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Australasia: Mapping a Theatrical 'Region' in Peace and War

Abstract

In specific times and places, theatrical touring 'maps' can exceed national borders and create their own local and trans-national networks and centres. The term 'regions' is preferred here to identify activity situated across and within the fluctuating outlines of nation states or empires, and capable of ignoring their boundaries. National theatrical activities are read as particular sites, but not necessarily centres, within the expanded and fluid cosmopolitanism enabled by modernity's technologies and communication networks. 'Regions' are adaptive, virtual, spatially and temporally elastic and strategically flexible: those constructed by dramatic activity may also differ from those of non-language-dependent or skills-based genres. Such regions, constructed during times of imperial expansion, are significantly reconfigured by global war. The Australasian region 1840s-1940s displays relatively stable political borders along with rapid extra- and intra-territorial expansions and contractions of its theatrical footprints, and is given as an example of the many interwoven 'regions' created by dynamic theatrical globalisation.

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When considering commercial theatre during the period of accelerated modernisation (ca. 1870-1960), categories of the 'regional' may usefully identify those spatial-temporal areas that are virtually 'mapped' by the networks of mobile global theatrical activity. A region's geographic dimensions may be smaller – or quite remarkably larger – than the shifting external and internal boundaries of modernising and/ or decolonising nation states, and can be radically re-fashioned in periods of conflict. As the *raisons d'être* of regional theatre networks are not always congruent with those of the nations that they traverse, their potential history as specific 'cultures of circulation' (Lee and Li Puma, 2002) may also be fragmented between national historiographies. A concept of 'region' can help to displace the sometimes exclusive goals and assumptions of nationalist theatre history, and indeed Kennedy's recent *Oxford Encyclopedia of Theatre and Performance* (2004) dispenses with organisation by nation to focus on theatrical activity in key cities.[1] Cities, however, are not merely significant hubs in themselves, but can also be generative foci for performance in extensive accessible inland or island areas. By suspending

national categories in favour of the looser and more provisional activities typical of international diffusion, the perspective of the theatre historian aligns more closely with that of practitioners. This chapter provides an historical overview of the development of such networks in Australasia, a region formed from the British Empire's settler colonies and ambivalently involved with British economic and military fortunes.

During European imperialism's expansive pioneering phase in the nineteenth century, theatrical touring reached a peak of global penetration, with practitioners creating or improvising their own trade routes or regional operational 'maps' in every accessible part of the world. While geographical hierarchies and status claims are typical of nineteenth-century cultural disputes, it is fruitful now to question discursively loaded fields of 'centres' and 'regions'. In the context of Irish theatre historiography, for example, Mark Phelan points out the neglect of activity in Belfast compared with the focus on Dublin's proclaimed 'nationalist' theatre revival. He queries why 'the regional sphere has always been subordinate to the national', and the assumption that 'the provincial is regressive, whereas the nation is progressive' (Phelan, 2007, p. 139). The terms 'regional' and 'provincial' can perform ideological work by coupling geographic remoteness from an assumed centre with imputations of cultural supplementarity, artistic backwardness or a deficit of innovative energies. It will be argued here that energy, enterprise and commitment to artistic experiment flourish as least as vigorously in 'regions' as in 'centres', and in commercial entertainment no less than in art theatres.

The West End or Broadway can be viewed as generative nodes, the central points of their various radial circuits. As a change of perspective, we can view them rather as prestigious local regions. As cultural formations, theatrical regions of all sizes resemble each other in being cosily inbred and self-regarding, welded into imaginative unity through geography, personal relations and professional networks. Simultaneously, all take care that their parish-pump gossip is communicated by assiduous printed or mediated publicity in order to feed international modernity's appetite for the artistically innovative, the celebrated and the scandalous. But regions are also alike in being avidly outward-looking and globally focussed: emulously seeking self-renewal through innovation and the recruitment from other regions of fresh talent and exciting ideas. More elastic and self-conscious even than the nation, the theatrical region as organisational category can usefully frame readings of modernity's global diffusion, where circulation of persons, practices and texts traverses and links diverse interpretive and linguistic communities. Whatever their geographical size, their forms of civic and national independence, or their political, linguistic or cultural power, the temporal and geographic ranges of all theatrical regions are necessarily historically-bound.

A theatrical region is not determined merely by physical size or even exclusively by statist politics: themselves the product of mutating demographic, economic, political, cultural or military activities. As will be shown by surveying one example over the century of high modernity (ca. 1860-1960), regions are historically flexible and contingent constructs in which can be identified the principal constituent categories of geography, history and theatrical genre. From the historical viewpoint, for instance, the geographical 'map' of the theatrical region may be significantly modified in times of war by being overlaid or curtailed by the regional mappings of military command centres, themselves dynamic and internationally mobile. In times of relative peace, regions are

primarily constituted on the basis of geographical factors and aggregations of population exhibiting some measure of common culture or linguistic homogeneity.

For dramatic theatre in particular, regions require, or create, a degree of commonality of language, aesthetic preferences or civil identity, thus enabling local adoption or adaptation of texts and production practices. They also accept into their ambit various non-dramatic theatrical genres and also performance traditions other than those of the dominant populations. In the case of Australasia this involves the hegemony of English over indigenous and the numerous minority settler languages, whose speakers also undertake theatrical activities. Substantial performance activity was undertaken by such socially pressured communities as post-contact Aboriginal peoples, the nineteenth-century Chinese migrants to the Victorian goldfields, or the German internees detained in Australian camps during the Great War (Casey, 2012; Love, 1985; Helmi and Fischer, 2011). This demonstrates multiplicities of theatre networks defined variously by ethnicity, language or genre being sustained within a single geographic region. They may conduct their operations by occupying limited geographic or social niches (voluntarily chosen or imposed) or by flowing freely and sometimes 'invisibly' through established regional sites and communication infrastructures.

Crucial to the formation of regions are types and extent of transport and communication. The capital-intensive technologies and infrastructures which host and sustain theatrical activity – mercantile or passenger shipping, railways, airlines, airports, trams, bridges, roads, telegraph cables, radio, cinema – originate in governmental or commercial investment undertaken for purposes of trade or military strategy. Each region can be positioned relative to larger or smaller such entities according to changing patterns of transport, technology and geopolitics. Modern global mobility implies that its theatrical regions can ignore national boundaries, particularly when traversing the relatively borderless oceans. One region may comprise many nations, or it might be formed by a strategic 'trade-route' linking smaller territories within a nation or between nations. During the period of imperial expansion, the theatrical region was created and institutionally maintained by the artistic enterprise and economic ambition of its key commercial practitioners: the male and female actors, actor-managers and entrepreneurs engaged in the varied genres of popular performance. Some regions, such as the Australasian one that forms my main example, also experience eventual centralisation by bureaucratised production organisations, who will typically map out their own industrial regions through constructing or acquiring chains of theatre buildings. Regional activity is thus internally various, flexible, and historically relative. Later it will be suggested that practitioners of skill-based genres of theatrical entertainment – variety, circus, musical theatre – might define their own particular regions, centres and networks within and across the same spaces, and which may overlap with the maps made by dramatic theatre.

Australasia as theatre region(s)

'Australasia' (south of Asia) is a historically fluctuating term without political definition or agency, whose currency belongs more to former periods than to present modes of national classification.[2] When defined by faunal continental ecozones, 'Australasia' comprises all land territory south of the Bali-Lombok or Wallace Line, usually signifying the principal island land masses of Papua New Guinea, Australia, Tasmania and their

immediate island groups, with further affinities and geographic proximity to New Zealand and Antarctica. In geographic usage the term can embrace also smaller neighbouring archipelagos of the Pacific or South East Asia, and loosely it might be extended to all or some of the equally elastic 'Oceania' (generally seen as Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia) as all being somewhere 'south'. The term now frequently denotes, in slightly archaic parlance, the informal common activities and interests of the nations of Australia and New Zealand.[3] Its political emptiness allows me to revive it in order to identify the loose and fluid configurations of an 'Australasian' region specifically defined by theatrical activity. Within this region there are limiting and defining infrastructural and geographical factors which demanded specific responses.

Export-oriented nations are as naturally alive to the importance of shipping facilities as are military strategists to the importance of naval strongholds. In 1901, the new Commonwealth Government of Australia took over from the States responsibility for transport infrastructure. Interstate coastal steamers remained the travel mode of choice for major touring theatre troupes. Australasian theatre troupes continued to cross the Tasman Sea as routinely as intercolonial steamer passengers bridged the equal or longer distances between Australian state capitals. The shrewd American-Australian J. C. Williamson tamed the presumptions of the Union Steam Ship Company, who demurred about giving discounted rates to his Royal Opera Company for their 1882 New Zealand tour. By the successful bluff of announcing that he would fit up his own ship for touring theatricals, the principle was established of theatre troupes as favoured customers on this lucrative route (Downes, 2002, p. 83). So we see regional theatrical activity as a potential driver of modern modes of circulation, not merely as their passenger or payload.

Land transport means building relatively expensive infrastructure, which in this region was undertaken by the state. While Australia's small population was concentrated largely in the capitals and major regional cities, the different rail gauges on the interstate systems, a legacy of uncoordinated colonial decisions, rendered notorious the border train changes. Not until 1917 did the Trans-Australian Railway, a Commonwealth initiative, link Port Augusta (South Australia) with goldfields Kalgoorlie (Western Australia) on standard gauge track, and this still necessitated a gauge change in order to reach Perth, the world's most isolated city (pop. 50,000), a further 500 miles of sandy desert to the west. Actors and managers preferred the relative comfort of the inter-colonial steamers, and the sea journey across the Great Australian Bight in the teeth of the prevailing westerlies produced many travel-sick performers. The relatively small land masses of the two main islands of earthquake-prone New Zealand, with their volcanically mountainous terrain, deep glacier-fed rivers and fjord-like coastline, presented as many difficulties for internal land transport as did the vast under-populated tracts spanning the colonies of Australia, and railway building in New Zealand advanced outwards a few miles at a time from the isolated population centres.[4] Most early troupes touring New Zealand used coastal steamers; hence the country's colonial theatrical hub was the fiercely Scottish southern city of Dunedin, the first stop south from Melbourne. Conversely, in the case of New Guinea, the world's second largest island with its unparalleled linguistic and cultural diversity, its mountainous rainforested terrain precluded close white settlement. So despite Australian proximity and sustained administrative oversight of this large territory, it registers only intermittently on theatrical maps of the older 'Australasian' region compared with the centrality of New

Zealand. Likewise, the tiny convict establishment on Norfolk Island, 1000 miles from Sydney, saw theatrical activity sanctioned by the military between 1793 and 1806, and again during 1837-42, whereafter it also disappears from the Australasian theatrical map for some time (Jordan, 2002, pp. 111-136, pp. 184-199).[5] For my purposes then, the stable core territory of the theatrical 'Australasia' – at least in peace-time – comprises the nations of New Zealand and Australia. There were however considerable periods during which this region expanded westwards across the Indian Ocean.

A significant candidate for inclusion is South Africa, which in fact possesses an occulted, if time-bound, Australasian theatrical history. In common with New Zealand and Australia, it experienced settler migration, land wars and gold rushes, displacement of indigenous peoples, diversely identified settler groups, colonial federation and imperial devolution movements, accompanied by the legislative drawing and re-drawing (involuntary or voluntary) of internal and external boundaries. From the mid-nineteenth century, and particularly after the discovery of gold in Witwatersrand (1886) and Kalgoorlie (1892), travelling troupes and artistes would commonly move between these newly populated regions, sailing between the Cape and Fremantle. With varying degrees of success, the Australian-based theatre organisations of J. C. Williamson Ltd and J. & N. Tait pursued their major 'Australasian' interests in South Africa over many decades, touring musical and dramatic troupes and setting up South African subsidiaries. Given these close managerial relationships, a fuller historical account could be produced of an intermittently expanded 'Australasian' theatrical region, whose history is effaced by differing – usually nationalistic – thematic emphases and choices of regional focus.[6] In the early twentieth century, this theatrical mini-empire was broken up on three occasions by wartime restrictions on internal land travel and sea traffic,[7] and from the 1960s South Africa's cultural isolation was institutionalised through anti-apartheid sanctions and embargoes. From the 1950s, Australia-Europe air routes favouring Asian stop-overs bypassed South African ports of call, just as the creation of the Suez Canal a century previously had cut out Cape stopovers for East-bound trading, postal services and passenger lines.[8]

The mobility and specific skills of the physically-based entertainer indicate the potential of multiple mapping of regions by specific generic fields. The geographical trade routes of international variety artistes working in cabaret, nightclubs, circus, theatrical revues and spectacles suggest after 1945 that different 'regions' can be defined from the perspective of the specialised performers and impresarios and their venue opportunities. The post-1850s Australasian theatrical 'region' surveyed so far is defined largely on the basis of largely language-bound dramatic activity (Downes, 2002; Kelly, 2009). Further industrial or generic criteria for the dynamics of interpenetrating theatrical regions could be argued for circus, dance or opera (St Leon, 2011; Pask, 1979; Love, 1981; Carroll, 2011; Gyger, 1990 and 1999). Variety, concert and nightclub performers, like the shipboard 'empire' tourists of a century earlier, typically form small mobile groups working in wide international networks of variety houses, cabarets or clubs. There were few linguistic boundaries for such acts as the black American jazz dancer Norma Miller or the Trinidad Steel Band, who toured Japan and Australia in the 1960s. The cabaret and club venues of European, American, Asian or Australasian cities formed their 'region', to which political divisions are pertinent but not definitive, and their characteristic transport was the jet aeroplane. Many entertainers of Australia's post-1945 variety originated in South East

Asia or commonly worked there, while many more performers were products of European diasporas of war and revolution.[9] Their skill-centred specialty acts, with their mobile performative ethnicities, depend less than dramatic theatre on the linguistic or racial congruence of performer and role, and from the 1950s such artists readily found a hospitable second home in the motley parade of television. The case of variety thus somewhat resembles the field of operatic music and the regional circulation of its performers, as discussed by Yamomo (2011) in the case of Filipino activity.

Consolidating a theatrical region

For Australia and New Zealand, the early 1850s mark a new dynamic phase of international modernity. The 1840s saw both the formal end of the New Zealand Land Wars and the cessation of convict transportation to Australia's eastern states, and in the next few decades new areas of settlement and the growth of administrative centres evolved into six self-governing Australian colonies. Cosmopolitan immigration and rapid urbanisation followed the gold discoveries in the Australian colony of Victoria (1851) and New Zealand's Otago region (1861). The generative presence of gold indicates the significance to entertainment of the infrastructures and networks created by international movements of mobile labour in pursuit of resource booms. For example, Alan Hughes (1986) studies the extremely close cultural and theatrical relations obtaining between the Australian gold regions and the city of Victoria, the capital of the Crown Colony of Vancouver Island. The Island's own gold rush in 1858 incurred population influxes from, amongst other places, California and Australasia, and exhibited similar theatrical repertoires and personalities. While managing the Keans' North American tour, the English low comedian and Australian legislator George Coppin (1819-1906) passed through the city of Victoria in the early 1860s, where he could dine at the Boomerang pub and read Australian news in the local press, just as he could in the 'other' Victoria across the Pacific. A trans-oceanic imaginary community was structured by the experience of gold, and discursively animated by those common colonial debates about legislative and administrative initiatives which formed the characteristically international cognitive map of the colonist. Thus a theatrical region may be structured as a loose or occasional 'trade route' network, which typically connects together major seaports, key urban centres or expatriate enclaves scattered internationally over large distances or across culturally disparate areas. The more formalised and cyclical late-century patterns of mobility are shown in the African and Asian touring activities of Maurice Bandmann, whose free-enterprise ventures and commercial partnerships are studied elsewhere in this publication.

As in the case of the relatively culturally homogenous and politically stable Australasian colonies (later nations) of Australia and New Zealand, highly-evolved centralised commercial structures were sedimented from its varied patterns of theatrical activity. When visiting or native actors transformed themselves into managerial entrepreneurs, the headquarters for their large intercolonial circuits were such major urban centres as Melbourne or Auckland, while more mobile managements serviced suburbs, towns and rural centres. Hence a fluctuating series of key individual entrepreneurs operated over many decades, located various beyond or within such stable company structures as J. C. Williamson Ltd (drama, musicals, opera, ballet), the Tivoli or

Fuller Circuits (variety and musical comedy), J. & N. Tait (concerts). These impresarios and managers organised the internal regional circulation of their various specialised performance troupes, and also forged extra-national alliances with similar key figures of other regions, be they the of West End, London suburban circuits, British provincial impresarios, the USA west coast or Broadway. Besides production development and tour administration, their central business was the purchase, leasing or exchange of such tangible legal commodities as artistic, production and management personnel, music scores, set designs, play scripts or entire productions, whether in blueprint or in actuality. Performance rights for usually English-language repertoires (Anglophone or translated, though opera was frequently sung in original language versions) were leased from North American, European or British holders, for which purposes 'Australasia' was a conveniently discrete legal unit. For nearly a century, J. C. Williamson's, the possessors of the exclusive 'Australasian' rights for the international commercial phenomena of the Savoy operas and the Gaiety musical comedies, exploited these key properties before captive audiences.

In 1901 the six colonies of Australia federated as the Commonwealth of Australia, and the 'seventh' colony of New Zealand formed its separate Dominion in 1907. Nonetheless, commercial touring activity, so vital to countries whose concentrations of settler population are separated by large tracts of land or water, continued to regard them as a single region and the 2000 kilometres (1250 miles) of the Tasman Sea as a local coastal waterway. In the view of the commercial entrepreneur, be s/he based in Sydney, Perth or Auckland, these countries comprised a single potential theatrical touring region, and it is this organisational and managerial perspective that most clearly defines the trade in theatrical commodities during the period of high modernity. In the tracking of the fortunes of theatrical trade routes, territory, in its geophysical sense, complicates and complements the elastic and invisible bounds of cultural regions. The regions' distances and dispersed centres, as outlined above, challenged early twentieth-century live entertainment to reach every exploitable pocket of potential audience. This promoted enterprise, stamina and improvisatory *sang-froid* in performers, managers and audiences alike. Given Australasia's pattern of highly-concentrated urban audiences with relatively small and scattered populations, touring was foundational to its theatrical economics, creating a self-conscious cultural unity from the brute facts of geography. Touring was aligned with cyclic or casual events likely to concentrate potential audiences at major nodes. Within Australasia, the ancient liturgical cycle of Christmas and Easter were both major repertoire foci, and the anniversaries of civic or religious figures and events mustered concentrations of patriotic or denominational audiences as well as entertainment-seekers. Temporary audience migrations from the country to the city or town were occasioned by agricultural shows, international trade exhibitions, visits of civic or vice-regal celebrities, horse races, sports fixtures, military parades or openings of parliament: all were bonanzas for the urban box office. In rural areas, theatre troupes visited scattered communities by train or wagon, either as informal touring dates or to coincide with the annual holidays, markets or sporting events.

Much was at stake here for the practitioners. By promoting the cultural esteem and the economic profitability of their own region, theatre people endeavoured to acquire cultural as well as economic capital. Their public self-constructions are doubly targeted. Intra-regionally, they are meant to maintain the pride and self-consciousness of 'their'

audiences as modern interpretive communities through mutual and common experience of theatrical performers, repertoires and organisations. Extra-regionally, this sustained activity marked their region's status as a significant global player within modern culture and entertainment enterprises. The Australasian region thus scanned and appropriated (and was appropriated by) the performing cultures of Europe, Asia and the United States, while also making tentative accommodations with the indigenous performances of the Maori and Aboriginal peoples. Each project – the internally and externally focussed – defines and supports the other. Australasian commercial entertainment in the period 1850-1950 is rarely a dissentient agent in the political projects of imperialism and colonisation, but it was by no means unequivocally tied to them. It labours to promote itself as an eminent cultural institution creating and upholding civic 'British' identities, but simultaneously to pursue those international trends and practices distinguished as signal markers of cosmopolitan modernity.[10]

Meantime at home, business was pursued as usual. The magnates of the big commercial theatre organisations in New Zealand and Australia were typically enmeshed in the capitalist enterprises of liquor, retail, sport promotion, property, cinema production and radio broadcasting syndicates, thus strategically allying themselves with urban and national economic fortunes (Fotheringham, 1992; Van Straten, 2004; Tallis, 1999; Griffin, 2004). Their managerial boards invested company profits in the big end of town: banks, mining, insurance and property. At every opportunity, and particularly during wartime, actors and managements situated themselves as public benefactors and organised massive fund-raising for military or civilian charities. While an early theatre entrepreneur such as George Coppin was himself a colonial politician, established theatre capitalists cultivated friends at court across the political spectra of colonial (later national) legislative bodies and vice-regal establishments. Above all, they sought to dominate regional theatre by buying or building their own chains of theatres in key cities, attempting to squeeze out rival access to scarce infrastructure. A natural partner of the prosperity of its component colonies or nations, this region's theatrical touring, in both its formalised or vigorous free-booting modes, rode first on the coat-tails of imperial expansion and later on those of nationalist discourses. Energetically (if selectively), it involved itself in those statist enterprises with whose economic fortunes it was critically enmeshed over periods of boom or depression, peace or war.

Sociability and regional mobility

Throughout the period of entrepreneurial consolidation (ca. 1870s-1960s), innumerable short-term or self-managed troupes of theatre, variety and circus also worked the Australasian region in the 'empire actor' touring mode. This was the phrase endowed by Wellington's *Evening Post* on what it saw as a large such group of competent world-travelling players, 'ambitious men and women who have declined to play a waiting game in London', but whose global activities were certainly not confined to the British Empire. These performers pursued, not merely 'gold', but the real if less tangible benefits of colonial 'freedom and sunshine' which 'exert their fascination permanently as soon as they have once been felt'.[11] The fluidly interpenetrative relationships of these performers with the operations of the regional managements could be strategic or casual as they pursed 'freedom and sunshine' and engaged in cosmopolitan sociability. Most major

Australasian cities were ports with the harbour-dweller's typical seaward orientation, adoring novelties and news from elsewhere, welcoming and rapidly accepting visitors. And to the north of Australasia, linked by trade, administration and major shipping lines, many more such ports awaited.

The gregarious cosmopolitan temperaments of the peripatetic 'empire' performers were attuned to experiencing the adventure of travel in unknown regions: both the demands and the allure of distance made them, in more senses than one, typically modern tourists. The social lionisation of visitors, typical of the scattered and socially dynamic settler communities of seaboard and inland, meant that, along with the standard gambits employed by entertainers to attract audiences, these particular audiences were equally keen to be sought out. While the large entertainment firms of Australasia marked out their territories based in their principal colonial cities (which also happen to be ports) and radiated out to hinterland settlements by road, rail or coastal steamer, for the small mobile family or marital troupes the ocean was their highway and the ship their home. Australia and New Zealand were just possible halts on their trans-Pacific, trans-Atlantic or trans-Asian voyages. Their fellow travellers aboard ship or train were the mobile tribes of traders, administrators, garrison troops, tourists, commuters, missionaries and emigrants, who might view theatre people as either enemies or natural allies.

Workable extra-national touring regions can thus be formed at specific geo-political moments across extensive tracts containing disparate nations and/ or colonies. China, Japan, India and South East Asia were increasingly visited from the nineteenth century by intrepid Anglophone theatre troupes playing both to expatriate and to local audiences of other language groups. Kobayashi (1998) gives a useful account of 'empire' touring companies working this region during the nineteenth century, some of whom, like that of George C. Miln, were suffused with cultural mission to bring Shakespeare to new audiences. These 'trade route' tourists wove together larger virtual regions throughout Asia, America, South Africa, India, Australia and New Zealand. Many were married teams like Daniel Bandmann and Millicent Palmer, George Darrell and Fanny Cathcart, William Don and Emily Saunders, J. C. Williamson and Maggie Moore. Other travelling troupes were typically families (whether in name or fact), many of whom, like the dancing American Zavitowski Sisters and the 'families' of Richard Stewart, W. J. Holloway, George and Rosa Lewis,[12] Alfred Dampier or the Pollard Opera Troupe (Downes, 2002) might also make repeated visits to Africa or the Americas, as well as spending considerable periods in Asia and Australasia. Rather than formalising Bandmann-type circuits, many travelled as opportunity or preference dictated. Such global performing tourists typically deposit their fragmented historical traces in many regions. They fit awkwardly into nationalist histories unless they can display prolonged periods of local residence, and/or become involved in the consolidation enterprises of managerial organisation or theatre construction, as did Coppin, Williamson and the Rignolds.

Regional theatrical activity holds a particular symbolic, cultural and economic centrality within the 'mutually constituted history' (Price, 2006, p. 603) of Britain and its colonies and dominions, but is not confined to it. The imperial links largely that held firm in Australasia for the early twentieth century were transformed by the Pacific War (1941-

45) with its ensuing decolonisation and formation of new nations, while shifting strategic alliances brought the United States to the fore in matters of Australasian regional defence. By the 1960s, the processes of political de-dominionisation were well under way (Ward, 2001; Webster, 2005). In various decolonising regions, Britain amongst them, successful campaigns established 'national' theatre companies subsidised by the state. For its part, the state acquiesced to these pressures upon the expectation that such theatre would continue to act in informal partnership with governmental enterprises, whether as a cultural flagship abroad and/or as enhancer of domestic leisure and tourism. The new nation of Papua Niugini, for example, had been a former German mandate administered by Australia from the First World War to 1975 (the Dutch colony in the western part of the island became the Indonesian province of West Irian Jaya). With the exception of the mobile airborne military entertainments characteristic of the 1940s Pacific War, it barely figured (as we have seen) in the Australasian region's early theatrical maps. Yet so strong had the paradigmatic partnership of theatre and nation become by the 1970s that touring ('*raun raun*' in Tokpisin) theatre on the Western model was instituted in post-colonial Niugini with its over 800 languages in order to express – or create – a 'cultural identity, mainly through dance and drama' (Gomez, 1980, p. 16).[13]

Theatrical regions may display moments of peak temporal cohesion before mutating into new geographic configurations based on the evolving political, generic and technological conditions to be managed and exploited by entertainment caterers and their extra-theatrical partners. While Australasia still exists as a viable commercial touring region, it is traversed by different groups of tourists. The commercial repertoires of international theatre, musicals, opera, dance, variety, celebrities and star acts which typified the 1860-1960 period now co-exist with a substantial presence of state-subsidised and commercial production organisations which implement intra-regional movements in the forms of interstate co-productions (usually for drama), or festival circuits (usually for musical, physical and skills-based performance). Extra-national personnel in Australasian theatre today are very likely to be from Asian or Pacific regions, and the exchanges of training personnel, companies and repertoire typify what has become a geographically and linguistically expanded theatrical region (Balme, 2007; Gilbert and Lo, 2007). The current map of 'theatre' in Australasia thus more resembles that of the older variety regional models than the purely dramatic one, suggesting how at specific periods different genres of performance or local agents of production may construct distinctive 'regions'.

Co-present with live theatrical activity after ca. 1900 are the mediated entertainments of gramophone, cinema and radio, with which the regional fortunes and genres of live entertainment are inextricably linked. Within global theatrical history generally, the terminal boundary of high modernisation's century (roughly 1860s-1960s) can be marked by wide adoption of television and by post-imperialist political devolution and new nationalisms. It comprises a distinctive historical period, as suggested here by an account of the regional fortunes of Australasia during periods of relative peace, whose generally free travel and political stability has been treated in this discussion thus far as modernity's default condition. But this period is also one of global warfare: modernity's dark side and the twentieth century's most defining experience. Equally formative of new theatrical regions is the massive and penetrative effects of global conflict on the symbiosis of entertainment, transport, technology, and population mobility. The

constitutive impact of war on theatrical activity is briefly suggested by a summary of Australasia during one such conflict: the Pacific War of 1941-45.

Theatres of war

Many of the technologies that variously enhanced or challenged theatre's global mobility in this turbulent phase of modernity are products of war. The organisational and technological capacities arising to meet the demands of massive global conflicts produce a pressured concentration of productive and destructive innovations. McKeown (2004, pp. 178-180) discusses international migrant networks as producing 'a social geography that is not congruent with physical geography', and conjectures that a world map drawn to identify concentrations of ethnic or language groups would look very different from the maps of nation states. Likewise, the peacetime operational 'maps' drawn up by theatrical impresarios for their own extensive touring 'campaigns', co-exist during war-time with definitions of strategic regions defined by military priorities. This can lead to bloated, if temporary, expansions of a theatrical 'region' such as to make the activities of the nineteenth-century 'empire actors' seem positively unambitious.

Again, the reach of international systems into regional activity is crucial. Basil Dean, creator of Ealing Studios, Britain's first cinematic sound stage, ran his wartime organisation ENSA (the Entertainments National Service Association), which sprang into action in 1939 to provide touring entertainments for Allied troops in Europe. Dean had done similar work 1914-18 and now organised expanded activities of concert parties, broadcasts, films, singers, revues, drama, ballet, orchestral and chamber music and dance bands. In existing or rapidly-adapted sites, ENSA troupes performed alongside many other entertainment organisations for huge concentrations of service personnel in training camps, garrison cities, airfields or naval bases, or for isolated units serving in remote coastal gun emplacements or jungle clearings. Between front-line battles, such amateur identities as Lance Bombadier Harry Secombe gave impromptu back-of-truck shows lit by headlights, for the benefit of Allied soldiers and sometimes mystified Sicilians (Taylor, 1992, pp. 80-83). Michael Pate's (1983) account of his 'Tasmaniacs' concert troupe during the Pacific War notes the New Guinea villagers who for the first time were encountering, and occasionally also participating, in Western entertainment genres.

Wartime entertainers on the home and battle fronts – dramatic as well as the variety or concert specialist – tend to work not only in touring dramatic productions but in variety format, as members of mobile concert parties. Rather than employing the relative spatial and venue-based inflexibility of commercial touring entertainment, these performers are warmly welcomed into the improvised spaces of their isolated audiences of battlefield, camp, hospital or factory, and endure their common hardships and acute dangers.[14] Undertaken in cramped trucks, battleship decks or draughty air transport, the wartime circulation of intrepid live entertainers most strongly resembles the sociable culture and make-do touring practices of the old ship-board 'empire actors', and again it redraws regional theatrical maps.

Dean outlines his previous careers as a formidable theatrical and film director, and his class socialisation as a serving officer of the first war. From its command headquarters in

the converted and bombed Drury Lane Theatre, ENSA deployed minutely segmented maps with pins and little flags to track the movements of the myriad companies around the country (Dean, 1956, pp. 130-131). Theatrical and military activities are thus homologous in their practices and vocabularies and, frequently, closely so in the acculturation of their personnel and in their material infrastructures. The uniformed impresarios of Allied troop entertainment – ENSA or military bodies such as Army Welfare (UK), the Red Cross or the Australian Comforts Fund – deployed their own maps of regional operations (Hughes, 1976; Pate 1983). The military can organise and command entertainment as a national priority, and its resources of trains, trucks, aeroplanes, rations, warships, portable lighting and electrics, mobile stages or adapted spaces are potentially at the disposal of entertainers deployed in close tandem with military operations. Modern warfare, of which the 1939-45 conflict is but one example, mobilises both entertainers and their audiences on home and battle front in unprecedented numbers and in new heterogeneous concentrations, so is a crucial factor in modernity's expansion of global theatrical networking. The wartime experience of close governmental involvement with civilian as well as front-line entertainment also set the ideological scene for the post-war expansion of state-supported national theatres.

During the Second World War, the region of the theatrical 'Australasia' was adjacent to, or contiguous with, Britain's South East Asia Command (SEAC, 1943-46). While Louis Mountbatten made his SEAC headquarters in Kandy, after 1942 Australian cities formed the forward headquarters for Douglas MacArthur, American Supreme Commander of SWPA (South West Pacific Area). Maps for military administrations, such as these two operating in or near Australasia, typically overlie national boundaries, with headquarters located according to the relative deployment of land, sea or air forces. These temporary strategic maps of military 'theatres' collaborated with the existing commercial and amateur entertainment activities of the Australasian theatrical region: bringing American popular bands and celebrated entertainers to Australasian troops while, on the home front, huge garrisons of American and other service personnel in cities or camps became devotees of Australian entertainers. Conversely, the entertainments offered to fellow troops and local people by ANZAC servicemen in Europe, Africa and the Pacific configure an enormous, if temporary, expatriate global diffusion of an Australasian theatre 'region' (Pate, 1983; Vaughan, 1995).

Hence, for the duration of the Pacific War, New Guinea and many tiny Pacific island groups were closely included into the theatrical region of Australasia, and also in the greatly extended British and American entertainment operations, with new or existing regional networks of performers complemented and extended by military ones. The theatres of war, in this case covering geo-political areas undergoing a particularly revolutionary nationalist period, might compromise or destroy existing theatrical regions, but they also create new ones or re-animate the ghosts of former regions. ENSA's eastern regional theatrical posts were based in Rome, Cairo, Delhi, Calcutta and other forward centres, according the mobile fortunes of war. Jack Hawkins of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, already a distinguished actor of stage and film, was the ENSA Colonel-in-Charge for SEAC: 'My territory stretched from Karachi to Hong Kong' (Hughes, 1976, pp. 204-205). Thus, five decades previously, might a Maurice Bandmann or George C. Miln have pronounced his ambitions for his own expansive 'territory'.

Entertaining a geographically tolerant concept of the theatrical region, while outlining its various temporal constructions by performance genres and geopolitical processes, allows interrogation of the radial hierarchies found in nationalist and imperial accounts, fostering historically contingent readings of global activities. While commercial theatre from the 1850s was intimately linked to the fortunes of expanding empires in peace and war, we can discern, not just centralism and radial flows, but multiple nested connections within the global commercial theatrical practices of which all regions form the generative and interactive parts, engaging with the formative forces of secular capitalist modernity according to their desires and opportunities. The 'regions' constituted by theatrical mobility typically display porous borders: commercially strategic, flexible in time and elastic in space. As we have seen, a geographic area or a nation-state might, over time, variously contain or be contained within multiple 'regions', whether simultaneously or consecutively. Theatrical regions show themselves creatively responsive and adaptive to political boundary-drawing processes, particularly those consequent on the global conflicts which are international modernity's most prominent phenomena.

Endnotes

[1] The disparate theatrical activities of Western Europe frequently ignore the boundaries of nation in favour of cultural or linguistic principles of aggregation and circulation: see Van Maanen and Wilmer (1988). Wilmer (2004) surveys the fortunes of nationalist historiography.

[2] It shares this categorical confusion with many other regions. The terms Great Britain, the British Isles, the United Kingdom, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Northern Ireland and Eire all construct different geographic or political entities. The academician Charles de Brosses (1709-77) coined the term *l'Australasie* in his speculative summary *Histoire des navigations aux terres australes* (1756), which inspired the voyages of Bougainville and Cook.

[3] Hence in this discussion I use the term 'colonies' to refer to pre-1907 New Zealand, and before 1901 to the entities of New South Wales, Tasmania, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia, when they became States within the Commonwealth of Australia.

[4] After two decades of construction the Auckland to Wellington main line opened in 1908. In the South Island, the Otira tunnel, completed in 1923 at the length of five and a quarter miles, finally linked its east and west coast rail systems. (Mike's Railway History, 2013)

[5] The site was re-animated during the Pacific War, again according to military needs as Norfolk Island became a US supply depot. The wartime diary of George Whitley of the Corps of Royal New Zealand Engineers covers his period on the island. Before they were moved to Noumea he recorded (13 March 1943) an open-air concert 'sponsored, acted and given by the officers of "N" Force in appreciation for what the men had done in previous concerts' (Whitley, 2013, p. 20). Currently Norfolk Island has amateur theatre activity plus historical re-animation performances centred on its historic sites.

[6] This expanded 'Australasia' may reconfigure itself from time to time according to economic opportunities and the requirements of specific genres of theatrical production. The festival circuits of South Africa and Australia-New Zealand now routinely exchange performances. In the field of opera, Simon Phillips' production of Verdi's *Otello* with a multi-national cast toured Australia for the Verdi Bicentenary Year of 2013 after premiering in Cape Town (6 April 2013). It is a co-production between Cape Town Opera, West Australian Opera, New Zealand Opera, the State Opera of South Australia, Opera Queensland and Victorian Opera.

[7] Cedric Hardwicke (1961, pp. 75-86) provides an account of the strenuous adventures and self-reliance of his Shakespearean theatre troupe, isolated in South Africa at the outbreak of the First World War.

[8] The key role of international postal contracts in forming or influencing nineteenth-century global touring routes is yet to be fully accounted for. For example, while the colonies of West Australia, South Australia and Victoria opted for a UK-Australian postal contract using the P & O line through Suez, the colonies of New Zealand, New South Wales and Queensland preferred the faster trans-Pacific routes. Initially the mail crossed Panama by train, but after the completion of the Transcontinental Railway the boats went to San Francisco and mail then crossed the North American continent to the Atlantic. Thus, after 1875, many North American companies included a South-East Asian and Australasian leg in their trans-American tours, the regular services enabling trans-Pacific and Asian movement in all directions. After this period, Australasia and East Asia could be legitimately included in a regional USA touring map.

[9] While variety's early-century Australasian organisations and founding individuals have received ample attention (Van Straten, 2003; Fuller, 2004; Anderson, 2009), its region-forming characteristics after 1945 are now also attracting study. Bollen (2011, 2013) deals with commercial regional revue and cabaret acts with a focus on Asian-Australian exchange.

[10] This flexible 'modern' relation between theatre and state was markedly different from the military suppression and invigilation during the rule of the naval and military colonial governors of the Australian convict period of 1788-1840s (Jordan, 2002), although during this period commercial theatre was established in Sydney, Tasmania, and the new settlement of Melbourne.

[11] Orpheus, 'Mimes and Music', *Evening Post* (Wellington), 12 October 1912, p. 11. The *Evening Post*'s examples comprise George Rignold, Kyrle Bellew, Charles Arnold, Frank Thornton, H. B. Irving, Thomas Kingston, Harcourt Beatty and George Titheradge.

[12] The wide-ranging international activities of George and Rose Lewis, including their important presence in India, are the subject of Mimi Colligan's (2013) study *Circus and Stage: The Theatrical Adventures of Rose Edouin and GBW Lewis*.

[13] The nation of New Guinea/Niugini gained independence from Australia in 1975. The touring company Raun Raun Theatre, founded by Greg Murphy in that year, is currently based in Goroka in the Eastern Highlands and performs in Tok Pisin or Tok Inglis (Murphy, 2010).

[14] Many entertainers in the armed services include their war experience in their published memoirs, for example Joyce Grenfell, Cicely Courtneidge, Michael Pate, Dirk Bogarde, Anthony Quayle, Alec Guinness, Gracie Fields and many more, forming a rich testimonial literature.

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