A World of Fiction

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PART II

Fiction in the World
Unsurprisingly—given the ubiquity of literary anonymity and pseudonymity in the nineteenth century—thousands of titles discovered in analyzing Trove were published without attribution or under an obvious or discovered alias. Due to the ephemerality of newspaper publication, in many cases where a title was attributed, despite the best bibliographical efforts the author’s identity remains unconfirmed. Anonymous, pseudonymous, and undetermined publications present a conundrum for literary and book historians, not limited to—in fact partly produced by—the field’s focus on authors: our urge to ask, as Michel Foucault put it, “From where does [this work] come, who wrote it, when, under what circumstances, or beginning with what design?” (15) We recognize that the discursive relationship of author and text (Foucault’s “author function”) changes over time, and that literary works have often “circulated without authors’ names attached” (McGill, American 2).¹ Yet most literary histories, and almost all of the scholarly infrastructure they are built upon, privilege the relationship of author and text. Scholarly editions, library and collection catalogs, bibliographies, special collections, and archives all routinely organize the past, in Meredith McGill’s words, by extracting “anonymous and pseudonymous texts from their disseminated condition.” This para-
doxically author-centered approach to literary anonymity explores “composite figures and bodies of work that did not exist and could not have existed in the era in which th[o]se texts were written” (American 3). It also disregards the many published works that have not been, and may never be, attached to historical individuals.

Rather than a problem that prevents analysis, the thousands of authorless works identified in this project indicate—and demand new critical approaches to understanding—the fundamentally different conceptions of literary meaning and value operating in the past. It is not simply that some stories were ascribed to authors and others were not. Exploring authorial attribution in nineteenth-century Australian newspapers reveals a spectrum of possibilities between these two poles. It also highlights the extensive information regarding authorial gender and nationality present in the publication event, whether or not these accurately describe the historical individual who wrote the work. To prevent bibliographic determinations erasing the complex ways in which authorship was represented and understood by nineteenth-century readers, this chapter considers both the authors definitively known to have published fiction in colonial newspapers and authorship as it was inscribed in these periodicals. I use these models of authorship to explore the complex ways in which authorial gender and nationality intersected with notions of cultural value in publication and reception, and the implications of that intersection for understanding the emergence and development of Australian literary culture.

The findings suggest that colonial notions of literary value were distinct from those operating in Britain and America. While women are understood to have dominated authorship of periodical fiction in these other contexts, men wrote the vast majority of extended fiction in nineteenth-century Australian newspapers and were represented as doing so. Even as British fiction was the most widely published, colonial newspapers also contained significantly more local writing than has been recognized, with the “Australian” inscription of titles implying the even greater presence of such titles. Although manifested in markedly different ways in metropolitan and provincial newspapers, in both contexts trends in authorship affirm the interest of colonial readers in British fiction (albeit a male-dominated version thereof) and suggest the cultural marginality of American writing.

While this hierarchy of value remains constant for overseas fiction,
for colonial writing a significant shift occurred in the late 1870s and 1880s, when provincial newspapers became not only the major sites for publishing and promoting Australian fiction but arguably the preferred location for Australian male authors to present their work. Within the existing framework of Australian literary and book history—where metropolitan periodicals are assumed to be the major, even the only, publishers of fiction—the activities of provincial newspapers would have little import. The discovery that provincial newspapers published significantly more fiction than their metropolitan counterparts fundamentally revises that assumption. On this basis, I demonstrate the role and importance of provincial newspapers in defining early Australian literary culture, including its distinctly gendered profile.

I

Of the titles discovered in this project, 36 percent were published without attribution. While seeming to leave a clear majority of attributed titles, the representation of authorship for fiction in nineteenth-century Australian newspapers was significantly more complicated. Many stories were published under obvious pseudonyms: listed alphabetically, “A Bohemian,” “A British Tourist,” “A Bush Naturalist,” “A Contributor,” “A Correspondent,” and “A Country Attorney” are the first six author names in the curated dataset. Other pseudonyms are only slightly less obvious (for instance, “A. Noble,” “Mark Antony,” “Sans Culottes”). Some are well known, such as “Mark Twain” for Samuel Langhorne Clemens or “Rolf Boldrewood” for Thomas Alexander Browne. Others were identified with additional research, including “Max Adeler” for Charles Heber Clark, “Johnny Ludlow” for Ellen Wood, and “Christian Reid” for Frances Christine Fisher Tiernan.

Sometimes it was comically difficult to determine if a name was a pseudonym or not. For instance, Carol Hetherington and I initially categorized “Captain Lacie” as a pseudonym before discovering an article (complete with portrait) presenting him as a historical person and “celebrated Australian writer.” With this evidence, and “Captain Lacie” listed as an author in AustLit, we designated his fiction as attributed. Only after I made this association in a published article (“Thousands” 293) did further evidence emerge supporting the first interpretation:
a story published in 1902 in the *Mercury and Weekly Courier* attributed as ‘By Captain Lacie (James J. Wright). Author of ‘The Gem Finders,’ ‘In the Wake of Fortune,’ ‘Narratives of the Bushranging Times,’ ‘The Huts of Ellerslie,’ &c., &c.’” Acknowledging the uncertainty in identifying them, approximately 12 percent of fiction discovered in this project appeared under a pseudonym.

Once again, this seemingly clear statistic belies the complexity of differentiating pseudonyms and attributions for nineteenth-century Australian newspaper fiction. Should the many author names composed only of initials—“G.A.W.,” “G.B.,” “G.B.W.,” “G.E.C.”—be considered attributions? Is the use of initials intended to conceal the author’s identity; to be decipherable only to certain individuals, or even to a range of readers at a designated place or time; or all of the above, in different instances? Is a woman using what is presumably her husband’s name (for example, “Mrs. Walter Allingham”) employing a pseudonym or following an established naming convention, one that might even make her more identifiable in a society where men tended to be the more prominent public figures? In some cases, the same form of nomenclature—such as the use of an honorific and surname, as with “Dr. Grey,” “Mrs. Gurtarie,” and “Miss Perry”—can have potentially different implications, for instance with respect to age or educational attainment. Because these specific author names remain unaligned with historical individuals, it is impossible to say if they are pseudonyms or not, and one can only guess at their intended meaning: are they a form of authorial discretion, an in-joke for particular readers, a way of emphasizing social standing, or again, all of the above in different instances? For some authors, the use of an honorific and surname—such as “Mrs. Oliphant”—is possible because of, and signals, the author’s fame. To add to the complexity of authorial attribution, fiction was often published with signatures: a list of other works “by the author of” the title in question, whether or not that author is named. Moreover, titles that were published without attribution, or with a signature or initials only, in one instance could appear under a pseudonym or the author’s legal name elsewhere. Such variability warns against interpretations that assume authors decided—or were even aware of—how their stories were attributed.

As these examples illustrate, not only were many forms of authorial attribution attached to fiction in nineteenth-century Australian news-
papers, but names within the same category could have completely different—even opposite—functions and effects. Lack of attribution can also be an expression of authorial identity in itself, signifying modesty, membership in a grand collective, or insider-ship. Newspapers conventionally carried unattributed items, with bylines a mark of distinction reserved for major stories. The numerous unattributed titles identified in this project have meaning within the conventions of newspaper—as well as literary—publishing.

Taking the multiple potential implications of different forms of attribution—and nonattribution—as read, table 2 identifies seventeen author name categories employed for fiction in nineteenth-century Australian newspapers, as well as the number and proportion of titles in each. This spectrum of authorial attribution—and the fluid relationship between author and text it indicates—shows that authorship, in the sense of a definite link between a historical individual and a written text, did not provide the organizing framework for colonial newspaper fiction. As McGill says of periodical publication in antebellum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of titles</th>
<th>Percentage of titles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attributed</td>
<td>2,109</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with signature</td>
<td>1,338</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editor/translator</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with signature</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honorific and surname</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with signature</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honorific, initials, and surname</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with signature</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initials and surname</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with signature</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initials only</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with signature</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudonym</td>
<td>896</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with signature</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surname only</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unattributed</td>
<td>3,011</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with signature</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>9,247</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
America, this was a “system in which literature circulated and was read without reliable recourse to the author as originator and principle of coherence” (American 144).

Figure 3 explores shifts in the representation of authorship in colonial newspapers by collecting these author name categories into three broad groups. “Attributed” encompasses titles that were ascribed to an author name that has been shown or appears to be authentic, including those composed of a first name and surname, an honorific and surname (with or without initials), a surname only, or initials and a surname. “Pseudonymous” incorporates both obvious and discovered pseudonyms as well as titles attributed to an author name composed of initials only, while “unattributed” includes titles where no name, or only that of an editor or translator, was given. The figure also shows the proportion of titles in each group published with a signature. As very little fiction was discovered prior to 1865, those proportional results—and their unevenness—should be interpreted with that scarcity in mind.

The well-established nineteenth-century transition from anonymous to named authorship is apparent in figure 3, though somewhat complicated by relatively high proportions of pseudonymously authored fiction and their growth from the mid-1860s to the late 1880s: from 15 to 18 percent of all titles. And although declining significantly over this time, “unattributed” fiction still comprised 30 percent of titles in the 1890s. Notwithstanding these complications, the considerable increase in “attributed” titles—to over half (55 percent) of the extended stories in Australian newspapers by the century’s end—demonstrates a clear trend toward aligning fiction with an individual author, as do trends in the allocation of signatures. Editors began routinely to assign signatures to “unattributed” and “pseudonymous” fiction in the 1860s. While emphasizing title over author, this form of attribution suggests that authors (even when not named) were increasingly understood to unite an oeuvre of works. Growth in signatures for “attributed” titles (to 24 percent of fiction in the 1890s) reinforces this association of author with oeuvre.

Despite increased attribution of fiction across the nineteenth century, and the substantial bibliographical research underpinning this project, for 38 percent of titles discovered authorial identity has not been determined conclusively. With the “enigma” of literary anonymity and pseudonymity not simply a past condition that has been resolved but a continuing presence (Foucault 15), a number of possible ways forward
suggest themselves, each with its own problems as well as recommendations. The most obvious—because adopted in many literary histories—is to consider only the 62 percent of titles with authors whose identities have been ascertained. Figure 4 shows this subsample of known authors (the solid line) in relation to the total number of titles (the dotted line).

In spite of the very similar shapes of these lines, known authors do not necessarily provide a reliable basis for generalizing about fiction. Authors whose names have been preserved through history or recovered by contemporary scholarship are, by definition, not a random sample. The reasons they are remembered might differ: perhaps their fiction was judged at the time, and/or by subsequent generations, as worth remembering, perhaps they were part of a group (such as Victorian women writers) whose literary talents have been reassessed in light of contemporary cultural shifts, perhaps their works were published in book editions collected by the university libraries whose collections formed the basis for contemporary bibliographies. Whatever the reason, these known authors have been selected for preservation or resurrection while others have not. More generally, studying literature through the lens of authors whose identities are known today preconditions us to view the past through contemporary parameters. As
St Clair’s work and other scholarship—for instance, histories of library borrowing (Dolin, “Fiction”)—attest, and as later parts of this book also demonstrate, the authors known to us today are not necessarily the same ones known to readers in the past.

Alternatively, one might deem the attribution of fiction in nineteenth-century Australian newspapers to be so distinct from contemporary formations as to render the topic of authorship irrelevant. The optimal strategy, from this perspective, would be to find new questions, categories, and approaches to elucidate the workings and values of this literary system. Rather than grouping works by authors, or author attributes (for instance, Australian or women writers), potential new arrangements might include fiction that appeared in the same newspaper or same type of newspapers (for instance, of a region, price bracket, or political persuasion), titles that were reprinted extensively, or those that were highly advertised or illustrated. One might read stories of the same genre or theme together, regardless of authorial identity, or explore networks of references established for readers by the use of signatures or by details within the publication event regarding acquisitions of copyright or sites of previous publication.
A shift away from authorship as an organizing category for reading and scholarship has benefits. Aligning fiction with aspects of its publication permits a focus on contexts of reception. It also avoids key critical impasses in contemporary literary history, including but not limited to the disproportionate power of contemporary reputation created by literary canons, the at times empowering but often ghettoizing alignment of gender with women’s writing, and the continuing power of the nation to organize and limit understanding of the contours of literary, publishing, and reading culture. Certainly, the plethora of “authorless” works no doubt present in many mass-digitized collections will require non-author-centered approaches to play a greater role as literary historians increasingly investigate such records. Responding to this need, the following chapters employ some of the above strategies. But simply eschewing authorship as a category of analysis is not necessarily desirable.

For nineteenth-century Australian newspaper fiction, and literary history broadly, the author remains an important framework for at least two reasons. First, even if readers of the time did not know the identities of many authors of the fiction they read, those identities—that is, authors’ backgrounds, their gender and nationality, not to mention their class, age, education, where they lived, and so on—profoundly influenced the literature produced: what they wrote and how, where and how they were published, whether and how much they were paid, and so on. For the interchange it signals between society and literature, information about authorship remains important for literary history. Second, while authorship—in the sense of a direct and unquestionable association of an individual and a body of work—was not the primary schema through which fiction in nineteenth-century Australian newspapers was published and received, this does not mean readers had no interest in the origins of stories.

In many cases, an author’s gender and national or colonial origins were inscribed in publication events and functioned as important framing devices for the reception of those titles. Most obviously, a significant proportion of author names, including pseudonyms, are clearly “male” or “female,” regardless of whether that gender matched that of the author. And some signatures specify an “authoress” for anonymously or pseudonymously published titles. Many pseudonyms for fiction in colonial newspapers also aligned the author with a place, either
directly—for instance, “A London Man,” “A Lincolnshire Clergyman,” “A Mildura Lady,” or “A New York Detective”—or indirectly—as with “A Bush Naturalist,” “A Member of Oxford University,” or “A Now Living Ex-convict.” Titles and subtitles often emphasized national or proto-national origins: *Australia(n)* was the third most frequent word in titles for fiction discovered in this project (after *story* and *tale*), and subtitles in the curated dataset include “A Tale of British Heroism,” “A Reminiscence of the Far North-West of America,” and “A Romance of the Russia of To-Day.”

Information about copyright, translation, or reprinting, and frequent descriptions of stories as written “especially” for a newspaper, further associated fiction with particular national or colonial publishers, languages, or periodicals. In the absence of other indicators, prominent settings can imply that fiction originated in that part of the world. As with the gender of author names, pointers to the national or colonial origins of fiction may or may not equate to the author’s actual location. Indeed, some titles or subtitles identify a story with one place, when its author is from another: “Carmeline; or, The Convict’s Bride: A Romance of England and Australia Founded on Fact” is by American author Francis Durivage; “Found Guilty; or, Ralph Chandos’ Fate: A Stirring Tale of the Early Days of Botany Bay” is by American Leon Lewis; and “The New Editor: An Episode in the History of Warrender’s Gulch, California,” is by Australian author Harold W. H. Stephen. Regardless of the relationship between actual and claimed nationality, such titles clearly conveyed—and were often clearly designed to convey—messages to colonial readers about the origins of newspaper fiction.

Both actual and inscribed origins are important for understanding this literary system. Information about the historical actors who produced these stories supports exploration of the conditions under which fiction was produced and how it circulated globally; understanding how gender and nationality were inscribed in publication events enables analysis of how fiction was published and read in nineteenth-century Australian newspapers. Because these different forms of authorship can and do contradict each other—indeed, that is the premise of many feminist studies of pseudonyms—the two datasets cannot simply be combined. Either known or inscribed authorship, and hence, the conditions of either production or reception, would need to be privi-
leged; even then, the two datasets would potentially work against each other to produce unreliable answers to either type of question.

To avoid these problems, and attend to both production and reception, I use two models of authorship. The first, for “known” authorship, represents gender and nationality only for the 62 percent of titles for which authors’ identities have been verified. The second, for “inscribed” authorship, depicts gender and nationality as they were presented in nineteenth-century Australian newspapers. It does so conservatively, listing a gender only when the author name is obviously “male” or “female” and noting nationality only when it is explicitly signaled by the paratext or, in the absence of such inscriptions, is prominent in the text. For textual inscriptions, I assigned a “nationality” when the first section of a story—typically the first few paragraphs of the first harvested installment—mentioned a location or featured some detail indicating a setting (for instance, kangaroos for Australia). Many stories identified in this project open with explicit geographical references. A well-known Australian example is Rolf Boldrewood’s “Robbery Under Arms,” which begins, “My name’s Dick Marston, Sydney-side native” (#13336/I). Other textual national inscriptions, where the title was unattributed and the author’s identity remains unknown, include “A Change in the Cast,” which opens, “Within the walls of the substantial and convenient but withal elegant residence called Hop Villa, situated in the pleasant county of Surrey, within one hour of London Bridge terminus” (#11771/I); or “Achieving His Ransom,” where the first sentence states, “Newburg was once a thriving little Missouri village, and a popular candidate for the county seat, until the Civil War stopped its growth and dwarfed its ambition” (#11770/I).

Inscribed genders and nationalities aim to model a nineteenth-century reader’s initial impression, if any, about the authorship or origins of a work. While clearly it is impossible to recapture the “original meaning” of any textual event, one can reasonably assume that a reader, encountering a story beginning in the “English countryside” by “John Smith” would assume a British male author. Clearly, this second dataset expresses an argument about how nineteenth-century readers interpreted publication events. For those who associate bibliometric analysis with objective historical facts, this approach will seem unreasonably speculative. Yet as earlier chapters have emphasized, this
book is predicated on the view that literary data are inevitably constructed and transactional, whether they are explicitly designated so or not. Inscribed genders and nationalities represent a direct—but not exceptional—engagement with this essential condition of literary data. As with all arguments in this book, by publishing the data I make the claims and assumptions underpinning my arguments accessible to others to contest, confirm, or complement.

In total, 47 percent of titles were inscribed with an authorial gender and 79 percent with a nationality. This relatively low rate of gender inscription—more than half of all fiction is not associated with a “male” or “female” author name—emphasizes the point already made: that the author was not the primary framework through which colonial readers interpreted fiction. By contrast, national inscriptions were prevalent: paratextual associations of stories with places, and prominent geographical markers in titles, were mirrored by explicit references to place at the beginnings of stories. Establishing whether this degree of emphasis on place is unique to the stories in nineteenth-century Australian newspapers or characteristic of fiction of this period would require extensive comparative analysis. Still, this foregrounding of locations in a society in which many readers had moved from where they were born suggests a keen interest in the effects of place on experience: in remembering other locales and in narratives constructed with respect to particular spaces, including colonial ones.

Investigating this relationship between place and reception, and its implications for colonial literary culture, necessitates a note on terminology. To this point I have used, without highlighting the potential anachronism of, words such as nation, national, and nationality. Although Australia was a term in common use in the nineteenth century—as is reinforced by its prominence, discussed above, in the titles of newspaper fiction—the continent was not a nation until the federation of Australia in 1901. The colonies that united at this time were only six of Britain’s seven Antipodean dominions. Until federation it was not inevitable that all of those colonies would come together (Western Australia was a latecomer), nor that New Zealand would be excluded. This lack of equivalence between historical and contemporary political geographies is not unique to Australia. Nineteenth-century Britain existed largely in its current form (as a nation-state composed of different countries). But America expanded from a
cluster of East Coast states to occupy close to its current territory during the nineteenth century.

These histories suggest alternative geographical unities this book could have explored: English writing rather than British, for instance, or Australasian instead of Australian. Historian Alan Atkinson has proposed that the Australian colonies be understood as separate “nations,” with “each of the Australasian capital cities . . . the centre of its own world. It had its own past, its own memories, its own customs, its own habits, its own hinterland, its own wealth, its own civic structure, its own ambitions” (103). As Paul Giles has done for the American context, Australian literary historians, most notably Robert Dixon, have applied this perspective to colonial fiction to explore its “intra- and inter-colonial rather than national [cartographies], albeit located within broader transnational or trans-imperial horizons” (“Before” 2). Writing this book, I was conscious that, in the colonial context, “most people who thought about their national identity were comfortably British and Victorian, or South Australian, or New South Welsh, as well as Australian” (Inglis 756).

While acknowledging the existence and importance of these layered identifications operating in Australia in the nineteenth century—and indeed, today—I use the terminology of the nation for two reasons. The first, prosaic, one is for ease of reference: I have not found a better collective term to describe where in the world the fiction in Australian newspapers came from than a range of national contexts. But I also focus on the literary production and reception of the Australian colonies as a whole, rather than primarily as separate entities or “nations,” because the book’s findings repeatedly align literary culture with that protonational unity. As the rest of this chapter shows, colonial newspaper editors and readers shared a preference for particular types of writing—by men, and by British and Australian authors—and the similarities between metropolitan (and between provincial) newspapers from different colonies were more marked than those between metropolitan and provincial newspapers of the same colony. The subsequent two chapters highlight, in turn, how regularly newspapers in different colonies published the same titles and thematic distinctions between the American, Australian, and British fiction published in these newspapers. Although this book considers the century, and especially the four decades, prior to Australian federation, my claim is that
an Australian literary culture and tradition was already in evidence, and considerably more distinctive and independent than many transnational literary scholars envision.

II

Analyzing known and inscribed authorship indicates gender and national trends that contradict prevailing conceptions of nineteenth-century fiction, as it is understood to have appeared in colonial newspapers and more broadly. Both authorship models demonstrate substantially fewer stories by women/“women” in these newspapers than current understandings of the gendering of nineteenth-century periodical fiction would imply. There is also considerably more local writing than would be anticipated based on a core argument of the “transnational turn” in Australian literary studies: that colonial readers overwhelmingly preferred overseas, mainly British, fiction.

Numerous studies of nineteenth-century British and American fiction emphasize the dominance of women writers.9 This situation is attributed to the perception at the time of fiction readers as women, and the subsequently devalued status of fiction, especially in periodicals.10 Contrasting the gender trend in Britain and America, men wrote the majority (65 percent) of titles by known authors in colonial newspapers, with inscribed gender trends reinforcing this male domination. For a substantially higher proportion of titles the author name is “male” (31 percent) than “female” (16 percent), and considering only those titles where gender was inscribed, proportions of “male” and “female” authors closely resemble the results for known authors, with 67 percent of titles by “men” and 33 percent by “women.”

Figure 5 presents gender proportions over time, with the solid and dotted lines indicating known and inscribed authorship, respectively. Bars depict the proportions of all titles inscribed as “male” or “female”; their relatively small size reinforces the point that the author—including the author’s gender—was not the primary framework through which colonial newspaper fiction was presented or perceived, while their growth over time shows that both “male” and “female” authorship were progressively more likely to be indicated as the attribution of fiction, overall, increased.
According to these results, fiction in colonial newspapers was consistently more likely to be written by men than women and, where gender was inscribed, to be presented as “male” rather than “female” authored. The first of these trends implies that, when acquiring British and American fiction, editors deliberately chose rarer, male-authored titles over more common, female-authored ones. The latter trend—especially the consistently higher rate of titles inscribed as “male” authored than known to be so—suggests that editors were keener to advertise male than female writers. Figure 5 also shows growth in fiction by women (and “women”) over time. This is the opposite trend to that described in other Anglophone markets, where male authorship is understood to increase over the nineteenth century as fiction writing became more prestigious; this is a difference I return to in the next section.

If we accept that a title was more likely to be attributed to an individual when its authorship was perceived as important or prestigious, gender trends in attribution—specifically, whether authors known to be male or female were represented as such—can be used to explore editorial assumptions about readerly interest. Comparing known and inscribed gender trends reinforces the claim that editors believed
their readers would be particularly interested in men’s writing: fiction by known men was substantially more likely to be attributed to them (69 percent) than was fiction by known women (57 percent), and less likely to be published pseudonymously (10 versus 15 percent) or to be unattributed (21 versus 27 percent). Although the practice was surprisingly uncommon in either direction, where the gender of the author is known and a gender was inscribed, fiction by women was over ten times more likely to be published with a male pseudonym than vice versa. Editors make decisions to increase the circulations of their newspapers. That these editors chose male-authored fiction, and foregrounded its real or inscribed presence, suggests that they perceived stories by men to be of greater interest to their readers and advantageous to sales.

As with gender, national trends contradict existing accounts of nineteenth-century literary culture, in this case, the colonial relationship to Britain. Perhaps partly in reaction against the vigorous cultural nationalism of earlier scholarship, research associated with the “transnational turn” in Australian literary studies has aligned colonial literary culture predominantly with non-Australian literature. In the words of Elizabeth Webby, Sydney University’s Chair of Australian Literature from 1990 to 2007, “For much of the nineteenth century and indeed afterwards, Australian readers were mainly interested in books by English authors” (“Colonial” 50). As noted in the introduction, such arguments are often based on empirical evidence of the predominance of British books in the colonies, including in the records and activities of booksellers (Askew and Hubber 115), lending libraries (Dolin, “First”; Dolin, “Secret”), and institutional reading groups (Lyons; Webby, “Not”).

For the main source of reading material in the colonies—newspapers—national trends confirm the predominance, and cultural importance, of British fiction. Yet they also challenge the perception that local writing was rare and of little interest to readers. With the exception of two titles—one Australian, the other South African—all of the small amount of fiction in colonial newspapers discovered prior to 1845 was British. The bars in figure 6 show the proportions of fiction by known nationalities from this time to the end of the nineteenth century, while the lines show the rates of inscription of different nationalities.
British fiction clearly remained dominant after 1845, representing half (51 percent) of all titles by known authors. But it was not the only fiction in colonial newspapers. Americans wrote one in every five (21 percent of) titles by known authors. Along with a small proportion (4 percent) of fiction by authors from other nations—especially France, Germany, and New Zealand—this substantial presence of American fiction shows that editors did not limit themselves to British writing when sourcing content from overseas. Australian fiction was slightly more prevalent than American, with colonial writers responsible for around one-quarter (24 percent) of titles by known authors. The population, and subsequent pool of authors, in the colonies was much smaller than in Britain or the United States, especially early in the century. As late as 1891, the non-Indigenous population of all the Australian colonies was 3.24 million. The United Kingdom’s population was more than ten times greater, at approximately 35 million, with America’s population almost twice that again, at 63 million. Given this disparity in population sizes, the finding that colonial authors contributed half as many titles as British writers, and more fiction than American authors,
reinforces the significance of their contribution to extended fiction in nineteenth-century Australian newspapers.

Referring to the 1870s and 1880s, Morrison has estimated that one-fifth of fiction published in this context was Australian (“Serial” 315). While the overall proportion reported here (24 percent) might seem to differ in only a small degree from this earlier estimate, Australian fiction was more widely published in the decades Morrison discusses, comprising 30 percent of titles by known authors in the 1870s and 1880s and as much as 40 percent in the early 1880s. Moreover, Morrison proposes a substantial decline in local fiction in Australian newspapers the 1890s, whereas the results for known authors in figure 6 indicate that a fifth (20 percent) of such titles were Australian in this decade. Finally, while Morrison’s figure is an estimate based on what she acknowledges is a relatively small sample, the fiction identified in this project constitutes a substantial increase in the bibliographical record of Australian literature. As well as multiple new sites of publication for previously recorded titles, this project has uncovered new works of Australian fiction, as well as new authors, with an illustrative and selective list of these discoveries offered in digital appendix 2.

This finding that Australian fiction constituted one in every four titles by known authors in colonial newspapers could still be congruent with readers’ lack of interest in such writing. In this scenario, editors published Australian writing because it was more readily accessible and/or cheaper than overseas fiction. But they did not seek to foreground its origins, and might even have concealed them, publishing colonial stories that appeared, to all intents and purposes, to come from Britain or elsewhere. Working against this interpretation is the similar shape of known and inscribed trends for Australian/“Australian” fiction in figure 6, including the higher proportion of inscribed than known titles in most periods and overall. Given how the national inscription of fiction is determined—a story must appear to come from that place—these parallel trends in Australian/“Australian” fiction suggest two things: first, that colonial writing was not only present but concerned to represent new (to Europeans) Australian places, and second, that editors were interested in advertising the local origins of this fiction to their readers. These trends indicate, in other words, that editors perceived a colonial readership for fiction about Australia.

The broader argument I am proposing—that the colonial popu-
larity of British fiction was concurrent with interest (authorial, editorial, readerly) in explicitly Australian writing—finds further support in more direct comparison of known and inscribed national trends. Figure 7 depicts the national inscription of fiction by known authors. For every national group, fiction in nineteenth-century Australian newspapers was significantly more likely to be inscribed (paratextually or textually) in accordance with the author’s known nationality than otherwise. But the strength of this association varied, with the most substantial correlation between known and inscribed nationalities for British and Australian writers: 76 percent of titles by authors in both groups were inscribed in accordance with their known nationality, whereas this is the case for only 51 percent of titles by known American authors, and 55 percent by those known to be from other national contexts.

Key aspects of the results in figure 7 reinforce the interest of colonial readers in British writing. The prevalent inscription of stories by known British authors as “British” shows that, as well as sourcing much of their fiction from Britain, colonial editors were keen to make the origins of such writing apparent. Indeed, “British” origins were often presented even for fiction from other places: titles by known American
and other authors were inscribed as “British” in 22 and 17 percent of cases, respectively. Such inscriptions suggest that editors were often drawn to titles that appeared to come from Britain or composed the paratext of stories to make this seem to be so.

Yet the equally prevalent inscription of known Australian fiction as “Australian” affirms the simultaneous interest of colonial editors and readers in local writing. It shows that editors were equally likely to highlight the local as the British origins of fiction. Rather than publishing Australian fiction only as a matter of convenience or commerce, editors perceived and responded to a market for writing about Australia. Although present in small proportions, the “Australian” fiction by non-Australian authors (3 percent of titles by known American and British writers; 4 percent of those by authors of other nationalities) reinforces the point that colonial editors sought to publish writing that appeared to originate locally. In some cases editors (or authors or adaptors) even appear to have modified locations and characters in non-Australian fiction to create this impression. Thus, American author Laura Jean Libbey’s “Florabel’s Lover; or, Rival Belles” was reprinted in multiple Australian newspapers as “The Rival Belles of Parramatta: A Charming Love Story of Intense and Thrilling Interest,” and “Old Sleuth’s” “The American Detective in Russia” was serialized in several Australian newspapers as “Barnes, the Australian Detective.” Colonial lending libraries and literary institutions might have privileged British fiction, as authors such as Webby have argued. But these trends in known and inscribed nationality suggest that they did so in the context of an active and extensive newspaper industry where Australian fiction was both prevalent and prominent.

As chapter 2 explored, books—particularly those collected by university libraries—are more likely to enter the bibliographical record than more ephemeral forms of publication. While historical forms of publication work against the construction of comprehensive bibliographies, considering the inscription as well as the historical fact of authorship provides an important ballast for literary history: one capable, in this case, of both enlarging the record of Australian literature and indicating scope for future expansion. Although British writing undoubtedly dominated colonial newspapers, trends in known and inscribed nationality indicate that literary and book historians—arguably especially in the recent transnational turn—have underestimated the scale
of Australian fiction circulating in the nineteenth century, as well as the importance of fiction from and about places in Australia to colonial publishing and reading. Combined with the general male-dominated authorship of fiction in these newspapers, these results clearly imply that literary culture in the colonies was not derivative of Britain’s but had its own distinctive characteristics and preferences.

III

As would be expected from these results, considering gender and nationality together indicates that authorship was male dominated across all national groups, both as this information is known and inscribed. Of known authors, men wrote 56 percent of American fiction, 64 percent of British fiction, and 71 percent of fiction from other national contexts, and where both gender and nationality were inscribed, “men” were responsible for 75 percent of “American,” 62 percent of “British,” and 74 percent of “other” fiction. Local authorship was exceptionally male dominated: 75 percent of known Australian fiction in colonial newspapers was by men, with the same proportion by “Australian men” where both gender and nationality were inscribed. These combined trends reinforce the claim that literary culture developed differently in Australia than in Britain. But they obscure variations within the literary system. With the exception of Western Australia, gender and national trends are similar regardless of the colony in which the newspaper was published. Considering metropolitan and provincial newspapers separately, however, demonstrates considerable variation in gender and national trends from overall results, and between the two sites of publication.

In exploring these differences, paratextual features—including the inscription of fiction, details about copyright, and the attribution of titles—support a move beyond the blunt presence of different national literatures to explore the complex frameworks of cultural value organizing literary culture in the colonies. This approach highlights the importance of British fiction in both metropolitan and provincial newspapers, particularly in contrast to the cultural marginality of American writing. It also demonstrates a profound change, in the late 1870s and early 1880s, in the publishing of Australian—especially
Australian men’s—fiction. If only metropolitan newspapers are considered, the 1880s and 1890s are a period of growth in colonial women’s fiction concurrent with a decline in the value of local writing. I show, instead, that Australian men’s fiction shifted to provincial newspapers. Rather than being excluded from metropolitan periodicals, it seems likely that Australian male authors were drawn to the provincial promotion—even the privileging—of local fiction. These findings cast critically neglected provincial newspapers as not only the leading publishers of fiction in the colonies but major sites in the development—and gendering—of early Australian literary culture.

Figures 8 and 9 represent gender and national trends in metropolitan and provincial newspapers, respectively. The dotted black lines and secondary axes show the number of titles published in the two locations for each five-year period, solid lines indicate what proportion of known titles were by American, Australian, and British writers, and the bars depict the proportions of titles in each national category written by known male authors. In exploring metropolitan and provincial publishing trends I only consider the period from 1865 to the end of the nineteenth century, as this is when the vast majority (98 percent) of fiction discovered in this project appeared.

Although some literary historians have noted the presence of fiction in provincial colonial newspapers (Law, “Savouring”; Morrison, “Contribution”; Morrison, “Retrieving”; Stewart), most have viewed the phenomenon as rare—and pirated when present. Yet comparing the number of titles in the two graphs shows that provincial newspapers published substantially more extended fiction than their metropolitan counterparts. Of the titles identified in this project, approximately thirty-eight hundred appeared in metropolitan newspapers, compared with fifty-two hundred in provincial ones. And given the underrepresentation of provincial newspapers in Trove, and aspects of collection and digitization that limit discovery of their fictional contents (see chapter 3), it is almost certain that the disparity in rates of fiction publication was even greater.

As figure 8 shows, metropolitan newspapers were overwhelmingly dominated by British fiction: while British authors were responsible for half (51 percent) of the titles by known authors overall, this is the case for almost two in every three such titles (63 percent) in metropolitan newspapers. Multiple factors align such publishing with the perceived
Fig. 8. Total number of titles and proportions of known nationalities and their male authorship in metropolitan newspapers

Fig. 9. Total number of titles and proportions of known nationalities and their male authorship in provincial newspapers
cultural value of British fiction, including gender trends. Reinforcing
the orientation of colonial editors and readers to men’s writing gen-
erally, in metropolitan newspapers men wrote the majority of fiction
in all national categories. But British fiction was the most male domi-
nated: 65 percent of known British titles were by male authors,\(^\text{18}\) with
the stable rate of such authorship suggesting that editors consistently
made deliberate choices to publish British fiction by men.

Working again on the assumption that a title was more likely to
be attributed to an author if that author was perceived as important
or prestigious, trends in attribution reinforce this orientation toward
British—and British men’s—writing. British fiction in metropolitan
newspapers was more likely to be attributed to a named author than
was fiction from other national categories: this was the case with 76
percent of British titles, compared with 69 percent of American and 61
percent of Australian titles. And British men’s fiction was more likely to
be attributed to them (80 percent) than was fiction by British women
(69 percent). Given the cultural prominence of metropolitan news-
papers, the dominance of British men’s writing in these publications
emphasizes the importance of both men’s and British fiction to literary
value in the colonies.

Gender trends in the publication and attribution of known Ameri-
can fiction in metropolitan newspapers support the general focus of
colonial editors and readers on men’s fiction. Men wrote a majority of
the American fiction in metropolitan newspapers (62 percent), and
titles by American men were more likely to be attributed to them (77
percent) than were those by American women (58 percent). However,
American fiction in metropolitan newspapers made up a much lower
proportion (12 percent) than British fiction (63 percent), and indeed,
was published at almost half the rate of its appearance overall (21 per-
cent). The cultural peripherality implied by this low rate of publication
is emphatically reinforced by the likelihood that much of this Ameri-
can fiction probably appeared without payment.

The United States did not sign an international copyright agree-
ment until 1891, when the Chace Act extended limited protection to
foreign copyright holders in America, thus gaining some protection
for American authors outside that country’s borders. A statement by
the editors of the Australian Journal in 1873 suggests that American
writing was widely reprinted without payment. Responding to accusa-
tions of plagiarism of American fiction, they wrote that “we see our own original papers—both stories and poetry—so frequently copied by American periodicals, that we never have any hesitation about extracting American productions that are worth copying” (cited in Johnson-Woods, *Index 7*). Multiple other aspects of fiction publication in nineteenth-century Australian newspapers bolster the idea that, having no legal requirement to pay for American stories, editors felt little or no moral obligation to do so.

British fiction—particularly by well-known authors—frequently appeared with explicit claims of copyright in metropolitan newspapers. Some statements regarding the purchase of rights to publication were general: for instance, that the title was “published by special arrangement with the author” or that the “right of publishing . . . has been purchased by the proprietors” of the newspaper. Others were highly specific regarding the extent and nature of copyright: for example, that it was for Australasia as a whole or in a designated colony, exclusive or with the right to reprinting. The presence of such statements resonates with what Sarah Ailwood and Maree Sainsbury describe as the exceptional adherence of Australian colonies, of all British dominions, to copyright law (1).

Similar claims regarding rights to publish were rarely made for American fiction. If the source of American fiction was noted, it was typically the periodical from which a title was taken. Literary journals and monthly magazines (such as the *Argonaut, Harper’s Magazine, Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine*, and *Scribner’s Monthly*) were prominent in this respect. But Australian newspapers also listed major American daily and weekly newspapers and pulp magazines (including the *Argosy, Detroit Free Press, New York Herald*, and *Yankee Blade*) as sources of fiction. Such periodicals were brought to the colonies on ships that passed through American ports on the way to Australia from Britain. It would seem that colonial editors selected and published fiction freely from these copies.

A decline in the proportion of American fiction in metropolitan newspapers after 1891 further supports the idea that, prior to the Chace Act, colonial newspapers reproduced such writing without payment, in that publication was reduced once a legal framework for copyright existed. While American fiction made up 15 percent of known titles in metropolitan newspapers in the late 1880s, by the
late 1890s this rate had fallen to 9 percent, with an even more rapid rate of decline in provincial publications. As I discuss in the next chapter, some American authors—including Bret Harte, Julian Hawthorne, Mark Twain, and Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen—were represented by international syndication agencies operating in the colonies and received payment for at least some publications of their fiction. But these exceptions do not contravene the general lack of payment for American fiction, particularly as these syndicated American authors were published less frequently than British authors represented by the same companies. Given that, for much of the nineteenth century, newspaper editors could acquire American fiction for free, the low rate at which it was published in metropolitan newspapers—especially in comparison to the prevalence of British fiction, which was paid for—indicates the marginal status afforded to the former and the priority given to the latter.

Based only on the nationalities of known authors, provincial newspapers seem also to have privileged British over American fiction, though less markedly than metropolitan papers. Although British fiction was still the single largest national category by known authors in provincial newspapers, it was published at a substantially lower rate (42 percent) in that context than in the metropolitan one (63 percent). Provincial newspapers also published American fiction at more than double—almost triple—the rate of metropolitan newspapers (28 as opposed to 12 percent). Yet the presentation of fiction indicates that, with respect to overseas writing, provincial newspapers maintained the same hierarchy of cultural value as metropolitan ones, greatly preferring British, particularly British men’s, writing over American fiction.

The clearest indicator of this distinction in cultural value is the disparity that figure 9 shows in rates of male authorship for British and American fiction. The variable rate of publication of male-authored British fiction in provincial newspapers over time—particularly compared to its stability in metropolitan newspapers—suggests that provincial editors were less consistently able to secure such fiction. But even with this variability, essentially the same proportion of known British titles were by men in provincial as in metropolitan newspapers (62 and 65 percent, respectively). In contrast, American fiction in provincial newspapers had the highest rate of known female authorship of any national category in either context (48 percent). The cultural prior-
ity accorded to men’s and British fiction in provincial newspapers is sustained by trends in attribution. Although rates of attribution of men and women authors were less divergent than in metropolitan periodicals, in provincial newspapers fiction by both British and American men was more likely to be attributed to them than was fiction by British and American women (this was the case with 61 and 63 percent of titles by men in these respective national categories compared with 49 and 54 percent of titles by women).

The relatively high rate of female authorship of American fiction has much to do with the prevalence of romance fiction among these titles and of female authors of that genre. American women (or “women”) romance authors were among the most widely published in provincial newspapers. These include the most featured author in this context, “Bertha M. Clay,” as well as the second, fourth, equal sixth, and eighth most published: Mrs. Georgie Sheldon, Harriet Lewis, Emma Garrison Jones, Laura Jean Libbey, and Eliza A. Dupuy, respectively. This growth in American romance fiction contributes substantially to the declining proportion of American fiction by known male authors, from 67 percent of such titles in the late 1860s to 45 percent in the late 1890s.

Due to the scale of fiction in provincial newspapers, this trend in American romance fiction contributes significantly to growth in fiction by women overall, noted in the previous section. There I remarked that gender trends in Australian newspapers moved in the opposite direction to those observed elsewhere—with the presence of women writers growing as the novel’s cultural value increased across the nineteenth century. The association of this gender trend with romance fiction resolves that apparent tension and maintains the recognized association of women’s authorship with devalued cultural forms. This doubly devalued status of much American writing in provincial newspapers—by women in a cultural context that privileged men’s writing and in a genre perceived as inconsequential, then as now—indicates that, despite relatively high rates of publication, American fiction occupied a similarly marginal position in these sites as in metropolitan ones.

The national inscription of fiction convincingly upholds this interpretation, while reinforcing the importance attached to British writing in provincial newspapers. Remarkably, one in every four (25 percent of) titles by known American authors published in this context was inscribed, paratextually or textually, as “British,” rising to almost one in
every three (31 percent) if only titles inscribed with a national origin are considered. (In contrast, “British” inscription of known American fiction occurs with only one in every ten such titles in metropolitan newspapers, and the reverse is almost never true: only 2 percent of known British fiction was inscribed as “American” in either metropolitan or provincial newspapers.) These trends in national inscription indicate that, when provincial editors published American fiction, they often chose titles that appeared to come from Britain. Such fiction allowed them to represent British culture to their readers at low—if any—cost to the newspapers.

“British” inscription is also common among titles by unknown authors, which comprised rather more of the fiction published in provincial than in metropolitan newspapers (42 as opposed to 34 percent). When nationality was inscribed for such works in provincial newspapers, 57 percent were presented as “British,” compared with only 38 percent of titles by unknown authors in the metropolitan context. Whether this unknown fiction was by obscure British writers or by equally obscure writers from other national contexts, as with the “British” fiction by known American authors, these titles offered provincial newspaper editors a presumably cheap way to publish fiction that appeared to come from Britain. Due to the widespread “British” inscription of provincial newspaper fiction, in the cases where nationality was paratextually or textually inscribed, almost the same proportion of titles were “British” in these newspapers (51 percent) as in metropolitan ones (53 percent).

Summarizing an argument made in much recent work on colonial literary and reading culture, Tim Dolin quips that nineteenth-century Australian readers were primarily interested in “bad literature from somewhere else” (“Secret” 130). Certainly, not only American romances but most of the fiction in both metropolitan and provincial newspapers in this period was in popular genres, so if “bad” is a synonym for “popular” I agree with Dolin on this point. With respect to overseas fiction, I would refine his statement in two ways: the “somewhere else” that colonial readers were mainly interested in was Britain; American fiction was accorded an inferior status in both metropolitan and provincial newspapers, despite its high rates of publication in the latter. And the “bad literature” that colonial readers primarily wanted to read was that written by men.
Considering how local fiction was published and presented challenges Dolin’s point about readers simply preferring fiction from “somewhere else” more specifically: in both metropolitan and provincial newspapers, Australian fiction was accorded more status than American. In metropolitan newspapers, such relative status is demonstrated by rates of publication. Although local fiction had a marginally lower presence in metropolitan newspapers than overall—23 as opposed to 24 percent of titles by known authors—this still means it was published at almost twice the rate of American fiction (12 percent). Although some authors provided fiction to colonial periodicals for free—presumably for the pleasure or prestige of seeing their writing in print—many were paid, some a substantial amount. The likelihood that metropolitan newspaper editors paid for much of the Australian fiction they published and little of the American, but still published twice the number of titles in the former category, indicates the greater standing of the local product.

The overall equivalence in rates of American and Australian fiction in provincial newspapers—28 and 26 percent of titles by known authors, respectively—bely the generally greater presence of American titles: notwithstanding a significant surge in local fiction in the early 1880s, as figure 9 indicates, in most periods more American than Australian fiction was published. Yet the greater value accorded to local over American writing is arguably even clearer in the provincial context. Such value is apparent in the national inscription of fiction: the inscribed nationality matches the known one for only 47 percent of American titles compared with 76 percent of Australian fiction. In other words, provincial newspaper editors were significantly more likely to highlight the local than the American origins of fiction. More particularly, the shift that occurs in the site of publication of local authors—from metropolitan to provincial newspapers in the late 1870s and early 1880s—indicates the investment, by some quarters of the provincial press at least, in Australian fiction, especially by men.

Figure 8 shows the national and gender trends constituting one side of this shift. While the presence of local fiction in metropolitan newspapers increased from the late 1860s to the late 1870s, after this time it declined: from around 33 percent of titles by known authors in the late 1870s to only 17 percent in the early 1890s (albeit with a slight rise—to 21 percent—in the second half of that decade). Gen-
der trends changed more dramatically. In the late 1860s and 1870s, the male-dominated authorship of Australian fiction matched and often exceeded the general male orientation of fiction in metropolitan newspapers, with a clear majority (76 percent) of such titles by men. That proportion fell suddenly in the early 1880s, to slightly less than half (49 percent) of known Australian fiction published. Even the higher average rate of male authorship of Australian titles across the final two decades of the nineteenth century (58 percent) is considerably lower than for either British or American fiction in metropolitan newspapers.

These shifts in national and gender proportions are concurrent with notable changes in the type of fiction published and its presentation. Prior to the 1880s, metropolitan newspapers emphasized the local origin of the Australian fiction they published. Bush sketches and colonial adventure fiction were prominent, and a clear majority of titles were inscribed as “Australian”: many titles referenced Australia or places therein, colonial settings were foregrounded, and fiction was often advertised as “specially written” for that newspaper. In other cases, pseudonyms advertised local authorship: for instance, “Old Boomerang” (the pen name employed by journalist J. R. Houlding) was the most widely published colonial writer in this period. Male authorship of local fiction was also highlighted, not only in the male orientation of the prominent genres but in the representation of gender and nationality. Among titles where both were inscribed, “Australian” fiction was the most likely of all national categories to be attributed to a “male” writer in metropolitan newspapers.\textsuperscript{22} Fiction by colonial men was also significantly more likely to be attributed to them than was fiction by colonial women.\textsuperscript{23}

With the growing presence, from the early 1880s, of Australian women’s fiction in metropolitan newspapers, romances and children’s stories became more prominent, and the emphasis on local origins abated (with fewer paratextual or textual references to Australian places). Whereas in earlier decades, the prominent local authors in metropolitan newspapers were men, in the final two decades of the nineteenth century they were women. In the 1880s the first and third most widely published Australian authors were women who have subsequently become part of the Australian literary canon: Ada Cambridge and Catherine Helen Spence. In second position was Onyx, the pseud-
onym used by Leontine Cooper, a prominent advocate for women’s suffrage in Australia at this time. Children’s writer Ethel Turner was the most published Australian author in metropolitan newspapers in the 1890s, while journalist and poet Mary Hannay Foot and one of Australia’s first internationally renowned authors, Rosa Praed, were fourth and fifth, respectively. There were still fewer Australian women than men contributing fiction to metropolitan newspapers in these final decades: this project has identified fifty-three individual Australian women authors, compared with eighty-seven men. But women were slightly more likely to publish a large number of titles and equally likely to contribute a single one.

In an article from an earlier project, analyzing gender trends in the authorship of Australian novels, I attributed growth in Australian women’s writing from the 1880s to demographic and social factors: the increased number of women in colonial populations and the earlier likelihood of women working outside the home in Australia than in Britain or America (“Graphically” 440, 443). Elsewhere, noting the greater likelihood of Australian women achieving book publication in Britain than their more numerous male counterparts, I proposed that the representation of colonial literary culture as male dominated might have been more a defensive response to women’s greater cultural success overseas than a description of reality (Reading 128). That many of the colonial women writers who published in metropolitan newspapers contributed to, or were responsible for, their families’ earnings upholds my point about the social and financial freedoms (and responsibilities) afforded to Australian women. The prevalence of their fiction in metropolitan newspapers might seem, likewise, to add weight to what I described as their greater cultural success: to indicate that colonial women writers were more likely to be published in prestigious locations not only in Britain but in the colonies too.

Yet this latter argument is at odds with aspects of the nature and presentation of Australian women’s fiction in metropolitan newspapers in the 1880s and 1890s that suggest the relatively low cultural value accorded to it. Given colonial literary culture’s orientation toward men’s writing and the male-dominated authorship of British and American fiction in metropolitan newspapers, the high rate of women’s authorship of Australian titles and the prominence of female-oriented genres (romance and children’s fiction) suggest that it occu-
plied a similar position in metropolitan periodicals as American fiction did in provincial ones: feminized and culturally marginalized. Supporting this view is the relatively low proportion of titles by known Australian women attributed to them in the 1880s and 1890s (60 percent) even as their presence increased. By comparison, 75 percent of fiction by known British women in metropolitan newspapers was attributed to them, as was 83 percent by known British men.

Taken together, these trends in the publication, inscription, and attribution of fiction suggest that greater cultural value was attached to local writing in metropolitan newspapers when male authors predominated, before 1880, than after, when Australian women’s fiction had a strong presence. If only metropolitan newspaper fiction is considered—as has largely been the case in Australian literary studies previously—the shift from male to female authorship, and from fiction where “Australian-ness” is frequently emphasized to fiction where it is not, might appear simply to indicate a devaluing of local writing. Perhaps the social and demographic conditions referenced above meant that more Australian women were contributing fiction to newspapers, so this activity was accorded less prestige; perhaps colonial fiction was devalued for some other reason, and the resulting decline in male authors wishing to contribute created opportunities for women. Whatever the cause, given what I have described as the cultural influence of metropolitan newspapers, it seems almost inevitable that these periodicals would direct changes in literary culture in the colonies.

Trends in provincial newspaper fiction cast a different light on the timing and suddenness of these shifts in the publishing practices of metropolitan newspapers. Rather than Australian men’s fiction declining from the late 1870s, some parts of the provincial press invested in such writing, emphasizing and promoting its importance and drawing those authors away from metropolitan publication. Prior to the late 1870s, there was little of any fiction—including Australian—in provincial newspapers. This project has discovered only twenty-four titles by known Australian authors in provincial newspapers before 1877, compared with one hundred and six in metropolitan papers. There was little overlap in the authors published, with fiction by only three writers—Marcus Clarke, James Conroy, and N. Walter Swan—appearing in both metropolitan and provincial sites.

However, as figure 9 shows, from the early 1880s provincial publi-
tion expanded dramatically, particularly with respect to Australian fiction. In fact, the change began in 1877. For that year and the following two, this project identified more titles (thirty-four) by known Australian authors in provincial newspapers than in all previous years. As the presence of fiction in these newspapers increased rapidly in the early 1880s, Australian authors contributed a larger proportion of known titles (46 percent) than any other national group. Such attention to local fiction was overwhelmingly focused on men’s writing: men wrote 83 percent of known Australian titles published in provincial newspapers in these final two decades of the nineteenth century, the highest rate of publication of men’s fiction for any period or any national group in either type of newspaper. In the early 1890s, men were responsible for nine in every ten (91 percent of) titles by known Australian authors in provincial newspapers.

This dramatic shift in the publication of Australian men’s fiction, from metropolitan to provincial newspapers, was also apparent at the level of individual authors. From the late 1870s, many colonial male authors who had previously published in metropolitan newspapers began appearing in provincial ones, including Grosvenor Bunster, Angus McLean, Atha Westbury, and Robert P. Whitworth. Provincial newspapers also featured fiction by a range of new local male writers, such as Donald Cameron, E. Charles, Henry John Congreve, David Hennessey, Harold M. Mackenzie, Frank Morley, John Silvester Nottage, and Harold W. H. Stephen. Many of these men wrote in genres—especially colonial adventure—that had previously dominated local fiction in the metropolitan context. The valuing of local fiction suggested by this investment in its publication and emphasis on men’s writing is reinforced by the attribution of fiction in provincial newspapers, where Australian fiction overall, and by men particularly, was the most likely to be attributed of all categories.25

The sudden and dramatic nature of this shift implies new opportunities for publication opening up rather than a more gradual cultural move away from or toward a certain type of writing. The implication that, in the 1880s and 1890s, Australian male authors were drawn to provincial newspapers rather than excluded from metropolitan ones is reinforced by two further publishing trends. First is the capacity of colonial men to publish in both sites. While Ada Cambridge is the only notable example of a local woman writer able to achieve this feat,
in the 1880s and 1890s multiple male authors—including Marcus Clarke, James Crozier, David G. Falk, N. Walter Swan, Owen Suffolk, Atha Westbury, and James Joseph Wright—had fiction published in both metropolitan and provincial newspapers. This trend suggests that colonial male authors were able to choose where to publish. Second is the attribution of fiction: even as publication of Australian men’s fiction in metropolitan newspapers declined, such titles were more likely to be attributed (72 percent) than Australian fiction by women (as noted above, this was the case with only 60 percent of such titles).

To be clear, I am not proposing that metropolitan newspapers aimed above all else to feature Australian men’s fiction and were outmaneuvered in this aim by provincial ones. Clearly metropolitan newspapers focused on British writing, particularly by men. However, the weight of evidence suggests that from the late 1870s, provincial newspapers sought to publish Australian, especially men’s, fiction, and this made them an attractive option and a focus for such writing.

Even with this qualification, my claim that colonial male authors were drawn toward provincial rather than excluded from metropolitan publication might seem implausible: why would any group of writers elect to publish in a site accorded lower prestige, with a lower readership, and probably less financial resources to pay them? My discussion of provincial newspaper syndication in the next chapter responds to these latter two points. As I show there, the majority of provincial newspaper fiction was supplied by an extensive, and almost entirely unrecognized, array of syndication agencies. Even with the available data, which underrepresents provincial newspapers, some of these syndicates encompassed forty or more newspapers. Such syndicated publication would offer authors readerships as large, if not considerably larger, than that gained by appearance in a single metropolitan newspaper. It is also possible that, even if cultural prestige was lacking, syndication agencies were able to pay authors well enough to make provincial publication attractive. With large numbers of newspapers involved in syndicates, even small amounts of money contributed by individual editors could have enabled considerable payments to local writers.

I also wonder whether this view of provincial publishing as culturally marginal might be ill-founded, relating more to contemporary cultural formations in Australia than to historical ones. As Graham
Law and William Donaldson show for Britain, with book publishing highly centralized in London, nineteenth-century provincial English and Scottish newspapers were the major sites for publishing and promoting local fiction. Colonial Australian book culture was similar to that of provincial England and Scotland: as noted in chapter 3, few local book publishers existed, and those that did often worked in the service of London companies. In Australia, the focus of metropolitan newspapers on British fiction increased the separation of provincial newspapers from the cultural center. Yet this focus also conceivably enabled provincial newspapers to develop cultural prestige by promoting a distinctively local literary culture.

Whatever their cultural prestige relative to metropolitan periodicals, the importance of provincial newspapers in publishing colonial fiction, and the dominance of male authorship in this context, throws new light on a long-standing debate in Australian literary studies regarding gender and the literary tradition. In an important 2008 article, Eggert challenged feminist literary historians’ claim of an ideological basis for the male-dominated Australian literary canon (“Australian”). He argued, instead, that works by specific male authors—Rolf Boldrewood, Marcus Clarke, and Henry Kingsley—which began to be referred to as classics in the 1890s, gained this position by virtue of the publishers they chose, the timing of the book editions, and most importantly, the cheapness of those books. These material conditions, not structural sexism, led to male authors eclipsing important colonial women writers, including Ada Cambridge, Catherine Martin, Rosa Praed, and “Tasma” (Jessie Couvreur), in the formation of an Australian literary canon.

While Eggert acknowledges the prior newspaper publication of all these writers, he sees serialization as unrelated to canonization: it implies instant consumption, whereas book publication enables the leisured reading and reflection necessary for accumulating both popular and critical acclaim (138). I agree with Eggert about the importance of book publication to canonization. But where he perceives the earlier book publication of these male authors as a historical coincidence, I would argue that earlier newspaper publication established the basis for it. Colonial readers already privileged men’s writing, particularly for local fiction. This background explains why works by Australian men were taken up earlier and offered more cheaply: they had an
existing and large colonial market. Where Eggert argues to replace an ideological account of canon formation with a materialist one, I see the material and the ideological working in concert.

The focus on explicitly male-authored Australian fiction in provincial newspapers from the late 1870s also resituates another core argument in Australian literary studies. As chapter 6 discusses in more detail, the Sydney-based Bulletin magazine looms large in Australian literary history as the instigator of an “anti-romantic vernacular” style of men’s writing that is frequently identified as the basis for an Australian literary tradition. Ken Stewart writes that the reaction to the Bulletin’s “opening of the literary floodgates,” especially once A. G. Stephens became literary editor in 1896, indicates that “pressure for such outlets had been building for some years” (22–23). Yet the importance of Australian men’s writing to the provincial press, and the extensive scale of that publishing, challenges the Bulletin’s supposedly originary role. Instead of offering an outlet for unmet demand, it is possible that the Bulletin’s literary agenda was an extension, possibly even in imitation, of long-standing provincial practices.

In this respect, it is far from incidental that Stephens, like many other editors, journalists, and authors of the period, previously worked in the provincial press, editing two country newspapers—the Gympie Miner and the Cairns Argus—before joining the Bulletin. As Stewart notes, the movement of people between metropolitan and provincial newspapers means that the “city versus country” dichotomy common in discussions of colonial literary culture is “likely to obscure shared traditions” in the colonial press. Stewart understands these traditions to flow largely from city to country, such that “some country newspapers . . . attained a ‘literariness’” that exposed “country dwellers . . . to some similar influences to those available to the literary minded city dweller” (15). The cultural trends explored in this chapter suggest that the opposite movement, from country to city, may have been just as, if not more, influential for the development of literary culture in Australia.

Writing in the Melbourne Review in 1878, James Smith described Australian fiction as eclipsed beneath “the shadow of England’s mighty and ever-spreading literature” (cited in McCann 25).26 While this contemporaneous description resonates with claims by subsequent literary historians, this chapter has shown that literary, publishing,
and reading cultures in the colonies were not entirely dominated by British fiction, nor did they slavishly follow British models. As trends in known and inscribed authorship indicate, colonial newspapers were much more oriented to men’s writing than was the case in Britain or America. Australian fiction also had a greater local presence than has been recognized—particularly in the decade after Smith’s pronouncement—and was published in such a way as to foreground rather than to conceal its origins.

This chapter has also demonstrated clear differences in the fiction published in metropolitan and provincial Australian newspapers in the nineteenth century. Where British fiction clearly dominated in the former—albeit with a prominent colonial inflection in the focus on male-authored fiction—provincial newspapers foregrounded Australian men’s writing, especially in the 1880s. Perhaps Smith’s comment is simply a coincidence of the place and time in which he was writing: not only in a metropolitan context for a metropolitan audience, but on the very cusp of what would be the embrace and development of Australian fiction by provincial newspapers. Contemporary scholarly accounts of colonial readers rejecting local writing and the absence of an Australian literary tradition do not have this excuse of timing. But they have been looking in the wrong place: in the pages of the metropolitan newspapers that have received the vast majority of the critical attention rather than those of the provincial newspapers that published the majority of the fiction.