Introduction
Republics of Letters and Literary Communities

*R*epublics of Letters: Literary Communities in Australia is the first book to explore the notion of literary community or literary sociability in relation to Australian literature in a thematic and comprehensive way. It brings together twenty-four scholars from a range of disciplines – literature, history, cultural and women's studies, creative writing and digital humanities – to address some of the key questions about Australian literary communities: how they form, how they change and develop, and how they operate within wider social and cultural contexts, both within Australia and internationally. If there can be no single set of answers to the research questions that organise the essays in this book, this is perhaps because of the slippage between the two concepts that have deliberately been chosen for its title and subtitle: the 'republic of letters' and the 'literary community'.

The notion of a 'republic of letters', as David Carter observes, has been widely taken up in literary scholarship internationally since the English translation of Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters* in 2004.[1] One reason for its 'seemingly irresistible attraction', he suggests, is that it captures the interest common among a range of contemporary approaches to the study of literature in cultural institutions – and of the function of intermediaries in those institutions, including writers and readers, editors and critics – in producing literature and literary value. What these different approaches have in common is that they all treat culture as a field, a structure or an economy. Yet Carter goes on to make an important distinction between different ways in which the dynamics of the literary field might be conceived. While the term 'community' suggests aspects of literary sociability, the idea of a community built around shared values and interests, the 'republic of letters' draws on the language of politics, reminding us that this is a field constituted by power and competition. For Casanova, the world literary system is a hierarchical structure, not the level playing field some of the more euphoric accounts of globalisation seem to imply.

Carter usefully describes the 'literary community' and the 'republic of letters' as the 'weak' and 'strong' understandings, respectively, of the dynamics of the literary field: one is built around ideas of community and sociability, of shared interests and values; the other around the dynamics of competition, position taking and symbolic violence both within national literary spaces and across international boundaries. Our title, *Republics of Letters: Literary Communities in Australia*, is meant to invoke both the strong and weak versions of this idea of literary communities, which are variously taken up, in turn, by the contributors.

By focusing on literary *sociability*, we mean to shift attention from individual writers and great books to examine the various forms of community that facilitate and sustain writing and reading, and also the kinds of communal identities that are formed *by* the practices of writing and reading. These include, for example, the networks of writers and readers

1 Pascale Casanova, trans. M.B. DeBevoise, *The World Republic of Letters* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2004 [1999]).

that cluster around literary journals and little magazines, literary 'schools' or movements, reading groups and book clubs, writers' festivals, and the various forms of sociability generated by institutions such as libraries, schools, universities and writers' associations. Though interest in Australian literary communities has grown in recent years – principally through the rise of book history, the history of reading, and print culture studies – it remains a loosely defined, relatively untheorised area in need of a more systematic approach, and drawing on an innovative range of case studies such as those provided here.

Among Australian scholars to date, interest in literary sociability has been confined mainly to studies of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British Romanticism, where it has had radically energising effects. A leading example is Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite's innovative and influential collection, *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain, 1770–1840* (2002). This book was designed as an intervention in the received history of British Romanticism, which had been shaped by the English translation in 1989 of Jurgen Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Habermas' 'two-phase' model sees a decline from the empathic sociability of the early eighteenth-century bourgeois public sphere, a space of conviviality where ideas circulate freely among supposed equals, to the Romantic moment of solitude and disinterestedness, which now become the grounds of the poet's claim to critical authority.[2] Russell and Tuite argue that by reinstating the idea of 'romantic sociability' as an analytical category we are able to rediscover the late eighteenth-century heterogeneous forms of sociality, thereby shifting the traditional focus from the lone writer and the private scene of writing to public 'sites of sociability'; from the authentic to the performative self; from canonical genres like the novel and lyric poetry, to the essay, diaries and letters. In this sense, sociability is not just the context for the writer's work but 'a kind of text in its own right', 'a form of cultural work'.[3] In addition to the early eighteenth-century classic sites of sociability – the tavern, the coffee shop, the theatre and the debating club – the late eighteenth century includes sites of 'private sociability', including walking, home visiting, shopping, private dinners, and radical dining circles, often under the auspices of publishers.[4] One consequence of this re-engagement with Habermas is also to foreground the gendered nature of his model, supplementing masculine forms of sociability with others that reinstate women's historical agency. As an analytical category, then, sociability cannot be treated ahistorically, as a given that does not require explanation. It is, rather, a 'heavily contested' term; it is both 'a practice and a value' that is implicated in specific cultural politics that change historically and have 'highly unstable meanings'.[5]

Although it is located within studies of British Romanticism, Russell and Tuite's work has affinities with that of the American social historian Joan Shelly Rubin. In her three major books, *Constance Rourke and American Culture* (1980), *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* (1992) and *Songs of Ourselves* (2007), Rubin has made a sustained and influential

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2 Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite, 'Introducing Romantic Sociability', in Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite, eds, *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain, 1770–1840*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 12–14.

3 Russell and Tuite, p. 6.

4 Russell and Tuite, p. 17.

5 Russell and Tuite, p. 9.

contribution to both theoretical and empirical approaches to the study of literary sociability.[6] In her essay for this volume, she defines the idea of literary sociability succinctly as 'an invitation to contemplate texts as sources of relationships'. She also reasserts the insight that has been fundamental to the histories of books and reading: that 'texts arise from as well as create social networks'. The central assumptions driving Rubin's research are her rejection of the idea that 'alienation was a prerequisite for artistic achievement', and that literature is both the 'source' and the 'product' of social interaction. Her work is typified by its richly researched case studies of the specific 'scenes of reading' that generate literary sociability in America. Both conceptually and through its detailed evidence, her essay offers a productive unpacking of the concept of 'community', which is too often taken for granted as a commonplace, ahistorical term – as Russell and Tuite also observe. Rubin demonstrates that the communities created by what she calls 'scenes of reading' are at once singular and heterogenous, local and national, 'coercive or arbitrary as well as liberating and life-enriching'. In this essay, Rubin offers case studies of three such scenes of reading: the Great Books movement, which began at Columbia University during the Great War; the speaking choir movement, which was imported from Britain in the 1920s; and an example of the text-setting of poetry to music for choral performance during the Cold War. At all times she observes the 'politics of culture' at play, including the fine grain of local engagement with and distinction from 'national politics'. Rubin's idea of the literary community is therefore that it is fundamentally diverse, constituted as much by internal tensions and differences as it is by the experience of commonality: 'Each of these collectivities brought together actual readers in physical space, each rested on an ideology about the benefits of participation in the group', yet, importantly, 'each also simultaneously sustained and challenged elements of cultural hierarchy and critical authority'.

The historically specific cases of literary sociability offered by Rubin, and by Russell and Tuite, are of course distinct from the history of Australian literature over the 200 years from 1788 to 2011 although, as Russell and Tuite's reference to the correspondence between Leigh Hunt and Barron Field in New South Wales indicates,[7] there are significant connections between them. Yet collectively they provide a set of concepts and methodologies that can be adapted to the history of other literary polities that have also privileged the writer, the sole-authored book and the nation at the expense of these other categories. In adapting some of their key concepts, especially the argument that sites of sociability are more than just the context for literary production but 'kinds of texts' that require reading and interpretation, and which produce their own forms of gendered literary subjectivity, the essays in *Republics of Letters* suggest some of the ways in which the concept of literary sociability can be used to map out a new field of inquiry in Australian literary history – or at least ways of reimagining existing accounts of that history. The sites of sociability examined here include literary journals and little magazines, literary societies, women's magazines, writers' friendship groups and workshops, libraries and their borrowers, institutions of

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6 Joan Shelley Rubin, *Songs of Ourselves: The Uses of Poetry in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007); *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); and *Constance Rourke and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

7 Russell and Tuite, pp. 19–20.

middlebrow culture, bohemias and bohemianism, literary avant-gardes, literary schools or movements, letter writing and epistolary communities, generationalism in Australian writing, readerships of crime fiction and other popular genres, poetry networks, gay and lesbian literary communities, the role of digital technologies in forming new kinds of community, communities of reading and recitation, and the significance of overseas readerships for Australian fiction.

In Australian humanities research, the 2000s have therefore seen the adoption of significant new methodologies that allow us to better appreciate the historically specific nature of the institutional, intellectual and social formations that support and enable literary culture. It is now accepted, for example, that literature, and texts in general, rather than merely reflecting the social conditions of their production, actively generate new forms of sociability. These innovations in methodology include the literary sociology of Pierre Bourdieu, with its central concepts of habitus and the field of cultural production; the rise of the history of the book, print culture studies, and the history of reading, with their stress on rigorous archival research into the materiality of print cultures and of social and intellectual formations, which are specific to particular kinds of institutions and locations.[8] These approaches have the capacity to shift our thinking about literary culture from the exclusive attention to individual books and great writers, apparently living and working in splendid isolation, to the historically constituted social and intellectual formations that sustain literary culture at levels of description both beyond and below that of the nation.

Still more recently, as we have seen, literary scholars have been challenged to place such richly informed studies of literary sociability at the local and national levels within the broader context of what Casanova calls 'world literary space'.[9] *The World Republic of Letters* takes a global perspective by stating that 'national literary space must not be confused with national territory.' After all, 'the legend of the nineties' in Australia happily excluded the nation's cities in order to celebrate the bush as a national signifier, just as it ignored the complex relations between Australian literary culture and the wider context of what historian Linda Young has usefully termed the 'Anglo-sphere' – the intricately connected literary cultures of Australasia, North America and the United Kingdom.[10] Casanova's point of departure is that, historically, the study of literature in the modern era has been dominated by nationalism. She attributes this to the rise of nationalism in Europe in the nineteenth century. Casanova believes that while we have been encouraged to think of literature exclusively in terms of national literatures, this is increasingly unrelated to the

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8 Examples include David Carter and Anne Galligan, *Making Books: Contemporary Australia Publishing* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2007); Tim Dolin, 'First Steps toward a History of the Mid-Victorian Novel in Colonial Australia', *Australian Literary Studies* 22.3 (2006): 273–293; Martyn Lyons and John Arnold, eds, *A History of the Book in Australia 1891–1945* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2001); Martyn Lyons and Lucy Taksa, *Australian Readers Remember: An Oral History of Reading 1890–1930* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992); and D.H. Borchardt and Wallace Kirsop, eds, *The Book in Australia: Essays towards a Cultural and Social History* (Melbourne: Centre for Bibliographical and Textual Studies, Monash University, 1988).

9 See Robert Dixon, 'Australian Fiction and the World Republic of Letters', in Peter Pierce, ed., *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

10 Linda Young, *Middle-Class Culture in the Nineteenth Century: America, Australia and Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

realities of a globalising world. Her book is dedicated to moving beyond nationalism in literary study, and looking instead at how all books and authors participate in what she thinks of as a world literary system. For much of the last twenty-five years, work on such concepts as 'invented traditions' and 'imagined communities' has been driven by the conceptually strong category of the nation. In his influential book *Imagined Communities* (1983), Benedict Anderson argued that textual forms such as the newspaper and the novel offered important ways of 'imagining' the modern nation state by creating powerful representations of community and national distinction.

For much of its history, Australian literature has been studied as a *national* literature: that is, as an expression of the national character or way of life developed through the shared experience of place; as an organic tradition of books and authors developing through time. This model of the imagined community has influenced all of the major histories of Australian literature: from H.M. Green's *A History of Australian Literature* (1961), through such keynote edited volumes as Leonie Kramer's *Oxford History of Australian Literature* (1981), Laurie Hergenhan et al.'s *Penguin New Literary History of Australia* (1988), Bruce Bennett and Jennifer Strauss' *Oxford Literary History of Australia* (1998), Elizabeth Webby's *Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature* (2000), and Peter Pierce's *Cambridge History of Australian Literature* (2009), to the *Macquarie Pen Anthology of Australian Literature* (2010) under the general editorship of Nicholas Jose. When imagined communities other than the nation have been considered, they have typically been at the level of large political and social units just below the level of the nation, such as the city or the state, but rarely smaller, more contingent social and intellectual formations.[11]

As Carter reminds us, however, Casanova's world republic of letters is not a benign space, but is structured in conflict, competition and dominance, with some national literatures being older, richer and more powerful than others. While the richest literatures, the ones with the most cultural capital, are the oldest, newer literatures like those of nineteenth-century America and Australia are relatively impoverished; their cultures are thin. What makes the older literatures stronger, Casanova argues, is that they have risen above merely national considerations. In the oldest nations, literature has become 'autonomous' – that is, it is recognised as being of 'universal' value and not merely an expression of the national culture. In Casanova's view, the country in which literary autonomy has been most strongly achieved is France, and, as the spatial centre of the modern world of letters, Paris sets the standards of taste in the same way that time is taken internationally from the Greenwich Meridian in London:

> At stake in the competition … is mastery of just this measure of time (and space), which is to say the power to claim for oneself the legitimate present of literature and to canonize its great writers … If modernity is the sole present moment of literature, which is to say what makes it possible to institute a measure of time, the literary Greenwich Meridian makes it possible to evaluate and recognize the

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11 For examples of city and state-based histories see John Docker, *Australian Cultural Elites: Intellectual Traditions in Sydney and Melbourne* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1974); Delia Falconer, *Sydney* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2010); and Patrick Buckridge and Belinda McKay, eds, *By the Book: A Literary History of Queensland* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2007).

quality of a work or, to the contrary, to dismiss a work as an anachronism or to label it 'provincial'.[12]

Although she has been criticised for being too French-centred,[13] Casanova does concede that, in addition to Paris, the world literary system also has other centres that set standards, and that are dominant in their own way. These include London and New York, which dominate the English-speaking world in the same way that Paris does world literature as a whole. By implication, the closer a writer is to one of these great centres, the closer he or she is to modernity and to the present. To be in a rich metropolitan community like London or Paris or New York is to be modern and up to date; to be of the present in terms of time and at the centre in terms of space. To work in a new national literature like Australia's is to be belated or old fashioned in terms of time and provincial in terms of space; it is to belong to the literary suburbs.

In Casanova's model, then, the world is organised into richer and poorer cultural spaces that are in competition with each other. National literary communities are inward looking and backward: they are, in a word, provincial. They show a lack of interest in translation and the literatures of other countries. Writers have a choice of either remaining inside such inward-looking cultures and being recognised as national writers, or aspiring to write in the style of international modernity – to be guided by the Greenwich Meridian of literature. To do this they must leave home, read widely in other literatures, learn other languages, and sometimes become expatriates. To become a citizen of Casanova's world republic of letters is therefore a kind of treason against one's national literature:

> World literary space is … organized in terms of the opposition between, on the one hand, an autonomous pole composed of those spaces that are most endowed in literary resources, which serves as a model and a recourse for writers claiming a position of independence in newly formed spaces (with the result that Paris emerged as a 'denationalized' universal capital and a specific measure of literary time was established); and, on the other, a heteronomous pole composed of relatively deprived literary spaces at early stages of development that are dependent on political – typically national – authorities.

> The internal configuration of each national space precisely mirrors the structure of the international literary world as a whole. Just as the global space is organized with reference to a literary and cosmopolitan pole, on the one side, and a political and national pole on the other, each of its constituent spaces is structured by the rivalry between what I shall call 'national' writers (who embody a national or popular definition of literature) and 'international' writers (who uphold an autonomous conception of literature).[14]

Casanova's own values are explicitly in favour of international writers. These are the ones who are discontented with their provincial culture, who are not happy to live in

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12 Casanova, p. 90.

13   For a wide range of responses to Casanova's book, many critical, see Christopher Prendergast, ed., *Debating World Literature* (London: Verso, 2004).

14 Casanova, p. 108.

the literary suburbs and be recognised merely as national writers, but who want to test themselves in the great centres of international literary space. This requires a break with the past and with the community of the nation. For Casanova, the great heroes of world literature include exiled and expatriate writers like Henry James, Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett and Salman Rushdie.

An alternative to the hard binary oppositions that appear to organise Casanova's thinking – national versus international literary space, the metropolis versus the literary suburb – can be found in the work of American critic Wai Chee Dimock, which provides a more nuanced way of imagining the relations between national and international communities of reading. Like Casanova, Dimock is concerned with developing new forms of literary history that move beyond the nation as an imagined community; but, where Casanova is a true comparativist, Dimock is a specialist in American literature whose interest is in opening up the study of national literatures to transnational perspectives. In *Through Other Continents*, she describes the 'playing field' of literary culture as a transnational, even 'planetary', community that is 'brought into being by that most minute, most intimate of acts, the act of reading', which 'generates relational ties that can … extend for thousand of miles and thousands of years'.[15] Dimock goes on to develop both a theory of the text and a phenomenology of reading, which she calls 'proximate' reading, in which citations within the apparently bounded, national text are traced like threads into transnational space and what she calls 'deep time':

> what we called 'American' literature is quite often a shorthand, a simplified name for a much more complex tangle of relations. Rather than being a discrete entity, it is better seen as a crisscrossing set of pathways, open-ended and ever multiplying, weaving in and out of other geographies, other languages and cultures. These are input channels, kinship networks, routes of transit, and forms of attachment – connective tissues binding America to the rest of the world.[16]

Dimock's argument therefore has the potential to break down Casanova's seemingly hard opposition between national and international communities of reading. As a crisscrossing set of pathways, a national text can also belong to a wider world. In her later book, *Shades of the Planet*, Dimock draws on mathematical set theory to describe the volatile relation between apparently hierarchical concepts like the local, the national and the transnational. Instead of thinking of such terms as being in an ascending vertical scale that is fixed or rigid, she argues that we can think of them as sets of nested categories that are unstable and recursive. She calls these reversible hierarchies *heterarchies*, using this notion to explain the manifold relations that are possible between local, pre-national, national, transnational and planetary communities of reading. Where Casanova implies that the relation between them is hierarchically arranged – Paris always prior or superior to the province in space and time – Dimock suggests ways in which, in our own reading practice, they can become productively unstable. This can happen in our reading especially at moments when literary

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15   Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 8.

16   Dimock, p. 3.

citations act like 'a kind of switch mechanism … in the reversible hierarchy between the local and the global'.[17]

As a number of the case studies in this volume indicate, the implications of these approaches for our thinking about Australian literature and Australian writers can be quite profound. What does it mean, for example, for a writer to identify as 'Australian', and yet to have their formative experiences in specific avant-garde networks in London and New York, as was the case for Patrick White? What does it mean for a writer to be described as 'Australian', and yet live and work for the bulk of their career abroad, as was the case for Christina Stead? What kinds of social and intellectual networks sustained such careers in writing across a series of levels – the local, the national, and the international? What kinds of connections exist between those levels to sustain and make possible the phenomenon of an Australian career that takes place on the international stage? And what kinds of differences exist across those levels to produce distinct communities of reading for each of which such a writer's work may have fundamentally different meanings? Casanova's concept of 'the republic of letters' and Dimock's concepts of 'deep time' and 'heterarchy' are stimulating to literary historians precisely because they enable us to think of both writing and reading as being conducted across a spectrum of imagined communities or networks of sociability. Casanova's literary 'republic' is both flexible and scalable, allowing us to view literature as a semi-autonomous transnational space that is the product of specific national and even local histories, and yet not governed by them but rather by its own laws and politics: the literary 'republic', she writes, is

> a world in which the ways and means of literary art are argued over and decided; … a world that has its own capital, its own provinces and borders, in which languages become instruments of power.[18]

While acknowledging Casanova's influence in our own title, *Republics of Letters* takes her work as a point of departure rather than a conceptual focus. Her book is about literature as a global polity rather than about what she calls the literary 'province' or 'suburb'. Our book, by contrast, is very much concerned with more local, even avowedly provincial, forms of literary polity: some of the towns and villages and nomad tribes of the world republic of letters, albeit in relation to world literary space – how they evolve, how they structure themselves, how they have been enabled by evolving forms of communications technologies, from print to the internet, and how they view themselves in relation to Australia as a national, and indeed international, space. The essays collected here explore a variety of networked relationships among writers, readers and texts, with an emphasis on processes of literary sociability that often elide or exceed the 'imagined community' of the nation.

The essays in *Republics of Letters* are divided into four thematic groups: 'Part 1 – Sites of Sociability, Scenes of Reading'; 'Part 2 – Republics of Letters: Local, National and

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17 Wai Chee Dimock, 'Introduction: Planet and America, Set and Subset', in Wai Chee Dimock and Lawrence Buell, eds, *Shades of the Planet: American Literature as World Literature* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 13.

18 Casanova, p. x.

International Literary Communities'; 'Part 3 – Sociality, Gender and Genre'; and 'Part 4 – Unsettlements: Emerging Literary Communities'.

Those in 'Part 1 – Sites of Sociability, Scenes of Reading' explore or exemplify key definitions in the relationship between writing, reading and sociality in what Joan Shelley Rubin calls 'text-centred communities'. In Australian scholarship, there is already a strong tradition of this kind of research on nineteenth-century literary culture, perhaps because in pre-Federation literature, as Andrew McCann observes, the nation functions as an *absence*.[19] The importance of private patronage, private libraries, and the enabling role of personal correspondence among intimate though often far-flung networks of writers and readers can be glimpsed, for example, in Ann-Mari Jordens' account of man of letters Nicol Drysdale Stenhouse and his circle in Sydney in the 1850s, and Eileen Chanin's account of the life and times of nineteenth-century book collector David Scott Mitchell.[20] This work is extended into the early twentieth century in Drusilla Modjeska's and Carole Ferrier's accounts of the loosely affiliated network of Australian women writers centered on Nettie Palmer, and in Peter Kirkpatrick's study of bohemian circles in Sydney in the 1920s.[21]

Among the new case studies offered here, Kylie Mirmohamadi's discussion of the Australasian Home Reading Union suggests that even in the 1890s, on the eve of Federation, there was considerable uncertainty about how such reading communities might be mapped onto established or indeed emerging political entities, including empire, state and nation. Julieanne Lamond examines how we might best use library loans records to describe and define local reading communities. Using innovative digital modelling, she shows that, contrary to nationalist literary histories that saw forms of vernacular realism supplanting the British–Australian romance fiction of authors such as Rosa Praed, 'realist' and 'romance' writers were in fact 'part of the same literary culture, and read by the same people' a century ago.

Patrick Buckridge reveals the extraordinary number of literary and cultural societies that flourished in Brisbane in the 1920s, contributing to what he describes as 'the active creation of a liberal polity' during the otherwise turbulent interwar period. Despite this apparently local focus, many, indeed most, of these societies, as their names indicate, were affiliated with wider forms of imagined community: *L'Alliance Francaise*, the Brisbane Shakespeare Society, *Der Brisbane Goethe Bund*. The power of book publishing on the wider Australian polity in the twenty-first century is the subject of Jan Zwar's chapter. She uses 'empirical mapping' – data from Nielsen BookScan, Factiva and parliamentary records – to examine the impact of books on the asylum-seeker debate of the 2000s. Patterns of reviews, media mentions, academic citations and references in parliament can indicate

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19   Andrew McCann, *Marcus Clarke's Bohemia* (Carlton: Melbourne University Publishing, 2004), p. 7.

20   Ann-Mari Jordens, *The Stenhouse Circle: Literary Life in Mid-Nineteenth Century Sydney* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1979); Eileen Chanin, *Book Life: The Life and Times of David Scott Mitchell* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2011).

21   Drusilla Modjeska, *Exiles at Home: Australian Women Writers 1925–1945* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1981); Carole Ferrier, ed., *As Good as a Yarn with You: Letters Between Miles Franklin, Katharine Susannah Prichard, Jean Devanny, Marjorie Barnard, Flora Eldershaw and Eleanor Dark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Peter Kirkpatrick, *The Sea Coast of Bohemia: Literary Life in Sydney's Roaring Twenties*, 2nd edn (Curtin University of Technology: API Network, 2007 [1992]).

in what ways books, and those who write and publish them, remain 'actively part of the democratic process'.

In 'Part – 2 Republics of Letters: Local, National and International Literary Space', a number of contributors take up the problem of thinking about how Australian literary space and time relate to international literary space and time. In the concluding chapter of *The Cambridge Literary History of Australia* (2009), Philip Mead expresses this two-way flow between the global and the local in the following way:

> Generally speaking, post-national Australian literary studies have been moving in two directions: towards transcultural comparisons and contexts, and towards readings of the local. These different spatial turns may appear antithetical – global or transnational versus regional or local – but in critical practice they are complementary. Much work in contemporary literary studies is an attempt to understand and articulate the complexities of the imaginary places, locales, districts and regions of literary texts and their recursive relations to the multi-faceted experience of actual, lived places.[22]

In moving toward such a 'post-national' formation, however, there is a danger of evacuating the space at the centre that was formerly occupied by the nation. As American literature specialist Paul Giles argues, the reason for introducing transnational perspectives into the study of national literatures is not to transcend national cultures, as if that were either possible or desirable, but to provoke discussion on 'the meaning of the "national" today'.[23] For other contributors to this volume, including Rubin, Robert Dixon, and Nicole Moore and Christina Spittel, the nation remains one among the numerous and recursively articulated categories of imagined community; it retains a spectral presence as a fundamental category of cultural policymaking, literary marketing, readership and affect.

In light of renewed interest in the concept of world literature by Casanova, Franco Moretti, David Damrosch and others,[24] Robert Dixon explores how Australian literature – as a disciplinary formation and as an imagined community of writers, readers and critics – can negotiate between provincial, national and world literary space. At what appears to be a time of unprecedented internationalisation, can Australian literature be considered a world literature, or does it remain a relatively minor national literature embedded uncertainly in world literary space? Dixon welcomes the turn toward transnational comparativism as a way of opening up the national literature, of seeing a national literature simultaneously from close up and from far away. But he is sceptical of a tendency in much of the rhetoric about world literature to place national and world literature in a relation of 'sublimation': that is, a preference for the transnational above the local; 'deep time' and the *longue durée* above 'local irregularities'; expansion rather than contraction of the frame of reference. In close readings of Joseph Furphy's *Such is Life* (1903) and Henry Handel Richardson's *Maurice Guest* (1908), he resists, like Carter, the tendency toward hard binaries, seeing a

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22   Philip Mead, 'Nation, Literature, Location', in *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*, p. 551.

23   Paul Giles, *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 17.

24   See David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003); and Franco Moretti, 'Conjectures on World Literature', *New Left Review* 1 (2000): 55–67.

recursive relation between the metropolitan and the provincial as characteristic of the way national literatures are embedded in international literary space.

In his case study of *Desiderata*, a literary journal published in Adelaide from 1929 to 1939, David Carter studies the cross-currents of literary modernism's reception among elite and middlebrow circles in this provincial city. On the basis of fresh archival research, he proposes an elegant model of the relations between local and international literary space, extending from Anglocentrism at one end to provincialism at the other, reflecting Casanova's distinction between national and international orientations. But in an innovative turn that resists and complicates her often hard binaries, he suggests that we can distinguish provincial and modernising forms of cultural identification at both ends of the spectrum. *Desiderata* illustrates 'that cultural nationalism was not the only alternative to the colonial condition and … that British cultural domination was not simply domination but involved a complex network of attachments and transfers of value that could be worked in both directions'. In an analogous way, in his chapter on the Jindyworobak poets, Peter Kirkpatrick shows how that movement's seemingly narrow cultural nationalism is in fact complicated by its international affinities with modernist primitivism and the avant-garde. In Casanova's terms, although their founder Rex Ingamells insisted on the 'centrifugal' primacy of national space, in their appropriation of Aboriginal culture they were nonetheless bound up with 'the centripetal forces that strengthen the autonomous and unifying pole of world literary space'.[25]

The reading nation, the *Leseland* – or at least distinct reading formations within two separate national polities – remains an important determinant in Nicole Moore and Christina Spittel's comparative study of the reception of Dorothy Hewett's novel *Bobbin Up* (1959) in Australia and the German Democratic Republic. These distinct reception histories work 'as revealingly transposed opposites', as between 1949 and 1990 Australian titles published in East Germany formed 'an alternative canon, a shadowy literary archive that rewrites Australia's post-war cultural history from behind the iron curtain'. In Australia, the networks of production and reception for *Bobbin Up* were focused on the Australian Book Society, and in the GDR on that nation's centralised cultural administration. This meant that its readerships in Australia were at once nationally distinctive but internally marginal within the wider culture of the Menzies era. Moore and Spittel's case study is also sensitive to the discursive frames – humanist, universalist, socialist and feminist – which allowed for the transnational mediation of meanings between these two distinct though internally diverse national cultures of reading. They argue that 'Eastern Bloc editions … formed threads along which literary realisations of intensely localised expressive identity, as *Bobbin Up* so thoroughly is, travelled beyond themselves and their reading worlds'.

Fiona Morrison treats the reception history of Christina Stead's once neglected masterpiece *The Man Who Loved Children* (1940) as a case study in the complex relations between the centres of international literary space and the literary province. This difficult and anomalous book was written by an expatriate Australian about her Australian childhood, but the setting was transferred to America during the Depression years of the 1930s at the behest of her American publisher, Simon & Schuster. Focusing on the two introductions to

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25   Casanova, p. 109.

the novel by American authors Randall Jarrell (1965) and Jonathan Franzen (2010), which were instrumental in its periodic revival, Morrison describes them as

> cosmopolitan intermediaries translating and ushering a peripheral Stead into American centres of literary value … [and] play[ing] a central role in what Casanova suggests is a contemporary transnational literary field magnetised to vectors of value, dominance, circulation and reputation.

Taking account of the impact of new social networking technologies, Philip Mead begs the question of how 'literary versions of human collectivity' might now be understood in a world where '[c]onnectivity is rapidly evolving in a posthuman world, replacing community'. In suggestive readings of two recent works with strong local focuses – Kim Scott's *That Deadman Dance* (2010) and John Kinsella's *Divine Comedy: Journeys through Regional Geography* (2008) – Mead models a critical practice that overrides Casanova's binarisms by attending to the multiple possibilities of time, space, identity and collectivity that these textual spaces bring into being. As he writes: 'Communities are dimensional in the way space is: they exist in time, in historical incarnations, but also in the existential constellations of individual consciousness. Multiple and virtual, they are always expanding and shifting'.

The essays in 'Part 3 Sociality, Gender and Genre' trace the dynamic social interface between these three terms, re-engaging, as did Russell and Tuite in their work on British Romanticism, with the gendering of literary sociality and the access of women to creative agency. Michelle De Stefani's study of Hannah Boyd's *Letters on Education* (1848) exemplifies Rubin's understanding of literary sociability as an invitation 'to contemplate texts as sources of relationships'. As a study in colonial readerships, it also connects with Russell and Tuite's work on gendered networks of romantic sociability, confirming their argument that sociability is best conceived as both a practice and a value. Using aspects of narratological and reader-response theory, De Stefani demonstrates how this early example of parenting literature interpellates the individual reader into a wider community of parent-readers in both space and time through its metacommentary on literary tradition, while at the same time generating a new and distinctive community of readers in the specific context of mid nineteenth-century New South Wales: 'For the first time the rural mothers of Australia were directly addressed by parenting literature specific to their individual circumstances and predicaments'. In creating a series of communal relationships between the author and reader, between the reader and other colonial mothers, and also with 'expert authors and parents everywhere', Boyd's *Letters* demonstrate how Rubin's 'everyday reading practices' generate multiple forms of engagement: 'the physical object' of the book 'creates for readers a shared community with the present, and also, with the past'; with the immediate context of rural New South Wales but also with parent-readers 'everywhere'.

Susan K. Martin reconstructs the emerging colonial readership for British sensation fiction, complicating her account of gendered sociability by contrasting the reception of Mary Braddon's novel *Lady Audley's Secret* with spectatorship of its stage adaptation in Melbourne in the early 1860s. She draws here on one of the classic models of eighteenth-century sociability, which John Dwyer refers to as the theatrical, performative or 'spectatorial' model of sociality.[26]

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26 John Dwyer, 'Enlightened Spectators and Classical Moralists: Sympathetic Relations in Eighteenth-

As the publishers of the avant-garde journal *Angry Penguins*, the small firm of Reed & Harris is well known in the history of Australian literature. What is less well-documented is its dealings with the women writers Cynthia Reed (later Nolan) and Elisabeth Lambert. Jane Grant looks at the company's correspondence, 'a far-flung epistolary community', and traces the fortunes of Cynthia's first two novels, in order to recover these two neglected figures for Australian modernism during its most tumultuous period.

In her essay on mid twentieth-century women's journalism, Susan Sheridan considers some of the strategies that women writers used to bridge the gap between their hard-earned place in the literary field and their bread-and-butter work for popular women's magazines. Her case studies of Kylie Tennant, Charmian Clift and Barbara Jefferis suggest that writers must negotiate different forms of professional identity as they move from one literary institution to another – from the novel to women's magazines – each of which has its unique networks of sociability and values. When Tennant began writing for the *Woman's Mirror* in 1961, for example, she felt that she had made her name as a novelist by 'opposing all the things' the women's magazines stood for. Jefferis dealt with the problem by adopting the pen-name 'Margaret Sydney' and assuming the persona of 'an everywoman'. While writing for the women's pages created 'a fragile community of women writers and readers', Sheridan argues that it was too bound up with the gendering of the domestic sphere to constitute 'a positive counter-public sphere', which was not achieved until the rise of women's presses, like Virago, in the 1970s.

D'Arcy Randall's essay on the Seven Writers group in Canberra in the 1970s and 1980s is a case study of literary sociability richly informed by both archival and oral history. It explores the internal dynamics of this group who worked collaboratively for a generation to nurture and critique each others' writing, publishing both individually and collectively while resisting becoming a 'school'. Meeting in each others' homes to workshop manuscripts and discuss the business of publication, Seven Writers are an example of what Russell and Tuite describe as a site of private sociability: writer Sara Dowse speaks of '"a room of her own" … crowded with seven writerly spirits'. Randall explores the complex and fruitful interaction between the more formal and informal parts of the workshops, describes both the internal dynamics of the group and its relations with outsiders, and considers the role of gender in this 'Australian women's literary community' at a time when other writers' networks, especially in the major cities, were overwhelmingly masculine, and located in other sites of sociability, such as the pub and the writers' festival.

As we have seen, networks of literary sociability are partly cultural and social, but they are also enabled by broader developments in the fields of communications technology and intellectual property associated with the phenomena of globalisation. *Republics of Letters* therefore also situates itself within recent 'new modernism' studies, and in particular those involved with 'vernacular modernities'; that is to say, the impact of increasingly rapid technological changes upon the material culture of everyday life and its social formations.[27]

Century Scotland' in John Dwyer and Richard B. Sher, eds, *Sociability and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), p. 96.

27   See Robert Dixon and Veronica Kelly, 'Australian Vernacular Modernities: Peoples, Sites and Practices', in Robert Dixon and Veronica Kelly, eds, *Impact of the Modern: Vernacular Modernities in Australia 1870s to 1960s* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2008), pp. xiii–xiv.

'Part 4 – Unsettlements: Emerging Literary Communities' examines some of the ways in which new forms of literary sociability come into being – sometimes through generational change or the global movement of people, sometimes stimulated by new communications technologies, and sometimes in response to government policy. The essays in this section remind us of Russell and Tuite's foundational definition of literary sociability as both 'a practice and a value', a 'heavily contested term' that is implicated in specific cultural politics.

This section begins with Keri Glastonbury's forward-looking account of how newly imagined communities might be at play in contemporary digitised literary cultures. As Michael Farrell observes, a textual community is conventionally defined as people brought together by shared texts or reading practices, though 'such a bringing together may be virtual, through online networks'. Recognising that imagined communities, even in Anderson's classic formulation, are indeed 'imagined', papering over forms of difference and inequality, Farrell examines a seemingly disparate group of texts by Charles Harpur, Norman Harris and Dorothea Mackellar that betray the 'plural knowledges of the past', forms of poetry that do not support the settlement upon which the imagined community of the nation depends. These are works that by virtue of their aberrant style and form and stance have been left to one side of the cultural nationalist canon, even when written by poets like Harpur and Mackellar, who otherwise have been enlisted into that settlement. They form, he argues, a community of 'wild' or 'fugitive' texts distinguished by 'their disinterest in building a national literature'.

Lindsay Barrett interrogates the remarkable effectiveness of John O'Grady's *They're a Weird Mob* – Australia's most popular novel of the 1950s – in negotiating for middlebrow Australian readers the tensions that had arisen between an older version of the 'imagined community' and the new, physical community brought into being by postwar migration. In this sense, Barrett argues, it was 'an intensely ideological work of fiction'.

In contrast to O'Grady's local popularity, Jeremy Fisher questions why G.M. Glaskin, whose books sold well in Europe and America, failed to find critical acclaim and a substantial audience here. Beyond some influential mentors in his hometown of Perth, Glaskin 'never seemed to fit in to the Australian literary community'. His international standing may not have helped, but neither did his homosexuality, and his frank writing about same-sex desire at a time when such themes were still taboo. Ann Vickery, on the other hand, traces how, since the 1980s, periodicals and anthologies have enabled a protean space in which forms of gay and lesbian poetic community have come into being. Historically, queer subcultures have been 'hermetic', lacking an open speaking position within heteronormative society, and Vickery proposes that this place of negativity in relation to the straight world 'may find affinity with poetry's notorious obscurity'.

Lachlan Brown's account of a writing workshop for young refugees in the western suburbs of Sydney, sponsored by the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation in 2009, is a vivid example of Rubin's axiom that texts both produce networks of sociality and are produced by them. The pieces by refugee writers also confirm her argument that sociability is heterogeneous and unstable, embracing both engagement with and subtle resistance to or difference from dominating forms of identity, including narratives of

national belonging. Brown notes a distinct and recurring ambivalence about 'Australia' that unsettles the writing by refugees: Tamil, Afghan or Iraqi identities are withheld and 'in play', always ready to 'overshadow any sense of Australian nationality or citizenship, and those sets of "values" that are required or promoted by the government'.

Bonny Cassidy brings this volume to a lyrical close with an account of a journey through outback New South Wales and South Australia that generates a very different form of literary sociality by 'discover[ing] an infinite community of distance and scale'. In seeking connection with the various landscapes she encounters – 'the grammar in being here' – Cassidy considers the relationship between painting and poetry, while locating her own writing process within a neighbourhood of influences that includes Fred Williams, Rover Thomas, Barry Hill, Jennifer Rankin and Charles Buckmaster.

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