Chapter Four

The 'Great Empire Of The South':
The Firm's Post-Federation
Australian Pantomimes and their
Implications for Australian
Drama.

1 Term used to described the new nation of 'Australis' in the 1900 arrangement of that name.
Introduction.

Stuart MacIntyre (1986) explains that the range of views within a "burgeoning national consciousness" around the time of Federation highlights the fact that representations of the new nationalism were undeniably ambiguous.

Were the Australian people to chart their own course, alone, as William Lane had prophesied? 'Behind us lies the Past, with its crashing empires, its falling thrones, its dotard races; before us lies the future into which Australia is plunging, this Australia of ours that burns with the feverish energy of youth.' Or were they instead to hold fast to the 'crimson thread of kinship'? This was how a representative of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce, in London for the passage of the Commonwealth Constitution Act, reassured his audience: We sometimes talk of a new nation under the Southern Cross. This is scarcely correct; we are not a new nation - we don't want to be - but in reality we are only part of a nation, a large and growing part...[and] desire nothing better than to be a part of the great people from whom we have sprung.²

These positions were certainly unequivocal, but they lay at the extreme edges of a wide spectrum of opinion in which the quickening sense of separate identity fused with imperial loyalty. Many thought of themselves as 'independent Australian Britons' and saw no difficulty in building the new nation as a component of the Empire. Others, more impatient with Old World ties, found that their endeavours to forge a distinct national identity merely emphasized dependence (285).

J. C. Williamson remained steadfastly uncommitted to the Nationalist aim of 'Australia for Australians' and therefore saw no need to stage representations of an 'indigenous' Australian culture in his theatres. The elimination of the Australian pantomime writer from the Firm was a 'natural' consequence of both Williamson's judgement that Australia lacked talented dramatists (Australia was just a new nation, how could it have a great dramatist yet!) and the huge financial successes he achieved in the post-Federation period through importing mostly musical comedy and melodrama. Similarly, European 'new drama' lived in the margins of his enterprise as the Firm brought out productions of Ibsen, Shaw and Maeterlinck within the repertoire of stars who mostly acted in conventional melodramas and comedies. This was the case for Janet Achurch, Nance O'Neill and Julius Knight.

This last chapter attempts firstly to look at how Williamson strengthened his theatrical importation business through a series of company partnerships which also

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Chapter 4: The Great Empire of the South 295
exposed his continuing domination of the Firm. Nonetheless, partnerships *per se*
expose the 'liminal' nature of the theatre entrepreneur's personal and professional
relationships as the space in which *his* success was created. These range from his
husband-wife acting partnership with Maggie Moore to the managerial partnerships
with George Musgrove, Arthur Garner, Gustav Ramaciotti, George Tallis, Clyde
Meynell, and Rupert Clarke and others. The Firm's evolution out of a husband and
wife acting partnership also raises further questions of the way gender issues impacted
on the construction of the pre-1914 Australian theatre industry, while Williamson's
other management partnerships expose the acceptance of competitiveness as a
masculine trait.

Regardless, all the partnerships enhanced Williamson's status in the Firm as
he reportedly continued to shape its policies and business decisions. Despite his
supposed 'retirement' in 1907, newspapers continued to report his many ventures
overseas for the purpose of 'gathering new impressions and in other ways preparing
to mould the dramatic future of Australia' (Age 5 March 1908). Furthermore,
conflicts which arose between the partners, such as the hostility between Williamson
and Musgrove, show that the Firm's partners still shared political opinions on
Australia's role in the Empire and the place of an Actor's and Musician's Union in
theatre industry.

As Harry Musgrove related, the final break-up of Williamson and
Musgrove's partnership in 1899 even became physical on one occasion. This was
precipitated by Musgrove's decision to go it alone and manage Nellie Stewart, whom
Williamson had not paid well enough for her 'starring' roles in many of the Firm's
successful productions.

[Nellie Stewart] had a capital vehicle in the opera 'Paul Jones'. Her father and a man
named McMahon were supposed to be with her in the venture, but it was really
George Musgrove who was behind her. Thus the friction between the Triumvirate
began. The opera was an astounding success, and a ceaseless exodus of dancing girls
took place from the Princess to the Opera House. Soon this got on James Cassius's
nerves. When he was told one day that still another valuable girl had gone over to
Nellie Stewart, he uttered a loud exclamation, grabbed his hat, gripped his cigar with
his teeth and burred the road to the Opera House. Those who saw him got out of
his way. He strode in through the front of the theatre where a rehearsal was going
on, and disappeared behind the curtain onto the stage, where George Musgrove
happened to be. Everybody listened for the falling of heavy bodies. The well-known

Chapter 4 : The Great Empire of the South 296
dull thud seemed to be overdue. Loud voices grew softer, then died away. The rest was silence. Only, some time afterwards two large men, holding each other's arms affectionately lurched on unsteady feet from the manager's room (Table Talk, 16 September 1926, 9).

Harry Musgrove's dramatic account thus ends with Williamson's and Musgrove's equally dramatic reconciliation, an image fundamental to the capitalist notion of businessmen as 'friendly rivals'. Such an image shows us the inherent contradictions of the managers' hegemonic control of the pre-1914 Australian theatre industry. Furthermore, if, as Gramsci suggests, professionals and semi-professionals mediated 'between the masses of the people and the predominant class, and without their mediation in the cultural and social realm political hegemonization would remain an empty project' (Holub 1992, 24), then as members of that professional class, theatre managers show that their power to mediate between the imperialist hegemonic processes and their mass audiences was maintained despite personal dissension within their ranks as an 'historic bloc'.

Connell and Irving (1992) argue that the real power of the mercantile bourgeoisie (in which Williamson and Musgrove certainly saw themselves) at the turn of the century was largely illusionary. Instead, it was 'a hegemony in the making and it was not very entrenched'. Thus there was 'nothing natural nor automatic' about their ascendency.

Certainly, the struggle for political domination by the commercial bourgeoisie bulked very large, and it was in relation to it that a resistance from below developed in the form of populist radicalism. It was the advance of capitalist corporate enterprise that disorganised small producers and checked the upward mobility of wage-earners. Yet there was a hegemonic situation. Cultural processes were operating, especially through the mechanisms that were so important for the commercial bourgeoisie's economic and political domination: the savings bank, the joint-stock company, the mutual insurance fund, the building society and, in the political arena, the forms of representative, parliamentary democracy. On the other hand, the pattern of gender roles and family life was still shallow among groups of workers, and the organisations of civil society had difficulty in reaching a broad range of workers. When the subordinate class mobilised at the end of the century, the balance between these mechanisms would shift towards the family and civil society and a new hegemonic situation would develop (107)

That 'new hegemonic situation' was, of course, the 'nationalism' surrounding Australian Federation. Connell and Irving (1992), like other Australian historians such as Clark, McQueen and Macintyre, see Australian culture as masculinist, racist and militarist yet also, as J. F. Archibald was to characterise the

Chapter 4 : The Great Empire of the South 297
ideal reader of the *Lone Hand*, as wanting to be economically independent and, in the idealisation of the bush ethos, egalitarian, resourceful, contemptuous of authority and sardonically humorous (145).

Perhaps where Williamson's values differed the most from this bush ethos were his attitudes towards 'authority' which in his theatre practice took on an Anglophilic deference to the 'London hallmark'. As *Australis* suggests, he was certainly against 'Radical Nationalism'. Instead, like others in the mercantile bourgeoisie, he believed in investing the family with moral authority and was not adverse to wrapping up progress in the flags of the empire and state. As Connell and Irving (1992) contend, the bourgeoisie's 'full ideological ambit was the entire class structure; there were variations on the Anglo-Australianist theme to suit businessmen and the suburban or small town petit bourgeoisie' (145).

Therefore, the Firm should be seen in the context of the commercial bourgeoisie's attempt to acquire and maintain economic and political domination. Williamson's 1900 role as chairman of the musical committee on the 'Government Organising Committee for the Inaugural Celebrations of the Australian Commonwealth' is a reminder that he was anything but apolitical. In the 1901 official portrait of that committee, Williamson is pictured as one of sixty-two men from politics, the judiciary, commerce, journalism and the military who steered the course of the week-long celebrations in Sydney from 31 December 1900 to 8 January 1901.3 The committee's secretary was J. J. Keenan (1904), who also wrote the official publication on the Inaugural Celebrations, when he noted that the management of theatres, musical societies and sporting clubs were invited to form sectional committees, and to nominate one member to represent them on the official Organising Committee... The duties of this committee were to receive reports from the Sectional committees and to make recommendations dealing more with principle than detail, to the Government' (34).

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3 The faces are mounted on a large poster - too large, in fact, to satisfactorily reduce down and show on an A4 size paper. The poster (framed and glazed) is held at the Mitchell Library.
Interestingly, the nature of Williamson’s subsequent partnership with George Tallis and Gustav Ramaciotti has been reported in theatre history as far more harmonious than that of the ‘Triumvirate’. In Ramaciotti, Williamson found the expertise to negotiate with such complex financial institutions as the property market - it was Ramaciotti who risked the gamble of buying theatres, not Williamson - and loan finance. In Tallis, Williamson gained a loyal business manager whom he had ‘trained’ in the business from 1886. Undoubtedly an anchor throughout the entire pre-1914 period, one must not underestimate Tallis’s power or ability to organise the Firm into a successful theatrical importation business. He retired from J. C. Williamson Ltd in 1931. Melbourne Punch described Tallis’s role in the following complimentary way:

Everybody has heard of the man behind the gun, and the man behind the bassinet, and the man behind the Ministry, and the man behind nearly everything. He is the unknown genius who does all the work unknown and unapplauded. The ‘man behind’ the theatrical show is, paradoxical as it may seem, really the ‘man in front’. For the ‘man in front’ is the business manager and the business manager is the brain of the show. On him depends in greatest measure its success or failure. He has to possess a mixture of all the qualities which go to make success in other professions. He must have the guile of a lawyer, the eloquence of a parson, the astuteness of the stock and sharebroker, the urbanity of the popular physician, and joined to all this he must know his theatrical world like a book. He has to deal with the most difficult, the most touchy, the most contradictory class of human beings that exists - the stage folk. Only the business manager of a big theatre knows how many whims and eccentricities and idiosyncrasies the average actor or actress possesses and no two are alike (2 April 1908).

The company of Williamson, Tallis and Ramaciotti continued until its amalgamation with Clarke and Meynell Pty Ltd in 1911. This partnership was the inevitable consequence of two businesses trading in the same market with exactly the same products. On the evidence of contracts it would seem that Clarke and Meynell were seriously affecting J. C. Williamson’s supply of overseas productions, while the Firm was equally impeding Clarke and Meynell’s ability to distribute those products throughout Australasia, since the Firm controlled the larger and better equipped theatres, such as Her Majesty’s in Sydney and Melbourne. Their amalgamation made ‘good business sense’. As Tallis explained in the Sydney Morning Herald on 10 August 1911:

The principal objects of the combination are the raising of the artistic tone of productions brought to Australia and the regulation of the dates and the nature of the attractions to tour the States. At the present moment managers found operas and other big events clashing, to the detriment of both. The new combination would take over the following theatres: - Her Majesty's and the Theatre Royal, in

Chapter 4 : The Great Empire of the South
Melbourne; Her Majesty's, Theatre Royal, and Criterion, in Sydney; Theatre Royal, in Christchurch; Opera House, in Wellington; and Her Majesty's, in Brisbane. Theatres in Adelaide and Perth would be leased from time to time. The combination would keep about 10 to 12 expensive companies touring the States and New Zealand, commencing with Madame Melba's appearance in Sydney on September 2. It would cover the same range as that now covered by the present firms, and would be managed by a directorate composed of Messrs, J. C. Williamson, George Tallis, Hugh J. Ward, and Clyde Meynell.

Above all, Williamson's partnerships highlight the consensual nature of the theatre industry's organisation which 'organic intellectuals' like himself exploited through the loyalty and good-will given to them by others. This demonstrates that, as Adorno (1991) explains, 'whoever speaks of culture speaks of administration' (93).

The Firm's administration of culture thus raises questions of how totalitarian or democratic it was for those who worked in it. The evidence indicates that Williamson had the loyalty of his work force and that this came from his affirmation of them as 'professionals'. For instance, Rock Phillips, J. C. Williamson's property master, stated in 1914 that 'my firm gives us an absolute free hand to alter, improve, and invent new effects, furnishing, etc' (The Theatre, 1 December 1914). However, behind-the-scenes articles also describe the absolute control, for instance, which the Firm's stage directors had over their casts. As the New Idea explains in the case of Gerard Coventry and Mother Goose, the stage director was in complete control of the production. The pantomime thus configures in the history of the evolution of a 'director's theatre' in Australia.

He is the monarch of the realm. While the ballet is being taught its evolutions, the chorus its songs, and the animal brigade its steps, the director sits at a table with a model stage before him. Tiny wooden dummies represent the principals, the choruses, the ballet, the extras, the properties, and hour after hour he puzzles and plans till the whole problem is clear and he has a working model. Then he comes down and builds up the big machine from his plan. The parts have been rough-hewn; he polishes them, proves them, sees that they fit into their places. Slowly it grows under his hand. The singing is right, the marching is crisp and confident, the scenery is well made and properties are finished. The principals have parts perfect, the specialists arrive. Everyone, from the scene-hauler away up in the ceiling to the trap-worker away down in the basement, knows his cue (6 February 1907, 174).

The good morale of the Firm's employees should not obscure the fact that Williamson arrogantly claimed the right to decide the 'future for Australian drama'.

Nor should we ignore the limitations of his dramaturgical knowledge of 'good plays'. For instance, on returning from abroad in 1908, he gave an extraordinary condemnation of English playwrights and their unwillingness to write him 'good

Chapter 4: The Great Empire of the South

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melodrama' (Age, 5 March 1908). His reluctance to stage 'new drama' is overwhelmingly evident in the miniscule number of plays of this type which he staged.

The second half of the chapter thus attempts to consider the implications of Williamson's dramaturgical tastes for the Firm's imported and local drama. While post-1900 productions were predominantly melodramas and musical comedies, it is important not to oversimplify the case since the 'mix' of productions always aimed for, and paradoxically achieved, a sense of novelty: 'First Time in Australia', 'First Time in Sydney', 'First Time in 11 years' heralded countless productions between 1900 and 1914.

Williamson's objection to the 'new drama' was that it was too 'intellectual'. By the same token, he also objected to the criticism that the Firm was not interested in staging 'serious drama'. His dramaturgical thesis that plays should have 'heart', then should appeal to the eye, and lastly to the mind was also the foundation of his criticism of over-literary dramatic works which paid scant attention to their theatrical staging. It was no co-incidence that this was his chief criticism of Australian authors, among whom were Arthur Adams, Leon Brodsky and other fervent believers in an Australian 'Drama of Ideas'. Williamson's opinions on the lack of merit of local dramatists had important implications for the local pantomime during those years, by eliminating forever the Firm's employment of the local pantomime arranger. The Firm's 'imported pantomime' thus sat within a myriad of other imported productions, seemingly exploiting the Australian audience's hunger for the overseas product.

As Eric Irvin (1981) points out in Australian Melodrama, the idea that Australian managers were unsympathetic towards Australian drama had been around since the late 1850s. However, it had undoubtedly intensified in the 1890s. In noting the standard of productions in Australia at that time, for instance, The Dramatic Year Book and Stage Directory for the United Kingdom (1892) concluded that:

as a rule plays are excellently staged, mounted, dressed and performed, by full and capable companies, many of whom, if not exactly native born, are so to speak, native born into the profession, there is no special Australian school of stage art, either amongst actors or authors, and that not from any inherent weakness or death
of talent, but from reasons which will be shown. So far as actors are concerned, it arises partly from overcrowding in the ranks of the profession, caused by the wholesale importation of European and American Companies, and a misapprehension on the part of foreign artists themselves as to what will suit Australian tastes. For example, at the present moment of writing, out of the five Melbourne theatres, one is occupied by a newly imported Italian Opera Company, one by an entire American Sensation Play Company, a third by a complete English Dramatic Company, just brought out, a fourth by a London Burlesque Company, and the sole remaining one is, practically a closed Corporation, while in Sydney matters are but little better. Where, then are the colonial actors? Here, there, everywhere! - touring up country, or in Tasmania, New Zealand, or Queensland, or elsewhere. But this remarkable penchant for imported talent on the part of managers cuts both ways; for at least two of these new companies have been disastrous failures, and the members thereof have already learnt, to their sorrow that 'all is not gold that glitters' and to their astonishment, doubtless, that 'anything' is NOT 'good enough for Australia.' Dramatic authors are in still worse case, for owing to prejudice on the part of most managers, the stage portal is utterly barred against them, and they have literally 'no show' for their wares, no matter how meritorious. The parrot cry, 'The London Hall Mark,' effectually shuts them out, and managers go on, year in, year out, importing and presenting English plays, some good and successful, others worthless and failures, to the detriment of native talent (Barrett 1892, 580).

The late 1880s into the mid 1890s saw Alfred Dampier experimenting with an 'Australian' theatre at the Alexandra, Melbourne. But as Eric Irvin's (1981) and John Rickard's (1973) analyses of Dampier's work show, that 'experiment' was full of contradictions in its claim to being a 'national' theatre. Rickards, for instance, argues that Dampier's nationalism 'looked backwards rather than forwards' and that his concept of a 'land of romance' came from the image of a Gold Rush Australia (53). Similar claims might be made of William Anderson's management at the King's Theatre Melbourne, though perhaps On Our Selection exploits the bush tradition in more 'modern' ways than Dampier's bushranger melodrama. The early years of the century were, however, seen by some as good years for local drama, a time when perhaps it would really start to flourish, with productions such as Tapu, The Squatter's Daughter, Thunderbolt, Parsifal, On Our Selection, and many more documented by Margaret Williams (1983).

Williamson's productions of Tapu and Parsifal provide us with significant insights into the Firm's relationship to local drama at this time and how it maintained its emphasis on the high spectacle of nineteenth-century theatre rather than the 'new drama'. Parsifal, for instance, shows the extent of Williamson's commitment to 'muscular Christian' melodramas, their sense of propriety arising from what Foucault was to identify as the nineteenth-century's 'repressive [sexual] hypothesis'.

Chapter 4: The Great Empire of the South 302
Interestingly, *Parsifal* reads like a fairytale pantomime arrangement, without the topical jokes and specialty acts.

*Tapu* also sits interestingly within the overwhelming number of comic operas and musical comedies the Firm staged in the post-1900 years. The opera's representation of 'aboriginal' New Zealanders exposes the limits of Williamson's and Arthur Adams' dramaturgical ability to accommodate cultural diversity. Adams' bitter response to Williamson's production, staged while he was working in London, raises the question of who was most responsible for this, theatre manager or playwright? Like *Parsifal*, *Tapu* 's pantomimic qualities expose a lack of precision in exploring dramatic 'form'. Hence, a potentially radical drama showing 'interculturism' on the edge of 'empire', recouped its sense of cultural superiority by making the Maoris the cast of a 'new comic opera company' managed by an Australian entrepreneur!

The question thus arises as to how Williamson homogenised cultures and theatrical forms alike. The Firm's claim that it produced precise 'replicas' of London productions, a claim made, for instance, of the 1906 production of *Mother Goose*, is provocative in its implications for local actors and production crews working for the Firm. Firstly, it raises numerous industrial questions with regard to the status and wages of local artists. Not surprisingly, the more importations became the norm for the Firm, the more anti-unionist it became, as the 1910 - 1912 court cases between the company and the Musicians' and Actors' Union show.

The issue of the replication of London productions was not just an industrial but an artistic one. From 1906 onwards, the Australian pantomime became 'unlocalised' in its specific socio-political representations of Australian culture. But it is a mistake to imagine that the Firm passively re-staged English pantomimes in Australia. A comparison between its 1911 *Sinbad* and the 1907 English production by J. Hickory Wood shows the arrangement was changed in profoundly important ways to present a more virulent disparagement of 'Persians' than the English productions. This alerts us to the specificity of the Firm's choice of English, American or European drama and its pro-Imperialist views which realised Australia.
was in a different position to Mother England with regard to the 'yellow hordes' and the 'cannibal islands' surrounding it. Wood's *Sinbad*, staged at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, contains counter-hegemonic elements left out of the Australian production. Since local writers no longer carried out re-arrangements of the text, one assumes those were made by management and the production crew.

Given the Firm's enterprise in securing imported productions, it is not surprising that, besides the Federation pantomime *Australis*, the only local pantomime written in the 1900 - 1914 period was Monty Grover's 1903 arrangement of *Sleeping Beauty*. It had much more in common with earlier Australian productions of the 1870s, than with the more 'modern' pantomimes the company began to stage from 1906. A blatantly political text, it was both pro-nationalist and bitingly topical. Thus, it also promoted racist and sexist attitudes. The villain of the piece, for instance, was Maligna, 'a coloured alien'. Women were represented in the production mainly as a dark force or through their 'eugenic' function, as the vessel by which the next generation of British-Australians was to arrive.

Interestingly the arrangement was considered a failure which suggests that Williamson's taste in imported productions was shared by his audiences. The consciously political nature of Grover's script, however, again raises the issue of why Australian audiences now were so intolerant of diversifications in dramatic form, especially since the pantomimes of the 1860s and 1870s had apparently succeeded using equally conscious topical humour.

I conclude the chapter, therefore, by examining Arthur Adams' and Claude McKay's provocative debate over the 'lack' of Australian drama in the 1900 - 1914 period. Adams claimed there was no shortage of Australian playwrights, only an unwillingness on the part of managers to produce their works. McKay disputed this and argued that Adams' laments were those of a failed writer whose work amounted to nothing. Embroiled in their argument was the perennial dispute of the decade over the limitations/responsibilities of the commercial stage versus the need for a 'better type of play'. Those arguing for an 'Art theatre' were clearly Nationalist and, like Leon
Brodsky, found models in the English and American repertory movements and the Irish National theatre. As Brodsky stated in 1907, the first rule of the new Australian playwright should be 'no imitation of Shoreditch melodrama or Parisian farce, no rehash of cloak and sword plays, no aping Pinero, or Jones, or Bernard Shaw' (Lone Hand, 1 June, 224). Instead, the new drama should begin by depicting 'phases of Australian life. When once this has proved successful, the way should be open to more ambitious work.'

Williamson consistently argued that one of the difficulties facing theatre managers in Australia was the short length of the seasons which meant managers were always hard put to gain a return on their theatrical investment. (The Theatre, 2 July 1906). Inherent in this debate is the question of the cultural basis of his business and artistic decisions in the Firm. This, in turn, is undoubtedly related to the problems of describing popular theatre as either reflecting or transforming popular tastes. Certainly, the Firm's three attempts at producing local dramas during 1900 - 1914, when placed in the context of the sheer numbers of imported productions, suggest that theatre entrepreneurs exploited the contradictions within Australian Nationalism. More disturbingly, the loss of local pantomime writers in the post-Federation period signals a loss of confidence in the Australian dramatist's artistic ability, not only to 'depict phases of Australian life', but more ambitiously to use the theatre to transform it.
4.1: Theatrical Partnerships, 1874 to 1913.

Observing how Williamson operated in various professional partnerships between 1874 and 1913 is a politically confronting site from which to review the dynamics which transformed Williamson the 'secondary' American actor into the 'Napoleon of the Australian theatre'. Williamson managed the Firm in 'partnership' for nearly thirty-one out of the thirty-four years he worked as a manager in Australia. It is that fact which should be focused on as enabling 'his' company to powerfully shape Australian theatre history. After all, the business partnerships set up to define and manage the Firm did so in both philosophical and practical terms. In other words, they defined the company's 'theory of praxis'. Casson (1990) points out that 'one of the most unsatisfactory aspects of entrepreneurial theory is its failure to distinguish between the entrepreneur and the firm', a common mistake 'is to suppose that there can only be one entrepreneur per firm' (xvii - xviii).

Describing a plurality of subjects does not necessary guarantee (an)other history of the Firm if the new subjects neither challenge the totalising effects of the 'identity politics' of historicist accounts or the 'unbridgeable distance of the Other' of post-modernist discourses based on Lacanian theories of the origin of desire. Helga Geyer-Ryan (1994) believes Emmanuel Levinas' theory of 'absolute alterity' poses an alternative to Lacan in arguing for 'the assymetrical quality of human intersubjectivity':

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\text{according to Levinas, the same predicament, conceived of as the origin of desire, situates the self in an attitude of obligation to the other. Because the otherness of my fellow human being can never be totally disclosed to me, this absolute alterity, which is nevertheless the very guarantee of my intersubjective identity, is the existential abyss out of which concepts of desire, transcendence and infinity emerge, forcing me to experience every individual as a singularity (2).}
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A new history might thus arise out of an attempt to describe Williamson's obligation to other(s) since this is what predominantly constituted him as a human (and hence historical) subject. Similarly, taking *Life Story* as the culmination of all the 'auto/biographical' histories of Williamson up to 1913, Williamson's and subsequent Australian theatre historians' underrating of the importance of his various
theatrical partners can be shown to aptly inscribe (and describe) his 'domination' of both the Australian theatre industry and Australian theatre history. 'Partnerships' thus uncannily connect the historiographical concepts of remembering and forgetting.

In 'The Rhetoric of Forgetting', Helga Geyer-Ryan (1994) points out that the 'dialectic' between remembering and forgetting is historically coloured by the thinking of the first third of the twentieth century.

The theoreticians who based themselves upon them have absolved the school of Nietzsche and now wish to reconcile the school of historicism with an aggressive theory of forgetting. The representatives of this theory had for a while - in a quite undialectical way - praised the destructiveness of forgetting: 'History's fountain of youth is fuelled by Lethe. Nothing renews as effectively as oblivion.' Walter Benjamin's phrase, combining elements of Nietzsche with elements of Proust, clearly shows the opposition to historicism. Historicism itself was a product of the nineteenth-century, yet even at the beginning of the twentieth-century it forced that whole generation of the avant-garde who experienced the full force of historicism as a nightmare into unreserved appreciation of forgetting (27).

The bitter separation from Maggie Moore in 1891 and her battles with him over her right to play in Struck Oil in 1894, meant that Williamson left Moore out of his 'memoirs' altogether. Hence, my re-inscription of the importance of Maggie Moore in Williamson's Firm demonstrates how the 'Lethe' of previous histories have served to continually 're-new' Williamson's part in it. For instance, Nellie Stewart's (1923) outrage in her autobiography (35) over Moore's omission has been well noted by historians such as Ian Dicker and Ian Bevan, only to be dismissed as partisan, without any questioning of their own biased support of Williamson's neglect of his former partner. However, the question of whether or not Maggie Moore should be in Williamson's story also demonstrates that just adding to it does not necessarily mean that one 'transforms' it, an argument Phelan(1993) makes in her opposition to the 'politics of the visible'(11). An new historical account of Williamson must question 'the power of who is required to display what to whom' (26), otherwise it is bound to repeat the 'me-ism' and inquisitive 'inward gaze' of previous biographical histories.

While Maggie Moore was not the only 'victim' of Williamson's self-aggrandising biographies from 1882 to 1913, the marginalisation of his other business partners, George Musgrove, Arthur Garner, George Tallis, Gustav Ramaciotti, Arthur Allen and Hugh J. Ward, seems of a different order to the gender-biased treatment of
Moore. The differences rest on the irony that while Williamson's biographical histories emphasize Maggie Moore through her gender, they neuter their male subjects.

Thus, while his advent into Australian theatre history as part of a husband and wife acting team is duly noted as a widespread practice in nineteenth-century English, American and Australian theatres where actors predominantly married within the profession, Williamson's male partnerships are assumed to be purely for 'business' purposes. In *Actresses as Working Women* (1991), based on exhaustive analysis of census information from England, Wales and Scotland, theatre historian Tracy C. Davis concludes that seventy one percent of 25- to 29-year-old actresses had a spouse in some branch of theatrical or musical entertainment (43). Significantly then, partnerships such as Alfred Dampier and Katherine Russell; Arthur Garner and Blanche Stammers; George Darrell and Fanny Cathcart, and later Christine Peachey; William Anderson and Eugenie Duggan; Bland Holt and Florence Henderson, are reported as the harmonious subjection of the wife in support of her husband's career. By contrast, histories of male partnerships seem to be about the 'natural' rivalry between men (e.g. Gilbert versus Sullivan, Williamson versus Musgrove). Paradoxically, however, male competitiveness is also based on the notion that maleness denotes a Sameness based around the moral essentialism of 'Christian manliness' fundamental to the writing of the male body during this time (Hall 1994, 10).

Whenever moments of potential 'revolution' occur, such as suggesting that Maggie Moore was more 'valuable' than her husband in their acting partnership, they are (uncannily) overturned in later accounts. For instance, the *Australasian Sketcher* article of September 1874, used as evidence of Williamson's first impact on Australian theatre, was, in fact, entitled 'Mr and Mrs Williamson' and portrays Moore as a more talented actor than her husband.\footnote{This is also supported by Nellie Stewart's (1923) 'biased' opinion, when she strongly suggests that Maggie Moore was thought in her time to be more popular and talented than her husband (36).}

The article states that they first came to Australia in
order to then move on to England, where none other than Dion Bouicault was going to write a play for Moore.

Mrs. Williamson, who still prefers to be known upon the stage by her maiden name of Maggie Moore, is a native of San Francisco, and is only 20 years of age. Her parents are Irish, and were old colonists in Sydney, whence they left for California at the time of the gold discoveries in the latter country. Six years ago her father died, and she then went upon the stage, commencing in small parts, and obtaining much favour by her singing and dancing, both in San Francisco and the provinces of what is known as the Pacific slope. Three years ago she was engaged at the Metropolitan Theatre, and soon offers of engagement came from the east. But she preferred to remain in her native city, and so joined Mr McCulloch's establishment, where, until she left with her husband for Australia, she enjoyed an unrivalled popularity. Her success, however, was not obtained without hard work and much study, so that, although she is possessed of great natural vivacity and impulsiveness, her industry plays an important part in determining the success of her efforts. She has been conspicuous in some burlesque characters, such as Aladdin in the piece of that name. Her reputation, however, it will be seen, has been entirely Californian up to the time of her coming to this country. It is the intention of Mr. and Mrs. Williamson, when they have completed their engagements here, to proceed to Europe, where we believe Mr. Bouicault, who has expressed his high approval of Mrs. Williamson's talents, is going to write a piece expressly for her.

Yet the period 1874 - 1913 saw Moore's acting career becoming more and more tenuous, with her presentation in newspaper articles changing drastically after her separation from Williamson in 1891. Up to then she was described as 'bright and winning as an actress, and adorned with all the gifts of a true and loving wife'. Her role was to help her husband 'through all his experiences, sharing with him his successes and his triumphs, and proving that 'bright guiding star' which has assuredly had a large influence in leading him on to fame and fortune' (Leavitt 1887, 250). After 1891 she is very rarely mentioned in Williamson's newspaper interviews. Furthermore, Williamson's decision to move out of his acting partnership with her and into theatre management in 1882 with two other theatre managers, George Musgrove and Arthur Garner, is portrayed as a natural step in his career path. Maggie Moore is thus only characterised as a support to his career rather than decisive agent in the setting up of the Firm.

The husband and wife acting team is, therefore, an important site to construct a politically motivated gender analysis of nineteenth-century theatre. By considering gender to be 'a primary way of signifying relationships of power' (Scott 1988, 46) a discourse on the construction of 'relationships' can dynamically inform us of what might have 'actually happened' between actors and managers, actors and their

Chapter 4 : The Great Empire of the South 309
audiences and show how the organization of theatre companies reflected wider social structures. Like Phelan, Tracy Davis (1989) believes that a 'transformational' representative history involves more than just filling in the 'female blanks'. In 'A Feminist Methodology in Theatre History', she argues that the limitation of the 'add women' approach is that it does not go far enough in its efforts to 'revise' past injustices (63).

Histories of women which read them as 'blanks' come dangerously close to inscribing them philosophically as the eternal victims of 'man-made' history (and therefore also historiography), thus ensuring the continuance of the active/passive binary. Hasia Diner (1979) resolves this philosophical dilemma in 'Women and History: Doing Good History' by denying that women were passive 'blanks' in the first place.

Women have never been absent from history. They have not been absent from it in the sense of being missing participants in the important turning points in human civilization - wars, revolutions, famines, and migrations. They have not been absent from it in the sense of the great debates over what is history and what is the proper scope of the historian's concern (296).

I view Moore and Williamson's partnership therefore as a problematic space where the cultural values constructing nineteenth-century capitalist business practices, marriage laws and theatrical forms and conventions re-instate themselves: indeed, where public and private values amalgamate to reveal an alliance scripted by the economic and moral factors underlying 'love and marriage'. The same precepts also fundamentally inform the ideological construction of relationships within nineteenth-century dramaturgy and the pantomime's arrangement of fairytale subjects.

In Williamson and Moore's case, as in other actor and actress' professional partnerships, moral and legal contradictions assisted in differentiating 'success' for male and female because being 'respectable' meant different things for actors and actresses.

Despite the tendency for Victorian performers to be credited with increasing respectability and middle-class status and for actors to receive the highest official commendations, the popular association between actresses and prostitutes and belief in actresses' inappropriate sexual conduct endured throughout the nineteenth-century (Davis 1991, 100).
As a result, the actress found herself in an in between category which reflected societal double standards defining Good and Bad Women: "by working in an inherently scandalizing realm (the theatre) actresses defied socioeconomic prescriptions about Good Women, yet by going home as respectable daughters, wives, or mothers they denied ideological prescriptions about Bad Women" (Davis 1991, 71). The actress' ambivalent moral status can be seen influencing the 'identity politics' behind Maggie Moore's use of 'Miss' and 'Mrs' in her stage names. Some actresses, such as Mrs Robert Brough, only used their married title. More often than not, however, they had a 'stage name' which was preceded by the title 'Miss'. Sometimes they used both, as evidenced in the 1888 theatre programme of Pygmalion and Galatea at the New Princess Theatre, Melbourne, where Miss Kate Arden has bracketed beside that title 'Mrs W. J. Holloway'. But if, as Phelan (1993) claims, identity is more than a name, the actress' varying titles of 'Miss' and 'Mrs' show her un/conscious mis/understanding of the 'symmetry between vanishing point and the viewing point' (25) in the fin de siècle struggle for women's political identity.

Moore moved legally and professionally between four names: Margaret Virginia Sullivan, Maggie Moore, Mrs Williamson and Mrs Harry Roberts, while James Cassius Williamson used only one. Williamson's unitary identity contrasts with the fracturing of her paternally-derived given name which signs the way that the Symbolic Father inscribes Law. Moore thus used her various titles as a means of negotiating the sexual politics within her private and professional relationships. These negotiations show the ambivalence of her desire to name herself. For instance, she used the title Mrs Williamson in advertisements in the Argus in 1894 to seemingly muster moral force in her court case against Williamson for the rights to stage Struck Oil. At the time she was lessee of the Theatre Royal, Melbourne, with her own company. Ironically, the advertisement also shows the name of her then co-habitant Harry Roberts as both Stage Manager and playing the part of Dr Pearson. These advertisements are in themselves symbolic of the contradictions at play between

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5 A similar point is made by Fletcher (1987) with regard to Madame Vestris.
6 Programme held in the Dennis Wolanski Library, Sydney Opera House.
business and marriage in nineteenth-century theatre practice; that contradiction is further highlighted in the Argus's enthusiastic report of Moore's victory over Williamson.

Preceded and advertised by an abortive application to the Chief Justice for an injunction 'Struck Off' was produced at the Theatre Royal on Saturday night before a packed house, which demonstrated its attachment to its constant favourite, Miss Maggie Moore, by tumultuous and sustained applause (Argus, 26 March 1894).

Seemingly, the article shows that audiences agreed the part of Lizzie Stofel rightfully belonged to Moore. Husband and wife acting partnerships were, of course, often of professional benefit to women. This, for instance, is suggested by some of the evidence concerning the Williamson's partnership up to 1882, which shows Williamson making use of his talented wife while Moore benefited from Williamson's managerial skills in mounting the productions of Gilbert and Sullivan and other comic operas such as La Mascotte in which she 'starred'.

However, this state of affairs had changed by 1886 when there began to be less certainty of Moore's pre-eminence in Williamson's productions. We see, for instance, her being replaced by English or American stars like Genevieve Ward, imported by the Triumvirate. In conjunction with this, there is some evidence that the marriage was experiencing difficulties as early as 1880. George Coppin infers this in a letter to American theatrical agent Henry Edwards, as part of his description of the state of business in Australia at the time:

> there being no stars in Australia except the Williamsons who have just concluded a five week run of H.M.S. Pinafore to very extraordinary business. He is the luckiest, and I may add, the meanest, man I ever met. She has taken to drink and he has to watch her like a cat to prevent a disappointment.7

I hasten to add that the relationship between Coppin and Williamson was not always amicable, which may explain Coppin's disparagement of Williamson, but this hint of a problem is supported by events described in Ida Osborne's diaries.8 These reveal Maggie Moore travelling in the company as an ordinary 'trouper', who accompanied other actresses on afternoon excursions when on tour in Adelaide,

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7 Letter from George Coppin to Henry Edwards, 23 March 1880, Coppin Collection, La Trobe Library, State Library of Victoria.
8 Ida Osborne Diaries, State Library of Victoria, MS 12134. Osborne was the stage name of Ada Mary Norcott (nee Gardner). She was an original member of Williamson's Royal Comic Opera Company and sang in the chorus and in minor parts up until 1901.
Sydney and New Zealand. On the other hand, Williamson is shown to be away for a
great deal of the time setting up business for the tours. It would be reasonable to
conclude, then, that the differentiation of roles of manager and actress begins in the
Gilbert and Sullivan seasons between 1879 and 1882.

By the late 1880s we can trace the appearance of Mary Weir and Harry
Roberts in theatre programmes and therefore begin to note the breakdown of the
marriage, with Moore forming a relationship with Roberts and Williamson with Weir.
Williamson and Moore officially separated in 1891, resulting in a period of open
hostility highlighted by the court case of 1894. (Plate 48 shows Moore as she was
pictured by the Lorgette around this time: a mature woman playing 'The Mascotte', a
role she had played since 1883).9 Williamson and Moore officially divorced in 1899,
Moore suing Williamson on the grounds of adultery with Mary Weir.10

Dicker's (1970) view that it was Moore who left Williamson for Harry
Roberts is puzzling (126). Given how hard he fought her for the exclusive rights to
Struck Oil in 1894, why did not Williamson sue Moore for divorce on the grounds of
her adultery with Roberts? Curiously, as the Referee of 21 February 1900 indicates,
Moore denied there were any marriage plans between herself and Roberts as late as
1900, and finally married Roberts in America in 1902.

In 1901 Moore worked under William Anderson in country towns
throughout New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and Tasmania
and at the Lyceum Theatre, Sydney and the Theatre Royal, Perth. In 1902 she
worked with her own company at the Gaiety Theatre, Melbourne, where she presented
Killarney, Struck Oil, Colleen Bawn, Meg the Castaway and The Days of '49. After
returning from America in July 1902, she performed in Newcastle, Brisbane, and
again under William Anderson's management, this time at the Theatre Royal,
Melbourne where, beginning on 4 October, she staged Struck Oil, The Chinese
Question, Peggy Peters, Way Down South, Arrah-Na-Pogue, The Widow from Japan
and Uncle Tom's Cabin. Struck Oil, The Chinese Question, Arrah-Na-Pogue and

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9 Pictured in the Lorgette, 11 October 1890.
10 The divorce is reported in the Sydney Morning Herald, 30 May 1899.

Chapter 4: The Great Empire of the South
MISS MAGGIE MOORE

As "THE MASCOTTE."
Uncle Tom's Cabin had been part of the original repertoire staged with Williamson in that same theatre in 1874. Moore was in North America and England for most of the period 1903 to 1908. In 1909 she produced Struck Oil for Williamson's competitors Clarke, Meynell and Gunn and then re-staged it again for William Anderson in 1911. In 1912 she found a new play, Mrs McSweeney, which, like Bouicault's plays in her repertoire, allowed her to play another comic Irish part. After Williamson's death, she worked for J. C. Williamson Ltd in The Argyle Case, in which she played Mrs Beauregard, the cook. Plate 49 shows her as she presented Mrs Sinbad in William Anderson's 1914 Sinbad. Her continuing presence in Sydney and Melbourne theatres at times bizarrely highlighted the disparity in status between her former husband and herself, especially in her frequent representations of Struck Oil.

Remarkably, Moore and Williamson's change of marital partners was represented by Professor Dicker (1974) through a comparison of Maggie Moore's and Mary Weir's differing attitudes towards 'domesticity'.

Unlike her predecessor, Mary Weir abandoned the stage after her marriage. If J. C. Williamson's first marriage succeeded professionally, his second succeeded domestically. Mary Williamson set about the task of making a happy home. 'Tudor' with its handsome appointments, a dining room which comfortably seated twenty-four and its spacious setting for entertaining visiting celebrities. But more importantly, Mary Williamson gave her husband the two daughters, Marjorie and Viola, with whom he was to share so much happiness in later years (135).

Dicker's image of the passive Mary Weir as an 'angel of the house' stands in contrast to the talented dancer whom Edward Pask (1979) portrays in Enter the Colonies Dancing and the ambitious professional Harry Musgrove describes in 'Stage Secrets' in Table Talk. Musgrove's reference to the 'Serpentine Dance' indicates the incident he reports may have occurred sometime in 1892/3 since that dance was staged in the 1892 and 1893 productions of Little Red Riding Hood:

J. C. Williamson always though highly of Mary, and often managed that she be given little 'bits' to do, which brought her into the limelight. On one occasion it appears JCW had promised her that she should be allowed to do a Serpentine Dance which called for beautiful clothes and a double portion of limelight. However, theatrical arrangements are subject to alteration, and theatre politics are sometimes not heeded by the manager responsible for putting on the best show. For this reason it was decided that Mary was not given the Serpentine Dance, which went to a lovely young dancer Alice Lethbridge. You can believe that there was some heart-burning in that theatre. Very soon the wardrobe mistress came downstairs and told me that she had heard some talk, and she believed that Mary Weir was planning to do the Serpentine Dance by waiting in the wings and getting on before Alice and a

Chapter 4: The Great Empire of the South
change. Furthermore, she had the costume locked away in her box. I called Mary into the office and told her bluntly what I had heard. She denied it hotly. Then I sent for Alice and told her, and Mary cried bitterly and repeated her denial. Soon the two girls were weeping in each other's arms, and presently went out, entwined, having kissed each other fondly. You may judge my astonishment when I heard what happened. Alice was in the wings that night waiting for her cue music, and ignorant that in the wings opposite her dress covered with a wrap, Mary Weir waited. Just before Alice was due to go on, Mary threw off her disguising wrap and glided on. There was Alice, all dressed up and no dance to do, and there was Mary, hogging the limelight. As soon as the dance was over, Mary threw her cloak about her and in her stage costume gained the street. As she went, she said to those about her - 'I said I'd do it, and I did.' I never saw her again until years later when she was Mrs Williamson. I wonder does she recollect her amusing rebellion against my authority. JCW never referred to it once since his wire to my inquiry as to what I should do if Mary tried to carry out her threat. He had telegraphed 'Do as you think right', but it was Mary who had. (Table Talk, 'Stage Secrets', 26 August 1926, 10).

The 'sexual politics' of the nineteenth-century, which predominantly defined the woman's role as wife and mother, ensure that Mary Weir's decision to eventually relinquish her career and bear Williamson children also morally condemns Moore's decision to keeping working as an actress. Chronologically, for Maggie Moore the twenty years of her marriage to J. C. Williamson represented the years when, as a woman, she was 'fertile': therefore her attitude to child-bearing must be considered though she herself remained totally silent on the matter. The most I have been able to discover is an article she wrote for the Australasian Stage Annual on child labour in the theatre, which shows her to be a compassionate, 'nurturing' woman who 'cared' about the welfare of the children working in productions in which she appeared but who, contradictorily, did not support laws restricting child labour. Instead, she argued that the theatre was one of the safest places for children to work and that legislation was unnecessary (Moore 1904, 14, 22 and 26).

The issue of fertility did not stand alone for the actress but was related to the concept of 'age'. As late-nineteenth-century postcards of actresses show, she was required to be eternally youthful. While men in the theatre moved 'naturally' as they got older from acting to management, the actress had to continue to trade on her 'youth' and 'beauty'. This meant that

the development of a woman's career was largely decided by factors beyond her control and unresponsive to her talents or determination. She could not decide what proportion of jobs she would qualify for, or how the industry would capitalize to effect her (Davis 1991, 53).
So we need to see the fact that Maggie Moore continued to play young roles like Lizzie Stofel in *Struck Oil* well into her old age as being related to the subordination of her managerial career which itself largely existed to stage her own productions of that play after her final separation from Williamson. Hence, she was not regarded as another Australian theatre manager in competition with her ex-husband, as were William Anderson, Alfred Dampier and Clarke, Meynell and Gunn. Instead, Moore remained merely 'an actress'.

Antonio Gramsci (1971) explains that culture is history in the making: a process which shows men and women becoming their actions (351). There can be no doubt that Williamson and Moore both constructed a style of dramaturgy in *Struck Oil* which was manifestly sexist. The play shows how both were implicated in structuring that sexism since, by her own admission Maggie Moore was incisive in structuring its success. In an interview in the *Argus*, 2 August 1924, Moore claimed that it was she who knew *Struck Oil* would work with an Australian audience. The *Australasian* article of 19 July 1924, 'A Famous Play: The Story of *Struck Oil*', further supports this claim and describes how Moore participated in the creation of the script's final form.

*Struck Oil* was a play gradually built up into the form in which the Williamsons first presented it in Australia. The original author, Sam Smith, a miner with a talent for writing verse something in the Bret Harte vein, composed a play so remarkably like 'Rip Van Winkle' - which he had never seen - that no producer would look at it in the original form, and it finally came into the hands of the Williamsons practically a one-man play, for John Stofel was the central figure, and there was no Lizzie. It was re-constructed and Maggie Moore was brought in as the little Dutch girl with some of the songs and business she had been doing in variety shows. Later bits of dialogue were added, a good deal of it by Miss Moore and Mr Williamson: two well-known stage writers, Clay Green and Barly Campbell, having some slight share in it. The bucket and mop scene, which the house always enjoyed, was worked up by Miss Moore herself to meet the exigencies of stagecraft.

Admitting Moore's part in the scripting of *Struck Oil* is tantamount to considering also her financial status in her partnership with Williamson, since the historian must then attempt to account for how much of her money went into financing future productions from 1875 on and, more specifically, how the informal and

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11 Nellie Stewart's career in theatre management, after George Musgrove's managerial failures between 1900 and 1907, bears some remarkable similarities with Maggie Moore's.

12 National Library's collection of all J. C. Williamson scripts includes four versions of *Struck Oil*. 

Chapter 4: The Great Empire of the South 316
inequitable business partnership of marriage financed his share of the business partnerships beginning with Garner and Musgrove in 1882. Various reports of the financial success of Struck Oil give amounts between £10,000 and £15,000.

Estimating the value of a woman's work is confounded by the difficulty of ascertaining its worth in monetary terms. If anything, in Moore's case secondary sources even suggest that financially she took more than she gave. This is implied in Viola Tait's 'official' history of the Firm, A Family of Brothers, because Williamson's version of events is allowed to stand without comment. For instance, Tait (1971) uses Williamson's own letters to show a 'darker' side to the popular actress at the time of his separation from her in 1891.

Personal letters, however, indicate another side to this 'darling of the gods'. Some three years earlier, on 29 June 1891, Williamson, who was in London, had written to his solicitor, Hector McDonald, of Lynch, McDonald, Stillman and Keep, Melbourne: The debts you refer to are PNs given to The Firm by Mrs Williamson or by her brother, Mr Moore, endorsed by Mrs Williamson. I think the amount was £1,000 or £1,200. I have always refused to acknowledge the debt in any way as I consider it very like blackmail. They evidently think I would rather pay than risk the scandal. Mrs Williamson had no property that I am aware of in 1888 but she had a good time. I provided her with an allowance of never less than £10 per week. In addition to this, she had all her own earnings for her separate use averaging £40 per week when she was acting. This state of affairs had existed for the past 14 years during which time I never benefited in any way from her earnings. I do not know whether this can be called a separate estate but I do know I would rather go to jail than pay one penny of her debts to the Jews. I wonder they did not get the money while she was making so much out of my play at the Royal. Please see Musgrove and advise him about the matter (60).

While Tait allows the letter to allude to 'another side' of Maggie Moore, she does not ask the reader to entertain the same possibility for J. C. Williamson. Ironically, and I believe unintentionally on Tait's part, Williamson's own words do. Besides its anti-Semitic references, the letter also indicates a lack of generosity towards his former partner. 13 Tracy Davis (1991) documents in Actresses as Working Women that in England 'by 1885, a leading comedy actress could earn between £20 and £40 a week, and a popular prima donna in opera-bouffe could make from £40 to £50 a week' (25). According to these figures, Moore's allowance of a modest £10 gave her an income equivalent to English performers in 1885. But what

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13 Harry Musgrove makes a similar point with regard to Williamson treatment of Nellie Stewart in 'Stage Secrets' in Table Talk (15 Sept 1926, 9). According to Musgrove, Williamson's refusal to pay Stewart her true entitlement as a star in Dorothy caused her to break with the Firm and set up the Nellie Stewart Opera Company under the management of her then co-habitant George Musgrove. This, according to Harry Musgrove was the cause of the end of the 'Triumvirate' in 1890.
of the further possibility of pay rises between 1885 and 1888? Williamson's claim to have never benefited from Moore's earnings must also be questioned given the money Struck Oil and Gilbert and Sullivan operas are believed to have made for the Firm. Ida Osborne's diaries reveal, for instance, how vitally important a drawcard Moore was for J. C. Williamson's productions from 1879 to 1882, while George Coppin's correspondence with Henry Edwards in 1879 and 1880 states on many occasions that Williamson was making a fortune in those years. Coppin's letter of 18 May 1880 is particularly noteworthy; he writes that 'Williamson's luck continues. He will make five or six thousand pounds on H.M.S. Pinafore.'

Documents which might enlighten us as to what, if any, portion of this Moore received are seemingly non-existent, perhaps because of the transient life she led from 1891 until her death in San Francisco in 1926. Nor is the question of Moore's worth ever raised by Dicker or other historians, seemingly because, from the viewpoint of their positivist historiography, Moore was only important while she served to benefit his career. This was primarily while she was content to play the dutiful daughter Lizzie in Struck Oil to Williamson's John Stofel, a father who has to tame his boisterous daughter who thinks nothing of fighting with boys at school. Lizzie is often threatened with beatings by John when she will not do as she is told. Of course, this is all done in the 'good' humour of 'eccentric' characters who speak with comical Dutch/German accents.

Nonetheless, Lizzie is often seen breaking the bounds of accepted lady-like behaviour, in scenes which show her doing 'man's work' such as mending shoes in her father's shoemaker's shop. At other times she is seen smoking a pipe. Were these characteristics of Lizzie Stofel, Maggie Moore's contribution to Struck Oil? Despite the difficulties now of answering this question, the script of the play enables us to see how Williamson and Moore presented 'unconscious' sexual politics within a seemingly 'apolitical' popular theatre. Considering their husband and wife acting partnership therefore enables us to revise the history written of them so far because it must by necessity correct the imbalance in value given one partner over the other.
What is at stake here is not only our understanding of J. C. Williamson and Maggie Moore's professional relationship but of how in cultural terms gender is instrumental in constructing popular theatre.

Considering gender in historical analysis is as crucial an issue in an analysis of Williamson's other business partnerships, particularly with regard to the gender bias of the theatre manager's role in the nineteenth century. While women did sometimes manage theatres, the important point to note is, as Davis (1991) argues, that they were usually 'lessees for short interim periods in lieu of a male relative. Countless widows became managers of public house Music Halls, remaining just long enough to sell the business as a going concern, connoting neither a desire to manage nor an ability to do so'. Or, they were joint managers with male partners, as with the Bancrofts and Mary Moore and Charles Wyndham (51). This is also apparent in Australia with regard to Alfred Dampier and Katherine Russell and William Anderson and Eugenie Duggan.

Having noted this gender bias, however, it is then equally important to see how it was expressed in hierarchical terms within a patriarchal theatre culture. This hierarchy, which positioned the manager as both visionary and ultimate producer of theatre, was supported philosophically by popular Social Darwinist notions which decreed that managers compete in a market in which only the fittest firms survived. According to a 'Darwinian' definition of entrepreneurship, therefore, the entrepreneur had evolved into an innovator and as such was the source of potential economic diversity analogous to genetic variation (Casson 1990, xvii).

Williamson's standards of production in staging Gilbert and Sullivan's *HMS Pinafore* in 1879 fit this definition of 'innovation' because, as Schumpeter also pointed out, 'innovation' did not necessarily have to mean 'invention'. So, it is possible to see, as Noel Macainsh (1982) argues in 'Australian Theatre and the Ghost of Classicism', how the standards of theatrical presentation in Williamson's theatres must have appeared 'to constitute virtually a new kind of production' (49). However, similar praise was also given to productions mounted by Williamson's partners Arthur
Garner and George Musgrove, with reference to the former's productions with the London Comedy Company and the latter's production of the comic operas *La Fille du Tambour Major*, *Madame Favart* and *Olivette* between 1879 and 1882.

What does seem distinctive about Williamson at this time, however, is his understanding of the value of dramatic copyright in guaranteeing the theatre manager a steady income in a speculative industry. As Atkinson and Fotheringham's (1987) review of dramatic copyright to 1912 points out, Williamson's aggressive willingness to litigate his presumed 'rights' in staging the only 'authorised' production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *HMS Pinafore* in 1879 effectively bluffed the pirates [the Lingards and Kelly & Leon] into a strategic retreat which did nothing to change copyright abuses in the Australian theatre.

The incident shows something of the gap between popular myths about copyright law and established case precedent. Many theatre professionals chose to believe that this case had validated copyright licence agreements in the Australasian colonies (a belief which Williamson himself did much to promulgate). Judicially it did not alter the law in any way and quite possibly a permanent injunction would have been refused if the matter had ever gone to the Full Court (53).

Even assuming that the action was not wholly governed by self-interest, the fact that the bluff worked cannot be underestimated in terms of the importance of Gilbert and Sullivan comic operas in guaranteeing the financial viability of Williamson's firm.\(^{14}\) It also highlights, as Casson (1979) argues, how the entrepreneur's first strategy is to deter competition by obtaining 'a statutory monopoly' (119). Artistic products in a commercial theatre by necessity therefore require to be given a 'legal' entity. This meant entangling the drama in a web of judicial legitimation which sought to guarantee an income for the playwright but, more importantly, for the entrepreneur as a theatrical producer. Interestingly, Nellie Stewart (1923) infers in her observation of the way George Musgrove did business that 'time and time again he was tricked and cheated' (114). The 1879 legal battle for sole

\(^{14}\) J. C. Williamson Ltd production cards held at the Performing Arts Museum, Melbourne, which show the productions staged between 1907 and the closing down of the company in the 1970s, indicate very few years in all that time when the company was not mounting a Gilbert and Sullivan opera somewhere in Australia and New Zealand. One must also remember that, as the Firm had the 'Australasian' copyright, it was also responsible for bringing such productions to South Africa.

Chapter 4 : The Great Empire of the South 320
authority to stage *HMS Pinafore* indicates why such a judgement might never have been made of Williamson.

Instead, much has been written about his careful management and how the various companies bearing his name illustrate his economic and artistic success. 1882 to 1889 saw productions under the banner of 'Williamson, Garner and Musgrove' after the 'Triumvirate' was formed on 14 December 1881. There are several versions of just who initiated the partnership. Williamson's *Life Story* states that Garner and Musgrove came to him and said 'We had better go into partnership!' (21). However, the *Bohemia* magazine of 23 July 1891 suggested, at the time of Arthur Garner's departure from the Firm in 1891, that Williamson and Garner became partners first, then approached Musgrove and thus 'effectually secured the control of the colonial market' (2). Regardless of who initiated the 'Triumvirate', its monopolistic tendencies were seen to be inextricably connected with the importation of stars into the Australian theatre. Hence, as Virginia Kirby-Smith (1964) noted,

> An apparently inevitable consequence of the increasing dependence on overseas stars and companies was the emergence of what a writer for the *Queensland Review* in 1885 termed 'an ogre, a dragon' bearing the device 'ourselves first, others afterwards,' and known as 'Monopoly'. Theatrical combination provided a natural solution for the sort of difficulty which prompted George Coppin to fetch back a theatre as well as a star tragedian from England [G.V. Brooke]: the difficulty in guaranteeing the imported actor or company a venue in each of the major urban centers. The ogre first threatened in July 1882, when three men of the theatre, James Cassius Williamson, Arthur Garner and George Musgrove, created a combination which came to be known generally as the Triumvirate (and which was eventually termed the 'unholy trinity' by actors who suffered exclusion at its hands). Initially the Triumvirate controlled the Theatre Royal and the Princess's Theatre in Melbourne and the Theatre Royal in Sydney; soon it acquired the use of the Adelaide Theatre Royal and the Brisbane Opera House as well (58 - 59).

Regrettably, only a few contracts remain to indicate the business arrangements under which the Triumvirate operated. Nonetheless, they show that it was J. C. Williamson's financial stability which enabled him to consolidate his supremacy over Garner and Musgrove. A contract between Williamson and Arthur Garner in 1888, for instance, highlights Williamson's financial strength when in October of that year he loaned Garner £2000. This suggests that Garner had had financial problems even before the troubles of the 1890s, a time when, as Ian Bevan

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15 This date comes from a 1888 Contract between J. C. Williamson and Arthur Garner which referred to their original partnership agreement of 1881, Performing Arts Museum, Melbourne.
(1993, 87) outlines, he lost much of his savings and left the company never to be heard of again in Australia.16

The inauspicious ending to Garner's theatrical career, however, belies the way in which he was the first partner to return to England in 1883 and make arrangements for the company's earliest imported productions and stars. The Lorgnette, of 11 November 1883 reported that 'Mr Arthur Garner, of the firm of Williamson, Garner and Musgrove, has just returned from England after making arrangements for the appearance in this and the neighbouring colonies of several first-class English artistes, and for the introduction of plays and novelties entirely new to this part of the world.' These included Amy Crawford, Philip Day, Arthur Redwood, Fleming Norton, George Leitch, the Drury Lane pantomimist Will Simpson and J. F. Sheridan's 'Fun on the Bristol Company'.17 During this trip he also secured the rights for The Silver King. This entrepreneurial excursion followed on from Garner's work of 1879 when he engaged the London Comedy Company for an Australian tour for W. S. Lyster. It was then that he also engaged the artist who was perhaps of greatest significance in enabling the Triumvirate to mount its impressive productions, the scene painter George Gordon.

Arguably, however, Garner always worked in the shadow of his two other partners. As such, his value seems to have been determined by his lack of 'star' status, which articles such as that in the Lorgnette of 25 September 1885 hint at when reporting how he originally arrived in Australia to play the 'juvenile leading business' in 1873. Theatre advertisements of 1874 also highlight that it was Garner's wife, Blanche Stammers, and not he who regularly appeared in Copping's 'Royal Star Company' at the Theatre Royal Melbourne. This company included Alfred Dampier and his wife Katherine Russell who were part of Williamson and Moore's first

16 The Lorgnette of July 1894 indicates that he was back at his former base at the Theatre Royal, Adelaide presenting one of the Triumvirate's earliest stars, Jenny Lee in Jo. The Australian Dictionary of Biography notes that he returned to England in 1896 where he failed as an independent manager and then 'disappeared'.
17 Garner also visited England for the firm in 1888.

Chapter 4 : The Great Empire of the South
Melbourne season. Garner only appeared with the Williamsonsons in Victorian country towns.

Correspondence in the George Leitch Papers\(^\text{18}\) also suggests that Garner was driven by friendship and not 'business' interests in his dealings with the actor/playwright. This is implied in such letters as the one for 28 August 1889, when he reassuringly writes to Leitch that he would be glad to confer with his partners on the subject of Leitch's debts to the firm and would endeavour to 'relieve' him of them as much as possible. George Musgrove's and Williamson's letters to Leitch on the other hand are insistent that he pay them and are unswervingly business-like in their treatment of him, as the following letter of 22 December 1890, from Musgrove, indicates with regard to Leitch's possible appearance in an 1890 pantomime production.\(^\text{19}\)

> You are the last I thought to cause me so much annoyance just before the Xmas production. You have greatly upset my arrangement. It was never my intention for you to play the principal part in the pantomime but one of the two principal old women's parts. The parts are both equal and it depends upon the actor as to which becomes the principal part. I had always intended Mr Greville to play the part he is cast for as I wrote to him as long ago as August last. The idea of you playing the other principal part was the contrast you would be in stature and size to Greville. I gave the cast five weeks ago to Mr Brereton of the Sydney Morning Herald and you will see it in print as I always intended it.

As the *Referee* of 31 January 1900 concluded, though rather tautologically, 'Mr George Musgrove is essentially a man of business and a business man...The theatre to him is a commercial institution that wants constant care and attention.' Harry Musgrove summed up the Williamson, Garner and Musgrove partnership as having operated within George Musgrove's self-containment, Williamson's watchful silence and Garner's laconic 'almost to the point of an epigram' temperament (*Stage Secrets* 26 August, 1926, 10). It was this combination, as the *Australasian Sketcher* announced on 15 July 1882, which hoped 'to make their name a guarantee that no piece' would be produced by them 'except in first-class style, and in a manner fully equal to its original production in London' (214).

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\(^{18}\) George Leitch papers ML. MSS 12/36 pertaining to 'Williamson, Garner and Musgrove'.

\(^{19}\) Leitch did not end up playing in the pantomime; instead A. G. Poulton took the 'old woman's part' with Greville.
Two court cases (interestingly, both reported in the *Australasian Sketcher* on 11 March 1883) in the company's first year of operation indicate, however, that its dominant position was not immediately guaranteed. The first involved the assault of Alfred Moul, the critic for the *Age* and *Leader*, by James Moore (Maggie Moore's brother), then treasurer of the Theatre Royal. The case in the City Police Court established that Moore struck Moul because of 'certain critiques in the *Leader* and the *Age*', in which Miss Maggie Moore, was attacked 'with unjustifiable security.' The second case involved a theatrical dispute between the prima donna, Emelie Melville, and Williamson, Garner and Musgrove, in which she claimed £2,500 for breach of agreement. The case was heard in the Supreme Court on 28 February 1883 in front of Mr Justice Williams and a jury of 12 who decided an eleven-twelfths verdict for the plaintiff. They awarded £1800 to the actress and ordered Williamson, Garner and Musgrove to pay a further £900 damages.

According to the evidence of the plaintiff, she was engaged on her arrival in the colonies in June last, to sing and act in theatres under the management of the defendants for the 24 weeks ending 23rd December last, at a salary of £150 per week for the first month, and of £100 per week afterwards. After playing for six weeks at the Opera House, Melbourne, however, the defendants, to her great surprise, dispensed with her services...Mr Williamson, on the other hand stated that the agreement was only applicable to the term for which his firm had leased the Opera house, with an option in their favour to retain the services of the plaintiff for any further length of time up to the 23rd December. No formal contract was ever signed by the parties, but a memo of agreement was produced by the plaintiff, together with a number of letters relating thereto which passed between herself and the defendants. Mr Webb, Q.C. on behalf of the defendants, contended that the evidence had substantiated their view of the contract - viz, that it was one under which the plaintiff's services were retained for six weeks only. Mr Purves, on the other hand, submitted that the evidence as a whole clearly proved that the plaintiff had been engaged for the 24 weeks ending with the 23rd December, and that the defendants dispensed with her services because they got Miss Nellie Stewart to play and sing in 'La Mascotte' at a much smaller salary (*Australasian Sketcher*, 11 March 1883).

Since such events were seemingly never repeated in the years that followed, one assumes the managers quickly learnt the importance of having a good relationship with the press and with their own staff. It must be more than coincidental that the Firm was later to employ journalists such as Garnet Walch, Arthur Adams, Monty Grover, Claude McKay and 'Billy' Hughes (afterwards Prime Minister of Australia) as its press secretaries. Likewise, the company's contracts with actors show that it led the way in drawing up 'legal' agreements between itself and its employees.
 Nonetheless, there was recurrent criticism of the Triumvirate in the press and by many in the theatre industry. These criticisms formed the basis of more general attacks between 1882 and 1891 on its monopolising practices which the *Bohemia* proposed had 'served its purpose, by keeping the standard of dramatic art down, until the firm had got up' (23 July 1891). It further stated that the partnership between Williamson, Garner and Musgrove had been the means by which Williamson had gained ascendency over his partners and therefore his main potential rivals.

Arthur Garner's retirement from 'the firm' has, theatrically speaking, a good deal more significance than is generally realised. It means that the monopoly which, for so many years, enabled Williamson, Garner and Musgrove to 'boss' matters theatrical in Australia, is finally broken up, and that for the future a healthy competition among managers will give the public better plays better staged, and the profession better engagements, and more of them. As affairs stand, Jimmy Williamson has worked out the problem of theatrical management to a very different ending from what popular rumour predicted. With the Princess Theatre absolutely in his own hands, and all partners and unpayable houses and other impediments out of the way, he probably stands in a better position than at any moment during the whole currency of the firm.

1890 saw productions under the banner of 'Williamson, Garner & Co' after Musgrove left the partnership in March 1890. Garner then left in December 1891, and Musgrove rejoined Williamson in 1892 to form 'Williamson and Musgrove'. This partnership ended in 1899 and much has already been documented by Ian Dicker (1970 & 1974), Viola Tait (1971) and Ian Bevan (1993) concerning it. These accounts stress that the partnership was in trouble from at least 1897, when Musgrove decided to produce a season of musical plays at the Shaftesbury Theatre, London under a limited liability company 'Musgrove and Williamson Ltd' which Williamson had not agreed to forming (Bevan 1993, 88). Historians underline the non-risk style of management which they believe helped make Williamson such an able theatre manager, by comparing his financial shrewdness and George Musgrove's flamboyant speculation in leasing the Shaftesbury from November 1897 and producing *The Scarlet Feather* and *Sporting Life* prior to bringing out George Lederer's Casino Theatre Company from New York with *The Belle of New York*.

Williamson survived the disasters of the 1890s while his partner Arthur Garner did not, and nor did other Australian theatre managers such as G. B. W. Lewis and Alfred Dampier. Williamson and Musgrove's partnership from 1892 to 1899 can
be read as the time when Williamson's popularity as a theatre manager was established, especially as Musgrove resided for most of this period in London. His ventures abroad also included visits to America. Musgrove had already accomplished the coup of contracting the London Gaiety company when he visited London in 1887 and he returned there when he temporarily separated from the Firm at the beginning of 1890. But it was on his 1892 trip, according to Nellie Stewart (1923), that he had extensive contact with Augustus Harris (101).

Williamson had also gone to England and America in 1890, and again in 1894, at which time, according to the Bulletin, he went in search of another Gaiety Company (13 January 1894). Table Talk, on 10 November 1894, gave a detailed account of his overseas purchases and reported he had seen points of contrast between Australian and overseas audiences.

Mr Williamson arrived by the Ophir the day before the Derby race was run, and almost before his office at the Princess Theatre was clear of the throng of visitors who came to welcome him back he was 'up to his neck' in business...Mr Williamson, during his tour, 'saw everything' in the way of public entertainments, and his investigations confirmed his opinion that Australian theatre-goers are more critical, more tasteful, and want more for their money than the average audience at a London, Paris, or New York theatre. Mr. Williamson saw theatres crowded night after night with audiences delighted to witness a performance which he knows to his cost Melbourne people would not look at after the first night. Yet the stage mounting of pieces is much cheaper in London and New York than it is in Melbourne or Sydney. Scene painting is done by contract, and so are costumes. Supernumeraries can be engaged at half the cost, and above all, it must be a very poor piece which will not have a three months' run. Mr Williamson saw Gilbert and Sullivan's last comic opera, Utopia Limited. The first act did not impress him greatly, but the second act he considered to be as good as anything the eminent collaborators have produced. When it will be produced in Australia cannot be said. The dresses are enormously costly, for the Queen's drawing-room scene necessitates real court dress for every member of the chorus. In fact, about £5000 would have to be spent on the mounting of the opera alone, and then its success depends as much upon the representation of the presentation at court, complete in all minute details of etiquette, as upon the acting or the music. Mr Williamson has secured the rights to Mr Gilbert's new comic opera, the music of which will be composed by Dr Caryl. Referring to the class of entertainment most popular in London at present, Mr Williamson states that the taste, which is stronger than a mere passing fancy, is for productions like The Gaiety Girl...Mr Edwardes, he says, has formed a company to perform The Gaiety Girl, which is the very best all-round company for singing and acting which has started on a world's tour. They arrive in Australia next Easter tide.

Obviously intended to enhance an Australian audience's opinion of itself and the products the company saw fit to purchase for it, the article also confirms the company's long-standing relationship with the Gaiety and the Savoy theatres and their

Chapter 4 : The Great Empire of the South 326
respective managers. The rest of his partnership with Musgrove, Williamson remained in Australia.

On the other hand, Nellie Stewart confirms that she and Musgrove resided in London for a particularly long period between 1895 and 1900. During this time Musgrove attempted to gain a foothold as a 'London' theatre manager by leasing the Shaftesbury Theatre and producing *The Belle of New York*. The curiousness of an Australian theatre manager importing an American musical seemed to escape the attention of London theatre critics who were much more interested in the Americanness of the production and the beauty of the leggy 'Casino girls'. Thus the *Globe* reported, on 13 April 1898, that the production was an 'event' in the history of the drama in London: 'The Belle of New York is, we believe, the first instance in which a musical comedy of the modern type, wholly American in locale and characterization, authorship and interpretation, has been submitted to an audience in this metropolis.' The critics also made clear that Williamson and Musgrove had transported the entire production - play, actors and scenery - from New York and that they were not 'catering for the folk who go to the theatre to be instructed. Their view of the embroidery of life is that we should laugh and grow fat - that we should gaze upon comely countenances and fascinating figures, 'fetching' costumes and nimble dancers' (*Daily Telegraph* (London), 13 April 1898).

Musgrove's work in London during these years contradicts the portrayal of him by Nellie Stewart as more interested than Williamson in producing 'high art' for Australia, as witnessed in the post-1900 period through his attempts to mount Italian and German operas and productions of Shakespeare (70). In reality, Musgrove's experimentation with opera, musicals and Shakespeare may identify him as the possible pre-1900 driving force behind the Firm's 'cosmopolitan' approach, for which post-1900 critics were to praise Williamson.20 Williamson, on the other hand, seems to have provided the stable anchor for the company in Australia. There seems no hint

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20 In 1906 Musgrove even attempted to produce theatre in America and was stopped by a union ban on the wharf in San Francisco and later the terrible earthquake which demolished the city. It was also clearly during his European trip of 1892, as Alison Gyger (1990) corroborates, that Musgrove assembled an Italian opera company for the Firm's first opera season of 1893 (84).
after his 1876 attempt to make a name for himself in England, that he wanted to return to London to set up as a theatrical manager there, nor that he wished to do so in America. In this sense his domination of the Australian theatre shows a more restrained ambition than Musgrove's attempt to set himself up as a theatre manager in England, America and Australia, evident even after his split from Williamson in 1899. By contrast, J. C. Williamson was content to rule Australasia! Information in Dicker's, Tait's and Bevan's histories that Williamson was angry with Musgrove for forming the London firm of 'Musgrove and Williamson Ltd' confirm that Williamson was solely committed to establishing an 'Australian' theatre company.

There is nothing, however, to suggest that Williamson and Musgrove were ever at odds with regard to their taste for spectacular dramas or the political ideologies framing them. There are hints that Williamson was more popular than Musgrove with employees, who found the latter more authoritarian. Several newspaper articles, such as in the *Sydney Morning Herald* for 28 March 1903, report Williamson complimenting his subordinates. By contrast, newspaper articles on Musgrove, such as in the *Referee* of 31 January 1900, refer to his belief that 'a manager must have absolute control'.

That Williamson and Musgrove shared political views is evident through such crucial issues as Australian Federation. While Williamson sat on the organising committee for Sydney's Inauguration celebrations, Musgrove helped organise the concert preceding the swearing-in of the first parliament in Melbourne. It is clear that they both viewed the coming of Federation as a means by which Australia would enhance its position in the British Empire.

However, as his speech on the success of *Djin Djin* in 1896 would suggest, it was Williamson who seemed to have formulated the company's response to the growing nationalist consciousness of that time. Certainly, newspaper articles show that he made an incisive input into the debate on what constituted an 'Australian drama'\(^{21}\) while the issue never seems to have interested Musgrove. Their separate

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\(^{21}\) For instance, Williamson spoke on the issue of 'Australian drama' at a dinner in his honour prior to his departure for England and America (*Lorgnette*, 22 February 1890).
participations in the Sydney and Melbourne Commonwealth celebrations thus indicate variations on a 'cultural imperialist' theme: a fact which a comparison between Williamson's 'home-made' pantomime *Australis* and Musgrove's 'parliamentary' concert of European compositions also reveals.

It must again be stressed that they frequently took similar stances over important industrial issues such as Trade Unionism even after the formal ending of their theatrical partnership. For instance, George Musgrove's secretary Ernest Collin mentions in a letter of 7 May 1902 that he had been given a letter from Williamson via stage manager H. H. Vincent saying that the professional musicians had registered themselves as a Union and wanted to bring their assumed grievances before the Arbitration Court.

Williamson objects and has told them that if they don't look out he will do without an orchestra, simply having a Grand piano and one or two other instruments and he asked me for an expression of your views. I said I thought he knew your opinion, but I was sure from the way you talked to me from time to time that in anything he did you would back him up.

Williamson and Musgrove continued to have an indirect professional association through Nellie Stewart but, as Stewart's autobiography makes clear, Musgrove was never again as financially buoyant as at the end of his partnership with Williamson in 1899. Every one of Musgrove's entrepreneurial ventures from that point on seems to have been fairly disastrous (particularly the excursion into the American theatre in 1906 and the season of German opera in 1907). The final ignominy came, according to Stewart, when at the end of his life in 1916 he was forced to sell all his theatrical props, scenery and costumes to the Firm for £1000 to cover his medical bills, instead of the £35,000 Stewart estimates they were worth. She thus argues, with considerable bitterness, that 'George was the brains of the concern all the time. Mr J. C. Williamson knew this well, and profited by it. He continued on the lines laid down by George Musgrove, and endeavoured to maintain the standard set by him, when they separated' (241). The events of 1900 to 1913 would suggest that Stewart was accurate in her summation of their partnership;
Williamson produced opera and consolidated his English and American connections in ways reminiscent of Musgrove's 'entrepreneurial' flair.

Williamson seems to have lost no time in re-organising a new company at the end of 1899. With the imminent ending of his partnership with Musgrove, he took his leave of Melbourne in November 1899 and, in an emotional speech at the Princess Theatre, announced he would make Sydney his headquarters. He told his audience that, since his tenancy of the theatre would expire on 17 December, 'it was with feelings of sadness that I am present to-night to witness the breaking-up of the old business, which has existed so many years.' Both this report in the Argus and another on the same topic in the Age give a synopsis of the Firm's achievements and depict an emotional Williamson directing some sharp criticisms at Musgrove for being 'an absentee partner'.

Once in Sydney, Williamson set to work gathering 'his scattered forces' as announced in 'Musical and Dramatic Notes' in the Sydney Morning Herald of 27 January 1900. The public was advised that he had just purchased The Rose of Persia and all Gilbert and Sullivan works for a period of three years from Richard D'Oyly Carte. His immediate aim was to re-organize his Royal Comic Opera company for the pantomime burlesque of Little Red Riding Hood and then set to work on the Savoy and Gaiety theatre imports. There is also a suggestion of a dispute between him and Musgrove over who held the rights to stage the Gaiety productions. The Referee of 28 February 1900 claimed that Williamson held the power of attorney from Mr Edwardes and that, from correspondence he received on 19 January, the Gaiety Theatre manager had no intention of doing business with anyone but Williamson, least of all taking up a lease of the Princess Theatre, Melbourne with George Musgrove and Nellie Stewart.

Williamson managed the firm single-handedly between 1900 and 1904, though for a short time between February and June of 1902 he formed a partnership with Variety entrepreneurs Lee and Rial, working under the banner of The World's
Entertainers'. As the *Referee* article indicates, during this period Williamson took full control of signing up overseas imports. Consequently, from this point on, he frequently travelled to England and America, with newspapers noting various trips in 1901, 1903, 1905 and 1906. In 1907 he took up a one-year residence in London, then returned there in 1910 and in 1913 - that trip was his last as he died in Paris in July. Interestingly, during this time Williamson's newspaper interviews stress the 'difficulties' of managing an Australian theatre company because of the distance from London, the shortness of an Australian production's 'run', the problem of finding suitable players and, perhaps most interesting of all, the difficult Australian audiences who were unbending in their taste for English theatre and who generally did not take kindly to American plays. These considerations seemed to drive Williamson's artistic decisions, particularly his adverse opinion of Australian plays and playwrights. Thus the post-1900 Firm appeared to aim at managing a theatre importation business better than the pre-1900 managers had done.

When, on 2 July 1904, Williamson entered into partnership with George Tallis and Gustav Ramaciotti, he seemed to be formalising what had in effect been the company's managerial practices from 1900. Williamson was to be sole artistic director of the firm with Tallis and Ramaciotti primarily the company's day-to-day 'business' managers. Tallis had been the business manager of the Theatre Royal, Sydney and Her Majesty's, Melbourne prior to his entering into this partnership and, from Dicker and Bevan's accounts, Ramaciotti's input had been as a financial adviser.

Not surprisingly, their partnership agreement reveals that by 1904 Williamson had undisputed executive power, since he had no partner within the Firm to 'rival' his theatrical expertise as Maggie Moore, Arthur Garner and George Musgrove had each previously done in their different ways. The seven year contract stipulated that the company should be known solely as 'J. C. Williamson' and that Williamson was to direct all matters of policy and exercise general direction, control

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22 Theatre advertisements in the *Sydney Morning Herald* show that 'Williamson, Lee and Rial' were no longer producing the Variety show at the Palace Theatre, Sydney by 1 June 1902, at which time the theatre was sub-leased to Frank Thornton for the 'Thornton Comedy Season'.
and supervision. Each partner, nevertheless, had the right to call a meeting to discuss and decide any matter of policy affecting the welfare of the firm. But, as a 1913 article in Melbourne *Punch* indicates, Tallis clearly managed the company according to the theatrical education he had received from Williamson. Interestingly, the article also suggests that, as a non-theatre person, he could make better 'business' decisions because 'with an unbiased mind, [he] could consider it in its proper business perspective - a feat which J. C. Williamson as an old actor could never perform' (22 May 1913). The article thus implies that 'the Firm' had come of age; also, that the reign of the great actor-manager was over in Australia.

From 1910 onwards, Tallis was a leading force in the transformation of 'J. C. Williamson' into the limited liability company of J. C. Williamson Ltd, which eventually amalgamated with Clyde and Meynell Ltd in 1911. Business contracts show that by then he held the greatest number of shares in the company, though Williamson was still confirmed in his role of 'Governing Director'. Successful financial survival thus existed symbiotically with Williamson's 'visionary' status as director of the artistic output of the Firm until his death. (Plate 50 photograph of George Tallis, courtesy of Michael and Joan Tallis.)

The re-grouping of partnerships between 1910 and 1911 had been precipitated by Gustav Ramaciotti's retirement. An agreement drawn up between the partners on 12 March 1910 states that Tallis was to purchase Ramaciotti's quarter share of the company for £13,000, to be made effective from 1 July 1911. In a separate agreement made on the same day, Ramaciotti was to retire on 13 June 1911; Williamson and Tallis would pay him one fourth of all cash reserves and the value of the company's assets as of the end of the financial year of 1911. Then, on 22 April 1910, Williamson sold half of his half-share of the company to Sydney solicitor Arthur Wigram Allen and George Tallis for £15,000. This would take effect from 1

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23 Theatre advertisements start advertising the amalgamation from September, 1911.
24 Contracts held at the Performing Arts Museum, Melbourne for 2 July 1904; 29 September 1908 for Meynell, Gunn, Clarke and Wren; 12 March 1910; 22 April 1910; 3 August 1911 and 10 November 1911.
July 1910. J. C. Williamson Ltd was registered on 25 July 191025 and on 30 November 1911 the company's partners (which by then also included Hugh J. Ward) sold their theatrical rights and interests, goodwill and all leasehold premises to 'the Company'. Under these new arrangements J.C.Williamson was to have 10,000; George Tallis 18,334; Hugh Ward 6666 and Arthur Allen 5000 shares in J. C. Williamson Ltd.

This reshuffling of company directors occurs almost simultaneously with the company's amalgamation with Clarke Meynell Pty Ltd. This involved the purchase of the London theatrical agency Denton Milton Bode and McKenzie Ltd from whom Clarke Meynell Pty Ltd had obtained successful musicals such as The Arcadians and Miss Hook of Holland. The Daily Telegraph (Sydney) of 10 August 1911 announced the 'absorption' of Clarke and Meynell as a result of negotiations between Williamson and London-based Rupert Clarke, with the amalgamation to take effect on 1 September 1911. George Tallis explained that the amalgamation was due to increased costs: he cites royalties paid to authors, wages paid to staff and the fifty to a hundred percent increase in the salaries of artists. The obvious conclusion was that getting important stars and successful productions for the Australian market had become so expensive that only a bigger and better 'J. C. Williamson Ltd' could carry out the scale of production required.

Retrospectively, therefore, the ascendency of 'J. C. Williamson' can be roughly divided into two epochs: a pre-1900 period where the entrepreneurially-run industry defined the limits of its operations within an Australian political climate moving towards Federation, and a post-1900 period where it refined that definition within a new nation. The irony, that the post-1900 period appears to be less locally

25 This date is in conflict with Ian Bevan's contention that J. C. Williamson Ltd was formed in 1908 when Williamson, Tallis and Ramaciotti re-formed their business as a limited company. It would have been helpful had he noted the source of this date. I arrive at my date from a contract dated 30 November 1911 which states that 'the Company was duly formed and registered under the Companies Act on the 25 July 1910.' I have found no evidence to suggest other than that the 1904 partnership was drawn up as a seven year contract by the partners and that it was at the end of that period, spurred on by Ramaciotti's desire to retire, that a limited liability company was formed. Furthermore, theatre advertisements show that 'J. C. Williamson Ltd' was first used in July 1910 and not, as Bevan suggests, in 1908 when the title of the company was simply 'J. C. Williamson'.
based than its pre-Federation counterpart, can thus be seen to result from the company's fulfillment of pre-1900 plans to be a theatrical importing business on a 'national' scale. As Williamson was keen to point out in 1890, the company had indeed been a pioneer of a 'theatrical federation' (*Lornnette*, 22 February 1890, 3).

The part Williamson played within the construction of this new 'subject' was, ironically, more visible after 1907 when Williamson retired from active management of the Firm. Histories such as Stewart's (1923), Dicker's (1970 and 1974) and Bevan's (1993) thus beg the question of the power of Williamson's in/visibility in the organisation of J. C. Williamson Ltd and of his transformational 'presence' in Australian theatre history in having his persona equated with 'his Firm'. Similarly, the frequent absence of the company's managers from Australia, while travelling in England, Europe and America, underlines the power of their displacement from the local scene in framing their cultural products for 'Australian' audiences.

These contradictions are reconciled in the 'invisible' kinship which Williamson and his partners shared within the specificities of a British Imperialist culture and generically in a European patriarchal Symbolic Order. Thus, Benedict Anderson's (1983) argument that Nationalism(s) belong 'with "kinship" and "religion", rather than with "liberalism" or "fascism"'(5), highlights the fact that Williamson's entrepreneurial Australian theatre also sought to be 'transcendental' and 'transformational'. Hence the value of a specific examination of the company's post-1900 operations in relation to the hundreds of productions it staged of comic operas, melodramas, musical comedies, operas etc. As this thesis demonstrates, the Firm's post-Federation productions 'unlocalised' the Australian pantomime. The earnest calls at this time for a National theatre in the face of J. C. Williamson Ltd's successes in staging imported productions show how 'Australian' drama existed at the margins of the 'Great [Theatrical] Empire of the South'.

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Chapter 4: The Great Empire of the South
4.2: Pantomime and the Firm's Post-Federation productions: producing Australian drama on the margins of Empire.

The now legendary story of Williamson's suggestion that Ibsen's ending for *A Doll's House* should be changed is as much a revelation of his ideology as it is an indication of his dramaturgical preferences. Richard Fotheringham (1995) relates the episode in *Companion to Theatre in Australia*:

Rowdy scenes marked the first night of *A Doll's House* at the Princess Theatre in Melbourne on 14 September 1889, and reviews were negative, although Achurch was generally praised for refined and artistic acting. J. C. Williamson objected to the ending and proposed a different one in which Nora would stay for her children's sake. He even suggested a final line: 'My darlings, I cannot leave you!'. Achurch refused to alter Ibsen's text, although, according to the *Bulletin* on 28 September, some cuts were made after the opening night, including the erroneously hopeful last line of the husband Helmer: 'The miracle?' (15)

Adorno's (1991) observation of the way the 'culture industry' maintains a 'grasp on the idea of a good life' despite the suffering and contradiction around it comes to mind here (90). Likewise, it is possible to see how Williamson's 'theatre as distraction' was being challenged by Ibsen's representation of a woman's exiting the house and the stage of a patriarchal Symbolic Order. Nonetheless, it must be remembered that it was the Firm which imported Achurch into Australia with her repertoire of sensational melodramas, comedies and historical dramas: her tour for its theatres shows how the notoriety and novelty of the 'new drama' sat at the margins of a predominantly conventional repertoire and yet also undoubtedly turned her visit into a 'sensational' event. The American tragedienne Nance O'Neill performed a similar repertoire when she came to Australia to play for Williamson in 1900 and 1905. Similarly, Julius Knight performed Shaw's *Man and Superman* in his repertoire of 'muscular Christian' dramas such as Wilson Barrett's *The Sign of the Cross*.

Nance O'Neill's tours included five performances each of *Hedda Gabler* and *Lady Inger of Ostrat* together with plays such as *Camille, Elizabeth Queen of England*,

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26 European theatre history shows that Williamson was not the only one who wanted another ending for *A Doll's House*. James McFarlane, editor of the 'World Classics' Henrik Ibsen: Four Major Plays (1981) reminds us that in Germany 'the eminent actress cast for the role of Nora refused in a storm of publicity to play the part of such a monster unless the ending was altered and a more conciliatory one substituted' (ix).

27 His article on Janet Achurch had previously appeared in Entertaining Australia (1991).
*The Jewess (Leah Kleshna), Fedora,* and the ever popular melodrama *Trilby.* In 1905 she also created considerable controversy with a love scene in Sudermann's *Fires of St. John.* Theatre advertisements report that *Hedda Gabler* was under her own direction (*Age*, 20 July 1900). However, it was never played for more than a couple of evenings at a time (in Sydney, 1 and 2 November 1900). Similarly, O’Neill's first performance of *Hedda Gabler* in Melbourne was for only one matinee. *Lady Inger of Ostrat,* however, enjoyed a Melbourne season of five performances between 20 and 26 April 1901. Theatre advertisements informed prospective audiences that this 'historical drama' was not the 'usual' Ibsen play.

*Lady Inger of Ostrat has been selected as a splendid play for Nance O'Neill to add to her repertoire, for the reason that it is a finely written and splendidly imagined drama, and exhibits many of the Norwegian's finer qualities, without presenting any of those difficulties which certain playgoers might probably discover in Ibsen's social dramas.*

The notice goes onto say that the play was still an unconventional drama in which 'the people are of flesh and blood, and do human things in a willful, human way, and are not mere sentimental puppets, set to work out a regulation plot in the regulation style of the virtuous stage hero, the virtuous stage heroine, and the honest low comedian' (*Age*, 16 April 1901). Similarly, when the Firm brought out the American actress Tittel Brune, she included Cicely Hamilton's *Diana of Dobson's* which, as Sheila Stowell (1992) explains, ably exploited the conventions of romantic comedy to offer a feminist critique on marriage.

In a final tribute to her predecessor, Tom Robertson, Hamilton concludes her play with a literal cup-and-saucer tableau of the happy couple enjoying sandwiches and coffee perched on a bench on the Thames Embankment. Yet even this final image is problematic. Are we meant to view it with optimism (after all, it is Victor who fetches the coffee) or read it ironically? One could certainly argue that in the manner of Robertson, the values of the home have simply followed Diana to the river's edge (186).

Such a consciousness of changing dramatic forms, *Gay Gibson Cima* (1983) claims, was becoming evident amongst many actors, and the theatre industry in general, at this time.

Unlike formulaic melodrama, Ibsen's dramas were perceived as more complex, partially because of his use of irony, which in turn widened the range of possible choices of action for the play. In 1893 an anonymous reviewer for the *Spectator* complained of *The Master Builder* that 'the dramatist's habit of hiding plot within the plot, and issue within issue, makes it almost impossible to give a fair idea of the main lines upon which the play is laid.' That was not the case with
melodramas, or even with some of Ibsen's predecessors who flirted with 'realism.' In *Camille*, let's say, the overall action might be 'to sacrifice oneself in order to save another' - a motivation shared by Camille and her lover and though there might be variations on this superobjective, the movement of the play holds fairly rigidly to the single line of action. On the other hand, in Ibsen's plays the directorial choices of action cover a much wider range. Partially because of this broader choice of action for the play, Ibsen's characters were not easily discernible 'types,' at least not to the nineteenth-century actor. While his more conventional counterparts knew immediately upon receiving a role assignment not only the play's action but also the character's functional motivation, the Ibsen actor (often not even in an established company) had to struggle to locate the character after determining which line of action was appropriate for the drama (15).

The Firm's importation of actors who performed Ibsen, Shaw and/or the New Woman dramas thus indicates its understanding of these new forms as a 'novelty' rather than a movement which embraced new political and artistic possibilities. However, on numbers alone, their presence in repertoires of 'star' attractions pale into insignificance in comparison with the hundreds of productions of 'muscular Christian' and Roman 'toga' dramas staged between 1900 and 1914.

One of the most high-profile exponents of this latter form was Wilson Barrett whom the Firm imported to Australia in 1901 'with his own complete London company' to present *Man and his Maker, The Manxman, The Sign of the Cross, The Silver King, Quo Vadis?, The Christian King, Virginius* and *Claudian*, all specifically adapted by Barrett. His season also included his adaptations of *Hamlet* and *Othello*. A well-known London actor-manager and charismatic melodramatic actor who, it was speculated, would be heir to Henry Irving (Thomas 1979, 480), Barrett's *Silver King* was used by Williamson as his exemplar of the ultimate well-made play in *Life Story* (1913).

Williamson also imported to Australia several other English and American 'melodramatic' actors such as Tyrone Power (1900), Cuyler Hastings (1902 - 04), Charles Waldron (1906 - 07), G. S. Titheradge (1909) the 'king of melodrama', H. B. Irving (1911) and Oscar Ashe (1912 - 13). But by far the most frequently visiting dramatic actor was Julius Knight. Undoubtedly influenced by Barrett's charismatic acting style, Knight made highly successful Australian tours in 1894 - 97, 1898 - 99, 1902 - 06, 1907 - 11 and 1913 - 16 (Murphy 1995, 318): his repertoire included

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28 Strictly speaking Oscar Ashe was brought out to Australia by Clarke and Meynell Pty Ltd. His contracts were part of the 1911 amalgamation of the two firms.
Barrett's *The Sign of the Cross* which he staged on no less that seven times in 1904, 1905, 1909, 1911 and 1914. Knight also presented Shaw's *Arms and the Man* in 1910 and *Man and Superman* in 1913.

Williamson's personal commitment to 'muscular Christian' melodrama can best be gauged, however, from the fact that one of his 'rare acts of faith in an Australian author' was the staging of *Parsifal* (Kelly and Fotheringham 1995, 427). Written by 'Toso' Taylor (now the Reverend T. Hilhouse Taylor), who had written three pantomimes for the Firm in 1889, 1893 and 1894, the production first played during the traditional pantomime Christmas season at Her Majesty's Theatre, Sydney 22 December 1906 to 15 February 1907. It then went to Her Majesty's, Melbourne for an 'Easter' season, 23 March to 26 April 1907. The Sydney season included a concurrent run of a 'juvenile pantomime' *Alice in Wonderland*, produced by choreographer Minnie Everett from 24 December 1906 to 26 January 1907 (only as matinee performances). Everett was also the choreographer for *Parsifal* while Williamson was its stage director. Theatre reviews acknowledged that Williamson wanted a 'religious drama' and, while he used a local writer, his choice for the leading part of Kundry was the American actress Tittell Brune. Her versatility is evident throughout her work; in the following year she was to be the first Peter Pan on an Australian stage.

The plot of *Parsifal* used the usual melodramatic 'clear line of action':

the protagonist, in conflict with external forces rather than divided against himself, struggles to win a battle, while the antagonist tries to block his action. The movement of the play is toward an idealised, simplified truth: to show that right triumphs, perhaps, or to reveal that suffering is rewarded (Cima 1983, 11).

*Table Talk* of 28 March 1907 describes the Reverend Taylor's adaptation of Arthurian and other medieval 'Holy Grail' legends as presenting a dreamy, abstracted ascetic.

Titurel, the King of Grail Mount, and his red-cross knights, were sworn to protect the sacred emblem. Klingsor, a magician, made many attempts to secure the relic, but armed with the Sacred Spear, the old king kept his trust inviolate. Not so his son who succeeded him, however. Amfortas, tempted by Kundry, a servant of Klingsor, and cursed in her descent from a woman who laughed at the agonies of Christ on the Cross, lost the spear and his own honour. Then Parsifal, simple and pure, overthrew Klingsor, secured the spear, was crowned in the abdicated and repentant
king's place, wedded Kundry (transfigured to the nobler type of pure womanhood) to Amfortas, and Christian quiet fell on the land.

While Kelly and Fotheringham are right in pointing out that the show ran to packed houses in Sydney and Melbourne, critics were nonetheless divided over Williamson's sole effort at producing 'original' drama. The Age of 25 March 1907 described it as 'one of the most notable events in the dramatic history'. It was a 'miracle play' full of 'mysticism and symbolism':

a sumptuous feast of light and color, flushing with a rosy dawn , the uplands of a Sacred Mount, bathing in amber sunlight the woodland dells, crimsoning in sensuous, voluptuousness a Garden of Temptation, anon deepening to the sombre weirdness of a magician's cell, lit by the flames of hellish brews, or revealing in lurid flashes the red ruin of an earthquake and the Dantesque horror of the tortures of the damned.

But the Argus judged Parsifal to be 'a tangled and confused skein, on which has been suspended daring and dashing elaborate mechanical marvels' (25 March 1907). Table Talk interestingly criticised it for being an 'old-fashioned' play, quite out of keeping for a modern age.

What is wrong with 'Parsifal' is neither the scenery nor the acting. But the play itself is about two thousand years behind the times: it smells of the torch of old superstition, and ought to be quietly dropped, after Mr. Williamson has satisfied his whim (which nobody will begrudge him after the pantomime), into the dark ages where it belongs. The dramatist must have a peculiar mind. He takes up the elementary human passions and wrings some fluttering actions from them on the rack of old legends. Hell and brimstone do their worst to the poor wight who, being a king, stoops to kiss a mere girl, just as many quite passable kings have done. And then a queer figure is conjured up - a man so pure that he will kiss the same girl merely for pity. If a spark of anything more ardent than pity had flickered in the kiss all would have been ruined, and 'Parsifal,' the play, would have died of shame. To be plain, the playwright who can analyse a kiss so minutely as that is morbid, and his morbidity has no place in modern life. Indeed, we do not believe that such hair-splitting over purity and naughtiness ever affected men, even when knighthood was in flower. In fifty lines of modern comedy are often compressed more pathos and sublimity than in the whole of 'Parsifal.' In looks, indeed, like the product of a slow intellect trying to define right and wrong in a three-hour fable where a healthy-minded modern would Divine the truth in a flash. In a word, we can commend the piece to those good brethren who, at this time of day, are still wrangling over the right or wrong of dancing (28 March 1907).

The critic of Melbourne Punch believed the play displayed 'hypocrisy'. This is also a criticism which George Taylor (1989) levels at Barrett's 'muscular Christian' plays, for titillating their audiences with villainy and then reassured them with a miraculous conversion (160). Similarly, Punch noted that the very moral tone of Parsifal 'may be good, but the end achieved by unsavoury and objectionable means'.

Chapter 4: The Great Empire of the South 339
In fact, the two 'temptation' scenes were little more than an excuse to show Brune virtually undressed (28 March, 1907).29

Curiously, the final nuptial scene was also reminiscent of festive comedies and the pantomime. Indeed, Williamson's fascination with evil women was the theme of his original production of *Matsa, Queen of Fire*. One also notes that the earthquake effect in *Parsifal* had been previously staged in his other original production *Djin Djin* and that *Australis* has as a central character the evil magician Azeemath. Like the pantomime, *Parsifal* also made considerable use of children in dances and other spectacles.

The blurring of the 'aesthetic autonomy' of this 'serious drama' and pantomime highlights Williamson's and his various business managers' commitment to an 'idealized, simplified truth'. Not surprisingly, therefore, theatre seasons were organised around 'light' and 'dark' productions. The pattern of productions offered to audiences in the Firm's main theatres of Her Majesty's in Sydney and Melbourne, for instance, predominantly show seasons of comic opera and musical comedy alternating with conventional dramas. Thus, when Bernard Espinasse's Boer War pantomime *Little Red Riding Hood* finished at Her Majesty's Sydney on 16 February 1900, it was immediately followed by his adaptation of the war drama *Youth*. This was followed by a season of Nance O'Neill's dramas (which included some comedies), then by an extensive season of comic opera including Gilbert and Sullivan's *HMS Pinafore*, *Pirates of Penzance* and *Iolanthe* which ran from 26 May to 28 September. During this season Williamson premiered *The Rose of Persia* by Basil Hood and Arthur Sullivan, previously staged at Richard D'Oyly Carte's Savoy in 1899.

Nance O'Neill returned for another season from September to early December, at which time the theatre closed to prepare for the pantomime *Australis*. The pantomime season finished on 1 March 1901, after which Edith Crane and Tyrone Power presented melodramas, including *Trilby* and *The Christian*. Then followed a season of musical comedy including the Sydney premiere of *Florodora* and the

29 Veronica Kelly (1995) examines this 'hypocrisy' even further in 'J. C. Williamson Produces *Parsifal*, or The Redemption of Kundry: Wagnerism, Religion, and Sexuality'.
Australian premiere of *The Casino Girl*: the former had been purchased from Tom B. Davis's Lyric Theatre London where it had run for 455 performances from 11 November 1899. In Australia the starring role was taken by Grace Palotta of the Gaiety Theatre, London. The Sydney season run from 6 April to 5 July 1901 with *The Casino Girl* opened immediately after on 6 July. The quick change from one musical to another was advertised as a feat in itself.

The CASINO GIRL will be the final production of the present season, and special interest and importance attach to this event, inasmuch as it follows immediately the most successful and popular musical comedy Australia has ever seen. Great preparations have been in progress for many weeks past, and every effort is being made to ensure perfection in every detail and made the representations a worthy successor to its pre-eminently successful predecessor, 'Florodora'. *(Sydney Morning Herald* 6 July, 1901)

After this season of musical comedy, Williamson staged an Italian opera season, as Alison Gyger (1990) explains, only the second since 1893 (92). Undoubtedly designed to compete with George Musgrove's 1900 English Opera season, Williamson's production opened just as Musgrove's was ending in Melbourne on 1 June 1901. The Sydney season at Her Majesty's ran from 3 August to 25 October and included *Aida, Rigoletto, La Boheme, Un Ballo in Maschera, Otello* and *La Traviata*.

After opera came Wilson Barrett's two month season of dramas, finishing on 21 December 1901. Barrett's article, 'The Church and the Stage', in *Australasian Stage Annual*, gives an account of anti-theatrical prejudice by comparing ethnic intolerance and intolerance towards actors and the stage:

intolerance is not practised towards actors and the stage alone. There is a class of professed Christians who seem at times to be everything that Christ was not. He taught tolerance, love and pity. They practise bigotry, hatred and persecution... Let me remind my readers that in the streets of Paris to-day the youth and manhood of Christian France are parading the streets shrieking: 'Death to the Jews,' and that but yesterday, in Russia, Poland, and Germany, in the name of Christ, the Jews have been robbed, tortured, and murdered. Even here in free England, lately, things have happen in our very churches which are a disgrace and a scandal to our boasted liberty of conscience... Vice defeated, virtue triumphant, charity, kindness and valour, comradeship to men, and chivalry to women, are the surest cards to play in the Theatre. And if the stage helps to inculcate these great principles, she is helping the Church indeed. This, I claim, the stage can, and does, do, and it is this work that the Church should recognise... If I have written strongly, forgive me. It is a subject upon which I feel strongly (1 January 1900).

This indicates that any 'hypocrisy' on Barrett's part, as suggested by Taylor, was unconscious. Similarly, Williamson's championing of morality should not only

Chapter 4 : The Great Empire of the South
be thought of as cynically motivated just for box-office profits. Rather, the 'light' and 'dark' organisation of theatre seasons indicated his understanding of 'human emotions' and 'human instincts' on which he believed all dramatic narratives were based (Life Story, 31).

Despite this 'light' and 'dark' alternation, the Firm's enterprise across the seven theatres they used in Sydney and Melbourne at various time in the post-Federation period shows its overwhelming commitment to giving audiences 'novel' theatrical experiences. Theatre advertisements often contained 'managerial manifestos' when the Firm staged what it regarded as a great theatrical 'coup'. Sydney's Italian Opera season, for instance, was advertised with the following manifesto.

As the last weeks of this great season are approaching, Mr. Williamson desires to thank the music-loving public of Sydney for the appreciation they have shown of his efforts in presenting to them the best and most complete series of representations of Italian Grand Opera that have ever been seen or heard in Australasia. Mr. Williamson has no hesitation in making this assertion, feeling sure that its correctness is proven by the splendid productions give at His Majesty's Theatre during the past nine weeks, many of which will challenge comparison with representations given at the best Opera Houses in the musical centres of Europe. In bringing this magnificent Company to Australia Mr Williamson's instructions to Signor Hazon and Mr. George Allen, his representatives, were to bring the very best available talent, forming a company superior to any which had ever been heard in Australasia, or to bring none at all, and he is proud to think that the press and public have so heartily shown their approval of the artistes selected. The public can have but little idea of the enormous expense and trouble of organising such a company and equipping it with entirely new scenery, costumes, and appointments for a repertoire of fifteen high-class Operas, to be presented with the most careful attention to detail, and requiring the assistance of a large and complete operatic Orchestra of the best players and an extensive carefully drilled chorus. In every particular the Director feels he may justly claim that his promises have been fulfilled, and faith has been kept with the Public regardless of an outlay which could only be recouped if the theatre was crowded to its utmost capacity every night during the season (Sydney Morning Herald, 5 October 1901)

The manifesto highlights the predominant theme of Williamson's growing lament in post-1900 years of the difficulties of being a theatre manager in Australia: ironically, this was seen as the difficulty of luring 'the best' talent and satisfying a 'spoil't Australian public because of the high standards the Firm had always maintained. An article on 'Theatre Managing' stated that no one 'can form any idea of the stupendous difficulties in the way of finding productions for the market. There is always a great degree of uncertainty as to what will please the public in the way of either pieces or artists' (Unidentified press clipping in Theatrical reminiscences and newspaper cuttings [collected by J. Plummer 1902 - 1912], Mitchell Library). The
article also suggests that the Firm was restricted because 'the field Australian managers have to draw upon is largely limited to England, for the public here do not generally take kindly to American plays'.

Despite the difficulties of keeping up with 'the London standard', the Firm's business was continuously reported in newspaper articles, describing 'important engagements' which Williamson secured from London theatres, primarily from George Edwardes and Charles Frohman. So Williamson's standing with overseas managers was described in the Sydney Morning Herald of 25 March 1905.

Some important engagements are announced by Mr J. C. Williamson in connection with the Easter production of 'The Cingalee' by the Royal Comic Opera company. Musically it is a difficult piece to cast, but the actor-manager, who is anxious to keep his performances well up to the London standard, was fortunate in being able to persuade Miss Margaret Thomas to remain in Australia for a while. The Welsh mezzo-soprano will make her final appearance at the Parkins-Foldes concert next Friday at Perth, and when next day her friends embark at Fremantle by the Orontes for London she will start on the return journey to Sydney. Last year Mr. George Edwardes offered Miss Thomas an important part in 'Veronique,' but she did not at the time care to leave her concert work. In this way it happens that her stage debut will be made in Australia.

Williamson was concerned with mirroring the London stage when possible, even with regard to 'revivals'. When, for instance, the Savoy revived Iolanthe in December 1901, Williamson produced it for Australia in July, 1902. The 'managerial announcement' for the production at Her Majesty's, Melbourne noted that 'the recent revival of Iolanthe at the Savoy Theatre, London, has prompted Mr. Williamson to present the opera once again in Melbourne' (Age, 17 July 1902).

Managerial announcements thus defined the company as 'maintaining the standards' of the past while also continually implementing new works. Very often this meant advertising the 'tradition' of the companies presented by the Firm, such as the Royal Comic Opera Company, while simultaneously always re-making them anew, as with the J. C. Williamson's New Comic Opera Company. Thus the tradition of having the 'Royal Comies' was well publicised during the Firm's difficult financial time after the burning down of Her Majesty's Sydney in 1902, when productions had to move to the smaller Palace Theatre.

Mr. Williamson begs to direct the attention of Sydney Playgoers and Music Lovers to the fact that arrangements have been completed for the return to Sydney of

Chapter 4: The Great Empire of the South
the largest, best, and most popular musical organisation in the Southern Hemisphere, the

ROYAL COMIC OPERA COMPANY

ROYAL COMIC OPERA COMPANY

The history of this organisation is remarkable and unique. The original company was formed and christened in Sydney by Mr. Williamson in December, 1881, just 21 years ago. During this long period the company has been constantly under the personal management of Mr. W., or the firms of which he was senior partner. From year to year there have been many changes in the membership of the company, but it has been the constant aim of the Director to secure the best available talent, and at all times maintain the

HIGHEST STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE

Since the enormously successful 'Runaway Girl' season in Sydney the company has been augmented and improved by the engagement of several important artists of the first rank, additions have been made to the already unprecedented repertoire, and brilliant revivals have been given to the most attractive works identified with the earlier successes of the company. In order to display the talents of the old favourites and the new candidates for the public favour to the best advantage, the programme of the coming season will be one of

CONSTANT CHANGE AND VARIETY

As Ida Osborne's diaries show, the 'Royal Comics' were a local company employing 'minor' Australian actors throughout Williamson's management of the Firm between 1882 and 1913. But while this 'local' tradition is valued at times, notices predominantly highlight the 'imported' pedigree of the stars. Hence, Grace Palotta of the Gaiety Theatre headed the company's 1901 Melbourne production of Florodora. Post-Federation theatre advertisements also show that stars now arrived in Australia with their own 'complete' London (and occasionally American) companies, dispensing with the necessity of local companies like the Royal Comics or J. C. Williamson's Dramatic Company altogether. This was the case for Wilson Barrett, the Irish comedian Andrew Mack, actor William Collier and H. B. Irving.

The managerial notice for Irving is particularly interesting in the way it also attempts to dispel the idea that English stars visiting Australia came long after the 'height of their powers'.

Mr. J. C. WILLIAMSON in announcing the approaching season of Mr. H. B. IRVING and his Company of London Artists, including Miss DOROTHEA BAIRD, realises that playgoers will recognise the occasion as unique in the history of the Australian stage.

In this eminent actor lovers of the great drama will see the finest exponent of classical roles on the English speaking stage to-day. The plays comprising his repertoire are such as only a master of the art of acting can essay with success, and
authoritative critical opinion agrees that Mr. H. B. Irving's gifts and intellectual equipment fit him, as no one else is fitted, to present them.

As the head of the family whose name means most to the English stage, Mr H. B. Irving has inherited the noblest traditions of the theatre, and his sincere devotion to its art has won for him undisputed right to the exalted position on the death of his distinguished father, Sir Henry Irving, left to be filled. Mr H. B. Irving makes his appearance in Australia at the height of his powers, and Mr. J. C. Williamson deems it a very great honour to have the privilege to present him, in association with Miss Dorothea Baird and his talented English Company, at the Firm's Australian theatres. (Age, 12 August 1911)

Such wholesale importation had always embroiled the Firm in the Nationalist debate on 'Colonial Talent'. The Lornette of 16 August, 1890 believed that the fault was with the theatre critic as much as the managers: there was 'no greater proof of the disgrace - we had almost said, criminal - neglect and indifference with which Australian talent is regard in Australia, than the utter and contemptuous non-recognition thereanent displayed by the Australian press'.

At a dinner in honour of J. C. Williamson's departure for America and England in January 1890, a toast to Williamson turned into an occasion for Alfred Dampier to confront his fellow theatre manager on the issue of local drama. The Lornette reported that Dampier 'believed that a time would eventually come in which they would not have to go to England for plays - that in these colonies they would be able to foster, by not being too hard upon it, a colonial drama (Here, hear). He looked forward to a time when the productions of Melbourne and Sydney would be sought after by the managers of London and New York' (22 January 1890). Dampier's views are, of course, in keeping with his own management of the 'Australian Theatre' at the Alexandra Theatre, Melbourne, where he staged locally written melodramas between 1888 to 1892 and Garnet Walch's Jack the Giant Killer in 1891.

Williamson took over the Alexandra in 1899 and renamed it Her Majesty's. Its official opening on 19 May 1900 prompted Williamson to speak from the stage and declare that he had found it impossible to stay away from Melbourne (obviously here referring to his earlier sad departure at the Princess Theatre). The theatre (dubbed 'The Home of Pantomime') was to prove of vital importance to post-Federation
pantomime as the theatre in which from 1906 on all productions were launched. 30 Despite Dampier's hopes that an Australian drama might be exported back to London and New York, Christmas pantomimes staged at Her Majesty's Melbourne show how the local pantomime reflected the growth of the company's importation business.

Sydney's last Christmas pantomime was at the Theatre Royal in 1903 31, after which all pantomimes were staged at Her Majesty's, commencing March or early April. If this was meant to represent an 'Easter' season, theatre advertisements did not mention it. Remarkably, while pre-1900 productions ran for six to eight weeks from Boxing Day to early-February, from 1906 they ran for between ten to twelve weeks, in keeping with the longer runs of musicals. In fact, Her Majesty's Theatres in Sydney and Melbourne were largely given over to staging musical extravaganzas. In 1900 the number of weeks devoted to staging musicals at Her Majesty's Sydney, for instance, was eighteen. In 1907 the theatre staged twenty-three weeks of musicals; in 1908, twenty-seven; 1909, thirty-one and in 1910 it was no less than forty. When added to the ten weeks of pantomime staged that year, this amounted to fifty weeks of spectacular musical production in 1910. Interestingly, in 1911, the year J. C. Williamson amalgamated with Clarke and Meynell Pty Ltd, Her Majesty's staged only thirty-three weeks of musical theatre but, after acquiring all Clarke and Meynell's imported productions, the new 'J. C. Williamson Ltd' also staged another thirty weeks of musical productions at the Theatre Royal. On top of that, the Firm also staged ten weeks of Nellie Melba's Grand Opera Season. It acquired the Criterion Theatre's more intimate stage on which it was not averse to staging musicals, as it did in 1913 with the Australian premiere of The Dancing Mistress. 32

Kurt Ganzl's (1986) outline of British musicals makes it possible to see that the Firm imported virtually every successful London Gaiety production. There were,
however, sporadic attempts to write 'Australian' comic operas and musical comedies during these years. For instance, W. J. Curtis and W. Arundel Orchard wrote *The Emperor* in 1906 and George Stephenson's English Musical Comedy Company staged Alfred Hill's comic opera *A Moorish Maid*. These were not as successful as the imported Gaiety musicals. *The Theatre*, for instance, questioned whether *Moorish Maid* should be called an opera since its disjointed story seemed to be merely an excuse to show off the talents of its comedians. Its music was nonetheless 'bright and tuneful' (1 May 1906).

These local works, which did not explore Australian social or historical concerns, show how local playwrights and composers were never incorporated into the basic structure of the Australian theatre industry as were, for instance, English writers and composers working for George Edwardes' theatres: composers like Sidney Jones and Lionel Monckton and writers Harry Greenbank and Adrian Ross. As a consequence it is difficult to say whether the lack of 'Australian' content was a result of the playwright's and composer's indifference towards the local culture, or a response to the need to emulate the overseas product for managers who believed that audiences did not want to see 'Australia' on stage.

Williamson produced only one locally written comic opera when he staged *Tapu* in 1904. It was also composed by Alfred Hill and co-authored by Williamson and Arthur H. Adams. Again, this work can only be described problematically as 'Australian' since it originated in New Zealand. J. M. Thomson's (1980) description of its origins reveals how Williamson only staged it after its successful New Zealand season by the Pollard company in 1902-1903. Arthur Adams, however, claimed in the *Lone Hand* (1908) that the comic opera was initially written between 1898-1900 when he worked under Williamson as literary secretary. This would have been at the time that he and Alfred Hill were collaborating on *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* for Williamson and Musgrove. *Tapu* 's adaptation by Williamson for the company's 1904 Sydney and Melbourne productions came while Adams was in England. He reported
four years later in the *Lone Hand* that he was greatly displeased by what he had heard about changes made by Williamson:

I came to Mr. J. C. Williamson, a raw reporter from Maoriland - well, some time ago - with a comic opera libretto in my pocket. I showed it to him, and was promptly engaged as 'literary secretary', at a salary of £200 a year, with the stipulation that all original work done by me during my two year's engagement should become the property of my employer. As I was eager to learn the rudiments of play-writing, this seemed to me then a fair bargain. I knew I had come to the best judge of plays in Australia, the man who could teach me my trade. Mr Williamson gave me the benefit of his experience; I gave him the bones of my comic opera. Afterwards, I thought, I should be in a position to make better terms for myself. Meantime, the main thing was to learn my trade, get my opera produced, and, if it were a success, I could bargain for any future work. The relinquishing of any profit upon this first play would be a small sacrifice to make for the possibilities of the future. Besides, I was getting a salary. And under Mr. Williamson's supervision and criticism I re-wrote 'Tapu'. The actual writing was, of course, mine; but he had a hand in the reconstruction of the play, and improved it from a popular point of view by many an effective piece of well-worn stage technique. And from this work, under my employer's eye, I learnt the manager's point of view, which is, of course, through the box-office window; and that point of view must not be disregarded, though it need not be made paramount by any writer for the stage, Australian or ordinary. So I worked with Mr Williamson for two years, and though he wished then to produce 'Tapu', circumstances did not permit. Some years afterwards, when I was in England, I heard, through friends and from the papers, that the opera had been produced throughout Australasia. I have never seen it on the stage, and judging from what I have heard of its final form, that was a fortunate thing for me. I believe that - like Homer and the Old Testament - it had been worked over by others, but not so reverently, since I left it with Mr. Williamson. But if I had been present on the first performance in Sydney I would have hurled a bomb at Lauri; and, if I saw it now, in the form in which I left it, I would hurl two bombs at it and lay dog poison on the stage. Thus, from this work I got actually not one penny of payment or royalty, which as I have indicated, was according to the bond (233).

Not only does this account shed light on the possible foregoing of copyright of pantomimes written by local writers such as Garnet Walch, Montague Grover and other 'literary secretaries', letters in Alfred Hill's papers suggest that Arthur Adams no longer wanted any association with the work after 1904. A letter from Williamson to Hill on 10 March 1909, for instance, suggests that Adams was no longer considered the one who should re-write the libretto for other future productions.

re Tapu:
I have made a number of efforts to get the book re-written but as yet have not been able to find anyone here or in England who could properly catch the spirit of the play and use the best portions of the libretto welded into a thoroughly good acting edition which would harmonise with the music and give the opportunity for working in the special New Zealand features. I have found lots of people who thoroughly believed they could do just what was required and have paid out considerable money at different times to give them a trial, with the result that I have on each occasion been obliged to discard the work as it did not fulfil my ideas. For this reason I should not care to give permission for the piece to be altered or re-written unless it was subject to my approval. I still have faith in the play and am very fond of your music and hope at no distant time to give it another trial, most likely on the other side of the world. I expect to be in England during the course of the present year and know Messrs Asherberg, Hopwood and Crew very well and if they make a successful production of 'The Moorish Maid' I shall be very pleased to take up the matter with...
them of producing 'Tapu', in which case I should certainly desire that you would be on the spot to help with the revision of the play and elaborate the music.

Inadvertently highlighting both the power and the conservatism of the theatre manager towards any further theatrical experimentation with local productions, it gives the impression that Williamson had sole rights over the work. A letter from Arthur Adams to Hill on 15 December, 1925 indicates otherwise, however, when, in reply to Hill's request to have Tapu re-written, Adams writes that he 'couldn't go back to that thing', indicating perhaps that the reason for his disinterest was more to do with his disgust at the 1904 production rather than Williamson's exclusive rights over the work.

Fortunately, there exist what seem to be 'New Zealand' and 'Australian' versions of the comic opera. While the 'Australian' libretto is clearly the 1904 Sydney/Melbourne version, the 'New Zealand' script is undated, thus it is difficult to say whether or not it was the one used for the Pollard Company's New Zealand production of 1902-3, particularly as Thomson (1980) suggests the latter was similar to the Australian production in having as its the central figure an Australian politician, George Wright. In constrast, the 'New Zealand' version has a 'Maoriland' politician as the 'Minister for Public Jobs' (referred to in the opera as 'Jobs'). Audiences were informed, via a young Maori warrior reading a newspaper notice while in conversation with the Maori Chieftainess, Mara, that 'Jobs' would be accompanied by a guide and four representatives of the League of Emancipated Maidens. The five were on a 'diplomatic tour of the Uniwera Country' intended to build a 'favourable feeling of the Maori constituencies towards the Government.' In the 'Australian' version an Australian politician is on a mission around New Zealand attempting to bring 'Maoriland' into the Commonwealth.

'Jobs' is not the comic focus of the opera as his equivalent is in the Australian version, an emphasis undoubtedly related to accommodating its star, George Lauri. Instead, the New Zealand libretto seems much more even-handed and ensemble-like in its distribution of leading parts amongst the three key elements of the narrative: the Maoris, a bankrupt comic opera company left stranded in New Zealand and the Pakeha.
politicians, Jobs and the Women's League. The plot, based around the concept of 'tapu', or 'taboo', looks at the exercise of native law in relation to Maori and Pakeha relations. 'Tapu' is explained in the programme notes as a superstitious yet powerful practice.

The influence of Tapu pervaded every phase of Maori life. The power of Tapu (which is the Maori spelling of the 'Taboo' of the Islands) was possessed by the Chiefs and Tohungas, Prophets of the Tribe, and one of its uses was to ensure to those exercising the power the possession of their property. Whatever a Chief touched, his Whare, Field, Crops, or a human being, was sacred to the person tapu it; and was perfectly secure from interference. The rash or careless person who broke through a tapu, was practically dead, for this fear was so real a thing with the Maoris, that persons have sickened and died from sheer fright. A human being who was tapued could not even feed himself with his own hands, either having to eat his food like a dog, or having it put in his mouth by some other person by means of pointed sticks used as forks. The persons of all Chiefs and prophets were similarly sacred.

The love-story involves inter-racial romances between Fay Chrysalis, the comic opera prima-donna, and Tonga, a young warrior, and John Smith, the baritone, and Mara, a 'chieftainess'. The two actors provide the metatheatrical focus for the whole narrative in their ability to comment on the interconnections between the stage and reality. For instance, Fay admonishes John over the subject of 'real' love when she reminds him of all his previous love scenes.

Fay: I yearn for somebody to make love to me in a real romantic way.
Smith: Ah Fay, how often have I?
Fay: I've lost count. You have made love too regularly on the stage to be sincere.
Smith: (throwing himself on his knees, dramatically.) But Fay, I have told you this is real passion; you are my only love, my----
Fay: (critically) That is exactly the way you propose to the heroine every evening at half past eight.

Similarly, when John is mistaken for the Minister for Public Jobs by the Maoris, he decides to play the part and profit from it. After all, according to the comic opera star, it is only another part: 'Portfolio and Pantomime! Farce and Federation! Democracy and Hypocrisy ----same thing.' Curiously, Smith announces that the ultimate purpose of his disguise is so he can recruit the whole Maori village for his new comic opera. He succeeds in the end, thereby also averting the 'cooking' and cannibalistic eating of the Minister for Jobs and the Women's League.

Unlike the 'New Zealand' libretto, the 'Australian' one shows George Wright entering the action before the arrival of the two actors. This makes the need for John
Smith's disguise redundant and from that point on the plot seems to lose its impetus to 'reveal' the truth about incompetent and greedy politicians. Instead, the brash 'Australian' comedian is applauded for his vain-glorious pride, in a style highly reminiscent of Tom Wallaby in Djinn Djinn. Neither libretto, however, regardless of its authors, explores Maori and Australian culture in anything other than crudely caricatured terms. The two endings, the 'New Zealand' one showing the 'tribe' becoming incorporated into a Comic Opera company, and the 'Australian' one showing the tribe singing the praises of the 'mighty politician', thus reveal the ascendancy of the 'Pakeha' over the cannibalistic Maori.

Ironically, the most spectacular features of both the Australian and New Zealand productions were the Poi dance and the Haka.

Among novel features of the Production will be:-

1. The First Presentation upon the Operatic Stage of
   the Famous
   POI DANCE
   by
   THE ROYAL BALLERINAS
   and the
   COMIC OPERA CHORUS,
   Instructed by Miss Minnie Everett.

2. The Thrilling
   HAKA
   For which Mr. Williamson has at much trouble and expense secured the services of
   the famous team of Haka Dancers known as
   'THE DUKE'S OWN'.

   Selected from the Ngatikahungunu Tribe of the Hawkes
   Bay District,
   who have their National Haka before the
   DUKE AND DUCHESS OF YORK
   at Rotorua on Saturday, June 15, 1901.

The Player of 15 September 1903 informed its readers of the pivotal role Minnie Everett played in learning the dances from Maori women and then teaching them to the 'Royal Ballerinas'. This suggests Everett's role was that of a 'colonising woman'.

Miss Minnie Everett is one who gets very little credit for the success of all the Royal Comic Opera productions, although in reality she deserves a great deal. The many beautiful dances introduced in several of the pieces were thought out by her

Chapter 4 : The Great Empire of the South
and for the production of Alfred Hill’s Opera a Maori woman has been specially brought over to teach the different steps of some of their dances. She gives her instruction not to the company, but to Miss Everett, who studies it in detail and then teaches the rest (5).

Reflecting on the episode in 1910, she betrayed her own cultural imperialist attitudes in suggesting that the 'Poi' dance was a misnomer.

The Poi dance is a misnomer, in so far as the Maoris have this as a dance, or it is sought to impose it on us as a dance. It is not a dance at all. It has nothing in it, beyond the movements of the arms, and the wriggling of the body. Very graceful - sensuously graceful - these actions may be; but they do not by any means constitute a dance. I had seen a good deal of New Zealand before 'Tapu' was produced. Moreover, Mr. Williamson had a Maori girl brought over to Melbourne with a view to enabling me to get from her whatever details I might require for the Poi dance. She showed me a lot of little things that I would not think of giving my pupils, for the reason that they meant a dreadful lot of work, and there was really nothing in them when done. What I did in 'Tapu' was to take the salient features of the Poi dance, and build up around these a dance of my own, utilising the chorus-ladies as much as I could in support of my eight girls, and in the end getting what was generally declared to be a most effective dance. (The Theatre, 1 November 1910)

Thus, both the New Zealand and Australian productions presented Maori culture through a mediated representation of the primitive warrior and the 'noble savage'. The opening scene, set in the Pah of the Ngatimaniopoto Tribe, Tarawera district, for instance, highlighted the primitiveness of Maori women.

Some women stand over the three hangis (ovens - which are round or oval earthen mounds, about 8 inches above the level of the ground, of various sizes). One woman is pouring a calabash of water into one of the hangis, and a great cloud of steam escapes. From the other hangis, which are covered with earth, steam escapes slightly during the rest of the scene till the exuamt of the chorus, when the steam ceases altogether. Other women are squatted on the ground, scraping Kumeras (potatoes). One of the ovens is a sligh, flames coming from it, and the food has been put in it. Some girls stand at frames (consisting of a string stretched between two poles) upon which fibre is hung, and the girls are weaving the fibres. Other girls on the ground weaving mats and baskets. The weaving- frames can be removed when the chorus exuamt. A log or form is place in foreground.

The opening song of the Maori maidens also reveals the self-deprecation so evident in 'Eastern' pantomime productions of Aladdin and Sinbad: unsurprisingly in this context, the lyrics farcically allude to the skimpiness of Maori dress. The similarity to the 'Jap' song in the Act 1, Scene 2 chorus in Djin Djin is also most noticeable:

Cook the succulent Kumera
Roast the root of Fern
Till the warriors to the Pah
Hungry return
Weave the mats to be worn meant
For our adornment
For our costume variety lacks - Chiefly tattoo work
Beautiful blue work.
Nice and cool - what there is of it
Simply exquisite;
Chiefly tattoo-work
Beautiful blue work
What there is of it!

Ours are frocks that do not wear out;
Changes of fashion
Are not our passion -
Fit you slender and fit you stout
Though in the quality
Somewhat decollete,
Worth all Worths' in the perfect fit
Simply exquisite
Somewhat decollete
In its quality what there is of it.

Tawerasolo
Though within a palisaded Pa
Our native tongue is Maori
Picturesque and flowery,
By the rules of Comic Opera
We curb our inclinations
And express our observations
In the language of the Pakeha.

The sentimental portrayal of the young lovers, Mara and Tonga, is clearly based on representations of the 'noble savage'. Furthermore, Mara's love song, which comes soon after the opening song quoted above, is both sentimental and culturally non-specific in that it might have been sung by any female protagonist in any comic opera.

To a woman's wistful heart,
In a startled wave of feeling
Swift and sudden
Sweeps love's flood in -
Joy with fear in rapture reeling
Scathe and sorrow, fret and smart
In one flush of gladness healing.
Life be-clouded,
Sorrows shrouded
As a sunlit world revealing
To a woman's wistful heart.

To a woman's wistful heart,
Warm with hopes that almost frighten,
Love comes singing
Gladly bringing
To her lonelines a light in.
Pain and shadowed grief depart, every hour life's glories heighten.
All earth's wonder
That has shunned her
Like a flower, blooms to brighten
In a woman's wistful heart.

Similarly, Makutu, a 'Maori prophetess', was caricatured like any spinster/Dame of pantomime and comic opera. She is desperate for a man and goes to
great lengths to find one. In the Australian production she immediately claims George Wright and attempts to educate him to the fact that now he is 'tapu' to all other women. The Australian politician quickly learns the political possibilities of 'tapuing'.

In this native superstition
Many virtues I can see
And as I'm a politician
English law - it soon shall be
When by chance a little tight, you
May be making things too gay -
If a policeman should invite you
Home with him - you simply say

Chorus
I'm tapu. I'm tapu. To touch me is to die
I'm tapu. I'm tapu. The charm you daren't defy
The man turns pale and passes on
He dare not tackle you
He says tata
So there you are.

Some wives while you are sleeping
In your pockets love to search
Of course they're only seeking
Sixpence for the plate in church
Now a man may sleep securely
For his wife will not pveilain
If, before he goes by-by
He just Tapus all his coin.
You're saved by ta-ta-pu.

This song is not in the 'New Zealand' version. However, both librettos show 'strong' women as being more inclined to marry than to wield real political power either in the 'Pa' or, in the case of four representatives of the Women's League, the parliament. The main difference is that in the 'New Zealand' version the four Emancipated Women also deal with 'Jobs' and his conniving to outlaw the Women's League while in the 'Australian' version they represent George Wright's daughters: their political purpose seems, therefore, totally deflected towards the need to find husbands.

As Thomson (1980) also notes, both New Zealand and Australian productions use cycling as the impetus for many verbal and visual gags of the production (72). As a representation of the freedom of the New Woman, the cycling woman became the butt of many jokes. None more so than when Fay (also represented as an emancipated woman) and Tonga go for a calamitous bicycle ride

Chapter 4 : The Great Empire of the South
which brings the actress to her senses as to the inappropriateness of the young Maori as her partner:

(ENTER FAY - followed by TONGA, R.I.E. - TONGA is wheeling a tandem - FAY is very angry)

Fay: You did it on purpose.
Tonga: Really I assure you -
Fay: You tried to murder me by riding into a flax bush.
Tonga: But it was I who got -
Fay: You deliberately decoyed me out on a tandem.
Tonga: Let me expl -
Fay: For the purpose of assassinating me.
Tonga: But the confounded -
Fay: Then the language that you used.
Tonga: I didn't have an opportunity -
Fay: You arranged with Mara to kill me.
Tonga: How absurdly jeal -
Fay: And you succeeded in making me look ridiculous - which is worse.
Tonga: I couldn't help laugh -
Fay: I'll never speak to you again.
Tonga: I only wish you -
Fay: I'll treat you with silent contempt
Tonga: But you still -
Fay: I've been weak in listening to your explanations.
Tonga: But I haven't had -
Fay: I've come into too intimate contact with this world. I don't like its bruises. I'll go back to the stage, even though John proposes to me.
Tonga: I congrat -
Fay: And I'll never speak to you again. (Crosses R.) Never, never, never. (EXITS furiously R.I.E.)

(ENTER MARA R.2.E.)
Mara: Serve you right. A woman's heart is nearly as wobbly as a bicycle.
Tonga: You do not reproach me. Ah, if we could only return to those idyllic days of our love, when it was my innocent joy to slay a rival or two for lunch.

The image of an emancipated woman falling off her bike ironically confirms European cultural superiority which in turn becomes the basis for Fay and Tonga's self-imposed apartheid. John Smith's search for local talent among 'the tribe' in order to put on his new Comic Opera is also presented as an act of 'benign' appropriation. Thus, the theatre can incorporate Maoris in Pakeha culture in ways the parliaments have not yet dreamed. The stage as intercultural space where Pakeha and Maori temporarily co-habit is, as Fay notes, totally 'unreal'. Similarly, she can only dream of the possibility of having her desires fulfilled in real life.

ENTER FAY

Fay: No, it is always the stage; never the great living world. This view would be impossible anywhere but in a pantomime, and the people - impossible
too. What would I not give for a real romantic man to emerge suddenly from that painted Panorama and make passionate love to me? It is all unreal. Is there a real world at all, I wonder, I wonder.

Fay’s ‘post-modernist’ inquiry into the nature of the Real demonstrates that, by turning away from any attempt to deal with the difficult inter-cultural issues which were an inevitable part of living in a colonial society, Williamson imported comic operas and musicals which also arrived metatheatrically at a sense of freedom from want and care. As Jane Feuer (1982) argues, however, musicals are designed to be solipsistically metatheatrical.

Musicals are unparalleled in presenting a vision of human liberation which is profoundly aesthetic. Part of the reason some of us love musicals so passionately is that they give us a glimpse of what it would be like to be free. We desperately need images of liberation in the popular arts. But the musical presents its vision of the unfettered human spirit in a way that forecloses a desire to translate that vision into reality. The Hollywood version of Utopia is entirely solipsistic. In its endless reflexivity the musical can offer only itself, only entertainment as its picture of Utopia. The very terms it set up for itself, however unconsciously, as an apology for art, prevented the musical from ever breaking out of its self-imposed hermetic universe (84).

Between 1900 and 1914, Williamson imported successful London musicals from George Edwardes, the entrepreneur who many regarded as having 'invented' the form. Interestingly, the same critics also lamented the demise of comic opera, calling musical comedy a 'hybrid-headed' invention (The Theatre, 1 March 1906). Hyman’s The Gaiety Years (1975) summarises George Edwardes’s contribution in the following way:

George Edwardes launched a new form of entertainment, which became known as musical comedy. These pieces had catchy and melodious music and a light-hearted and inconsequential plot, strung together with the object of keeping the audience amused between the songs or dance numbers and designed to give the comedians scope for putting in their individual gags. There was always a romance going on between the hero and heroine: half-way through the show they would have a bust-up and the heroine would break off their engagement or understanding and down would come the curtain. But it was odds on that they would be reconciled at the very end of the show. The chorus girls were dressed in the very latest fashions, which was a complete innovation. Musical comedies took something from the Gilbert and Sullivan operas, had a good deal in common with the Continental operettas, and derived some of their comedy ideas from the old Gaiety burlesques (63).

Indeed, some Australian critics saw the musical as having calamitous consequences for local theatrical tastes.

This class of entertainment in a theatre - for that is the most dignified way of describing it - is really a cross between pantomime, vaudeville and comic opera, which latter was brought to such a high standard by Gilbert and Sullivan. I apologize to those masters for mentioning their names in any connection with rubbish. The ‘musical comedy’ was first written by a man who, failing to write
comic opera, made a cheap counterfeit of it, threw in a few 'extras' and trusted to luck or smartness to have it accepted as something of high intrinsic worth, and worthy the place of genuine comic opera. Unfortunately his design succeeded, and he and his fellow-conspirators achieve fortune if not fame, instead of being gaoled as most counterfeiters are - when they are caught ('An Australian Taste', The Leeuwin, 1 November 1910).

Critics had to bow eventually to the fact that Williamson and other theatre managers came to depend more and more on musical comedies for their economic survival. Managers and their agents continuously travelled to England, Europe and America to purchase attractions. Williamson's exclusive connection with George Edwardes' theatres ensured up to 1914 his importation of highly successful musicals such as Floradora and The Circus Girl in 1901; San Toy, A Runaway Girl, The Circus Girl, Robin Hood and The Toreador in 1902 and My Lady Molly in 1903. In 1904 Williamson brought out a company from the Gaiety Theatre itself with Three Little Maids, The Girl from Kays and Kitty Grey. Besides this, the Firm also staged The Orchid, A Country Girl and Tapu. In 1905 it presented The Cingalee and Veronique; in 1906, The Little Michus and The Spring Chicken; in 1907, Lady Madcap, The Diarymaids, Blue Moon and The Girls from Gottenberg. Plate 51 shows the 'Gymnasium Scene' of The Diarymaids, showing that the pre-1914 musical, like pantomime, was also reliant on women for the creation of its spectacle.


Rupert Clarke, Clyde Meynell, John Gunn and John Wren began to challenge Williamson in musical comedy in 1908 with Miss Hook of Holland. The company
The Gymnasium Scene from "The Dairymaids," now running at Her Majesty's Theatre.
had a London representative in Sir Rupert Clarke. Other partners were based at the Theatre Royal, Melbourne. After John Gunn's death in 1909 the company went into partnership with London agents Milton Bode and Thomas MacKenzie and formed Clarke and Meynell Ltd. Between 1909 and its take over by Williamson in 1911, it had purchased *Girl Behind The Counter; Miss Hook Of Holland; Tom Jones; Gay Gordons; Belle of Brittany; The Arcadians; The Gay Grizette; Baron Trench; The Chocolate Soldier; Little Miss Nobody; The Spring Maid; Belle Of Mayfair; Sergeant Brue and The King's Bride*. As contracts between J. C. Williamson's and Clarke and Meynell Ltd indicate, the Firm's repertoire of musical comedy was substantially increased by their purchase of these for £16,000.

The size of the post-1904 company thus continued to grow and easily incorporated the new 'modern' pantomime. Not surprisingly, then, in 1906 its first pantomime for three years was the Drury-Lane 1902 arrangement of *Mother Goose* by J. Hickory Wood which had starred Dan Leno and Herbert Campbell. The article on 'The Pantomime from Behind' in *New Idea* indicates that George Tallis was instrumental in the initial staging of all of the Firm's pantomimes from this time on. Thus, he is able to elaborate on the cost of *Mother Goose* in considerable detail.

And it is a costly toy, this pantomime. 'Four thousand pounds to stage it,' says Mr J. C. Williamson's secretary, Mr Geo. Tallis. 'Four thousand pounds, without a penny of salaries or current expenses. Add to this the pay-list of property men, machinists, etc. (something like £200 a week), weekly salaries running into four figures for the principals (two at least of whom receive bigger salaries than the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth), and the salaries of the ballet, the show girls, the children and the 'animals' (ranging from 30s. to £5 a week), and the heavy cost of lighting, advertising, and so on, and you will see that the booking needs to be pretty generous to make the managerial mind easy.' 'How many people are employed in the pantomime?' 'About 350, all told, including the regular working staff. The bulk of the performers are locally engaged; the stars, with several notable exceptions - are imported.' A description of the pantomime-machine in detail would be interesting, but space-filling. Each section of it deserves attention, but all that may be attempted is a rough outline of the process by which it is built up, so that the parts fit together and run smoothly. 'Let us suppose' - again Mr. Tallis is speaking 'that the subject is chosen. This, by the way, is not the simplest matter in the world. Dozens of books were waded through before 'Mother Goose' was adopted for this year. The essentials of a pantomime are fun, brilliance and startling novelty. It does not require an elaborate plot, but merely a firm line of story on which any number of specialities may be hung' (6 February 1907).

Tallis then explains that the English arrangement was stripped of its jokes which were replaced by local ones. Though he does not say who carried out this task, he implies that the primary re-shaping of the production was due to the stage director,
other production staff such as the scene painters, and invariably, Williamson and himself. As the Firm's productions were to be under the attentive eye of Gerard Coventry for the next five year, his part in developing the modern Australian pantomime should not be under-estimated.

Coventry's advent into Australian theatre seems to have occurred with Williamson's Federation pantomime Australis in 1900, though a rare article on his theatre work in the Theatre in January 1908 suggests that he first came to Australia to direct The Belle of New York for Williamson in 1899. The Theatre informs us Coventry had produced a 'long and extremely successful series of musical comedies' at the Casino Theatre, New York for the Schubert Bros syndicate and that he was part of 'a famous quartet of great stage producers in New York, consisting of Julian Mitchell, Ben Tearle, Sam Marion, and himself'.

Mr Coventry is a stage producer in the true sense of the word. He not only faithfully carries out the author's intentions, but adds to them, and in many cases elaborates the original idea. In many cases he has embellished Australian productions with attractions that at Home and in America they were entirely bereft of (1 January 1908).

The contradiction of 'faithfully' carrying out the author's intentions while re-arranging the script obviously escaped the writer. More importantly, it signals the ironic contradiction embedded in post-1906 pantomimes under Coventry: the 'greatest of Drury Lane Spectacles' of 1906 significantly alters the tradition of engaging a local author to 'localise' the arrangement. In other words, while managers, stage directors, leading actors and other production staff had always contributed to the pantomime's local and topical 're-arrangement', the Firm had never before totally by-passed the local writer in an Australian pantomime production.

According to Tallis, preparations for Mother Goose had begun some six months earlier when the production crew of scene artist, costumier, choreographer and property master were brought together. The Sydney Stage Employees Association Annual of 1910 gives us a rare glimpse of the stage employees striking a scene from a pantomime production and of working the flies (Plates 52 and 53). Tallis also relates how agents 'secured the necessary talent from abroad' while the children and dancers

Chapter 4 : The Great Empire of the South
THE FLIES. HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE. SYDNEY.
come from Jennie Brenan's dance school. According to the business manager, there
was no comparison between the pantomime and drama, or even musical comedy,
which it more closely resembled, because of the complexity and speed of its spectacle
and the way that productions were more likely to be altered.

Despite Tallis's assurances that Mother Goose would contain 'local jokes',
the manuscript holds exceptionally few. Rather, its humour was centred on the Dame
as she worked through the 'temptation' of becoming a wealthy woman. As Wilson
(1946) explains, the Drury Lane production was a variation on the nursery characters
of Mother Goose and her goose that layed the golden egg, the Dame 'provides a test
case in a theory propounded in a debate between Fairy Queen and Demon concerning
happiness in poverty and the corroding effect of riches upon content' (100).

The 'locals' seem to have been saved for the final scene when, from the
heights of 'In the Air' some local Melbourne features are named (in the appropriate
spaces left in the text) while a topical song 'That's what the wild waves are saying'
refers to recent debates on gambling, drinking and the corruption exposed in the 1906
Royal Commission.

This bill against gambling is only a farce
That's what the wild waves are saying
And none of the members intend it to pass
That's what the wild waves are saying
Why do we put into Parliament men
What say they are honest and trustworthy when
They can't pass a bill without asking Wren
That's what the wild waves are saying.

Richard Fotheringham (1992) explains that interest in these issues is also
observable in localised 'gambling plays' such as Dyson's 1905 version of Sutton
Vane's The Betting Book: 'this had pertinence to the Australian society of 1905 which
had picked up the mood of pro-and anti-gambling hysteria' (136). The play showed
'a notorious Collingwood gambling institution' easily identified as John Wren's
Johnston Street betting shop, Wren being the infamous local criminal referred to in the
pantomime song. The gambling issue is also mentioned in the comical song which
ends Act 1, Scene 2. However, in the rest of the pantomime, the songs are
unprovocatively 'apolitical' and unlocalised.
The Dame in *Mother Goose*, Harry Phydora, was a comedian from the Gaiety who had originally played in Gaiety burlesques and, as the *Theatre* of 1 June 1907 reports, had spent considerable times more recently moving between London and South Africa, playing in Gaiety musicals (14). The article also notes Phydora was adamantly against Transvaal Home Rule and English Liberal Governments, thereby confirming that the pantomime's star was anything but apolitical. However, the framing of Wood's modern pantomime shows that topical politics no longer consciously framed the pantomime's comic business. Instead, they appeared only in the margins of the comic's *ad libbing* and the occasional topical song.

Though always claiming to be for the edification of children, pantomime productions now aimed quite specifically at 'amusement with instruction', which in the following year's arrangement of *Humpty Dumpty* attempted to warn its audiences against over-ambition. Presumably based on the 1903 Drury Lane arrangement, the final scene thus shows a 'Congress of Nations' prepared to learn the lesson.

GRAND PROCESSION

RUSSIA, AUSTRIA, GERMANY, ITALY, SPAIN, JAPAN, AMERICA, FRANCE, ENGLAND.

Aurora: To teach a little lesson we have tried To be unselfish - and to banish pride.

Humpty: If you should climb upon ambition's wall Consider others, or you'll have a fall.

Rudolph: We hope you'll say that now our story's ended Amusement with instruction has been blended.

The theatre advertisement made no allusion to possible local attractions in the arrangement other than the 'PATRIOTIC AUSTRALIAN STATES BALLET'; the typed manuscript of the arrangement does not indicate where this occurred in the production.

As the *Theatre* of 1 February 1908 noted in 'Pantomime: What it Was and Is', the big difference in the mounting of modern pantomime was the size and intricacy of its spectacles: 'thirty years ago it was thought a marvellous thing if £2.00 was spent over a show at Xmas tide. Now-a-days a Drury Lane Panto runs to over £25,000.' As a result, pantomime was 'all spectacle, scenery, ballet, and loaded with turns cribbed from the music-halls' (4). This did not mean that pantomime was
'dying' but rather that it had 'changed its style'. From the evidence of *Mother Goose* and *Humpty Dumpty*, its fairytale narrative now resembled a 'well-made' play which, as in musical comedy, aimed to cultivate a smooth transition between its songs, dances and dialogue.

J. Hickory Wood's comic style was to make broad political hits at hegemonic structures. Unfortunately, there is no indication in the texts that comedians turned these into more specific hits at local politicians. Thus in the 1908 production of *Jack and Jill* the following conversation between the Baron's servant 'Perks' and an old scarecrow watching over one of his fields is used to expose how 'all politicians' are idiots and thieves. The conversation begins after Perks frightens off thieves stealing the governor's crops. He then moves near a scarecrow, talking to himself.

Perks: Upon my word, it's a good thing for the Baron that he's got a faithful servant to look after his interests. He'd be in the workhouse if it wasn't for me. (Scarecrow coughs. Going close to him up R. sees it and jumps.) Hallo! what's that? Oh? Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Why, its only an old scarecrow.

Scare (Up R.C.) I'm not an old Scarecrow - I'm a new Scarecrow.

Perks (Starts) Good gracious! Can you talk?

Perks (R.C.) I say! You did frighten me!

Perks (L.C.) Did I? I'm glad!

Scare Yes! I never frightened anything or anybody before. As a scarecrow I'm a failure! Why! The crows perch on me.

Perks Well! Cheer up! You're not the only failure in the world. A bad scarecrow may be good for something else.

Scare Yes! I think I'd like to be a politician.

Perks A politician? Why? You've no brains!

Scare Does that matter?

Scare No, it may be an advantage. I think you'd make a very good bankrupt.

Perks Do you? Why?

Perks Because you're a man of straw.

Perks Well. I'm ready to be anything you like - except a scarecrow!

Scare An idea! How would you like to be a servant to my guv'nor, the Baron?

Perks Splendid.

Perks Do you want any wages?

Scare Got no pockets.

Perks Want any food?

Scare Got no inside.

Perks Then you'll suit the guv'nor down to the ground. Consider yourself engaged!

One might liken this to what Adorno (1990) described as 'pseudo' political activity, as 'the acceptance of any small change as one step on the long way toward
total change' (173). Thus identification of corrupt politicians resigns itself to laughing at a seeming universal type which the English, Australian and American cast of the production lampoon - while audiences laugh no one believes that anything can be changed. The post-1906 pantomime carnival is ultimately about accommodating such corruption into the everyday, while celebrating through this 'pseudo-activity' and the quantity and size of the spectacular context in which it appears. The Theatre of 1 May 1909 reported that, at the end of the first performace of Jack and Jill, Williamson was called twice before the curtain by the 'packed, brilliant and enthusiastic audience which filled the theatre to overflowing'.

The wildest enthusiasm prevailed, and no wonder! In no country in the world could richer, more exquisite pantomime stage scenes be shown - the snow scene; the spring transformation; the autumn scene, with tumbling water and wandering fairies; the beach scene, where the surf breaking over the bathing girls seems real, and the most wonderful scene of all - the palace of precious stones. There are at least a dozen separate ballets with innumerable dancers. The fashionable Teddy Bear is introduced, and exquisite butterflies appear like a cloud. There are skaters, surf-swimmers, Scottish Cavaliers, and other novelties too numerous to write about. Mr Bert Gilbert is the chief Comedian, and is so funny that he really can't realise how funny he is! It takes the little boy and girl from the country to thoroughly appreciate and define his laughable nonsense. J. M. Campbell is the able lieutenant of Mr. Gilbert, and between them things go with a bound. Mr. W. Stanton is the Great Rooster - a very knowing gentleman bird indeed! Jack (Stella Castelle), and Jill (Alma Barber) perform prodigies of miracles - would we could all as easily turn grey winter to glowing spring! And the Scarecrow, Harry Shine, is a most accommodating, unselfish fellow. Stella Selbourne, tall and beautiful, delights the collective eye of a discriminating gathering, and Addie Hine nightly dances her way into every heart (16).

By 1908, advertisements no longer claim that the pantomime had a Drury Lane pedigree but rather highlight its 'unique combination' of 'comedian, vocalists, dancers, pantomimists and speciality artists' engaged from England, America and Australia. All productions were also sold on the trouble its managers had gone to throughout the previous year to obtain these artists. The managerial notice in the theatre programme for Aladdin in 1909 thus stated that 'since Xmas 1908, MR. J. C.WILLIAMSON himself and the Prince of Stage Directors MR. Gerard Coventry have both completed Round-the-World tours in search of Striking Novelties, Attractive Features and Sensational Effects, while all through the year the Firm's Representatives in London, on the Continent, and in America have devoted their energies almost exclusively to the same end.' Gerard Coventry's contract of
employment for 1909 indicates that the firm paid for first class travel by rail and sea for himself and his wife. He was to proceed to Europe and America and travel through those countries solely on the Firm's account for a period of about six months, returning to Sydney before the end of July 1909. He was also to be paid half-salary (a 1907 contract indicates that his usual salary was £25 per week) during his trip.

The 1909 *Aladdin* does not seem to be based on that year's Drury Lane arrangement by F. C. Burnand and Woods. Unlike other productions between 1906 and 1914, it includes some use of Australian locations in Scenes 12 and 13, set in the Australian Bush and at Flinders Street Railway Station. Its ballet of Australian birds also allowed the Theatre's critic to comment on the unusualness of Sydney's 'Easter' pantomime as an apt expression of pantomime in an Antipodean world.

Australia is only acting up to its reputation when it has its Pantomime at Easter instead of at Christmas. It is a contrary, cursed kind of country. There are fish with lungs as well as gills, black swans, birds with wings not even big enough to flap the flies off it saying nothing of lifting their owner from the ground, and a damned creature so cursed that it couldn't make up its mind what it really wanted to be; and after it had begun to be a duck, it felt inclined to be a possum, then tried to be a fish, and ended up by being a little of all three. So, naturally, Pantomime must fulfil its Antipodean destiny and be a little out of the ordinary run of the world's arrangements. (1 April, 1910, 17)

James J. Hewson's arrangement of the 1910 *Jack and the Beanstalk* was very much in the same vein as the Firm's other productions between 1906 and 1909. Unfortunately, the typed manuscript gives no indication of where 'the building of the Australian Navy', alluded to in theatre advertisements, was incorporated in the script other than to highlight again how consciously an 'antipodean' pantomime was related the Australian patriotism, in this case Nationalist controversies over the formation of an Australian Navy.

This is significant since J. Hickory Wood's arrangements seemed to allow Williamson to continue what he 'patriotically' attempted to set up in productions of *Djin Djin*, *Matsa* and *Australis*. Not surprisingly, then 'Australia' was staged in post-1906 productions in spectacularly patriotic terms. This was noted by the *Daily Telegraph*'s theatre critic after viewing *Jack and the Beanstalk* in 1911.

It is quite the usual thing for some patriotic representation to be included in the present day pantomimes. Playgoers will still remember the quaintly devised Australian flag which was formed by the sudden unfurling of a number of umbrellas in the hands of a

Chapter 4 : The Great Empire of the South 364
set of daintily clad ballet girls in 'Humpty Dumpty'. Later on in 'Aladdin' the Australian flag was again shown, this time formed by a number of girl scouts mounted on ladders who, at a given signal unrolled her particular section of the device and placed it in position, when the whole was immediately illuminated with myriads of tiny electric lights. In 'Jack and the Beanstalk' the same old flag is again shown in the hands of the leader of the Australian contingent in the Military Ballet. That the spirit of patriotism is not slumbering is testified by the fact that wherever the Australian flag is shown it is greeted with cheer upon cheer (18 March, 1911).

The extent of the Firm's commitment to conservative politics during these years can be gauged through a comparison of J. Hickory Wood's 1907 arrangement of *Sinbad* at the Theatre Royal, Manchester with its adaptation to the Firm's pantomime production for 1911. Theatre advertisements were adamant it was not going to be merely spectacular but would also give audiences 'plentiful opportunity for laughter' because of its especially strong corps of comedians. *Sinbad the Sailor* was directed by E. T. Steyne, following the five pantomimes directed by Gerard Coventry. Clause 9 of Steyne's 1910 contractual agreement underlines the fact that the company wanted him to continue Coventry's work. Steyne needed to emulate Coventry's huge successes, which peaked with two hundred performances for *Jack and the Beanstalk*; he equalled that with *Sinbad*.

Most significantly, the Firm's adaptation of Wood's Mancunian arrangement occurred in a climate of political unrest between it and Australian actors. The productions provide further evidence of the lack of opportunity for Australian actors to reach 'star' status in an industry dominated by the star system. This was also a departure from another Australian pantomime tradition, as up to 1905 local comic opera 'stars' such as Carrie Moore, Nellie Stewart, Florence Young (her last role as pantomime boy was in *Mother Goose*) and George Lauri often took leading parts in pantomime productions. They were now replaced by English stars such as Bert Gilbert, Harry Phydra and 'Pip' Powell. As the *Theatre* of 1 June 1910 shows in the case of Bert Gilbert, for instance, these English actors not only toured Australasia with the pantomime but were also used in the Firm's musical comedy productions:

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33 It could be equally argued that as local actors were now moving onto bigger and better things in musical comedies; for instance, Florence Young was a leading performer in the Firm's musical productions, they no longer had the incentive to perform in pantomime. The point is, however, that there is no indication that a 'new crop' of local talent was being groomed to replace them. Rather, the Firm found its pantomime stars overseas.

Chapter 4: The Great Empire of the South
Actors' contracts between 1900 and 1914 show that stars like Bert Gilbert received £50 for musical productions and £60 when playing in pantomime. His 1910 contract also stipulates that the actor was to be employed for a minimum of a 104 weeks at the former rate and a minimum of twenty weeks for pantomime. 'Pip' Powell, who played the Dame in Sinbad, also received £50 per week. In comparison, Australian choristers such as Mary Morris Smith received £3. Billed as The Dashing Young Australian Actress, Stella Selbourne was paid £4 per week. Her contract for Jack and Jill stipulated that 'there shall be no payment for matinees, unless more than two be given during any one week, in which case the artist shall receive half-salary for all such extra matinees, it being understood and agreed that eight performances shall constitute a week'.

Williamson outlined his disparaging views of the Australian actor in Life Story (1913), though he was not so critical of the Australian actress. In fact much of his memoir deals with his 'advice to players'. His own sense of professionalism, he explains, is exemplified by his close study of real life; since there is 'no school of acting whence professionals may graduate, every humble performer must make his closet his college and tutor himself. With his looking-glass, his book, and a good deal of diligent observation and thought, every actor may be an artist'. A good actor is, therefore, a hard-working one: artistic pursuit is totally equated with industriousness. It is on this score that the Australian actor failed to impress him.
be a good actor he has to give his mind to the profession all the time. It's not enough to gain applause at night, if you think so much about the applause next morning that you forget to look out for the next chance. An actor should be always studying to improve himself, always studying to fit himself for the better parts, always studying to make himself such a trustworthy man all round that when there's an opening ahead he'll be chosen to fill it. Australian actors have great talent naturally - and, mind you, I'm not making any sweeping condemnation; but I do think that it may fairly be said that some are deficient in application, deficient in painstaking ambition, too apt to forget that stage laurels will fade if they are not continually refreshed by new achievements. It seems to be the fault of the country. Things ripen too quickly. The fruit ripens quickly, the crops mature quickly - but the harvests are irregular (22).

The Firm's policy must also be seen in an even wider context since, from its inception in 1882, it had always used local talent in its Sydney and Melbourne theatres to deliberately allay fears raised by its critics that the amalgamation of the three managements of Williamson, Musgrove and Garner was 'seeking to gain their own selfish ends by injuring 'the profession' (Walch 1885, 24). The company's theatre advertisements had been careful over the years to point out that its aim was only to 'raise the standard' and bring to Australia the latest innovations from leading English theatres. The 1882 production of Aladdin included many actors who had worked in Sydney and Melbourne theatres for some years. The pantomime boy Maggie Knight was a New Zealander and had been playing in Sydney and Melbourne pantomimes since 1879. The cast also included various members of the Stewart family. This pattern of sponsoring 'local talent' was certainly behind the formation of the Royal Comic Opera Company and J. C. Williamson's Dramatic Company.

By the time the 1911 production of Sinbad was being staged, Australian actors, choristers and musicians were ready to be unionised. While the Professional Orchestral Musician's Union had existed since 1900, choristers and actors were still in the midst of court action with the Firm over their right to form a union in 1910. Remarkably, the issue had been debated since at least the early 1890s. The Lorgnette, for instance, had always advocated the need for a union and had pointed out the iniquitousness of many theatrical 'customs' such as unfair dismissal on a fortnight's notice, from which managers had profited (10 May 1890). Equally, as Ernest Collins' 38

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38 Richard Stewart played the Emperor and Doey Stewart played Shi-Ning, a slave of the lamp. The former's association with Australian theatre began in 1860. In particular his association with George Coppin's Theatre Royal, Melbourne in the 1870s had seen him frequently playing in pantomimes there.
letter to George Musgrove shows, Williamson had long opposed Unionism. Though he was silent on the issue in newspaper interviews, the aggression with which the Firm opposed the registration of the Australian Theatrical Chorister's Association in 1910 leaves no doubt as to Williamson's anti-Unionist views. Indeed, J. C. Williamson Ltd attempts to de-register the Association were mounted on the basis of disallowing all Unions to operate within the theatre industry.

This entailed mounting a persistent attack on the Unions' right to represent their members. The company looked for every legal means to do this. The 1910 action against the Australian Theatrical Choristers' Association, for instance, questioned its validity to be registered as a union on the technical point that the Union had no members since its committee hadn't formally confirmed memberships at its Annual General Meeting. All Unions were required to follow this procedure under the Conciliation and Arbitration Act. The President of the Court had therefore to de-register the Choristers' Association on the grounds of Rule 9 of the Act.³⁹

The company brought another challenge to de-register the Australian Actors' Union in August, 1912.⁴⁰ And again it succeeded because of a technical point. The President's summation underscores the extent to which the company was prepared to use any means it had under the law.

In this case I am compelled by the Act to do a stupid piece of injustice. No one has been hurt by the mistake, and all the material objections would be dealt with, if this objection were not taken, but I am obliged to give effect to the objection because it is taken. On the 6th December, an application is lodged in Sydney in the District Registry. On the 16th December the application is advertised, and under the regulations the registration should not take place until the 16th January. By some slip - very natural, for we are all liable to error - the Deputy Registrar seems to have read the 16th, the date of the advertisement, as if it were the 6th, and he registered this Association on the 11th January, when it ought not to have been registered until the 16th. The position is perfectly clear. The registration in Sydney took place upon the 11th January, admittedly at too early a date, and the Deputy Registrar sends to the Principal Registrar in Melbourne on the 13th January a letter stating that the Association was registered - 'I have registered an Association as and so.' He also draws up a certificate of registration, which stated that the Association was registered. After he had found his mistake he apparently recalled the certificate and altered it to the 7th February, and sent word very frankly to the Principal Registrar in Melbourne of the mistake, and it was altered in Melbourne. But I come to the Act, and the Act says that the Court shall order cancellation if it appears to the Court that an organisation has been registered erroneously or by mistake. It has been registered

³⁹ J. C. Williamson Ltd v Australian Theatrical Choristers' Association, Melbourne, 26, 27 and 28 October 1910 in 4 Commonwealth Arbitration Reports (1910), 77.
⁴⁰ J. C. Williamson Ltd v Australian Actors' Union, Melbourne, 1 August, 1912, 6 Commonwealth Arbitration Reports, 77.
eroneously or by mistake, and then it is my duty to order it. I have no discretion. ...I am very sorry for being forced into the position, but it is my duty to obey the Act at all costs, and I shall order that the registration of the organisation be cancelled.

Not satisfied with this technical win, since the Union could simply turn around and re-register its application, J. C. Williamson Ltd took an action to the High Court to rule: '1. That an association of actors is incapable of being a party of an industrial dispute. 2. That an association of actors is incapable of registration. 3. That the alleged industry is not an industry within the meaning of the Constitution or of the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act.' This action in essence sought to remove the legal basis of any employees' association to unionise by discrediting the Registrar insofar as he 'might' erroneously grant associations the right to form as representative bodies. This directly attacked the Registrar's powers under the Constitution. As it transpired, the High Court upheld the Registrar's constitutional power to register applications and the Firm's action was disallowed because:

The Court has jurisdiction to decide wrong as well as right. If it decides wrong, the wronged party can only take the course presented by law for setting matters right; and if that course is not taken, the decision however wrong, cannot be disturbed.41

Amongst the most contentious of the issues fuelling the conflict between the Firm and actors', musicians' and choristers' unions was undoubtedly the issue of unpaid rehearsals. Musicians wanted dress rehearsals to be limited to three hours. This had a particular impact on pantomime rehearsals. Frank Dix, the author and producer of the Firm's 1913 production of Forty Thieves, pointed out in the Theatre on 1 December 1913 'a pantomime dress rehearsal could not be brought within three hours'. Unionism also impacted on the manager's ability to move theatre companies around the country. The Firm's tour manager, Taylor Darbyshire, revealed that a pantomime engagement meant up to ten months work and companies travelled between 13,000 and 15,000 miles (The Theatre, 1 December 1914). Traditionally, actors had always been paid more on tour. Ivy Bickford, a chorus member, was paid £2/10/0 per week for 1910 Jack and the Beanstalk and thereafter £3 or £4 on tour.

Further options in her contract show that the company sought to retain her for at least

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41 The King against The Deputy Industrial Registrar of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, New South Wales Registry (1912), 15 Commonwealth Law Reports, 576

Chapter 4: The Great Empire of the South
another two years at a salary of £3 in 1911 (£4 on tour) and of £5 in 1912 (£6 on tour). Any further increases in salaries and living-away-from-home allowances would mean huge expenses for the Firm.

Undoubtedly, the actors', musicians' and choristers' unions fight in the courts continued to be fuelled by the Firm's practice of importing 'complete' English and American companies during these years. *The Whip*, for instance, which premiered in Sydney for the Christmas season of 1910 42 consisted of the 'complete London company'. It was the Drury Lane 'racing play' sensation of the previous year and a special note in the theatre advertisement stated that it replicated the Drury Lane production 'to the smallest detail'. Similarly, Oscar Ashe and Lily Brayton brought their own company to perform *Kismet* and a season of mostly Shakespearean plays in 1912, while Maeterlinck's *The Blue Bird* was presented by a company from Frederick Harrison's Haymarket Theatre. The Quinlan Opera company in 1912 brought a chorus of 50 singers and an orchestra of 55 players (*Entertaining Australia* 1991, 168).

Remarkably, the *Sydney Stage Employees Annual* of 1910 does not indicate that it was experiencing similar difficulties in forming its Union during this time. On the contrary, it reveals that managers were supportive of their attempt to protect the industry against amateur and cheap labour. The stage employees saw these 'imposters' as unprofessional and parasitic and tolerated only by 'irresponsible managers'. Perhaps its different stance can be explained by the fact that, while Williamson imported English and American actors and directors, the lists of the production staff of his pantomimes show that his behind-the-scenes crew virtually remain unchanged from the 1890s. This included scenic designers John Gordon, George Dixon, W. R. Coleman, George Upward and Leslie Board, the choreographers Minnie Everett and Jennie Brenan, the stage mechanist William Salisbury, the props men Rock Phillips and William Turner and the lighting designers John Povah and H. Ring. Given the longevity of service of each of the above names,

42 Between the 17 December to 2 March 1911.
I believe it is possible to claim that much of the success of the productions was due to their expertise. George Tallis says as much in *New Idea* on 6 February 1907 when he stated that 'Mr. Williamson boasts that he has the finest behind the scenes staff in the world - not only in ability, but in loyalty - 'a man is a new hand unless he's been fifteen years in harness here,' the secretary remarked.' Most significantly, guarantee of work for pantomime writers was never considered part of any Union's brief, yet the professional dramatist was the worst effected by the Firm's policy of importing productions during these years.

Like Coventry, E. T. Steyne made major changes to J. Hickory Wood's *Sinbad*. The Dame, Mrs. Sinbad, became Sinbad's wife rather than his mother. This interestingly re-arranged the pantomime's love-story. Hinbad rather than Sinbad is the pantomime boy of the Australian production: as a result, Ruby, the pantomime girl, becomes Sinbad's daughter rather than his sister, with Hinbad as Ruby's love-interest rather than Mrs Sinbad. Sinbad, played by Charles Howard (Plate 54), thus became both a comically 'bad' husband and a nearly-always absent father and, together with the Dame, Mrs Sinbad, provided a farcical representation of family life. Hinbad, played by a reportedly petite Florence Imeson, together with Ruby, played by Nell Finnis, represented the romantic ideal.

The Australian production also reversed Scenes 1 and 2 of Wood's script. This shifted the moral tone of the pantomime by requiring the Fairy to make direct moral judgement on the 'Old Man of the Sea'. Wood's arrangement contained a much more 'tolerant' Fairy who does not chastise the Old Man as vociferously as she does in the Australian production with:

You've quite enough your greed to satisfy,
Why call upon the storm, for men to die.

Instead, she derived much more of her power from the 'elements' than from moral rectitude, entering in Scene 1 with a song on the 'spirit of adventure'.

The spirit of adventure crowns the sea
And all the good it brings is joy for me;
Yet after all, the calm must hold its sway;
And tho' the evil powers may try their worst
We know that truth and virtue's ever first.
CHARLES HOWARD (appearing as Sinbad).
Amazingly, her morally righteous Australian counterpart censured the Old Man in Act 1 Scene 4, saying only those who use wealth 'in the ways of goodness - to succour the sick - to help the poor' will be rewarded with its acquisition. This does not stop the dubiously philanthropical Sinbad from finding the Valley of Diamonds with her help. Since the Australian production eliminated the 'real' demon of the piece, the Storm Fiend of Wood's arrangement, it demonised the Old Man because, as Sinbad's financial competitor, he attempts to thwart him finding the Valley of Diamonds.

The Australian production had hired Andrew MacCunn especially to write ballet and other music for the production, thus its musical numbers were significantly different from Wood's 1907 production whose music was composed by Charles W. Chambers. The song used in the street scene set on the Quay of Balsora in the Australian production entitled 'In a Persian Kind of Way', for instance, replaced the 'welcome home' song the chorus greeted Sinbad with in the English production. The Australian song and scene is reminiscent of an 'Eastern' market scene, as in the opening of Matsu, with fruit sellers, water carriers, beggars etc.

**Onnes**

In a Persian kind of way
We potter about all day,
We've nothing at all to do,
It's true.

**Fruit Sellers**

Though we carry our fruit around,
We've never a buyer found,
For nobody has a sou.
Have you?

**Water Carriers**

Our Pitchers are full to the top
But we've never got rid of a drop.
For water's no sort of a drink,
D'you think?

**Beggars**

We are beggars as you may see,
Simple beggars of low degree,
A humble crowd,
And not too proud,
To take our share of the L. S. D.

**Onnes**

But it's all a terrible bluff,
And we've put up long enough,
We live to eat and eat to live,
And take whatever you like to give,
We have no thought for to-morrow.

Chapter 4 : The Great Empire of the South
The 'Persian' culture's indolence dispensed with, Sinbad is then introduced as a hen-pecked husband with a shrewish English wife through a conversation between various chorus members who explain how he escapes her company by adventuring around the world. The topic of marriage is then used to make further comparisons between Persian and English marriage customs, with one of them stating that 'It must be bad enough in England with one wife, but fancy in Persia with a dozen'.

Soon afterwards, the topic of English and Persian customs is taken up by Ruby in conversation with a group of young women. Here the strength of English womanhood is likened to the strength of Britannia herself.

Ruby: Britannia rules the waves - and she's a lady. Did you ever hear of anybody ruling Britannia?... Well, that's the way things are built in England. I may have a Persian Papa; but I've got an English Mother, and it's two to one against Papa.

Her mother enters and re-inforces this point with 'Never marry a Persian...here a woman is a white slave. In England she can be a Suffragette and break Cabinet Minister's windows.' While these lines are also to be found in Wood's script, Ruby's response is the complete opposite of the one in the English production. In the Australian production she answers 'I want to marry an Englishman' while in Wood's play she says 'I wouldn't want to marry an Englishman.' Indeed, the Australian production is consistently more virulently 'anti-Persian' in its response to the issue of race. For instance, Ruby compares her mother and father to Othello and Desdemona and Mrs Sinbad impresses on her daughter Rudyard Kipling's famous saying that 'East is East and West is West - and they can never meet.'

Most significantly, the sense that the English are as much the butt of jokes as the 'Persians' in Wood's arrangement is absent from the Australian production. For instance, when in the Australian production the Emperor of the Sahara's habit of giving blue ribbons to anyone who calls him 'Your Majesty' is satirised, it reflects only on the pretentions of his empty Eastern claims to power. This is a complete reworking of the same episode in Wood's script. In the first place, the action of throwing out the medal is not done by the Emperor but by his Envoy (a character who
does not exist in the Australian production). Thus, in the English production, the scramble for the medals allegorises the getting of English titles.

**ABDALLAH:** It is your Majesty
**ENVOY:** Who called me 'your Majesty'?
**ABDAL:** I did your Majesty
**ENVOY:** Come forward. (decorates him with Blue Ribbon and Order). I decorate you with the Order - the Blue Ribbon - and probably some day you may become Lord Mayor of Manchester, that is, if we run short of 'Brewers'.
**OMNES:** Hail to his Majesty!
**ENVOY:** (Throws ribbons about) Here you are! Help yourselves.
You're all Knights of the Blue Ribbons.

The decision to make Sinbad an older man rather than a young adventurer also means that the journey to the Valley of Diamonds is much more about adult enterprise rather than the customary 'initiatory' business of fairytale adventures. The chorus underscores this theme when it sings at Sinbad's departure

> With Sinbad we are sailing....
> We mean to do out duty
> And get our share of booty
> For Persia home and beauty
> And also L. S. D

Thus the Australian production shows a number of characters scrambling for riches, controlled only by the Fairy's decree that only the kind-hearted can obtain them. That, of course, means Sinbad and Hinnad. Meanwhile, the business on stage has explored the maxim spoken by the greedy and vain Princess of the Sahara, when she says to the travellers as she imprisons them and takes their map of Diamond Valley, 'all's fair in love and war and business.'

While local allusions seem rare in the Australian production, topical references abound in Wood's script. The localisms apparent in the Firm's arrangement are, firstly, when Sinbad describes how he began his adventures 'at the early age of seven in a humble way by floating on two cross planks down the Saltwater River at Footscray'; Mrs Sinbad calls Dirk the pantomime dog a Wallaby throughout, and in Act 2 Scene 1 the Princess of the Sahara makes a joke that the chart to the Valley of Diamonds is in fact 'King O'Malley's design for the Federal Capital'. The production also stages a topical version of 'A Hunting We Will Go'.

> At billiards we'll back George Gray;
> He'll live to fight another day

Chapter 4 : The Great Empire of the South 374
And Stevenson can't stay,
So a hunting we will go.

If to New South Wales we went,
The only job that's worth a cent
Is speaker in their Parliament
So a hunting we will go.

To find a man to tell us quick
Who'll be really premier of Vic.;
If Watts or Murray does the trick
A hunting we will go.

These occasional allusions to the local scene stick barnacle-like (pardon the pun - but it is Sinbad the Sailor!) on the structure and content of the arrangement. They are not, however, organically part of a satirical approach to the pantomime's subject of the search for riches. Instead, the Australian production is a moral tale which disapproves of greedy Old Men without questioning the capitalist dream which fuels the search for the Valley of Diamonds. It also demonises other contenders for power and wealth such as 'foreigners' and the New Woman.

As in Djin Djin and Matsu, Sinbad contains a satirical song showing the disastrous consequences of the modern women; 'The Rest Of The Week She's Mine' exposes the 'dangers' of educating women

I'm a lucky fellow; I've a little wife
Far above the ordinary kind
Scientific problems constitute her life,
Wonderfully educated mind -
When I feel like leaving her she's deep in books
I must set and gaze at Caroline
Writes to me in shorthand -
Funny stuff it looks
She's no time for kisses, but she's mine.

Monday she learns Psychology,
Tuesday it's Sociology,
Wednesday Geometry and tricky Trigonometry,
Rob me of my Caroline.
Thursday she's Anatomical,
Friday Astronomical,
Saturday she teaches,
Sunday she preaches,
But the rest of the week she's mine.

The bliss re-instated at the end of both the English and Australian productions is 'domestic bliss'. The men swear they have had enough of adventure and the women are shown as reining them in. However, the Lollipop Land setting of the Australian finale is distinctly more juvenile in character than the mythical 'Realms
of Happiness' of earlier Australian productions. Remarkably, the ending of Wood's arrangement is far more complex in its representation of a mad scramble to find the diamonds in 'The Forest of Cocoa Nuts'. Realising that they can't get over the mountains without the Roc's help, the Emperor and his Envoy attempt to find another way. Laying out a map of the terrain, they plan their route. Their dialogue becomes a satirical view of how the search for riches is inevitably tied to empire-building:

Emp. Let me see this chart! (They spread chart on ground and kneel over it). First of all, there's the United Kingdom!
Envoy That's ours (plants flag on it).
Emp. Here's Canada!
Envoy That's ours. (same Bns.)
Emp. Here is India and South Africa!
Envoy Both ours! (plants two flags).
Emp. Here's Spain! Shall we take Spain?
Envoy No! the young Queen and her baby have done that!
Emp Where my foot is, is Russia!
Envoy Look out! (explosion)
Emp What's the matter?
Envoy Anybody who puts his foot on Russia is liable to be blown up!
Emp We'll begin again, here's America!

(Yankee comes up trap)

Yankee Say, there! get off my earth! Don't you know you're trespassing! (goes down trap again).
Envoy That was Pierpont Morgan!
Emp. Oh, I beg his pardon! We'll try again! Here's the earth, and secondly, here is Germany.

(Emperor of Germany rises through trap).

German But why second? I am the earth! I am the first alway Donner and Blitzen!

(disappears)

Enter Sinbad and Ruby and others

Sinbad So Your Majesty we meet again.
Envoy Be civil to him. He will explain the way to the Diamond Valley,
Emp. Sinbad, I relent, only give me an opportunity of sharing the spoils of your Diamond Valley and half my kingdom is yours.
Sinbad That's reasonable!
Emp. I invite you all to my Ivory Palace.
Sinbad I was going to seize that, as compensation for your cruel treatment to all my friends.
Emp. I will make you a present of it.
Sinbad And I will entertain you all there at my Durbar!

The Firm's claim to replicate English pantomime productions in the post-1906 period must be qualified by the fact that it was drawing from only a limited number of English and American theatres, albeit those invariably regarded as the
'leading' theatres of London, New York etc. Furthermore, the comparisons between the English and Australian productions of Sinbad show that the local production continued to 'localise' the Australian pantomime in important ways with regards to its representation of race and gender. In particular, they reveal the particular virulence of the 'white Australia policy' and the continuing political struggle of Australian women for a more just society despite the gains they had made in securing Federal suffrage in 1902.43

Above all, Australian pantomime productions, marketed to Australian audiences as 'imported', continued to exist, like their 1890s counterparts, within a paradoxically imperialist/nationalist ideology. As a result, as Luke Trainor (1994) notes, late nineteenth-century radical nationalists and imperialists shared a racism 'which winked at the assault on Aboriginal life, fostered Australian dominance in the Pacific, and offered the very suitable Natal language test for the emerging White Australia policy' (188). While the Firm's 1906 to 1914 pantomime productions seemed secure in their attitudes of cultural superiority, the degree to which this required constant authenticating shows a lack of confidence which in 1949 was finally named 'the cultural cringe'. The pantomimes also show that part of that lack of confidence was a lack of faith in Australian dramatists' ability to represent the complex reality around them.

Ironically, the last locally written pantomime production of the pre-1914 period was the 1903 Sleeping Beauty and the Beast; or, Mother Goose and the Seven Champions written by Monty Grover and based on Garnet Walch's 1885 arrangement. To make its Australian pedigree even more complete, its music was composed by Alfred Hill. It was the only pantomime staged in Sydney that year. However, Williamson did not transfer the production to Melbourne or to other parts of Australia or New Zealand as was customary with other pantomime productions. By pantomime production standards, its season was also exceptionally short, opening on

[43 And, of course, suffrage at state level from between 1894 and 1914.]

Chapter 4: The Great Empire of the South
Boxing Day and finishing on 29 January 1904: most productions ran until at least mid-February.

Sleeping Beauty was replaced by The Belle of New York on 30 January, the production which caused so much division between Williamson and his former partner, George Musgrove. Williamson staged a new Gaiety musical A Country Girl at His Majesty's for the 1903 Melbourne Christmas season, having premiered the production in Sydney from 7 November to 18 December. Running concurrently with Grover's Sleeping Beauty at Her Majesty's in Sydney, therefore, was Julius Knight in Monsieur Beaucaire.

Born in Melbourne in 1870 and educated at Melbourne Grammar, Montague Grover, like most pre-1914 Australian playwrights, was a journalist. His grandson, historian Michael Cannon, noted in the introduction to Grover's memoirs that he began in journalism through an introduction to David Syme of the Age in 1894. Grover's interest in politics was evident throughout his career, beginning with his work on the short-lived labour weekly, the Boomerang. In 1896 he joined the Argus and worked there until he took up the position of J. C. Williamson's press secretary and travelled with him to England in 1902-03. The Australian Dictionary of Biography describes Grover as 'both pro-socialist ('before I even heard of Marx') and passionately pro-Australian' (Vol 5, 133).

Sleeping Beauty is an overtly political arrangement. Act 1, Scene 1 is set in 'THE PARLIAMENT OF STARS' where Mother Goose speaks with a political purpose

OMNES:     Hail, Mother Goose! Great Queen of Nursery Story!
M.G.:     Why, bless my stars, you shine with so much glory
          That your assistance in his Christmas session
          Should drive from fair Australia its depression
          And give the world the pleasures that it ought
          Enjoy, if I can count on your support.
          Who'll help me?

The opening scene calls for a new political agenda of prosperity to come into being: the Cloudland parliament consists of a federation of Aurifera from the West, Cerealia from South Australia, Capricornia from Queensland, Victoria,
Tasmania, New Zealand and Imperia from New South Wales. They are joined by the Roman mythological figures Mercury, Mars and Venus and, in mock-heroic couplets, these legendary beings intersperse their dialogue with references to 'real' politicians such as Dan O'Sullivan, the Sydney Alderman and later New South Wales M.P., at the time responsible for closing down Sunday shopping.

Mercury: We'll carry out, if you're not afraid
More than O'Sullivan himself has made.

When the States are summoned to attend the parliament they are also identified through references to the topical issues which currently faced them in 'real' politics. For instance, Queensland addresses the parliament with reference to its political debate over 'coloured' labour.

The reason for their colloquium, the child Beauty, symbolises a new hope for Australia, whose problem 'Victoria' explains is the 'want of population'. This 'Christmas' child is described as white, golden-haired and blue-eyed. She is the hope for a new nation for the 'King and Queen' of Australia. The 'populate or perish' message of the pantomime is thus joined to notions of race purity 'as the pivot of an ideal which embraced "an enlightened and self-reliant community".' (McQueen 1986, 270). Hence one might indeed read this pantomime as the impassioned plea of an radical Australian Nationalist arguing an 'enlightened' case for the White Australia Policy.

Maligna, the evil fairy, is unconventionally a crossed-dressed harridan/dame, though Grover satirically shows her as part of the chaotic political state where train strikes are a daily occurence, thanks to Thomas Bent, the Railway minister. Her evil assistants 'Drought and Dust' are also 'Australian' in character. Their identities clearly come from Australia's dreadful droughts of 1895 to 1903:

The dry years began in 1895 and did not break until 1903...right down the fertile crescent of eastern Australia - from Queensland, through New South Wales, Victoria and into South Australia, the grass had disappeared. A man who journeyed from Echuca, on the Victorian side of the Murray River, where the river boats had come to a stand-still, up central New South Wales as far as Booligal, described the scene as 'desolation and dust, dying stock and disheartened settlers'. On a cattle station in

44 Unsurprisingly, the Australian Federation was a most topical subject in 1903. As Plate 55 shows, Tom Perman's Red Riding Hood, staged at the Bijou Theatre, Melbourne had as its Grand Finale, 'Tableaux of March of the Commonwealth States to the Federal Capital'.
central Queensland, it was reported the kangaroos were too weak to hop and the kookaburras could not fly... By 1903 the number of sheep and cattle had been reduced to little more than half. The wheat crop planted in 1902 was a disaster (Macintyre 1986, 133).

The production also offers a comical 'quick-fix' to the drought in Act 1, Scene 1 when Maligna's attempt at aiming a lightning bolt at the stork carrying the child to the King and Queen misses. The storms it causes bring rain enough to 'paint Australia green'. The pantomime's transformative powers are used to reassure the audience that the country can and will regenerate itself.

Maligna is undoubtedly meant to be the enemy of the state. Remarkably, her arrival at court, after some 'entertainment' (a great excuse to stage popular songs and speciality acts) organised by Maligna's cooks to keep the party going because she is late again, is met by the King's demand that she pass the 'literacy' test, a reference, of course, to the Natal language test within the Immigration Restriction Act. She fails on two counts: she is a 'coloured alien', 'who's come for vengeance upon things Australian' and an arch-feminist: 'we women now with votes will make you squirm'. Indeed, she becomes Grover's means of aiming jokes at 'coons' and the New Woman, the seeming perennial subject matter of jokes in post-1880 Australian pantomime productions.

Though Grover brings the 'Australian' landscape into the subject matter of his pantomimes through these 'evil' characters, it seems to have been unrepresented in John Gordon and George Dixon's scene paintings of Cloudland, the Outposts of Owls, the Hall of Pillars complete with magnificent rainbow effects, Beauty's Bower and the Enchanted Forest, though the final scene offers a view of the Sydney of the future.

Act 2, Scene 1 presents the Palace's celebrations of Beauty's coming of age in terms of Australia coming into a new prosperous era:

This is the date
We're freed from gloom
Her beauty great
Has burst to bloom
And through the state
We join the boom
This mighty date
We're free from gloom
However, Grover retains his satirical line on Australian politics by representing the King as politically incompetent, and suffering from an acute hearing problem. Indeed, 'monarchy' cannot withstand the challenges presented to it by its new Australian child, a wilful revolutionary who threatens her parents that if she is not guaranteed her freedom she will leave them and 'start a tea room on the block'. Furthermore, Grover seems to compare her powerful femininity to Maligna's darker 'feminist' power as Maligna's two henchmen, Drought and Dust, now disguised as 'Swagmen', recognise that Beauty's unruliness and frivolity with men will be the very failings which will allow Maligna to overthrow the Australian monarchy.

The contradiction inherent in depicting Beauty as a strong native girl (another Currency Lass) and yet dangerously 'feminist' is an interesting facet of Grover's text: though it moves away from characterising the pantomime girl as an ingenue it retains a masculinist stance towards its subject. She is disapproved of in court because of her 'pluck'. Ironically, her main critics are her mother and Mrs Harris, her nanny. The latter is the other Dame of the pantomime who characterises herself as a member of the Women's Political Association. Her first entrance on stage in Act 1 is through a topical song 'If We Only...', which looks forward to Australia doing better in a number of areas such as agriculture, the exchange rate, the cricket, a new North Shore bridge, no tariffs etc. Regardless of her political credentials, however, Grover continues to depict Mrs Harris as a man-hungry spinster, the usual mark of the pantomime Dame.

In the next act Mrs Harris and the Queen complain of Beauty's immodesty, her flirtatious ways and the fact that 'she's often out of sight for hours'. However, Beauty's songs allow her to characterise herself as a 'plucky little maiden with the flowing hair'.

The Australian girl then chooses an Australian husband from a long procession of suitors from England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Italy, Spain, France, a repeat of similar scenes in Walch's 1885 *Sleeping Beauty* and Williamson's 1895 *Djin Djin*. Her preference is, of course, for the disguised Australian Prince Charming who

Chapter 4: The Great Empire of the South
gives her 'Australian' gifts such as a pet kangaroo and Australian gems and gold. The King disapproves, saying he is likely to be 'a spendthrift through and through' and that Australia is 'bung' financially.

But once again 'Australia' finds its voice in youth as Prince Charming defends the country against the King's criticisms.

If you could see our harvest now, your tone Would be a trifle different. Three seasons more like this and we'll be worth More than the happiest nation of the earth

His courage cannot stop the inevitable from happening when Maligna puts her curse on the couple's future happiness. But, just when all seems lost, the good fairy 'Progressa' enters the scene and promises that a rejuvenated Australia will awaken after a long sleep and 'Australian beauty' will break out because of its 'spirit of progress'. The Good Fairy then hands over a symbol of fertility, 'the magic egg', and endows the Prince and Beauty with 'perpetual youth'.

Act 3 is set one hundred years later in the Prince's picture gallery where his pages are playing tennis and talking about the pictures hanging on the walls. They mention George Reid, Chamberlain, Loubert, Roosevelt. Then the age-less Prince is confronted with images of the past and is told by Progressa to begin his quest. All this time he has kept company with Drought and Dust: Australia has been suffering and stagnating for a hundred years and it must now take up its rightful destiny. Ironically, it is the demons, Drought and Dust, who sing 'The Price We Pay for Federation' characterising the challenges for a future independent nation in living out the consequences of its own political decisions.

Australia's flag at last is proudly hoisted and unfurled. There isn't any other country like it in the world. We've all the things that human ingenuity invents: We've got four million people and we've seven Parliaments You can travel o'er the country wide and search it as you can, But you seldom find a fellow who is not a public man, We've eaten off a mouthful that we're trying hard to chew: For, although we can't find work for them, we've got to find their screw. It's part of the price we pay for Federation, It's part of the penalty of being a nation What's the good of talking how We might have dodged it now - It's the price we have to pay for Federation. I went into a shop last week to buy a pair of socks. I didn't know you wore 'em!

Chapter 4 : The Great Empire of the South
And the salesman brought a box.
He says: 'I'll let you have a pair like this for eighteenpence. '
I said to him: 'Why, hang it all, what means this new expense?'
They used to be a shilling. ' He says: 'Since you bought your last
Australia's federated and another tariff's passed,
And the blessings of Protection now to everyone we teach
By putting on the price of socks an extra threepence each.'

Act 3, Scene 2 is the 'dark' scene in the enchanted forest. The setting
symbolises the place of political nightmares which present politicians need to cut
through to re-awaken some sense of 'Australian beauty'. Maligna is challenged by
Progressa and her marching Amazons. Women's power, like Vida Goldstein, is
revered here as the Amazonian guard prepare to fight the good fight. It is
characterised as nothing less than a 'race' war as the Prince congratulates their courage
and tenacity with 'There's something English in you after all'. This presentation of a
'race war' is observable in the Perier's photographs (Plate 56) of an unspecified 1890s
pantomime by George Rignold at Her Majesty's Theatre, Sydney. Note the
vanquished blacks after what appears to be an intervention of a Good Fairy.

Maligna is, of course, overcome and, unlike Australis's, the 'monarchy'
in Sleeping Beauty is given a legitimacy of its own without reference to its English
counterpart. Though not consciously 'republican', Beauty's and the Prince's union
underlines the worthiness of Australian rule in its own right. Even the animal
impersonator of this pantomime plays a boxing Kangaroo!

Unfortunately, the pantomime did not create a great impression on theatre
critics and none seemed to know that it was reviving a local tradition of pantomime
writing. The review in the Player was quite scathing, in fact, in criticism of the
'book'.

Pantomimes have been in a degenerate state for some time past. The present
upheaval at the Royal is not better in this respect than its predecessors. The book is
very weak; the scenery, though sometimes pretty, is at others crude and inartistic;
the pictorial embellishments in the 'Picture Gallery' scene, for instance, are almost
an insult to the wretched individuals they are supposed to represent; and in several
other scenes the colours are thrown on with a lavish hand, and at times absolutely
shrink in despair. Miss May Beatty is a pretty and clever principal boy, and Miss
Olive Lenton a charming Princess Beauty. Fred Leslie, as a caricature of Hugh
Ward, is fair as a caricature; but why not, for a change, try to be just like Fred
Leslie? The experiment might be worth trying. By far the best part of the show is
provided by the youngsters, and little Lizette Parkes proves herself a little
comediennes who could give point to her elder sisters. The little D'Artos are also
elegant; and, as in this piece, the third and still more diminutive D'Artos appear,
the family have more to follow in their footsteps. Fred. Graham, as Mrs Harris
(why must the chief comedian in panto always be a woman?) gives an excellent dissertation on that person 'Man,' which proved highly satisfactory to his audience; and Arthur Crane, as an elderly, wicked, and decrepit Maligna, barely reaches Comic Opera form. Miss Elsie Moore looked very attractive in her fleshings, and Miss Sara Hyman was a pretty Mother Goose. Alfred Hill - he of the raven and curly locks - conducts the orchestra with all his old-time skill and uniform grace (15 January 1904).

Monty Grover's lack of success with Sleeping Beauty thus indicates the dilemma facing Australian drama (or the lack of it) at the turn of the century: was it, as Williamson believed, due to the lack of skill of local writers or was it due to the managers' and the audiences' lack of understanding and hence support? Perhaps audiences, unused to satirical allegories of their own political reality like Grover's, did not see his pantomime as carnivalesque enough. Arguably, after twenty-five years of Williamson's policy of 'theatre as distraction,' there was no longer room for the more consciously political local product, though William Anderson's post-1904 productions seem to continue in that vein. For instance, Fred Graham also played the Dame for Anderson's 1904 Sinbad and one of his monologues in Act 2, Scene 5 reveals that references to local politics came thick and fast:

Drink to me only with thine eyes - sparkling wine and sparkling eyes, with a headache in the morning. But I've a terrible lot to do to-day - a terrible lot to do - and there's no one to help me prepare the banquet. Mr. Reid is going to give a dinner for Mr. Watson, Mr. Isaacs, and Sir William Lyne, and the guests are to be exclusively members of Parliament and Government Royal Commissions - about 10,000 altogether. Who's going to pay, goodness knows. I suppose we'll have to float another loan. When the worst come to the worst, we can float a new loan.

Anderson's financial troubles after his venture with Wonderland City caused his partial retirement in 1912 and seriously affected his ability to mount such productions during these years, a fact made even more noticeable by the number of adaptations of the same arrangements of Sinbad he produced between 1904 and 1911. By contrast, there can be no doubt as to the enormous success of Williamson's style of production from 1906. On the basis of this evidence it would seem that the editorial in the Theatre on 1 August 1905, claiming that if audiences are patriotic, and would support a work by one of their nativelanders were it good, bad or indifferent, provided they were assured that it was purely Australian, was wrong.

Claims of non-support for Australian dramatists persist throughout the period. In March 1911 Arthur H. Adams wrote a provocative article in the Theatre
which caused Claude McKay, Williamson's then literary secretary, to answer in
defence of the Firm. Not satisfied with that reply, Adams retaliated further and
opened up a debate on the status of the Australian dramatist which raged in that
magazine until June. Its arguments give an extraordinary synopsis of the state of
'local' drama.

Adams began by arguing that, while it was impossible to say that Australian
plays are equal to 'the best' by foreign dramatists, local drama was 'very much better
than some of those imported to Australia'. Furthermore, since a 'payable play' had to
be musical comedy or melodrama, managers gave audiences merely what they had
educated the public to like. He also accused managers of being unpatriotic and unlike
their English and American counterparts who, like Charles Frohmann, for instance,
'have thrown away a lot of money in an effort to run a repertory theatre'. Since
Australian theatre entrepreneurs were unwilling to invest in the development of new
works, as patriotic millionaires were doing at the New Theatre, New York, he called
for a government-funded repertory theatre which would stage a greater variety of
European and American plays as well as new Australian works.

Still on a patriotic note, Adams believed that Australian theatre managers had
totally underestimated the political importance of theatre for the making of a new
nation. In a remarkable contradiction, he argues that the national theatre should be an
imperialist 'education medium', by citing An Englishman's Home to demonstrate how
an equivalent Australian play might have stirred 'greater enthusiasm for our defence
scheme. The rest of the article applauds Louis Esson's work and the Adelaide Literary
Theatre and summarises the misfortunes of his own twelve plays. He concludes by
arguing that 'there is a nationality in plays which has its special appeal only to
audiences of that nationality'.

Claude McKay's response in May was to refute outright Adams' claim that
theatre managers were hostile to Australian playwrights. On the contrary, they would
jump at the chance of producing 'good' local works in preference to the costly
business of searching for and importing foreign plays. Williamson was particularly
keen to develop a distinctive Australian drama and had in recent times encouraged Steele Rudd to develop his uniquely Australian characters\(^{45}\), as there was no sense in Australian dramatists writing more English drawing-room dramas!

Then McKay cuts to the bone with an attack on Adams' credentials as a playwright with only a limited knowledge of theatre production. Accusing him of being overly intellectual, of 'living in books', he believes that Adams' 'pity the woes of the dramatist' asks theatre managers to allow unworthy Australian dramatists to have their works staged when, in a reciprocal case, Adams as an editor would not publish unworthy poems and short stories in the *Lone Hand*.

McKay also argues that the New Drama was not going as well in European centres as Adams inferred and cites as his example the Court Theatre with Bernard Shaw as dramatist-in-chief. Furthermore, Frohman had abandoned his idea of a repertory theatre because no one wanted it. In fact, those calling for the New Drama were often blatant hypocrites: one London critic, for instance, to whom the New Drama was very dear, visited the repertory theatre once, while he visited *Our Miss Gibbs* three times.

McKay ends the article by again emphasising that it was simply not correct to say that Australian managers had failed local dramatists. The J. C. Williamson firm had produced works by Mr Adams, Marcus Clarke, Espinasse, George Darrell, Monty Grover, and Bert Royle. Nor was it correct to say that managers did not produce New Drama: Williamson had staged Ibsen, Shaw, Maeterlinck, Sudermann and Pinero. However, 'someone has to make the selection, and in this case, as in most others, it has always been the person who pays the piper'.

Adams' immediate response the following June opened with a stinging attack on McKay's partisan view as an employee of J. C. Williamson's management, a position, he reminded him, he himself had filled twelve years before: adding, rather

\(^{45}\) Inadvertently, McKay verifies Williamson's account that *On Our Selection* was the Australian play which had escaped his entrepreneurial eye, remembering that this article was written the year before William Anderson produced it in May, 1912. As Richard Fotheringham explains, Williamson most probably took an option to produce the 1907 version of the play influenced by Augustus Thomas's *In Mizpah*, co-written by Steele Rudd and Beaumont Smith. (1995, 417)
sarcastically, 'at that time, I had not one-tenth of the knowledge and expert authority displayed by this precocious young man. Anyway, I knew so little of stagecraft that I wrote 'Tapu' and Mr. Williamson accepted it'. Presumably, the conclusion one might draw from this is that Williamson's acolytes were invariably inexperienced and perhaps, as 'Tapu' would suggest, the expertise of the theatre manager was not foolproof either.

Adams then explains that he was not attacking Williamson in the previous article but apologising for him and for the fact that Australian drama was 'chiefly governed by the box-office intellect'. From such a perspective, he too would 'import only proved successes from overseas and with them the scene-plots, the producers and the players'. In fact, Adams was convinced that Claude McKay was not the one mounting the spirited defence of J. C. Williamson but rather it was the Firm itself attempting to discredit him, for how could a young man possibly dismiss the existence of all Australian dramatists as absolutely as McKay had done! Likewise, would he like to name the ten most successful dramatists in the world? Presumably Australian audiences had seen them all, imported with (here he quotes McKay) 'the cream of the world's theatrical output' which Australia had feasted on 'for the last quarter of a century' thanks to the Firm. McKay's reply was swift, published in fact in the same edition. It was a vitriolic personal attack amounting to little more than a re-stating of his opinion that Adams was a poor playwright who, through the power which journalism had given him on the Bulletin's 'Red Page' and as editor of the Lone Hand, had given too much space to the misfortunes of the Australian dramatist.

Thus, Adams' and McKay's debate highlights the 'limits' of the debate on Australian drama in the pre-1914 period: constructed as it was around an ideology of 'high' and 'low' art and the concept of an 'Art' theatre versus the 'Commercial' stage. Adams' call for different forms of theatre thus continually collided with the theatre entrepreneur's view of who should pay for it and who would come to see it. McKay was correct in noticing the importance of the Lone Hand in articulating the need for a more 'intellectual' drama and, through it, Adams' attack on the theatre manager's
(most notably Williamson's) 'claims to be sole arbiter of public taste' (*Lone Hand*, 1 May 1907, 105). The *Lone Hand* championed the cause of an Art theatre at every opportunity; for example, Leon Brodsky's report on 1 September 1909 on repertory and experimental theatres called for similar theatres in Australia. Similarly, he often reported on the Irish National Theatre (such as in his article of 1 May 1908) and used this model for his own organisation of the Melbourne Theatre Society in 1904. He was also an active supporter of his friend Louis Esson.

Implicit in the *Lone Hand*'s nationalist stance was what Simon During (1990) argued in *Nation and Narration* was the 'virtue' of Nationalism in post-colonial nations, as they used literature to articulate 'Nationalism's other' (During 1990, 151). Equally, a fractured psyche emanated from calls for a 'National Theatre' by Brodsky and Adams, which both allowed them to both criticise theatre managers for their policy of importing drama, yet also argue for importing more 'intellectual' drama from the European centres of Western culture. Theatre programmes of the Melbourne Repertory Club of 1912 thus proudly stated that its mission was one of 'promoting an interest in the better forms of dramatic arts irrespective of any particular school'. However, Arthur Adams' arguments concerning the use of theatre for moral education through plays such as *An Englishman's Home* is a sobering reminder that Australian Imperialism and Australian Nationalism were never far apart. Indeed, as the author of the 1898 production of *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, he had included a series of tableaux of 'The Pride and Progress of the Anglo-Saxon Race'.

As the 1911 production of *Sinbad* shows, during 1906 and 1914 Williamson emptied the pantomime of certain kinds of local representation only to fill it with patriotically-inspiring reassurances that Australia was a valued member of the Empire. J. F. Archibald's 'ideal reader' for the *Lone Hand* was not that different from Williamson's ideal audiences who enjoyed seeing the flags of empire waving from the stage. Thus, McKay's attack on Adams' artistic credentials could be seen as the entrepreneur's need to hold the goodwill of his market in the face of just another competitor.
The two most salient points arising from the debate, however, were, firstly, Adams, like others arguing for a 'better class of play', call for an Australian theatre which was not created to defeat reflection. Secondly, McKay warned against the disparagement of the great successes of the commercial stage and its ability to reach huge populaces: could a more 'intellectual' drama do as much? Indeed, the two viewpoints raise the question as to what dramatic form(s) might serve the nation best?

Adams had already partly answered this quite accidently in his critique of the pantomime in the *Lone Hand* three years before his heated debate with McKay, when he argued the communal benefits of the pantomime's eclectic and festive form. Implicitly, his review challenges those who argued for a 'better class of drama' to prove that they could do better than produce the breadth of pantomime's (im)moral vision for new Australian drama.

We are only just passing through the pantomime season, a season which in Australia shows a tendency to protract itself over all the seasons. The pantomime is successful because it gives that numerous class, which 'goes to the theatre to be amused,' all the elements it is capable of appreciating, vivid colour, violent action, strenuous gaiety, dancing, music, song, and story, with more than a dash of mild impropriety of the kind that passes off the average citizen like water off a duck's back, but which clings to the Puritan like glue. Certainly the pantomime, with its free leg, its pale-blue solo, and its *doubleentendre* as blunt as the family woodaxec, is a little bit naughty; but this is a wicked world, and the moralist's error is in supposing that we increase that wickedness by such frivolous repetition as occurs in popular entertainments, where there is more likelihood of our wearing it out. For those who are well enough to appreciate it, the pantomime is well enough, but rude health and child like vivacity are essential to its enjoyment. It is absurd for people with a touch of liver to abuse it on the ground that a sentient people should find entertainment on a higher dramatic plane. The man who delights in the epigrams of Nietzsche has no quarrel with Hal Caine or Marie Corelli, or the astonishing millions who read them, and the idea that because pantomime is successful the intellectual minority are robbed of Shakespeare's comedies, and the best work of the best contemporary brains is sheer humbug. The intellectual minority does not get the dramatic fare it desires because it is wanting in the courage to fight for, lacks the energy to produce and the generosity to maintain, the better thing (*The Lone Hand*, 1 April 1908).

The article raises further questions: was Australian drama to be the province of intellectuals who had the courage, energy and generosity to fight, produce and maintain it? Or was it best left in hands of the general populace, that 'numerous class' which 'goes to the theatre to be amused'? The pantomime suggests that, as an 'intellectual', a theatre entrepreneur like Williamson recognised that there was no better

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46 As Bernstein explains, this was Adorno's most profound criticism of the culture industry (Bernstein 1991, 9).

Chapter 4: The Great Empire of the South
carnivalesque form to use in order to celebrate the 'novelty' of Australian nationhood. As a result, post-Federation productions became festively patriotic. Furthermore, like the swearing-in ceremony at Centennial Park, they were acts of communion, repeatedly affirming the Nation's allegiance to the Empire.

At another level, however, they also exposed the essential 'fiction' of 'inventing' Australia. Post-1906 pantomimes were sold to audiences as pieces of inventive and novel entertainment. However, Plate 57 showing the 'Flying Ballet - Aviation without the Aeroplanes' in J. C. Williamson Ltd's 1911 Sinbad is a reminder of the way pantomimes only made superficial gestures at looking at 'real' social and political change. If, as Adams argued, there was a 'nationality in plays which has its special appeal only to audiences of that nationality', then such representations as the 'Flying Ballet' show how Australian pantomime, and arguably pre-1914 Australian drama in general, was marginalized in its efforts to find a local space, not only to write a 'better class of play', but to invent what that could possibly mean in indigenous terms. Given the Firm's enterprise in producing pantomimes between 1882 and 1914, one must conclude that earlier more 'localised' works such as Djin Djin, in which Prince Eucalyptus (Plate 2) had appeared, had been further refined according to political needs of the 'Great Empire of the South'.

Chapter 4 : The Great Empire of the South  390
FINALE.

It was to be another fifty years before a 'national' theatre achieved support with the formation of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust in 1957. That, however, is another story, since public funding for the Arts, I believe, has raised even more questions about what constitutes Australian drama, if the recent disputes over the allocation of Arts Council Fellowships are anything to go by.

Undoubtedly, Williamson 'won' the cultural contest between his company's policy of importing 'tailor-made' European theatre and the idea of an Australian 'national' theatre pre-1914. His legacy, with regard to the subsequent workings of J. C. Williamson Ltd, was to ensure that the entrepreneurs/theatre managers who followed continued to legitimise themselves through the aims of Cultural Imperialism. Dorothy Hewett's (1979) claim that 'Australians are still very frightened of the imagination' (85) reverberates in its political implications for any Australian dramatist or theatre producer who has ever wanted to experiment with dramatic form and/or question Australian cultural hegemony.

Prime Minister Paul Keating's claim that the 'Creative Nation' statement spells the end of the 'cultural cringe' perhaps relegates Williamson's pantomime productions to a pre-enlightened Australia which has since outlawed many of the more strident forms of class prejudice, racism and sexism rampant between 1882 and 1914. Likewise, productions of plays by Aboriginal Australians and members of other ethnic groups within Australian society surely show that Australia is now more than just an Anglo-Saxon dom. The success of Jimmy Chi's Bran Nue Dae and the comic antics of Wogs Out of Work and more recently Wogarama perhaps even indicate that former sub-cultures have made it into the mainstream of Australian theatre. In both a symbolic and very real sense, then, Williamson's empire is no more, having finally closed its doors in 1979.

Indeed, empire-building is also a thing of the past if Rupert Murdoch's arguments in his John Boynthon lecture on 22 October 1994 are to be believed. George

Conclusion
Orwell got it wrong, according to Murdoch, firstly with regard to developments in information technology and secondly in his prediction 'that free markets would lead to private monopolies and to drive down living standards...Because capitalists are always trying to stab each other in the back, free markets do not lead to monopolies...Monopolies only exist when governments create them' (The West Australian, 21 October 1994, 13).

Amazingly, Murdoch here absolves himself from his own monopolistic activities in becoming one of the most dominant controllers of 'information superhighway' technology together with owning a vast array of mass-circulation newspapers and film and television networks. Again, the point to be noted is not whether monopolisation by Murdoch or Williamson or any entrepreneur was/is ever 'total' but that 'history' shows us that the processes within 'entrepreneurial' driven industries control and limit forms of production even while they appear to produce more. As Frederic Jameson (1990) and other critics have argued, 'repetition' is a 'universal feature of commodity equivalence' and therefore a vital component of popular culture (17). This, of course, not only calls into question the whole notion of artistic 'originality' but raises the cultural and political problem of framing a 'new society'. The issues of repetition, novelty and originality had serious political implications for both the placement of people within Williamson's company and the nature of the theatrical product which it created. I believe it is foolish to assume otherwise and not to admit, as Schumpeter outlined, that the entrepreneur within a free-market economy was able to 'educate' Sydney and Melbourne audiences about what they wanted.

It is for this reason that I share Raymond Williams' concerns in The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists (1989) about how the present diversity of theory might be reassuring if we did not have to remember, for example, the comparable liveliness of the Weimar culture in the 1920s, which had also gone as far as its Red Shirts and its Red Rockets and which was not only repressed by Hitler (the constant political warning) but which, when it came under pressure, was shown to have been all along a double-edged vitality, unified only by its negations, as throughout the whole period of the avant-garde. Are we now informed enough, hard enough, to look for our own double edges? (173)
I believe it is not enough to point out oppositional forces and historical contradictions. To do so would amount to ignoring the equally 'hard evidence' concerning the disproportionate power entrepreneurs assume within the capitalist system with regard to their right to produce what they want based on what they think we want. There can be no doubt that Williamson the entrepreneur and 'his' company significantly altered the Australian theatre's capacity to 'inform' Australians in Sydney and Melbourne about their own socio-political as well as geographical 'focus' by reducing the kinds of dramatic forms which could occur within the theatrical space. As a trade-off, audiences were given the euphoria of moving towards becoming the 'Great Empire of the South', a place worthy of the 'best' of world entertainment.

Interestingly, Rupert Murdoch made a similar promise to his Melbourne audience when he told them that the next century 'will be the century of networking. Australia will profit from its strategic location as a highly educated, English-speaking society that - because of technological change - is now as integrated into the world economy as any place on Earth.' Australia's cultural superiority assured - the coincidence of the Creative Nation statement stating that the cultural cringe is over is, some say, not accidental - we are now invited to trust the entrepreneur and 'free-markets' - surely an oxymoron - to have the wisdom (and the ethics) to shape the culture of the 21st century. The necessity to view entrepreneurs as managers of culture never lessens in its importance for creative beings and critical thinkers.