***Russh* and the 'All-Australian' Girl?**

Rosie Findlay

Abstract: A central preoccupation that constantly arises in Australian culture is the question of who 'we' are and where 'we' belong. So much is evident in independent women's fashion magazine *Russh*, the focus of this article, in which pride and uncertainty about Australian identity (and fashionability) are representationally resolved through a sensual, girlish and white fashionable ideal. By closely analysing magazine issues selected from its archive, this article charts the ways that *Russh* imagines Australian fashion as both imbricated with global flows as well as reaching from the periphery towards where fashion *really* originates. It then reads the fashionable femininity represented in the magazine in light of settler colonial fantasies that imagine the actualisation of national character amongst the Australian landscape – a landscape in which white presence is positioned as originary. This fashionable ideal symbolically rejects cosmopolitanism through her 'return to the bush' whilst embodying fashion itself, thus reconciling the tension between far and near. As such, *RUSSH* can be read as actively reinforcing a hegemonic Australian imaginary that elides the diversity of contemporary Australian culture/s whilst escaping censure, because as a niche fashion magazine peopled with dreamy protagonists, its content is situated firmly within the realm of fashion's fantasy.

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A central preoccupation that arises again and again in Australian culture is the question of who 'we' are and where 'we' belong. As historian Richard Nile writes, 'deep anxieties of unbelonging run pretty close to the bone of being Australian' (1994: 12). This preoccupation has also traditionally threaded through Australian fashion: as with other post-colonial contexts, the development of a local industry and a fashionable sensibility in Australia has been heavily influenced by – and often unfavourably compared to – European metropolitan style (see Maynard, 2001). Indeed, as Jennifer Craik has observed, 'fashion is seen as belonging to far flung cosmopolitan sites elsewhere while Australia is a far-flung site cut off from the trappings of civilization including civility, fashion, and good taste' (2009: 410), even though 'there is a history of intense interest in fashion from the earliest days of settlement [*sic*]' (2017: 32).

The cultural perception of being far from fashionable cosmopolitan centres fuels *Russh*, an independent Australian bimonthly women's fashion magazine founded in 2004. Described by editor Jess Blanch as 'Australian at heart, international in mindset' (Rawsthorne, 2015), it presents a particular vision of Australia and Australian fashionable femininity: a lush, isolated frontier, a place that is wild, young and free, qualities embodied by the models who populate its pages. While scholars of fashion media have scarcely examined Australian fashion magazines, consonant with Luz Neira Garcia's observation that fashion cultures beyond a Eurocentric perspective are 'often totally ignored in histories of fashion' (2018: 96), they have much to reveal about the self-conscious mix of uncertainty and pride that invigorates Australian fashion. In *Russh,* there is a constant oscillation between 'there' and 'here', as celebration of Australia's natural beauty and the Australian body beautiful jostles against continual reminders of how far the country is from the cities where the most exciting fashion, music, and art supposedly originate. However, when examined, *Russh*

demonstrates how entangled global flows of fashionable ideas, products and people are, even as it discursively performs geographic remoteness, serving to demonstrate Featherstone's point that the local is 'relational, an idea which serves to emphasise the symbolic rather than […] fixed, spatial, community boundaries' (cited in Gabriel, 1998: 32).

This oscillation between anxiety and pride is, crucially, reconciled in the magazine's editorial shoots, in which the reader often encounters the sensual union of beautiful (young, white) model and Australian landscape. This can be read as both a symbolic rejection of the cosmopolitan and a 'strategy of avoidance' (Hemelryk Donald, 2000: 165) in which Australia's complex history of colonisation and multiculturalism is elided in favour of a vision of fashionable white femininity.

This article follows the lead of Osuri and Banerjee (2004), Pugliese (2002), and others to argue that iterations of whiteness must be considered in relation to the specific histories and social and cultural formations by which they were shaped. As such, I will argue that in *Russh*, we encounter Australian ideologies of whiteness and being a 'young' country, which have historical basis in Australia's immigration and assimilation policies, as well as in historical narratives of Australian fashion, in which the country was imagined as a New World abandoning the traditions of Europe. The magazine distills these ideas into a fashionable ideal: a romantic, cool feminine regularly shot as being at one with the landscape, which often looks Australian even if it is not. Concepts of global and local symbolically entangle on the site of her body, as an ideal consistent with that found in fashion magazines from Europe and North America iterates in relation to the Australian veneration of body and outdoors. She represents both a Romantic union with and incarnation of the land, a figure ultimately realised through the pleasures of being recognised as an aesthetic object.

This article will closely map the ways that *Russh* produces these narratives of Australian culture and white femininity. I am not suggesting that these narratives, nor the cultural anxiety previously alluded to, apply to all Australians; rather, they are discourses recurrent in Australian popular media and offer a recognisable and dominant identity to white Australian women. At the same time, while the dynamics here interrogated are evident in other post-colonial contexts and, indeed, in many other representations of fashionable femininity (see Laing 2015), I will argue that *Russh* articulates a distinctly Australian cultural sensibility shaped by its history, one that operates in parallel to other, similar national discourses of centre/periphery and the widespread idealisation of white femininity in fashion imagery. In this magazine, the cultural anxiety about who and where 'we' are is representationally resolved through *Russh*'s white feminine ideal, who exults in her unity with the Australian landscape (which is defiantly, pleasurably and imaginatively 'elsewhere') whilst embodying an Anglo-American and colonial feminine archetype.

This reading will be advanced through textual analysis of *Russh*, based on a close reading of 33 issues spanning the 15 years of its publication. *Russh* is not widely circulated outside of Australia: while proof of its dedicated international readership can be found on early fashion blogs where the magazine's editorial shoots were frequently reposted, 20,000 of its 25, 000 bimonthly copies circulate within Australia (AdNews, 2008). For this reason, and because it is based in Sydney and produced by a mostly Australian editorial team, this article will argue that *Russh* can be read as an Australian cultural text reflecting a distinctly Australian structure of feeling.

Contextualising *Russh*

As *Russh* is not widely available beyond Australia's city centres nor widely known beyond certain sectors of the fashion industry, I will briefly situate it in the context of Australian fashion magazines before proceeding with my discussion. The earliest fashion magazines produced in Australia date from the late nineteenth century, aiming to educate aspiring middle class women in 'a range of areas concerned with fashion, design, decoration, and lifestyle' (Craik, 2017: 33). This focus shifted with the post-war emergence of *Flair* (1956), promoting Australian-made fashion and aimed at a younger reader, and *Vogue Australia*, which, in 1959, was the fourth national edition to ever be launched (after the American, British and French editions; see Craik, 2017). Craik characterises *Vogue*'s publication as a 'major shot in the arm for the idea of Australian fashion and the nascent fashion industry' (2017: 33), and its establishment coincided with a postwar 'upsurge in production of consumer goods' (Palmer and Rhodes, 2010: 66) and a booming local economy of fashion photographers and illustrators.

The ensuing decades saw the launch of a number of local editions of international titles – *Marie Claire* (1995-); *Harper's Bazaar* (1998-); *Grazia* (2008-2013, 2017-) – and independent Australian titles *Follow Me* (1981-1992), *Australian Style* (1993-2003) and *Madison* (2005-2013).[1] Around the turn of the century, a number of youth-oriented independent magazines emerged, such as *Oyster* (1994-), *doingbird* (2001-), *Yen* (2002-2017), *Frankie* (2004-), and *Russh*. They foreground content on Australian style and lifestyle alongside popular culture and the arts, and address a young, cosmopolitan reader.

Publishers Ian Davies and Bruno Giagu launched *Russh* in 2004. Giagu, who published independent titles *Follow Me* and *Follow Me Gentleman* in the 1980s, stepped down after

[1] For a more detailed history of fashion publishing in Australia, see Palmer and Rhodes 2010 and Craik 2017.

Russh's first two issues, while Davies continued to publish the title until it was sold to Switzer Media + Publishing in 2010 (see Safe, 2007; Burrowes, 2010). Despite these changes, the magazine's content has remained fairly consistent throughout its history, aiming, in the words of former editor Charlotte Scott, to 'blend some of the elements of fashion magazines that have to cater to a broad audience […] with a more edgy, arty feel' (Safe, 2007). While no information on *Russh*'s target demographic is publically available, based on its content and advertisers, the magazine addresses young women with an interest in fashion, style and culture. Each issue (save a handful of early copies) features a theme, which appears on the cover and guides the issue's content. These are often evocative, and convey the magazine's romantic mood: 'Double Fantasy' (Issue 26); 'Venus Rises' (Issue 55); 'Nothing But A Heartache' (Issue 86). Of the 89 covers examined (October 2004- August/September 2019), only eight feature non-white or mixed race models, two of which were for issues published in 2019.[2]

Each issue includes a Beauty Icon and a Style Icon spread, with pictures of the featured artists when they were young, framed by products that they might use if they were contemporary *Russh* girls. There are usually three editorial shoots, a series of articles and, from 2009 onwards, a questionnaire with the cover model. *Russh*'s art direction favours collage, positioning archival images of retro products (heart-shaped sunglasses, glass Pepsi bottles) alongside photographs of the kinds of artists the magazine idolises (Jane Birkin, Kim Basinger, Anna Karina). The magazine's 'voice' is at once authoritative and swooning, which has the declarative effect of mandating the only ideal way of being, even as it suggests that

[2] The representation of non-white women in the magazine is gradually increasing: a number of issues examined from 2018 and 2019 included at least one editorial shoot with a non-white model, and it became less rare to see more than a couple of images of non-white models throughout the rest of the magazine. Similarly, *Russh* has increasingly featured comparatively older models, such as Emma Balfour, Jamie Bochert and Karen Elson.

this subjectivity is beyond rules, romantic and bohemian. For example, in Issue 73 (2017) an accessory story was 'for the gypsy child with the dangerous eyes' whereas the 'Fashion Notes' page read, 'stifled by the city, you've got to get free […] There's a fire in your psyche and a freedom in your core' (34-35; 46). This voice has been remarkably consistent under the four editors the magazine has had since its inception.

'More Than This'

Although the position that fashion is an innovation of Western European cultures has been critiqued since the 1990s (see Cheang, 2013), as Neira Garcia observes, it has yet to be eradicated (2018). The cities that have historically been recognised as central to the material and symbolic production of fashion are all situated in the Global North – Florence, London, Milan, New York and Paris – and many of the most resourced and powerful publishing companies and fashion museums, globally-recognised fashion colleges and brands are based in these same contexts. By contrast, there are multiple ways in which Australia has historically been constructed as far from fashion: not only has its geographic distance from fashion's 'centres' impeded the inclusion of Australian designers in cultural and professional networks, the ensuing 'climate at odds with the Northern Hemisphere' and Australian fashion's 'focus on the domestic market' (Neira Garcia, 2018: 97) have been seen as impediments to its successful involvement with 'global' fashion. This has been expressed in terms of national uncertainty about whether Australians have a distinctive fashion sense or style of fashion photography (see Craik 2009 and 2017; Maynard 2001 and 2009) and has given rise to the sentiment that for fashion professionals to truly succeed they have to 'make it' overseas.

A significant barrier to the perception of an equivalent Australian fashion culture is the ways in which the Eurocentric perspective of fashion has historically circulated within the Australian fashion industry. In Margaret Maynard's study of Australian fashion, *Out of Line* (2001), we encounter a series of designers and media workers who, at different times over a number of decades, compare Australian fashion to that of the 'Old World'. Fashion designer Prue Acton is quoted as saying in the 1960s: 'we are not stuck with the old, as they are in New York or Europe, we can think as a young country can' (56); alternative style monthly *Rag Times* quotes author Alexandra Joel in 1979, saying that she felt Australians were 'still waiting for "style" to arrive from some far distant source' (65); *Vogue Australia* declared in their 'Great Australian' issue, March 1980, that, 'our designers are no longer the poor counterparts of their European contemporaries' (61), and the *Weekend Australian* magazine reported in 1996 that 'Australian fashion has stylists but no real designers and that it does not measure up to French, Italian and American design' (Miriam Cosic in Maynard, 2001: 65). More recently, scholar Monique Mulholland linked the imagined distance between Australian and European fashion to the 'colonial binary of modern/traditional' (2019: 210), identified in the ways in which news media profiling Aboriginal Australian models discursively 'cast [them] as the other to modernity', their success framed as a 'breakthrough' into a 'civilized [practice] such as fashion' (2019: 210).

The recurring imminence of the arrival of Australian fashion and fashion workers, and comparison of Australia to the established (so-called) fashion capitals, extends through the pages of *Russh,* which simultaneously reinforces and collapses Australia's distance from fashion. This reflects Maynard's observation that 'discourses within fashion magazines spelling out a national Australian "difference" have inconsistently been interspersed with contradictory ones urging "similarity"', which, she argues, suggests an 'underlying rhetoric

of uncertainty' (2009: 45). Indeed, *Russh* constantly swings between reinforcing the superiority of other, supposedly more fashionable and cool places (and people) and developing strategies that elevate Australian models, labels and locales to suggest equivalence. The premiere issue somewhat self-consciously promises to bring 'the best in Australian fashion, talent and design, be it here or overseas, every two months' (2004: 10); and for every mention of a non-Australian place or person in the issue there quickly follows mention of one who is. For example, a feature on a weekender bag by Sydney label Ginger and Smart switches between references to Australian and international brands ('with enough space to accommodate your Manolos and Mad Cortes', 2004: 20) and describes the bag as 'perfectly proportioned […] to accompany you on nifty jaunts to Geneva or dirty weekends in Darwin' (2004: 10; never mind that Darwin is approximately a 4.5 hour flight each way from Sydney and Melbourne and therefore not a destination commonly chosen by many Australians for weekend getaways). The mixing of Australian and international references is also often mirrored in the magazine's styling: shoes from Italian labels Prada and Tod's are styled with garments from Australian designers Garth Cook and Bec & Bridge; products from European brands Le Coq Sportif, Loewe and Christian Dior are shot alongside those from Australian labels Tigerlily and Purl Harbour. It should not escape notice that the international labels featured are influential and from the very places often recognised as originary for fashion. This has the effect of reifying the labels from fashion's 'preferred cosmopolitan' (Saarenmaa, 2013: 334) contexts whilst discursively constructing much smaller Australian brands as equal to, or in some kind of conversation with them.

This practice may signal as much about the availability of clothes in the Australian market as it does about the preferences of the magazine's stylists, yet the flow of products is paralleled by the flow of Australians *Russh* features, who live 'elsewhere' and return 'home'. Designer

Josh Goot travelled in New York and Europe before 'settl[ing] down in his native Australia' (Issue 4, 2005: 15); 'girl-of-the-moment' model Caitlin Lomax 'was back in Sydney for five seconds (or so) to shoot the latest WISH campaign' (Issue 44, 2012: 34); and handbag designer Rachel Ruddick is celebrated for her 'truly transcontinental', 'gypset' life: 'she lives between three cities – Sydney, New York and Sao Paolo […] – and works across four time zones' (Issue 48, 2012: 50). This language reveals the lifestyle *Russh* idealises for its Australian readership: that the proper attitude to the rest of the world involves fostering 'a global mindset, an adventuring spirit' (Issue 48, 2012: 20) and living as a 'conquering global nomad' (Issue 1, 2004: 161) while never forgetting, like Miranda Kerr, who has 'conquered catwalks for Balenciaga and Miu Miu' […] just where she calls home' (Issue 48, 2012: 25).

These examples ostensibly prove Arjun Appadurai's argument that the 'global cultural economy has to be understood as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order, which cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models' (1986: 296). Yet intriguingly, alongside its narrative of mutual flows of capital, products and people between Australia and the rest of the world, *Russh* frequently suggests the superiority of that which originates elsewhere. Indeed, that profiles of notable Australian fashion professionals are often framed in terms of the recognition they have received overseas indicates the sense in which international acknowledgement still holds the power to legitimate. The Beauty and Style Icons are frequently non-Australian artists whose cultural capital is evident in their international renown, their connotations of coolness and artistry, and the nostalgic effect of showcasing images from their youth, all spatially and temporally hold them apart from the reader.

Moreover, until the September 2007 issue, most (if not all) of the cover models were Australian, yet after this date, only 12 covers featured Australian models. *Russh* has developed a reputation within the fashion industry for being able to 'pick' up-and-coming models who are shot for the cover before they've reached the peak of their fame; yet most of the Australian cover models after September 2007 were only featured after they had already been recognised internationally, as in the case of Julia Nobis (on the cover in 2013, three years after her breakthrough moment of securing a Calvin Klein exclusive); Abbey Lee (in 2015, despite being named one of the season's newcomers in the Fall 2008 season and having already been on the cover of *Vogue Australia* four times); and Gemma Ward (shot after her return to modelling, after being one of fashion's leading faces in the early 2000s).

These examples serve to illustrate the ways in which *Russh* fosters a particular cosmopolitan imagination that speaks to an Australian context. As Laura Saarenmaa has argued, cosmopolitanism is a '*situated* structure of feeling' (2013: 330, italics in original), so the ways it is performed in specific national media should be understood as 'developing in the frame of a predominantly geographical awareness and with a prevailing sense of geopolitical distance and closeness' (330). In *Russh*, as well as the Finnish magazines of Saarenmaa's study, the cosmopolitan imagination is laden with longing for 'the other' and 'the elsewhere' (see Nava in Sarenmaa, 2013), functioning as a portal for fantasies of otherness. In *Russh*, the dominant fantasy is of Australia as a place whose isolation is overcome by the contributions of adventurous Australians who leave its 'wild frontier' (Issue 48, 2012: 20) to succeed overseas, uniting Australian spirit with non-Australian fashionability.

This fantasy is evident in an article about the phenomenon of Australians undertaking short-term departures from the country, published in Issue 48 (2012), which was predominantly

devoted to celebrating Australia. According to the article, in 2011, 35.8% of the total Australian population undertook a short-term departure, which is viewed by Contributing Editor Anna Harrison as a reflection of Australians' voracious appetite for adventure: 'we sink our teeth into foreign landscapes […] we strive to conquer the big bad world – to be seen on an international stage' (62) – implying that to be recognised within Australia is to be obscured from the gaze of the rest of the world. She attributes the proclivity to travel to the effect of Australia's 'geographic isolation, relative youth (in terms of European colonisation) and small population [on] our collective psyche […] we seek to be part of a larger, richer, more complex cultural terrain' (62). She justifies this desire by suggesting 'our collective psyche isn't weighted with the kind of complex and layered history that tugs at the trousers of older developed nations. Australia simply bares [*sic*] fewer scars, fewer historical hardships, and generally less cause for cynicism' (63).

I draw the reader's attention to a few key conceits here: the suggestion that Australia is a 'young' country born when it was invaded by British colonisers; that Australia's cultural terrain is comparatively impoverished; and the staggering suggestion that Australia's history is not weighted with historical scars and cultural complexity. These statements reveal the anxieties that I have argued animate *Russh* and, more broadly, an Australian cultural sensibility; but they also reveal a white Australian imagining of Australia that blithely erases not only historical, state-mandated racism and violence towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples but their entire histories, cultures and presence in Australia. This cosmopolitan imagination reaches towards what is not-Australian – the culturally rich international – and eagerly seeks unity with it by erasing aspects of Australian history and culture that would mark us as further away from the rest of the world: not the right kind of people, or, rather, not the right kind of *white* people, an anxiety enacted into 'corrective'

policy with the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 (see Pugliese, 2010). Also known as the White Australia Policy, this Act was one of the first bills passed by the newly formed federal government, ostensibly to protect the local labour market but also founded on racist ideologies by 'restrict[ing] the immigration of "coloured races" to Australia by requiring non-European people to sit a convoluted dictation text in any European language' (Miles and Neath, 2016: 558). The Act was employed as a pretext to screen for whiteness in locations such as Southern Italy, in which the bodies of Calabrians were examined to ensure that they displayed the correct amount of whiteness to 'pre-empt the possibility of importing people with black bits into the corpus of the white nation' (Pugliese, 2010: 165).

Indeed, as I have intimated thus far, the cosmopolitan imagining in *Russh* is one which seeks unity with certain other fashionable locations – namely European and North American contexts – but I turn now to consider another iteration of longing, which reflects 'localised ideas about national belonging and an international kinship of whiteness' (Osuri and Banerjee, 2004: 153). The models cast are, by a vast majority, white, and the ways in which they are frequently shot in editorial shoots situates them in a landscape that recalls Australian flora, yet is empty of the presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other non-white Australians. These shoots mythologise a union between the ideal white feminine and nature that recalls Romanticism and myths of the frontier, as well as recalling an historical Australian ideology of white Australia.[3] Such spreads can also be read as a symbolic resolution of the anxiety of being far away from Anglo-European cosmopolitanism by rejecting the urban entirely. Rather, in the return to the bush, which Rickard argues 'has

[3] Framing romantic white Australian femininity in rural settings is a recurring trope in Australian cultural texts, particularly in the nineteenth century, but also into the twenty-first. Notable examples include George Lambert's painting *The Squatter's Daughter*, 1923-24 and Peter Weir's film *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975). See Turner (1986) for more on the role of Australian nature in representations of national selfhood.

been a quest, a purifying ordeal' (2017: 249) in Australian mythology, we find the embodiment of a distinctively Australian feminine fashionable ideal, one inherently tied to whiteness, youth and the body. She embodies both centre and periphery in her whiteness and the way she is depicted in ecstatic communion with the landscape.

'Place to Be'

The perception of connection to the land is central to Australian culture: as Craik has argued, despite the fact that Australia is 'one of the most urbanised countries in the world […] the bush continues to occupy a central place in the national imaginary and constructions of national identity and character' (2009: 418). Indeed, the constant return to the landscape in Australian popular culture suggests a disavowal of the actuality of Australian life (which, for most, takes place in suburbs and cities near the coast) in favour of a romanticised construction of the country as the 'authentic location for the distinctive Australian experience' (Turner, 1986: 25). The outdoors has also been a key feature of Australian fashion, as Craik (2009) and Maynard (2001) have both illustrated: it has been read as a space for leisure and self-actualisation, and for realising the idealised Australian body, which is 'composed of the outdoors, natural elements, activity, exercise, and projection into and with its environment' (Craik, 2009: 430).

Unsurprisingly, given the context in which it is produced, one of the recurring tropes of *Russh*'s editorial shoots is the depiction of a slender, very young, white model alone and in communion with a landscape that resembles Australia. In these shoots, the model is customarily depicted as *part of* the landscape, not merely in it: her body is submerged in lucent ocean or presses against red desert sand; she peers through bush like a wild thing, she

approaches over sand dunes with a distant stare.[4] These shoots reflect a recurring trope of fashion photography, the staging of images in 'exotic locations' (see Cheang, 2013), but rather than the world surrounding the model appearing as subservient to her urbane fashionability, as is the case in other fashion imagery (see Cheang 2013, Jobling 1999), here the relationship of model to landscape is metonymic. It is in these shoots that the oscillation between anxiety over distance from fashion and pride in Australia are reconciled, as the body of the model functions as the embodiment of a fashionable ideal – albeit one that is distinctively Australian in its reification of the youthful white body and nature. She is the embodiment of fashion itself whilst at the same time ostensibly rejecting the cosmopolitan in her communion with nature, which is coded in the magazine as 'pure'. By consistently centering a white fashionable ideal, these shoots present a mythic reimagining of Australia that empties the country of its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures as well as Australia's ethnic composition as 'the world's second largest immigrant nation [… with] over 150 ethnic groups speaking over 100 different languages' (Cunningham, 2008: 154).

The representational unity between model and landscape becomes deeply problematic in light of *terra nullius*, a principle in international law that justified state ownership of territories in which there was 'no evidence' of prior inhabitation, applied to Australia during British colonisation. The presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their cultures, traditions and histories were not recognised by British colonisers, a position that was not formally revoked until the Mabo case in 1992 when the Australian High Court recognised common law native title in Australia for the first time.[5] In light of this history, the shoots that

[4] For further imagery in this vein, see James Nelson's photographs of Angela Lindvall on *Russh*'s website: www.russh.com/angela-lindvall/
[5] See Rickard (2017) for an overview of the Mabo case.

depict vast landscapes that read as Australian, peopled only by slender white models, can be read as a fashion fantasy that whitewashes Australian history and advances a vision of Australianness that is seamlessly white. It is an extension of the exclusion of Indigenous Australians from the white Australian imaginary that dates to Australia's colonization, as Mulholland argues, wherein 'Indigenous bodies and sexualities [were never] granted a normalized, agentic, mainstream presence' (2019: 199). With no other bodies present to challenge the autonomy and authority of *Russh*'s white model, we are placed in a landscape that is mythically outside of time, which neatly intersects with a wider national imagination, as Hemelryk Donald has observed, 'in which recent memories of genocidal practice and the associated violence of assimilation has been largely ignored or disavowed' (2000: 165).

Russh's originary representation of whiteness reflects the connotations that arise again and again in relation in literature devoted to rendering whiteness visible: such representations remove it 'from history and absolve it from itself' (Hemelryk Donald, 2000: 158), and extend the identification of whiteness to 'purity, spirituality, transcendence, cleanliness, virtue, simplicity, chastity' (Dyer, 1997: 72). Such connotations are not merely implicit in *Russh*: the magazine frequently deploys language that appeals to these notions to consolidate the naturalisation of white fashionability in Australia. For example, the copy in Angela Lindvall's Model Profile in Issue 73 describes how the model 'led us off the beaten path […] where we captured her at her purest – grounded in nature, face to the sun' (2017: 28), whereas in a profile in Issue 48, editor Jess Blanch describes how photographer Derek Henderson's images 'drip with a sensuality and naturalness that is unique to both our ideal of Australian allure as well as the chastity of our frontier' (2012: 66). This language dresses Australia in connotations of another mythologised terrain, that of the Western frontier. Richard Dyer has described the frontier as a 'temporal and spatial concept' that mobilises an

historical imagination in which white presence is the 'establishing presence' (1997: 33), as the American West is mastered by white masculinity. In contrast to this reading, the Australian frontier is constructed here as feminine: as sensual as the women who seemingly emerge from it to be admired or possibly tamed, its wildness represented by the absence of other people and signs of human inhabitation, echoed by the abandon of the models arching against rock and emerging, saturated, from the ocean. When she does look into the lens, her eyes are often wide, as if surprised to encounter the presence of another; but she is often shot as if unaware of being seen at all. Over-coding this merging of model with landscape is the way that the models' bodies are foregrounded to emphasise their 'natural' beauty: their hair is often loose and long, their breasts are visible in some of the shots, their clothes wet or falling away from their bodies, as if nakedness is their preference.

This is exemplified by an editorial in Issue 21, 2008, featuring a 16-year-old New Zealander, Zippora, on location at a beach in Sydney's Kurnell (see *Earth Age* blog 2010). The shoot's title, 'I Want To Stay Here Forever', is written in white cursive text over an image of horses running towards the camera, superimposed on a close-up of Zippora's face, blonde hair tangling around her eyes, which gaze into the lens. The following images depict her standing in the shallows on an uninhabited beach, legs disappearing into high-waisted denim cut-off shorts, beaten silver and turquoise jewellery catching the light, or riding bareback on a palomino horse in a white one-piece swimming costume with a fringed suede bag resting on her thigh. She is the only figure in sight, surrounded by open sky, silvering ocean and distant hills. The hues of ocean, sky and horse match her clothes: blue denim, knitted shorts the colour of wheat, brown suede. In one double-page spread, she lies along the palomino's back, naked breast on its withers, her hair tangling into its mane. In another, the sun illuminates her face as she gazes into the middle distance, a tumble of feathers woven into her hair.

The symbolism of this spread is hard to miss: Zippora is at one with nature, the body of the palomino horse and the pale sunlight equivalent for her own blonde girlhood. Signifiers of Indigenous American cultures (in one image, she wears a dream catcher as a hair accessory) overlay with references to hippie counterculture: faded denim and fringed suede worn over bare breasts, citing a non-Australian indigeneity which, in the context of the shoot, is framed as cool, desirable and hers for the taking.

Here, Australia's complex past is entirely side-stepped to import a vision of white triumph over the frontier whilst appropriating the symbols of other Indigenous peoples, presented here simply as representative of the model's free-spiritedness and beauty. In the utopian space of this shoot, a tension inherent in Australia's relationship with the bush – 'its dualistic ability to simultaneously represent both the "reality of newness and freedom" and the "reality of exile"' (Judith Wright in Turner, 1986: 25) – is reconciled. The exile of geographic isolation is reframed as freedom, even as the non-Australian model is dressed in references to a foreign culture: here, the *Russh* girl is actualised in her unity with nature and the ways in which it acts as a metonym for her free spirit.

Yet by embodying the fashionable feminine, she represents the cosmopolitanism of fashion even as the return to the bush seemingly rejects it. In this way, the mystique of the Australian landscape merges with white femininity to present a vision of Australian fashionability that relates closely to the ideals of Australian style identified by Jennifer Craik, all of which reflect Australia's connection with land: 'a sense of *place*; a sense of *body*; and a sense of *cultural heritage*' (2009: 411, italics in original). In this conflation of fashionable ideal with Australian landscape, the imagined cultural distance between fashion and Australia closes:

far and near are unified through the white feminine body whose beauty reflects and draws significance from the landscape around her.

'Dream Girl'

The relative youth of the models featured in *Russh* is worth considering further, as it is here that the white Australian feminine ideal can be understood in a different way. There is a quality of nascence to the cultural anxiety explored throughout this article, also evident in Richard Nile's characterisation of Australian civilisation as 'a place of the future still in the making […] always arriving but which has not yet quite arrived' (1994: 21), as well as in Anna Harrison's assertion (in *Russh*) that Australia's 'luxury of space […] instills in us a sense of opportunity, abundance and endless possibility' (Issue 48, 2012: 63).

The sense of arriving rather than having arrived is embodied by these models, most of whom range between 16 years of age and their mid-twenties. Their physique is suggestive of being on the cusp of adulthood, and the ways in which they are shot often suggests that they are also on the cusp of sexual maturity: old enough to be looked at with desire, but young enough to be innocent of the effect they are having on the viewer. While models' breasts and bottoms are frequently visible in *Russh*'s imagery, their faces are usually expressionless when they look at the camera, which seems to reinforce the unidirectionality of the pleasure of looking. One example is 'Bunny Ain't No Kind of Rider', an editorial shot for Issue 34 (2010) by Will Davidson, featuring Latvian Ieva Laguna and American Tony Ward, then 20 and 46 years old respectively. The shoot depicts a passionate relationship between an artist (Ward) and his muse (Laguna), resulting in a series of images in which Ward grips Laguna by the torso, one hand on her breast, or holds her by the neck while she looks dispassionately at the camera, or

seems to swoon in his embrace.[6] Her clothes and face bear daubs of paint, as if she is the work of art he is creating. In one image, Laguna stands in a romantic white dress with billowing sleeves as bright yellow paint splashes over her, akin to an outpour of artistic energy, or ejaculation. Her expression, of course, is serene. While she prompts passion in him, the creator, her role is simply to appear: to embody fashionable beauty and evoke desire. That she is not depicted as a desiring subject reinforces the connotations of purity attached to her whiteness; it also feeds the liminality of her being: she exists in the fashion photograph as an idealised feminine, to be looked at but with no agency of her own.

This subject position is also modelled to readers by the distinctive voice *Russh* adopts in the copy of the Model Profiles and on the Beauty and Style Icons. The reader is positioned as a fan worshipping the models and artists, who are often described primarily through their appearance and the perception other notable figures have had of them. Angela Lindvall is 'a Capricorn with flaxen hair and sun-speckled cheeks' (Issue 73, 2017: 28), actor Milla Jovovich is 'otherworldly, near ephemeral, with long legs and wide-set eyes, the one Richard Avedon named "unforgettable"' (Issue 44, 2012: 27), whereas musician Hope Sandoval is described thus: 'her tangled locks, brooding smile and heartbreaking temperament hums into our hearts as a low-key lullaby' (Issue 59, 2014: 88). Here, *Russh* discursively bestows the status of idols on these women, the timelessness and inspiration of their beauty reinforced by the photographs chosen to run alongside these descriptions, always of the Icons in their youth regardless of their age at the time of being featured. That it is romantic and aspirational to be regarded as beautiful, to inspire creativity and sexual desire, is paramount in Jess Blanch's Editor's Letter in Issue 59. In it, she romanticises Pablo Picasso's first encounter with an unnamed young blonde: '"Miss, you have an interesting face. I would like to do your portrait.

[6] The full editorial spread is accessible at: www.mapltd.com/post/map/willdavidsonandsteviedanceshoottony/

I have a feeling we will do great things together. I am Picasso." It's got to be the greatest come-on of all time' (2014: 18). While the letter specifies the age of the young woman – seventeen – it doesn't mention Picasso's (forty-five), and it states that 'this voluptuous woman has only ever been known as Picasso's "Nude"' (18). So is Marie-Thérèse Walter stripped of her identity, reduced to her function as muse. Later in the same issue, the position of being a desired object is reinforced in the monthly 'We Love' section, in which what is loved is 'those who say no to a normal life. Being ambiguous, wearing a man's jacket […] and replying "nothing" when asked what we do' (24), which is printed alongside a collage of images of a young Betty Catroux, a 19 year old Gemma Ward in a Valentino campaign, a 20 year old Maria Schneider in *Last Tango in Paris*, and so on.

In fashion media, the fashionable body has historically been white, slender and feminine, the model representing cosmopolitan modernity wherever she is photographed. She represents fashion's capacity to transcend 'any local and traditional matters of ethnicity' through 'a set of cosmopolitan cultural dynamics linked to globalisation' (Cheang, 2013). The currency of this cosmopolitan figure in *Russh* – the young, white, normatively feminine model who represents 'young and free' Australia – also serves as an articulation of the Australian veneration of the outdoorsy, 'natural body' (Craik, 2009: 429), an ideal that, for art historian Joan Kerr, symbolises 'the young white race in the most ancient continent controlling or "mastering" the land' (Craik, 2009: 428).[7] The model stands for the 'youthful' Australia, her situation on the cusp of adulthood mirroring the possibility that both drives *Russh*'s discourses of Australian identity and hunger for travel, and invigorates wider Australian discourses of being the 'lucky country', of cultural newness in which white Australia has yet to consolidate itself and achieve greatness.

[7] 'Young and free' is a reference to the Australian national anthem and is often taken up within Australian media to indicate an inherent national quality.

Intriguingly, this ideal within *Russh* is frequently performed by models who are not Australian in landscapes that resemble, but are not, Australia. For example, Issue 73 finds American model Angela Lindvall leaning with tousled hair against Joshua Tree's reddish-brown rock formations that recall the Red Centre, whereas for Issue 84, Bulgarian model Kremi Otashliyska was shot on a beach south of Varna, which features the kind of golden sand and wide sky found up and down the east coast of Australia. I read such examples as another way in which these shoots symbolically recognise and reconcile concepts of far and near, as the Australian fashionable ideal – which itself heavily draws on the aesthetic of the white Romantic woman-child identified in British fashion media by Morna Laing, as well as Romantic discourses of feminine innocence and high art (Laing, 2015) – speaks to an Australian cultural sensibility both in its veneration of the unity of (young, white) body beautiful with the outdoors as well as the longing to embody another ideal, that of cosmopolitan fashion. This fashionable ideal sits outside time by constructing a myth and, as Barthes has argued of myth more generally, by so doing, her presence purifies and makes innocent, lending the things that she represents – white Australianness, Australian fashionability – 'a natural and eternal justification' (Barthes in Laing, 2015: 89).

Conclusion

Russh as a cultural text has much to tell us about the complicated ways in which global intertwines with local in the pages of a magazine self-consciously 'far' from the traditional fashion capitals. Here is a publication whose content challenges the cultural perception of Australia as peripheral to global flows of fashionable people, products and media even as it discursively reinforces the perception of distance, demonstrating how ingrained this anxiety is in the white Australian structure of feeling. Where it arises in *Russh*, this anxiety is

resolved through the figure of the model in their signature editorial shoots, where Australian and non-Australian are fused in the representation of a youthful fashionable ideal in harmony with nature, embodying and performing an ahistorical white Australia.

Russh also presents a culturally-specific iteration of wider discourses that invigorate fashion, particularly fashion media: that some places are more central to fashion, more important and influential, more cool, while others are peripheral, looking with longing to that which they can only imitate; that white, young, slender, normative femininity remains the fashionable ideal. Here, we have seen that 'the local is not merely an aspect of the global or localised by the global, it is a defined space, a field of active production and reproduction' (Osuri and Banerjee, 2004: 156). What remains, despite *Russh*'s efforts in recent years to diversify the image of fashionable Australian femininity presented within their pages, is a sense of Australia – and Australian fashionable femininity – as somewhere in between, longing to be 'there' but exulting in being 'here', a dynamic that is continually reinforced and overcome within it pages. As Jess Blanch writes in her Editor's Letter for Issue 65, 'The Global Issue', 'geography is irrelevant. "Home" an adaptable notion. And suddenly we have the power to be everywhere and yet nowhere, at once' (2015).

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