

11. The Americanisation of romantic love in Australia

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This chapter explores the transnational influence of consumer capitalism on the culture of romantic love in Australia during the twentieth century, particularly as it has been manifested through advertising. I want to utilise Benedict Anderson's well-known argument about how print capitalism created the 'imagined community' of the nation to argue that if the circulation of texts throughout society can foster feelings of nationalism,¹ they can also create or affect emotional experiences of romantic love.²

These ideas and expectations take root across national boundaries precisely because love is often assumed to be self-evidently universal; an unchanging part of the human condition, reaching beyond the boundaries of a specific nation or culture. Particular notions and practices of romantic love have become increasingly transnational because of the global reach of Anglophone culture, fostered by the prevalence of the English language throughout the former British empire and reinforced when hegemonic American popular culture piggybacked on this colonial legacy to find new markets for products and practices of romantic consumption in Anglophone societies.

The widespread use of English makes national boundaries porous because whoever controls the means to disseminate ideas widely – especially ideas about love that are generally considered 'natural' and universal rather than socially constructed – can affect other societies' ideas, expectations, and, hence, emotional experiences of romantic love. Thus the transnational influences on Australian romantic love occur through the global circulation of Anglophone print and visual culture, and the global spread of the American practice of romanticising commodities, inextricably linking experiences of romantic love to consumption.

This chapter begins with a brief sketch of the changing culture of romantic love in the United States of America throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century. It then charts how, through consumer capitalism, a particular conception of romantic love which had its genesis in affluent white middle-class America has

¹ My thanks to Marilyn Lake for her editorial feedback.

Benedict Anderson 1991 [1983], *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edition (London: Verso), pp. 6, 46.

² For a discussion of how discourse transforms desire into 'romantic love', see Jack Goody 1998, *Food and Love: A Cultural History of East and West* (London and New York: Verso), pp. 109-19. Also, Catherine Belsey 1994, *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell), p. 81.

become transnational, influencing the way Australian women, in particular, conceived of romance especially in the mid-twentieth century. Of course it may be argued that the culture of romantic love in Australia has always been transnational because non-indigenous Australians began as 'transplanted Britons', and this British heritage has had deep and long-lasting influences in mainstream Australian culture.³

It should be noted, however, that this inherited culture of romantic love was not necessarily consonant with the national boundaries of the imperial metropole. John Gillis's work on romantic love in Britain, for example, demonstrates the fragmented nature of romantic rituals and attempts at intimacy throughout the British Isles where different regions and classes were concerned. Gillis argued that although certain ideals of romantic love might have been widely shared in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, its practical outworking differed significantly between classes and generations, with, for instance, homosocial developments in some regional working-class young adult cultures forming a barrier against emotional intimacy and mutual understanding or sympathy between the sexes.⁴

This is a timely reminder to Australian historians belonging to an older imperial historiographical tradition that insists on first knowing British in order to understand Australian history,⁵ or to those who would write transnational Australian history, that, as Antoinette Burton has warned, in drawing connections between cultural or other traditions, the reified nation can still creep in through the backdoor:⁶ vide discussions (even in this chapter) of 'British' or 'American' cultural influences in Australia when these are hardly monolithic or cohesive

³ For discussions of the Britishness of Australian society and culture see, for example, Stuart Ward and Deryck Schreuder (eds) forthcoming 2006, *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Australia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press); Tara Brabazon 2000, *Tracking the Jack: A Retracing of the Antipodes* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press); Hsu-Ming Teo 2004, 'The Britishness of Australian Popular Fiction', in Kate Darian-Smith, Patricia Grimshaw, Kiera Lindsey and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *Exploring the British World: Identity – Cultural Production – Institutions* (Melbourne: RMIT Publishing), pp. 721-47.

⁴ John R. Gillis 1985, *For Better, For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press), pp. 258-9.

⁵ See Ann Curthoys' discussion of W. K. Hancock and J. A. La Nauze in 'We've Just Started Making National Histories, and You Want Us to Stop Already?', in Antoinette Burton (ed.) 2003, *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking With and Through the Nation* (London and Durham, NC: Duke University Press), pp. 72-4.

⁶ Antoinette Burton 2003, 'Introduction: On the Inadequacy and the Indispensability of the Nation', in Burton (ed.), *After the Imperial Turn*, p. 8.

cultures within their own geographical boundaries.⁷ Even the homogeneity in ideas of romantic love spread by print capitalism through mass-market publications – magazines, advertisements and genre novels – manifested class and gender differences, and did not necessarily translate into a common lived experience of love. In the same way, the mainstream ‘American’ culture of romantic love could exclude or subsume differences in class, geographical regions, ethnic origins, educational and/or religious background.⁸ Nonetheless, there is still a case to be made that a specific commercialised mass-market romantic culture, produced by American corporations and globally disseminated throughout the twentieth century, has become transnational in its reach. I argue in this chapter that Australian popular culture demonstrates transnational influences in its representation of romantic love, increasingly instituting white, educated middle-class Americans as authorities on romantic love by importing or reprinting American advice columns, articles, lectures and advertisements in magazines and self-help books. In the interwar years, Americans jostled alongside traditional British authorities on love and marriage; by the postwar period Americans had won the war of romantic expertise in Australia.

The culture of romantic love in the United States

The United States of America has one of the most well-documented histories of romantic love over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Ellen K. Rothman, Karen Lystra, Steven Seidman, Francesca Cancian, David Shumway and Eva Illouz, among many others, have examined diaries, love letters, medical journals, etiquette and advice manuals, magazines, popular literature and film to chart the changes in American understandings of romantic love.⁹ Generally speaking,

⁷ See, for example, the discussion of British people in James Jupp, ‘The Making of the Anglo-Australian’, James Jupp (ed.) 2001, *The Australian People: An Encyclopedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins* (Melbourne: Australian National University and Cambridge University Press); also L. Brockliss and D. Eastwood (eds) 1997, *A Union of Multiple Identities: The British Isles, c.1750–1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press); and Marjorie Morgan 2001, *National Identities and Travel in the Victorian Britain* (Houndmills: Palgrave).

⁸ Steven Seidman, for example, takes particular care to limit his discussion of romantic love to non-immigrant white middle-class Americans in the north-eastern United States. See Steven Seidman 1991, *Romantic Longings: Love in America, 1830–1980* (New York, NY and London: Routledge), p. 4.

⁹ Ellen K. Rothman 1987, *With Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press); Karen Lystra 1989, *Searching the Heart: Women, Men and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press); Francesca M. Cancian 1987, *Love in America: Gender and Self-Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); David R. Shumway 2003, *Modern Love: Romance, Intimacy and the Marriage Crisis* (New

this body of work identifies two significant and interrelated broad changes in the culture of romantic love that affected emotional experiences of love. Firstly, in the nineteenth century Americans understood romantic love as an intensely private, spiritual experience – exalted to the point where romantic love practically became a new religion in itself.¹⁰ The ultimate aim of romantic love was the complete disclosure of the individual self to the beloved in order to achieve intimacy in marriage.¹¹ By the early twentieth century, this had changed to a secularised notion of love that conceived it as inseparable from sexuality, pleasure and consumption.¹² Marriage or long-term partnership was no longer the ultimate fulfilment of love; rather, happiness and the experience of ‘romance’ became goals in themselves.

Secondly, the ritualised forms of romantic gender relations changed from nineteenth-century courtship to the twentieth-century practice of dating. Courtship took place in the private sphere and was controlled by the woman, who, in order to assure her security and happiness in marriage, placed obstacles in the relationship to test the love, patience, and faithfulness or loyalty of her suitor. Men occasionally tested women’s affections as well. Therefore pain, endurance and the postponement of pleasure was an expected and accepted part of the experience of romantic love as well as the more pleasurable emotions.¹³ The practice of dating turned this upside down. Dating replaced courtship among middle-class white Americans between 1870 and 1920. It was controlled by men who took women ‘out’ and ‘bought’ them a good time. Dating depended on practices of consumption and new technologies of transport and mass-market entertainment – the car, dance halls, movie theatres, restaurants, and the nascent hotel and tourism industries.¹⁴ It taught men and women to commodify each other as well as the experience of ‘romance’, which was increasingly separated from ‘love’.¹⁵

By the early twentieth century, therefore, romance had acquired an exchange value in dating, one which was reinforced by advertising which romanticised as well as glamorised consumer goods, so much so that romance eventually came to refer to consumption practices – gifts of chocolates, corsages, candlelight

York, NY: New York University Press); and Eva Illouz 1997, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradiction of Capitalism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press).

¹⁰ Lystra 1989, *Searching the Heart*, p. 249.

¹¹ *ibid.*, pp. 31-9.

¹² See Illouz’s main argument in her 1997, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia*.

¹³ Lystra 1989, *Searching the Heart*, pp. 9-10.

¹⁴ Rothman 1987, *With Hands and Hearts*, pp. 289-94; Illouz 1997, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia*, pp. 54-6.

¹⁵ Illouz 1997, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia*, p. 35.

dinners, cruises at sunsets, romantic holidays – rather than to the disclosure of feelings, as was the case in the nineteenth century. Where working-class women were concerned, sexual favours were often expected and dispensed in return for dating, but this was not necessarily the case among the middle-classes who took for granted gift-giving and consumption practices on dates.¹⁶ Nevertheless, as the twentieth century wore on, sexual activity became part of dating, not because it was expected or because it had been ‘bought’, but because consumption reinforced the message that dating was about sensual pleasure and the goal of romance was feelings of happiness.¹⁷

Dating thus inverted the understanding and goals of nineteenth-century romantic love, which was experienced through the rituals of courtship and which viewed marriage as its inevitable goal. Where courtship encouraged patience and a focus on the future and surveillance by others – family members as well as the community – dating was immediate, focused on the present and comparatively free of social surveillance and control. It took place in ‘islands of privacy’ in the public sphere, rather than in the private sphere.¹⁸ It had a secular, consumerist understanding of love rather than a spiritual one. Where expensive gifts had been looked on suspiciously in the nineteenth century, and personal gifts such as a lock of hair, a sketch portrait of the beloved, or hand-made cards were favoured instead, by the early twentieth century, gift-giving had become an expected part of the expression of romantic love. Dating was controlled by men rather than by women. It was focused on consumption rather than production (that is, marriage and the production of family). It was hedonistic in that pleasure was the goal, and pain was increasingly an unacceptable part of the experience of romantic love. And above all, the same limited script of romantic consumption was widely broadcast and reinforced by advertising, films, romance novels and magazines which commodified romance and romanticised commodities – especially what Eva Illouz has called ‘ego expressive’ commodities such as shampoo, perfume, deodorant and cosmetics.¹⁹

The promotion of consumerism through advertising directly impacts emotional states and our sense of well-being because, as Peter Stearns has observed, people stake ‘a real portion of their personal identities and their quest for meaning – even their emotional satisfaction – on the search for and acquisition of goods’.²⁰ The aim of advertising and consumer capitalism is to foster an increased sense

¹⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 59-61.

¹⁷ Seidman 1991, *Romantic Longings*, p. 4.

¹⁸ Illouz 1997, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia*, p. 56.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 37.

²⁰ Peter N. Stearns 1997, ‘Stages of Consumerism: Recent Work on the Issues of Periodization’, *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 69, no.1, p. 105.

of yearning, the feeling 'that one's life cannot be complete without this or that acquisition'.²¹ Stearns argued that the coincidence of mass literacy and new print technology leading to dramatic changes in advertising in the 1890s, transformed the way Americans expressed their emotions. Not only did the look of commercial advertising become more visually arresting or appealing – dull newsprint gave way to 'screaming headlines, illustrations, and lavish use of color'²² – but the style of advertising copy changed from a matter-of-fact description of content, durability and price to an appeal to the senses and emotions as products became associated with pleasure and sensuality.²³

By the turn of the century, Americans had not only been socialised into consumption from a very young age, they had also imbibed the notion that emotions could be expressed and/or managed through consumption. For example, in the 1880s 'American girls were able to buy caskets and mourning clothes for dolls, to train in the proper expressions of Victorian grief', while children were increasingly given gifts to ameliorate jealousy upon the birth of a sibling or as emotional substitutes for fathers who were now working longer hours.²⁴ Inevitably, feelings of love and experiences of romance became inextricably intertwined with the consumption of commodities and services, fostered, as Seidman noted, by giant corporations grabbing local as well as non-local mass markets in the first two decades of the twentieth century.²⁵ Illouz, too, argued that:

At the turn of the century, cultural entrepreneurs and established industries began promoting commodity-centered definitions of romance to further their own economic interests ... Since then, consumption and romantic emotions have progressively merged, each shrouding the other in a mystical halo. Commodities have now penetrated the romantic bond so deeply that they have become the invisible and unacknowledged spirit reigning over romantic encounters.²⁶

Early twentieth century advertising featured romantic couples who are 'made-up, well dressed, and expensively bejewelled',²⁷ engaged in acts of consumption such as dancing, dining at an expensive restaurant, drinking at sophisticated cocktail lounges or bars, going to the theatre or movies, on holiday at 'romantic' destinations and so forth. These have become clichéd images of romance, yet,

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 105.

²² *ibid.*, p. 110.

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 111.

²⁵ Seidman 1991, *Romantic Longings*, p. 67.

²⁶ Illouz 1997, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia*, p. 11.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 37.

as Illouz's cross-class interviews in the 1990s demonstrate, they still have resonance and meaning for large sections of American society.²⁸ American practices of romantic consumption became increasingly widespread in the twentieth century because of the transnational reach of American capitalism – the export of its consumer goods and cultural products, and the adoption or imitation of American advertising and marketing strategies in other countries.

The culture of romantic love in nineteenth-century Australia

The culture of romantic love in nineteenth-century Australia shared many similarities to that in the United States, Canada and Britain.²⁹ Romantic love was an emotional, moral, physical and spiritual attraction believed to be a necessary prerequisite to courtship, with companionate marriage as its ideal goal. It was bound up in class consciousness and the demonstration of 'gentlemanly' or 'ladylike' behaviour.³⁰ Love was supposed to have an ennobling, morally and spiritually uplifting effect, especially upon the male lover. This notion was both a result of the greater spiritualisation of love in the nineteenth century as well as being part of a wider nineteenth-century belief in progress and perfectibility in all aspects of society, including love and moral character. Physical attraction was enhanced by a lover's 'character' and shared moral and/or religious values.³¹ Yet while physical attraction was important and lovers wrote of their yearning for contact, kisses and embraces, the focus of courtship was on the mutual and exclusive disclosure of the self. This process was understood to be the very foundation of romantic intimacy.

In sharing their 'essence' with each other, it was expected that romantic love might produce great unhappiness, bitterness and despair as well as ecstasy and a feeling of empathy and completeness. Because marriage was taken for granted as the sole aim and fulfilment of romantic love, almost everything that accompanied married life could potentially be interpreted as an aspect of romantic love. Thus some lovers wrote that they did not necessarily expect love to produce constant happiness after marriage because they distinguished between the

²⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 112-52, 247-87.

²⁹ See above references for the United States and Britain. See Peter Ward 1990, *Courtship, Love, and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century English Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press). For Australia, see Hsu-Ming Teo 2005, 'Love Writes: Gender and Romantic Love in Australian Love Letters, 1860–1960', *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 20, no. 48, November 2005, pp. 343-61.

³⁰ See Penny Russell 1988, 'For Better and for Worse: Love, Power and Sexuality and Upper-Class Marriages in Melbourne, 1960–1880', *Australian Feminist Studies*, nos 7/8, Summer, pp. 11-26. Also, Marilyn Lake 1990, 'Female Desires: The Meaning of World War II', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 24, no. 5, p. 271.

³¹ Katie Holmes 1995, *Spaces in her Day: Australian Women's Diaries, 1920s-1930s* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin), p. 4.

emotional elation and physical thrill of 'infatuation' in courtship and the steadier, more mundane serenity of married love in which bouts of boredom or apathy might well be expected in the cycles of domestic life.³²

Much of this was similar to white middle-class British as well as American culture. However, there were a few crucial differences between the United States and Australia. Unlike nineteenth-century American lovers who viewed romantic love as something highly mystical or mysterious,³³ Australians generally tended to have more concrete and prosaic ideas about love. This was partly due to the fact that, unlike American culture, romantic love was not sacralised in Australian culture. The rhetoric of romantic love among Australians was never as intense, sublime or spiritualised as in the United States, neither was romance transformed into a new religion in Australia. Moreover, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, where the private correspondence among Australians reveal an eloquence of emotional feelings, the public rhetoric of romantic love has been characterised by awkwardness, self-deprecation and even bathos, in stark contrast to public romantic rhetoric in the United States.

These differences in the rhetoric of romantic love are still recognisable today, but in other respects, Australians have come to develop an increasingly American understanding of romantic consumption as a critical expression of love. This is demonstrated in an article, 'Money Can Buy You Love', in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 14 February 2005, which argued that 'Valentine's Day ... has become less about intimacy than the grand, expensive gesture: the jewellery, the mink coat, the impromptu hot air balloon ride'.³⁴ In this article, RMIT marketing lecturer Con Stavros observed that:

Marketing has turned Valentine's Day into the celebration that it is ... If you go back even a decade, people used to just exchange private cards and have some kind of romantic [dinner]. These days the gift has to be public, conspicuous – people [at work] ask each other: 'What did you get?'³⁵

The practice of romantic consumption may have become more extravagant in conspicuous ways at the beginning of the twenty-first century, yet this was something which developed in unevenly gendered ways in the first half of the twentieth century as consumer culture in Australia became Americanised.

³² Teo 2005, 'Love Writes'.

³³ Lystra 1989, *Searching the Heart*, p. 6.

³⁴ Alan Mascarenhas 2005, 'Money Can Buy You Love', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 February, viewed on-line at <http://www.smh.com.au/news/National/Money-can-buy-you-love/2005/02/13/1108229857401.html> on 14 February 2005.

³⁵ Quoted in Mascarenhas 2005, 'Money Can Buy You Love'.

The romanticisation of consumption in Australia

The historiography of consumer culture in Australia has focused largely on women and domesticity rather than romance, with Marilyn Lake's work on the sexualisation of femininity and romanticisation of advertisements in women's magazines of the 1930s being one of the few exceptions.³⁶ Nevertheless the extant body of work on consumerism establishes a number of important findings, the most significant of which are the gendered nature of advertising, and the sophistication of Australian women where the consumption of personal and household goods was concerned. Consumer goods were advertised in distinctly gendered ways, catering to the gendered division in shopping activities whereby, for most of the twentieth century, men 'made the majority of decision for motor mowers and electric shavers – items considered men's products. They also made the majority of decisions for bottled wines and spirits, radios, radiograms, record players and television sets'.³⁷ On the whole, women shopped for men's 'ego expressive' products – shirts, soaps, shampoos – for most of the twentieth century.

Meanwhile, advertisements for consumer goods bought by men tended to emphasise nationalism and men's identities as workers – collective identities, rather than individual ones. Robert Crawford has demonstrated how, until the end of the 1950s, items of personal or leisure consumption for men were advertised with images of factories: products as diverse as beer, Berger Paints, Dunlop rubber, Boomerang whisky, Australian oil and General Motors-Holden cars.³⁸ These images also emphasised men's social and economic role as producers. It was not until the late 1950s/early 1960s that advertising directed at Australian men shifted its focus to them as consumers. Although men's ego-expressive products such as fragrances and powders were available during the 1930s, advertisements targeted women, who were urged to buy these products for Australian men to enhance their physical attractiveness and sex appeal.³⁹

Mark Swiencicki has argued that the historiography of consumption in the United States has privileged women and entrenched them as primary consumers throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century. Swiencicki contended that if the consumption of services as well as goods was taken into account, American

³⁶ Lake 1990, 'Female Desires', pp. 269-74.

³⁷ *Who Decides? – A Study of the Buying Habits of Australian Men and Women*, commissioned by the Readers Digest Association Pty Ltd (Melbourne, 1961).

³⁸ Robert Crawford 2003, 'Manufacturing Identities: Industrial Representations of Australia in Press Advertisements, 1900–69', *Labour History*, no. 84, pp. 21-46, viewed on-line 14 December 2004 at: <http://historycooperative.press.uiuc.edu/journals/lab/84/crawford.html>

³⁹ Marilyn Lake 1992, 'The Desire for a Yank: Sexual Relations between Australian Women and American Servicemen during World War II', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 2, no. 4, p. 630.

men can be demonstrated to have consumed at least twice as much as women between the period 1880 to 1930.⁴⁰ The same may have been true of Australian men. It may be that men were as avid consumers of goods and services as women, or even more so. Nevertheless, the point remains that in advertising material, these consumer practices were not romanticised and entwined with relationships, or infused with emotions of intimacy. The same could not be said to be true of advertising aimed at Australian women in the first half of the twentieth century.

Historical scholarship on Australian consumerism has linked practices of consumption to the sexualisation of women's bodies in advertising in the 1920s. Rosemary Pringle, for example, argued that it was during this time that "'Girlie' pictures began to appear in such newspapers as *Truth*, *Smith's Weekly* and the *Labour Daily*", while 'advertisers linked sexuality to the emotionalisation of housework and the establishment of private life as the place where we "find our real selves"'.⁴¹ The timing is significant because, as Ann Stephen's work on the marketing of soap during the interwar years demonstrated, this was the period when American magazines and American companies began to penetrate the hitherto impregnable British market for women's consumer goods. Stephen's work makes clear the link between the circulation of American women's magazines in Australia and the glamour of American products for women, demonstrating that by the time the American company Palmolive entered the Australian market in 1921, in direct competition to the British soap company Lever,

the quality of 'Americanness' already exerted a strong appeal on local audiences. This attraction was not difficult to understand, for Australian magazines, like their British counterparts could not compete with the scale and lavish colour of the two most popular US imports, the *Saturday Evening Post* and the *Ladies Home Journal*.⁴²

Moreover, as Jill Matthews has noted, the association of global American commerce with exciting modernity and Hollywood glamour contributed to the attractiveness of the American brand.⁴³

⁴⁰ Mark A. Swiencicki 1998, 'Consuming Brotherhood: Men's Culture, Style and Recreation as Consumer Culture, 1880-1930', *Journal of Social History*, vol. 31, no. 4, pp. 773-809.

⁴¹ Rosemary Pringle, 'Women and Consumer Capitalism', in Cora V. Baldock and Bettina Cass (eds) 1988, *Women, Social Welfare and the State in Australia* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin), p. 97.

⁴² Ann Stephen 2003, 'Selling Soap: Domestic Work and Consumerism', *Labour History*, no. 61, p. 63.

⁴³ Jill Julius Matthews 2005, *Dance Hall & Picture Palace: Sydney's Romance with Modernity* (Sydney: Currency Press), pp. 7-11.

The interwar years were in some ways a culturally hybrid moment for advertising in Australian women's magazines, when visual layouts based on American magazines were accompanied by advertising copy with a 'British' flavour.⁴⁴ Increasingly the visual style of Australian women's magazine advertisements became more American, sometimes brazenly copied with minor adjustments to 'Australianise' the image.⁴⁵ The impetus towards Americanisation in Australian advertising styles and images thus occurred during the interwar years and was driven by the perception of American women's modernity and the glamour of romantic consumption. This was reinforced by the gradual penetration of American beauty products into the Australian market during the 1930s, advertised through images of romantic consumption.⁴⁶

The association of goods and romantic love was not new in Australian culture; by the outbreak of World War I, the Richmond Furnishing Company's advertisements in the Melbourne-based *Table Talk* magazine had already made this connection. Text advertisements for the company's wares and its store address were embedded in short love stories, play tableaux and letters purporting to be from mothers advising their daughters on marriage. What was new in the interwar years, however, was the expansion of advertisements for female ego-expressive products associated with beauty and romance in the 1920s, and, by the 1930s, youthful 'sex appeal'.⁴⁷

In the early twentieth century, advertisements for domestic products – Horlicks malted milk, dress patterns and accessories, sewing machines, chocolate laxettes for the management of the family's health – were more numerous than advertisements for shampoos, perfumes or cosmetics. The visual image was also significantly different. Advertisements for ego-expressive products in *The Australian Women's Weekly*⁴⁸ before World War I were black and white line drawings with a preponderance of informative text over pictures. The emphasis was on health and hygiene. For example, beautiful hair was a sign of good health rather than sexual allure. Whatever the subtext might have been, beauty was advertised for its own sake rather than in the context of overt romantic encounters.

⁴⁴ Stephen 2003, 'Selling Soap', p. 63.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 65, 67.

⁴⁶ Kathy Peiss 2002, 'Educating the Eye of the Beholder. American Cosmetics Abroad', *Daedalus*, vol. 131, no. 4, pp. 101-9. Viewed on-line 15 December 2004 at: <http://www.highbeam.com/library/doc3.asp?DOCID=1G1:94144191&num=6&ctrlInfo=Round9c%3AProd%3ASR%3AResult&ao=1>

⁴⁷ Lake 1990, 'Female Desires', p. 271.

⁴⁸ The pre-Australian Consolidated Press publication which ran from 16 November 1912 to 30 April 1921 and continued as *Home Budget* in 1922.

This began to change in the 1920s, when advertisements for ego-expressive products were set within the context of romantic love and marriage. The contrast between British and American advertising styles and techniques during this period is clearly demonstrated in the rivalry between Lever and Palmolive. In contrast to Lever's soap advertisements in Australian women's magazines, which emphasised imperial themes of racial whiteness and hygiene even in the 1920s, the American company Palmolive focused entirely on female beauty, youth and romance, telling them to: '*Live Your Romances! Keep that Schoolgirl Complexion!*' The advertisement went on to advise women that

BEAUTY, Charm, Youth may not be the fundamentals of romance, but they help. Practically every reader of a 'best seller' pictures the heroine as being possessed of those attributes. To *live* one's romances to-day, one stays young as long as she can, makes herself as *naturally attractive* as she can and trusts the rest to her womanly intelligence.

This advertisement, which first ran in women's magazines in the United States and was later carried by *The Australian Women's Weekly* and *Table Talk*, established a nexus between women, beauty, youth, romantic love and consumption – of 'best selling' romance novels and films as well as soap. Other companies followed suit in hawking glamorous or luxurious romance with beauty products. Thus a 1922 advertisement for Icilma face cream in *Table Talk* featured a sketch of an elegantly dressed woman standing on a balcony in front of open French doors leading into a ballroom where couples are dancing. She is powdering her nose while a man stands attentively behind her, and the caption underneath reads: 'Her Complexion won his attention.'

Kissproof lipstick ran advertisements in *Table Talk* in 1930 featuring a cartoon drawing of two young women talking in front of a mirror while one applied lipstick. The modernity of these women is conveyed by their bobbed and shingled hair, sports jackets, and the golf club one is carrying under her arm. The caption, part of the conversation between the two 'flappers', reads:

There's no doubt about it, dear, that Kissproof Lipstick you told me about is magic, pure and simple! I'm getting so popular – just a glorious time! Kissproof Lipstick makes my lips so small and, er, you know, so – inviting! And the way it stays on, no matter what happens!

With this and other lipstick advertisements in the 1930s and 1940s promising 'seductive' and 'provocatively appealing' lips, femininity, as Lake argued, 'was beginning to cast off its passivity as the logic of the incitement to pleasure took its course'.⁴⁹ Liz Conor has further commented upon young women's dynamic sense of 'self-mastery' or agency in presenting a 'modern' appearance through

⁴⁹ Lake 1990, 'Female Desires', p. 274.

clothes as well as cosmetics: 'perhaps for the first time in the West, modern women understood self-display to be part of the quest for mobility, self-determination, and sexual identity'⁵⁰ – an identity fashioned in part from the images of screen stars in American romantic movies, to which young Australian women made up seventy per cent of the audience.⁵¹

The Americanisation of Australian women's magazines during the interwar years in terms of the promotion of romantic consumption such as dancing and dining out, as well as the romanticisation of ego-expressive commodities, was accompanied by the Americanisation of expertise on romantic love, but not without a certain measure of initial scepticism and sardonic commentary. In a 1924 issue of *Table Talk*, the social column 'What People are Saying and Doing' featured a short article on 'Love and Millions', an ironic report on how:

An attractive stranger, Miss Alfaretta Hallam, from America, of course, is lecturing in Sydney on many popular subjects including our old friend, 'Love, Courtship, and Matrimony,' only, being a modern and an American, she disguised it as 'Practical Psychology.'⁵²

This was among the first of many articles linking American expertise to romantic love as well as the psychologisation of the self. Moreover, the metaphors used by Alfaretta Hallam – the 'business of marriage', the 'training' involved in relationships, the idea that choosing a husband is like choosing a career – all emphasised the intertwining of romantic love with commerce and the market. The Australian reviewer recognised this and ended the short article with a dig at the American association between the professionalisation of love and money. Hallam's next lecture tour, the article concluded, was 'How to Make a Million Honestly'.

As with advertisements, a struggle between 'British' and 'American' styles and authority is evident in *Table Talk* magazine during the late 1920s and early 1930s. In 1926, *Table Talk* – which was always obsessed with romance, marriage and domestic harmony – ran a series on 'The New Wife'. Among the 'experts' it summoned to discuss and give advice on happy marriages were English and Australian social hostesses. A similar series subsequently featured in 1930, 'Making a Success of Marriage', again featured female society leaders from Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney, but not from England. In the same year, however, *Table Talk* commissioned an article by the American writer Rupert Hughes on 'What is True Love?' Hughes's expertise arose from his reputation

⁵⁰ Liz Conor 2004, *The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press), p. 29.

⁵¹ Conor 2004, *The Spectacular Modern Woman*, pp. 78-100.

⁵² *Table Talk*, 31 July, no page number.

as a novelist and was described by the magazine as ‘one who has, by his outspokenness and common sense views, set all America talking’.⁵³ The Thirties saw reprints in *Table Talk* of American articles on love, romance and marriage by Kathleen Norris – ‘America’s Foremost Magazine Writer’ – as well as an increasing number of articles on Hollywood romances, divorces, and happy marriages. By 1936, the magazine turned to Eleanor Roosevelt to assure readers that ‘A Wage-Earning Wife Does Not Cause Divorce’.⁵⁴

British – and occasionally European – contributors continued to be featured as ‘experts’ on love, romance and marriage, but only if they were novelists, psychologists or philosophers: Bertrand Russell, A. A. Milne and Evelyn Waugh among them. Yet it was evident that the widespread influence of American dating rituals and practices of romantic consumption had also reached Britain. The English writer Alan Kennington, whose articles on relationships were sometimes reprinted in *Table Talk*, wrote a piece titled ‘Should Girls Go Dutch?’ and explained that “‘Going Dutch’ is an American expression, origin unknown’.⁵⁵ He opined that it was a common practice among Europeans and, presumably, Americans, but rarer in England. Kennington’s article indicates anxieties in the United Kingdom as well as in Australia over the growing practice of romantic consumption and the concomitant commodification of love inherent in ‘American’ practices of dating. Although the article seemed to be directed towards the lower middle classes whose romantic consumption was constrained by low wages, the pen and ink illustration that accompanied the article depicted the impossibly idealised image of glamorous, romantic dating among the wealthy – the man in white tie and tails, his arms around an elegantly dressed woman with a fur stole, both of them outside an up-market theatre.

These articles, still photos of glamorous film stars in romantic poses, and advertisements in women’s magazines accustomed Australian women to the idea of romantic consumption. They were calculated to provoke yearnings for beauty, youth, romance, luxurious ego-expressive products, and the experience of ‘romantic’ activities or services in the process of what Illouz has called ‘consuming the romantic utopia’. By contrast, very few (if any) of these romanticised images appeared in Australian men’s magazines, either in advertisements or as illustrations accompanying articles. It was not that men’s magazines were uninterested in romance, marriage or relationships. When *Man: The Australian Magazine for Men* was launched in December 1936, the inaugural editorial proclaimed that the magazine would ‘cater as completely as possible

⁵³ Rupert Hughes 1930, ‘What is True Love?’, *Table Talk*, 18 December, p. 40.

⁵⁴ Eleanor Roosevelt 1936, ‘A Wage-Earning Wife Does Not Cause Divorce’, *Table Talk*, 19 November, pp. 6-7.

⁵⁵ Alan Kennington 1936, ‘Should Girls Go Dutch?’, *Table Talk*, 24 September, p. 7.

for the varied monthly reading requirements of the average male'. Moreover, it would feature '90% the work of Australian writers' and '100% Australian artists'.⁵⁶ Among the articles on fiction, business, current affairs and sports, however, were the occasional pieces on romance and marriage. The Australian writer Gilbert Anstruther wrote several articles on the subject between 1937 and 1942, such as 'Are Husbands Worth While?'⁵⁷ or 'I Know About Love'.⁵⁸ Austin Roberts analysed love and jealousy in the psychology section, while Browning Thompson did the same in the sociology column. Between the late 1930s and the late 1950s, other male authors pitched in with articles on 'Marriage and Morals of the Future', 'Why Husbands Leave Home', 'Husbands Who Hate Women', 'How to – Where to – And Why You Shouldn't – Be Unfaithful', and 'How to Get Along With Women'. Not until the late 1940s, however, did *Man* feature advertisements for ego-expressive products set within a romantic context. An advertisement for Ingram's shaving cream in 1947 featured a cartoonish picture of a man climbing over a balustrade at night – presumably invoking the figure of Romeo – and a woman stroking his smooth chin. The caption was joking in tone and clumsy in text:

Question: To what did Helen of Troy owe her fascination? The face that launched a thousand ships must have had something more than the usual complement of eyes and things. INGRAM'S, on the other hand, has launched a thousand faces. A million, maybe ...

Another advertisement for 'Be-Tall' shoes in April 1957 showed the illustration of a blissfully smiling woman clasping a man's shoulder as he towers over her. The caption read: 'Tall men get the plums.' Be-Tall shoes were spruiked as 'amazing height-increasing shoes' which 'help you grow almost 2 inches taller instantly', promising an increase not only in height, but also in poise and the confidence, presumably, to go after and 'get the plums'. Such advertisements of romanticised commodities were few and far between in Australian men's magazines, and there was something slightly awkward about them.

It was not until American magazines such as *Playboy* were imported during the late 1960s that Australian men were introduced to a culture of romanticised (and, of course, sexualised) consumption for all sorts of products. For example, an advertisement for Renault's Le Car had a photo of a woman sitting on top of the car, held in the close embrace of a man, while the caption referred to the 'passion' of driving. An American advertisement for Hennessy in the 1990s showed a

⁵⁶ Editorial 1936, *Man: The Australian Magazine for Men*, December.

⁵⁷ Gilbert Anstruther 1937, 'Are Husbands Worth While?', *Man: The Australian Magazine for Men*, February, pp. 32, 86, 87.

⁵⁸ Gilbert Anstruther 1937, 'I Know About Love', *Man: The Australian Magazine for Men*, November, pp. 60, 62.

woman's ecstatic, upturned face as a man kisses her. The caption read: 'If you've ever been kissed you already know the feeling of Cognac Hennessy.' Interestingly enough where transnational ideas of romance are concerned, the couple are framed by the carved arches of a stone colonnade, vaguely suggestive of Europe. In this American advertisement romance is Europeanised, generic 'Europe' signifying luxurious romantic moments and classy destinations. *Playboy* notoriously commodified women's bodies and sexuality, but it also commodified romance, as with John Stack's 1980 article, 'We'll Take Romance!' Accompanying suggestions for romantic moments were thoroughly entwined with luxury consumption:

A light and sexy Lillet with a twist of orange or lemon is our choice for a romantic aperitif ... For any occasion that seems extra-special, we recommend California Chandon, but nighttime is the right time for Cognac. Delamain (which runs from \$22 to \$100) is for foreplay, afterplay, and serious fooling around.

Investment acumen and sentiment *do* mix. Buy each other gifts that will last: lithographs, Oriental silk flowers, inlaid boxes, photographs, leather-bound books or first editions, cognac, fine stationery, personally blended scents, pottery, season tickets (to the ballet, symphony, theatre or even hockey), museum membership, dancing (or self-defense) lessons, antiques (such as handmade quilts, bits of embroidery, old china). Or a pair of sexy black pajamas.

Getting away even for a weekend is a terrific way to renew your relationship and take time off from professional stress at the same time. If you live in the country, try some bright lights/big city sight-seeing ... If, like most of us, you live in the city, look for an intimate country inn that you can make your own ...⁵⁹

My point here is that although Australian men's magazines carried articles about marriage and romantic relationships, romantic consumption did not feature widely until after World War II – and then it was introduced to Australia via imported American men's magazines and advertising techniques copied from the Americans. In the first half of the twentieth century, therefore, there was a gender disjunction where ideas of romance and courtship or dating were concerned. This came to a head during World War II.

World War II and gendered romantic consumption

As several scholars have noted, World War II saw a widespread condemnation of, and moral panic surrounding, young Australian women's relations with

⁵⁹ John Stack 1980, 'We'll Take Romance!', *Playboy*, September, pp. 91-7.

American soldiers.⁶⁰ This was in part a backlash against modern young Australian women's Americanised conceptions of consumerist dating and romantic love.⁶¹ The attitude of conservative media institutions and transnational corporations was highly contradictory in this regard. Despite the fact that *The Australian Women's Weekly* carried wartime advertisements emphasising the importance of consuming beauty products – such as the Pond's 'Lips' advertisement declaring: 'She's doing a job of national importance, but she doesn't forget the importance of looking lovely for *him*' – Lyn Finch noted that the *Weekly* ran a campaign implying that the presence of American troops exacerbated 'consumerist-driven dating practices', thereby not only subverting 'normal and correct gender relations' but also

simultaneously undermining the British character of Australian culture. While the practices and assumptions associated with courtship were conceptualised as productive and patriotic, dating was stigmatised as non-productive and neither patriotic, nationalistic, pro-Empire nor, indeed, moral.⁶²

Finch suggested that the 'competing constructions of courtship or, to be more precise, the difference between courtship and dating, lay at the centre of much of the moral panic about relations between American men and Australian women and girls'.⁶³

But it was possibly more than that. I want to propose that, as Marilyn Lake has suggested about contemporary understandings of the sexualisation of femininity in the 1930s and especially during World War II,⁶⁴ there was a gender and age disjunction in understandings of romantic love at this time, when some women, through their consumption of magazines and familiarity with commodified images of romantic love, might have been more in tune with American men's conception of gendered self-display, dating and romantic love than with

⁶⁰ Michael Sturma 1989, 'Loving the Alien: The Underside of Relations Between American Servicemen and Australian Women in Queensland, 1942–1945', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 24, pp. 4, 15–16; Gail Reekie 1985, 'War Sexuality and Feminism: Perth Women's Organisations, 1938–1945', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 21, no. 85, pp. 576–91; Lake 1992, 'The Desire for a Yank', p. 625.

⁶¹ Lake 1992, 'The Desire for a Yank', pp. 625–6; Lyn Finch Press 1995, 'Consuming Passions: Romance and Consumerism During World War II', in Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake (eds), *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, (Melbourne: Cambridge University), pp. 105–16)

⁶² Finch 1995, 'Consuming Passions', pp. 106–7.

⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 110.

⁶⁴ Lake 1990, 'Female Desires', pp. 268, 279.

Australian men's.⁶⁵ I am by no means arguing that love relationships did not develop between Australian women and men at this time, or that ideas of romantic love were reducible to romantic consumption; clearly, they were not, as the Australian War Memorial's very moving collection of love letters written by Australian soldiers to their wives and girlfriends attests.⁶⁶ What I am arguing, however, is that for some women, the initial process of 'falling in love' depended not only on sexual attraction and liking, but that these increasingly took place within a context of Americanised romantic consumption.

This can be demonstrated, for example, in gift-giving. In the nineteenth century, the types of gifts acceptable between courting couples were those of personal sentiment and little monetary value: hand-made cards, portraits, locks of hair, flowers, cakes, books of poetry or songbooks compiled by one of the lovers.⁶⁷ More expensive presents were acceptable only after the couple were engaged. In the mid-1880s, *Australian Etiquette* declared that the man could then give his fiancée 'small presents from time to time, until they are married, but if she has any scruples about accepting them, he can send her flowers, which are at all times acceptable'.⁶⁸ Yet even at the turn of the century, gifts could indicate the purchase of a woman as a man's property, as the following excerpt written by a young man to his fiancée indicates:

I shall be able to get something nice for your birth-day this year. Perhaps the last present it [unclear] be my lot to bestow upon you or perhaps the forerunner of very many more if you become my property. Hope you will say what you would like, anything but jewelry, I will get for you.⁶⁹

The American culture of romantic consumption inverted traditional reticence over expensive gift giving because within the culture of romantic consumption, and especially in a culture where, as was argued above, emotions can be conveyed

⁶⁵ It is no doubt true that, as Michael Sturma (1989, 'Loving the Alien', pp. 3-17) has argued, many American men did not share such notions of romantic consumption and were not only sexually aggressive, but also economically exploitative of Australian women. Nevertheless, what I'm concerned with here is the idea of the romantic gift-giving American – uniformed and homogenised in the Australian female imagination, as Lake suggested – that many women entertained. See Lake 1992, 'The Desire for a Yank', pp. 631-3.

⁶⁶ See also the section on World War II in Teo 2005, 'Love Writes'.

⁶⁷ See, for example, Blackburn family papers, MS 1528, Box 1760/1 (b), La Trobe Library; Broughton family papers, MLMSS 6250, Mitchell Library; Fry family papers, ML MSS 1159, add-on 2076/Box 1 and 2076/Box 4, Mitchell Library; and Gant family papers, MS 3711, Box 13023, La Trobe Library.

⁶⁸ *Australian Etiquette, or the Rules and Usages of the Best Society in the Australasian Colonies, together with Their Sports, Pastimes, Games, and Amusements* (Melbourne: People's Publishing Company, 1885), p. 198.

⁶⁹ Gant family papers, MS 3711, Box 13023, La Trobe Library.

and managed through consumption, romantic love was increasingly expressed through gift giving. Admittedly, the mere receipt of a gift was no proof of the giver's devotion, but the understanding of romantic love was transformed to a point where it was difficult, if not impossible, to declare love for someone without giving costly gifts at some stage, or engaging in frequent romantic consumption. American men were already in the habit of romantic consumption by the early twentieth century and, as Finch recognised, during World War II, gifts 'were integral to dating for American men and usually had no connotations of buying a woman'.⁷⁰

Jill Matthews' study of young working women's leisure practices in Sydney during the 1910s and 1920s suggested that 'modern' young men were paying for 'modern' young women's cinema-going and dancing within either a heterosocial or romantic context: 'a woman who let a man pay for her to go to the pictures or to a dance was no longer necessarily a kept woman.'⁷¹ Nevertheless, more traditional Australian men and older Australian women still believed a young woman had been 'bought' even if her process of romantic dating led to love and marriage with an American man.⁷² One of the most extreme condemnations of romantic consumption during the war came from Reverend James Duhig, Catholic Archbishop of Brisbane, who asserted that: 'many girls associating with Allied soldiers have shown a spirit of greed and selfishness that does little credit to Australian womanhood.'⁷³

Hollywood films as well as ego-expressive advertisements spruiking romantic consumption and the commodification of the modern, sexualised self played an important role in mediating romantic relations between modern Australian women and American soldiers. As Liz Conor has demonstrated, young women in the interwar years were accustomed to fashioning themselves as both creative subjects as well as commodified objects of the public gaze. Managing one's modern feminine appearance was achieved via film and advertising. 'Identifying with advertising promised romance; but romance was about being subject to the same intense scrutiny and appraisal as the commodity image, and this required self-surveillance.'⁷⁴ This practice of self-commodification – packaging

⁷⁰ Finch 1995, 'Consuming Passions', p. 112. See also Lake 1990, 'Female Desires', p. 275.

⁷¹ Matthews 2005, *Dance Hall & Picture Palace*, p. 91.

⁷² That this fantasy was still a goal of romantic liaisons is demonstrated by the number of applications to marry American servicemen lodged with the Registrar's Office – four in the first ten days of US troop arrivals, and a total of between 12 000-15 000 contracted marriages. See Lake 1992, 'The Desire for a Yank', p. 624, and Sturma 1989, 'Loving the Alien', p. 3.

⁷³ Cited in John Costello 1985, *Love, Sex & War: Changing Values, 1939–45* (London: Collins), p. 326.

⁷⁴ Conor 2004, *The Spectacular Modern Woman*, p. 116.

oneself in youthful, modern and sexually attractive ways which privileged visual effects – was also directed towards men.

Lake has argued that, during the war years, young women objectified and commodified the 'Yank' ('they were different, they were anonymous, one stood for all the rest, any one would do')⁷⁵ because they had been trained by Hollywood films to code 'American men as lovers, as sexual, and as objects to be looked at'.⁷⁶ Like these young women, American soldiers also appear to have been in the habit of managing their visual effects in a distinctly modern way.⁷⁷ Thus young Australian women again shared with American soldiers the modern practice of commodified self-display that not only located the sexual and aesthetic management of their bodies within a capitalist exchange economy, but that also meshed with consumerist practices of romance: gifts of silk stockings, flowers, a way with words that was inspired or adapted from Hollywood films – 'She's just like a baby Betty Grable', for instance.⁷⁸

There is no doubt that Australian men practised consumerist dating with the women they were courting, going to the movies, dances, and on picnics. Where gift-giving was concerned, however, some letters suggest that it was women who were in a better position to give gifts and send parcels to Australian soldiers, especially to those stationed away from major urban centres.⁷⁹ Some Australian soldiers had financial constraints; others simply had no idea of what gifts to shop for, as with the soldier who wrote in all sincerity:

I don't like accepting any further gifts from you especially when I'm so thankless in this way. I haven't given you a single thing in return yet. I've been to town a few times & window shopped but have not found anything to suit my fancy but I don't know what to appear thoughtless so you must tell me what you would like as a memento.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Lake 1992, 'The Desire for a Yank', p. 627.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p. 629.

⁷⁷ See *ibid.*, p. 628, for articles in the Australian press urging Australian men to pay similar attention to their appearance; to imitate American men's attention to their uniforms, angle of hat, position of garters, etc.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 631; Costello 1985, *Love, Sex & War*, p. 312.

⁷⁹ See references to gifts received by women – either wives or girlfriends – in the letters of Sergeant Michael Billings, PR00610, Australian War Memorial; papers of Pte Albert Gerrard, PR03111, Australian War Memorial; letters of Flying Officer Ralph James, PR00661, Australian War Memorial; letters of Trooper Andrew Pirie, PR00602, Australian War Memorial.

⁸⁰ Letters of Trooper Andrew Pirie, PR00602, Australian War Memorial.

While the woman showed a confidence in gift-giving, which was obviously something she was used to, the man was clearly unaccustomed to this way of relating romantically.

Significantly, it was only after American magazines began to be imported to Australia in the postwar years, and the style of Australian advertising directed at men changed to a focus on them as consumers, that love letters from Australian men demonstrate the same notion of commodified romance that Australian women had become familiar with earlier in the century. Letters from Australian men written during the Vietnam War, for instance, are concerned with shopping and gift-giving in a way which would have been most surprising during World War II.⁸¹ These Vietnam soldiers not only bought gifts for women, they were confident and decisive in what they wanted to give.

Conclusion

Thus the gender and age disjunction relating to romantic consumption gradually disappeared in the postwar years as Australian men also became orientated to romantic consumption through American-style films, magazines, advertisements and the advent of generic self-help books with their inevitable relationship case studies⁸² which now made the verbal culture of American romantic love – previously confined to women’s magazines and romance novels – available to men, couched in the language of psychologists and stamped with the masculine authority of ‘scientists’.

With the popularisation of self-help books, another layer was added to the Western discourse of romantic love: the search for ‘intimacy’ replaced ‘passion’ as the Holy Grail of romantic love.⁸³ ‘Intimacy’ – understood as the absence of loneliness, a ‘deep communication, friendship, and sharing that will last beyond the passion of new love’ – promised to cut through the Gordian knot of consumerism and romantic love in the West, offering a ‘refuge from the social fragmentation of late capitalism’.⁸⁴ But the route towards intimacy was ‘communication’, its gateway the consumption of self-help books and its guides the American authors who traversed the world selling their new gospel of hope.

The most successful of these at the end of the twentieth century was, of course, John Gray, whose *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus: A Practical*

⁸¹ For example, see the Papers of Lance Corporal A. D. O’Connor, PR 88/75, Australian War Memorial; papers of Private Laurence Hoppner, PR00047, Australian War Memorial; papers of Private Manfred Bohn, PR00745, Australian War Memorial; papers of Corporal Ronald James Kelly, PR87/195, Australian War Memorial.

⁸² Shumway 2003, *Modern Love*, p. 149.

⁸³ *ibid.*, pp. 141, 27.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p. 27.

Guide for Improving Communication and Getting What You Want in Your Relationships (1993) sold over six million copies in the United States alone and was translated into more than forty languages worldwide, thereby claiming to be 'the highest selling commercial book in the 1990s next to The Bible'.⁸⁵ Gray's book was published in Australia in 1993 and HarperCollins Australia has kept it in print ever since, branding it a 'modern classic'. As late as 2000, *Mars and Venus* was selling over 20 000 copies a year in Australia, earning it a place on the annual 'bestseller' list.⁸⁶ Sales figures do not, of course, tell us anything about reader reception or whether Australians have embraced and put into practice the tenets of romantic relationships to be found in such books. Indeed, such self-help material might be read as a new genre of consolation rather than as revelations about romantic relationships.⁸⁷ The point, however, is that these discourses on romantic relationships have become transnational, not necessarily because of their intrinsic worth, but because they are marketed transnationally in what Karen S. Falling Buzzard has argued is a global process of 'brand marketing' that, for instance, sold John Gray as 'the Coca-Cola of self help'.⁸⁸

It is these American techniques of marketing and advertising, more than anything else, that have established the American dominance of romantic love – whether it be as expertise or entertainment – in Australia through the course of the twentieth century. By the century's end, the culture of romantic love, not just in Australia but right throughout the English-speaking world, had become transnational, shaped by new technologies and communications systems as well as advanced consumer capitalism, fed by transnational publishing and media corporations, and sophisticated methods of marketing and international distribution. As Illouz observed, 'emotions are influenced and even shaped by the volatile "stuff" of culture: norms, language, stereotypes, metaphors, symbols', which means they are also 'subject to the twin influence of the economic and political spheres'.⁸⁹ As one cultural narrative of romantic love becomes increasingly hegemonic worldwide through the American-dominated global economy, there is less and less common knowledge or understanding of alternative cultures or expressions of love.

⁸⁵ Mars Venus Franchise web site, <http://www.marsvenuscoaching.com/franchise-opportunity.html>, accessed 16 February 2005.

⁸⁶ Australian Publishers Association, '2000 Public Survey', viewed on-line on 16 February 2005 at: <http://publishers.asn.au/emplibary/ACF4E53.pdf>

⁸⁷ See Shumway's argument about self-help books in his 2003, *Modern Love*, pp. 133-187.

⁸⁸ Karen S. Falling Buzzard 2002, 'The Coca Cola of Self Help: The Branding of John Gray's *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*', *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 35, no. 4, pp. 89-102.

⁸⁹ Illouz 1997, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia*, p. 3.