and the transformation of public space in a dramatic manner which testifies to the deep emotions stirred by royalty, and royal spectacle in the 1950s. The display of children as symbols of national prosperity and hope (the children were simultaneously being given a lesson in the benefits of loyalty) began and continued in all centres on the itinerary. Aborigines joined the list of 'others' to be noted and monitored for appearance and behaviour, Protestants and Catholics continued to jostle over loyalty, while clothing re-emerged as a site of class conflict and the left investigated some muted or limited forms of protest. Ambivalence towards politicians proved to be as strong as during all previous royal tours.

¹ This title was inspired by a Melbourne shop window displaying revolving puppets in the form of an Emu and a Unicorn, both dressed in satin and pearls. The verse underneath read, 'The Emu — a most ancient bird/Adjusts her speedy gait/To step out with the Unicorn/And join the Happy Fete. Quoted in Lyn Harrison, *Me Too!*, Oswald Ziegler, Sydney, 1954, p. 48.

² Remark overheard on 3 February and reported in the *Bulletin*, 17 February 1954, p. 8.

The most significant single thing to be observed in a study of these first five weeks is the overwhelming sense of isolation expressed by the mainstream Australian community. There appears to have been such anxiety over its place as a small white outpost at the end of the earth, and in the early stages of the tour this was enacted over continued attention to migration and the behaviour of migrants; in apprehension over the burgeoning influence of America; and in the fuss made over the English climate of Tasmania, which gave an early indication of unease over the very exotic climes to come (this heightened during the second stage of the visit, through Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia. The Tour began to lose steam as a national spectacle, although it remained exciting to each new community of participants. It was only sustained by the appearance of the least-tamed landscapes, the tropics and the deserts, and their bid to claim the title of the 'real Australia'.)

.....

Yesterday was ladies' day in Royal Sydney. Ladies by the thousand, their menfolk at work, their children in school, and their housework completed or forgotten, came to the city for a glimpse of the Queen.

Sydney Morning Herald, 5 February 1954.³

.....

Tumult and shouting in Sydney

'Now I know what sardines go through', wrote Nancy Ray, after a rough time in a crowd on Thursday, 4 February. The people had come back for the first morning of the tour proper, and the city had collapsed into grid lock. Even the trams stood still while crew and passengers swarmed onto their roofs, and private vehicles had to be eased around the great masses of pedestrians who had taken over the road. At least one hundred thousand crammed into Macquarie Street as the Queen opened Parliament and thousands more ran in front of the Duke of Edinburgh's car as he drove to the University of Sydney for lunch.

This level of disruption in continued unabated in those first days of Queen. Her every route around the city was ringed with barricades, and these were erected

³ *Herald*, 5 February 1954, p. 2.

hours beforehand and then slowly taken down. When I spoke about the tour at a Rotary lunch in July 1995, men who had been living in Sydney in 1954 raised their eyes to the heavens at the memory of driving home. A couple also laughed at the recollection of returning to wives who'd been out on the streets all day — as it was a big city joke of the day that women abandoned the hearth to follow their 'enthroned idol' around.⁴ Housewives gone AWOL were most amusing to cartoonists and also featured in little vignettes, such as one reported by a journalist from Essendon Airport in Melbourne, who overheard a husband asking his errant wife if there'd be any clean crockery to eat off when they got home.⁵ The *Sun* newspaper was to report later in the visit that 'kitchens were left untended' on the Queen's last morning in Victoria, and after she had passed, 'Mrs Melbourne collected her children and trudged back to her breakfast dishes, via the nearest cup of tea'.⁶

Mrs Sydney, back on that first morning, may well have ended up in a first aid station. Four hundred and fifty people, mainly women, went woozy with heat, excitement and minor injuries after some vigorous jostling for a view of the Queen arriving at the Trocadero ballroom in George Street, for a luncheon organised by representatives of one hundred women's organisations in New South Wales.⁷ Their determination and single-mindedness was captured in an anecdote appearing in the *Herald*, a story of a woman who called down from her vantage point on a ladder that someone else had fainted. 'They're taking her over near the entrance ... well, she's lucky, she'll have a better view than us'.⁸

This activity fell away in the afternoon, but it rose again in the evening, as another ardent crowd gathered in the streets around David Jones' upmarket department store, the venue for the New South Wales State Banquet. By the time the Queen arrived there were two hundred thousand tightly squeezed people there to greet her. They could not help but break through the barriers, several times, and when linked arms proved useless, the mounted police were called in. Their horses caused panic, especially amongst children, and they forced a move backwards which then crushed several people against a wall. There were angry shouts from the crowd about 'strongarm tactics'.⁹

⁴ *Bulletin*, 17 February 1954, p. 6.

⁵ *Age*, 27 February 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook.

⁶ *Sun* (Melbourne), 10 March 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook

⁷ *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand*, Consolidated Press, Sydney, 1954, p. 43.

⁸ *Herald*, 5 February 1954, p. 6.

⁹ *Herald*, 5 February 1954, p. 7.

THE ROYAL TOUR FROM DAY TO DAY

THURSDAY, 4th February

a.m.

10.30 *Her Majesty opens Parliament, and attends a Parliamentary Reception.*

p.m.

12.30 *Her Majesty presides at a meeting of the Executive Council.*

1.00-
2.15 *Her Majesty lunches with representatives of women's organisations.*

1.00-
2.15 *His Royal Highness visits the Sydney University to lunch with Members of the Senate, and Council Members of the New South Wales University of Technology.*

8.00 *Her Majesty and His Royal Highness attend a State Banquet.*

FRIDAY, 5th February

a.m.

10.20-
10.50 *Her Majesty and His Royal Highness attend an assembly of schoolchildren.*

11.10-
11.30 *Her Majesty and His Royal Highness attend an assembly of ex-Servicemen and Women, War Widows and wards of Legacy in the Sydney Domain.*

p.m.

3.00 *Her Majesty and His Royal Highness inspect the Repatriation General Hospital at Concord.*

5.15 *Her Majesty and His Royal Highness arrive at Government House.*

9.30 *Her Majesty and His Royal Highness attend the Lord Mayor's Ball at the Sydney Town Hall.*

SATURDAY, 6th February

a.m.

11.30 *Her Majesty and His Royal Highness visit Legacy House.*

12.00 *Departure by car for the Randwick Racecourse.*

p.m.

12.20 *Arrive at Randwick.
After viewing the second race the Royal Party lunch with the Chairman and Members of the A.J.C. Committee.
Her Majesty presents the cup.*

3.15 *Departure by car for Bondi.*

3.35 *Her Majesty and His Royal Highness witness a Surf Life Saving Display.*

4.20 *Arrival at Government House.*

9.00 *Her Majesty and His Royal Highness attend a Symphony Concert.*

SUNDAY, 7th February

am

11.00 *Her Majesty and His Royal Highness attend Divine Service at St. Andrew's Cathedral..¹⁰*

¹⁰ Source: *Australia's Royal Welcome*, Colourgravure, Melbourne, 1953, unpaginated.

The papers on the following morning were not exactly surprised, but certainly gratified that Sydney had 'kept up its carnival' for a fabulous, second day. But the clamour of a third day, and then another, was both thrilling and alarming. By Saturday it was clear that this tour was an even bigger story than could have been imagined, and the headline writers took a few days to find their way in uncharted territory. The front page of the *Herald* displayed genuine anxiety over the chaos on the streets. Yesterday's happy cry of 'SYDNEY CHEERS THE QUEEN', turned suddenly into 'CROWDS DISRUPT QUEEN'S DAY' (as if her presence would have had meaning without spectators), and 'POLICE POWERLESS TO STOP SURGING THROG IN SUBURBS'.¹¹

Journalists revealed their disquiet in their language of their copy: the people had become a shrieking mob, the police were forced into battle, and the Queen, though cheerful, was seen to be strained and exhausted from the heat and the 'pitiless exuberance' of her subjects. The police estimated that there were a million people attending tour activities on Friday 5 February, which included one hundred and fifty thousand schoolchildren at two separate assemblies — an awesome gathering at the Showground and the other at Concord Oval to the west. Organisers had to quickly come to grips with larger congregations than had been anticipated, and participants had to scale down their expectations. There was a lot of grumbling from ex-service personnel attending a military assembly on Friday morning, for example, after they had failed to come within coo-ee of the Queen. Some were angered by the number of civilians barging their way in, and the joke circulating afterwards was that at least you couldn't complain about the organisation, because 'there wasn't any!'¹²

There were further problems along the thirteen mile route from Government House to the Concord Repatriation Hospital, which was so congested that the car was forced to stop at several points and was an hour late in getting through. St John's Ambulance workers treated a thousand casualties during the day, and a further two thousand in the frightening press around the Town Hall in the evening for the Lord Mayor's Ball. At the worst spots, christened 'sardine corners', people were counted collapsing at the rate of eight every minute, and had to be passed unconscious over the head of the pack to waiting police. There

¹¹ John MacAloon ('Actors, Audiences and Reflexivity: Olympic Games and the theory of spectacle', in *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle*, J. MacAloon, (ed.), Institute for the Study of Human Issues, Philadelphia, 1984, p. 243), separates rituals which may be performed without an audience from spectacles which require the presence of both performers and spectators. 'If one or the other set is missing, there is no spectacle'.

¹² *Bulletin*, 10 February 1954, p. 18.

was a delirious roar when the guest of honour appeared on the balcony in a strapless satin gown, and the mob stood chanting 'We Want the Queen' for almost an hour afterwards.¹³

These unprecedented scenes shook officialdom into a public plea for calm. Having worked so hard to conjure up such masses, they became afraid of their 'emotional unpredictability'.¹⁴ The Minister-in-Charge of the Royal Tour, Mr Harrison, asked Sydneysiders to show more consideration for the Queen. He was already under pressure from England, where the papers were printing all sorts of stories about the wild, colonial welcome, but they only took his pleading as further evidence of misrule. London's *Daily Mirror* twisted it into the headline: 'GO EASY, YOU MAY HARM THE QUEEN', while the *News of the World* had 'PLEASE AUSTRALIA, YOU MUST LOOK AFTER THE QUEEN'. The *News'* correspondent wrote that enthusiasm was coming dangerously close to mass hysteria and the *Observer's* Patrick O'Donovan described Sydney's welcome as 'almost frightening', although he also emphasised its sincerity.¹⁵ Australian newspapers faithfully reported all of this, and were sometimes defensive and sometimes in semi-shamed agreement, although the most trenchant attack on the itinerary was made not in London, but by the *Truth* in Melbourne, which reprinted the stiffest of the British censure, and a suggestion that London bobbies might have to be sent out to handle the job (having predicted that there would be trouble, the *Truth* was clearly enjoying itself in the role of Cassandra).¹⁶ The *Bulletin* argued that Fleet Street wasn't giving us enough credit for the fact that this was a unique event in our annals — 'the appearance of the Queen is as rare as the appearance of a woman from Mars' — but later on, in early March, it published a poem apologising to Her Majesty for our 'ruffian ways':

Our land is lusty, vigorous and young,
Our songs, if roughly, are sincerely sung,
Our ways are generous, albeit blunt;
Enthusiasm is our chief affront.¹⁷

¹³ These figures were given by the ABC, various bulletins, 5—6 February 1954.

¹⁴ See MacAloon, p. 249, for a discussion of the inherent unpredictability of modern spectacles.

¹⁵ *Observer*, 7 February 1954, p. 1; and unpaginated clippings from scrapbook in possession of Powerhouse Museum, Sydney. I was interested to know whether any of the English papers invoked the ghost of 1868, but the *Times* and the *Observer* were either ignorant of the assassination attempt or were too polite to mention it.

¹⁶ *Truth*, 7 February 1954, p. 9. Cassandra was a figure in Greek mythology destined always to speak the truth and never to be believed.

¹⁷ Peter Bladen, 'Apology to Her Majesty', *Bulletin*, 3 March 1954, p. 6.

Adelaide's *News* took yet another tack with a predictably parochial defence, blaming Sydney for going 'over the fence'. 'This kind of hysteria is not likely in Adelaide'.¹⁸

Although the *Truth* and the British tabloids persisted with this early line the rest of the media began to calm down at some stage over the first weekend. Perhaps it became clear that the Queen was going to handle things or perhaps they began to assume an air of strange 'normality'. Before long, although the official press office kept feeling it necessary to issue statements denying exhaustion, most Australian papers regained their confidence.¹⁹

.....

Long Live Our Queen
Schnapper 4/- lb.

Sign painted on the window of a Sydney fishmonger.²⁰

.....

Gwen Badgery went in to see the Royals drive down George Street on Friday afternoon but took her aching legs home before the Lord Mayor's Ball (a very old woman in the crowd next to her decided to stay on because she wanted to see the Queen 'in them clothes') and wrote later to her daughter,

am sitting here in one of your old sunfrocks, very *envious* for one of the few times in my long life, listening to good old Elizabeth Ida Jenkins describe the glorious dresses at the Lord Mayor's Ball. The Queen in heavy white satin, and the fat old Premier's wife, with a face like a black

¹⁸ *Bulletin*, 17 February 1954, p. 6; *News* (Adelaide), 8 February 1954, p. 3. Universal interest in the opinion from the United Kingdom was criticised by the Australian Journalists' Association in March, in a blast against the 'time-worn habit' of giving news from England undue prominence in the Australian press (*The Journalist*, March 1954, p. 3).

¹⁹ The last of the really alarming incidents took place on 13 February when crowds unexpectedly swarmed onto the tracks in front of the Royal Train as the Queen was returning to Sydney from the Blue Mountains. Eric Harrison was forced to issue another statement: 'The vociferous and unprecedented welcome given Her Majesty and His Royal Highness in New South Wales has led to some alarmist reports, but these are completely discounted by the Queen's radiant health and happiness'. He added that people should stop going on to the tracks. This was published in the *Times* (13 February 1954, p. 7) with an accompanying remark that there was no knowing what Australians would do in their eagerness to see the Queen.

²⁰ *Bulletin*, 17 February 1954, p. 8.

orpington hen, in Royal Blue Shyfon, Heavily Beaded as usual.²¹

Journalists could hardly be as rude, but were equally unimpressed by the social elite on their first real outing. *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand* (the *Daily Telegraph's* tour book) described the first of Australia's balls very bluntly, as a 'flop'.²² The *Bulletin* said that 'something went very seriously wrong', that it was hot and crowded and that the Queen spent the whole hour that she was present under the unremitting gaze of two thousand mesmerised guests. The *Maritime Worker* published a cartoon lampooning this very *gaucherie*, but the contempt of the radical left and the embarrassment of the *Bulletin* were worlds apart.²³ The 'Women's Letters' page of the latter had a very superior tone, and was afraid that the antipodean *haute bourgeois* were not up to the task ahead. Their initial curtsy to the Queen, envisaged by organisers as a 'graceful undulation', was more of a 'mass-stagger' in practice, and the tiaras, one felt, 'were a mistake, although Lady Lloyd Jones's, which looked the real thing, was elegant'.²⁴

Columnists in other publications could also be supercilious, although again the standpoint is not identical, especially about those engaged in a vulgar scramble for tickets. Jim McDougall, who wrote the 'Contact' column in the *Sun* thought that the currency had been devalued after he heard that a 'gentleman of quality' had received one for each of seven functions.²⁵ Cartoonists also picked on would-be socialites. Emile Mercier's Mr and Mrs Trimble grew sick of waiting for their invitations and attempted to crash a reception by ladder, explaining to security and guests that it was all right, because 'we're well-known social climbers.'²⁶ But although there were sufficient of these to suggest a general turn of mind among cartoonists, they were a drop in the ocean of loyal effusion.

Australia at play

Saturday 6 February dawned just as bright and as blue as the four days preceding, and the Queen was seen to be 'all vitality again' on her way to Randwick for the horse races. The crowds around the perimeter of the track

²¹ Toni Mackenzie (ed.), *Mother Stayed at Home*, Pan, Sydney, 1989, p. 46.

²² *Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand*, p. 46.

²³ Noel Counihan's 'powerful satire', a cartoon in which the fat and overdressed elite stand staring mesmerised at the Queen, appeared in the *Maritime Worker*, 2 March 1954, p. 6.

²⁴ *Bulletin*, 10 February 1954, p. 18.

²⁵ *Sun*, 20 January 1954, p. 1.

²⁶ *Sun*, unpaginated copy of cartoon from Royal Tour scrapbook in possession of Powerhouse Museum, Sydney.

were enormous, but actual attendance at the meeting was down on expectations — there were only about fifty thousand people, twenty thousand fewer than had been hoped for — and the Australian Jockey Club blamed the media for scaring the punters away. Chairman A. G. Potter issued a statement saying that he'd been 'disgusted' by 'mass hysteria reports of public functions for the Queen'.²⁷ The police also felt that reportage had had an effect on behaviour, but one which they applauded. Although a million people saw the Royal couple on Saturday they were rather more biddable and restrained than the weekday mobs. The only incident was sparked by a hat that was thrown into the car and immediately thrown out again by Philip. The crowd thought it was his own and four persons fought bitterly over it until they were told of their mistake.²⁸

The Duke left his wife after a couple of races (he was known to regard it as a 'mug's game') and headed for an unscheduled appearance at the Sydney Cricket Ground and a match between New South Wales and Western Australia. Although a full house displayed its patriotism with a tremendous ovation and a spontaneous chorus of the National Anthem, the Queen's absence allowed for a blokier and jokier atmosphere. Wags called for the Duke to have a bowl, and men who stood up for too long in the Members' Stand were told to sit down, 'you're like a mob of sheep'. He returned in time for the drive to Bondi Beach, and the surf carnival which would be the first distinctively Australian spectacle on the tour. 'Typically Australian,' said the *Sun-Herald*, and shared with a typically Australian crowd — 'men in shirt sleeves and shorts and women basked in sun-frocks and licked ice creams' just a few yards away from the Royal couple, who seemed to be having a great time watching surfers and surf boats. They stayed forty-five minutes longer than scheduled, and this was regarded as a marvellous triumph.²⁹ Margaret Ryan was there with her husband Pat, and says that competitors were told over the loudspeaker, just before they arrived, that they oughtn't to worry about winning and losing but only to make sure that the show was as spectacular as possible.³⁰

Australiana ruled again at the Tivoli Theatre that evening, at a gala concert featuring the ballet 'Corroboree'. The music was composed and conducted by John Antill and although choreographer Beth Dean had based her work on

²⁷ *News* (Adelaide), 8 February 1954, p. 24.

²⁸ *Sun-Herald*, 7 February 1954, p. 3.

²⁹ *Sun-Herald*, 7 February 1954, p. 7.

³⁰ Margaret Ryan, interview, 6 July 1990.

actual Aboriginal dances, the performers were all in 'blackface'. Australian wildflowers had been placed in the Royal Box to augment the theme. The evening ended with the drive back to Government House amidst a quarter of a million people, many of whom had waited along the road, or up in trees, since the middle of the afternoon. It was still a warm and humid night, and sixty were hospitalised. Not among them though, was the 'happiest woman in Australia', twenty-nine year old polio victim Margaret Hemphill, who had been escorted by police to the door of the theatre in her wheelchair and was rewarded for her patience by a special smile and wave from the Duke.³¹

The only scheduled event on the Sunday was a service at St Andrew's Cathedral. There were more than thirty thousand people on hand to watch the Primate of Australia and the Dean of Sydney greet Her Majesty at the door, and hundreds of them knelt in prayer on the footpaths outside, protected from the heat of the concrete by thickly folded newspaper and followed the service on loudspeakers as reverently as if they had been inside. The Jewish community held a special service in honour of the Royal visit at the Central Synagogue in Bondi Junction at the same time.³² After the service, the Queen and Duke returned to Government House through another cheering throng, and were then off-duty for the next thirty-six hours.

The ABC took the opportunity of the break to take a body count from the first four days: St John's Ambulance personnel had attended more than seven thousand cases of collapse since Wednesday, and thirty ambulances had responded to four thousand calls. A spokesman for the Army said that its contribution had already constituted the biggest single effort ever made for a state occasion in peacetime. They had provided ten thousand soldiers on street duty, bands and ceremonial escorts, and had mounted a constant guard over Government House. A senior officer from the police was also contacted, and he pointed out that many police had been working eighteen-hour spells.³³

But the emergency services didn't get the breather they were expecting, as this first rest day of the tour gave rise to five simultaneous rumours. The Queen was

³¹ ABC, 7 February 1954, 7.45 am bulletin.

³² ABC, 7 February 1954, 12.30 pm & 9 pm bulletins. One of my correspondents, the Reverend Arthur Deane, sat in on the rehearsal for this Service, and was press ganged into taking on the part of the Duke, opposite a serious, middle-aged cleric who was playing his wife. The two reverends were greeted respectfully by the Archbishop and proceeded down the aisle (Arthur Deane, correspondence, 22 July 1990).

³³ ABC, 7 February 1954, 8.45 am bulletin; and 8 February 1954, 12.30 pm bulletin.

said to be in Palm Beach, at the Far West Children's Home in Manly, in Camden to the west, in Moss Vale to the south, and dropping in to the Lady Gowrie Red Cross Convalescent Home in suburban Gordon. She was actually in none of these places, but stayed inside Government House while her husband was sailing on the harbour.³⁴ About one hundred thousand people believed the various north shore rumours, according to police estimates, and sat patiently along one or other of the roadways. The Camden rumour caused a man and two women to promise the driver of a Sydney cab any money if he'd just get them to the Queen on time, and police stations were besieged with enquiries and bribes.³⁵

When authorities learned about the stories in the late afternoon they started broadcasting denials. But when police who were trying to clear a major traffic jam in the little town of Moss Vale conveyed these to motorists they were met with disbelief and a blanket refusal to leave. Many maintained their vigil until nightfall. In the meantime the Queen was under benevolent siege. She was watching movies — the names of which could not be released under normal procedures, but were thought to include the newsreels from arrival day — and actually sent a message to the large crowd picnicking outside to the effect that she'd be staying put. This put them off so little that there were still fifteen thousand there at eleven o'clock that night. (Equally powerful misinformation swept Victoria during a rest day exactly one month later. Kathy Skelton's father heard from friends that there were thousands of people parked up and down the highway from Melbourne in the belief that the Governor was bringing his guests up to meet the local laird. The Skeltons went and waited in the sun too until it became quite clear that the Royal Couple were somewhere else entirely, 'resting, their shoes off', probably, and 'stretched out on a spare bed'.³⁶)

³⁴ One of my interviewees, a cameraman who followed the Queen around the country, believes that a copy of her menstrual calendar may have been discreetly slipped to the organisers. The itinerary isn't 'conclusive' on this point, but this rest day on 8 February was followed by another a month later, so maybe he was right. It certainly would have made sense (Loch Townsend, interview, 24 October 1991).

³⁵ All information on this day of rumours comes from the *Herald*, 8 February 1954, p. 1; and the ABC, 7 February 1954, 7 pm & 9 pm bulletins.

³⁶ Kathy Skelton, *R. G. Menzies, Miss Gymkhana and Me*, McPhee Gribble, Melbourne, 1990, pp. 98—9. I've made an educated guess with the weekend as Skelton doesn't provide a date.



Housewives, business men, shop assistants and elderly folk forgot for a moment they were strangers and, as they waited for the Royal car to glide towards them, chatted with one another.

Sun (Melbourne), 10 March 1954.



The world stopped turning

'If only I could show you Sydney as it has been for the last week', Nancy Ray wrote home to her parents in Bathurst after this crazy day.

Even its oldest inhabitants do not recognise it for the city it was. It isn't only the decorations, lovely and strange as they are; it isn't the fact that the police have become human beings and that the pedestrian has come into his own and takes command of the middle of the street to view the arches and the floodlights and the flags; it isn't the good humour that flows through the crowds as they wait — and some of them wait all day or all night or both; it seems to be that Sydney has found its heart at last, and there is a tremendous outpouring of affection and admiration and loyalty towards the person of the Queen.³⁷

Nancy sent home regular news of the tour, in vivid letters describing, and even defining, the strange days she was living through in Sydney. Her parents kept her correspondence and so she was able to send me a copy — a computerised version — in response to a request for recollections published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. In her accompanying note, she wrote that she could assure me that 'the enthusiasm shown in the enclosed account ... was genuine for the time'.³⁸

Because she was writing an autobiographical account of the tour, her own individual view was of course, central. And yet, she was so aware that it was actually, inherently, a mass spectacle that she seemed to experience it simultaneously as if she were *one and everyone*. This was at least partly due to

³⁷ Nancy Ray, correspondence, February 1954.

³⁸ Nancy Hunt, correspondence, 4 July 1990.

the fact that her own role in the grand scheme of things was made immediately transparent through the simultaneous chronicling of the 'whole'. It is significant how many times she referred to the reportage — radio, newspapers, nightly newsreels — as part of the total experience of the visit, suggesting that it confirmed, heightened and transformed her own immediate perceptions.³⁹ This impression that the presence of the media was absolutely integral to the conduct of the tour was strongly confirmed during interviews. Quite a number of the people I spoke to began answering my question about newspapers and radio with typical phrases such as '*of course*, it was all over the papers' etc. My friend Helen Ferry, interviewing on the Indian-Pacific in 1989, found that people looked at her pityingly when she asked whether 'there'd been much in the magazines?'

- Woman I** Was there ever!
- Woman II** Oh, yes! And in the newspapers.
- Woman I** We didn't have TV at the time and we were all reading, reading, reading.⁴⁰

In general interviewees seem to remember that there had been exhaustive press coverage more often than they recalled the existence of daily radio commentary or nightly newsreels, but I did not pursue the matter enough to be able to suggest why this would be so.

Nancy's letters are wonderfully evocative, impressionistic, and composed of flashing, lively scenes. Their author was fascinated by the palpable display of emotion — 'you can almost see it' — and her very language reflects a city where ordinary time and the normal order of things were suspended —

It seems years since Wednesday morning ... if the work gets done in the city its a wonder ... after 5.30 anything can happen ... to hell with motorists, its the pedestrian's hour ... its a wonderful, crazy place, and Thursday is the end of the world. Will we ever be the same again I wonder? Did we dream it...?

³⁹ Gwen Badgery's letters to her daughter overseas demonstrate a similar awareness. More than Nancy Ray, Badgery was also conscious that the Tour was permeating her own home through the wireless (see MacKenzie, pp. 45—8). See also Annette Kuhn on the domestication of popular events, in *Family Secrets*, Verso, London, 1995, p. 68.

⁴⁰ Indian-Pacific, interviews, 29 March 1989.

Customarily sharp lines of division between day and night, work and home, home and the streets and even between oneself and the mob were dissolved as the city swirled around the Queen.⁴¹ Sydney's only public holiday was on the Wednesday of arrival, but the *Herald* reported that thousands had been unable to give their minds to their work on the following two days.

The general attitude seemed to be (and who will doubt its propriety?) — let the telephone ring, let the ink dry in the nib, let the business letter remain a shorthand note, let the customer wait — you don't get to see the Queen of England every day.⁴²

Articles reported bosses turning a blind eye, or joining their staff on the street. There were undoubtedly employers who turned nasty, but they don't show up amongst the dominant tolerance. Many had clearly sanctioned private arrangements (a friend of Nancy's worked on Saturday to make up for time off during the week and a woman in Melbourne was reported to have worked through fourteen consecutive lunch hours to gain time with the Queen). The office boy and the typist from Nancy's workplace slunk off for the opening of Parliament on Thursday morning and they all went out at lunchtime to watch the Royal car go by, 'over the heads of other people'. The Boss invited them all into his office one afternoon to watch the Queen drive down Martin Place under a snow storm of torn-up office paper, and they saw whole workplaces spilling out onto the footpath with bins, stools and boxes under their arms. Flo Fahey, another of my correspondents, remembered popping in on former workmates who had spent every day of the visit to Sydney carrying their chairs and desks outside to get a look as she went past. 'I don't think there was any work done in the CBD that week — it was Queen hysteria... it really was a magic time'.⁴³

The excitement was heightened by the crucial transformation of public space. It was not only that offices spun into the street, but that the very streets had been made so beautiful. They were sharp by day with unexpected colour from the

⁴¹ Victor Turner ('Liminality and Communitary', in *Culture and Society*, J. Alexander & S. Seidman (eds), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, p. 148) describes periods of 'liminality' as times of 'unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders'. These features are instantly recognisable in both press and individual accounts of the atmosphere during the Tour.

⁴² *Herald*, 5 February 1954, p. 7.

⁴³ Flo Fahey, correspondence, 3 July 1990.

standard-banners — blue-and-red, white-and-green, henna, orange, emerald — and otherworldly with illumination by night. The churches sported golden spires, the domes of the city halls were jade, and even the great bulky harbour bridge became a hazy, moonstone wonder.⁴⁴ They were a dazzling mirror image of the royal jewels, two parts of the whole. The Queen alone did not transform the city, but its conversion was conjured up for her alone. Luckily, the alchemy was sufficient to linger in the air through her absences, enough to sustain barely-sated Sydneysiders during her time in other towns.

Industrial and rural New South Wales

After this boisterous introduction to metropolitan Australia, the visitors were sent out to view the nation's rural and industrial development in their second week. On Tuesday 9 February, they boarded the 'Royal Train' and headed north to Newcastle and the heart of the steel industry.

One of the distinctive, remembered images of the tour was the sight of the Queen waving from the observation platform at the rear of the Royal train. Five year-old John Fisher only has one memory of actually seeing the Queen, and that's a vague impression of standing at Sydney's Summer Hill railway station with his brother, waving at a train 'with a little fence out the back'.⁴⁵ This was actually an elaborate cast-iron railing with the Royal Cipher in the middle. John Keneally, who was a teenage train-spotter, tells me that the engine pulling the train was one of the new forty class diesels and that the pilot engine was a nice, big C.38.⁴⁶

People who lived or worked near the main railway lines in Sydney or Melbourne were able to develop a little pattern, a surefire, regular means of seeing the Queen. One man interviewed on the Indian-Pacific had worked at

⁴⁴ Australian National Airways ran special night flights over Sydney to view the illuminations. These ran every night from the beginning of February to the 18th and were completely booked out. ABC, 7 February 1954, 11 pm bulletin.

⁴⁵ John Fisher, interview, 22 August 1993. The train had been built for the Queen's grandparents in 1901 and was subsequently used by her parents in 1927 and by the Governors-general. Now, it belongs to the National Museum of Australia which keeps it pretty much as it was in 1954. Beyond the observation platform there was a sitting room and two bedrooms, with furniture and fittings much as in a small but comfortable house. There must have been a bathroom, although I can barely recall it — having walked through in Sydney in 1993 — and in the galley way leading to the rest of the train were four high, leather bunks which I imagine to have been used by the personal staff of the Queen and the Duke. Ordinary sleeping carriages were attached for the remainder of the company in 1954.

⁴⁶ John Keneally, interview, 22 June 1993.

the Arnott's biscuit factory by the tracks at Strathfield, and had seen her first on her way to Newcastle. The company bosses allowed the staff to go out and see her every time she passed after that.

Helen They did? They paid you? They didn't dock your pay?

Man No, no. They said, 'the train's coming through at a certain time, and anybody who wants to go out can go out' for the ten, fifteen minutes it took to go through, and after it was all over, back inside again.⁴⁷

The thousands gathered at Newcastle's Railway Station to greet the Queen that afternoon did not require the blessing of any employer. It was a public holiday for residents of towns between Newcastle and Kempsey (people living further north would have their holiday on the following day when the Tour moved to Lismore). The ABC reported that Kempsey businesses were closed for the day, and were displaying notices which said,

Away all day today going to see our Queen, God Bless
Her, back to work tomorrow.⁴⁸

Newcastle, which had a population of one hundred and forty thousand, began to swell up twenty four hours ahead of time, as a steady stream of people from the middle and lower North Coast and the Hunter Valley came in by car or train. The weather was overcast with intermittent showers but more than a thousand slept out overnight in Civic Park, transforming it into a huge, outdoor dormitory. Some were unable to obtain or afford accommodation, but there were also others, in every crowd of campers during the tour, who regarded it as part of the excitement. By the time the Queen arrived on Tuesday afternoon, showers had become 'ceaseless drizzle' but three hundred thousand residents and visitors refused to be put off. Most saw her in transit, travelling in an open-topped car with an umbrella held high against the rain. Because of Newcastle's size, this was a longer visit than that paid to most of the sixty-nine other towns in the following seven weeks, but its format would become very familiar. The visitors were in town for three and one-half hours, and drove a total of ten miles, in a progress punctuated by the Lord Mayor's official welcome, an ex-service assembly, a schoolchildren's assembly and an inspection of BHP's great

⁴⁷ Indian-Pacific, interviews, 29 March 1989.

⁴⁸ ABC, 9 February 1954, 7.45 am bulletin.

steelworks, where the media congratulated her for speaking to workers (the correspondent for the London *Times* had a word with one of the two selected and found that he had spent the week before trying to take the calluses off his palm before he shook hands with the Queen).⁴⁹

From Williamstown Aerodrome, just outside Newcastle, the Royal party flew to Casino and drove immediately to Lismore where they slept overnight. Lismore had been in the grip of drought just previously, but rain had finally arrived in the week before the Queen, and so it looked its customary lush self. Once inside the Gollan Hotel on the main street, the Queen and Duke feasted enthusiastically on a forty-dish buffet. The cuisine to date had been very unimaginative — chicken, asparagus, fruit salad and strawberry shortcake, even twice on the one day in Sydney — and the variety at the Gollan was apparently very welcome. Since it had been selected to host the Royals, the hotel had received more publicity than you can imagine. Photographs of the rooms had been published everywhere, and the fittings described in detail, right down to the flatware at the buffet and the dimensions of the pink mosquito net that would guard the Queen's sleep.⁵⁰

The combination of royalty and rain produced real exuberance among the eighteen thousand residents and their thirty thousand visitors. Nearly half of these gathered around the Hotel Gollan in the evening for an informal greeting that became increasingly boisterous. Police from Sydney said the crush at the front of the pub was the most dangerous they had seen, and fifteen women were taken to hospital. A sustained chant of 'We want the Queen' brought her onto the balcony twice (it became something between a rumour and a joke that she had a glass of Flag Ale in her hand) and after she retired at ten the police had to bully the revellers into moving their street party away from her window. This continued through most of the night, reinforced towards dawn by travellers coming in from the far-flung reaches of the north coast, where three hundred thousand cows had had the earliest milking of their otherwise peaceful lives.⁵¹

⁴⁹ *Times*, 10 February 1954, p. 8.

⁵⁰ The smorgasbord was described in the *Australian Women's Weekly*, 24 February 1954, p. 12. The *Women's Weekly* had also published an earlier article on preparations in the Hotel Gollan, 10 February 1954, p. 12.

⁵¹ ABC, 9 February 1954, 7.45 am bulletin.

The only thing that wasn't up by early morning was the sun. The weather veered between light showers and occasional bucketings, but rather than suppressing the spirit of the crowd, it almost seemed to liberate it. Lismore's was the least formal of all Australian gatherings. Many women had to remove their shoes and stockings in the mud, for example, and saw no point in hanging onto their dignity after that. Schoolgirls from Bowraville stood in the street with navy dye from their hats running down over their faces and onto the white of their shirts.⁵² Twelve thousand other schoolchildren could barely see the car as it circled Oakes Oval, and it had to make a second circuit. This simple action impressed the authors of *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand* who recorded that:

Elizabeth's heart was so touched by the sight of all those dripping wet but enthusiastic little faces that she ordered her driver to turn around and circle the area once more.⁵³

Patients at the Lismore Base Hospital were brought outside in their beds and wheelchairs, just in time for the morning's most torrential downpour. Though soaked to the skin they were laughing and cheering, and the Queen smiled warmly when she saw them and ordered the car to pause. The rain held off for the Civic Reception at the close of the Progress, but the red carpet squelched loudly as Her Majesty walked upon it. Everybody else seemed to be caught in a puddle holding their shoes, and as the skies began to lighten they started to sing loudly and cheerfully 'You are my sunshine'. The Mayor made his speech under a temporary dais outside the Council Chambers, which was one of the most unusual seen on tour. It was in the shape of a golden shell, and lined within by quilted crimson satin and had eaten up a large part of the £5 000 allocated to decorations from municipal funds⁵⁴ (some towns used existing podiums or bandstands, but many built special platforms for the Queen. The Shire Council in Wagga constructed a dais that was tiered like a cake and topped with a globe of the world which rotated day and night within a ribbon — much like Saturn's rings — on which the word 'Commonwealth' was painted. A couple of the English papers reported with interest that it was the work of a New Australian signwriter.)⁵⁵

⁵² ABC, talkback, Lismore, 10 February 1994. A caller named Charles remembered this because he later married one of those girls.

⁵³ *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand*, p. 49. They described it as a very kind and thoughtful gesture on the Queen's part, although she alone was under an umbrella.

⁵⁴ *Herald* (Melbourne), 11 February 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook. This sum would be equivalent to about \$101 000 in today's terms.

⁵⁵ *Observer*, 14 February 1954, p. 1.

The final activity of the morning was the presentation of the famous Sara quads. The Queen had asked to meet them after learning that the family had travelled two hundred miles from Bellingen for the occasion. Unfortunately, the poor little things (they were just three and one-half) were overwhelmed by the crowds and they burst into tears and ran off, leaving their embarrassed mother to explain and Prince Philip to roll a sympathetic eye at their father. After this, it was into the car for Casino, along a road full of cheering spectators.

The rain was still heavy during the second reception of the morning. Casino had barely eight thousand inhabitants but there were four times as many drenched souls waving flags along the roadway or gathered in Carrington Park. Some of the crowd had driven over five hundred miles for the briefest of glimpses. Their cars were muddy and so were they, but there weren't many places to wash with the town so crowded. A bus party of forty from Dorrigo had been overturned on the way, but turned up, all shaken and bruised, before they even thought of seeking treatment. Despite these conditions, or perhaps because of them, Casino let out a roar that journalists thought to be one of the mightiest yet.

After the Royal plane had flown off towards Dubbo, visitors to Lismore and Casino turned to face the difficult journey home. Some were trapped by the floods (within a few days these had become the worst ever known, causing loss of life and massive damage to stock and property). Others were caught in a massive bottleneck on the Clarence River, near Harwood, the like of which was never seen before or since. The old ferry could only handle seventy cars every hour and the line of vehicles waiting to cross was still five miles long at 11 o'clock that night. Farmers were taking food to distraught children. It was five in the morning before the last car was taken over the river.

.....

Queen's Special Smile For Aborigines

CASINO, Wednesday.— The Queen gave one of her warmest smiles to the Australian aborigines who came into Casino to see her today.

Herald, 11 February 1954.



Aboriginal spectators were first noticed by the press in these northern towns. Anne Matheson from the *Women's Weekly* was amused by one old Aboriginal man saying to her, 'I stay up all night to see Queenie'.⁵⁶ Another reporter noted 'an outstanding, noble grey-haired man nursing a small child in one arm while he vigorously waved a small flag with the other' amongst the crowd in Casino. Language of this kind was only applied to Aboriginal people, and it was also only they who would be described as 'neatly dressed' (with an element of surprise or relief always hovering in the background).⁵⁷

There were also 'smiling black faces' among the white ones greeting their sovereign in Dubbo, but they took no part in the 'typical Australian bush show' that was the afternoon's entertainment. Although the plane landed in brilliant sunshine, Dubbo had also had heavy rains and there had been some epic journeys made to get there. A local shearing champion and a bus load of children had been pulled out of a swollen river by a tractor in separate incidents, and two spectators had come one hundred and sixty miles from Condobolin in a cab.

Each occasion on this early part of the tour unveiled another aspect of 'Australia', and Dubbo emphasised the culture of the sheep and wheat farming districts of the west. The Queen was met by an unusual guard of honour — one hundred prize-winning stud merinos, worth many thousands of pounds, with their tails turned towards her. They lined the route to the Exhibition Hall, where a Western Districts Exhibit had been prepared. There aren't any detailed descriptions available, but I imagine it was one of those fascinating displays of intricate bottling and freakish pumpkins. The Queen was said to be delighted, and the Duke to enjoy the subsequent display of wood chopping, whip-cracking, tree-felling and shearing. After another civic reception, a brief service assembly to honour a local man who had been posthumously awarded the

⁵⁶ *Australian Women's Weekly* 24 February 1954, p. 12.

⁵⁷ Both of these descriptions are from the *Herald*, 11 February 1954, p. 4.

Victoria Cross for bravery during World War II, and a quick run around the twelve thousand children on the oval, the party got back on the plane and returned to Sydney and a 'welcome home' from tens of thousands of people along the route from the airport. Their whirlwind trip was described in the *Sydney Morning Herald* as 'probably the busiest two-day tour any distinguished visitor has ever attempted in Australia'. The Queen had travelled one thousand miles to attend four civic receptions and shake two hundred and fifty hands. Of her thirty-two hours away, she had stood for a total of twenty.⁵⁸

.....

This will be the greatest day in Bathurst history and we want it to be a memorable one.

The Mayor of Bathurst, 11 February 1954. ⁵⁹

.....

Notwithstanding, she was up bright and early on the following day, for a car trip to Wollongong on the South Coast — via her first morning tea in the bush, with home-made scones and jam⁶⁰ — and was then off again to Bathurst on Friday morning. She had been in the country for a week now and the dazzle of those first days had subsided to the point where she 'was now being accepted as an everyday visitor rather than a novel one'.⁶¹

Her party was met at Bathurst Airport by Premier Joe Cahill, and was driven into town through custom-built, wrought-iron gates with a golden crown and a message of welcome on top. Family parties had slept around the city square from midnight, and the ABC's correspondent made a flight of fancy by imagining that there'd already been more activity in town in the early morning than at any time in Bathurst's heyday as the goldmining centre of New South Wales.⁶² The population had grown fivefold for the day, from thirteen to over sixty thousand and lengthy hurrah-ing and happy singing were heard as far as five miles away, across the surrounding plains. The address of welcome was

⁵⁸ *Herald* 11 February 1954, p. 1. The final statistic on the hours of standing was given in *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand*, p. 49.

⁵⁹ ABC, 11 February 1954, 7 pm bulletin.

⁶⁰ The scones had been made by a Mrs Melrose of Carrathool, near Hay in the Riverina, who told reporters in her five minutes of fame that she had a bit of a reputation in the kitchen but she'd never thought she'd be cooking for the Queen (*Herald*, 12 February 1954, p. 3).

⁶¹ *Herald*, 12 February 1954, p. 1.

⁶² ABC, 12 February 1954, 6 am bulletin.

read and presented in front of the court house, in a ceremony which merged into a service assembly near the Evans Memorial. The widow of Labor Prime Minister Ben Chifley was a special guest at the reception, and the crowd cheered especially loudly while she was conversing with the Duke. It was just a little visit, this one, and it ended at the railway station where the Royal Train was waiting. The Bathurst Horticultural Society had made it as fine as five pence with roses and carnations as a surprise for the Queen.

The train took them up to the mining centre, Lithgow, and they arrived just after the local police had performed the novel task of untangling the one and only traffic jam in the town's history. Lithgow was only on call for twenty-five minutes but the Town Council had made a particularly strong effort with decorations. An arch across main street was built from mining gear and coal skips were lined up below with costumed miners standing by them. Other miners formed an unofficial guard of honour, and the Queen said in her speech how pleased she was to see them. As she left she walked across a carpet that had been woven in red, white and blue lambswool by workers from the local woollen mill in their spare time. It was then cut into tiny pieces and given away to residents.⁶³

The next stop was Echo Point at the bottom of Katoomba, whose usual population of thirty thousand had doubled during the morning. The Blue Mountains were found to have been never so azure as when graced by the Queen — but the temperamental echo wouldn't perform, despite local member Clive Evatt bellowing down into the valley (apocryphal stories were circulated that he had a staff member hiding down a ravine ready to coo-ee back). The visit ended with a drive around Cliff Road to Leura, all of it absolutely jammed with people, where they joined the train again and left for Sydney. There were sad cries of 'Come Back' ringing in their ears on their way down from the Upper Mountains, but these were replaced by raucous shouts of welcome in Penrith and then all through the western suburbs into Central Station. For some reason, possibly because her final departure was now so close, true Royal-fever broke out again in Sydney that afternoon, and authorities were caught on the hop. There were nowhere near enough police to stop huge, hysterical crowds from surging on to the tracks, behind and in front of the royal train which was several times forced to stop. The only way to ensure safety was to stop the suburban services, which threw all the peak hour traffic into chaos. It was

⁶³ *Herald*, 13 February 1954, p. 8.

especially important to halt the electric trains because some people had sought vantage points high on the steel poles which carried the overhead wires. Others were packed onto railway bridges, or fences, or were standing on cars in parallel streets. The train was three-quarters of an hour late, and even the Queen, who had stood smiling on the observation deck throughout was moved to a rare remark, that the crowds had been 'tremendous'.⁶⁴

.....

Cahill and his crowd ... looked like wharf lumpers waiting for a call up. I would really like to know what H. M. thinks of Her Government. It would be really interesting to hear what she and Phillip have to say after the light goes out at night.

Greg Donellan, letter to daughter Margaret, February 1954.⁶⁵

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Mud-stained politicians

One caller to ABC radio in Canberra called Ross had been a resident of Bathurst in 1954, and he had a funny story about a local politician greeting the Queen at the railway station. He had his details wrong, as she had actually come in by plane, but the point of the story was that wherever she had gone, this man had followed.

He had beaten the train to each stop by car ... and had done the trip by car to be at each platform when the Queen arrived.⁶⁶

In another version of this story, which also centred around Bathurst, the Premier put the Queen on the train in Sydney and then flew to her destination so that he could greet her at the other end. Mr Cahill acquired another nickname, 'I'll see you again Joe', because of his habit of popping up in country towns (Loch Townsend told me that it was impossible to take a shot of the Queen in New South Wales without a small burly man somewhere in the

⁶⁴ *ibid*, p. 1.

⁶⁵ Greg Donellan, letter to his daughter Margaret Webster, 3 February 1954 (copy sent to me by Mrs Webster with note, 14 July 1990).

⁶⁶ ABC, talkback, Canberra, 1990.

frame).⁶⁷ This was seen as moderately amusing, but he queered his pitch with many people by being too political about the space by the Royal elbow. He refused to invite the Prime Minister to the New South Wales State Banquet — there was no technical requirement that he do so as Mr Menzies was a resident of Victoria, but it would have been seen as a decent gesture — and was alleged to have wrongfully denied a non-Labor mayor the right to greet the Royal Party at Concord Oval in Sydney. These actions were widely criticised.⁶⁸

But complaints about the behaviour of local politicians and civic officials must have been more general, because the Prime Minister felt moved to tackle the issue on the radio on 10 February. He addressed himself to one particular grievance, that the members of local councils were hogging the front row at all receptions. 'Why shouldn't they?' he asked. They were devoting long hours to voluntary public service and deserved the distinction of representing the people before the monarch. Had we forgotten that they were our democratically elected representatives?

I don't mean by this, of course, that people like myself should try to monopolise our Queen, but I do mean that on formal occasions a just representation by us is the expression of our democracy and not, as some people seem to think, inconsistent with it.⁶⁹

But complaints kept coming. Journalist Douglas Brass had a piece in the Melbourne *Sun* a whole month later defending aldermen and councillors, once again, from 'a good deal of uninformed criticism'. He 'understood' that the Queen and Duke were delighted to meet such minor dignitaries as it brought them 'as close to the people as they can possibly get on such a marathon as this'.⁷⁰

On the surface, the invitation lists support Mr Menzies' assertion that entree cards were the reward for public service, although not all of it was voluntary. At big events, like Queensland's State Reception on 9 March, invitees included parliamentarians, judges, former Cabinet ministers, Church and Service leaders (and their wives) and another group of people representing charitable and

⁶⁷ Loch Townsend.

⁶⁸ See the *Herald*, 6 February 1954, p. 6; 'Mayor kept from Queen', *Sun-Herald*, 7 February 1954, p 5, contains the allegation that the Premier threatened to cancel the Queen's visit to Concord Oval if the Mayor insisted on his right to greet her.

⁶⁹ ABC, 10 February 1954, 9 pm bulletin.

⁷⁰ *Sun* (Melbourne), 11 March 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook.

public organisations and every field of sport.⁷¹ Several things strike me from this list: that sporting heroes were far more likely than *artistes* to meet the Queen, and that leaders of business do not appear to the extent that they would today (or at least it was preferred that those engaged in commerce should behave as if they had old money and secure their invitation on the basis of their charitable work). It is also likely that many disputes and tensions lay beneath the composition of any guest list, as was strongly hinted in a letter I found in the files of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in the Australian Archives in Canberra, from a Mr Frank Debenham of Queanbeyan protesting about the composition of the guest list for the Federal Government's State Banquet. Amidst vehement assurances that he was not, personally, upset at his own omission, he accused the powers-that-be in the Liberal Party of rewarding one faction over another and Johnnies-come-lately over citizens (such as himself, but this was not the point) with a lengthy record in local service.⁷²

A typical list of presentees at a regional do was a little different. In Wollongong, for example, His Worship the Mayor, having been introduced by a State Minister, presented in turn four local members and their wives; the Shire President and his good lady; the mayors and mayoresses of four surrounding towns; the aldermen of Wollongong, also accompanied by their better halves; and, lastly, 'Lt. Colonel and Mrs McCammon'.⁷³ The arguments of Menzies and Brass may have fallen on deaf ears in the crowd, which was seen to become impatient. The hostility expressed about such persons suggests that the people did not think about electoral systems in quite the same terms as the Prime Minister. They were impatient of social climbing ('people who want to bathe in the glory of the great'), and they didn't seem to see their local members as representative of themselves at all. The Premier of Tasmania and the councillors of Katoomba were hailed as heroes when they held back — the former didn't make one speech when the Royals were in his state and the latter got a mountain of positive publicity when they waived their right to be presented so that 'the Queen would have more time to enjoy the beauty of the scenery' (and she made an unusually direct response in saying, 'That is one of the nicest things I've heard').⁷⁴ Former New South Wales Labor Premier Jack Lang hit a

⁷¹ ABC, 9 March 1954, 9 pm bulletin.

⁷² Frank Debenham, letter to Prime Minister's Private Secretary, 14 January 1954, File no 54/183, Department of the Interior, Australian Archives, ACT Regional Office.

⁷³ *The Royal Visit to New South Wales*, Oswald Ziegler, Sydney, 1954, p. 70.

⁷⁴ ABC, 12 February 1954, 7 pm bulletin.

popular note when he said that politicians 'were doing their best to wreck the tour' and that the Queen ought to be allowed to see the truly ordinary people.⁷⁵

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The Queen moved among the shearers, axemen and boomerang throwers after the display, and shook hands with the men. Harold Deaves, of Brooklands, the winner, was sitting with his opponent, Len Stephens, after the event, when his 11 year-old daughter, Frances, ran across the ground. 'Which hand was it Dad?' she cried, eager to be the first to shake her father's hand after the Queen had shaken it. Deaves gave her his right hand, iron-hard, callused, and grimy, and then he looked at it unbelievably.

ABC, 13 February 1954.

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Wagga

The last lucky town in New South Wales was Wagga, in the Riverina area, where one hundred and ten thousand people gathered for the day on 13 February. One of the English correspondents, the *Observer's* Patrick O'Donovan, filed quite a lengthy piece on Wagga, describing its sunburnt, dead-looking countryside, a wealthy, frontier town with freshly-painted buildings on the wide main street, tracks for every known variety of racing, houses whose uniformity disguised the income of the occupant, and the 'extraordinary pleasure' that the sight of the Queen was bringing to the shouting crowds.

Talk rumbled out of crowded stand up bars. Pavements disappeared under people. Soldiers appeared to line the streets. Amateur military bands marched about. Loudspeakers never stopped advice or exhortation, but the crowd stayed quietly happy and half of it seemed to know the other half. The mayor stood on his dais and the Queen came driving down the main street into Wagga Wagga. It was tremendous and the greatest fun.⁷⁶

After the mayor had said hello, as many as could fit then squeezed into the Showground for another bush carnival, and the district's best shearers and

⁷⁵ *News* (Adelaide), 8 February 1954, p. 24.

⁷⁶ *Observer*, 14 February 1954, p. 1.

wood-choppers performed, in the sweltering heat. Most press attention was given to an Aboriginal family who had been imported from Sydney for the day to give an exhibition of boomerang throwing. Joe Timbery was a national champion (I think that he had also won a competition overseas), and he put on a display in which his wife and three children gradually joined in, until the final throw when five boomerangs flew out and then back in together. The Queen and Duke then spoke to all the performers but particularly to the Timberys. Joe Jr., who was seven, remembers that she said something to him like, 'You're a young boy to be doing such a good job'.⁷⁷ She then climbed into a Land rover to drive around the park and fourteen thousand school children, before leaving for the aerodrome and the symbolic heart of her visit, in Canberra.

.....

No reigning sovereign has visited Canberra before; the Queen's presence there now gives the final note of authority and meaning to the place of the National Capital in Australian life.

ABC, 13 February 1954.

.....

The national capital

The Royal Visit to Canberra had to transcend the discrepancy between the size and social development of the bush capital, and the number and significance of the events it was to host. It may have had a slightly more sophisticated air than other towns with only thirty thousand residents — being home to the Diplomatic Corps, politicians, academics and career public servants — but those others were only in the limelight for a couple of hours. Canberra was required to stage the Commonwealth Government's state banquet, the historic opening of Federal Parliament, a children's assembly, various receptions and several military parades.

The Prime Minister's Department and the Department of the Interior co-ordinated the local organisation, and both were concerned about the level of facilities available for visitors — especially for five thousand visiting troops for

⁷⁷ Joe Timbery, speaking in 'The Queen and Her Australian Subjects, episode nine, 'Out of Empire', ABC Open Learning television, 1993.

whom they had responsibility. Members of both bureaucracies worked with the ACT Citizen's Committee which they had established to advise on the matters of the Civic Welcome to the Queen, the public decorations and public entertainments. As a Canberra native, I found their files just fascinating — it seemed a bit of a backwater in the nineteen-seventies, but they were a revelation as to the social life in the fifties. Cafe owners had to be requested to stay open at night, the street lights had to be left on to a later hour, and the matron was asked to run evening tours of the hospital for visiting nursing sisters and female officers. But to be fair, the tour also spawned a nightly carnival, many dances, suppers, sporting matches and concerts, which utilised Canberran clubs and performers.⁷⁸ Native soldiers and cadets from New Guinea were entertained separately by the YMCA, which later asked for £66 toward the cost of stationary, light, power, transport, supper and games.⁷⁹

Canberrans did not sleep out on the night before the Queen's arrival. Two women came down from Sydney prepared to do so, but went to stay with friends when they saw there wasn't any need. They were still the first people in place at six in the morning. A couple of thousand spectators arrived for the rehearsal at seven-thirty, and particularly enjoyed the sight of a blushing cadet from the nearby military academy in the role of the Queen. Cars from the South Coast, the Southern Tablelands and the Monaro District arrived throughout the morning and afternoon.

The Royal plane touched down at Fairbairn Airport at four o'clock in the afternoon of Saturday 13 February, and the Queen was met by the Governor-General, the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and other senior parliamentarians. There was a crowd of two thousand at the landing and a further fifteen thousand in the town centre, Civic. Thirty thousand visitors came over the four days, but the biggest contingent arrived for the children's display on Monday. Elizabeth and Philip were given a very warm welcome, particularly when the Queen referred to her father's great interest in Canberra and his oft-expressed desire to see for himself how the experimental city had developed since 1927.⁸⁰ They then retired to Government House, from where

⁷⁸ Information from File no 54/185, Department of the Interior; and File no 825/2/30, Prime Minister's Department. Australian Archives, ACT Regional Office.

⁷⁹ Letter from the General-Secretary of the Canberra YMCA, 9 April 1954, File no 835/2/59, Prime Minister's Department, Australian Archives, ACT Regional Office. The Secretary-General noted in the letter that the provision of this service had been a 'stimulating experience' for his members.

⁸⁰ ABC, 13 February 1954, various bulletins.

they could probably hear the sound of fireworks in the evening — Canberra's first party.

On Monday afternoon, Her Majesty entered Parliament House, where her father had stood before her, and dressed in her 'Commonwealth' Coronation Dress, declared open the Third Session of the Twentieth Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia.⁸¹ In her speech she underscored the 'elements of unity' in the British Commonwealth: parliamentary sovereignty, a democratically controlled executive and an independent judiciary, united across all nations by the comradeship of the Crown. These institutions together fostered the progress, freedom, democracy and brotherhood that she had observed with pleasure in her journeys through the Commonwealth to date. The traditional format of the ceremony did not allow for a response, but the Prime Minister had written or spoken along these lines for the media on many occasions before the Tour, and they would both give these sentiments less formal expression at the State Banquet in a few days time.

.....

The very existence of Her Majesty restores our faith and strengthens our hope for civilisation and the world. It refreshes and satisfies our longing for beauty, goodness and truth.

Senator McKenna, Leader of the Opposition in the Senate.⁸²

.....

When the ceremony was over, the Queen and Duke moved outside and stood beneath a sagging canopy to take a rain-sodden salute from four thousand troops and three hundred cadets, who marched past in the biggest parade of the military seen in peacetime. Schoolchildren provided a backdrop, massed on a nearby rise with a message of greeting. Neil MacPherson was a fourteen year-old cadet from the country, and by 1992 his memory had retained mostly the weather — 'rain now blew up the road in gusts squarely into our faces' — and a

⁸¹ The Coronation gown had been packed by a firm specialising in the transportation of art treasures, and flown out from London to New Zealand at a cost of £75 in order that it could be worn at the openings of Parliament in Wellington and Canberra. (*Australian Women's Weekly*, 20 January 1954, p. 24).

⁸² ABC, 15 February 1954, 9 pm bulletin.

vague, undefined impression that a 'moment of some importance had now passed'. One thing he did remember was that the boys had been unimpressed by the sentiments enunciated in the speeches all around them: 'we young soldiers were somewhat removed from such considerations as "liberty according to English ideas and on English principles"'.⁸³ But was this because they had received too little formal instruction in these matters, or too much?

.....

We stood on that hill and we all had coloured pieces of crepe paper and we made an Australian flag by holding them up at a certain time. That's commonly done now, but at that time I think it was the latest in high technology — holding up crepe paper to make patterns like that.

*Edward, remembering the Opening of Parliament in Canberra, 1954.*⁸⁴

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The American alliance

The Stars and Stripes flew side by side with the Union Jack and the Australian ensign on 16 February when the Queen unveiled the National Memorial to the United States of America: a 258-foot shaft of aluminium surmounted by an eagle and known for ever after as 'Bugs Bunny'. The memorial had been erected in gratitude for the help given to Australia by the United States during the war in the Pacific. In her speech, the Queen portrayed the bond between American and British people (she did not differentiate Australians from the latter) as a 'great and real' one inspired by common traditions. The second speech maker was the Prime Minister, who spoke of the Americans who were buried on Australian soil. Their sacrifice had rendered the existing friendship between the two nations 'a thousand times more enduring'. He added that the Queen's presence was particularly appropriate because of the place she held in American hearts — the 'softest of soft spots'. The American ambassador, Mr Amos J. Peaslee, politely agreed with the observations of both:

We recall too, with deep affection, the common source which Australians and Americans look to for much of

⁸³ Neil MacPherson, 'A brief, shining moment in 54', *Canberra Times*, 8 February 1992.

⁸⁴ ABC, talkback, Canberra, 1990.

their traditions, their literature, their law, and perhaps above all else, their love of liberty.⁸⁵

Stephen Alomes has described the opening of this memorial as an important event in the battle between American and British cultural themes in post-war Australia. To those who regretted burgeoning American influence the Queen's presence was a master stroke. It would reassert the primary, imperial relationship. But despite its importance, Alomes argues that it was ultimately unsuccessful — Menzies may personified British style, but all the time he was actually 'presiding over an Australia which moved increasingly into the American defence and economic orbit'.⁸⁶

The notion that Britannia's star began to wane in the southern skies during the 1950s while Uncle Sam was on the up and up is accepted by writers on the period. Richard White provided a neat summary of the consensus in 1993, that 'with investment, treaties and television, economically, diplomatically, culturally, the United States replaced Britain as the new imperial centre'.⁸⁷ This shift was a site of conflict and contradictory feelings throughout the decade (although, as White's inclusion of television implies, more so in the later years) and particularly when it intersected with generational division. The United Kingdom came to stand more and more for tradition and the United States for modernity and the teenage culture that was seen as threatening to the Australian way of life. During such conflict, according to White, a deep reservoir of anti-American feeling surfaced — it had previously been stimulated by the actual presence of American soldiers during the war, as the Prime Minister well knew — and then the potential hegemony of the United States was felt by many to be 'as great a threat as communist subversion'.⁸⁸

Such divisions were not openly aired during the Royal Tour. There were no forthright statements opposing American influence. But although the war against socialism and the ramifications of migration were treated far more openly, statements laudatory of British tradition often appeared to be aimed at a shadowy target. The *Herald*, for example, published an editorial after the opening of Federal Parliament which concluded that 'those who have said that

⁸⁵ ABC, 16 February 1954, 12.30 pm bulletin.

⁸⁶ Stephen Alomes, 'Ceremonial Visions of Australia', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no 20, May 1987, p. 55.

⁸⁷ Richard White, 'The shock of affluence: Australia in the Fifties', in *The Australian Dream*, Judith O'Callaghan (ed.), Powerhouse Publishing, Sydney, 1993, p. 23.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

this country's bonds with Britain and the Throne are loosening have been confounded',⁸⁹ and Victorian Labor Premier John Cain made a particularly assertive statement on these lines to the State Banquet in Melbourne later in the month:

There was nothing that could adequately take the place of the British way of life, and nothing that could compare with the ideals and aspirations of those who laid claim to British tradition.⁹⁰

Such sentiments were also given poetic expression in the *Bulletin*, by an author who described Australians as 'children in exile, or colonial sons', who cherished from afar 'all that was British, will be and has been'.⁹¹

The Catholic welcome

Most of the resistance I have encountered to the idea that the Tour was well-nigh universally popular has come from leftish ex-Catholics. My father — who was actually away at sea at the time — was one who attempted to deny that Catholic schools would have taken part in any official activities. His memory of the Catholic schooling of a slightly earlier era (he left school in 1947) was of a system where British songs were never sung, and so 'when you get that sort of background you don't flock to the Queen ...'

Chorus They did!!

Tom Connors (persevering gamely) ... and I was very disappointed when my sister spent all night on North Head waiting for the yacht to come in the harbour. I though she was traitorous.⁹²

Tom Keneally described a similar school system in his autobiography-cum-treatise, *Our Republic*, one where there were no portraits of George VI in the corridors and faint regret that the lucky 'Proddos' (Protestants) in the state system got time out of school for Empire Day celebrations.⁹³ His younger brother John was at school during the tour, when the 'Micks' did join the Proddos in every showground the length and breadth of the country, but as he remembers it, the motivations were fairly complex.

⁸⁹ *Herald*, 17 February 1954, p. 2. My emphasis.

⁹⁰ ABC, 28 February 1954, 6.45 am bulletin.

⁹¹ Peter Bladen, 'Apology to Her Majesty', *Bulletin*, 3 March 1954, p. 6.

⁹² Tom Connors, interview, 1989.

⁹³ Tom Keneally, *Our Republic*, William Heinemann Australia, Melbourne, 1993, p. 22.

The thing that I really remember, is that we had to go to it to show that we were as good as anybody else, that we were as good as the state school kids, or as whoever. We had to do that to show that we were Australians, but the thing that kept on coming, certainly from my teachers, was that it was a whole lot of nonsense. That really this was an English Queen. A bit of a star, but to keep the Proddies, the ruling Proddies happy, we had to go and wave the flag and be as polite as they were, and almost as servile (laughing).⁹⁴

In John's recollection, his teachers objected on *Australian* nationalist grounds. The anti-English feeling of the Irish, which had been kept alive for such a long time here, was no longer dominant, or even distinct, but a fading remnant of the race memory. His own family were not particularly crazy about the Queen either, but again, it was because they were Australians rather than because they were Catholic.

Jane How would you describe the atmosphere at home? It wasn't violently anti-royal, it was more or less indifferent ... ?

John There was no animosity. There was frustration with the excessive welcome that was being out on by other people. There was interest in the whole spectacle. I think there was not, immediately then, any question that we should get rid of the monarchy ...

Jane Well, it would have been quite an extreme position in 1954.

John The question then, in 1954, was 'what has this got to do with us as Australians?' It didn't go that extra step to saying 'lets do away with it'...⁹⁵

The Keneallys lived opposite a railway line on the Queen's route, and John can remember his father saying that he couldn't be bothered going out to see her — although he thinks that in the event he did. (His future father-in-law also planned a private boycott, and was most annoyed when fate intervened and he saw her by accident in the Blue Mountains). But this was a milder position than that of John's grandfather, a fierce old nationalist, who often reminded his descendants that an earlier generation of Hanovers had been lousy with

⁹⁴ John Keneally.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*

syphilis, and who ruined every Christmas for monarchist relatives with aggressive interjections during the Queen's annual message.⁹⁶ This family, I think, represents the relaxation of ancient hostilities that was generally evident during the Tour.

But there was one occasion on which sectarianism flared. The Royal Military College at Duntroon in Canberra had prepared for the 'presenting of colours' over months. It was later declared to have been a perfect display of 'full military splendour' from the first drill to the precision fly-past on conclusion, and most people forgot, or chose to forget that the ceremony had actually been dogged by open religious controversy for almost eighteen months.

This had begun in September 1952 when Melbourne's Archbishop Daniel Mannix, who was also the Catholic Chaplain-General, became infuriated by the insistence of the Minister for the Armed Services, William McMahon, that a Protestant religious service be used at the presentation ceremony. Mannix believed that the imposition of a Protestant service on Catholic cadets was illegal under Section 116 of the Australian constitution (and a violation of the military's own 'freedom of conscience' provisions) and sought assurances from the Federal Government that the Duntroon ceremony would be arranged in a way to avoid any embarrassment 'for the Queen or for Catholics' — in other words, he wanted a common civic ceremony with provision for separate Protestant, Catholic and Jewish services if required, as was the standard practice at the time. The Minister stalled, and it was the Archbishop who finally had to break the deadlock, just a week before the Royal presentation, by issuing a dispensation that allowed Catholic cadets to attend. Only then did the Prime Minister agree that future celebrations would include distinct civic and religious components.

The controversy provoked vigorous exchanges in the letters pages of the newspapers in the weeks before the Duntroon ceremony, and some angry reflective editorials in the Catholic press afterwards. 'Duntroon and Bigotry' ran the banner in the *Catholic Worker*. The Queen, of course, was specifically and carefully excluded from all accusations. The *Catholic Advocate* argued that she was better aware of the provisions for religious freedom in the Constitution than the Government, and the *Worker* that

⁹⁶ Tom Keneally, pp. 25-6.

the objections came not from the Queen or her husband, but from bigots or from small-minded men who are all for show, and who cannot bear to see a step out of place for fear it might upset Her Majesty. Her Majesty knows better than they that her Catholic subjects are truly loyal to her, and none the less loyal because they owe an even higher loyalty to God.⁹⁷

Mainstream media outlets such as the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the ABC had already left the controversy well behind. Their reportage of the ceremony did not even refer to its supposedly successful resolution, and the commemorative volumes then buried it entirely.

There were few other public examples of religious hostility. A friend did tell me the story of Father X in Melbourne, his headmaster, who burned souvenir booklets in the playground, countermanded the public holiday and closed all blinds as the Royal Progress passed the school.⁹⁸ But his intransigence is not reflected on the public record, or in the memories of others. Media-friendly theologians were certainly most accommodating. Archbishop Simonds spoke of the Queen and the Pope as if they were tandem spiritual leaders during the 'Catholic Hour' on the ABC, and poetry in the *Catholic Weekly* depicted a close relationship between Mary above and Elizabeth on earth.⁹⁹

The Queen of Heaven could hardly have received a more fervent expression of welcome than that prepared in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn for the Children's Display on 16 February. The Reverend John P. Kelly, Diocesan Director of Education, wrote to the Prime Minister's Dept at the end of January on behalf of his newly-appointed Archbishop, the Most Reverend Eris O'Brien (who was also a distinguished historian). The Archbishop was concerned that those Catholic schoolchildren who were not able to attend the Display on Manuka Oval should nonetheless 'be brought to feel some personal links between themselves and the Royal Visitors'. He proposed that a 'spiritual bouquet' might be presented to the Queen, by which he meant an illuminated parchment roll with a message. The intended text was included, and it is clear from it that children in this Archdiocese, at least, were being led in prayer in school for the safety and well-being of the monarch,

⁹⁷ *Catholic Advocate*, 18 February 1954, p. 6; and *Catholic Worker*, 1 March 1954, p. 1.

⁹⁸ Brendan O'Dwyer, conversation, 1989.

⁹⁹ The Archbishop's speech was reported in the *Catholic Advocate*, 4 March 1954, p. 7. Poet Mary King requested the 'most Blessed Queen of Heaven' to 'protect our earthly Queen', in 'Two Queens', *Catholic Weekly*, 25 February 1954, p. 15.

... beseeching God to bless you and His Royal Highness, the Duke of Edinburgh, and to watch over you during your arduous journey through so many of your lands.¹⁰⁰

The Prime Minister's Department sought advice on this matter from the Chairman of the ACT Royal Visit Schools Committee, who responded that the idea, though excellent, had been submitted too late for inclusion in the program. He also felt that it would be unfair to schools from the public sector and from other church schools to include a specific address from the Catholic system only. Father Kelly was recommended to forward the 'bouquet' to the Governor-General for submission to the Queen.¹⁰¹

With or without it, Canberra's children's display was boisterous and happy. Many children coming in from areas around Cooma and Bombala were away from home for more than twenty-four hours in order to attend, and up to fourteen of these were spent on the train. Rotarians rose in the middle of the night to ferry local kids as far as sixty miles to railway stations. There were some from as far away as Orbost, in Victoria. It was unusually humid in Canberra that year, and the atmosphere was stifling enough to send eight hundred children to the ground, despite the efforts of ambulance officers moving constantly through their ranks with water. Their cries of welcome were tremendous nonetheless, even though they heard little of their sovereign's address. The ABC said charitably that 'enthusiasm' had caused some to grasp the overhead wires of the public address system, with the result that the Queen spoke into a dead microphone, but the Prime Minister was bitter about the incident.¹⁰² It was the eleventh time that amplification had failed during the tour already and he was angry enough to call loudly to a journalist, 'Why don't you write a special article about all public address system mechanics being morons?'¹⁰³ However the contractor blamed the children and was generally believed. Kathy Skelton's class was warned by the president of the local shire that he wouldn't stand for any repetition in Melbourne.

¹⁰⁰ Letter from Reverend Kelly, file 825/2/21, Prime Minister's Dept, Australian Archives, ACT Regional Office.

¹⁰¹ All correspondence from file 825/2/21 Prime Minister's Dept, Australian Archives, ACT Regional Office.

¹⁰² The Minister for the Interior arranged to have a tape copy of the speech sent to every school so that nobody need miss out (ABC, 16 February 1954, 9 pm bulletin).

¹⁰³ *Herald*, 17 February 1954, p. 1.

'I would hate to think, boys and girls, after all the trouble I've taken to secure site number twenty-five, that anyone from this school would cause that kind of trouble next week'. 'Would anyone in this school cause that kind of trouble, boys and girls?' asked Mr Robertson, stepping up to join the Shire President at the microphone. 'Give Councillor Herman your answer.' 'No-o-o, Mr Robertson. No-o-o, Councillor Herman.'¹⁰⁴

The State Banquet

Denise, aged twenty-one, was serving with the WRANS in Canberra during the tour, and was on duty outside Parliament House — all spick-and-span in her white dress uniform, and without creases because she'd sat on the edge of the seat on the bus — on the evening of the state banquet:

I remember this fairytale figure going up the steps of Parliament House and being met by Sir Robert Menzies ... we were supposed to be standing there to ramrod attention with our eyes front, and we were getting real eyestrain trying to look sideways and see her without actually moving our heads! But then somebody relented and we were allowed to turn around and have a good look. Oh, it was great fun, I remember that.¹⁰⁵

Each of the great state banquets on the tour was hailed on the morning after as the most 'brilliant' or 'glittering' to date, but Canberra's was surely the most gorgeous of them all. There were tiger lilies looped along the corridors of Parliament House, the reception rooms of which were fragrant with roses and lambent under the refracted light of jewellery and chandeliers. The Canberra elite, in Sydney fashions, uniforms and national dress, grazed on a supper 'that had to be seen to be believed'. Ten of the nation's best chefs had been pulled together for this 'Roman feast', a sumptuous melange of decorative boars' heads and modelled swans in fat, sixteen hams and twenty turkeys, mounds of caviar, cutlets à la Canberra (veal, tongue and giant asparagus spears covered in aspic in the shape of a turtle), salmon flown from Scotland, marzipan in luminous baskets and a monstrous centrepiece, a seven-foot tower made entirely from icing sugar which had been sculpted into elaborate decorated panels and a replica of King Edward's Crown.¹⁰⁶ The National President of the Country Women's Association described it to her members as 'something I thought one

¹⁰⁴ Skelton, pp. 95—8.

¹⁰⁵ ABC, Canberra, 1990. The dress was actually white Chantilly lace with silver thread.

¹⁰⁶ *Herald*, 17 February 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook.

would only read about', but Mr Willie Gavera, one of the native representatives from Papua New Guinea, remarked that he could buy a wife with all those pigs.¹⁰⁷

Among the parliamentarians circling around this lavish display was the Labor Party's Clyde Cameron, one of several rebellious members wearing lounge suits. The *Herald* made a note of this, along with the fact that the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Evatt, had now worn tails 'for the second time'. But the *Herald* either didn't know, or didn't choose to add that Mrs Cameron was one of many women wearing a tiara. Her husband told the ABC's Jenny Palmer in 1986 that there'd rarely been a more disparate couple, clothes-wise, than the Camerons on that evening.

Jenny Palmer Didn't you try to dissuade her?

Clyde Cameron Oh, no, it was impossible to dissuade ... she felt that she was just as good as the Liberal women, and I had to agree on that point, so we didn't have an argument about it.¹⁰⁸

This tension may have been played out in other Labor Party households. The Victorian Premier Mr Cain, for example made an adamant announcement that members of his government would not be accepting any Royal honours and yet his wife attended Victorian governor's ball also in a diamante tiara (and a long-waisted guipure lace bodice with kiltings of tulle). This does not necessarily mean that the politics of Mrs Cameron and Mrs Cain were more conservative than those of their husbands, but possibly that women selected different battlegrounds on which to take a stand. Certainly other male members of the Labor Party also took a conciliatory position on appropriate attire, including some from what Clyde Cameron described as the 'socialist element':

I can remember Justin O'Byrne turning up in his airforce officer's uniform, complete with a sword, and his medals. He certainly looked the part — he was a fine-looking young man. Gough Whitlam was there with white tie and tails, and whatever medals he won as a navigator in the war. Leslie Heylen was there in all his splendour, white tie and tails, and nobody could be further to the left than

¹⁰⁷ *The South Australian Countrywoman*, 5 March 1954, p. 3; *Herald*, 17 February 1954, p. 1.

¹⁰⁸ Clyde Cameron, interview recorded by Jenny Palmer for the ABC's Social History Unit. There is no longer any identification on the tape, but I think that it must have been recorded in 1986.

Leslie Heylen ... it was quite funny to see these characters parading around like peacocks on heat.¹⁰⁹

Cameron clearly derived much pleasure (at the time and in memory) from keeping his cool. In another anecdote from the same interview, he recounted the fun he'd had with members of the Liberal Party after a few words with the Queen at an afternoon presentation. They'd been curious enough to ask him what 'Her Most Gracious Majesty' had said,

and I said, 'Look, for someone who has been to St. Peter's College as you have, and come from the best side of the fence, I am surprised that you are so ill-bred as to ask a question that would expect me to repeat a conversation that I had with Her Most Gracious Majesty. I'm surprised that you should do it.'¹¹⁰

I'm sure they slunk away. But if this was his attitude, why was he there at all? Jenny Palmer didn't ask him this directly but he did say that he decided to go forward for presentation after a colleague advised him that it would be 'very, very bad' for him in his electorate if it could be said that he had snubbed the Queen.¹¹¹

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FOR ALL
ROYAL OCCASIONS

WEAR A

HENDERSON
HAT.

Advertisement, *The Countrywoman in NSW*, March 1954.

.....

Clothes maketh the man

The Prime Minister attempted to exploit confusion over attire in the Opposition ranks in the course of a radio broadcast on the subject made during the

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹ *ibid.*

Canberra visit. Labor's Deputy Leader, Arthur Calwell, incurred some opprobrium by appearing at the garden party at Government House without a top hat, so it is unlikely to have been by coincidence that Mr Menzies opened his 'Man-to-Man' broadcast on the following evening with the information that his own topper was a 'little moth-eaten' from recent wear. He responded to those unnamed persons who had been saying it was 'snobbish' to wear formal gear, by likening it to the correct dress of a lawyer or even a cricketer — it was simply appropriate to the occasion.¹¹² These remarks annoyed the *Worker*, the newspaper of the Trades and Labour Council of Queensland, which published a spirited rebuttal in the editorial for its March edition. The *Worker* took care to express respect for and loyalty to the Queen —

there is not a person in the community who would not put on his best apparel to meet Her Majesty the Queen, who will receive a loyal welcome equal if not better than any given to her in the South when she arrives in Queensland tomorrow¹¹³

— before returning to its target. Menzies and the 'Tories' were denounced for their lack of true, nationalist patriotism and for introducing 'retrograde industrial and social legislation' designed to ensure that there would always be a division between those who could afford to swan around in top hats and those in bowyangs.¹¹⁴

The *Worker* has files to remind us that the man with the ordinary work-a-day outfits; the fellow with the corn-toughened palms and wearing shearing shed moccasins or wielding the cane knife; the bloke with the battered boots and begrimed face, who is always expected to be at the END of the line on festive occasions, is always expected to be at the HEAD of the line when real tests are made.¹¹⁵

Despite the qualification at the head of the article, it seems to me that this line runs awfully close to a critique of the frivolities of the tour, and to suggesting an association between the monarchy and the indigenous ruling class. Clearly, the *Worker* considered that Menzies had broken the unspoken agreement to

¹¹² *Herald* (Melbourne), 18 February 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook.

¹¹³ *Worker*, 8 March 1954, p. 3.

¹¹⁴ Bowyangs are tapes worn around the trousers underneath the knee.

¹¹⁵ *Worker*, 8 March 1954, p. 3.

suspend normal political cross-fire during the Queen's visit, and it was therefore justified in its response.¹¹⁶

There were other kinds of politicking apparent during the Canberra visit, too. One of Clyde Cameron's kindred spirits, well-known left-winger Eddie Ward (the member for East Sydney), later became embroiled in stiff correspondence with the Prime Minister's Department over the procedures for invitations issued to the families of Members and Senators. Ward was famous not only for his politics but for his energy and pugilism, which were employed in this instance in an unlikely cause. His first letter arrived early in March, asking merely, yet mysteriously, whether the advertised arrangements for the State Ball had been 'rigidly adhered to'. These procedures had been outlined in a circular distributed to all parliamentarians on 1 November 1953, and were that wives would receive invitations to all events, and, at the request of the member, one unmarried son or daughter over eighteen years of age might also attend. The Secretary of the Department, Mr Brown, replied that there had been a minor relaxation allowed, so that a number of daughters about to turn eighteen had also been admitted. Mr Ward then wrote again, still without personal explanation, demanding to be informed why it was that this privilege had not been publicised to all members, and requesting a copy of the full invitation list. The next piece of correspondence in the file was a two-page memorandum prepared by Mr Brown for the Prime Minister. His investigations had revealed that several members — Mr Billy Wentworth, Senator Gorton and Senator Benn — had lied about their offspring (the last was exposed when his daughter's picture appeared in the paper along with her true age). A third letter from Eddie Ward, still fuming two months after the affair, finally provoked Brown to terminate the correspondence with an exasperated response,

Am I right in assuming ... that you have an unmarried daughter who at the time of the State Ball was nearly 18? If so, apologies all round. Would you be good enough to let the Dept. have her full name and date of birth so that we can ensure that she is not overlooked on another occasion?¹¹⁷

Eddie Ward is no longer with us, so we can only speculate about his motives. Did the feelings of a fond father overcome any reservations about the

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹¹⁷ All correspondence from File 825/2/112, Prime Minister's Department, Australian Archives, ACT Regional Office.

monarchy? Was he a little like Mrs Cameron in not wishing the Liberal Party to hog all the glory? I only know that Ward had been a childhood hero to a friend of mine, who was most upset by my discovery of these letters.

'We are yours'

On the night itself, the Prime Minister would have been equally oblivious to Clyde Cameron's sardonic amusement or Eddie Ward's gathering discontent. 'His finest hour,' said the papers of the Queen's arrival in Canberra, and for sure in all the photographs he wears a beam of avuncular delight to be the first Prime Minister to greet a reigning monarch on Australian soil. On the night of the banquet, his was also the honour to present a nation's gift to its ruler (a brooch, a spray of wattle and tea-tree blossoms, made of fine blue, white and yellow diamonds from all over the world. The Queen wore it quite a few times during the rest of the tour. Before the presentation it went in display in Drummond's window in Melbourne. Jane Lawry told me that every time she went past there would be a 'gathering of thirty or forty women *peering* at it'.¹¹⁸



She was as delighted as a girl could be. She showed it to everybody on the way out ... this is a simple enough story, but natural and unspoiled pleasure among people of importance was still sufficiently rare to be noticeable.

Mr Menzies commenting on the Queen's reception of the wattle brooch.¹¹⁹



There has been much written of Menzies' 'extravagant, public devotion to the monarchy' as Judith Brett has described it, but it only really came into relief in later years.¹²⁰ His notorious speech to the Queen in 1963 — 'I did but see her passing by, And yet I love her till I die' — was anachronistic enough to hasten the beginning of his end, but in 1954 his ardour was close enough to the popular mood to be entirely successful.¹²¹ Labor Premiers may have been

¹¹⁸ Jane Lawry, interview, Sydney, 1989.

¹¹⁹ *Herald* (Melbourne), 1 February 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook.

¹²⁰ Judith Brett has written briefly but specifically of Sir Robert's feelings in 'Menzies and the Monarchy', in *Australians and the Monarchy*, P. Spearritt & A. Shiell (eds), National Centre for Australian Studies, Melbourne, 1993, pp. 30—2.

¹²¹ This remark is commonly attributed to the state banquet in Canberra in 1954. Even Loch Townsend and Bruce Webber, who were both at the banquet in 1954, got it 'wrong'.

vulnerable to mockery, but Menzies seemed almost like a doting uncle (Kathy Skelton remembers that his presence by the Queen's side seemed so natural to little children that they often forgot he was an elected representative of the people).¹²²

In his toast to the Queen at the state banquet, he took as his theme the unity of the British diaspora. Menzies was not in his heart a convert to the multi-coloured Commonwealth. He celebrated the genius of the Anglo-Saxon race, to which he applied a familial metaphor. 'The moving truth tonight has nothing to do with high pomp or regal splendour. It is quite simply that you are in your own country and among your own people'. The tour was 'essentially a family gathering, a family reunion'. Dr Evatt, on behalf of the Opposition, supported these remarks, and the Queen also referred to her 'family of nations', although both were truer internationalists than the Prime Minister.¹²³

The brotherhood of peoples

A few weeks after this banquet, G. V. Portus, Emeritus Professor of History and Political Science at the University of Adelaide, published an article on 'The Queen and the Commonwealth of Nations' in the *Australian Quarterly*.¹²⁴ The Professor's article presented a brief history of the development of the Commonwealth and the crucial constitutional role of the monarchy. Portus described earlier studies as too much concerned with the role of the British Dominions within the Empire, and too prone to regard monarchism as a racial phenomena. For example, Andrew Fisher had written in 1910 of Australians, New Zealanders and Canadians,

having little ritual themselves, they are the more fascinated by the pomp of an ancient and dignified institution which they have no means of reproducing in their several communities, but which they regard as the joint and several possession of the British race.¹²⁵

¹²² Skelton, pp. 8—9.

¹²³ ABC, 17 February 1954, 6.45 am bulletin; and *Royal Visit 1954*, Angus and Robertson for the Australian News and Information Bureau, Sydney, 1954, p. 20.

¹²⁴ G. V. Portus, 'The Queen and the Commonwealth of Nations', *Australian Quarterly*, vol xxvi no. 1, March 1954, pp. 9—15. Professor Portus had given a series of lectures on the meaning of the crown for members of the Workers Education Association in South Australia.

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 14.

Portus argued that this situation was entirely changed by 1954. So many members of the former British Empire had achieved self-rule, but within the confines of the Westminster system, so that in

the present self-governing portions of the Commonwealth there is one white person to every six who are not white. Including the Dependent Empire, it is safe to say that only one out of every eight subjects of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II is white.¹²⁶

While Portus considered that there was still a racially-based distinction between the loyalty of white and non-white — the Queen was ‘dear to the heart of British people at home and abroad’ but ‘accepted by those who are not British among her subjects because they approve of the political principles for which [the] institution had come to stand’ — the commonalities were surely now more important than the differences.

If this Commonwealth is to endure, its members must learn to associate with each other on friendly and equal terms, despite differences of race and colour and creed.¹²⁷

Although we in Australia had ‘only a decreasing handful of Aborigines, and therefore had no ‘colour problem’, he urged his readers to overcome race prejudice. The finest model they could take would be Her Majesty herself, because ‘her friendly and courteous bearing to her West Indian subjects and to the Maoris in New Zealand [had] been beyond praise.’¹²⁸ I think that the Queen probably deserved this commendation, as her belief in the Commonwealth constitutes the one sustained and explicit political commitment of her reign and has certainly drawn criticism from arch conservatives over many years.¹²⁹ She certainly attempted to rise above the sour, post-colonial racism that wafted gently through the press coverage of her tour. At the opening of the Federal Parliament on 15 February, she remarked that her journeys through the Commonwealth had made her ‘even more vividly conscious of the true

¹²⁶ *ibid.*

¹²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 15.

¹²⁸ *ibid.*

¹²⁹ Royal biographer Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd has attributed much of the Queen’s interest to the excitement and romance of this first Tour of 1953–4. She seemed genuinely excited by the welcome she received in the West Indies, and in Fiji and Tonga. The conservative writer and commentator Auberon Waugh said famously and sarcastically after her return, ‘She is never so happy as when she is being welcomed by a crowd of tribal dancers in grass skirts’.

brotherhood of my peoples, even prouder of their services to civilisation, and more richly confident of their future destiny'.¹³⁰

She returned to this theme at the State Banquet on the following night:

I hope that I may be given opportunities to see more of Australia in the future. For such meetings with the peoples of the British Commonwealth of Nations not only give great pleasure to my husband and myself, they also illustrate more fully how close is the association between all the members of the family.¹³¹

But while the idea of a familial relationship was straightforward where the dominions with settler populations were concerned (Canada, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa), the idea that Indians and West Indians were also siblings went down a little harder with many in her audience. Even as she spoke soldiers from New Guinea were being subjected to segregated entertainments in Canberra, and if the Australian media had presented Tongans or Fijians earlier in the tour as in any way related to us, it had only been that they depicted them like perpetually younger siblings: endearing but irresponsible. By and large, they had been treated as objects of exotica.

The second of the Queen's themes was far more popular (this was the most reproduced of her speeches here and was broadcast live from Parliament House. In *The Queen in Australia* listeners were shown crouching over the wireless in diverse locales). One particular passage was reproduced in the daily press and later in the tour books — after speaking again of the Commonwealth, of her pleasure in being here and her delight in the reception, she concluded as if with her impression as an English tourist:

This country offers wonderful opportunities for men and women, capital and industry from the old world, and to those in the United Kingdom who seek wider scope for their talents and resources, Australia may well seem the Promised Land. For it is a spacious country with a healthy, vigorous people and vast natural resources. Only a pessimist would set bounds to its future.¹³²

¹³⁰ *Royal Visit 1954*, p. 15.

¹³¹ *ibid.*, p. 21.

¹³² *ibid.*

The Government had been hoping that extensive coverage of the Tour back in the United Kingdom would lead to an increase in British migration. This endorsement from the Queen must have been very gratifying, and in fact an unprecedented rush of applications was reported on the very next day. Nearly eight hundred men and women had been interviewed by Immigration officials in Hull (Yorkshire) in one day alone. The London *Daily Mirror* had anticipated the Queen's speech with the headline: 'THEY QUEUE TO GET TO THE PROMISED LAND'; while the *Daily Sketch* proclaimed that 'every time the Queen smiles and flashbulbs pop, thousands of Britons want to go to Australia'.¹³³

Farewell from Sydney

On the morning after the banquet and that speech the Queen and Duke returned from Canberra to Sydney for their official farewell from Sydney and New South Wales. A searing blast of heat rose up from the tarmac as they disembarked at Mascot Airport. The mercury was nearly at a hundred by noon, and it rose throughout the afternoon. The car headed straight for North Sydney and a final children's assembly, and on the way through town it was all but buried in 'something like a New York ticker tape welcome' as office workers threw balloons and streamers and confetti out the window in a heartfelt gesture of good-bye. From St Leonard's Park they drove slowly down to HMAS Penguin, the naval depot at Balmoral, where the Queen took the salute. Gwen Badgery was on Military Road to watch them pass, torn between sentiment and flippancy as ever. She was sick of crying over them, but also unable to stand any more of the fuss.

Nan and I had a very good view of THEM this morning. We set off at 8 am and got a fruit box and sat for three hours on the shady side at Spit Junction. It got hotter and hotter and the crowd was beyond words, all screaming kids and abominable old women who pushed and shoved, but she looked divine in yellow. But never again. All 21 of the Royal Family can come even to Collaroy if they like, and I would go on to the beach and take no notice.¹³⁴

The Queen was probably inclined to this view by this stage, as her very last engagement — the Governor's tea party — was something of an ordeal. The heat was at its worst, and the eight thousand guests were bad-tempered. The smooth green lawns of Government House were likened to the Simpson Desert

¹³³ ABC, 17 February 1954, 7 pm bulletin.

¹³⁴ Mackenzie, p. 48.

by the *Herald* because the refreshment tents were late to open and people were reduced to drinking water out of the taps, and huddling in the shade.

Ambulance workers struggled to clear the fallen into a discreet corner of the verandah before the Queen arrived at four o'clock, but the stampede to see her brought all their good work undone. The crowd rushed over the rockeries and flattened the petunia beds. Their faces were crimson and their makeup had disintegrated, but she, having just stepped from her dressing room inside, looked as 'cool as the tinkle of ice in a glass'.¹³⁵ The newspaper companies had already done great business selling photographs from the tour to the public, and the shots from this afternoon, with the Queen in an unusually sophisticated white lace frock and broad-brimmed black hat, were to prove particularly popular.

And then it was on to the boat. More than seven hundred thousand people, maybe as many as a million, stood in the city and around the harbour to bid their beloved visitors farewell (they included, or were supposed to include, thirty former prisoners released on 'royal remission'). As on every other occasion before, they swooned in great numbers and roared with delight, until the very moment when the Queen and Duke walked through the gates of the wharf at Circular Quay and onto the *Gothic*. Then gaiety fell away and the tears began. Great masses of people sang a sad chorus of 'Auld Lang Syne'. As they made their way down the Harbour, Elizabeth and Philip moved around from port to starboard on the boat deck, waving vigorously. Little boats sailed all around them as on landing day, tooting and wailing their good-bye. And then at the end, as Sydney looked out to sea with misty eyes, the long white ship glided out through the heads into the sunset gilding the clouds on the horizon. They were gone.

Some were more saddened than others, of course. The end of the tour in New South Wales was a great relief to some of the police, who had taken a battering in the previous fortnight. Detective-Sergeant Ray Blissett told me in a letter that although he had remained one of Her loyal subjects, he was very glad to see her go:

After her departure I took a squad of Consorting Squad Detectives to a city hotel where we really gave her a send off she knew nothing about.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ *Herald*, 19 February 1954, p. 6.

¹³⁶ Ray Blissett, correspondence, 4 July 1990.

Nancy Ray was not so happy. She had seen the departure from the Jeffrey Street wharf across the Harbour, and had watched and waved until there was nothing more to be seen. Then she turned to her friend. 'L and I look at each other, turn for home, and trudge back to the humdrum and everyday'.¹³⁷ But many others were unable to tear themselves away. The worst traffic jams of all were seen that night, as cars circled the city under the last of the illuminations.¹³⁸ This reluctance to depart occurred in each of the capital cities to come, and in each again, the dimming of the fairy lights became the point of demarcation between the magic of the tour and the return to everyday.

Now she must go, and the gay lights and bright nights
must go with her. Soon the glory will be gone, the bright
flags will be tucked away in dusty cellars, the bright grey
will take over from the rainbow. And the Queen will be
gone, taking with her the gaiety and warmth we have
come to love.¹³⁹

Hobart

For as long as the Tour continued, of course, she took the rainbows with her where she went. As the *Gothic* made its way down the east coast, accompanied from time to time by enthusiastic yachts, she lay asleep for nearly fifteen hours — 'I did not think it possible for one to sleep so long', she told the Harrisons, who were sailing with her — but she was first up on to the bridge on the following morning (Saturday 20 February) for the brief journey up the Derwent River into Hobart, and was seen filming landmarks recommended by the Duke, who had been to Tasmania before.¹⁴⁰

While they were still at sea, the ABC was reporting on the rising temperature ashore. The sheer weight of visitors lent a holiday air to the entire town as

¹³⁷ Nancy Ray, letter home to parents, 1954.

¹³⁸ It was announced on the Queen's final day that the consumption of electricity in Sydney had been a lot lower than expected in the previous fortnight because the extra wattage in town had been somewhat balanced by a big drop in domestic use, because so many people had been out and about for the tour. The department store Mark Foys, which had won a competition for the 'best-lighted building' announced that it would stay switched on for another few days to satisfy the demand from country folk, but almost everything else was taken down, and quickly (*Herald*, 19 February 1954, p. 9).

¹³⁹ *Argus*, 9 March 1954, pp. 12—13.

¹⁴⁰ Harrison, p. 42. The boat made landfall overnight on Cape Frederick Henry, on Bruny Island which the Tasmanian government subsequently rechristened Cape Queen Elizabeth, in what 'the ABC described as 'Australia's most permanent gesture of welcome' (20 February 1954, 7.45 am bulletin).

people walked around just watching the workmen who were putting the finishing touches to decorations and members of the CWA weaving several hundred thousand flowers — red, white and blue — into two great floral carpets outside the Town Hall. When night fell the city was invaded by pipe bands and more sightseers come to see the decorations and illuminations. Many were so intoxicated by the atmosphere that they were unable to go home.

A fortnight ago, the people of Hobart listened incredulously to stories that Sydneysiders were sleeping on pavements and camping in parks while they waited to greet their Queen. They are no longer incredulous because many of them have done the same thing.¹⁴¹

But unfortunately Hobart doesn't have the climate to support spontaneity, and when the temperature fell down to forty-nine degrees people started shivering in the streets. Unpreparedness also led to other privations: a talkback caller named Bill remembered spending fifteen hours in front of the Town Hall, from nine o'clock at night until noon on the following day 'without anything to eat and without going to the toilet'. The thing that clearly interested him most, thirty seven years later, was that he really couldn't remember why it had seemed so important to him at the time.

I saw her standing on the dais and I took a photo ... I just can't believe it. I wouldn't go from here to the corner [to see her] now.... it was, I suppose, worth it at the time. But times have changed, I think, times have changed.¹⁴²

Bruce Webber and Ida Elizabeth Jenkins were down at Constitution Dock as the boat came in, waiting to resume their own tour of duty with a description of the disembarking. But as this was delayed for almost an hour — for reasons that were never revealed — and as the local commentator dried up completely after only fifteen minutes, they were left prattling away to each other for an interminable period. (When I was asking Bruce if he knew whether the Royal Party had listened to the radio commentary, he said that Philip had referred to this very incident some six weeks later, in Perth. 'Yes', he said, 'I thought you were in trouble when I heard you describing how seagulls were dive bombing the *Gothic*.' ¹⁴³) Hobart's population of ninety thousand had been joined by sixty thousand visitors for this day, so when they did finally step down, and made

¹⁴¹ ABC, 20 February 1954, 6.45 am bulletin.

¹⁴² ABC, talkback, Hobart, 1991.

¹⁴³ Bruce Webber, June 1993.

their way up through the streets to the Town Hall, they received a welcome that was 'as warm as anywhere in Australia — but much more polite and orderly'.¹⁴⁴

The program in Tasmania was lighter than in other States as there were neither great distances nor massive crowds to negotiate. During their first two days the Royals drove through Hobart with comparative ease, working steadily through a civic reception, a schoolchildren's display, a repatriation hospital, a ceremony to commemorate the sesquicentenary of the founding of the capital, and a state reception. There was also an investiture, and a garden party and the Queen opened Parliament in the tiny Legislative Chamber. One spectator outside was a man of ninety-two, who could remember Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in Launceston in 1897, and nearby was a Chinese market gardener who had presented an address of welcome to the Duke of York in 1901. At the Hobart Civic Ball in the evening the feature of the buffet table was two large blocks of ice, one with an illuminated gold plastic crown inside and the other with the Royal cipher, also in gold. The *Age* reported, with not a little pride, that the ice had been flown in from Melbourne as the local stuff was 'not sufficiently clear to achieve such an effect'.¹⁴⁵ Loudspeakers were turned on just before the Queen's arrival so that guests could be reminded NOT TO STARE (but to no avail).

Little England

The hills around Hobart were wreathed in clouds on the following morning as the Royal TAA Convair took off for Wynyard on the north-east coast, but the sun broke through to allow a glimpse of the neat patchwork fields that lay across 'this other England', or 'little England' as the journalists kept referring to it. The Queen was also struck by the similarity, and apparently exclaimed 'Why, we might be in Kent!' at several points during the subsequent drive.

Tasmanians certainly chose to emphasise this resemblance through their choice of activities — maypole dancing and other anglophilial displays — and the press was also pleased to see that the Queen had found just one little corner of Australia that might remind her of 'home', before she was subjected again to the foreignness of the bush, the heat and the curious tropical spectacles of far north Queensland. The fields in Tasmania were green, the faces were pale, and the

¹⁴⁴ *Sun* (Melbourne), 22 February 1954, p. 4.

¹⁴⁵ *Age*, 22 February 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook.

government went for its strongest suit and played the England card. This could not have been made any clearer in the official souvenir booklet, especially in the passages commemorating the anniversary of the landing at Sullivan's Cove in February 1804:

Our grandfathers left an Island to come to an Island. Here they planted English trees and gardens; built their houses in the English style...

And so, in this monument is perpetuated not only a memory of 150 years but of centuries — the timeless past when our forebears lived and died close to the heart of that other Island which we call 'Home'.¹⁴⁶

The tradition of calling Britain 'home' in Australia was coming towards its final days in 1954 and these passages would rank amongst the most extreme to be published even in the heightened context of the tour. But the visit to Tasmania was regarded as highly successful, and as 'successful' was a common euphemism for uncontroversial, then much of this might be attributable to the fact that the organisers did not even attempt to reconcile British and distinctly Australian cultural elements into the perilous hybrid forms seen elsewhere.

.....

In Hobart, Her Majesty had said to Dame Gertrude Cosgrove: 'I feel very much at home here.' No remark could have pleased the hospitable people of Tasmania more. To make the Queen feel at home was exactly what they had wanted.

The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand.

.....

After landing in Wynyard, the touring party headed off by car to Cressy, just south of Launceston, where they would stay overnight. A trip of one hundred and twenty miles took them through dairy country and sheep farms, apple orchards, potato fields, vegetable gardens and twenty-two little towns or hamlets. Their way had been decorated with bucolic abundance. Stock was put

¹⁴⁶ From the Official Souvenir Programme, *Royal Visit to Tasmania*. Terry Free of Moonah, Tasmania, kindly sent me a copy of this programme.

out by the road for the day behind gateposts and fences gay with flowers.¹⁴⁷ Gladioli and hydrangeas twined with ferns on the welcome arch at Westbury and purple blooms twisted into the letters 'ER' hung low over the Meander River at Deloraine. There was an arch made of apples, and another of wheat, and on that of Cressy the word 'Welcome' was picked out in local grains and flanked by sheaves of oats and hay.

As the cars of the official party headed up hill and down dale, they gathered up the people of northern Tasmania. Successive towns were engorged with visitors, momentarily occupied with their own demonstration, and then abandoned. Choirs of children sang in several centres. A champion treefeller brought down a mighty trunk in the time it took the cars to pass through Penguin (with a musical accompaniment from highlanders in kilts, singing 'Will Ye No Come Back Again') and in Carrick men and women danced around a maypole by the road. Penguin was also the home of ninety-seven year-old Mr Charles Hunt who stood in the main street with a sign on his head proclaiming him to be the 'world's oldest living serviceman', and a publican from Burnie tried unsuccessfully to arrange preferential attention by sending a telegram in advance to the Master of the Royal Household, Viscount Althorp, suggesting that the Queen might like to wave specifically at his hotel.

This idyllic day concluded in the evening at 'Connorville', a pretty old sheep property near Cressy. The Duke had been a guest there some ten years before. This was the first time in Australia that the Royal Standard was unfurled over a private home, and the Queen requested that her hosts, the O'Connor family, should stay in residence and dine with their guests. While this quiet affair was underway the yeomanry were having a great time down at the local hotel, making hay with the press. A couple of journalists were slipped a tip that 'Connorville' was a fire hazard and had almost gone up that very day. But just as the sub-editors were getting the headlines ready in both Sydney and Melbourne ('Queen's Brush With Inferno', perhaps?) it was found that the story was news even to the local fire brigade, and pictures of the happy progress through the countryside were restored to the morrow's front pages.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Authorities did request the farmers of Deloraine to keep their cows away from their customary grazing spots in the main road when the Queen came through. This item was reported, with a distinctly sarcastic inflection, for an urban, mainland audience by the *Sun* (Sydney), 22 January 1954, p. 1.

¹⁴⁸ Lawson, *Connie Sweetheart*, Heinemann, Sydney, 1990, p. 297. The reporters in question were Tom Farrell from Sydney's *Daily Telegraph* and Gordon Williams of the *Argus*.

Taswegians said good-bye in Launceston on the following morning during a progress, a civic reception and a children's assembly. Twelve thousand young performers had come from all over the state, including the islands of Bass strait for this final display of hoop drill, pyramid building and an impressive march past. Seventy thousand people gathered in town for the day and the road to the airport was lined with people calling out to their visitors to 'come again soon'.

.....

The Queen is a Queen — I think that's the only way you can describe her ... and you can see too her love for the children in the way she looked at them as she was standing waiting for her speech. There was a sort of maternal glow about her, a kindness as she looked right across the ranks of children.

ABC commentary, Sydney Showground, 5 February 1954.

.....

Australia's children

Launceston's was only one of the children's displays that were such a great feature of this Tour. Although they pre-dated it — massed displays having been an integral feature of royal, imperial and other public celebrations in Australia for many a long year — they seem to have reached their peak in size and perfection during these two months. They must also, paradoxically, have been almost at an end. Interviewee Cheryl O'Connor remembered doing something fancy with bits of coloured paper for the Queen Mother in 1958 but she thought that the practice had been on the way out even then.¹⁴⁹ I was taken to see the Queen when she came to activate the Captain Cook Memorial Water Jet on Lake Burley Griffin in Canberra in 1970 but we only stood around in her vicinity. Massed displays by that stage were confined to Olympic opening ceremonies and Communist regimes, to the extent that some of the photographs from the bigger gatherings in 1954 have a faintly Stalinist air about them today.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Cheryl O'Connor, interview, 1989.

¹⁵⁰ The other interesting feature from a contemporary perspective is the rigid distinctions maintained between the sexes. Above the infant's level, and even when they were doing the same thing, boys and girls were rarely dressed alike. When the children of Mt Gambier formed an outline of the map of Australia, the boys wore grey and white with red caps and girls wore red and white with blue caps. Male and female roles were 'naturally' represented in Port

Those pageants in the capital cities involved thousands of children, but they were also staged in the bush. One of the most imaginative was devised by a local teacher for the combined schools of the Lower Eyre Peninsula in South Australia. Nine hundred children from tiny farming and fishing communities rehearsed throughout the summer and finally performed for the Queen in Port Lincoln on 20 March. Although small in size their display was one of the most artistic and distinctively Australian attempted south of Queensland, and began with the children forming an outline map of the Peninsula. This then transmogrified into a living fan when the boys, clad in white, marched stiffly into place to form the ribs and the girls, dressed to resemble the local wildflowers in *papier mache* and hessian, danced gracefully into the intervening panels. The fan swayed gently for a bit as if captured by a zephyr, and then, in daring change of mood, exploded into a vigorous polka and a 'magnificent sea of colour'. The Queen was thrilled, or so it was reported.

Jill Roe wore a very authentic outfit of red and black in the back row of the fan:

The exact order escapes me now, but the tallest were Sturt desert peas and there were bands of templetonias, wild lilacs, pink and blue orchids, billy buttons, wattle, gum blossom and gumnuts ... the Queen is said to have recognised the Sturt peas as she had not long seen the real thing at Broken Hill.¹⁵¹

Jill is now a republican, and thinks she may only have become so out of embarrassment. But during an interview we conducted in 1993 she also admitted to feelings of admiration and nostalgia for the public sentiment which led a small rural community to turn out in all its glory. It was part of a culture of communal display which no longer seems to exist within the Anglo-Celtic culture.

Another feature of post-war Australia was the common expression of pride in its young people. It was tremendously important that their Queen should see them for herself — their beauty, their 'happy sunburnt faces' and their glowing health were living testament to Australia's prosperity and the greatest

Lincoln and in Melbourne's Physical Education Display where the exercises performed by the senior girls and senior boys were described respectively as 'rhythmic' and 'physical'.

¹⁵¹ Jill Roe, 'Miles, the Monarchy and Me', *Editions*, August 1993, p. 5. Jill was a Sturt desert pea.

guarantee of its future.¹⁵² This was so much taken for granted that little needed to be said. The Federal Government's official publication, *The Royal Visit and You* merely remarked that 'to enable Her Majesty to be seen by as many children as possible, displays by children have been arranged at many centres'.¹⁵³ Even in those towns where there were only fleeting visits, children were pushed to the fore, and the Queen's reactions noted with pride. In Sale, in rural Victoria, she was very struck by the number of little sturdy arms waving flags at every turn. 'What marvellous children!' she said to the Mayor, Councillor G. R. Valentine. 'Where do they all come from?'¹⁵⁴

Her Majesty, just twenty-six years old, was still regarded herself as a personification of youth and hope. It was not so many years since she had spoken for the young people of the Empire, and now as Mother of the Commonwealth, she came with a message for the children whom she would guide into the years ahead. Many of her speeches were delivered specifically for the young, in Her Majesty's customary style of vague, yet grand exhortation. In Sydney, for example, her speech concluded with the solemn reminder:

It is you who will guard the safety and guide the destiny of this country in the years to come, and I feel sure that you will be worthy of that great trust. I wish you all happiness, now, and in the future.

The children who were present were greatly excited by the event, but my feeling from the film footage of the day is that speeches and words were largely irrelevant.¹⁵⁵ The Queen was very much a post-war rhetorician and she was preaching austerity, duty and vigilance to audiences of children who were feeling the first allure of the consumer age, and my impression is that they were moved more by spectacle than ideology on the day. But I may well be wrong, as they had undoubtedly been thoroughly prepared for the encounter.

The resources of the public and the Protestant schools (and most of the Catholic system) had been placed at the disposal of tour organisers, without reserve or

¹⁵² *The Queen in Victoria*, Argus & Australasian Ltd, Melbourne, 1954, p. 42.

¹⁵³ *The Royal Visit and You*, unpaginated. This simple rationale was repeated to me by interviewees and correspondents, including Pat Rubenach (correspondence, 14 October 1990), who remembered that 'school children were given top priority'.

¹⁵⁴ *The Royal Tour of Australia in Pictures*, Colour gravure, Melbourne, 1954, unpaginated.

¹⁵⁵ The feature film, *The Queen in Australia*, contains tremendous footage of wild scenes at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

hesitation.¹⁵⁶ Most of this was in the form of labour, as teachers poured thousands of hours into drilling their pupils into 'spelling-bee' formations or into the creation of elaborate pageants. They also accompanied their pupils on hot, exhausting train trips in the country areas, and all of these activities were simply regarded as part of their job. Whatever their individual convictions, it was a teacher's duty to ensure that his or her students saw the Queen.

Within the classroom, they were also required to prepare students thoroughly for their encounter with the crown, although few would have taken the task so much to heart as my friend Suzanne's headmistress, who actually pretended to *be* the Queen, for some months, in order that the girls would feel familiar with Her Majesty (who in the end merely flashed past in an open-top car on her way to somewhere else.) The acquisition of knowledge and respect for the constitutional monarchy was a central component of the school curriculum throughout the fifties, but its presence in the classroom was never stronger than in the two year Coronation-Tour period that began with the death of George VI in February 1952. When I hear people speak about their education in that era, it sometimes seems as if they studied nothing but the Coronation regalia. Some laugh about it, describing it with faint, sentimental indulgence, but others are now angry at the memory of syllabi that relegated Australia into second place.

Jenny Rockwell has written an article about her childhood, in which she remembers that the first few months of second grade in 1954 were spent doing finger paintings of the Union Jack and the Australian flag and drawing pictures of the Queen as a fairy princess.¹⁵⁷ My mother, who was older, recalls that the fuss made about the Tour at the St George Girls' High School in Sydney revealed the extent to which an Australian government school could operate as if it were itself 'an outpost of Empire'. It flushed out the presence of at least one teacher who was '*madly* pro-British, almost like a British Israelite', and who went to see the Queen 'about thirty times'. (However, this excessive behaviour drew a reaction from other members of staff who found a cartoon featuring a

¹⁵⁶ Rachel Grahame's Church of England boarding school gave girls from NSW an extra week on holiday to enable them to see the visitors, and the Queensland girls were allowed to go home for a week in the middle of term, which they made up for with Saturday morning lessons every week until the following holidays (interview, 1989).

¹⁵⁷ Jenny Rockwell, 'There were definite rules and life was pretty stable', in *In the Half Light*, Jacqueline Kent (ed.), Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1988, p. 211.

koala boasting that he'd 'seen her fifty-six times, or something like that' and wrote her name across it).¹⁵⁸

The memories of child participants in this event repay at least something of the effort, as they are generally vivid, and bring pleasure to the rememberer. Many do recollect that they were entirely overcome by the sight of the Queen — and I don't think that there is much correlation between their memories and their contemporary politics. (There only seems to be one curious black spot in the memory of children. There were many specific souvenirs for young consumers, including board games, money boxes, dolls, and a commemorative soft drink called 'Royal Toast', which was a thick and disgusting purple syrup. However, with the lone exception of the novel cardboard periscopes for use in crowds, these are long forgotten. I suppose that this is of a piece with their ephemeral nature).¹⁵⁹

The most usual memory of very young children is bewilderment (they either didn't know what was going on, or made 'mistakes', like a six-year old girl in Casino who was so taken with the Duke that she forgot to look at this wife).¹⁶⁰ Reporters were very fond of tales about very young children trying to make sense of the whole show. In one common story, little girls were perplexed to see the Queen without her crown; and there were also many about little boys who wondered why she drove around in the boot of her car. Another typical anecdote, appearing in the *Bulletin*, featured a toddler who was hoist over her father's head to see the Queen, but she only saw 'a lady'.¹⁶¹ I was told some of these too. Flo Fahey's five year old daughter was disappointed that she didn't get to see a crown. June Lindsay was standing at the Townsville Air Base with five year-old Cheryl and seven year-old Jocelyn, and Cheryl didn't realise that

¹⁵⁸ Lyndsay Connors, interview, 1989. I haven't been able find this particular cartoon, but there was one in the *Bulletin* (31 March 1954) featuring a dreamy koala staring into space as his partner explained to a friend that he'd 'been in a trance since the Queen patted him'. This may have been the one in question.

¹⁵⁹ I heard an interview on the radio in November 1995 with the proprietor of Loy's Lemonade in Melbourne who recalled that 'Royal Toast' sold fairly well for a couple of weeks, but was actually so awful that he ended up giving it away. The doll was available by mail order for £7, and wore a 'long, stately frock' in silk taffeta and 'hair coiffured in regal style' (advertised in the *Truth* (Sydney), 31 January 1954, p. 9). For a description of souvenirs for 1954 and other royal events, see Annette Shiell, 'A royal visit in the home', in *Australians and the Monarchy*, P. Spearritt & A. Shiell (eds), National Centre for Australian Studies, Melbourne, 1993, pp. 35–6. See also the illustrations throughout this publication.

¹⁶⁰ ABC, talkback, Canberra, 1990. Andrea was struck by the Duke because he wore a uniform like her father's, but her parents were unreasonably annoyed that she wasn't able to tell them anything about the Queen after they had gone to all the trouble to get her there.

¹⁶¹ *Bulletin*, 17 February 1954, p. 17.

the lady who'd just gone by was the Queen, because she didn't have her 'funny gold hat' on. She was put in her place by her superior older sister: 'Oh, don't be ridiculous! She only wears that in the house! She doesn't wear it out!'¹⁶²

Ann Curthoys was a child of seven at the time, and moreover, the daughter of members of the Communist Party of Australia who were hardly enthusiastic about the whole thing. The family were living in Newcastle in 1954, where were several days of carnival prior to the actual visit and a fireworks display afterwards, but Ann, in much the manner Annette Kuhn has suggested, has retained only a memory of her immediate involvement.¹⁶³

I would have been in second grade, so I was with New Lambton South Infants School and we were all in the Newcastle Showground. Its a long time ago, but I do remember that we had to spell out the word 'Welcome' and I stood in the 'W'. And the other things that I remember are just the Queen and the Duke coming round in some kind of open car, or something very high, it seemed like a high car, and hardly seeing a thing but it all being terribly exciting.¹⁶⁴

Nine year-old Paul Raffaele was in the junior boy's pageant in Melbourne a few weeks later, doing something that he could only visualise vaguely by the nineteen-eighties, 'something with sticks', although he could remember rehearsing three or four afternoons a week for a couple of months. His recollection of the moment when the Queen glided above him is much clearer than Ann Curthoys', but then he was just that little bit older, and also came from a family in which his own interest was reinforced.

It was almost as if she was picked out in spotlights, even though it was broad daylight ... It wasn't a real figure, it was like some sort of goddess had arrived in front of us and there was a tremendous sweep of emotion, because this was the Queen of England. Virtually nobody in Australia had ever seen this woman before, and yet she was *our* Queen ... so when she came into the arena and swept around us in this Land rover, standing up and

¹⁶² Flo Fahey, correspondence; and June Lindsay, interview, 1989.

¹⁶³ Kuhn, pp. 67–9.

¹⁶⁴ Ann Curthoys, interview, 1989. The phrase in Newcastle, which Ann didn't remember, was actually 'Welcome to our Gracious Queen'. I think that this was the longest of these displays and it involved thirty-five thousand children.

waving regally, and looking radiant as they probably said in the papers the next day, we had *tremendous* emotion.¹⁶⁵

My mother, who was twelve, has distinct memories of actual events and can also recall specific sensations. She remembers waking in Sydney on the morning of 3 February with a sickly feeling of anticipation and also her awe at watching that first foot descend on Australian turf, but she then experienced something that was almost cynicism just a few days later when the Royal parade rushed past in the heat on President's Avenue in Kogarah. Kathy Skelton reports a similar range of emotions in *R. G. Menzies, Miss Gymkhana and Me* — elation on hearing that the Shire council was going to send her down to Melbourne for the day, and then ... nothing much.

Off-loaded from our lumbering bus, exhausted at the end of its sixty-mile journey, we were jammed into our site along with half the children of the southern peninsula only minutes before Elizabeth and Philip flashed down Toorak Road. We scarcely had time to get our Union Jacks aloft and in motion when a white-gloved hand and a pale face below a thatch of violets went past in a big, black car, and everyone was cheering. 'Was that her?' we asked and, assured it was, reboarded the bus to come home.

Kathy and her sister wished they'd taken the option of going to the circus with Dad.¹⁶⁶ Margot Oliver kept her feelings to herself, after her father, who was not a big royalist, had gone to the trouble of taking her to see the Queen for her seventh birthday. This coincidence had seemed very significant, but she actually passed so far away that 'it could have been anybody ... I think that secretly, that really, really, really underneath it all I was really disappointed at the fact that I hadn't been close enough to see her face and recognise it as her'.¹⁶⁷

Rachel Grahame's memory of crying at the sight of the Royals in Sydney has become reduced over the years to a brief recitation of the facts, a matter-of-fact rendition of an event which after all, involved a lot of tears. Because of her adult attitude of disdain for the monarchy, Ray can recall that there were emotions present at the time, but can no longer recapture them. This experience of memory 'behind glass' was not uncommon to those interviewees who were

¹⁶⁵ Paul Raffaele was interviewed by Tim Bowden for the ABC's Social History Unit in 1986.

¹⁶⁶ Skelton, p. 98.

¹⁶⁷ Margot Oliver, interview, 16 July 1993.

children or adolescents at the time and for whom the event has been rendered absolutely distant as much by attitude as by the passage of actual years. They find it almost unbelievable that it could ever have taken place. Gregor Ramsay made a typical remark to the effect that the tour had been propelled by a 'hysteria that seemed right at the time ... you look back on it and you wonder 'Why on earth did the whole of this country put so much effort and energy into the visit of the Queen?' It was notable that this was not a question plaguing even those among the older interviewees who hold republican opinions today. Child participants seem to remember the nineteen-fifties as a 'foreign country', while older participants do not.

.....

I doubt if she would have noticed a girl who didn't have a glove on in the terrible heat.

Lyndsay Connors, 1989.

.....

Callers to talkback radio were generally positive about their sighting of the Queen. Ann was taken by train from Forbes, where she attended a Catholic boarding-school, to stand on the showground in Dubbo. Conditions were so hot and so terrible that they could only tell when the Queen was coming by the dust around the car. They were eventually given permission to remove their blazers.¹⁶⁸ Rosemary came from Cowra to Bathurst, where she remembered that there had been twenty thousand children on the oval, and that it had been ninety-two degrees. She had been woken up at three-thirty in the morning, and brought to the railway station by her father on his bicycle, before travelling for hours in an old, dirty train in order to stand around beneath the blazing sun. After the Royal Couple had been and gone,

they shunted us back to the park, and I think we had our lunch there, and we had to catch the dirty old train back home again and we got home very tired and dirty that night.¹⁶⁹

Yet neither of these two women have borne a grudge. In Ann's memory it had all been worth it, because they had seen the Queen (even if only from behind).

¹⁶⁸ ABC, talkback, Lismore, July 1990.

¹⁶⁹ ABC, talkback, Canberra, 1990.

And for Rosemary, it had simply been a wonderful day. The Queen was lovely, the Duke divine, and as school excursions were few and far between,

it was a big deal to have a day off school and go off in the train for a day like that, so it was wonderful really.¹⁷⁰

Phyllis also recalled her day with the Queen as a 'really great event'. She had been living in Kalgoorlie in Western Australia, and had stood on the oval with 'hundreds and hundreds of children who'd come from everywhere, probably out on the Nullarbor Plains'.

We were all presented with a new Testament like part of the Bible, and in it was written into my name, Phyllis, and my surname, and when I was growing up I always thought that she'd really given it to me.¹⁷¹

It was a hot summer that year, and there was a lot of fainting. Another talkback caller, Helen, was teaching in Sydney, and even though she was a member of the Communist Party, duty took her to Concord Oval in Sydney with her students. One collapsed in the heat, and Helen was holding her up when the Queen and Duke went past. 'All I saw was a bluey-green dress and a face that I honestly thought looked like an egg', but the little girl thought 'she was the most beautiful thing she'd ever seen'.

I would say that for 99 per cent of those little girls at Burwood Home Science that year it was the thrill of their lives — that glimpse of the Queen, and of course Philip! Oh, they were all madly in love with him too, they were madly in love with him.¹⁷²

There were also children whose experiences contradicted official and media depictions. I received a letter from Carole Lander, who was 11 years old in 1954, and present at the Sydney Showground, and who wrote to tell me that nearly forty years on she still remembered this day with 'horror', as the worst event of her childhood. There were more than one hundred and ten thousand children present in the Showground complex on that day, and the 'official' record, as in the commemorative movie, *The Queen in Australia*, shows thousands of children going simply berserk as the Queen and Duke drive through their midst. ABC

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁷¹ ABC, talkback, Canberra, 1990.

¹⁷² ABC, talkback, Lismore, July 1990.

commentator Kay Kinnane attempted to convey their passion to a radio audience:

The children — ah, I wish you could see them!. They're just, well, every inch of them is on tip-toe. They're not just standing up, they're waiting in a fever of excitement, ready for her to come. ¹⁷³

The broadcast was interrupted here by the tumultuous cheer that rang out as the Royal car appeared. Carole's memory, in contrast, is of extreme physical discomfort caused by standing in the sun for hours with neither a hat nor a drink nor a toilet to alleviate her distress. She was lost and sick and insecure among the crowd. But the other emotion she experienced was anger — at the 'stupidity of the organisers' and the involuntary nature of her attendance:

At that young age, I couldn't care less about seeing the Queen, but was forced against my will. We went because we had no choice.¹⁷⁴

The vehemence in the memory has no correlation with Carole's attitude towards the Queen as an adult, as she is now a royalist. But it is unusual, even among people who are now republicans or fellow travellers. John Keneally, who is a member of the Australian Republican Movement, was taken to Concord Oval by the Christian Brothers of St Patrick's College at Strathfield (on the same occasion as Helen) and certainly remembers the heat, and the fainting but with a certain nostalgic amusement.¹⁷⁵ Despite his tolerance, it remains a favourite theory of mine that the republican movement of the nineteen-nineties was born on the dusty showgrounds of 1954.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ ABC, 5 February 1954, live broadcast held by ABC Federal Radio Archives, tape no 72/7/365.

¹⁷⁴ Carole Lander, correspondence, 6 July 1990.

¹⁷⁵ John Keneally.

¹⁷⁶ Songwriter Robyn Archer made the same direct correlation from personal experience in 'The Jubilee Cakewalk' (1977) although, doubtless due to her early training, she didn't hold the Queen personally responsible for causing her to faint on the racetrack in Adelaide. 'She's a benevolent monarch, it's not her fault, it ain't!' Robyn Archer, *The Robyn Archer Songbook*, McPhee Gribble, Melbourne, 1980, pp. 40—1.

.....

And here's one tip for Melbourne folk. Don't let your loyalty to the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh run to familiarity and don't call them 'Liz' and 'Phil' as occurred in Sydney.

Argus, 9 February 1954.¹⁷⁷

.....

Welcome to Melbourne

As the visitors were saying good-bye to the children of Launceston on 23 February, Melbourne was shaking itself into place. The night before had been cold and wet and generally unsettled and the city centre had been wakeful long before dawn, as police and early arrivals appeared on the streets, along with a ministering angel in Mt Alexander Road, who had distributing bread, tea and saveloys to the gathering masses from her front gate.¹⁷⁸ Sunrise brought better weather and the first trains began to bring the suburbs into town. For the next few hours Melbourne resembled nothing so much as a beehive whose workers were making their determined way to the centre for a meeting with the Queen.

Jane Lawry, the aunt of a friend of mine, waited with the rest of the city from early morning until mid-afternoon, when the Royal plane touched down at Essendon Aerodrome, and the progress made its way, eastwards, towards the Town Hall. Jane later recorded in her diary that the sun had finally come out, '*boldly*, when our lovely Queen went by'.¹⁷⁹ There were a million people lining her route and they went absolutely mad with pleasure. A continuous, joyous hurrah accompanied the cavalcade all the way into town and good-humoured 'spot stampedes' followed behind the cars as people scrambled for new and better vantage points. Children were yelling 'Queen! Queen! Queen!' along the route. New Australians held signs of greeting in their native languages. The intensity of hello built steadily to a crescendo in the city proper, where the

¹⁷⁷ *Argus*, 9 February 1954, quoted in *Australian Nationalism*, S. Alomes & C. Jones (eds), Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1991, pp. 302—3.

¹⁷⁸ This Mrs Pridham gave away fifteen loaves of bread and twelve gallons of tea and coffee (*The Royal Tour of Australia in Pictures*, unpaginated). Lyn Harrison (p. 47) was told that she had cooked fifteen dozen hot dogs and served biscuits and sandwiches as well.

¹⁷⁹ Jane Lawry. Jane read aloud some extracts from her 1954 diary during this interview.

crowds were densest, and their cries echoed through the narrow canyons of the CBD until they sounded like the roaring of the sea. The Queen said, 'Wasn't it wonderful!' alighting at the Town Hall steps and the Duke remarked, 'Some city, Melbourne!' which became the headline in the tabloid papers. The *Age* opted for 'Greatest Day in City's History'.¹⁸⁰

The visitors retired to Government House in the late afternoon, but Melbourne steamed on. There were street parties in the inner-city, and about half a million people attended the official carnival by the river, where fireworks flew high into a sky already transplendent with the lights from the port and the city buildings. Police reported 'indescribable congestion' on the streets, and were powerless to manage a serious crush that developed by the Yarra around nine o'clock when a large mob trying to leave ran into a large crowd arriving. One hundred and fifty casualties, mostly fainers, were treated in the following forty-five minutes. Babies were passed to ambulance men over the serried heads while their mothers struggled through below. The total casualty count for the day was just over nine hundred, and a dozen people were taken to hospital.¹⁸¹



All visitors to Mt Gambier on February 26th will be well-advised to bring at least one meal with them. Make it satisfying, but prepare it in such a way that there will be little to worry about when the meal is finished. A suggestion: — individual cartons containing cold meat, egg or cheese, salad vegetables, fruit, cake and a paper cup for liquid refreshments.

A Day With Our Queen, souvenir of the Royal Visit to Mt Gambier, 26 February 1954.



Country towns

Melburnians arose with barely less enthusiasm in the morning. They abandoned their homes and offices, just as in Sydney, as they crushed themselves into every point along the way, and they surged across the barriers at several points. But they had to put their passion on hold on the following

¹⁸⁰ *Herald* (Melbourne), 25 February 1954, p. 1; and *Age*, 25 February 1954, p. 1.

¹⁸¹ ABC, 24 February 1954, 11 pm bulletin.

day, 26 February, when the Queen paid a flying visit to Mt Gambier in the south-east corner of South Australia. A large, exuberant crowd saw her off at the airport but when she alighted from the plane a few hours later in the bush, the country people there to greet her struck the ABC's reporter as shy and reserved. Their hoorays became slowly more confident as they followed her around from the airport to the oval and back again.¹⁸²

Mt Gambier's experience of hosting the Queen was typical of most of the bush towns on her route through Australia. I chose it for a short case study because I was given a copy of its comprehensive souvenir booklet, *A Day with Our Queen*. Organisers from country communities had to meet some challenges specific to the bush but in essence, their preparations required the same, simultaneous attention to logistics and ideology as was demanded in the larger centres. In many respects, rural communities contentedly situated in the 'real Australia' were more confident of what they were offering the Queen, but their clamour for her attention suggests that her 'validating gaze' was required at the local level just as much as on the national stage.

The Town Council in Mt Gambier had been informed more than twelve months in advance that they'd received a relatively generous allocation of one hour and forty-five minutes — the Royal Party would arrive at the aerodrome just before twelve-thirty and would be gone just after two — and held a public meeting to initiate the planning process. The program that they devised for the Queen was simple: a loyal address of welcome, a drive through the town, a commemorative tree planting and a Children's Demonstration in Vansittart Park, in which the students of seventy schools formed themselves into the outline of a map of Australia.

These plans were co-ordinated by the Mayor and other members of the council, who formed an executive committee to supervise the efforts of the eight specialist committees (decorations, traffic and transport, publicity, entertainment, amenities, catering, expenses and schools) and negotiated with the regional committees from eleven surrounding towns. Most of their work was concentrated on provisions for the spectators, who would be in town for longer than the Queen. Each host community had to anticipate an unprecedented influx of travellers, much bigger and more concentrated than for the annual show. Mt Gambier's population increased fivefold, from ten to fifty

¹⁸² ABC, 26 February 1954, 4 pm bulletin.

thousand, which was way beyond the capacity of its infrastructure. Visitors had to be urged to bring their own provisions, for example, and the service clubs would have organised refreshments for the day, as happened in other towns, like Dubbo where the Apex Club brought in fifty thousand bags each of chips, sweets and peanuts as well as five thousand bottles of cordial and two and one-half thousand gallons of ice-cream for sale in the street.¹⁸³ There might also have been other arrangements made but not advertised. In Bendigo, officials from the Council went round to ask people living on the route of the Queen's progress if they would allow the public to come in and use the toilet on the big day.¹⁸⁴

As in other country towns, much of the work was done by volunteers, or on work time donated by employers. I received a letter from Bundaberg which shows something of how it must have worked. The writer, Margaret King, was employed by the City Council there in 1954 and was set to work by the Deputy Mayor, Mr Rattray, to make the decorations for the official dais. The wife of the Town Clerk also gave a hand as a volunteer and the two women were assisted by a couple of men employed by Mr Rattray at his theatre.¹⁸⁵ Although city councils and governments paid for much of the work in the capital cities, there was always a strong component of volunteer labour and donations in kind. The flowers for the Commonwealth Government's State Dinner, for example, came from Canberra gardens and were arranged by the donors.¹⁸⁶

Mt Gambier's celebrations actually began on the eve of 'Q-Day' with a ball, and continued with regattas and exhibitions into the following night, as if the district needed to let off the steam accumulated through so many months of waiting. These supplementary festivals were a feature of the tour in rural areas. People who had travelled so far wanted to make a real occasion of it, but I also think that organisers had correctly anticipated that such intense feelings of communality could not be turned on and off like a tap. On the nights when there'd been nothing specific organised in the cities many people drifted round, unwilling to go home, even hours after the Queen had retired.

¹⁸³ *Australian Women's Weekly*, 10 February 1954, p. 13.

¹⁸⁴ Nancy Betteridge, correspondence, 9 August 1990.

¹⁸⁵ Margaret King, correspondence, 29 October 1990.

¹⁸⁶ One of the women responsible for the Canberra flowers spoke to me after I gave a paper at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra in 1994. In another example, female employees of the David Jones' department store in Sydney spent their own time and money raising flowers to decorate the ground floor of the store (*Australian Women's Weekly*, 24 February 1954, p. 18).

Every town produced a booklet commemorating the Queen's presence. These usually combined practical information with elevated sentiments. Mt Gambier's *A Day with Our Queen*, on sale for three shillings, included pages that were clearly written with an eye to posterity.¹⁸⁷ Neither residents nor those who lived nearby actually required information about the mayor, or the decorations they were looking at, or even a brief description of the district to get them through the day; the journalists were given any information they needed by the press office; and the Queen herself was presented with a different publication, a book about the social and natural history of the area which had been prepared by the teachers and pupils of the local schools. *A Day with Our Queen* was no mere ephemera but a 'piece of history'.

It is appropriate that Her Majesty should be welcomed to South Australia at the town of Mt Gambier which has the distinction of being the first part of South Australia sighted and named.¹⁸⁸

These are really the same sentiments as those that had been expressed for the nation in Sydney, broken down into the local (and somewhat competitive) claims of municipalities. The history of white settlement would be confirmed and consecrated by Her Majesty's role as witness, and such validation could only be granted by the Crown because of its own long linkage with the past. Yet for these purposes the description provided of Mt Gambier in *A Day with Our Queen* lacked grandiloquence. It began pompously enough with a paragraph on discovery and foundation, but quickly dropped away to the language of travel brochures, with a special commendation for the 'kitchen, laundry and ironing facilities' available at the Blue Lake camping ground (royal visits obviously assisted the local tourist economy). Throughout the booklet, the tone was clichéd, stuffy and overcapitalised by contemporary standards, but it was also assured and unshadowed. The town had done its best and awaited its Queen with confidence.

¹⁸⁷ As ever, this booklet contained information on all aspects of arrangements except expense. There was no reference to any costs or fundraising.

¹⁸⁸ *A Day with Our Queen*, p. 7. These 'historic' claims came thick and fast throughout the tour. Two examples: Saturday 20 March, which was spent on the Eyre Peninsula was later described as 'the greatest day in the Peninsula's interesting history' (*Royal Tour of Australia in Pictures*, unpaginated); and the Lord Mayor of Adelaide made an address of welcome in which he declared that 'Adelaide was the oldest municipality in Australia, yet the Royal Tour was by far the greatest event in its municipal history' (as reported by the ABC, 19 March 1954, 12.30 pm bulletin).

In the event, its day in the sun was considered to have gone off very well indeed. It had even survived a late addition to the program when Miss Shirley Weston, the famous 'snake girl', had suddenly appeared on the side of the road with a 12-foot carpet snake and an 8-foot python wrapped around her neck and arms. It was a pretty arresting sight, and it appeared to shake the living daylights out of Philip. The python, which was decorated with a tricolour ribbon, was known thereafter as 'The Duke'.¹⁸⁹ (City humorists certainly looked to the bush for this kind of easy laugh, as a number of cartoons attended to the immense preparations made for her flying visits to country towns, suggesting that they did see it as funny that the Queen would come all the way from Buckingham Palace to the Australian outback. 'BOOLI-WOOLI SALOOTS OUR QUEEN' said a ragged banner above a one-horse town, whose inhabitants were hoping that she wouldn't 'notice the crook printin' from the air'.¹⁹⁰ Eric Jolliffe showed CWA ladies in despair as a mighty wind from the royal plane blew cakes and teacups off a trestle table. 'HERE THEY COME!' yelled Saltbush Bill. 'HAVE YOU GOT YOUR SPEECHES READY?'¹⁹¹ *Woman's Day and Home* kept the joke alive from week to week through the trials of Maudie Lacklustre, the Lady Mayoress of the fictional town of Anonbillago and heroine of a humorous weekly column by Margot Parker. The poor old thing spent weeks before the visit practising her curtsy with knees cracking like rifle shots, and on the evening after she had to cut her gloves away from her swollen hands with scissors. At least the Royal presence had the desirable effect of unifying the community, as Mrs Lackluster and her great rival Mrs Millington were able to bury their differences in pleasure over the success of their Great Day.)

It was a day of surprises for the Queen's right-hand man, as he was also bemused by the sight of a bride in the crowd as they were driving back into Melbourne in the early afternoon. Another crowd in the tens of thousands had assembled along the roadside from Essendon and a newly-wed couple had rushed from the altar to the street when they heard the approaching noise of the mob.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ *Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand*, pp. 87—8.

¹⁹⁰ *Bulletin*, 24 February 1954, p. 12.

¹⁹¹ *Pix*, 20 March 1954, p. 20.

¹⁹² *Age*, 27 February 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook.



The car was all lit up and it was just like fairyland, it was something which you'd thought about since you were a little girl, and it was just enthralling and we were so thrilled we decided we would stay on the tram tracks until the show finished'.

*Talkback caller Del, memory of the Queen on evening of 27 February 1954.*¹⁹³



City pleasures

The city then had the Royal Couple to itself for four uninterrupted days, and the multitudes kept coming. They followed them to the tennis, to the races (where one lucky jockey said that 'meeting the Queen was better than winning the Melbourne Cup')¹⁹⁴ to a state banquet, a church service, a women's luncheon — Philip to the Flinders Naval Depot — a garden party, another ball, and the 'Tales of Hoffman' at the Princess Theatre. This opera was a charity performance presented by the National Theatre Movement. *The Queen in Victoria* tour book described the audience as the most brilliant ever seen in an Australian theatre. 'There were tiaras even in the upper circle.'¹⁹⁵

Jane Lawry saw the Queen for the second time on this night. She'd gone to the newsreels straight after work — 'everyday there was a new reel of where she'd been the day before, so if you weren't able to follow her round you could still see' — and then she waited for an hour and a half on the Bourke Street barricades, which were five or six deep with people, before catching her breath at the sight of the Royal car and its brilliantly lit interior.¹⁹⁶ So did Del, a Canberra talkback caller, who was so excited by the 'fairy tale' Queen that she waited for nearly seven hours with her sister outside the Exhibition Building to catch both entrance and exit from the City of Melbourne Royal Ball. When they decided to stay for a second glance, they had to fight for a place across the road

¹⁹³ ABC, talkback, Canberra, 1990.

¹⁹⁴ ABC, 27 February 1954, 7 pm bulletin.

¹⁹⁵ *The Queen in Victoria*, p. 27.

¹⁹⁶ Jane Lawry.

5.25 Her Majesty and His Royal Highness leave Warragul.
7.00 Her Majesty and His Royal Highness arrive Flinders Street station [Melbourne] and proceed to Government House.

Source: *Australia's Royal Welcome*.



Back to the bush

Melbourne saw the Queen again for its massive Children's Demonstration — where the word of the day was 'WELCOME', thirty feet high and nearly two hundred feet across, with the startling twist of the children lying flat and then jumping up at a whistled command so that the whole word appeared to be leaping out of the ground²⁰¹ — and a visit to the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, but most of the time remaining in Victoria was spent in the bush, on a whistle-stop tour of country towns. Wednesday 3 March was the turn of the Gippsland region, when the Queen and Duke travelled by train between Sale and Warragul, alighting at Traralgon and Yallourn, and slowing through the many tiny hamlets on the way. Even in a little place like Sale some people had slept out in the streets. Traralgon had been decorated with a floral carpet, a million blooms arranged in a circular design around a central cipher. Yallourn was a model town built by the State Electricity Commission around the world's biggest deposit of brown coal. Forty minutes were spent viewing the vast open-cut mine, which was then producing about eight million tons of coal a year. The variety of Australian produce on show during the day — agriculture, industry and children — made it memorable. *Royal Visit 1954* described it as 'not only another opportunity to look into the hearts of her Australian people, but a further glimpse of the potential of her great southern dominion'.²⁰²

Friday 5 and Saturday 6 March passed in a blur of towns and villages. On the first day, the travellers covered two hundred and fifty miles by train and car and were seen by several hundred thousand people (a hundred thousand in Bendigo alone). The ABC reported that farms had been deserted over thousands of square miles as entire rural populations were drawn to the main towns.²⁰³ Every centre on the route was in day-and-night carnival clothing, bunting and flowers for the Queen and illuminations for evening revels, and

²⁰¹ ABC, 4 March 1954, 7 pm bulletin.

²⁰² *Royal Visit 1954*, p. 62.

²⁰³ ABC, 5 March 1954, 1.30 pm bulletin.

yet most had been granted the briefest of stopovers. It was fifteen minutes in Rochester, twenty minutes in Echuca — really just enough time for the Royal Couple to step down, receive the Mayor's best wishes and a bouquet, and then away — and a lightning Progress in bigger towns like Shepparton and Ballarat.

There was heartbreak in Maryborough and Castlemaine because poliomyelitis had been reported in both districts, and the Victorian Cabinet had decreed that the Royal Carriage would not stop in either town. Congregations of children had to be discouraged for fear of infection and the Queen also had to be shielded from the slightest risk. But the howls from these centres were loud enough to force an eleventh hour amendment: the train could halt at the platform but the Queen and Duke would not alight and speeches of welcome could only be passed, unread, through an open window. So said Melbourne anyway, but it might have well as saved its breath. The parents of Maryborough and Castlemaine dragged their children into the middle of pressing crowds. Their elected mayors were going to address themselves to their sovereign if it was the last thing they did, and each proclaimed their loyalty in loud defiant tones. The Premier was heckled in Maryborough, by people yelling 'What's wrong with us? Where is our Queen? Has Cain gone mad? There is no polio here!'²⁰⁴

Given that fear of polio was a recurring summer nightmare for Australian parents in these years, this seems to be to be extraordinary evidence of the premium placed on the sight of the Queen. The determination of parents of children who did have disabilities, whether from polio or other causes, is also compelling, and the story of one of these greatly affected my thinking about the meaning of this tour. During a radio talkback session in Canberra in 1990, a woman named Heather rang in to speak about her son, who had been born with cerebral palsy in 1949.²⁰⁵ They were living in Warragul, which was on the route of the Gippsland tour on 3 March and the Legacy people in town arranged for a special seat in the stands. When Heather arrived she found that they had gone to the trouble of providing a nurse, a sunshade and a flag for her son to wave. 'It was just a magnificent day', she said, starting to cry,

²⁰⁴ *Age*, 6 March 1954, p. 1.

²⁰⁵ ABC, talkback, Canberra, 1990. Heather said that she had always been very interested in Prince Charles because he had been born in the same week as her twin sons. 'Charles was born the same week as these twins — fourteenth of November, and they were born on the fourth.'

and when they were going, the Prince gave us a special wave because we were sitting down, and everybody else was standing, so we got a special wave from the Prince ... then after that they all went, and we got this wave, and then I lost this little fellow the next year, in 1955...²⁰⁶

I nearly cried too, over that and another story I found in the *Women's Weekly* shortly afterwards. A reporter on a visit to the offices of the Commonwealth Royal Visit Staff in January 1954 was shown a letter from a father whose child was not expected to live for very long, a request for a special seat.²⁰⁷ It just seems foreign now to think that it would be important to take a dying child to see the Queen, and it was this that first made me realise how very powerful her presence had been for so many people, how much the tour had been an experience beyond the realm of politics — an act of national communion.²⁰⁸ In as far as my interviewees can remember, this was not a society in which sick or disabled children were displayed as a matter of course, but rather one in which they were usually hidden away.

This unusual openness was demonstrated even on her first morning in the country, when one hundred children with cerebral palsy were chosen to watch the arrival on television at the Mosman Spastic Centre in Sydney (there had been other experimental television broadcasts in Australia, but this was the first to abandon co-axial cables for microwave transmission, and was regarded as a great success. Technicians from AWA — Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Ltd — installed one microwave dish and two cameras near the landing pontoon and pictures from the scene around Farm Cove were beamed across to a second receiving dish on the outside wall of the centre). An audience of three hundred and fifty, including staff and parents, sat in several rooms in front of fourteen screens. The *Herald* sent a staff reporter to watch the children's reaction to these twin miracles, Queen and television, which she described in a lengthy article on the following day as, 'perhaps the most touching demonstration of loyalty in Australia':

A telephoto lens on one of the television cameras brought a close-up of the Queen to the screen. One of the boys in

²⁰⁶ *ibid.*

²⁰⁷ *Australian Women's Weekly*, 27 January 1954, p. 27.

²⁰⁸ There are organisations today which attempt to fulfil the wishes of dying children, but I have not read of one wishing to see the Queen. This might not be the case with the Princess of Wales, who seems to have inherited the 'royal touch'.

the front row tried to clap but could not co-ordinate his hand movements.²⁰⁹

In later days, young polio victims were given special places at most of the Children's Demonstrations and as with Heather's son, they often got a special smile or wave from the Royal couple. There were also ad-hoc gestures like the invitation from the Governor of New South Wales to several hundred children from the NSW Deaf, Dumb and Blind Institute and the Sub-Normal Children's Welfare Association to come into the grounds of Government House and watch as the Queen departed for the day's activities.²¹⁰

Stephen Alomes, however, has interpreted the experience of another crippled child spectator in rather different terms. In *A Nation at Last?* Alomes mentioned a particular child among the crowds for the Queen in Melbourne. I found her story in one of the souvenir books, *The Royal Tour of Australia in Pictures*, but it may have originally appeared in one of the Melbourne newspapers (Alomes doesn't give a source). Little Colleen Bailey, who had been born crippled and later had both of her legs amputated, took her mother's seat in the official stand, on the day of the Queen's arrival.

Colleen returned home to Footscray satisfied she had completed the happiest day of her life. To use her own words: 'It was a real thrill, perhaps even better than being able to walk.'

To this, the book editors added, 'that was the magic effect of the beautiful Queen on one of her most affectionate subjects.'²¹¹ Alomes clearly found this story amusing and produced it as the clincher to his argument that the tour was a triumph of emotional manipulation, using her thrill at seeing the Queen as the final proof that there had been a century of 'imperial indoctrination'.²¹² Alomes is not, of course, pretending to examine the 1954 Royal Tour at any length. But I find his remarks to be overly dismissive of individual experience — what is felt can only be what has been taught — and uninterested in contextualisation. While I don't believe that writing about the past is, or ought to be, a process of translation — trying to carry over meaning from one discursive community to another, as Hayden White (paraphrasing Ricoeur) has described the traditional

²⁰⁹ 'A Grandstand View for Children: By television', *Herald*, 4 February 1954, p. 2.

²¹⁰ ABC, 7 February 1954, 12.30 pm bulletin.

²¹¹ *The Royal Tour of Australia in Pictures*, unpaginated.

²¹² Stephen Alomes, *A Nation at Last? The changing character of Australian nationalism 1880-1988*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1988, p. 155.

method of the historical sciences²¹³ — nor should it be a matter for contempt in the interests of the politics of a later era.



She went through with her husband on the tail end of the last carriage. She was giving him a 'curtain lecture'. He hardly knew which way to look, so he looked straight ahead (laugh) My wife was especially interested in that.

Frank Rocke, memory of seeing the Queen in Sydney, 1989,²¹⁴



The limits of public scrutiny

The matter of the Queen's domestic privacy also arose during rural Victoria's brief period of custodianship. Elizabeth and Philip left their train at Warburton railway station on the evening of Saturday 6 March, and motored to the Metropolitan Board of Work's chalet in the picturesque foothills of the O'Shannessy Mountains, where they stayed until noon on Monday. The only engagement was a service at St Andrews Presbyterian Church, where none but regular worshippers were allowed to join take part.

The sojourn by Lake O'Shannessy provided the only opportunity for the couple to really just *be* in the Australian bush, although officialdom just couldn't let it alone. The nearest dam had been stocked to ensure good fishing, and koalas had been imported from other parts of the state. Loch Townsend particularly remembered those koalas because they were going to feature in *The Queen in Australia*. Loch arrived at the chalet with cameraman Frank Bagnall and sound recordist Don Kennedy on Sunday afternoon, ready to shoot some footage of the Queen with the koalas and some kangaroos. They were kept waiting outside for quite some time and just as they began to get agitated about the light ('Christ, when are they bloody well coming?') Philip came tearing out of the house with his tennis racquet and shoes hurtling after him. Then the Queen came flying in pursuit, shouting at him to come back, and Frank Bagnall's old Fox Movietone instincts just overtook him and so before anyone knew what

²¹³ Hayden White, *The Content of the Form*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1987, p. 49.

²¹⁴ Frank Rocke, interview, 3 June 1993.

was going on, he had the whole incident on film. The Queen grabbed her husband and dragged him into the chalet. Peace prevailed until the autocratic Commander Colville, Press Secretary to Her Majesty, charged down to the trio on the lawn, threatening to have them arrested.

I said 'Calm down' and I went up to Frank and I started unscrewing the back magazine, and he said 'What are you doing?' and I said, 'Exposing the film, Frank'. I said, 'You may have finished using your balls, but I've still got work for mine and I'd like to keep them.' I'll never forget saying that. And anyway, I unscrewed it and I took it. There was about 300 feet of film and I walked up to the house ... and I said, 'Commander, I have a present for you. You might like to give it to Her Majesty.'²¹⁵

Commander Colville went indoors. A few minutes later, one of the aides came down with beer and sandwiches for the crew, and before very much longer the Queen appeared to thank them personally for the gesture.

I said who I was and introduced Don and Frank, and she said, 'Oh, thank you very much. I'm sorry for that little interlude but as you know it happens in every marriage. Now, what would you like me to do?'²¹⁶

When Loch first told me *about* this story, before he told it formally to me, he made more of that moment of decision. He had been moved by several factors. These included the motive most apparent in the interview, which was fear that the movie might be jeopardised if future co-operation was withdrawn, but also the uncomfortable awareness that privacy had been invaded, and the knowledge that such footage was too dangerously anomalous. There was no genre to encompass it. It would never have been included in any official product, and there wasn't yet a black market in such material — there may have been titillation on the grapevine at the thought of a royal domestic, but even the tabloid papers weren't ready to spell it out in black and white.

'This reticence is further illustrated in one of the very popular motif-type stories from the tour, which has been told to me by a score of people. It features 'deaf and dumb' children. Richard, a caller to Canberra talkback, had one of the most detailed versions, which was that the Queen and Duke were driving through

²¹⁵ Loch Townsend.

²¹⁶ *ibid.*

Woolloomooloo in inner Sydney and went past a contingent of children from a special school.

The Queen was looking particularly jaded, and then apparently because of the Queen's non-reaction, the Duke said to the Queen, 'Come on ducks, now come on, a big smile and a wave to the children, they're deaf and dumb'. But of course, the children could lip read. So there was a huge roar of applause from the children as they realised what the Duke had said and the whole thing was a very great success.²¹⁷

The popularity of this story reveals the intense interest in what They really said to each other and what They really thought about what the tour, but it also demonstrates the contemporary limits of popular speculation. If people really wondered then about the real private life of the Royals — the between-the-sheets stuff — they're still not mentioning it today. Speculation extended only to their rows, as in the following version of the 'deaf-and-dumb' story, remembered in this exchange between Edna Ryan and her daughter-in-law Margaret.

- Edna** Well, they were supposed to have seen her mouth words to him that she wasn't saying....
- Margaret** Yes, the lip readers.
- Edna** They were supposed occasionally to be sparring.²¹⁸

People were gently titillated by the thought of a royal domestic because it proved they were 'just like you and me'. There has also been a traditional interest in the capacity of the royal bladder, for the same reason, and there's some vague, lingering evidence of this from 1954. Valerie Lawson quoted an anecdote from a journalist about the distribution of unused toilet paper from the Queen's rooms at the Hotel Gollan in Lismore, and several people told me stories about toilets constructed especially for the Royals and then not used. I investigated this with my mother (as her family were sanitary contractors and had a professional interest in such matters): had there been any crude

²¹⁷ ABC, talkback, Canberra, 1990.

²¹⁸ Margaret and Edna Ryan, interview, 6 July 1990.

speculation, say, about whether the Queen had to go to the toilet during those extended periods on her feet?

Lyndsay I remember men making jokes like that, and a bit of giggling going on over it. There were jokes around like that.

Jane I suppose no-one talked about menstruation much anyway...

Lyndsay Oh, heavens no! Good heavens! Although there was a lot of interest in the babies being born. A few jokes about that. They were terribly pallid jokes... I don't remember anything very trenchant or dreadful.²¹⁹

Well, at least I got further than my friend Helen did with her mother.

Helen I just want to know all your memories of the Queen coming. Did you wonder about things like when she went to the toilet?

Dulcie No! She didn't go to the toilet. Cut it out, Helen.²²⁰

Loch Townsend, in contrast, could remember a *risque* rumour that the Queen had used the Matron's toilet at Concord Hospital and that someone had souvenired the sanitary pad that she left behind. 'It'll probably turn up at Sotheby's any day now!' ²²¹ As this story would still be out of bounds today, I think that he must have moved in exceedingly vulgar circles.

.....

'GOD SPEED — PLEASE RETURN TO US'

Farewell message hanging across Swanston Street in Melbourne.

.....

Farewell to Melbourne

²¹⁹ Lyndsay Connors.

²²⁰ Dulcie Ferry, interview recorded by Helen Ferry, Broken Hill, 1989.

²²¹ Loch Townsend.

Melbourne's final vigil was gathering as the train began its journey back down from the north on 8 March. Masses and masses of people lined the tracks through the bush and the outer suburbs, and then the roadways of the inner city. The broad, grassy sweep of St Kilda Road offered three sightings for the price of one long picnic, as the Royals returned to Government House from the train in the afternoon and then went out to one last reception at the Exhibition Building in the evening. Remarkable as the first day's gathering had been, the police rated these penultimate gatherings as the largest of all. The throng around the Exhibition Building was described as an 'almost solid mass of cheering people' by the ABC.²²² The final, final crowds gathered early on the next morning for a dignified farewell. Their unprecedented restraint reflected the sadness of farewell. It was all too much for many among the thirty thousand at the airport, who were weeping openly as the Queen and Duke stood briefly by the door of the plane, waving and smiling before they ducked and disappeared.

²²² ABC, 9 March 1954, 6 am bulletin.

 CHAPTER 6

The lion and the kangaroo¹

All her peoples, in whatever land they may be, should know that the Queen and Duke are happy and are thoroughly enjoying the changing scene as they move from State to State.

Eric Harrison, Minister-in-Charge, 8 March 1954.²

From Brisbane to Perth, Australia continued to put its foot forward with a heady mixture of confidence and fear. The people who lived in the outback and the tropics and even in ordinary suburban homes put their hand up for the title of the true Australians. Aboriginal Australians were nowhere in the race, although they were called upon to bear a heavy symbolic load.

Much of this chapter is concerned with an examination of gender, and gendered responses to the Queen. Australian women often felt coarse beside her. Young boys were the group most indifferent to her presence while servicemen may have had the most intense reactions of all. These distinctions are retained in memory, too, as men and women recall the moment at which they saw the Queen in quite distinct ways. The place of the military is examined in particular detail because it reveals the most obvious point of difference between the emotional responses of men and women to Queen and country, and because I found it new and fascinating to realise how much the shadow of war was still cast across the country.

I also investigate the policing and security operations as they reveal the spectrum of fears besetting politicians and organisers. These ranged from the widespread

¹ This title is taken from a verse displayed in a shop window in Melbourne (next to the Emu and the Unicorn of the previous chapter). 'The Lion chased the Kangaroo/Across the Seven Seas/In Loyalty the two cavort/Her Majesty to please'. Quoted in Lyn Harrison, *Me Too!*, Oswald Ziegler, Sydney, 1954, p. 48.

² ABC, 8 March 1954, 1.30 pm bulletin.

apprehension of misdemeanours (the 'lurking fear of coarseness' from the eighteen-sixties had never gone away), a cynical scare campaign aimed against the organised left, and a faint dread of a deranged assassin.

There were five weeks down and three to go as the great Royal caravan headed north to Brisbane on Tuesday 9 March. The milestone was marked by a statement from the tour's Minister-in-Charge, who declared that the Queen was in 'splendid health and spirits'.³ According to Valerie Lawson, however, the reporters accompanying her were not holding up as well, and were bored and jaded and unable to devise fresh angles.⁴ Some, like Anne Matheson, had followed the Royal Party all the way from England and had therefore been travelling for months. One of her February despatches in the *Women's Weekly* told readers all about her life on the road — going to bed every night and waking every morning to the sound of typewriters tapping in adjoining rooms, scrambling for the best position at every stop in order to catch a Royal remark, to interview the crowds, and then to make sure that the cars would not depart without you. Reporters sat in trees and in moving cars or buses to get their articles finished, while little boys in uniform waited to run to the cable and wireless operators. Material was sent from post offices in larger towns, but out in the bush, teleprinter vans followed after the royal cavalcade, sending the copy off at sixty-six words a minute.⁵ Little wonder then, that fatigue was just beginning to seep through in the papers. The 'Woman Reporter' from the *Age*, for example, wrote a weary piece from Toowoomba on 11 March, remarking on the 'usual, crowded streets' and the 'endless routine of presentations'.⁶ Another, more subtle indication of press ennui was the slow rise in the number of articles referring to anonymous critics or to unsourced criticisms of the itinerary. Douglas Brass wrote one of these for the *Melbourne Herald* after the Queen's first two days in Brisbane, reminding the pundits that one never stands twice in the same river. 'One thing some critics forget is that for the new city, the new State, it is not repetitive. It has all the impact of utter originality'.⁷ These critics were probably Brass' own colleagues, who apart from being tired, were also

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Valerie Lawson, *Connie Sweetheart*, Heinemann, Sydney, 1988, p. 298.

⁵ Anne Matheson, 'Reporting the Queen's tour is exhausting, but her smile makes it all worth while', *Australian Women's Weekly*, 17 February 1954, pp. 20–21.

⁶ *Age*, 12 March 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook.

⁷ *Herald* (Melbourne), 11 March 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook. Brass had been with the tour longer than most other reporters, having been travelling with the Queen since November 1953.

getting the 'wrong' view of the whole event. It is likely that there were Queenslanders who felt they'd already seen too many pictures from the southern states, but it is also hard to see how the community at large could have expressed any greater excitement.

.....

The Brisbane of the hot afternoon dated March 9, 1954, contained 100 000 people eager to give a super-A-plus Queensland welcome to the two most distinguished people ever to come to it.

*The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand.*⁸

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The Brisbane heat

It was time for northern loyalists to sleep out. Several hundred carried bedding and cooking gear on to the tarmac at Brisbane's Eagle Farm airport on the evening of 8 March, as hundreds more took up overnight possies at strategic centres in town. Suburbanites brought packing cases and canvas chairs in on the trams in the morning. The ABC found a family with a new baby out for the day. The young mother said that she had been reluctant to bring it into the crowds but the alternative had been for everybody to stay at home. 'We just couldn't do that on a day like this'.⁹

When the Queen and Duke disembarked from their plane exactly on schedule at quarter past two, they stepped into the glare of the sub-tropical sun and the 'warmth of a typical Queensland welcome — informal and unrestrained'.¹⁰ Brisbane's was the most colourful of all the city parades because of bright umbrellas and makeshift awnings thrown up against the sun, and the people, one hundred thousand or so, seemed particularly exuberant. They broke free from the barricades in the wake of the Royal car and ran closely behind it on the way to the Exhibition Grounds where fifty thousand more were waiting for the civic welcome to begin.

⁸ *Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand*, Consolidated Press Ltd, Sydney, 1954, p. 112.

⁹ ABC, 9 March 1954, 12.30 pm bulletin.

¹⁰ ABC, 9 March 1954, 4 pm bulletin.

The southern press granted Queensland its day in the sun, and reported dutifully on its exotic charm. But it did up the ante on the 'Queen's health' angle — the women's pages were even more struck than before by her capacity to look fresh when all around were wilting, but boy reporters began to speculate as to whether the heat was getting to her. It was Philip who suffered most obviously, the prisoner of uniforms and morning suits. This was apparent from the first pictures taken in Brisbane, which showed him pulling at his tight admiral's collar. Melbourne's *Sun* published one of these on its front page under the headline, 'From HERE to THERE'.

The Duke of Edinburgh must have been thinking of the cool autumn morning he had left behind a few hours earlier in Melbourne as he drove through 80-deg. tropical humidity in Brisbane yesterday. He continually eased his collar as he and the Queen passed cheering thousands of people.¹¹

The several attitudes fighting for supremacy in this caption included pride in this vast continent of interesting climactic extremes, mild relief that Melbourne had not been the cause of such discomfort, and just a hint of the traditional laugh at the new chum.

The heat was still oppressive at the end of this first day in Queensland, when Lady-in-Waiting Lady Pamela Mountbatten was several times observed clutching the back of a chair for support during the State Reception in Parliament House. Premier Vince Gair was all for everybody having a good look at royalty ('because they are here to be seen') and several times escorted them out on to the balcony for the benefit of the large crowds outside. He also set an 'Australasian and Royal Tour record' (in the reckoning of the *Melbourne Herald*) by presenting two hundred and sixty people to his Queen in the course of forty-one minutes, an epic performance captured on television for patients at the nearby Greenslopes Military Hospital.¹² There were still tens of thousands on the streets when the reception concluded at 11 o'clock and several hundred broke through the barriers in George Street to buzz around the Queen's car. Apparently she smiled broadly at them.

¹¹ *Sun* (Melbourne), 10 March 1954, p. 1.

¹² *Herald* (Melbourne), 10 March 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook.

Australiana

More than any other state, Queensland attempted to put itself forward as the 'real' Australia. It mounted the most sustained display of uniquely Australian flora and fauna, and also inserted most indigenous culture into the *pot pourri* that was offered to the Queen (this was stretched to the point of schizophrenia in Cairns with a program in which a war dance from the Torres Strait succeeded immediately by a 'graceful maypole dance'). Even on the first afternoon Aboriginal spears and shields alternated with paper decorations in red, white and blue along the route of the progress. This binarism was illustrated again on that same evening, in the course of the State Reception. Parliament House, usually such a definitive monument to the Westminster system of government, had been transformed into a tropical bower hung with ferns and pawpaws, pineapples and bananas, actually growing, which had been transplanted around the entrance to the marquee on the surrounding lawns.

But even this decorative scheme was thrown into the shade by the decor for the civic ball on the following night, which was loudly acclaimed as the most original devised for the tour and the most 'Australian' by a country mile. As Elizabeth and Philip made their way down the room, past massive bowls of bright strelitzia and towering gladioli, through the cream of Queensland society bent double in their honour, an impressive diorama was revealed. The official dais was dwarfed by a recreated slice of rainforest. A waterfall ran down over rocks covered with palm trees, ferns and caladium which gave way at the bottom to a bed of roses. Sculpted figures of an Aboriginal man and woman had been placed above a campfire half-way down, and eight live koalas, borrowed from a nearby wildlife sanctuary, were trying to sleep in a tree somewhere near the front. The Queen laughed when she saw them and Philip went back to play with them several times. The Woman Reporter from the *Age* described the tableau as an effective depiction of 'primitive Australia' and the *Herald's* headline said 'AUSTRALIAN SCENE AT ROYAL BALL' which suggests, by implication, that it hadn't been sufficient for the earlier balls to be merely held in Australia, but rather that 'Australianness' was only achieved through conscious effort.

Peter Spearritt has remarked on the dominance of Aboriginal motifs throughout the tour, as if they 'were the only genuine Australian iconography

Europeans could muster, along with native flora and fauna'.¹³ The *Truth* had argued openly for their inclusion on these grounds in January, in an article critical of the 'motley and bedraggled' bunting and heraldry on Sydney's streets. 'Australia has a wealth of material for original designs' — such as 'outsize sprays of imitation waratah, wattle and boronia' — 'but this seems to have been completely ignored'.¹⁴ The chairman of the Co-ordination Committee for Royal Tour Decorations responded with the argument that Sydney was a 'world city', and should present itself as such. Nonetheless, he continued, Australian motifs would be plentiful, including two hundred of the twelve hundred standards scattered around town, which would have Aboriginal designs. The interchangeable use of the terms 'Australian' and 'Aboriginal' indicate how thoroughly the latter term had been subsumed in the former.

Kimberley Webber has observed that the use of borrowed Aboriginal motifs in civic decorations had little to do with respect for the culture of indigenous Australians.¹⁵ Just as white Australians had appropriated a select number of words with Aboriginal derivation into their everyday vocabulary, so were boomerangs and native fauna used to provide the transplanted Anglo-Celtic culture with an exotic adjunct. The symbols of the dispossessed were not intended to refer directly to the act of dispossession, but were nonetheless the spoils of victory: an interesting inheritance from a society that was commonly supposed to be on the verge of extinction. The editor of the *Women's Weekly* actually pointed this out, in a very rare moment of protest, when considering Sydney's decorations:

It is difficult not to feel a slight twinge of the national conscience at this blithe adoption of aboriginal art, considering that the record of the white man's treatment of its creators left a lot to be desired in the past and still does.¹⁶

Jock Phillips has noted the same mish-mash of themes appearing in New Zealand. In particular, the streets of Auckland had been decorated with

¹³ Peter Spearritt, 'Royal Progress: the Queen and Her Australian Subjects', *Australian Cultural History*, no 5, 1986, pp. 87–8.

¹⁴ *Truth*, (Sydney), 10 January 1954, p. 13.

¹⁵ Kimberley Webber, 'Celebrating "Q-Day"', in *Australians and the Monarchy*, P. Spearritt & A. Shiell (eds), National Centre for Australian Studies, Melbourne, 1993, p. 26.

¹⁶ *Australian Women's Weekly*, 10 February 1954, p. 26.

thousands of illuminated cut-outs of crowns, fleur-de-llys, Christmas trees, tikis and ferns — a weird mixture of royalist, Christian and, occasionally, New Zealand symbols.¹⁷

Although the place of the Maori in New Zealand was not the same as the place of Aboriginal people in Australian society, I would suggest that the juxtaposition of native and imported iconography was intended to serve the same purpose in each country: to illustrate the historical romance of white settlement in a far-away and hostile environment.

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Jane Were you conscious of the Queen coming from somewhere that was different from Australia?

Margot Yes, but there was a strong connection though. She belonged to us as well. It was akin to that thing of being raised on European story books as well as Australian childrens' books, and having white Christmases with holly and Santa Claus, which we do to this day, like a split between what's actually going on in this culture and the European culture. You're raised on both, so I don't know.

*Interview with Margot Oliver, who was seven in 1954.*¹⁸

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The fairytale Queen

The high point of Brisbane's second day was the Lord Mayor's Ball. It 'has caught the imagination of Brisbane housewives', said the ABC, and 'many have been camping all day in the City Hall Square to be sure of seeing the gowns that will be worn by guests tonight'.¹⁹ Two elderly women climbed up on to the high stone pedestal of a memorial statue — having picked out the spot four months before — where they perched for hours. Three hundred at mid-afternoon had become twenty thousand by evening, an excitable mob only just held back from the road by several thousand police and army men. By nine

¹⁷ Jock Phillips, *Royal Summer*, Department of Internal Affairs & Daphne Brasell Associates, Wellington, 1993, pp. 5—6.

¹⁸ Margot Oliver, interview, 16 July 1993.

¹⁹ ABC, 10 March 1954, 4 pm & 7 pm bulletins.

o'clock high spirits had mounted to hysteria in a frightening crush. Two hundred and fifty fainted, and police had to commandeer cars belonging to guests to take the worst cases to the emergency rooms. This was probably not visible to the Queen who was met with 'wild hoorays and gasps of pleasure' as she appeared in a dress of ice-blue tulle with an apron drape of lace guipure. Queen Mary's famous diamond-and-pearl tiara glittered on her head while the light struck fire from the three-stranded diamond necklace at her throat. The internal lights of the car had been left on as usual to allow the people on the streets to see inside.

The visiting BBC commentator Audrey Russell remarked that the outstanding feature of this tour was the rush to see the Queen in evening dress, and that this was the reason why the constabulary were having such trouble maintaining order at night.²⁰ It might also have been that the police were as susceptible to the vision of the Queen in all her finery as the public. Detective-Sergeant Ray Blissett was seconded to work on security during the tour, and while he had attended many official parties in the course of his career,

I have never seen anything so outstanding as the Queen when she attended that function at the Tivoli [in Sydney]. Whether the jewellery was genuine or replicas I do not know, but under those lights it was something I have never seen equalled.²¹

It was an age of more elaborate frocking than we bother with today, and society women in this country certainly owned splendid gowns. On 24 February, when the Queen appeared like a 'twinkling star' in strapless white tulle at a Melbourne ball, other guests attended in fantasy ensembles created from such things as ombre organza and magnolia poul, pearl and diamante 'encrustations', strawberry pink slipper satin and a golden ostrich feather fan.²² But they couldn't match her for the quantity and variety of dresses, and they didn't have the gems that were gleaming around her neck. Jane Lawry, who now collects books about the Royal jewels, can still remember the pleasure she derived from waiting behind barricades on that evening to see the Queen drive

²⁰ Audrey Russell, 'We love her evening gowns, *Woman's Day and Home*, 8 March 1954, p. 12.

²¹ Ray Blissett, correspondence, 4 July 1990.

²² *Age*, 25 February 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook. The 'brilliant frocking' of socialites were routinely described in advance in the papers in the fifties, a form of reportage which seems particularly archaic today, just as the dresses themselves appear bizarrely elaborate.

past in 'a glitter of diamonds!'²³ In Perth at the end of March, Beryl Watson was equally delighted to find that

they had a light on inside the car so that everybody could see her. And that was quite exciting — to really see, there she was, the Queen, the diamond tiara, and everything.²⁴

In Beryl's memory the Queen and the diamonds can barely be distinguished, and I think it was true that the jewels were a physical expression of the otherwise abstract notion of 'royalty'. These night time glimpses became defining moments in the tour. In many ways they were the source of the magic: the times when the fairytale component of royalty was transcendent, when it spoke less of military reviews and national progress and more of otherworldly beauty and riches.

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This morning the Queen wore a heavy tussore silk coat in a subtle pale zircon shade with a close fitting bodice and fully knife-pleated skirt. Her Majesty's smart little hat in mushroom pink peachbloom velours was a pixie-crowned cloche with folded back brim finished with black veiling.

Age, 24 March 1954.

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But day or night, as my mother remembers, and as the description above so amply demonstrates, the media had 'a fetish about the clothes'.

They'd say, 'The dress is a pale green colour, but when she turns in the light, would you say it was a pale green, or more of an ultramarine? Oh, almost beyond description, more of an aqua!' ²⁵

As comment on the Queen's appearance and style was not only affected by her status but was also imbued with so much contemporary opinion on how good women ought to present themselves, there was terrible pressure on media

²³ Jane Lawry, interview, 1989. Jane did not admire the Queen's fashion sense as a rule, as she was rarely *smart*, but she was unstinting in her admiration for the fairytale moments.

²⁴ Beryl Watson, interview, 10 February 1992.

²⁵ Lyndsay Connors, interview, 1989.

commentators to get it right. Valerie Lawson reported in *Connie Sweetheart* that the men assigned to the 1954 Royal Tour were 'frightened' of this task and depended on female colleagues employed for their ability to pick a peppermint tulle at fifty paces. Lawson says the public actively demanded this information. 'Ordinary Australian women kept lists and scrapbooks of what the Queen wore, and were irritated if she wore the same dress twice'.²⁶ The interviews that I have done also confirm that there was much interest in her wardrobe, and although I didn't find anybody who actually kept lists, Jane Lawry remembered details of individual ensembles very clearly, and also that the Queen had made a point of wearing a new outfit to each new place on the itinerary.²⁷ Although she'd hadn't thought Her Majesty was especially elegant, she was very taken by the *size* of her wardrobe. Ordinary Australian women had never seen so many clothes.

You see, the first few years after I left school ... we were still coupons for clothes. My best dress was made out of a tablecloth, or out of material for curtains, those sort of things ... we were still very much post-war economy. And coming with this enormous wardrobe that *no* expense had been spared and all the jewels ... I mean it'd be like the youth today following Madonna or whoever they do.²⁸

Seven-year old Margot Oliver was a royal fashion follower in 1954. She loved Elizabeth for being young and beautiful and for wearing such fabulous frocks. Her scrapbooks were full of pictures of the Queen in evening dresses (to which she had taken the liberty of adding extra lipstick with red texta colours).

Every time you saw her she had a different dress on, so it was like a fascination with it all. What dress has she got on this time? What colour is it? What shape is it? That whole sort of fascination with female fashion that young girls engage with at some level.²⁹

Margot thought that the Queen looked just like her Mum, and in the daylight hours, as a young woman in a neat, sensible frock, she probably did. June

²⁶ Lawson, p. 289.

²⁷ Jane Lawry. My friend Helen Ferry spoke to a woman on the Indian-Pacific (29 March 1989) who didn't like the dress the Queen wore when she arrived in Sydney. 'It looked nylon. It was light, it wasn't snow-white, but a light base, and peach flowers on it. It looked so *cheap*'.

²⁸ Jane Lawry.

²⁹ Margot Oliver.

Lindsay went along to the Townsville Air Base on 13 March to see a woman of her own age in a similar outfit. 'I think she had a yellow dress on, and mine was a limey-green, and I'll always remember realising, it's like the Queen's dress'.³⁰ Just as the royal-books described the Queen as a woman who was both ordinary and extraordinary, in accordance with the representational role of the modern constitutional monarchy, the Australian media also presented a dichotomised sovereign throughout the course of the tour. Her image was simultaneously achievable and yet also out of reach.

The 'wild west'

The Royals left the Lord Mayor's Ball early, to get ready for their trip to Bundaberg and Toowoomba (for just a few hours each) on 11 March. As they slept, as on every night throughout the visit, there were people out there moving through the dark to whichever destination was the morrow's port of call. Queenslanders were the first to make really monumental journeys just to see her for such a brief while, and after returning to the capital by plane in the evening, she told the Minister for Lands that the distances had been the thing to impress her most. 'It has given me a glimpse of just how vast Australia is'.³¹

Steamy Bundaberg drew a crowd of somewhere between thirty-five and sixty thousand people, having stayed open all night to welcome travellers from within a radius of three hundred miles. The reception went off without a hitch, the crowds were effusive and the streets were pretty. They were decorated with sugar cane arches supplied by neighbouring towns and with homemade and commercial trimmings. I have a letter from resident Margaret King who can remember larger firms advertising special decorations, though she preferred to make her own, huge banner reading 'Welcome to Our Queen', which she bullied her brother into tying to the front of the house. She could also recall the giggle they all had when they read that an English reporter had described Bundaberg as a 'wild west town'.³²

Toowoomba marked a further progression into the real Australia. Its population trebled for the day, to around one hundred thousand, and some of these had come from as far away as Cunnamulla, which was a good four

³⁰ Later in our interview (1989) June Lindsay remarked that she'd never found the Queen to be anything startling. 'But you said she wore a dress just like yours', said her daughter, Cheryl. 'Well, I wasn't anything startling', said June.

³¹ ABC, 11 March 1954, 9 pm bulletin.

³² Margaret King, correspondence, 29 October 1990.

hundred miles to the west. They had travelled over sodden black-soil roads, across streams still swollen from the recent floods and their cars were caked in mud. But at least they got through with relative ease. It was still raining further north, around Townsville, where the Queen would be the following day and the only way to get across the Burdekin River in some places was by boat — or by aircraft belly in the case of one party. A Mr and Mrs Allingham of Southwick, both aged seventy-five, spent three days on horseback and swam across several flooded creeks, traversing each one six or more times to get their baggage across.³³ They added to a crowd of about forty thousand and the *Age* estimated that there were about twenty thousand more who had been defeated by the rising waters to the south.³⁴

One of the trains pulling into Townsville from the west had carried members and friends of the Mt Isa branch of the CWA across six hundred and three miles. The travellers had decided to forgo sleeper compartments so that more people could come, explaining to the *Women's Weekly* that 'the joy of seeing the Queen will more than compensate for an uncomfortable night on the forward and return journeys'.³⁵ The Tour stretched the capacity of rail services to the maximum. On any given 'Q-Day' the railway station in a country centre was full to overflowing. When the Queen came to Dubbo, for example, the demand from people in the Central West was sufficient to require nineteen special trains, and on the morning of the Royal Progress in Adelaide the state railway had to utilise every piece of rolling stock it possessed to bring the masses in from surrounding areas.³⁶



The night before the Queen's visit to the country towns of Australia will see each of them ringed with the glow of camp fires, as outback families, determined to secure good vantage points the next day, sleep beneath tip-carts,

³³ *The Royal Tour of Australia in Pictures*, Colourgravure, Melbourne, 1954, unpaginated.

³⁴ The Mayor of Cairns took a more robust line with the floods: 'As long as we get the Queen here we don't mind if we stand up to our necks in water to see her!' Wynford Vaughan Thomas, *Royal Tour 1953-4*, Hutchinson, London, 1954, p. 90.

³⁵ *Australian Women's Weekly*, 27 January 1954, p. 35. The person whom I think journeyed furthest was a Mrs Thompson from Ocean Island (between Nauru and the Gilbert Islands in the Central Pacific), who travelled more than three thousand miles to see the Queen in Australia (*Woman's Day and Home*, 15 February 1954, p. 27).

³⁶ Information on Dubbo is from the *Australian Women's Weekly* 10 February, p. 13; and Adelaide information is from the ABC, 19 March 1954, 7.45 am bulletin.

sulkies, in tents and in caravans, and in expensive new-model American cars.

Australian Women's Weekly, 10 February 1954.

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Australia being as it is, of course, the floods in Queensland were counterbalanced in some other parts where it was as dry as a bone. One rural talkback caller, Betty, rang in to say that she had been living on a wheat farm in the far north-west of Victoria in 1954. Her husband was President of the Chillingollah RSL and all fifteen members wanted to see the Queen (Betty didn't say where, but it must have been either in Mildura or Echuca, both of which were many miles away) so they packed up their trucks and headed off down an unsealed road.

We all arrived looking like we'd fallen in a talcum powder bag (laugh). And we had thermoses and fruit and oranges and squeezed juice and water bags on the front of the cars and everything ... and as you say, all for about fifty-seven seconds [worth of Queen].³⁷

After the tourists had gone, the gang from Chillingollah had to turn around and head home because there was no-one left in town to milk the cows. Betty's husband had been in the guard of honour, and her daughter ... well, Betty decided to share with a state-wide radio audience a story that her daughter would probably rather she forgot.

My most vivid memory was my daughter wetting her pants with excitement — seven years old — and to think it was her Queen!³⁸

The talkback host, a young woman, asked a sceptical question about whether those few moments of Queen could possibly have been worth the effort. I thought that Betty's answer was firm yet somewhat opaque in her rationale.

Well I think so. Seeing the children, and seeing all the old people too. All the old ladies from the outback coming in. And one fellow there must have made a fortune because he hired out metal picking buckets to stand on, for a shilling a piece. And he went round and gathered them

³⁷ ABC, talkback, Lismore, 1989.

³⁸ *ibid.*

all up and took them home afterwards. He had a truck load of them, I remember that.³⁹

The oldest Australian pilgrim was an Aboriginal man who was thought to be 107 years old. Charlie Dennison from Boggabilla (just south of Goondiwindi on the Queensland-New South Wales border) told the *Truth* that he had wanted to shake hands with a British sovereign since he was seven — for a neat century in other words — but that he hadn't enough money to travel to Toowoomba, the nearest point on the Queen's itinerary. The *Truth* understood that the Premier, Mr Gair, was willing to assist Charlie make his journey, but there is no record of him shaking hands. A party of twenty-two Aboriginal dancers were also coming to Toowoomba for the day, and I imagine that their long journey — three thousand miles from the Northern Territory — was also funded from the public purse. They were chaperoned by an officer from the Department of Native Affairs.

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Townsville, Friday. —

Despite the heat and humidity, the Queen looked cool and fresh in her blue and white checked voile and white hat. The Duke, however, looked hot in his navy blue single-breasted suit.

Age, 12 March 1954.

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Aboriginal culture

By Townsville the Woman Reporter for the *Age* seemed to have had enough. The sight of Queensland's fourth largest city sweltering in the heat of an intensely humid afternoon brought Noel Coward's famous song, 'Mad Dogs and Englishmen go out in the Noonday Sun', into her mind. In other tropical countries the inhabitants would have been taking a siesta indoors, but in Australia they were dragging the Queen towards an arid oval where four thousand hot little children were poised to form the words 'Welcome to Townsville'.⁴⁰ The only thing that made the Woman Reporter perk up, and this

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

was pretty much true for all the press, was the sudden introduction of a native element into the otherwise standard routine. Two little Aboriginal girls presented the Queen and Duke with a bouquet of feather flowers and a buttonhole flower made from fish scales. Native crafts were also displayed on a stand, and the red carpet was replaced by matting woven from palm leaves by residents of the Yarrabah Mission, two hundred miles to the north. A troupe of dancers from Palm Island replaced the children in the middle of the oval, and during their performance the Queen was said to look relaxed and happy.

There had only been one actual live display of Aboriginal culture on the Tour prior to Queensland — the boomerang exhibition by the Timbery family in Wagga (the 'Corroboree' ballet was an entirely European production) — but the lack was then made good. Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander dancers performed in Townsville, Cairns and Whyalla. Spearritt has drawn attention to the irony involved in Queensland making such an effort, when it was the state with the most repressive race legislation and administration.⁴¹ There would seem to be an additional irony in the explicit representation of otherness by state and federal governments committed to assimilationist policies, but I think that both resulted from the fact that neither the organisers nor most of the journalists appeared to think that these displays had any reference to Aboriginal culture as a living entity. Rather, they were a harmless, colourful remnant from prehistory (although I also wonder whether there might not have been an unacknowledged feeling that it was necessary to provide evidence to the British Crown that the indigenous population had not been entirely wiped out).⁴² Reporters used words such as *ancient*, *stone age* and *primitive* to describe the dances and corroboree, and turned to adjectives like *weird*, *uncivilised*, *uncouth* and *savage*. Articles began with paragraphs such as this:

The Royal couple had their first intimate look at Australia's ancient Stone Age culture today when aboriginal dancers and singers performed for them here.⁴³

The Commonwealth Government's souvenir publication, *Royal Visit 1954*, described the Toowoomba performance as a 'grotesque, age-old ceremonial ...

⁴¹ Spearritt, p. 87.

⁴² Albert Namatjira's presentation to the Queen reinforces this point as he was being commended for his 'European' skills. No traditional artists were presented — although a famous 'black tracker' did meet the Royal couple in Adelaide.

⁴³ *Age*, 12 March 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook.

mimed to the weird cacophony of didgeridoos and music sticks'.⁴⁴ The language used to portray this performance was particularly extreme because of the perception that the tribesmen involved had had very little contact with white society. A similar vocabulary was adopted later on when Whyalla (in South Australia) decided to showcase Aboriginal performers as its major entertainment for the Queen. A party of sixty-four Aboriginal men, members of the Pitjantjatjara people, were brought four hundred miles across from Yallata for a 'Royal Command Corroboree'. The corroboree was a sacred one, part of the men's knowledge, and the story was told to the Queen beforehand on the undertaking that she would never divulge it to another woman. This pact was widely reported. So too was the primitivism of the performers, 'uncivilised and wild-looking', 'full-blooded' and supposedly untouched by modern life. But this last claim was untrue. These people had only recently been resettled in Yallata. Their own land was on the outskirts of the area around the Woomera Rocket Range and Maralinga where British and Australian research scientists were conducting atomic tests.⁴⁵

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There is an ironic flight of fancy behind the choice of the name being given to the Rocket Range ... nothing could be more marked than the contrast between the woomera of the stone age man and the rockets that are the subject of experiment by the modern scientist at the Woomera Range-head.

Royal Visit to South Australia, official souvenir booklet.

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There seemed to be much public fascination at the meeting between these timeless men and the little woman who represented at that moment the very apogee of western civilisation. The ABC made this explicit on more than one occasion, by commenting, for example, that 'the clay-matted hair and grizzled

⁴⁴ *Royal Visit 1954*, Angus and Robertson for the Australian News and Information Bureau, Sydney, 1954, p. 74.

⁴⁵ The ABC made a brief reference to the resettlement but didn't give a reason for it. It only became clear to me when I looked at the map. For information on the effects of the nuclear radiation on Aboriginal people and their memory of the period, see Heather Goodall, 'Colonialism and Catastrophe: contested memories of nuclear testing and measles epidemics at Ernabella', in *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, P. Hamilton & K. Darian-Smith (eds), Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994, pp. 55—76.

beards of the older natives made a fantastic contrast with the slight graceful figure of the Queen'.⁴⁶ Where this contrast could not be so clearly distinguished it was left alone. A number of the dancers from the Torres Strait Island who featured in Cairns had served in the army during the war — and some visitors from Papua New Guinea had actually been decorated — and they were treated with more reserve or respect.

Margot Oliver, who was a little white girl of seven at the time, included a picture of a Maori chief greeting the Royals in her own scrapbook — and could recall that she had been fascinated by the fact that a man in a feather cape might meet the Queen. 'No Aborigines that I recall, now I think about it, not one'. I reminded her that Her Majesty had been introduced to Albert Namatjira in Canberra and the Timbery family in Wagga, but she didn't remember them at all. What had struck her at the time was that Maori people as a group had been able to greet the Queen, as had 'natives' in Fiji. 'There was no Aboriginal welcoming group'.⁴⁷

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Cairns, Sunday. —

Forty-seven bronzed Torres Strait Islanders in ceremonial war dress, with bows and arrows, yesterday sang the hymn, 'God Be With You Till We Meet Again', as the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh walked through their ranks here.

Age, 13 March 1954.

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The Royal Visit 1954 reprinted a photograph of an Aboriginal performance in Toowoomba with non-Aboriginal Australian spectators in the background, watching with blank expressions. When I was looking at the program for the Royal tour and at a copy of the program for the Federation Jubilee celebrations in Queensland in 1951 I was struck by the complete absence of Aboriginal

⁴⁶ ABC, 20 March 1954, 7 pm bulletin.

⁴⁷ Margot Oliver The question of an official Maori greeting to the Queen was a heated issue in New Zealand. Maori people were unhappy at the limited time originally allotted and were partially successful in their bid for more (Phillips discusses this in detail in *Royal Summer*, pp. 25—39).

content from the latter. White Australians did not customarily summon native performers for their own entertainment or education, which might explain the reaction in Toowoomba and the atmosphere encountered in Cairns by a journalist from Melbourne. It was his opinion that the Torres Strait Islanders had stolen the show, but 'many of the local citizens openly said after the ceremony that the islanders had had far too much of the Queen's time'. They may have been even more annoyed by the fact that 'Her Majesty enjoyed it and spent 10 minutes chatting with the leaders'.⁴⁸ But however many Aboriginal people were brought before the Queen, organisers kept her well away from the places where they lived. There were no visits to any mission stations or to any other urban or rural settlement where she might have seen for herself the awful conditions which most were forced to endure.⁴⁹

I asked some Aboriginal women whom I met in 1989 whether they remembered the Royal Tour. They had only been very young at the time, but did remember that there had been some articles in the *Dawn* (the monthly magazine produced by the Aborigines Protectorate Board 'for the Aboriginal People of NSW'). Before the Coronation the *Dawn* had printed an article of explicit ideological instruction under the title — 'A CITIZEN MUST BE LOYAL. PATRIOTISM HAS NO COLOURLINE' — a 'special coronation article' by Michael Sawtell, who was a member of the Aborigines Protectorate Board. Sawtell argued that the principles governing Aboriginal tribal life and modern citizenship were very much the same. As they were both based on loyalty, it was therefore no great matter for native people to transfer their allegiance from 'tribal fathers and heroes' to Christian leaders.

When our Queen Elizabeth is being crowned with all the pomp, the ceremony and the pageantry that is so characteristic of the English people, the aboriginal people will all understand that, for when times are good, and food is plentiful, almost the whole of their time is given up to dances and songs of tradition and loyalty.⁵⁰

After this, the *Dawn*'s contribution to tour preparation was slight. One brief article presented a strange collection of 'little-known facts' about Her Majesty,

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹ Nor were Aboriginal rights on the agenda during the Tour. The Council for Aboriginal Rights in Victoria suggested that Her Majesty's visit might be celebrated through the repeal of discriminatory legislation (as reported in the *Age*, 4 March 1954, p. 2) but this suggestion did not even merit an official response.

⁵⁰ Michael Sawtell, 'A Citizen Must be Loyal', *Dawn*, June 1953, p. 28.

the Royal couple at Government House, but he trod on a bottle and cut his foot too badly to be able to go. He received commiseration from the *Dawn* in March. 'Hard luck, Stan!'⁵⁴

Aboriginal kids made some of the longest journeys of all. From the brief descriptions appearing in the press, most of this travel seems to have been at the instigation and expense of the Department of Native Affairs or its local subsidiaries, but I found one small piece in the Melbourne *Herald* claiming that a party of youngsters from Alice Springs and Ernabella had saved the money for train tickets to Adelaide 'out of their earnings from dingo scalps'. Some of these kids were making a round trip of more than two thousand miles.⁵⁵ Another group of two hundred school-age children came from Cherbourg to Bundaberg in trucks, a hundred miles each way, and their teacher told the *Age* that they'd asked to go two hundred miles to Rockhampton to see the Queen again on Monday.⁵⁶ The *Dawn* recorded that fifty kids from Murrin Bridge had travelled three hundred miles to Broken Hill. They had 'had a marvellous time and will undoubtedly remember and talk about the experience for years to come.' The Aborigines Welfare Committee in Coffs Harbour was warmly applauded for purchasing an outfit each for two children who would not otherwise have been able to accompany their classmates to Casino. 'The children had a lovely time and are very proud to have seen the Queen.'⁵⁷

These were not the only Aboriginal children to receive new clothes in order to appear before royalty. The Timbery children from La Perouse, who travelled with their parents to Wagga to stage a boomerang demonstration at the Bushland Carnival, were also presented with new outfits. The media kept a weather eye on the presentation of 'piccaninnies', surprised but pleased that they invariably looked to be clean and neat.

The ostensible reasons for including Aboriginal children in tour festivities were similar to those behind the interest in migrant participation. There was the same desire to prove that native people were part of the one community united under their common Queen, and the same wish to demonstrate to the children that loyalty to this Queen was an obligatory part of Australian identity (although I have heard stories of Aboriginal kids being taken miles to see her

⁵⁴ *Dawn*, March 1954, p. 4.

⁵⁵ *Herald* (Melbourne), 23 February 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook.

⁵⁶ *Age*, 12 March 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook.

⁵⁷ The *Dawn*, March 1954, p. 4.

without knowing who she was, which made for a mysterious day out). This was obvious in media descriptions of Beverley Noble, a five-year old girl who presented a bouquet in the Western Australian town of Boulder on 26 March. The ABC enjoyed the contrast between her 'dusky figure' and her 'white organza frock', while *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand* laboured the comparison between tribalism and civilisation by noting that Beverley had just stopped eating 'lizards, grubs, goannas and possums' and was learning to enjoy the taste of fruit and vegetables.⁵⁸ I have no proof of this, but it seems probable that Beverley may have been recently 'taken away' from her family and was being rewarded through her service to the Queen.



We've got these societies and things in Australia to help newcomers from overseas to fit happily into our Australian way of life. But we can't even live at peace amongst ourselves.

The Mayor of Mackay, March 1954.⁵⁹



Farewelling the tropics

While Cairn's Civic Welcome of Islander and European dancing was underway on 13 February, on an appallingly hot afternoon, two makeshift public stands collapsed and five hundred people were thrown on top of each other. Many needed first aid but there were only two broken limbs and a fractured spine. The Queen expressed her distress that anyone would be hurt on 'an occasion such as this', but in a way, this accident was all of a piece with the Queensland tour — the downside of the same hearty, prodigal atmosphere that had made the trip north less predictable than any other leg of the visit.

This was never so apparent as in Mackay, where the *Gothic* dropped anchor on Monday 15 March, after a lazy day meandering down the Barrier Reef. Queensland's unhappy 'sugaropolis' was later awarded the 'Royal Tour booby prize' by a columnist from *A. M.* magazine, who was sent north by his editor to investigate how it was that the 'strong political and other antagonisms' of

⁵⁸ *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand*, p. 154.

⁵⁹ Kim Kearns, 'The Town that wins the Royal Tour booby prize', *A.M.*, March 1954, p. 20.

everyday municipal life could have bubbled over into such a 'bewildering confusion of detonations and crossfire' as greeted Her Majesty on arrival.⁶⁰

The trouble had started with the composition of the greeting parties on the wharf and at the showground. The Labor-dominated City Council had excluded the State Member for the seat of Whitsunday, a Country Party man, from one of these and the Secretary of the Mackay RSL from the other. This was interpreted as an attempt to present a distorted picture of the community — in this instance the more progressive side of politics trying to exclude the conservatives. We cannot know whether there would have been a similar fuss in Mackay had the President of the Trades and Labour Council been excluded but my impression is that community consensus genuinely ran in favour of inclusivity rather than censorship when it came to deciding just who would and would not be allowed before the Queen.

Trouble then escalated with a very public confrontation over the Mayor's decision to hold back on the national anthem until the Queen had arrived at the Showground, some thirty minutes after her actual arrival in town. A member of the Shire Council, described in the press as a 'strong-minded septuagenarian', refused to be presented under such disgracefully unpatriotic circumstances.⁶¹ He rustled up a party of about seventy children to break into song while the cavalcade was passing (they had to sing 'God Bless Elizabeth' after he had been 'advised', as the *Melbourne Age* put it, not to attempt the official anthem)⁶², and then tried to lead them onto the oval behind a drum-and-fife band. The crowds around the showground were such that they were not able to break through. The gathering had barely assembled inside the stadium when a torrential storm broke, drenching the children whose tableau was being described into yet another dead microphone, and the Mayor must have wished that the ground would open up and swallow him after he had tried to board the Land rover with the Royal Couple — a complete no-no — and had been waved away by the Duke of Edinburgh. These were described as 'odd, unrehearsed incidents' in the papers, but the low point of the afternoon was the very cool reception given to seven year-old Daphne Ruth Newman when she rose to present the bouquet to Her Majesty. Daphne was the Mayor's grand-

⁶⁰ *ibid.* Kearns wrote, 'now that the Queen is leaving Australia, one or two special awards may be in order. Booby prize, consisting of a tin of golden syrup rampant, with crossed sugar canes vert, must, in my opinion, go to the city of Mackay'.

⁶¹ *Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand*, p. 127

⁶² *Age*, 16 February 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook .

daughter but a resident of Rockhampton and there had been a lot of protest over her selection. A typical letter to the paper began with the question,

Did Alderman Binnington think no Mackay child was worthy to present the bouquet to the Queen? A child of Legacy would have been good for the job.⁶³

The ideological position represented by this letter, which seemed to have the upper hand in Mackay if Daphne's chill reception was anything to go by, was that the choice of presentee should be based on the following criteria: the child should not only represent the locality literally, by living in it, but also symbolically. Mayor Binnington defended his decision along the lines promoted by the Prime Minister: that he had earned the right to favour his own relatives through his own position in the community. 'As I understand the position', he told the reporter from *A. M.*, 'it's the nearest blood relative of the host who makes the presentation of the bouquet'.⁶⁴ But in the eyes of his detractors he failed to appreciate that while a Legacy ward signified patriotic sacrifice and community caring, an imported grand-daughter smacked only of self-aggrandisement, and their not-so-subtle protest on Q-Day was designed to sting.

Small town dramas

Its hard to say whether the ructions in country towns were any more or any different from those in larger centres, but the potential for a truly internecine struggle may have been greater in a smaller community. The letter from Queanbeyan citizen Frank Debenham to the Prime Minister protesting about the distribution of invitations contained a whiff of confrontation on main street.⁶⁵

My favourite story of small town discontent had its origins in the 'notorious intertown rivalry' between the communities of northern Tasmania, which reached a peak when the Devonport Council refused to erect an arch of welcome simply because Burnie had already decided to do so. The *Melbourne Age* reported that

⁶³ Kearns, p. 20.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

⁶⁵ Frank Debenham, letter to Prime Minister's Private Secretary, 14 January 1954, File no 54/183, Department of the Interior, Australian Archives, ACT Regional Office.

instead, Devonport put a pretty blonde schoolmistress in a flowered organdie dress up on a dais to conduct 2 000 schoolchildren in a part song of *Merrie England*.⁶⁶

This teacher, Gwen Dixon, had spent countless unpaid hours after work in the four months beforehand belting around a thirty-mile radius from Devonport with a pianist in order to rehearse with students from more than twenty schools.⁶⁷ The choir was finally gathered together just three days before the performance, and the chairman of the local organising committee was so impressed by the results that he decided to present her to the Queen. Absolutely thrilled, Gwen rushed out to buy an organdie dress and gloves, but was brought back down to earth the next day when the same man rang, embarrassed, to say that he had had a barrage of 'phone calls and letters and telegrams from local dignitaries who felt that a mere housewife and school teacher shouldn't be presented in front of certain other local dignitaries', and would she please withdraw? 'Which I must say I did somewhat ungraciously'. But virtue had its own reward on this occasion because the song went off extremely well, and as Gwen was watching the final circling of the oval, she saw the Duke of Edinburgh stand up and wave his hand.

The whole entourage came to a grinding halt and he climbed down from the Land rover and walked right across the showground and came directly to me and shook me by the hand and said, 'Her Majesty has wished me to express, on our behalf, our thanks for the childrens' beautiful singing. It was much appreciated'.⁶⁸

As if that wasn't triumph enough, Gwen and her husband subsequently received an invitation to attend a garden party at Buckingham Palace. What a fairytale revenge, and once again confirming that the relationship between royalty and the people could transcend the petty interference of self-important officials. The pivotal player in this narrative was the Duke of Edinburgh who,

⁶⁶ *Age*, 22 February 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook.

⁶⁷ Neither the newspapers or the subsequent tour albums conveyed the effect of the tour on working lives with any consistency. The men and women who decorated the big cities with streamers and flowers were written about in the papers because the scale and visual splendour of the decorations made them newsworthy and because their efforts were so specific to a one-off effort for the tour. But the schoolteachers who devoted thousands of hours to drilling their pupils into 'spelling-bee' formations or into the creation of elaborate pageants barely rated a mention. This was simply part of their job and there was no public query as to whether it was a proper use of teachers time or public money.

⁶⁸ ABC, talkback, Hobart, 1991.

because he was a newcomer and possessed of vigorous masculine energy, was commonly supposed to despise both bureaucracy and humbug.



'A lovely day and a lovely couple,' Maudie Lackluster panted. 'Really — after what that poor little girl goes through, none of us should grumble'.

Woman's Day and Home, 15 February 1954.



Farewell to the tropics

As far as could be perceived through the confusion, the 'native' flavour of far north Queensland began to subside in Mackay. The children's display included a bevy of tots dressed as gum-nuts, wattle fairies, joeys and other bush-babies who hopped from the plastic pouch of a plywood kangaroo, but this was very much the colonised iconography to which Spearritt refers. Later in the afternoon in Rockhampton, 'normality' was resumed in a formal civic reception and a magnificent afternoon tea, described at length in *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand*:

There were two cakes, made in the shape of crowns, with jelly beans and silver cachous for jewels and cotton wool for ermine. But even more arresting were the sandwiches which were cut out in the shape of maps of Australia and Queensland. A local businessman had fashioned the sandwich dyes during the previous week-end. To add to the effect, the enthusiastic culinary cartographers of Rockhampton marked the State divisions on the sandwiches with vegetable extract, and as a last-minute inspiration they showed the exact location of their city with little bits of chopped mint.⁶⁹

This spread had taken days to prepare. It was symbolic in a way of the effort made to get Rockhampton ready for its day in the sun. Just a fortnight before, about one-third of the city had been under water. Many people were still without housing, the streets were covered in mud and there was a plague of

⁶⁹ *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand*, p. 128. It is unusual to find such an openly amused note in a contemporary publication on the tour.

flies and mosquitos, which was only partially controlled by great clouds of disinfectant sprayed into the air on the day before the Queen's arrival. Even in these circumstances, and in stinking hot weather, Rockhampton was able to play host to about sixteen thousand visitors from distant parts of central Queensland, serve its remarkable afternoon tea and erect enormous decorative archways through the town. Mackay had emphasised the cotton, wool, beef, grain and mining industries in its displays, but 'Rocky' used hundreds and hundreds of pineapples.

From tropical *charivari*, the Royals returned to Brisbane, where their five day absence had only made the urban crowds more fond. They pressed in to within two feet of the open car all the way from Eagle Farm to Government House and forced it to travel so slowly that it arrived forty-five minutes late. The northern visit was now nearly at an end, and already marked by the impending sadness of good-bye. Seventeen thousand ex-servicemen and women sang 'Auld Lang Syne' with 'eye-stinging feeling' at the Exhibition Ground on Monday. The Duke inspected the University of Queensland and the Governor's reception passed off successfully under blazing stars and a violet sky. *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand* wrote later that the city, 'jewelled with lights' had made a 'perfect background for the majesty of Elizabeth'.⁷⁰ When the open car passed through city streets for the last time on the following morning, confetti and paper streamers were showered down upon it from the office blocks above. A final crowd gathered at the airport as the Trans Australian Airways' Constellation taxied down the runway and as it headed off for Broken Hill, with a final wave through the window, the noise of the engine was almost blotted out by the cheering and the singing: 'God Save the Queen'.

The outback

During the three hour flight from Brisbane to Broken Hill the lush green of Queensland faded away into the ochre plains of western New South Wales. 'This was the real "outback"' wrote Wynford Vaughan Thomas.⁷¹ Like tourists before and after, he was probably struck by the sheer variety of the heat in Australia— coastal humidity had been replaced by the dry mohair fug of the inland, by the flies, and a fine, choking dust. The Silver City had gathered together forty to fifty thousand people, many from outlying properties and the

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p. 130.

⁷¹ Vaughan Thomas, p. 93.

surrounding towns of Brewarrina, Wilcannia, Tibooburra and Silverton. A local radio correspondent had reckoned a few days earlier that nine out of every ten people in the district intended to attend, and that many would be camping, as all accommodation was long gone.⁷²

The two and one-half hour stopover encompassed a progress, an inspection of the Zinc Corporation mine, and a visit to the Flying Doctor Base, where the Queen sat down at the transceiver to hear the voice of Mrs Hazel Mitchell calling in from three hundred miles away on the shores of Lake Eyre. Mrs Mitchell described the rigours of outback life and the work of the Flying Doctors and the Queen responded with an affirmation of her personal admiration for the Service and also for the people of the bush. It was a moving exchange between two women leading very different lives. One purpose of the exercise was to illustrate how much they had in common as young mothers, but the many miles between them were more symbolic of a monstrous gulf. The Queen's clipped London accent was heard on radio receivers scattered across 'half a million miles of saltbush, sage and near desert', where the ABC imagined its effect on her listeners:

sheep and cattle station families, boundary riders, well sinkers, drovers and people in outback hospitals and mission stations. Everyone of them hung onto the clear words which bought the Queen into their lonely world.⁷³

The bush was often described as a lonely place during course of the tour, and rural representatives expressed special gratitude that the Queen travelled as widely as she did.⁷⁴ Her presence seemed to stimulate an awareness of isolation, although whether this was from the 'Mother Country' itself, or merely from the Anglo-Saxon civilisation in the cities, I am not able to be sure. Certainly appreciation was not confined to the bush (in February, for instance, the Reverend Dr Muldoon asked Sydney's Catholics to give thanks that 'a Queen has come to her people at the ends of her Empire'),⁷⁵ but it was more often expressed in the heightened context of the bush, and was usually tempered by a certain rural righteousness (this country rides upon our back). It

⁷² ABC, 15 March 1954, 11 pm bulletin.

⁷³ ABC, 18 March 1954, 4 pm bulletin.

⁷⁴ See, for example, the 'Address of Loyalty' presented to the Queen by the National President of the CWA, which described its members as living in 'such lonely places as lighthouses, boundary riders' huts and mining camps'. The full text of the address appears in the *South Australian Countrywoman*, 12 March 1954, p. 3.

⁷⁵ *Catholic Advocate*, 11 February 1954, p. 2.

is difficult to understand now when it has faded so, how much the Tour called upon the notion of the 'outback' to give meaning to the rest of the Australian experience. Poets, politicians, the authors of *A Sunburnt Country*, journalists and bureaucrats, urban dwellers almost to a man and woman, were unanimous that in the lonely hour of the final instance it was Mrs Mitchell and her family out on Muloorina Station who were the 'real Australians'.

Adelaide

Because of the late hour of the Queen's arrival on 18 March, Adelaide's Royal Progress had been held over until the following morning. But a good proportion of the citizenry turned out on that first evening anyway, more than two hundred thousand of them, as if to see for themselves that she was really there. Bivouacking was still *de rigueur* for some but it was a wild and woolly night and the ABC's early morning roundsman thought that it had required 'spartanlike fortitude' to stick it out. The campers marked their territory with blankets and groundsheets in the morning, protecting them against the inexorable influx from the suburbs that began, as elsewhere, at dawn. By the end of the morning it had grown into the largest crowd in Adelaide's history, upwards of three hundred thousand and popularly accepted at one-half million. This was one of the more proper progresses, and more of a piece than some of the others. The decorations were *all* in red, white and blue and the spectators were particularly obedient to instructions from the police. Many watched the cars roll by without cheering, so that the dominant noise was the constant pealing of bells from the city's many churches. However, the tempo picked up suddenly in the afternoon, with wild scenes as the Queen left the races and a terrific reception at the cricket where a packed house burst suddenly into the National Anthem.

The remaining days of South Australia's week were spent travelling between the capital city and the country towns. The blast furnaces of Whyalla represented the state's industrial future, the Eyre Peninsula exhibited its children and the Duke was taken to Woomera for an exciting glimpse of the atomic age. The Queen's much-remarked admiration for rural life and rural people was demonstrated again during her trip to Renmark and Mildura, the fruit-growing towns on either side of the South Australian-Victorian border on 25 March. She had requested this visit to the famous 'Sunraysia' district, as she wanted to observe the irrigation schemes in the Murray Valley, and after viewing the technology and the mountains of fresh and dried fruit that it

produced, she described it as a wonderful example of harnessing natural resources to defeat unpromising surroundings.

.....

Having collected nearly one thousand pictures of Your Majesty over the past seventeen years, it is, indeed, a wonderful pleasure to meet you in person.

Mrs B. Jew, entrant in the 'What would you say to the Queen?' competition, *Woman's Day and Home*.⁷⁶

.....

Ordinary Australians

As ever though, most of the 'real' Australia had actually taken the day off. The Upper Murray Valley had emptied into Renmark and Mildura overnight — some of the surrounding country towns had been all but deserted, including Pinnaroo in the upper south-east, which had a population of two thousand but was left only with emergency firemen and railwaymen⁷⁷ — and many of the eighty thousand residents and daytrippers in the Victorian town were watching when the Queen *almost* fulfilled one of the tour's great fantasies by *almost* going inside the home of an ordinary Australian. Hopes were high in Mildura, because, as the *Age* explained, 'meeting her subjects in their own homes is one of the Queen's greatest pleasures'.

The Queen has said several times during the Australian tour that she regretted not being able to visit more people in their own homes and she showed today how keenly interested she is in getting to know how her people live and work.⁷⁸

The lucky couple were Councillor and Mrs Nat Barclay who were chosen to demonstrate to the Queen and Duke the process that transforms a grape into a sultana. Mrs Barclay was known to have her house prepared, but to everybody's disappointment, they didn't go inside. They had had afternoon tea with a working-class family in Canada in 1951, and the idea had entered the

⁷⁶ *Woman's Day and Home*, 8 March 1954, p. 27.

⁷⁷ ABC, 25 March 1954, 1.30 pm bulletin.

⁷⁸ *Age*, 26 March 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook. The Queen and Duke had stayed in Connorville in Tasmania, and had visited the Albert family in their Sydney mansion, but these were 'gentry'. A visit to an ordinary home would have had quite a different meaning.

culture as a popular monarchist daydream. There was even a mild joke about spotless housekeepers being those who would have no cause to blush should royalty pop in unannounced. The *Women's Day and Home* had fuelled the fantasy in January with its 'What would YOU say to the Queen?' competition.⁷⁹ Edna Ryan told me that there had been rumours in the Fairfield area in western Sydney that she was going to stop for a cup of tea on the housing settlement at Yennora, 'and of course they'd have given the earth...'

I remember deciding that I would write a story for the *Women's Weekly*, and the story would be that an English lady is at home who has a spotless kitchen ... and the Town Clerk rang and said 'We didn't want to make this public but would you be prepared to have the Queen to look at your place?' And she can't believe it and of course she gets fussier than ever, and takes the tea towel off the line outside. You know, all the details that she had to attend to. And she sat down for a few minutes to collect her breath, was sitting there, and fell asleep. And she'd dreamt it all!

I never wrote the story. But it was a good *Women's Weekly* story at the time.⁸⁰

Although I didn't think to ask my interviewees whether they remembered dreaming about the Queen or Prince Philip when they were here in 1954, I am convinced that the night air in Australia that summer must have been thick with sleepy fantasies. This does actually have some basis in research, as later studies in England revealed that dreams about the Royal Family were a significant nocturnal 'genre' at times when the Family itself was popular or in the news.⁸¹ These dreams invariably took one of three forms: the dreamer rescued a royal person from danger; or was paid a gratifying public attention by the royal person, always to the chagrin of the neighbours or any other *bete noire*; or simply had the Queen around, like an old friend, for an intimate cup of tea. Like Edna's imaginary housewife, dreamers never fantasised about being Majestic themselves, as the excitement resided in the fact that a brush with royalty would lift them temporarily above the herd.

⁷⁹ *Women's Day and Home*, 25 January 1954, p. 17.

⁸⁰ Edna Ryan, interview, 6 July 1990.

⁸¹ See Michael Billig, *Talking of the Royal Family*, Routledge, London, 1992, for discussion of this work (and especially for description of Brian Master's *Dreams about Her Majesty the Queen*, Mayflower, St Albans, 1973), pp. 75 & 132.



She has moved freely and closely among the people. She has taxed herself to come close to them. Her appearances are marked by none of the ramifications that surround those of totalitarian dictators. Tommy-gun-bearing troops do not accompany her cars.

Catholic Weekly, 11 February 1954.



Policing

Apart from the Governor of New South Wales and Premier Cahill, who wasn't going to let his sovereign get away without a final pressing of the flesh, the furthest travellers to Broken Hill on 18 March were a couple of detectives from the Consorting Squad at the CIB in Sydney: Detective-Sergeant Ray Blissett and Detective-Constable Adams. Detective-Sergeant Blissett's letter to me that they had arrived in town about a week before the Queen, in order to search out any troublemakers.⁸² The general level of policing required by organisers, and the number of visits like this to small country centres, resulted in long hours of duty and large bills for overtime, travel and allowances.⁸³ Ray Blissett's assessment was that a lot of it had been unnecessary, but he added, mysteriously, 'justified in light of occurrences here and there'.

The police presence around the Royal couple has largely slipped from memory. 'Oh, of course they were there...', everybody says when reminded, but nothing interesting about them can be recalled. I only found one contrary recollection, from Margaret Ryan who'd run foul of the water police in Sydney Harbour when her boat ran out of petrol and couldn't be moved from the path of the *Gothic*. Perhaps they were afraid of demonstrations?

Oh, I don't think so. *Not then*. They were just making sure everything ran smoothly. I don't think they thought of people out there with guns.⁸³

The police had to tread a fine line during the tour. Nobody wanted to repress enthusiasm, but it was also necessary to ensure public safety and to keep behaviour within bounds dictated by protocol and social mores. It was also

⁸² Ray Blissett, correspondence, 4 July 1990.

⁸³ Margaret Ryan, interview, 6 July 1990.

desirable that the Queen be seen to move easily among her people and too heavy-handed a police presence would have jeopardised this.

The boys in blue were assisted in this compromise by comprehensive instructions. The volume issued in New South Wales was almost completely concerned with on-the-street policing and had only the smallest reference to security arrangements.⁸⁴ The list of administrative staff for the Royal Tour included two officers in charge of security, but there was only one hint of their presence or responsibilities in the remainder of the booklet, which was that they would organise for detectives to be present when baggage was being moved. As far as its actual content is concerned, you would think that the fears for the Queen's safety began and ended with the possibility of the crowds spilling out from behind police barriers and into her path. With thoughts of arms far from their minds, the Australian police received orders to be especially nice to aged persons and little children. The vast majority of instructions refer to the distribution of police on foot and motorcycle along the route of the progress in each of the towns and cities on the itinerary; and the biggest problems anticipated were misdemeanours by enthusiasts in the crowds. It was expected that people would try to perch on awnings or on fruit cases, shimmy up lamp-posts or stand in fountains. They were also to be discouraged from throwing bouquets and hawkers would not be allowed to sell their wares inside the barriers. Vandalism was also anticipated, although 'souveniring' is probably the more accurate term, as police were told to make every effort to protect the decorations that went up in every centre.⁸⁵

The only contingency unforeseen in police instructions was the unpredictable behaviour of very little children. The first tiny rebel was four year-old Narelle Dick of Brisbane, who wandered onto the stage during the schoolchildren's display and climbed into the Queen's lap. She was hauled off immediately but her minute of fame made headlines around the world.⁸⁶ In Toowoomba on the following day a copycat toddler put his hand on the knee of the Duke, and while this seemed to amuse everyone else, royalty included, tour officials

⁸⁴ *Police Instructions, Visit to New South Wales of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh 1954*, passim.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 17—19.

⁸⁶ The headlines included 'Biggest heart touch of the tour', 'Narelle, Four, Almost Stole Kiss from Queen', and 'Little Brisbane Girl Who Almost Kissed the Queen'. Narelle's mother was horribly distressed and had to take a headache powder, but she told journalists that her daughter had been talking about the Queen ever since the Coronation (*The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand*, p. 118).

decided they'd have no more of it and devised 'Operation Infant' to keep 'errant youngsters' away. They were largely concerned that numbers of older children, possibly even 'youths', might be inspired to play the goat, and so when two girls rushed out of a crowd in Adelaide, the security police took a dim view. They had wanted to give the Queen two threepenny bits in an envelope for the money boxes of Prince Charles and Princess Anne, just as their mother had done with the Duchess of York in 1927. From the look of the girls, beautifully dressed in frilled party dresses and patent leather shoes, this was a much rehearsed act, and one which was trying to establish a personal tradition between themselves and the Royal Family. Their mother told journalists, 'This sort of thing is becoming quite a family institution', but she was ticked off by the police. Authorities did not wish to see affection expressed in individual or anarchic gestures.⁸⁷

Such bad behaviour as did occur seems to have been confined to urban areas (which suggests that it was the result of crowding as much as anything). As the visit to Australia's second largest city had drawn near, there had been much discussion as to whether Melbourne mobs would reach the threatening levels of enthusiasm seen in Sydney. While officials reviewed security arrangements — all police leave was cancelled and additional officers were brought in from rural areas⁸⁸ — the *Argus* newspaper sought assurance from a psychiatrist that Sydney's 'mass hysteria and selfish scrambling' would not be repeated in the South. Not at all, said the unnamed shrink, as Melburnians were more easy-going and considerate than highly-strung Sydneysiders. 'Although Melbourne's welcome will be full of warmth, it will not go over the fence'.⁸⁹

Catherine Kaye, a correspondent for Melbourne's *Catholic Advocate*, was even harsher in her condemnation of Sydney. She doubted that the full story of the initial arrival had even been told as she had heard a 'quite shocking account of the uncouth and uncontrolled behaviour of the crowds' in an early morning news report on the wireless, and this had then been edited out of later bulletins.⁹⁰ Try as I might, I have not been able to find an echo or a trace of any incident, and only one report of another. Ironically, it was 'Melbourne youths' on this occasion who were castigated by the commemorative publication, *The*

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p. 150.

⁸⁸ *Argus*, 9 February 1954, quoted in *Australian Nationalism*, S. Alomes & C. Jones (eds), Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1991, p. 302.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*

⁹⁰ Catherine Kaye, 'Courtesy for the Queen', *Catholic Advocate*, 25 February 1954, p. 15.

Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand, which claimed that the Queen's reception at the Melbourne Town Hall almost went haywire when hundreds of teenagers 'strong-armed' their way toward her, knocking over dozens of adults and children.

The teenagers also behaved badly outside Government House ... many youths evaded the police, scaled the fence and raced off through the gardens with uniformed and plain-clothes men in pursuit. Eventually they were caught and frog-marched out.⁹¹

Melbourne's pre-eminent newspaper, the *Age*, reported these incidents in vaguer terms, such as a reference to a 'partial breakthrough' outside the Town Hall, but it did include a dramatic description of the straining muscles of the police as they fought to keep the crowd behind the barriers.⁹² These are among the few detailed accounts of trouble or fear, and I have little way of knowing which 'reality' they represent. Did the incident at Government House actually take place? What would the motives of these boys have been? Were there other such, and was reportage actually suppressed, or was it an example of the readiness of the Australian press to find evidence of hooliganism or delinquent tendencies among young people in these years, as authors Lesley Johnson and Jon Stratton have recently described?⁹³ Journalistic memory — represented by Valerie Lawson's interviewees and by Keith Dunstan's writing — certainly offers no evidence that there was frightening crowd behaviour going unreported, and neither does the memory of participants.

Catherine Kaye was also concerned about straightforward lapses in Australian manners towards their guests. She deplored the ill-breeding of those who had been staring and the rudeness of people calling out 'Good on you, Liz'.⁹⁴ The newspapers, having warned against them in pre-tour days, also mouthed regret at such breaches, but I actually think that they quite enjoyed them. The larrikin spirit had to come through somewhere, after all, and they also provided a break from the endless superlatives.⁹⁵ The Melbourne *Herald* was very hearty with the 'cads' who stripped all the small fittings — combs,

⁹¹ *Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand*, p. 80.

⁹² *Age*, 25 February 1954, p. 1.

⁹³ See Jon Stratton, *The Young Ones*, Black Swan Press, Perth, 1992; and Lesley Johnson, *The Modern Girl*, Allen & Unwin, 1993.

⁹⁴ Kaye, p. 15.

⁹⁵ Journalist Keith Dunstan (*Supporting the Column*, Cassell, Melbourne, 1966, p. 41) has written amusingly of the abuse of superlatives during the tour. He says that the word 'radiant' took such an 'awful mauling' that reporters agreed among themselves to retire it from the language.

brushes, mirrors and ashtrays — from the Queen's boudoir and the Duke of Edinburgh's smoking room at the Lord Mayor's Ball on 2 March.⁹⁶



- * Be courteous and considerate
- * Obey the police at all times
- * Stay behind barriers
- * Keep to the left
- * If caught in a surge, go with it
- * Spread out along the route
- * Don't bring young children and old people with you
- * Avoid horseplay. It is dangerous and will court the attention of those in authority
- * Climbing on roofs and verandahs leads to tragedy and is against the law.

Instructions issued by the National Safety Council of South Australia.⁹⁷



Preserving the mystique

The police were also required to police the presentation of royalty in the press. There was bipartisan protest in Canberra in the middle of February, when a Liberal member from Victoria, who was inconspicuously making a home movie from a back table at the State Banquet, was harassed by Her Majesty's personal detective, Superintendent Clark. The Scotland Yard man wanted to know whether the people's representative had permission to film and whether he intended to show the footage in public. The ALP's Arthur Calwell issued a statement objecting to the excessive use of authority in this incident (legally, police had no jurisdiction over members of Parliament within Parliament House), and on several occasions when police moved parliamentarians, including Dr Evatt, out of the Queen's way.⁹⁸

Instructions issued by the Commissioner for Police in New South Wales made it clear that while accredited photographers, working either for the press or for government, would be afforded 'every reasonable facility', amateur and non-

⁹⁶ *Herald* (Melbourne), 3 March 1954, p. 1.

⁹⁷ These instructions were issued by the National Safety Council of South Australia, and reprinted in the *South Australian Countrywoman*, 12 March 1954, p. 9.

⁹⁸ *Herald*, 18 February 1954, p. 8.

accredited professionals would neither be permitted to cross barriers or to use 'ladders and other contraptions' to secure their shots.⁹⁹ While this was partly to protect the rights of sightseers (police were also instructed to remove butter boxes and other means of elevation from the crowds), it was also intended to ensure that agreed standards and conventions surrounding the representation of royalty would be adhered to.¹⁰⁰

These conventions were taken extremely seriously in Australia, and were policed by the Federal organisers and by the travelling Buckingham Palace press office. A reporter named Oliver Hogue was seconded to the Federal Secretariat to serve as the Commonwealth Public Relations Officer. His efforts were supported by a Press Liaison officer and a Press Committee in each state. These latter committees contained bureaucrats and representatives from media organisations, and served to make sure that officials and proprietors remained of the one mind concerning the tour's presentation.

Photographers were issued with a specific set of guiding principles, which were even incorporated into the Commonwealth Government's central planning guide:

- (a) Her Majesty and His Royal Highness must never be given cause for embarrassment.
- (b) The dignity of any official ceremony must never be impaired by the activities of photographers; and
- (c) When rest periods occur, the relaxation of Her Majesty and His Royal Highness must be strictly respected.

Photographs were not to be taken during meals and fixed positions were preferred to continuous shooting.¹⁰¹

Valerie Lawson has described these instructions as 'oppressive' (Bruce Webber agrees that the complaints of press journalists were justified but was adamant that there had been no interference at all with the ABC).¹⁰² As an example of

⁹⁹ Members of the official press corps were issued with passes such as the following: 'Miss Constance Robertson of the Sydney Morning Herald is authorised, on production of this card, to pass through street barriers, and to enter public areas and lines held by the police, and should be afforded every reasonable assistance in the discharge of his duties'. Constance Robertson collection, Mitchell Library (Sydney), ML MSS 1105/4.

¹⁰⁰ *Police Instructions*, p. 18.

¹⁰¹ F. H. Berryman, *Notes for planning the Visit of Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh*, 1953, pp. 77—9.

¹⁰² Bruce Webber, interview, June 1993.

the effects of this 'censorship', she refers to the ban on photographs of the royal couple eating or drinking. When photographer Keith Byron snapped Prince Philip with a glass in his hand at the University of Sydney in early February, an envoy was sent around to the offices of the *Daily Mirror* to make sure that the picture wouldn't be published.¹⁰³ This interference caused resentment amongst the press, which was greatly compounded by an incident in which a lensman from the *Daily Telegraph* was detained after taking a shot of the Queen (who was smiling at him) returning from a private excursion in Sydney. He was pressured into exposing the film, on the grounds that Her Majesty had not been 'on duty' at the time. The photographer initiated legal action against the police, but the matter was dropped in November when he received an official letter of apology.¹⁰⁴ The trade magazine, *Newspaper News*, carried a front page story on this episode in March, complaining that there had never been any indication given that photographs of travel to and from informal visits were undesirable.

Any such hint by the authorities would doubtless have been interpreted as a Royal command and as such would have been obeyed cheerfully, but police action was, in the circumstances, regarded as interfering with the freedom and rights of the press.¹⁰⁵

The example of the censored domestic has already illustrated that this assessment was probably correct — that self-censorship would keep most, if not all, journalists on the straight and narrow.

Control of the press had already become an issue during the course of a grand fuss over security during the days immediately before the Queen's arrival, when a dozen Victorian journalists had been informed that their accreditation, and therefore their right to report on the tour, had been vetoed, with no reasons given, by the Victorian (Labor) Government. On being informed of this action, the Victorian District committee of the Australian Journalists' Association (AJA) immediately passed a resolution protesting against the 'unwarranted slur on the journalistic profession' and demanded that the ban be lifted immediately.

¹⁰³ Lawson, p. 288. I think that Lawson's argument is a little exaggerated, or possibly a-historical. She forgets, for example, that everything then was presented in a far more formal fashion in a far more formal era. Her description of the tour is disparaging and rather conspiratorial. But if there was a conspiracy to present the Queen in a certain light individual reporters were participants just as much as officials and proprietors.

¹⁰⁴ *Journalist*, November 1954, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ *Newspaper News*, 1 March 1954, p. 1.

The Federal Executive met on the night of 1 February and passed a motion of its own, which included these points:

Members of the executive cannot conceive that any of our members specially selected by their employers to cover these historic events could possibly be involved in a demonstration or incident that would be in any way embarrassing to our Royal visitors. To suggest that their reporting of the Royal Visit would be slanted is ridiculous.¹⁰⁶

The content of both motions were sent by telegram to state and federal organisers and politicians. On the following day, the eve of the Queen's arrival, AJA officials failed in their efforts to meet with the Victorian Premier, John Cain, or the Chief Commissioner of Police. But late in the evening they received a response from the Prime Minister. He had made inquiries into the matter, although he pointed out that the accreditation of Victorian journalists to the Royal Tour of Victoria was a matter for the Victorian Government. The bulk of Menzies' response concerned the role of the Commonwealth Security Service, although it had not actually been mentioned in any communication from the AJA, and provides a rare glimpse of the security processes at the time.

So far as the Commonwealth Security Service is concerned there is a free exchange of information between the service and the State Police Branch. This usual practice would naturally cover all phases of the Royal Visit. While participating in this exchange of information however, the Commonwealth Security Service has not submitted recommendations on any particular persons.¹⁰⁷

Even later that same night, with the Queen only hours off the coast, newspaper executives and officers of the AJA were notified, by persons unspecified, that the bans had been lifted. Accreditation badges were returned to the journalists concerned on the following morning. These incidents were not reported in the press as they were taking place, but only in a discreet and therefore rather mystifying article in the *Journalist*, the journal of the AJA, in March. If the union knew of the reasons behind the ban, it kept quiet, speaking only through the publication of a letter from one of those affected by the ban. 'On Tour' (a pen

¹⁰⁶ *Journalist*, March 1954, p. 1.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

name) described the attempted discreditation as 'farcical yet sinister' and congratulated the AJA for joining with the Waterside Workers Union in NSW

in the van of opposition to the smear tactics of an anonymous body — tactics repugnant to most Australians.¹⁰⁸

Although the letter from 'On Tour' suggests a progressive disposition, there was nothing published by any accredited reporter which vindicated the behaviour of the 'anonymous body'. There is certainly no evidence to be found in the *Journalist* that action on this matter was prompted by any feelings 'against' the Tour. Although it was involved in disputation with the newspaper proprietors for many months before and after, over a range of matters concerning the conditions for journalists working long hours to provide tour coverage, it also ran a number of little stories reporting on members who had been able to meet the Queen.¹⁰⁹

Security

At the Police Commissioners' Conference in Hobart in November 1953, it was agreed that each state, plus New Zealand, would supply experienced detectives to a group of seventeen members with the operational name 'ANZPOL'. This team was to work closely with the several members of Scotland Yard who were travelling with the Royal party. When the tour was on the road, half of the group would arrive in town just before the official party, and the others would remain behind to see it depart. The detectives selected for this duty were members

who are conversant with active pickpockets, spielers, confidence men, etc; also cranks who may offer some disturbance or embarrassment to the Royal Party, the Commonwealth or the States.¹¹⁰

This range of skills indicates that ANZPOL wasn't to be solely concerned with the safety of the Queen — it was also responsible for weeding out the kind of petty crime that can flourish in large crowds. As to the secondary category of offender, Detective Sergeant Blissett wrote that the role of the consorting squad

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p. 4.

¹¹⁰ Correspondence from Mr R. Reid, Commissioner of the Commonwealth Police to Mr W. R. Cumming, Director for the ACT Royal Visit, 26 November 1953. File No 825/2/42, Prime Minister's Department, Australian Archives, ACT Regional Office.

was to identify 'undesirables liable to demonstrate and upset the Queen during her big day'. Blissett knew who he was talking about — he made a beeline for the Barrier Industrial Council in Broken Hill for reassurance from President Shorty O'Neill that there would be no political unrest from the town's very active trade unions (in fact, the Council was an enthusiastic force behind the day's events) — but I'm not sure that the Commissioners were using the term 'cranks' to include members of organised left-wing organisations. It is more likely that they were on the lookout for less predictable, ad-hoc disturbances.¹¹¹

However many of these there may have been only one actually made it into the papers. Melbourne's *Truth* newspaper carried a story about a would-be assassin on 7 February — 'POLICE CLOSE IN ON THE QUEEN'S WOULD BE KILLER'. The *Truth* revealed that a letter had been sent from Melbourne to its Adelaide office on the day before the Queen's arrival, boasting that 'plenty will see your Queen killed when she comes to Australia', and that Victorian detectives had been searching around the clock for a German man who may have been a railway worker and who may also have been a member of a Nazi secret society. The *Truth* claimed that 'every migrant' in Victoria had been closely questioned and that 'foreign clubs' had been raided nightly in the search. There was no doubt added potency to a threat from an alien ('a fanatical Nazi who escaped the Department of Immigration's screening'), as one of the Royal bodyguards told a journalist that they were working on the assumption that 'Anglo-Saxons are not natural assassins'.¹¹² The *Sydney Morning Herald* had carried a small story about the matter on 5 February, in which a senior bureaucrat in Canberra said that it wasn't being taken very seriously, and the Commissioner of Police in Adelaide said that it was. The *Herald* offered two theories: that it was indeed the railway worker (described as 'mentally unsound' rather than a Nazi) or a hoax.¹¹³ These possibilities were also canvassed in Adelaide's *Advertiser* on the same day. The story died in both newspapers at that point, and I do not believe that it was subsequently resurrected in any publication.¹¹⁴

The other responsibilities of detectives and police surrounding the Queen were more routine. They searched her car before each drive or progress, and they

¹¹¹ Ray Blissett, correspondence, 4 July 1990.

¹¹² Lawson, p. 294.

¹¹³ *Herald*, 5 February 1954, p. 3.

¹¹⁴ The *Advertiser's* story (5 February 1954, p. 1) concluded with the late news that a man had rung police in Melbourne to confess to a hoax and would present himself at the Commonwealth Investigation Office on the following morning.

watched over her sleep. The first of these duties was very little mentioned in the press, and the second only when she slept in unusual circumstances, such as a night on the Royal train in Victoria when local police stood all around but well away, while an inner ring of ANZPOL men spent the night in close proximity. 'Who'd want to harm the Queen out here?' asked the local grocer of the ABC reporter, but the police were more conscious of her friends than her foes in this instance. On other occasions when she'd slept away from a government house she'd been disturbed by people singing the National Anthem in the night.

.....

The decorations would be more joyous if at the same time the nation's resources were mobilised for a full-scale attack on ... social evils — for tackling the task of peace instead of preparing for war. The expenditure of the wealthy on their diamond tiaras, top hats and dress suits, and their private junketing could well be used for this.

Tribune, 2 February 1954.

.....

The red scare

Marxist organisations believed that they were under investigation in the weeks and months before the tour. This was certainly a reasonable feeling. The Communist Party of Australia was the source of most radical protest in the nineteen-fifties and therefore of major interest to the security forces. But political activity then was conducted on a comparatively narrow political and industrial front, and royalty was hardly in its sights. Although ideologically opposed to the institution of monarchy, the CPA barely deigned to notice it. Its official newspaper, *Tribune*, confined itself to an article drawing a contrast between the decorated archways of Macquarie Street and the slums of Woolloomooloo, a cartoon and a poem. There were certainly no plans to disrupt the tour, and party members attended official functions for the Royals, including the two communist aldermen on the Sydney City Council. When I spoke to long-time party member Sam Aarons on the telephone in 1988, and

asked him why there had been so little opposition, he simply said 'that you'd have been a mug' to stick your head out in the middle of all the ruckus.¹¹⁵

Aarons also denied that the reticence was the result of the 'Chiplin affair' in 1953. Rex Chiplin had written a short article on the Coronation for the June edition of the *Communist Review*, in which he described the monarchy as a weapon used by the Establishment to stifle class consciousness, foster class collaboration and paralyse working class action for social change.¹¹⁶ On Friday 17 July, ostensibly in response to the appearance of this article, security police raided several private residences in Sydney, the offices of the CPA and also of *Tribune*. Three men, the printer and the publishers of the *Communist Review*, were charged with 'seditious intention' and were tried in a Special Federal Court in August and September.¹¹⁷ In the opinion of Sam Aarons, the charges had been trumped up to exploit popular excitement over the Coronation and forthcoming tour, and served as a long desired excuse for comprehensive raids on party premises. The police removed many boxes of documents and these have never been returned.¹¹⁸

Mainstream newspapers were unimpressed. The *Sydney Morning Herald* described the Government's action as a 'stupid prosecution' which was potentially injurious to freedom of speech.¹¹⁹ The tabloids had also run or reported comments on the Coronation that were similar to those in the *Communist Review*, and Eddie Ward announced that he would ask the Prime Minister in Parliament why it was that their proprietors were not also facing charges in the Court of Petty Sessions. The *Sun Herald's* 'Onlooker' columnist remembered an incident in 1917 when the *Times* in London published H. G. Wells' call to the British to rid themselves of the 'ancient trappings of throne

¹¹⁵ Many individual party members would have come under pressure to take part from their children or other family members. Ann Curthoys (interview, 1989) remembers that her mother agreed to accompany her grandfather, a twice-divorced Liberal senator, to a big reception for the Queen, wearing a blue taffeta dress, 'an extraordinarily elaborate thing that no-one would be seen dead in now, but I thought it was beautiful!'

¹¹⁶ Rex Chiplin, 'The "Democratic" Monarchy', *Communist Review*, June 1953, p. 179.

¹¹⁷ The Australian Labor Party was committed to the repeal of the *Crimes Act* in which 'seditious intention' was defined as including any actions which might bring the Sovereign into hatred or contempt; excite disaffection against the Sovereign or the Government or constitution of the United Kingdom; or promote feelings of ill-will and hostility between different classes of His Majesty's subjects so as to endanger the peace, order or good government of the Commonwealth (*Tribune*, 5 August 1953, p. 1). For a full account of the Chiplin case, see Laurence Maher, 'Dissent, Disloyalty and Disaffection: Australia's Last Cold War Sedition Case', *Adelaide Law Review*, vol. 16 no 1, July 1994.

¹¹⁸ Sam Aarons, conversation by phone, 1988.

¹¹⁹ Reported in *Tribune*, 23 September 1953, p. 1.

and sceptre'. Mr Wells was never called to trial, and indeed said 'Onlooker', 'I find it hard to treat seriously the idea' that the *Communist Review* article 'had anything to do with the raid on Communist premises in Sydney'.¹²⁰

In the end, the prosecution's case was so fragile (the prosecutor was reduced to questioning the use of quotation marks around the word 'democratic' in the title of the article) that the magistrate had no hesitation in acquitting the men and awarding them costs. In his opinion, the article was merely 'radical political criticism and the worst that can be said about it is that it is in bad taste'.¹²¹ It seems probable then that Sam Aaron's assessment was right, and the party was inhibited by its recognition of public sentiment rather than by any capitulation to the forces of the state.

The communist-dominated trade unions were also muted, although the Maritime Workers' Union was provoked into threatening industrial action by a decision that security police would relieve wharfies of the task of berthing and unloading the royal yacht. The MWU protested successfully that its members had the right to work on all jobs, adding that it was a disciplined radical organisation which did not indulge in anarchist behaviour of the kind that might wreck the Tour, and also that as working men its members would not be guilty of disrespect towards a woman, even though she occupied a throne.¹²² The Building Workers Industrial Union's only pre-tour activity was to push successfully for tour-day holidays for its members.¹²³ Public sector employees were guaranteed a holiday on the day of the Queen's arrival in their town or city, and most, if not all private sector unions had lodged successful claims before the end of 1953. This was due to pressure from members who wanted to see the Queen and from officials jealously guarding industrial parity with the public sector at all points.¹²⁴

Both reasons were operating during an ironic episode recalled in a letter from Kay Swancott of Hammondville in New South Wales. Kay was working in a 'semi-government enterprise' in Sydney in 1954, and her bosses tried to refuse time off for employees who were eligible to attend the ex-servicemen's rally in

¹²⁰ *Tribune*, 5 August 1953, p. 1.

¹²¹ *Tribune*, 23 September 1953, p. 3.

¹²² *The Maritime Worker*, 19 January 1954, p. 3.

¹²³ *The Building Worker*, January 1954, p. 7; and February 1954, p. 2.

¹²⁴ The Industrial Commission in New South Wales approved a variation to the majority of State Awards in order to allow a days holiday to 'celebrate the Royal Visit' (*Journal of the Retail Traders' Association of N.S.W.*, January 1954, p. 5).

Hyde Park. An emergency meeting was called. The union delegate, Snow, 'a red-hot party member', was all for the men receiving their rights but he couldn't stomach the thought of industrial action over an issue like this, and for once he was holding the members back. One of them went up to him afterwards to say,

You're a strange sort of communist. One minute you're up there arguing till you're blue in the face that you want time off to see the Queen and the next minute you're in there fighting against a strike resolution. I've met a few commos in my time but you're harder to follow than any of them.

The general manager was equally dumbfounded but buckled under pressure and gave all the servicemen, Snow included, the day off. What made Kay really laugh was on the Monday following,

when one of the bosses said to Snow: 'I suppose you and Parker had a good day seeing the Queen' with heavy sarcasm. Snow, deadly serious, replied: 'Well, we intended to, but then we thought we'd make a better gesture. So we met some of the boys in the local pub — the Royal, of course — and what's more we drank to her and the general manager'.¹²⁵

It must have been very annoying for members of the Party, in the light of such restraint, to feel that the security forces would still take advantage of the public feeling around the Royal tour in order to harass them. On 13 January, *Tribune* published a story accusing the security police, assisted by the regular state and Commonwealth forces, of prying into the political affiliations of people living along the routes of the Royal Progresses. There was a specific allegation that a visit had been paid to every house between Essendon Airport and Government House in Melbourne and that the police had justified their intrusion by explaining that the Queen had to be kept safe from Communist attacks.

It is a monstrous, damnable lie to suggest that any member of the Communist Party of Australia seeks to do physical harm to either the Queen, her husband or any other representative of the capitalist system.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Kay Swancott, correspondence, 24 July 1990.

¹²⁶ *Tribune*, 13 January 1954, p. 1.

ASIO was actually very well aware that this was the case — which means that if they really did go to that amount of effort it was purely for purposes of propaganda — as is made clear in a letter sent by ASIO chief Allan Spry to the Prime Minister in January 1954. Spry enclosed copies of several bulletins reporting on *Communist Activity in Connection with the Royal Visit to Australia*, which made it only too plain that there was none whatsoever. These reports contained only such information as the following:

No information has come to hand to indicate any change in the Communist policy of caution in their activities during the Royal Visit...

The Party leadership appears apprehensive of the action which might be taken against them in the event of their openly criticising or interfering with the Royal Tour arrangements....

As a result of their continued policy of avoiding interference with Royal Tour plans, the Communist Party of Australia have averted any criticism for disruptionist tactics on their part.¹²⁷

Spry reported to Menzies that Commonwealth and state police had been briefed to this effect.

.....

Here the designs for long-range rockets and guided missiles come to be tested as they cannot be in the highly populated counties of the mother country. And here the Duke, penetrating the security curtain that enfolds this place of many secrets, came to watch the launching of a test rocket...

Neil Ferrier, *The Royal Tour*.¹²⁸

.....

¹²⁷ These extracts have been taken from bulletins prepared by the Australian Security Information Organisation on Communist Party activity around the tour. Item 1147, Series A6122/15, Australian Archives, ACT Regional Office.

¹²⁸ Neil Ferrier, *The Royal Tour*, L.T.A. Robinson, London, 1954, unpaginated.

The Duke of Edinburgh

National security was a man's business, and the Queen stayed home in Adelaide on Monday 22 March, when the Duke of Edinburgh flew north to Koolymilka to inspect secret guided missile projects being developed by British and Australian scientists (who later reported that he had asked well-informed questions throughout his stay). He was taken over a rocket launching site, allowed to operate the controls of a Jindivik pilotless aircraft, and enjoyed himself so much that he slipped back to the Salisbury Long Range Weapons Establishment on the following day for a second look. 1954 was a big year for the atom in Australia. Uranium mining was set to open the door into a 'new era of prosperity'.¹²⁹ The Royal Australian Academy of Sciences and the Nuclear Research Foundation were both established, and the first nuclear treatment plant was opened at Rum Jungle. Modernity, rockets and atomic power were rolled up into one big package at that stage of the fifties, and Philip's 'validating gaze' was most eagerly sought. He was regarded at the time as a man of the modern age (although as Richard Walsh cannily observed, it was more likely that his 'touch of cheekiness' was mistaken for modernity) and this impression was reinforced by his interest in defence technology.¹³⁰

The Duke of Edinburgh, as Eddie Butler-Bowden has written, was well-known as 'Phil the Greek' in Australia before and during the Tour, and it is a fine illustration of how irreverence took a back seat in the Royal presence, that not a whisper of this nickname was heard in public (actually, it only took a few lonely cries of 'goodonyerphil' to bring out the critics).¹³¹ His mixed ancestry — Butler-Bowden has also remarked that 'had he been subject to the usual *Truth* reportage he might well have been portrayed as a 'gold-digging Continental' ¹³² — was also handled with care. The *Truth* had assured its readers during the

¹²⁹ *Man*, May 1954, p. 5. David Lowe ('1954: The Queen and Australia in the World', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no 46, September 1995, p. 2) has noted that popular support for atomic testing in the early 1950s was based on the sense that it made Australia truly modern, or put it 'on the map'. For another interesting discussion of the discourse around uranium and modernity, see Noel Sanders, 'The hot rock in the Cold War: uranium in the fifties', in *Australia's First Cold War*, A. Curthoys & J. Merritt (eds), George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1984, pp. 155—169.

¹³⁰ Richard Walsh, 'The Monarchy as a valid social symbol', in *Australia and the Monarchy*, G. Dutton (ed.), Sun Books, Melbourne, 1966, p. 123.

¹³¹ Eddie Butler-Bowden, 'Prince Philip and the Australian Male', in *Australians and the Monarchy*, P. Spearritt & A. Shiell (eds), National Centre for Australian Studies, 1993, p. 28. My father, typically for his generation, has never referred to His Royal Highness as anything but 'Phil the Greek'.

¹³² *ibid.*

Coronation that he had left Greece when a baby and couldn't even speak the language.¹³³

John Keneally told me that his family regarded Philip as a 'hanger-on'.

It was quite unusual, you know. It was very interesting that he had to walk about two yards behind the Queen or whatever. That was quite strange because men were much more important than women (laugh).¹³⁴

I imagine that would have been a common opinion, and it found public expression in the media's great interest in how he was going to handle his unusual role. The tour was the first real chance for him to establish a persona as the prince consort. There was little doubt really, but the early notices from New Zealand were certainly very good, and they only got better in Australia.¹³⁵ The Duke was widely lauded as a thoughtful husband whose support was indispensable to his wife. He was able to help her through awkward social moments through his wit, and through visits to industrial or scientific installations through his masculine understanding. He noticed children and old people in the crowds and drew them thoughtfully to her attention; he could address ex-servicemen as one of themselves; he kept her spirits up and guided her decisions. His record of genuine action with the navy, and his prior knowledge of Australia from the visit of HMS *Whelp* to Melbourne and Sydney during the war ('sowing his wild oats' as Jane Lawry remembered) stood him in tremendous stead.¹³⁶ The major elements in the popular portrait of Philip then were his manliness, his wit, his intelligence and his informality. He was the very picture of a top bloke.

The Duke's whole approach to the tour is as fresh and as stimulating as a cold drink on a hot day. He has no set pattern of behaviour to follow, so that he can do almost

¹³³ *Truth* (Melbourne), 30 May 1953, p. 23. The Duke was the son of Prince Andrew of Greece (who was actually a member of the Danish Royal Family) and Princess Alice of Battenburg. He and the Queen are both great-great grandchildren of Queen Victoria.

¹³⁴ John Keneally, interview, 22 June 1993.

¹³⁵ See Anne Matheson, 'Democratic Duke, thoughtful husband: the Queen's right-hand man', *Australian Women's Weekly*, 27 January 1954, pp. 10–11; and 'The Queen and Duke are a perfect team', *Pix*, 13 February 1954, pp. 22–3, for examples of such articles.

¹³⁶ Philip's naval career commenced after he left Dartmouth College in 1940. He served in the Mediterranean against the Italian Fleet; became first lieutenant on H.M.S. *Whelp* in 1944 and went to Singapore with the British Pacific Fleet. He was present at the surrender of the Japanese Fleet in Tokyo Bay in 1945, and spent time in Melbourne and Sydney in 1941 (Louis Wulff, *Elizabeth and Philip*, Sampson Low Marston & Co, London, 1947, pp. 25–7).

exactly as he pleases. This gives him a wonderful opportunity to lift the dull routine of the tour into something lively and of more general interest.¹³⁷

Before the Royals arrived, Australians had been informed that though serious and conscientious they shared a splendid sense of fun. This is only evident today from Philip's tepid sallies, which became the thing that journalists most hoped to glean from him at every event. He warned an amateur photographer that his face might crack the camera, confided to a porter who 'just went wobbly at the knees' that he hadn't got a ticket for the train, delighted schoolchildren by pretending to grab an apple off an archway at the North Hobart Oval and told a dental student that he knew all about Australian teeth because he'd seen so many of them in open Australian mouths. These jests were rewarded by hooting laughter from his various audiences, which was probably the result of nervousness and the fact that almost every one was made within a deathly formal event. It was only at the undergraduate 'rags' that anybody else was bold enough to join him in initiating a laugh.¹³⁸

The most elaborate rag was staged by students at the University of Melbourne on 4 March, and the photographs show Philip laughing and grinning at the puerile humour of male undergraduates. A strapping boy in exaggerated drag thrust a posy of candy walking sticks into his car as he arrived, the red carpet had been eaten by moths and the speech of welcome was thrown into the air. A giant camera — the Murkmaster — dogged his steps and his presents included a pair of crutches. These last two elements were clearly satirising aspects of the tour: the minute reporting and the State government's strange gift of a walking stick to a healthy young man, but they were hardly subversive. The President of the Student Council shut the door firmly on this possibility with his farewell speech.

Your Royal Highness, from this informality I hope you will gain some idea of the warmth of the heartfelt appreciation we feel at your visiting here today.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ *Australian Women's Weekly*, 27 January 1954, p. 11.

¹³⁸ No wonder perhaps that Philip sought the company of an old friend, photographer Jo Fallon, on his free nights in Sydney. Valerie Lawson (p. 294) has written, although she doesn't reveal whether it's based on more than speculation, that 'Fallon's home represented to the Duke an oasis of sophistication in an innocent country' and a refuge from gawping.

¹³⁹ ABC, 4 March 1954, 4 pm bulletin.

But the rags (there was also one in Sydney) do also suggest that the wearisome formality and extreme unctuousness of Australian officials and socialites were getting some people down. The newspapers interpreted this feeling with headlines such as 'STUDENTS GIVE DUKE A BREAK', in which the sentiments of 1881— sympathy for royalty and dislike for the 'accidental somebodies' — were seen to persist. Philip played on this with occasional hints that the stuffed shirts and the routine were getting him down too. He refused a chance to shear sheep in New Zealand with a joke, 'I might nick it, and we've had enough mutton on this tour'. Quite a rude remark really, but even the *Women's Weekly* decided to find it hilarious.¹⁴⁰ He gained a reputation for bucking 'red tape' and being on the side of the ordinary folk, although examples were rarely specific.

Tasmanian broadcaster Ken Short articulated the feeling in 1991, with a memory that 'the Duke shunned the people who sort of rode on the glamour of it all and feathered their own nest as it were. He cut them down to size'.¹⁴¹



I was tongue-tied when the Duke asked me where I was captured and it took me several minutes to get out the word Tobruk. Then the Duke helped me along with our talk and put me so completely at ease that we were soon chatting away like old mates. He asked me where I spent most of my time in Germany. When I told him at Gorlitz in Stalag S.A. he said 'You were comparatively fortunate. At least the countryside was pleasant'.

Mr Jim Brill, President of the Ex-POW Association, on meeting the Duke in Canberra.¹⁴²



A 'gendered' tour

The gender of the monarch made a great difference to the success of 1954. There is no doubt in my mind that it would have been a smaller and more solemn event had George VI been able to come. The romance of a young Queen captured the Australian imagination. But the question of whether one gender participated in the Tour with more enthusiasm than the other is more difficult to assert, as there are so many ways in which it might be determined. Most

¹⁴⁰ *Australian Women's Weekly*, 27 January 1954, pp. 10—11.

¹⁴¹ ABC, talkback, Hobart, 1991.

¹⁴² ABC, 17 February 1954, 12.30 pm bulletin.

crowd scenes do reveal a greater number of women in attendance, but on the other hand, the Tour was initiated and contrived within the masculine enclaves that dominated public life in Australia at that time.¹⁴³ The Queen was surrounded by eager male dignitaries at any official event, while men also brawled with each other over precedence, wrote angry letters about invitations not forthcoming, and drove their families over hundreds of miles for a look (although *Man* magazine did explain that phenomenon with their definition of a 'weakling': 'A man who swore he wouldn't get caught in the Royal Tour crush and let the children change his mind'.)¹⁴⁴

The newspapers divided the visit between its 'national' dimension and a women's dimension. By national, I mean that the Queen had come to investigate the affairs of the nation: its economic, rural and industrial development, the efficacy of its political systems, the state of its armed services (and the remembrance of World War II); and whether its population was thriving. These things were displayed to her by men and this dimension of the tour was assumed be more interesting to them than to women (the editor of the *Australian Women's Weekly* wrote of the visit to BHP, 'a steelworks tour is not the average woman's notion of an enthralling afternoon').¹⁴⁵ The 'women's aspect' was more personal and domestic, and was served by the women's magazines and the women's pages in each newspaper. Of course, these distinctions were not rigidly observed. Because the Queen's appearance had political ramifications, for instance, it was also an issue on the front pages.

Male cartoonists paid especial attention to gender. Their female characters were more often identified as social climbers; or as the fanatics in the family, dragging bemused men along and then standing on them for a better view; neglecting their domestic duties; seeking treatment for knees put out by too much curtsying; and copying the Queen's attire. Cartoonist Jack Quayle offered two different styles of male behaviour in 'Perce the Punter at Randwick' in the *Truth*. Perce headed off for Royal Randwick dressed up like a sore thumb but he showed a decent, manly indifference to the Queen, *unlike* the trainer of Blue Ocean, winner of the Queen Elizabeth Stakes. Quayle had a laugh at real-life figure Harry Darwon for bowing to everybody, eventually to the official with the dust-pan and broom. While the scrapbooks in my possession were

¹⁴³ For instance, the ABC reported that women outnumbered men by five to one outside the state ball in Canberra (17 February 1954, 9 pm bulletin).

¹⁴⁴ *Man*, April 1954, p. 6.

¹⁴⁵ *Australian Women's Weekly*, 24 February 1954, p. 10.

made by women, the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney does own one which curators believe to have been made by a man (the author is unknown), and it is rather different from the others in that many cartoons have been deliberately included. Jane Lawry's scrapbooks contain only cartoons that appear on whole pages from the papers, and June Leonard included none at all.

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Ray And you wouldn't believe it but I still have two bottles of Crown Lager specially put out for that visit. They still have the seals intact, with the Royal Visit seal on them and the contents are still there. Which is quite remarkable and I'll keep them forever.

Announcer They put out *beer bottles* with special royal seals?

Ray Oh yes ... they were a special brew and there was only a limited number of them ... and I have a very delightful portrait of the Queen in my loungeroom, which has been there, and that'll be there forever.

Talkback caller, ABC, Lismore, 1990.

.....

Male reactions

Most memorabilia from 1954 was either made for or by women. When the Powerhouse Museum was looking for items for an exhibition in 1993, it located fewer than a score of manly objects, including a beer bottle, a tobacco tin, decorative rosettes for the car, a set of cufflinks (apparently unworn), a coronation tie and an amateur portrait of the Queen. Women contributed dolls and aprons and jewellery and small domestic souvenir items, all sorts of things, and in the end, far too many to use. Looking at this disparity, Eddie Butler-Bowden decided that it was too great simply to reflect 'different hoarding practices of men and women', although it didn't ultimately support an argument that the monarchy was essentially a female interest.¹⁴⁶ Memorabilia personalised and domesticated the Crown in a manner that may have seemed merely inappropriate to many otherwise staunch male monarchists.

¹⁴⁶ Butler-Bowden, p. 28.

The men's publications ran fewer articles on the tour than their sister magazines and they concentrated on mechanics and logistics: 'OUR AIR-MINDED QUEEN TO FLY 1017 MILES', 'ROYAL TRAIN HAS EVERY COMFORT' and 'THESE CARS ARE FIT FOR A QUEEN'. It is well-known that significant numbers of men and women read each other's publications, and many men may well have been catching up with the latest news from the royal nursery, but as I also believe that perceived differences in male and female interests are enacted in everyday behaviour, I accept that in general men and women welcomed a 'different' Queen. In particular, I have found that in recalling these events, men are more likely than women to recall the national/political dimensions of the tour.

John Fisher can certainly remember the impression he had as a boy, that

women were more interested in royalty than men were. I didn't know all that many men, because there wasn't a father in my life, but it was more of a feminine thing to do.¹⁴⁷

When he watched the Queen on the newsreels at the Saturday afternoon pictures, John was always more interested in the horses, or the Grenadier Guards who were often in the background. John Keneally, who was about twelve, could remember clearly that the Queen's visit had been exciting, because it was just such a big thing, but he had personally got a much bigger thrill from seeing the actor who played Hopalong Cassidy outside the movies in George Street.¹⁴⁸ Journalist Neil McPherson was a schoolboy cadet in 1954, and marched before the Queen in Canberra. Reminiscing for the *Canberra Times* in 1992, he wrote that the young soldiers hadn't really been moved by the major themes of the tour:

For us, the greatest excitement came with the news of Australian runner John Landy winning the Australian one-mile championship in 4 min 5.6 sec on a soft track at the Sydney Cricket Ground.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ John Fisher, interview, 21 August 1993.

¹⁴⁸ John Keneally.

¹⁴⁹ Neil McPherson, 'A brief, shining moment in '54', *Canberra Times*, 8 February 1992.

McPherson's article ends on an ambiguous note — he is aware that 'a moment of importance had just passed' and his eyes fill with tears. But this may not be with emotion. His tone to that point has been flippant and he has already mentioned sobbing for breath under the weight of his rifle.

Gregor Ramsay, who was a little older than Neil MacPherson was a student at teachers' college in Adelaide. He remembers that it 'was sort of quite smart' to be indifferent to the Queen among the young men in his set, but because his mother had provided him with the right kind of blazer, he was unable to escape a directive from the Director-General of Education in South Australia to take charge of one of the flagpoles during the schoolchildren's display on the Adelaide Oval and unfurl his banner on cue when the Royal Car entered the arena. Gregor and his friends thought about refusing to accept this honour, but when they saw 'that this wasn't likely to do our future as teachers any good whatsoever' they submitted to weeks of rehearsal. 'But no, I wouldn't have gone to see her if it hadn't been for that'.¹⁵⁰

Of the women I've spoken to, there was actually only one who told me that she had been obsessed with the Queen as a child.¹⁵¹ Girls like Lyndsay Connors and Rachel Grahame were as intrigued by the surrounding fuss and organisation as they were in the Queen herself, and neither maintained much interest into adolescence. There doesn't seem to have been a great difference between the genders in this tiny sample, although I am interested that boys mention other heroes. Perhaps this indicates that there were fewer alternative role models for girls.

Boys may also have been inhibited by another cultural element that was still lurking in John Fisher's memory: the recollection of a feeling that royalty was for cissies. He had had a strange encounter with a boy of his own age, who wanted to show him an inept attempt to turn a picture of the Queen into a slide by shining a light behind it. The realisation of his friend's devotion made John uncomfortable. Although he had no sense of him being 'gay or homosexual', he had heard him spoken of as cissy, and his adoration of the Queen seemed certainly to confirm that this was true.¹⁵²

This story speaks to a distinction only in sanctioned styles of male and female royalism. Amongst the acceptable modes for men were the mildly larrikin student hijinks, the 'high achievement' category (for men like Patrick Ryan, who borrowed a launch in order to take his wife in style), and of course, your average attendee, the regular Australian man. Peg O'Brien and Beryl Watson were both married to one of these, and both remembered, in Beryl's words that

¹⁵⁰ Gregor Ramsay, interview, 5 July 1990.

¹⁵¹ Jenny Palmer, conversation, 1990.

¹⁵² John Fisher.

'they weren't quite as excited or interested as the girls, but they were happy to go along and have a look'.¹⁵³ As Peg said, 'I know I didn't have to insist on my husband going'.¹⁵⁴

One special category of men were awarded licence for their emotions, and these were the ex-servicemen. When there were tears upon farewell from any centre, they were attributed to women (the ABC felt compelled to make a distinction between 'women and *some* men' crying openly in Launceston).¹⁵⁵ But tears are an acculturated practice, not an objective measure of emotion. There were many occasions on which soldiers were reported proudly displaying other outward signs of intense feeling. A visit to the Concord Repatriation Hospital in Sydney provided an example of this: the only tears recorded were those of a war widow who was found sobbing with happiness after speaking to the Queen. But a trio of blokes had found other interesting ways of being beside themselves — Frank Perina, 18, a gunner from Brisbane, had dropped his camera practically on her feet, Sydney Brock of Anzac Parade could remember that he'd said something to her but had no idea what it was, and Jack Reynolds from Bondi was so excited to be greeted by the Queen that he'd replied with 'Hello, Sister', as if she was a nurse.¹⁵⁶

There was certainly nothing cissy about my mother's step-father, who was a returned soldier and a staunch servant of the Crown. There were many men of his ilk, whose belief in the 'free world' had only been strengthened by their war experience (I guess that it was necessary for him in order to make sense of his terrible experiences in New Guinea) and whose attachment to the monarchy had almost a spiritual dimension. I don't know that there was an equivalent category of women. These men, who identified with the Tour at the highest level, who prioritised its connections with national achievement and national defence, were its true stalwarts.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Beryl Watson.

¹⁵⁴ Peg O'Brien, interview, 22 April 1992.

¹⁵⁵ ABC, 24 February 1954, 4 pm bulletin.

¹⁵⁶ ABC, 5 February 1954, 7 & 9 pm bulletins.

¹⁵⁷ When I have spoken about my work in public, it has been elderly men of conservative politics who have been suspicious of my motives, much more so than their wives. When I advertised for 'clear and unusual' memories in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1990, I received a letter from a man who had been on the landing pontoon at Farm Cove, in an official capacity. He wanted to know more about my motives, and I replied that I was after first-hand experiences as a way of helping me understand what the tour had meant to ordinary people. A second letter followed shortly, expressing surprise that I would be concerned with 'hearsay and opinions'. 'This suggests to me that yours is not intended to be an accurate and in depth review of the prestigious occasion' (Don MacKinnon, correspondence, 11 September 1990).



Melbourne, Thursday.—

Mr Alan Trelor, of Glenferrie Rd, Malvern, and ex-Tobruk Rat, cried when he saw the Queen at the M.C.G. ex-service rally yesterday.

'I just couldn't help it', he said afterwards. 'The sight of our young Queen makes you realise that everything you've ever fought for is worthwhile'.

Age, 26 February 1954.



The remembrance of war

The tour originally planned for the King in 1949, had been intended as a 'royal tribute', as Jock Phillips put it, to the loyalty of the New Zealand and Australia during the World War II.¹⁵⁸ Phillips has written that members of New Zealand's Returned Services Association were unhappy with the small number of defence-related ceremonies remaining on that country's itinerary by 1953—54. The explanation advanced by officials was that the Queen, as a woman, was naturally more interested in children than in ex-servicemen, but Phillips also sees it as a generational issue. Although the imperial connection between Britain and New Zealand was in no way disavowed during the tour, he argues that

the decision to focus attention upon children rather than old soldiers did represent a subtle generational shift. It was eight years since the war had ended, and New Zealanders were now giving their energies to raising kids in the suburbs.¹⁵⁹

Such a distinction does not appear to have been made here. There were gatherings of ex-service personnel and other victims of war (widows and children) held across the country and trooping of the colours at Duntroon and Point Cook. Military service or loss were also acknowledged in visits to repatriation hospitals, in the prominence of junior Legatees among the flower

¹⁵⁸ Phillips, p. 58.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*

girls, in reserved sites for service personnel, and in the general media attention to decorated ex-servicemen, elderly veterans and fatherless children. There seems to have been no difficulty in looking both forward and back, which was facilitated by the use made of both the monarchy and the military as indicators of continuity. Old soldiers would recall their service under previous sovereigns — as in Katoomba, where veterans waited by the roadside under a banner declaring to the Queen, 'We served your forefathers, how we will proudly serve you!'¹⁶⁰ The length of Australia's war record was reiterated in the roll-call at each assembly: Melbourne's welcome from ex-service personnel and the war bereaved on 25 February included men from campaigns stretching from the Sudan in the eighteen-nineties ('for the Queen's great-great grandmother') to Korea in the nineteen-fifties.¹⁶¹

War was still present in everyday life, in a manner that slowly died out from the mid-to-late fifties — and was then replaced with a different and more fragmented consciousness in the Vietnam era. Nearly one-tenth of the population had been in the armed services during the war, and the continuation of national service throughout the following decade meant that nearly one million Australian men had been exposed to military training and its conservative culture. Children wore their fathers' medals on Anzac Day, and brigadiers came to school to talk about sacrifice and the free world. There were not only returned service organisations, but bereavement associations as well. Legacy survives to this day, but there were also specific societies, represented in the tour but now defunct, for war widows and the mothers of deceased single sons. The Duke, speaking for the Queen on most defence occasions, was expressing their gratitude to a very responsive community. The few moments of silence in the entire tour were heard at the service rallies, which invariably produced pathos and tears. Spectators wept at the sight of old men brought to Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance in their beds, just as weeks before Sydney crowds had cried for disabled veterans who tried — and failed — to stand to attention as the Queen drove past.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ ABC, 12 February 1954, 12.30 pm bulletin.

¹⁶¹ Ninety-seven year old Hugh Bailey in the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital had seen action during the Boxer Rebellion in China, the Boer War, World War I and the Anglo-Afghan war of 1919 (ABC, 4 March 1954, 9 pm bulletin).

¹⁶² There were complaints and disputes at these events too, of course: veterans in Sydney were upset that the police allowed civilians to crowd them out of the way, for instance, and war widows felt that the Returned Services League hogged the limelight in Melbourne (as remembered by Kathy Skelton, *R. G. Menzies, Miss Gymkhana and Me*, McPhee Gribble, Melbourne, 1990 p. 100).

The national war record celebrated during the Royal Tour was the Anglo-Australian effort. Although the speeches given by veteran's representatives and by the Queen and Duke in return were of a generalised nature — referring to courage and patriotism without reference to particular campaigns — the World War II being commemorated inside the embrace of this tour was not so much the Pacific War from 1941 as the war against the Hun from 1939. Not Mr Curtin's alliance with the Yanks, but Mr Menzies' solemn declaration that Britain's entry into the European theatre meant that Australia was 'also at war'. This does not mean that individual veterans from the conflict in the Pacific did not remember their 'own' war as they cheered for the Queen, nor that the ANZUS alliance went unremarked, or even that residual controversy over some events of World War II was entirely suppressed, but in the context of a tour so overwhelmingly concerned with British heritage, one particular version of our military history was definitely at the fore.¹⁶³

This was apparent on Sunday 28 February when the Duke accompanied his wife to Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance for a sombre ceremony. A vast audience stood under grey skies without cheering, intently watching, many crying, as the Queen dedicated the Shrine's new forecourt in honour of the dead of World War II and then ignited an eternal flame at the base of the Cenotaph. Solemn and silent, a 'perfect community of reverence'. A journalist from Melbourne's *Sun* provided a very personal description of this moment:

The voice, so young and fresh, threw many memories back to the dark, almost hopeless, days of 1940 when a much older voice — that of Winston Churchill — strove to give hope to the world.

And some of us, behind the young voice, could almost hear the old voice boom: 'We shall go on to the end ... whatever the cost may be.' Bleak across the Shrine echoed the Last Post. The cost had been heavy.¹⁶⁴

It is hardly surprising that military events were so well represented during the Tour, because in many respects it was run as a military operation. Thousands of public servants in local, state and federal bureaucracies were involved in the

¹⁶³ For example, the eminent ANZAC historian C. E. W. Bean wrote an article for a major tour supplement in the *Sydney Morning Herald* referring to the fact that Australia and even Britain might have gone under during the war if not for the Americans. This was not a controversial opinion, but neither was it usually given prominence during the tour (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Survey of Australia' supplement, 4 February 1954, p. 3).

¹⁶⁴ *Sun* (Melbourne). 1 March 1954, pp. 20—21.

organisation of the tour, but much of the key co-ordinating work was undertaken by State and Commonwealth secretariats whose staff included a high proportion of military men. The Commonwealth's Royal Visit Staff Quarters were housed in the Victoria Barracks in Sydney, under the charge of Lieutenant-General Berryman. His supporting officers included a Wing-Commander and several majors (the lesser number of service events in New Zealand's tour may have been the result of its civilian origins).¹⁶⁵ There were also many ex-military men in prominent positions across the country, and their influence was obvious. The Director of Education in South Australia, for example, had been a Lieutenant-Colonel in the army, and he organised the children's display in Adelaide with clockwork precision.¹⁶⁶ There were twelve months of rehearsals behind this one afternoon (23 March), and a logistical operation that might have daunted the Red Army. More than one hundred thousand children were brought in from across the state, travelling in 90 buses, 160 trams, 36 trains and 1 800 private cars. South Australia claimed it as the greatest assemblage of Australian children ever in the one place (and only fifty required treatment in the casualty room).¹⁶⁷ The official State Guide to the Royal Tour remarked that 'the organisation, timing and enormous amount of detail involved have made this display akin to a military operation, and it has been planned along those lines'.¹⁶⁸

Farewell to Adelaide

The great emotion engendered by this visit was apparent during Adelaide's last moments with the Queen and Duke. The rally for ex-servicemen and women on the morning of 23 March began rather badly as a fussy, over-organised event and the veterans had been told to cheer only when the Land rover was passing directly before them. They were so proper that they barely raised a hooray, until Philip leant back out of the car and gave them a hollow cheer of his own, whereupon their inhibitions fell suddenly away and they nearly brought the stands down. On the following, final night, there was a music

¹⁶⁵ The Director-General's immediate staff of nine included five senior officers from the services: one Wing-Commander, a naval Commander, a Lieutenant-Colonel and Majors from the Army (*The Royal Visit and You*, pamphlet distributed by the Commonwealth Government, 1954, unpaginated).

¹⁶⁶ The core of the display consisted of the word 'LOYALTY' spelled out in enormous letters by white-clad schoolboys. The effect was softened by other tableaux, including a thousand primary-aged girls dancing as wattle blossoms. Each child was given a free bottle of milk.

¹⁶⁷ *Herald* (Melbourne), unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook. This was a contested claim. There were actually more children gathered at the Sydney Showground on 5 February, but the South Australian argument was that they were spread across three arenas.

¹⁶⁸ *Royal Visit to South Australia*, State guide, 1954, unpaginated.

festival under the stars, where a symphony orchestra, a band and a choir performed for sixty-eight thousand people. When the choir sang the final chorus of the closing selection, 'Land of Hope and Glory', the entire assembly took it up and sent it ringing out through the night. People waiting three miles away on the Queen's return route fell silent as they heard it die away into endless peals of unrestrained, unbridled cheering. It was a moment of transcendent emotion, triggered by the most aggressive of all the British anthems, and it revealed how the 'scarlet thread of kinship' could still tug on the Australian psyche.

The following day was spent in Mildura, and then it was time for the second-last state farewell. A fourteen year-old schoolgirl who had already seen her Queen on ten occasions was the first person to take up position outside Government House in the early morning of 26 March. By 11 o'clock King William Road was crammed and noisy with cries of farewell as the car shot past for the final time. Its way was strewn with petals in the suburb of Nailsworth and its occupants were seen to be affected by the crowd's emotion. A quick inspection of an Air Force guard of honour, farewell to Premier and Governor, and they were gone again. Their plane completed a sweep around the aerodrome and headed west into the cloudless sky. And 'so ended the eight most exciting days in South Australia's history.'¹⁶⁹

.....

Perth became known as the City of Bobs and Bows. There were no handshakes. The powers that be had ordained that, but to the credit of the West Australians, it made not the slightest difference.

Lyn Harrison, *Me Too!*

.....

The West

As the eastern states had been performing one by one for the visitors, Western Australians had become fearful that their long-awaited turn might be snatched away. There was polio in the west that summer, and health authorities became alarmed at its threat to both Royal and public health. The spectre of cancellation

¹⁶⁹ *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand*, p. 151.

emerged after the visit to Canberra in the middle of February, when it was revealed that the Queen had shaken hands with a woman from Perth who became sick with the virus shortly afterwards.¹⁷⁰ The Premier of Western Australia, Mr Hawke, insisted that the risk of infection was absolutely minimal, but public servants and doctors — the West Australian Commissioner of Public Health and the Polio Committee of the Medical Research Council — maintained that the outbreak had the potential to become a major epidemic. Intense discussions between the State Cabinet, the Royal Household and Tour organisers were finally resolved by Mr Menzies, who flew to Adelaide to see the Queen on 22 March, and announced on the following day that the price of continuation would be extensive modification. The Prime Minister was not going to send his sovereign home with a crooked gait or withered arm, regardless of Western Australian disappointment:

These considerations of health and safety are of national and British Commonwealth importance ... if there is the slightest risk of infection to Her Majesty, or a risk of added danger to the people — and particularly the children of Western Australia — and the medical authorities say there is — then it is unthinkable that any Government should not act immediately on the medical advice.¹⁷¹

The precautionary measures then devised were more obviously aimed at quarantining the Queen than protecting the public from each other. No Western Australian was to come within six feet of any member of the touring party. There was no hand-shaking during presentations and no passing of bouquets. The Queen slept on board the *Gothic*, which was berthed at Fremantle, and her food was prepared by her personal staff — fresh foods such as salads were flown in from Adelaide, and washed in 'an antiseptic but tasteless solution', and grapes were peeled before eating.¹⁷²

These restrictions began to operate immediately upon touchdown in Kalgoorlie. The welcoming ceremony at the airport ended in laughter because the 'hands-off' curtseys and bows looked so peculiar. The Queen and Duke then drove to the Kalgoorlie Oval — where *The Royal Tour of Australia and New*

¹⁷⁰ This was Mrs Kim Beazley, the mother of Kim Beazley Jr., currently the Leader of the Australian Labor Party.

¹⁷¹ ABC, 22 March 1954, 6.45 am bulletin.

¹⁷² ABC, 22 March 1954, various bulletins. These precautions were also described in *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand*, p. 160; and the *Australian Women's Weekly*, 7 April 1954, p. 26.

Zealand was pleased to discover that 'no polio threat in the world could have prevented 3 300 schoolchildren from assembling to cheer themselves hoarse' — and on to nearby Boulder, where the bouquet was placed out of harm's way, on a nearby table.¹⁷³

Details such as these, and the anticipated drama of farewell, were all that really kept interest alive in the rest of Australia over the next few days. There had now been too much repetition.¹⁷⁴ Even those books compiled later for posterity could barely keep going to the end: *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand* has only two short pages on the west, and the *Royal Tour of Australia in Pictures* one tiny paragraph. The Commonwealth Government's *Royal Visit 1954* was more doughty, but its descriptions of the rural sorties in Western Australia — to Busselton and Albany on 30 March, and Northam and York on the following day — were also brief. Of Busselton it merely reported that the reception 'followed the pattern set by small towns all over Australia', while York was dismissed as 'the tail-end of a long, hot summer'.¹⁷⁵

Luckily the *Australian Women's Weekly* and the ABC were indefatigable to the last, because Perth refused to be cowed by the restrictions, and the atmosphere was as festive as anywhere else. Anne Matheson detected a 'family picnic' feeling, which was enhanced by the presence of a refrigerated ice-cream van bearing the Queen's food at the rear of every cavalcade.¹⁷⁶ Roadways had to be cleared by troops on several occasions, particularly on the evening when the Queen was introduced to night trotting at Gloucester Park (a Perth specialty), and a rumour that the Duke would attend a regatta on the Swan River resulted in one of the biggest traffic tangles the police had ever seen.¹⁷⁷

The temperature rose again for the final time on the night of the Lord Mayor's Ball on 30 March, the second last evening of the tour. The fairylights and the jewels made their last appearance, *al fresco* because of the polio precautions, in the beautiful grounds of the University. These were enhanced by cyclamen and gladioli borne across the lily ponds on floating rafts and local wildflowers

¹⁷³ *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand*, p. 154.

¹⁷⁴ Valerie Lawson (p. 299) reports that the proprietor of Sydney's *Daily Mirror* had become 'fed up' by the time the Tour was due to proceed to Western Australia and called his reporters home.

¹⁷⁵ *Royal Visit 1954*, pp. 100—1.

¹⁷⁶ *Australian Women's Weekly*, 7 April 1954, p. 26.

¹⁷⁷ ABC, 29 March 1954, 6.45 am bulletin.

bursting out of Ali Baba jars.¹⁷⁸ Very Important Persons from the east were all there, having flown across in the afternoon, and their presence started the clock counting down to farewell. Every action now became a 'last' and a goodbye. The Queen's broadcast to local children, for example, which was intended to serve as compensation for the cancellation of their display, was transformed by the media into a paean of appreciation for the 'loyalty and patriotism' of all Australian youth.¹⁷⁹

Women's business

She had herself turned her speech to the women's organisations of the west into a farewell to the women of Australia just a day or two before, assuring them that she now understood the vital part that women had played in the development of the country.

Courage and determination — and perhaps more important still, love — were needed to overcome the hardships and difficulties inseparable from the pioneering of a new land.¹⁸⁰

There was just one women's gathering in each state, open to representatives of women's organisations. Most of these bodies — such as the CWA and the Housewives' Associations — certainly looked to extend the influence of women in public life, but only through the exercise of traditional roles and expertise. This was very much the Queen's way as well, as can be seen in this final speech, which included her customary celebration of the 'helpmate' model of married life. If she did recognise other roles of value for women she did not articulate them (although servicewomen were honoured implicitly in the course of the service rallies), and nor did she ever speak about her own unusual partnership, or of her own extraordinary career, preferring messages such as this one given to the women's lunch in Sydney:

It has always seemed to me from what I have learnt that one of the happiest aspects of life in this country is the enduring strength of the home and the family. If it were not so, I cannot believe that Australian manhood would be as renowned as it is for vigour and self-command.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Harrison, p. 68.

¹⁷⁹ ABC, 1 April 1954, 12.30 pm bulletin.

¹⁸⁰ *Age*, 30 March 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook.

¹⁸¹ ABC, 4 February 1954, 7 pm bulletin.

'Modern life', she added, 'tended to weaken the influence of the home and the family; if that influence was weakened in a nation, the strength and vitality would go from it'.¹⁸² Here is the Queen that my mother remembers from 1954, all tied up with 'the sort of heavy propaganda about the nuclear family in the fifties'. It only occurred to her in later years that Her Majesty had actually been 'the archetypal career woman' because her image had been so carefully managed to avoid general comment on the capacities of other women to perform a public role.¹⁸³

A mother's selfless grace

Journalists following the tour were confronted with the same dilemma as the royal-book authors in England, as to whether the Queen was primarily monarch or mother. In the absence of any actual information on the extent of communications between Her Majesty and her family back in England, they were frequently reduced to speculation. *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand*, for instance, reported that on her second afternoon in Hobart the Queen stayed at home at Government House, and thought sadly of her children.

No doubt reminded of home by Tasmania's soft greenness and cool climate, Elizabeth forgot about her crown as she sat at the desk in her private sitting room and listed wardrobes of summer frocks and suits for her children, ordered play suits and sun hats and planned details of a holiday all together in Malta.¹⁸⁴

The Malta reunion, which would see little Charles and Anne meet up with their parents two weeks earlier than had been expected, was announced during the Tasmanian visit, and met with general approval in the press.¹⁸⁵ The children had not been included in the plans for this tour at any stage. This was partly dictated by Royal custom which discouraged the presence of a ruler and his or her heirs on the same journey, in order to protect the succession against disaster

¹⁸² *ibid.*

¹⁸³ Lyndsay Connors. Margot Oliver was struck during our interview (16 July 1990) by the realisation of how 'few figures of female power or public position' were around at the time, and specifically that there was no women between her teachers and the Queen. But she was also aware that she was only making these connections 'in retrospect'.

¹⁸⁴ *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand*, p. 76.

¹⁸⁵ One of my scrapbook-makers included several articles about this decision. When they were reunited in Malta, five year-old Charles was placed at the end of a long queue of dignitaries, and was greeted by his parents with a handshake. This incident was used by an Australian women's magazine in the 1990s as an example of how his unnatural upbringing had turned him into a 'cold fish'.

(even today, it would be unusual for the Queen to travel on the same plane as the Prince of Wales); and partly from fifties commonsense, as it would disrupt the children's all-important routine and distract their parents from the task at hand. Even so, the effect of separation on mother and children was a major matter (as although Prince Philip was held to be a model father, his agonies were not considered to be as great). The womens' magazines mulled over it at length, and the Queen was formally commended for 'a mother's selfless grace' in the women's receptions in each of the capital cities.¹⁸⁶ The CWA made another typical commendation in the 'Address of Loyalty' presented by the National President:

We would express our grateful thanks to Your Majesty for so graciously making this visit which has entailed the sacrifice of parting from your children for a long period, a sacrifice which we, as women, very many of us mothers, can readily appreciate.¹⁸⁷

In January the *New Idea* had published an article by a Mrs Helen Cathcart entitled 'How can she bear to leave the children?', and like previous pieces on this topic, it began with reference to the 'harsh and uninformed criticism that sometimes arises when Queen Elizabeth leaves her children'.¹⁸⁸ (Forty years on, these criticisms only surface during rebuttal. I cannot find them in print, so must assume either that they circulated as talk, or that they were anticipated by writers as a result of general mores surrounding motherhood and work.) Mrs Cathcart's defence of the Queen was resolutely sensible. The children were hardly being left alone, as they would remain under the continuing care of Nanny Lightbody and their grandmother, the Queen Mother. As Australians could hardly be expected to treat them with the 'accustomed habit of Londoners', they would be exposed to a disruptive level of public scrutiny and the 'cardinal virtues of undisturbed and placid routine' would go out the window. Surely Australian mothers would understand. Mrs Cathcart didn't dwell as much as some on the pain that this separation would cause the Queen, but she did recommend to her readers that they watch her face at around five

¹⁸⁶ I borrowed this phrase from a poem written by a member of the CWA. Olga Walters, 'Elizabeth Regina', *The Countrywoman in NSW*, February 1954, p. 5. The 'Address of Loyalty' presented to the Queen by the National President of the CWA expressed 'grateful thanks to your Majesty for so graciously making this visit which has entailed the sacrifice of parting from your children' (*South Australian Countrywoman*, 12 March 1954, p. 3).

¹⁸⁷ *South Australian Countrywoman*, *ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ Mrs Helen Cathcart, 'How can she bear to leave the children?' *New Idea*, 6 January 1954, pp. 6–7.

o'clock on each afternoon of the tour. This was tea time in Buckingham Palace, and

if you catch her shy glance of gentle abstraction, you will know what is in her mind. Behind the cheers, the fluttering flags, the mother-Queen can hear the blare of a toy trumpet, can see a small boy astride a blue woolly elephant, a little girl cooing with delight at a musical duck.¹⁸⁹

It is hard to say whether these writers would have preferred the Queen to open up more on this topic, or whether they admired her reserve. She only spoke publicly on the topic at the women's receptions, when accepting gifts on behalf of the children, and her remarks were never more than an cool acknowledgment that she was indeed looking forward to their reunion. She did tell Mrs Harrison that she was finding her weekly telephone conversations home very unsatisfactory. The children 'did not understand the difficulties in connection or the distortion of voice, and couldn't believe it was Mummy'.¹⁹⁰

This public/private sleight-of-hand was also operating on the audiences at these functions, which were the only ones at which the Queen met women in their own right. Although the wife of the Premier acted as hostess in every state, most of the guests had actually been invited in recognition of their work as office-bearers of large organisations, as politicians and as professional women. Yet little in the programs for these events seems to reflect that fact to modern eyes — in Brisbane, for example, most of the time was taken up by an elaborate floral tribute in which eighty pairs of women marched to the centre of the hall and laid a bouquet around the platform where the guest of honour was standing¹⁹¹ — and little in the speeches reflected on the professional life of the monarch.

Even some who were well-known as advocates for women's rights clearly felt constrained by the pressure of the occasion. Amongst the many speeches made at the women's luncheon in Sydney, the one most reported was made by the only female member of the New South Wales Legislative Council, Mrs Gertrude Melville. Mrs Melville was said to have spoken for all when she told

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁹⁰ Harrison, p. 33.

¹⁹¹ *Age*, 18 March 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook.

the Queen, 'We have loved you since you were a baby'.¹⁹² But while Mrs Cahill and other prominent spouses later reported their delight, at least one member of the audience had quite other feelings. Edna Ryan had only come at Gertie Melville's own request, because they were friends and fellow members of the Australian Labor Party.¹⁹³ While she had been prepared to support her colleague by attending, she had also been hoping that duty wouldn't require her to be introduced to the Queen. 'I couldn't stand that'. Edna Ryan's experience of 1954, and that of Mrs Melville, who was clearly under some duress, illustrates the extent to which there was no longer a reasonable space provided within the ALP, or indeed within the public culture, for the expression of anti-monarchical feelings. As an alderman on the Fairfield Council, Edna was later forced to stand to attention on a railway platform in Sydney's western suburbs as the Queen came by on the train — 'a very embarrassing situation for someone like me' — and also to spend the morning ferrying elderly constituents to official viewing areas.

I used to feel so alien because I didn't share in the enthusiasm. I wasn't hostile. I wasn't nasty. I didn't even utter a word. But I could not become enthusiastic.¹⁹⁴

Happily for organisers, these feelings were lost in the crowd at the Trocadero, and attention was claimed instead by the historic attendance of four nuns, who were gracing a public function for the first time in Australia.¹⁹⁵

It was left to men, with their greater constitutional interest, to praise the Queen for her diligence and marvel at her workload. But even here their admiration was inspired by virtues well within the female lexicon, such as duty, goodness and application, rather than by intellect or ambition. She was a moral exemplar, rather than a leader. Professor Portus from the University of Adelaide, although an admirer, went even further in reducing her qualifications to her pedigree.

¹⁹² *Royal Visit* 1954, p. 29.

¹⁹³ Edna Ryan. In the previous year Mrs Melville had nominated Edna Ryan, Edna Roper and two others for Coronation medals. Possibly she had felt that it was more important to broaden the range of recipients than to ignore the medals altogether.

¹⁹⁴ Edna Ryan.

¹⁹⁵ *Catholic Weekly*, 28 January 1954, p. 2. Actually, the text of the article in the *Weekly* suggests that the four women were invited in another capacity, as each was the matron of a large hospital, but the newspaper's headline — 'Nuns will attend Women's Luncheon' — focussed on their religion.

The Queen then is the bond of the Commonwealth of Nations, *not because of what she does, but because she represents, in her own person, an institution coming from the Misty Ages ...*¹⁹⁶

This was the correct view of hereditary monarchy, but dry and impersonal in comparison to the language of the women's organisations, for whom it was essential that the institution bestowed especial lustre on the individual and *vice versa*. The President of the CWA in New South Wales described the Queen as 'gold within', her own 'magic personality' enhanced by the 'spiritual glow' of a dedicated life, in an article which concluded with typically 'female' observation that the Queen was both a ruler and a woman, and that it was the combination which inspired.¹⁹⁷

.....

She went through like a wisp-of-the-wind. And we said — all in unison — you could have had an orchestra leader just getting the baton ready, and we all went at the one time, 'Ohhhhhh' (laugh).

Nell Hannon, on seeing the Queen in Sydney, February 1954.

.....

The first time ever I saw her face

Beryl Watson was the envy of her friends when she attended the Governor's Garden Party in Perth. Her boss invited her to accompany him as his wife had had to go away. Beryl wore her going away outfit, and was fortunate to have a really close look at both the Queen and Duke, 'which I thought was wonderful'.

Jane What did they look like?

Beryl Well the thing that struck me with the Queen of course, firstly, was the complexion. So pale and looked lovely. But one thing that I thought was rather intriguing ... you know, you expected a perfect complexion from an English person and particularly the Queen, but I did

¹⁹⁶ G. V. Portus, 'The Queen and the Commonwealth of Nations', *Australian Quarterly*, March 1954, p. 13.

¹⁹⁷ Barbara Cullen, 'And She Was All Gold Within', *The Countrywoman in NSW*, March 1954, p. 1.

notice she had all these little hairs on the side of her face because the sun was shining through.¹⁹⁸

She was slightly disappointed to find that the Queen was like everybody else after all, but 'other than that, she really was lovely, and the Duke was very, very charming'. Beryl was only one of the interviewees from whom I got the feeling that the eyewitness encounter with the Queen wasn't always 'easy', and that it required a moment or two to reconcile the person and the icon.

Beryl Watson's story of the 1954 Royal Tour, like that of all the other ordinary participants, is actually the memory of 'how I *saw* the Queen'. When I was recording interviews, I was deliberately vague about my own requirements, as I hoped to encourage people to frame their stories as they wished (my correspondents were responding to an even vaguer and very brief request, and so I had even less influence on way they structured their replies). I thought that they might start with the aborted tour of 1952 perhaps, or even with the preparations made within their own families. This hardly ever happened, even though it turned out in later conversation that most remembered that King's death and the postponement very well. Instead, and almost invariably, a 'royal tour story' began within hours of Her Majesty's arrival at a specific destination, ended immediately as she left, and consisted almost entirely of a dazzling physical impression. One of my correspondents, Nancy Betteridge, wrote that she could remember her reaction to the sight of the Queen as if it were yesterday. She was standing up in the back seat of her husband's Ford Coupe outside their house in Bendigo:

My girlfriend and myself were able to get a lovely view of the Queen. When she passed it was such a wonderful feeling, it sort of made us go cold all over.¹⁹⁹

Like everyone else, Nancy was aware of the crowds around her, as a necessary precondition for the excitement and the spectacle (most people remark that they have never before or since been in such enormous gatherings) but that lightning connection between herself and the Queen was the most important thing. That 'relationship' dominates memory because it dominated story-telling at the time. The newspapers could say everything else about the tour but each individual had one unique tale of their own, singular encounter.

¹⁹⁸ Beryl Watson.

¹⁹⁹ Nancy Betteridge, correspondence, 8 August 1990.

It was clearly important to 'prove' to yourself — or others — that you had seen the Queen by comparing her to the lifetime of photographs. Peg O'Brien made the typical remark that she was 'more beautiful in the flesh than she ever appeared in photos. Beautiful skin'.²⁰⁰ Peg's reference to skin was also common (and I can't help being sceptical that so many interviewees really got close enough to see the Queen's complexion). My Aunty Nell, who only saw her driving down the middle of the road, described her as 'most exquisite'.

She had the most loveliest apple-blossom, peachy cream skin. It was her lovely pale skin that we got ... you know, with a little colour in it. She looked frail, I thought, you know, not as if she'd blow away but so delicate looking.²⁰¹

Margaret Ryan, who saw her once from a boat and once on the beach, recalls 'thinking what beautiful skin she had', just like June Lindsay, who saw her on the aircraft base in Townsville and who laughed as she told me she would 'always remember thinking what lovely skin she had and hadn't been in the hot sun for very long'.²⁰² The effect of sun on skin was a prime concern of beauty editors, who watched closely for signs of damage as the tour progressed (they found none) and wondered aloud whether the Queen was using make-up. The *Age* reported in March that

woman reporters are baffled by the resistance of her delicate complexion to the tropic heat. All are agreed that a protective base of some kind must be used but there is no sign of any obvious make up other than lipstick.²⁰³

In this much-remembered discourse (in which fear of skin cancer played no part at all) perhaps the Queen's complexion stood as a metaphor for an Anglo-Celtic sense of physical dislocation, or transplantation, into such a foreign clime. *Women's Weekly* editor Dorothy Drain even put this feeling into verse, describing how other 'English girls' had sacrificed the 'soft brief beauty of the spring' to the 'wide and lonely wastes'.²⁰⁴ Many Australian women, however

²⁰⁰ Peg O'Brien.

²⁰¹ Nell Hannon.

²⁰² Margaret Ryan; and June Lindsay, interview, 1989.

²⁰³ *Age*, 17 March 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook. Edna Ryan remembered, with some malice, that 'they were loaded up with make-up, with paint, very heavily, so that they never looked tired' and a male caller to ABC 'Sounds of Summer' talkback, 26 December 1995, insisted that the Rimmel make-up company had provided the Queen with face powder in shades that became paler and paler as the Tour progressed.

²⁰⁴ *Australian Women's Weekly*, 27 January 1954, p. 9.

proud of their pioneering achievements, clearly felt coarse and weather-beaten beside this rose from the Misty Isles.

Two interviewees who had been teenage girls at the time were not so admiring in retrospect. Lyndsay Connors swore she'd always found her 'quite mawkish' and not at all 'film-starrish'. Rachel Grahame remembered thinking that the Queen was good-looking, but only because 'they said it so often that you couldn't not think she was very beautiful unless you were very independent-minded'.²⁰⁵

Male journalists described their sovereign simply as a pretty or a beautiful young woman, preferring to leave the physiognomical detailing, once again, to the women. Anne Matheson reported that New Zealand men raved about her 'wonderful eyes, beautiful smile',²⁰⁶ but the only contemporary evidence I have been able to collect appeared in a letter sent by Mr. Greg Donellan — the Secretary of the Sailors', Soldiers' and Airmen's Association in New South Wales — to his daughter Margaret, after his morning on the official podium at Farm Cove. In a style that was both flippant and emotional he wrote that he had been so 'taken up gaping at Her Majesty' that he hadn't noticed any more of Philip than a blur of white covered in ribbons and gold lace'.

4/2/54 — Saw the Queen again today... she looked very nice and still happy. Do you know, old as I am, I'd take that lass to the pictures — best seats too — and I'd even pay for her ticket. That's of course if Mum wasn't around.²⁰⁷

Very much your Australian bloke. After their second encounter he gave the game away ('I *have* seen the Queen') but continued to keep a paternal eye on her progress and to worry when she began to look strained.

My two boy interviewees, John Keneally and John Fisher, weren't interested in her appearance at all, but some older men remember it as part of the package of elements that made the Tour a success. A Lismore talkback caller, Alf, attributed his interest to the fact that she had been a 'very elegant, beautiful young woman' *and* 'that we were still very much part of the Commonwealth'.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ Rachel Grahame, interview, 1989.

²⁰⁶ *Australian Women's Weekly*, 3 February 1954, p. 9.

²⁰⁷ Greg Donellan, correspondence to daughter Margaret, 3 February 1954 (copy forwarded to me by Margaret Webster, 14 July 1990).

²⁰⁸ ABC, talkback, Lismore, 10 February 1994.

Frank Roche nominated looks and monarchy together in his answer to the question about why he'd gone to see her:

She was worth seeing. She was good-looking. She was a beautiful young woman. There was a sort of glamour attached to it. Royalty, you know, first royalty I'd ever seen.²⁰⁹

Such memories suggest that the actual sight of the Queen had been as important to men as to women, even if they usually were less able to enumerate the details of her appearance. Then again, in the course of this project I have twice heard men arguing about what she had worn on a given day. Two male journalists had a civil exchange on this matter on ABC radio in Hobart in 1990. John MacLachlan, who had been one of the local commentators in 1954, was asked if could remember what the Queen had been wearing. He was very firm. 'Blue. I do remember. I'm quite sure it was a pale blue'. But Ken Short, who had been a cadet journalist at the time, insisted that it was green. John was then only prepared to concede as far as 'aqua'.²¹⁰ This was amusing but not as funny as the sight a year or two before of my friend Helen's laconic father and his otherwise reticent mate — pillars of the Barrier Industrial Council — roused from their customary silence by a brisk exchange over whether or not *she* had been in yellow in Broken Hill.²¹¹

.....

She was really pretty. But in Europe we somehow liked Margaret better. Margaret, her sister, you know. We liked her better in Europe.

*Belgian woman recorded on the Indian-Pacific, 1989.*²¹²

.....

'New' Australians

²⁰⁹ Frank Roche, interview, 3 June 1993.

²¹⁰ ABC, talkback, Hobart, 1991.

²¹¹ Mr Ferry (Helen's father) was right to insist that she had been in blue — 'ciel' blue actually, with a tiny geometric pattern in navy and white, according to the *Age*, 19 March 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook.

²¹² Princess Margaret was commonly regarded as being more sophisticated than her older sister.

The Queen's last day in the country was spent in Fremantle and may have been the day most truly spent among 'New Australians'. Fremantle's Italian community provided the music and atmosphere of an old-world carnival, and its fishermen and fishmongers gave their catch away to the crowds lining the roads along the port.²¹³ The ABC referred to Western Australia's immigrant communities on several occasions, usually to remark on the vivid contrast between bright national costumes and 'the more formal dress of the [Australian] crowds'.²¹⁴ Reporters looked everywhere for foreign faces but only spoke to them for instances of truly exceptional loyalty. The four migrant couples who were chosen — through the agency of the New Settler's League — to represent the two hundred thousand New Australians of New South Wales at the Governor's Garden Party in Sydney were among those interviewed. They came from the Ukraine, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Holland, and were described as being thrilled at the prospect of seeing 'their' Queen.²¹⁵ The proprietress of a Greek cafe in Katoomba also enjoyed fifteen minutes of fame over her scrapbooks on the Queen, which she had kept since the day of Her Majesty's birth. 'Australia is now my country and Elizabeth is my Queen'.²¹⁶

Carmel Craglietto, my only migrant interviewee, was there for the Queen in Fremantle on 1 April, holding her baby son above her head as the car drove past, but the press did not ask her to explain her complex reasons for attendance. In an article on the attitudes of migrants to the monarchy in 1966, Rohan Rivett argued that most new arrivals in the nineteen-fifties had regarded the relationship between Anglo-Australians and the Queen with indifference, and that those who did have an opinion felt constrained from repeating it because of their desire to remain inconspicuous. 'Nothing in the past in Europe encourages them to risk being deprived of a niche in the new continent by introducing any breath of politics'.²¹⁷ Even a casual glance at official publications such as the *Good Neighbour* confirms this as a likelihood — migrants were advised to concentrate on their future as good citizens of Australia and to leave their past troubles behind. But as Rivett also points out, their private attitudes towards the monarchy were influenced by their

²¹³ Carmel Craglietto, interview, 18 August 1991.

²¹⁴ ABC, 27 March 1954, 12.30 pm bulletin.

²¹⁵ *ibid.*

²¹⁶ ABC, 12 February 1954, 12.30 pm bulletin. Mrs Coadato had arrived in Australia in 1910.

²¹⁷ Rohan Rivett, 'The Migrant and the Monarchy', in *Australia and the Monarchy*, G. Dutton (ed.), Sun Books, Melbourne, 1966, p. 67. Rivett does not provide any sources nor even a description of his research methods, but appears to be reporting on conversations with members of ethnic communities.

experience of other political systems, and Carmel's story illustrates the variety of possible reactions.

Mrs Craglietto and her husband Louis arrived in Western Australia from Italy in 1950. They had been bitter opponents of fascism and had endured the long years of the war. Their corner of northern Italy was then occupied by the army of communist Yugoslavia, before British forces were able to force it back across the border (Carmel remembers the day when the English soldiers marched into her town as the best of her life) and the Cragliettos spent months in a refugee camp before gaining a place on a boat to Australia. By the time the Queen came, they were living outside Fremantle, and one of their few neighbours, a Mrs James, offered to take Carmel in to see the parade. Although she had never been interested in the history of Italian kings and queens, or any monarchies ('I always dismissed them because I thought there should have been information on the poor people') she was pleased to accept the invitation. After so many years of 'jackboots, and guns and bombs' she was very happy to take part in a light-hearted celebration of democracy.

Jane Were you surprised that people were so crazy about them?

Carmel Oh, no, no, because after all I knew that people could get enthusiastic about Mussolini...

Jane Did it feel a bit the same?

Carmel No, no, no, no! Because she looked so innocent. You couldn't think of her being a dictator. I had already left the horror of a dictatorship behind so this was a new thing. It was like a new flower. Coming to be with you, not against you.²¹⁸

Perhaps the picture of a country united in celebration rather than duress was more persuasive than Rivett conceded, or perhaps it was only that the benefits of blending in were made so explicit during the tour, as the number of non-British immigrants inquiring about naturalisation was three times greater than usual while the Queen was in the country.²¹⁹ She even attempted to encourage this trend herself with a special farewell message to New Australians, in which

²¹⁸ Carmel Craglietto. Carmel would only go to see the Queen today if she was prepared to offer her a medal for enduring fifty years of marriage.

²¹⁹ *Good Neighbour*, April 1954, p. 6.

she expressed her delight for their loyalty and her best wishes for their future.²²⁰

.....

The photographers presented the Duke with a Box Brownie camera. He asked one of them, 'What are you going to do now it's all over?' The photographer replied, 'I am going to have a beer, sir'. The Duke muttered, 'So am I'.

*Valerie Lawson, Connie Sweetheart.*²²¹

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Parting gifts

The Queen's parents had returned from their travels in Australia with three tons of presents in the hold of their ship, but I have been unable to find a similar calculation for the booty of 1954. Australian councils, governments and organisations gave gifts to mark each event on the itinerary (under strict conditions which had been widely publicised before February. Presents would not be accepted from firms engaged in trade or commerce, and books only from authors of 'reputable character'. Individuals were discouraged from making presentations at all, although it was policy to accept 'very small presents of purely sentimental value offered by small children, veterans etc' when a refusal would 'lead to hurt feelings').²²² Among the many hundreds of bequests — receipt of each was acknowledged by letter from the travelling secretariat — there was an album of Australian stamps from the Prime Minister (a personal gift); an album of photographs from the Blue Mountains Council; a wooden cabinet and an album of photographs of native people on behalf of the Northern Territory; a collection of Australian books from the 'Australian People'; a necklet and earring suite designed around the famous Andamooka Opal from the government of South Australia, along with a woomera and samples of uranium ore for Philip; a gold rose bowl (for the Queen) and a walking stick and cigar box crafted from native timber (for the Duke) from the government of Victoria; and hand wrought silver spoons with pictures of

²²⁰ ABC, 20 March 1954, 12.30 pm bulletin. This message was conveyed through the Minister for Immigration, Mr Holt.

²²¹ Lawson, p. 299.

²²² Berryman, p. 23.

Australia fauna from the Victorian Women's Organisations. Amongst presents accepted from ordinary Australians for Charles and Anne were innumerable boomerangs and a gift of moccasins from two crippled children.²²³ In their entirety, these offerings seemed to duplicate the many representations of Australia in the program itself, most notably in the constant appropriation of native symbolism and indigenous culture.

The very last presents of all were exchanged on the docks in Fremantle when the quick and lonely hour of parting arrived at last on 1 April. As in 1901, the burden of farewell was borne by the people of the west, and many thousands of women, and this time many men as well, watched in tears as the Royal Couple bid their last good-bye to Prime Minister and Governor-General. There were loud calls as well, a long fervent roar above the music of a naval band and a choir of schoolgirls. They were singing 'Will Ye No Come Back Again' as the Queen walked slowly towards the boat. She had come in high summer and now she left Australia in the dusk of an early autumn evening. 'We take back with us', she said in her final broadcast from the disappearing boat, 'an abiding admiration for Australia and her people'.

We shall always remember the loyalty of your welcome and the joy of your children. I hope that this visit had served to remind you of the wonderful heritage we share. I also hope that it has demonstrated that the Crown is a human link between all the people who owe allegiance to me, an allegiance of mutual love and respect and never of compulsion.

And now I say good-bye. God be with you until next time I can visit Australia.²²⁴

²²³ Somebody has told me, and its a staggering thought, that all of the gifts ever presented to the Royal Family are lying in great vaults under Buckingham Palace. But I prefer to believe instead that the fond hopes of one Victorian mayor are still being realised. As he handed the Queen a polished wooden box full of gold specimens on 6 March, he expressed on behalf of his district the hope that 'when you look at this box on your return home Your Majesty will always think of Bendigo' (*Herald* (Melbourne), 6 March 1954, unpaginated clipping, Jane Lawry scrapbook).

²²⁴ *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand*, p. 160.

Australia's Farewell to the Queen

She came at Summer's end and brought the Spring.
 But now it is farewell to magic days.
 The book is closed, the great adventure told,
 (A book of brilliant pictures writ in gold)
 But still we live it through, remembering.
 The arches are torn down, the bunting rolled;
 The shouts that shook the continent, the cheers,
 That rang from Perth to Townsville, hushed by tears,
 But happy tears, aglint with thanks and praise.
 We shall remember her, our Queen.
 Retentive eyes will drop a silken screen,
 Casting her form upon the well-known scene.
 'Twas there she floated all in filmy white,
 And on this balcony out-starred the night;
 On these grey steps she spoke that charming phrase.
 We shall remember her, our Queen.

...

There will be talk while there are ships, and seas,
 Of Gothic and the tiny boats, the large,
 That gathered in the early-morning breeze
 To form a laneway for the Royal barge;
 And that great moment, when there came a shout,
 And sun, and flags and gunfire all broke out.
 A Melbourne busman, while the lights are red,
 Will think: 'She came this way,' and lift his head.
 He will remember her, our Queen.
 Stopping his fellow cloud of dust, a drover,
 Hearing a whirr of wings in warm, blue sky,
 Will watch an arrowhead of swans thrust by,
 And tell his dog: 'One day our Queen flew over'.

...

The children all who yelled along the way
 And waved their flags, seeing her warm, young smile,
 Dark-skinned from reefs where coral flowers sway,
 Or rosy-cheeked where winds blow from the snow,
 Dusty along Kalgoorlie's Golden Mile,
 Sturdy behind prize rams at Dubbo Show,
 Or purple-fingered where the grapevines cling,
 All will stand up so proudly now to sing
 'God Save Our Gracious Queen!'
 Farewell, young Queen! A happy, safe return!

...

We are a closer-welded nation,
 Through having shared one exultation,
 One loyalty, one proud belief,
 And now, one grief.
 We shall remember you, our Queen.

*Agnes Millrose.*²²⁵

²²⁵ Agnes Millrose, 'Australia's Farewell to the Queen', *Bulletin*, 7 April 1954, p. 2.

conclusion

When I hear 'Queen of Australia', she's not some figure with a couple of corgis — she's a very attractive young lady who I remember all those years ago with a charming, handsome man beside her, and it really does have a personal touch to it. She's not a remote figure to me in that sense.

John, talkback caller, Canberra, 1990.

But it does seem to me looking back now that it came and went, and considering that I was rooted to the ground with wonder when I saw this sight, it amazes me that I never, ever wish to see one of them again.

Lyndsay Connors, Canberra, 1989.

When the long party was over at last, Australians might have expected to settle back down into everyday life. But within a fortnight, any such hopes had been rudely shattered by a series of explosive political revelations. On 3 April 1954, while the Queen was en route from the Cocos-Keeling Islands to Ceylon, the Russian diplomat Vladimir Petrov slipped quietly into the headquarters of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation in Canberra and requested political asylum. The Prime Minister informed the Parliament of his defection ten days later, and on the following morning announced the establishment of a Royal Commission into the extent and nature of Soviet espionage in Australia. The mandate of the Liberal Party was renewed at the general election held seven weeks later, at the end of May.

The Leader of the Opposition, 'Doc' Evatt, later maintained that the Petrov revelations and the subsequent reprise of past red scares had been responsible for Labor's defeat — and as Geoffrey Bolton has remarked, 'Labor folklore' has

followed his lead.¹ But although the Royal Commission was to prove immensely damaging to the ALP over time, as its investigations into the activities of several members of Mr Evatt's staff later in the year had a destabilising effect on the entire party and certainly contributed to its splitting in 1955, its contribution to the result of the 1954 election has probably been overstated. Bolton and Humphrey McQueen, among other historians, have suggested that the warm glow left by the Queen also worked in favour of the more conservative party.² Popular memory, as least as my interviewees represent it, seems to connect the soviet scandal and the sovereign in the one explanation (although the fact that the ALP actually received a majority of the first preference vote makes any argument problematic). Loch Townsend was particularly explicit on this point:

I mean, lets face it, Bob Menzies needed it. He needed the Queen and the Petrov thing fell in his lap magnificently, I mean the ingredients he needed for a successful election were just amazing.³

Even so, the Petrov affair is a major reason for the relative obscurity of the Tour in history-writing today. A robust political scandal — long-running, ever-escalating and awash with espionage — was like a gift from heaven to journalists jaded by the months of consensus and superlatives, and they made the most of it. Its place in posterity was then assured by its role in precipitating the Labor Split, which was for many years the most controversial episode in Australian political history. The role of the monarchy, by contrast, only became the topic of sustained debate in 1975, after a Labor Government was dismissed by the Queen's representative in Australia, the Governor-General.

Declining attendances

The widespread expression of republican sentiment in 1975 — although it was far from universal, as it still is not today — revealed how far attitudes had

¹ Geoffrey Bolton, *The Oxford History of Australia*, vol. 5, 1942—1980, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1990, p. 140. Over the succeeding forty years, much time and research has gone into establishing how soon Menzies had known about the impending defection and with how much calculation he timed the bombshell in April.

² Bolton, *ibid.* McQueen wrote that 'nothing could have reminded Australians how conservative they should be more than the presence of their Monarch' (see Humphrey McQueen, *Social Sketches of Australia*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1979, rev. ed., p. 200). David Lowe ('1954: The Queen and Australia in the World', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no 46, September 1995, p. 8) has made the eminently sensible remark that the Prime Minister had had two years to perfect the timing between the Tour and the election but could not have foreseen the defection.

³ Loch Townsend, interview, 24 October 1991.

come since 1954. In the intervening years, the place of the Royal Family in public affection had slowly declined (without incident, said my republican interviewees, it was merely that it slowly became irrelevant) and this had left it vulnerable to loud queries over its role in the country's public life.⁴

This had not begun to be apparent during the course of three further Royal tours in the nineteen-fifties. The Duke of Edinburgh returned by himself in 1956 for a brief and rather masculine visit in which he opened the Olympic Games in Melbourne, and inspected the uranium processing plant at Rum Jungle and the huge hydro-electric project in the Snowy Mountains. Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother made a very popular visit over three weeks in 1958, in which she attracted very large crowds in the capital cities (although Margot Oliver, who was then in fifth class in primary school in Sydney, remembers being 'corralled and shipped' to Randwick Racecourse, where she was not impressed by the sight of 'some vague figure in a Land Rover').⁵ The third visit was paid by Princess Alexandra, a young cousin of the Queen, who was guest of honour at the celebrations for the Queensland Centenary in 1959.

The Queen did not return to Australia until 1963, and by this time she could probably see for herself the evidence of a changing world. Although she was still very popular, Sir Robert Menzies' sentimental declaration to his 'lady sweet and kind' seemed a little out of time. Britain's *Daily Mail* reported that 'a slight national shudder might have been detected on the seismographs at Woomera'.⁶ The media certainly gave the Tour its due — the television age had arrived, of course, and there were live broadcasts every day — but journalists were already wont to draw unfavourable comparisons between the clamour of the first tour and the moderation of the second.⁷ This downward trend, with accompanying comparisons, continued through the many tours in the

⁴ Rachel Grahame (interview, 1989) articulated the majority view amongst the republican supporters, saying 'I don't remember any major change, except that perhaps certainly by the sixties times had changed. We were no longer prosperous. It seemed rather gross, really, when people were out of work and there was a credit squeeze on, for people to be kowtowing to the British throne. It just sort of became irrelevant. Not even enough to be antagonistic about'.

⁵ Margot Oliver, interview, 16 July 1993.

⁶ Quoted by Keith Dunstan, *Supporting the Column*, Cassell, Melbourne 1966, p. 41.

⁷ As Dunstan recalled in 1986, when interviewed by Tim Bowden for the Social History Unit, ABC Radio, 'There was deep shock because the circulation didn't increase at all. It stayed exactly as it was, as if it hadn't happened, and this was a tremendous shock in Flinders St. I must confess their enthusiasm for royalty was never quite the same again'.

following decades, which have become increasingly brief and always directed towards a specific purpose.⁸

The 1963 visit also provoked direct satire (I believe that it must have been the first significant instance since the *Bulletin* had ceased to rage some sixty years before) when the editors of the iconoclastic *Oz* magazine decided to make their first edition as controversial as possible, and by what better means than lampooning the biggest show in town? Author Richard Walsh wrote a cheeky review of the 'Royal Spectacular', suggesting that although the actress Elizabeth Windsor was called upon 'to handle some of the worst lines in the show', she nonetheless gave a 'sparkling performance' in the title role, a convincing characterisation of a cold, aloof personality.⁹ There was enormous outrage at this affront, but it was instrumental in opening a new era, and by the nineteen-seventies, the Royal family were being sent up by Australian humorists as a matter of course.¹⁰

'I did not see her passing by...'¹¹

Amongst my interviewees there was not so much the evidence of a slow decline in the size of the crowds accompanying each successive Tour, but a precipitous drop after 1954. With the exception of those who were still children and taken by the school during later visits, only two ever went out of their way to see the Queen again. Jane Lawry was actually introduced in 1970 in Armidale, New South Wales, where her husband was the President of the local

⁸ The nineteenth century propensity for having significant buildings opened by regal or vice-regal representatives has never really died. The Queen's tours have included her visit in 1972 to open the Opera House in Sydney, and she also officiated at the opening of the new Parliament House in Canberra in 1988. As to the frequency: interviewee June Lindsay, though still in favour of retaining a role for the Queen in the Australian constitution, feels that the Royal Family began to come out here too often. 'I've gone off them a little bit. I think we're getting a surfeit of them'.

⁹ Walsh also observed that the Duke had developed 'a fine range of personal mannerisms' in the role of the male lead, that Menzies was well-cast as the buffoon of the piece, and 'as the toadies, cronies and parasites, the male and female chorus jostle delightfully' (*Oz*, no 1, April 1963, p. 14).

¹⁰ In the main, the laughter was cosy (cosier than that of *Oz*), and rarely implied serious criticism of the monarchy as an institutionalised part of Australian life. It only took a political turn after 1975, and perhaps a more personally vicious turn in the jokes that greeted the assassination of the Earl of Mountbatten, the Duke of Edinburgh's uncle, in 1979. For a brief history of the attitude of Australian humorists to the Royal Family, see Jane Connors, 'Laughing at the Royals', in *Australians and the Monarchy*, P. Spearritt & A. Shiell (eds), National Centre for Australian Studies, Melbourne, 1993, pp. 14–16.

¹¹ Cartoonist Jenny Coopes (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 February 1992) commented on the small crowds for the Queen, with a cartoon in which a woman whips out a republican flag and declaims, in parody of Sir Robert's remarks in 1963: 'I did not see her passing by/In fact I did not even try'.

branch of the RSL, and because of this personal contact she considered this second experience 'even more exciting' than the first.¹² But Kitty Peisley found her reunion in 1963 rather disappointing. 'There wasn't the same sort of thrill about it this time. I suppose I was much older, and I didn't have younger kids to get all het up about seeing the Queen'.¹³ Of the remainder of my group, even those like Peg O'Brien, who remained supporters of the monarchy, were happy that they had seen her once in the flesh and that would do.

This apparent nosedive in interest, or at least in viewing Royalty 'live', makes the extreme popularity of 1954 an even more compelling conundrum, and one which I raised during all interviews. I did this after extracting the details of each encounter with the Queen, and began to realise that the shift in the line of questioning, in most cases, also led to a perceptible shift in tone. Discussion became more serious. While the committed monarchists had expressed pleasure from the beginning of our encounters that a historian was working to commemorate this event, it became clear to me that others had been sceptical that it could really be considered suitable for a serious academic project. This was caused partly by the unwelcome realisation that years within their own lifetime had slipped backwards 'into history', but was also because the idea that the Tour had been an ultimately trivial event, and one associated with the gaucheries of the fifties, had been accepted. These interviews contained a standard moment of surprise, interest and pleasure when the speaker suddenly realised that it could actually constitute a serious 'historical' moment.

This was the 'second coming' of such knowledge, of course, because the people who went to see the Queen in 1954 knew at the time that they were witnessing history. They also enjoyed the sense that they were *making* history together with the Queen. The Tour provided an opportunity to add your own chapter to the annals of two families (especially if your parents had seen the Duke and Duchess, and they probably had) and through this connected you to the history of the country. Participants probably envisaged, like the Reverend Dr T. Muldoon of Sydney, that they would describe it all in vivid detail to their children, that their children would pass it on in turn, and that its light would, 'for generations to come, illumine the highest peaks of the greatest events in our history'.¹⁴ But forty years later, it seems that they reneged on this implicit

¹² Jane Lawry, interview, 1989.

¹³ Kitty Peisley, interview, 29 September 1992.

¹⁴ From the speech of the Reverend Dr T Muldoon, in the Queen's presence at St Marys Cathedral, Sydney, 7 February 1954, reprinted in the *Catholic Advocate*, 11 February 1954, p. 2.

promise to the future: although they remember the Tour very well themselves, either in the detail of adult memory or through the powerful impressions of a child, they have rarely been concerned with conveying them to succeeding generations.

We do not know, as there have been no systematic surveys of this question, what the stories are that Australians do pass on through their families. Is it likely that parents told the children of my generation about the Petrov Affair or the Melbourne Olympics (independently of the matter arising at school) over the dinner table? Or was it more likely to have been private family stories and social history details about customs in the 'olden days'? In the latter context, the memory of the tour probably fares no better and no worse than the memory of most other public events. But the critical difference between it and others is that it has also lost its toehold on history and is therefore unlikely to survive the passing of the generations.

Once I asked about the Tour, I was able to call up — from anyone — hearty, colourful recollections. Its very public and spectacular nature marked it out in memory, but the ability to recall has been sustained without the *aide memoire* of history, whether in the form of serious history writing, or until very recently, the sounds and pictures of popular historical communication. In this instance history has neither legitimated nor nourished popular memory and if this tells us nothing else about the relationship between memory and history it is that depth and breadth of memory alone is not a guarantee of entry into the recorded annals. The fact that the Tour has been 'rediscovered' to a limited extent today, and has recently been celebrated in exhibitions and television programs was not initiated by the strength of public memory, but is instead the result of a twist in history itself — as for a brief period in the early nineteen-nineties the popularly presumed inevitability of a republic turned the place of royalty in the public imagination and the past into a 'safer' topic — and a changing fashion in historiography which looks towards the cultural. However, it is popular memory that will now keep it alive. The currency of a Royal tour story is rising, as (former Sturt Desert pea) Jill Roe has found with university students who enjoy hearing her story of Port Lincoln's artistic triumph.¹⁵ People born after the tour are amused by its old-fashioned excesses, but it also operates most effectively as a shorthand metaphor for a popular vision of the nineteen-fifties as an era at once corny, conservative and robust.

¹⁵ Jill Roe, in conversation, 1993.

Television has been another significant phenomenon to influence memory (and to throw up a screen between the generations). Ann Curthoys and Paula Hamilton have both impressed upon me that Australians had a different relationship both to the world and to spectacle in the days before television.¹⁶ It becomes so obvious once articulated, but having been born into a generation for whom television always provides a second chance in the form of delayed telecasts, replays and highlight packages (bearing in mind also that most public events, including royal events, are now designed specifically for broadcast) I did need to be reminded that 'people had to actually go and see the Queen'. My initial awe at the crowd estimates for 1954, which is still considerable, had to be adjusted down a little. I think that the absence of television also accounts for much of my impression, and this is something that its 'survivors' also say about those years, that Australia was an unsophisticated country. The sense of isolation from 'people of importance' and Hollywood stars does appear to have lessened after the introduction of the box.

Kitty Peisley, interestingly, linked the presence of television with a new and slightly jaded attitude towards the Queen in 1963.

The next time we were quite content to watch it on TV. We didn't drive out to Government House and stand at the gate to watch the car like a lot of them did. I think we all got much older and we were more used to her and all the rest of it. It was a different ball-game, really.¹⁷

Peg O'Brien was another to articulate a connection between the enormous crowds in 1954 and the paucity of options. She was especially struck by the number of parents who wanted to ensure that their children saw the Queen, 'thinking it would probably be the first and last time they'd have the opportunity'.¹⁸ This explanation certainly resonates, again, with the rhetoric from the Tour. It also suggests the presence of another idea, which now seems old-fashioned, that people residing in the antipodes could only realistically expect to see royalty once in a lifetime. But moving beyond the specific question of the Royal Family, for their previous visits had been so few and far

¹⁶ My earliest memory is actually of television, as I can just remember a favourite show being interrupted by the newsflash announcing the disappearance of Prime Minister Harold Holt in 1967 (when I was three).

¹⁷ Kitty Peisley.

¹⁸ Peg O'Brien.

between that the Queen's return could not have been assumed, perhaps it is not such an antiquated idea to expect that you would witness such a gala only once? Nobody raised this with me during interviews, but possibly we value the spectacles of the late twentieth century more if we are satisfied that they are unique, and that our memory of them will therefore retain its value into old age.

A mindless or transitory experience?

Once they had re-accustomed themselves to the thought of the Tour as a significant occurrence, it was the younger participants (most of whom admitted that they'd only been thinking about since I'd made the request for an interview) who became most intrigued and amused by the recollection of just how big it had been, and were eager to help me puzzle it out. Some were equally interested in the speed with which the universal enthusiasm seemed to dissipate, and Rachel Grahame, John Keneally, Lyndsay Connors and Margot Oliver each commented, in varying degrees, on their perception of the transitory nature of the ardour. This must largely be explained by the experience of a societal shift away from popular monarchism during a relatively early stage in their lives. Margot has kept the scrapbooks she made at six years old over all these years, because it seems 'so strange that I had such a little royalist past and turned out to be a rebel', but she doesn't think that her *interest lasted much beyond the Queen's tour.*

Jane Well, you'd already given her the best year of your life!

Margot I can't remember too many of my school friends being excited by the Queen Mother's visit [in 1958]. I think some of them were more loyal than I was and I remember looking at them somewhat sceptically and thinking 'Aw, grow up! Come off the grass! ... and then by the time I was 17 or 18 I was even refusing to stand up for the National Anthem in the picture theatres.¹⁹

My mother can't recall her own fall from grace so accurately, although it had been completed by the early nineteen-sixties, but instead it puzzles her greatly that hers had not been a household in which royalty had been a topic of much interest prior to the Coronation in 1953. In another branch of the family there

¹⁹ Margot Oliver.

was the aunt who had been beside herself during the Abdication saga in 1936, and there was a cousin by marriage who purchased a corgi, but her immediate circle had been rather indifferent and even rather amused by the frailties of the others. And yet there they were during the Tour, as passionate as anyone else to take part.

What interests me most is the fact that this seemed to me to come out of the blue in my childhood, after not much interest in them at all ... what interests me is that we were people caught up in the wave of mass interest in it.²⁰

I think it is a fairly simple matter really, as her family were firstly not the kind of people to stand aloof (my Great-Aunt Nell, in particular, *gave* herself to popular enthusiasms) and they had no actual *objection* to royalty, let alone any opposition powerful enough to encourage them to walk out of step with their neighbours and friends. This is a significant issue in the popular memory of the Tour, as when they look back upon it, they remember just how different was the level of accommodation to public norms and expectations than those we might accept as a society today. People went where they were told in 1954, stood patiently for hours and kept any disappointment to themselves. With rare exceptions, they did not imagine then or now that the conditions of their participation in the tour could have been different. Perhaps Australians in the nineteen-fifties were more modest about their place and role in public life, and perhaps it is this that has attracted the implicit suggestion that their attendance before the Queen was 'mindless'.

'Mindlessness' might also be inferred from the inability of some informants to articulate their precise motivations for attendance. For those who had been adults in 1954, the question of the Tour's success was sometimes difficult to isolate from the general climate of the day. From some, I was only able to elicit the briefest response: the Queen had arrived and they had travelled to her side. Searching to define the enthusiasm of the day, Margaret Ryan could only remember the feeling that 'it' just 'overtook the community. The fact was that the Queen was coming and we all had to see her'.²¹ June Lindsay gave the same answer a colloquial twist: 'They were real big time, you know, everybody went'.²² June could not remember anyone speaking with indifference or hostility to the Royals, and neither could Peg O'Brien or Beryl Watson. Peg

²⁰ Lyndsay Connors, interview, 1989.

²¹ Margaret Ryan, interview, 6 July 1990.

²² June Lindsay, interview, 1989.

couldn't think of anyone she knew who had stayed away for any but logistical reasons, and Beryl was emphatic that there hadn't been *'any'* problems with anyone objecting to the visit or anything like that as they do now'.²³

Such answers demonstrated that I was leading with the wrong question to some interviewees. I was placing the emphasis on reasons for participation, when abstinence was far more peculiar and noteworthy. I began to realise that the more meaningful question was the inverse of my original proposition, to wonder 'what would have been the reward for anyone, others than those of radical politics, choosing *not* to participate in this event?' (The answer to which is, I think, nothing at all). This need to define the correct norm became clarified during my interview with Frank Rocke in 1993. Frank has been a republican since the nineteen-sixties, waiting for an organised movement to catch up with him, but he strongly rejected my suggestion that the Royal Visit might seem strange in retrospect, because he can recall the temper of the times so clearly. His own family were 'typical Australians' with a great deal of respect for the Royal Family and their participation in the Tour had flowed so naturally out of their lives that it still didn't make sense to Frank to dissect it — although he certainly had theories as to why Australia had been the country that it was. He certainly had no desire to disown it.²⁴ (This is another feature of memory which became apparent, that it is not a process of seamless evolution. Life experience and 'epistemological' changes come in heady stages, yet people retain either the knowledge or a sense of their past selves, behaviours and beliefs and are able to articulate these in a very sophisticated manner. They remember themselves as inhabitants of the foreign country which was Australia after the war).

Of my interviewees Edna Ryan was the only one to remember being put out or discomforted by the Queen's presence — or, more accurately, by the sight of her fellows prostrating themselves. Gregor Ramsay, like some other young men, was not that interested himself, but accepted without demur that millions of other Australians did actively wish to see her. Loch Townsend thought the Royal Family operated as a conservatising force (although it is not clear to me that he was concerned about this at the time) but through the production of *The Queen in Australia*, the Tour became a highlight of his career and so has become an event that he likes to recall. For others, the reasons for attendance were numerous. Children were taken by school, but the majority also clamoured for

²³ Peg O'Brien, interview, 12 April 1992; and Beryl Watson, interview, 10 February 1992.

²⁴ Frank Rocke, interview, 3 June 1993.

extra-curricular sightings, whether it was the novelty, the glamour or the history that most motivated them. Adult motivations ranged between reasonable curiosity, desire for excitement and spectacle, patriotism (in its political and spiritual variants), historical consciousness again and a sense of duty to one's children. Most were influenced by a combination or possibly all of these factors.

.....

Why does Royalty feature so prominently in the recreational fiction of the ordinary people?

Angela Carter, *The Virago Book of Fairytales*.

.....

The first reigning monarch

The reason for attendance proffered most often, and always proffered first, was that the Queen had been the first reigning monarch to come to Australia. As Jane Lawry said, typically, 'Well I think to begin with, it was the first time that a reigning monarch had come to Australia'.²⁵ Several speakers repeated the phrase in a sing-song voice, and then laughed at the memory of how often they had heard it at the time, and how it had seemed to be such an important and even necessary stage in Australian history. In this respect, the first-reigning-monarch factor revealed the closest correlation between contemporary rhetoric and popular memory.

While most adult participants agreed that this factor had motivated them personally, they nonetheless regarded it as an explanation primarily pertaining to the nation. As individuals, their true desire had been to see this particular Queen, the companion of their childhood. June Lindsay and Frank Rocke had been strongly moved by the idea that they would finally see one of the 'little princesses'.

Frank Yes. The little girl and all that sort of thing. She's only five years younger than me.

Jane And there she was all of a sudden?

²⁵ Jane Lawry.

Frank That's right. I remember when her sister was born.²⁶

Beyond this interest in the Queen's person, Frank also drew another distinction, and one which others echoed, between monarchy in the constitutional sense, and royalty in the sense of jewellery, ballgowns and regal celebrity. Beryl Watson, who had also found the lure of a 'real, live specimen' irresistible, also amalgamated a number of these factors in her response.

We'd never had any close connection with the Royal Family like that. You read about it but you know, they are a long way away, and you can't really imagine what its like. But of course we had the opportunity to see, and as I say, see her done up in her diamonds and everything and actually *see* royalty.²⁷

Kitty Peisley offered the strongest argument in favour of glamour and personality of any interviewee, sure that it had really had little to do with Empire, and almost everything to do with personal curiosity. Everyone had felt sorry for this young thing with so much responsibility thrust upon her, but had also been drawn to the glamour, 'the dressing up and all the rest of it. People love it'.²⁸

These Australians found much of what they wanted from royalty in 1954, although, as I have remarked, many discovered in the moment of meeting that they were more comfortable with the image of Queenliness than the fact (how could she have met such extraordinary expectations)? In the big-picture uncertainties of the Cold War and under the influence of anti-totalitarian dogma they took pleasure in the benevolent domesticity of the symbolism surrounding royalty. The rewards of clear, solid values — the 'hard work, independence, family life, Parliament and the Queen' — so successfully preached by the Prime Minister, were embodied in the public image of the happy Royal couple.²⁹ The harping critique of the Communist Party, that the monarchy was merely the 'useful weapon' of the ruling class, a device designed to 'stifle class consciousness and foster class collaboration', seemed irrelevant,

²⁶ Frank Rocke.

²⁷ Beryl Watson.

²⁸ Kitty Peisley.

²⁹ This quote (but not the coupling with royalty) from Judith Brett, *Robert Menzies Forgotten People*, Macmillan, Sydney, 1992, p. 1.

rude and even faintly ludicrous in the face of a family life, that after all neatly mirrored your own.³⁰ There was plenty of evidence of class consciousness and occasionally of conflict during the Tour, but people genuinely did not see what the Queen had to do with it.

The popular memory of this event may be considered conservative in that it tends to recall cohesion rather than fragmentation. People tend also to remember the effect but not the mechanics of the strategies used to induce their participation. When I put it to them, they recalled the overwhelming attentions of the media, but did not regard it as inappropriate to the occasion. Nor were they concerned with the role of the 'state apparatuses', such as the schools and the public money and labour expended on the national mobilisation. My mother's suggestion that this event came 'out of the blue' does not hold water for the population at large, as the success of these centralised strategies depended on their integral relationship to existing mores. They asked no more of people than they were prepared to give.

The memories of this Tour are happy ones, with the recollection of pleasure centred around the remembered experience of 'liminal' days, the disruption of normal time and behaviour and the transformation of public spaces. Clearly people were attracted to the idea of genuine national communion (whose borders were actually patrolled quite closely, but all but one of my interviewees, of course, were well inside the boundaries). The negative inducements for attendance, such as the red-baiting and the Cold War demagoguery, are simply not remembered at all.

Australia and the world

The consciousness of provincialism and isolation lying underneath many of the explanations offered by interviewees took full flower in another substantial category of reasons given for the Tour's success. The powerful effects of the loneliness of distance were expressed in a number of anxieties. The media's obsession with couth and manners revealed the fascinating longevity of the fears of 1867, that life on the frontier had rendered Australians coarse and embarrassing, while the fuss over climate suggested continuing anxiety over their place as a small white outpost at the ends of the earth. As Jane Lawry remembered Australia in the post-war years, it had been 'very much off the

³⁰ These quotes from Rex Chiplin, 'The "Democratic" Monarchy', *Communist Review*, June 1953, p. 177.

map. You didn't have movie stars and people coming here either. I mean it was like a fairytale come true'.³¹ A talkback caller, Ray from East Ballina, also said something of this kind, although with a stronger nationalist emphasis. He thought that it had given 'most patriotic people ... a real kick along' to see that their young Queen had come all that way just to visit them.³² Ray was an assertive monarchist and remembered this feeling without the chagrin which afflicts John Sullivan, who is now an active member of the Australian Republican Movement. It now seems remarkable to John that even he was drawn into the feeling of wonder that 'the glamour of London' was going to come out here 'to little old us, out here in the bush':

Its hard to remember now what the build-up was, of emotion and excitement and WOW! We suddenly thought we were going to be in it, we were going to be sort of London for a day, that we weren't forgotten, that we were going to have people of importance come and talk to us and we'd see them in the flesh.³³

This absorbing interest in the distance between Australia and London arose, he thought, from the two-tiered patriotism of the day. In a brief taxonomy of contemporary nationalism, he described a 'complete layer of Australianism' at the grass roots (involving 'the diggers and the Road to Gundagai' and other bush tunes) and the official position of 'Union Jack, Empire, Queen of England or King of England, dah-de-dah-de-dah' at the top.³⁴ John Fisher, who was born in 1948, remembered a different dichotomy, but one which also featured England. To a child, the Queen and all her British baggage was associated with formality, ceremony and 'the establishment' (her portrait was hung in the office of every headmaster, for instance), whereas 'everything that was interesting was more American'.³⁵ These two Johns were the only people to look beyond the obvious association with the United Kingdom, as others were so struck by the memory of how strong it had been during the Tour that they tended to linger on it.

Beryl Watson remembered experiencing a surge of interest in Australia's history as part of the British Commonwealth. 'We felt that tie. I'm sure that was

³¹ Jane Lawry.

³² ABC, talkback, Lismore, 1990.

³³ John Sullivan, interview, 5 July 1993.

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ John Fisher, interview, 21 August 1993.

why people were interested'.³⁶ Frank Rocke said that it was just a matter of fact that Australians still regarded themselves as part of the British Empire in 1954.³⁷ 'It may have been starting to fade a bit, but it was still very much part of the Australian ethos' he said — but it went beyond mere ethos in some homes. Gregor Ramsay recalled that

even though my family on all sides had been out here since the eighteen-fifties, which was about a hundred years by then, it was still almost as if we were in temporary residence (laugh). Not that anybody believed that they were temporary, but it was just that feeling.³⁸

Gregor and Peg O'Brien both saw the Tour (as Valerie Lawson described it in *Connie Sweetheart*) as the last gasp for Anglo-Saxon cultural hegemony. While Gregor was not nostalgic for the days when 'we were totally Anglocentric in our world view', Peg was more ambivalent about their disappearance, if only because support for the monarchy has declined as well:

And that of course has to do with immigration — people who don't feel any loyalty to England or to the Queen — you know, people born from different countries.³⁹

Although working from a different perspective, Rachel Grahame also argued that the monarchy became irrelevant when Australians began to change their view of their place in the world. 'We were no longer, whatever Menzies said, "British to the bootstraps"'. By the middle of the nineteen-sixties, Rachel had begun to feel that the country was reconciled to its location in Asia and the Pacific, and 'the Queen's about as relevant to South-East Asia as snow is to Hades'.⁴⁰ This development had been apprehended in 1954, as migrants were the very group whose behaviour was monitored most consistently by the media (who paid little further attention to the left once the festivities were underway). Aboriginal Australians were also placed on the list of 'others' whose appearance and demeanour were noted, but aboriginality was not regarded as threatening to the Australian way of life. The speed and the size of the migrant influx was more alarming and its impact on the culture was the subject of speculation and unease. It is apparent in much writing from the time

³⁶ Beryl Watson.

³⁷ It was almost another decade before Frank, now also a member of the ARM, decided that the British connection was past its use-by date.

³⁸ Gregor Ramsay, interview, 5 July 1991.

³⁹ Peg O'Brien.

⁴⁰ Rachel Grahame.

of the Tour, and particularly that about the landscape, that the debts from Britain's colonial exercise were still being paid. The Anglo-Saxon adaptation to this country had been painful and there was still enough ambivalence to give rise to fears over its precarious balance. In the reception of the Queen there was general awe and pleasure in the presence of the most famous person in the world, but her nationality and the inherent reassertion of the dominant culture was extremely important. (Despite differences in their attitudes towards the 'British to the bootstraps' mentality, most of my interviewees were in agreement that it lingers. Gregor Ramsay argues that as long as such strong feeling remains in living memory, it constitutes a powerful stumbling-block to the republican objective:

Looking back on it and knowing that, you do understand why we can't change our constitution and why we can't become an independent country in our own right.⁴¹

Ann Curthoys agreed, as a historian, that the strength of the British connection is still a powerful force in Australian politics. In answer to a question about Tour's low profile in history books, she suggested that the 'scarlet thread' and the 'Royalty thing' were still awkward to talk about in a nationalist context, because of the sheer power of their presence until such comparatively recent times.)⁴²

This does not necessarily indicate a cringing attitude towards Britain itself. There were obviously those who maintained, and the Prime Minister was one of them (by and large), that the Anglo-saxon culture developed in Australia was a pale derivative of the original. But there were more — and their conviction was particularly evident in their offerings to the Queen in many country centres — who believed it to be better: more vigorous, more colourful, more fitted for the future. It was still important that *she* see and approve of it, and in this sense the umbilical cord was yet to be severed, but it was Australia who was taking the initiative in the relationship. I can find no evidence that the welcome to the Queen was actually injurious to a sense of being Australian (indeed Rex Ingamells was arguing at the time that the nation had nothing to lose and much to gain from a continued association with the monarchy, on the

⁴¹ Gregor Ramsay.

⁴² Ann Curthoys, interview, 1989.

basis that it was a free association which actually enhanced the 'peculiar genius of Australian tradition and character').⁴³

In general, neither the nationalist nor class ambivalencies which so affect historians are present in memory to any great degree. Memory certainly associates the Queen with political and social conservatism, but it is also adamant that the success of the tour sprang from popular consensus. In this respect, this spectacular event was certainly the creature of that brief, strange decade after the end of World War II, when much in the public culture was being devoted to the creation of a mass democratic imagination, and to new means by which the ordinary people could be encouraged to participate in the life of the nation. Modern notions of community were developed through popular culture, notably, as this case study has illustrated, through the staging of events in which the individual was able to experience pleasure at their own participation in history. Although the capacity of the Royal Family to function as a satisfactory 'mirror of the people' has inevitably diminished as the millennium approaches, its appeal at the time was real. There is no necessary tension between the story of the Tour as an establishment triumph and as a genuine people's event.

⁴³ Rex Ingamells, *Royalty and Australia*, Hallcraft Publishing Co., Melbourne, 1954, p. 91. The notion of free association was a common defence of the Commonwealth and the role of the monarchy within it. In 1910, British politician A. J. Balfour — later the author of the Balfour Declaration of 1926, which established the principle that Great Britain and her dominions, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa, were 'autonomous communities, equal in status, in no way subordinate to each other in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by common allegiance to the Crown and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations' — opined that the hereditary monarchy would be the saviour of the Empire. There was no way, he thought, that a multi-national entity could survive the inevitable problems inherent in electing a common leader, even if only at the symbolic level. For a discussion of the notion of 'free association' in the 1950s, see G. V. Portus, 'The Queen and the Commonwealth of Nations', *The Australian Quarterly*, vol xxvi no. 1, March 1954, p12.

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