ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The Changing Commemorative Landscape during the Australian Interwar Period:
The 'Pioneer Woman Citizen' Joins the 'Citizen Soldier'

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Abstract

In the aftermath of the First World War, the Australian commemorative landscape was dominated by remembrance of the sacrifices made predominantly by men during wartime, celebrating a constructed national identity based on 'egalitarian' masculinity through the figure of the 'citizen soldier'. By the end of the succeeding two decades, during which the terms of Australian nationhood underwent significant changes, the citizen soldier's domination of Australia's commemorative culture was challenged by a new historical and cultural subject of memorialisation: the 'pioneer woman citizen'. Embedded in the language asserting the pioneer woman citizen into the public commemorative landscape was the exclusion of Aboriginal women, who were located outside of the boundaries of citizenship.

Biographical Details

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Ah how I bless the pioneers

The women lost to fame,

Who braved the bush for strenuous years

To make Australia's name.[1]

Louisa Lawson, 1895.

History, as it has mainly been written, is, very literally, the story of man.[2]

Eleanor Dark, *The Peaceful Army,* 1938.

Introduction

In the aftermath of World War I, the Australian commemorative landscape was dominated by remembrance of the sacrifices made predominantly by men during wartime, celebrating a constructed national identity based on 'egalitarian' masculinity through the figure of the 'citizen soldier'.[3] By the end of the succeeding two decades, during which the terms of Australian nationhood underwent significant changes, the citizen soldier's domination of Australia's commemorative culture was challenged by a new historical and cultural subject of memorialisation: the 'pioneer woman citizen'. From the late nineteenth century, Australian feminists have sought to establish white settler women's place in the national historical narrative conceived as an entirely male domain, by emphasising the qualities of 'pioneer woman'.[4] In the 1930s, the National Sesquicentenary and Victoria and South Australia's state Centennials provided the opportunity for Australian feminists to insist on the public acknowledgement of women as citizens, based on their contributions to Australian nationhood.[5] This article will show how interwar feminists, particularly the nationalist National Council of Women, opened the public commemorative landscape in the interwar period to the memorialisation of white settler women through the figure of the pioneer woman citizen. I will investigate the historical circumstances that facilitated the entry of this subject of memorialisation into Australia's commemorative culture, namely developments in Australian society and culture, particularly the changing relationship between gender, citizenship and nationhood. Embedded in the language asserting the pioneer woman citizen into the public commemorative landscape was the exclusion of Aboriginal women, who were located outside of the boundaries of citizenship as formulated by the National Council of Women.[6]

[1] Louisa Lawson, 'The Women of the Bush', Louisa Lawson Scrapbook, vol. 1, Lawson papers, ML MSS A, 1895.

[2] E. Dark, 'Caroline Chisholm and Her Times', in *The Peaceful Army*, ed. Flora Eldershaw (Adelaide: Rigby for the Women's Centenary Council of SA, 1936), 59-84.

[3] Ken Inglis 'Men, Women, and War Memorials: Anzac Australia,' *Daedalus* 116, vol. 4 (1987): 35-54.

4 Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1999), chap. 5, eBook Brissenden collection (EBSCOhost eBooks online), eISBN 9781743439340.

[5] Lake, *Getting Equal,* chap. 5.

[6] Australians did not become 'citizens' in the legal sense until 1949, following the Nationality and Citizenship Act of 1948. The terms 'citizen' and 'citizenship' are used in this article with direct reference to the National Council of

Figure 1. Hugh Linaker and Charles Web Gilbert, The Pioneer Women's Memorial Garden, 1934, Melbourne, Victoria, photograph, image by Author, March 2019.

The Changing Dynamics of Australian Nationhood in the Interwar Period

According to Australian historian Stuart Macintyre, during the thirty years from the beginning of the Great War to the end of the Second World War, 'the circumstances of Australian nationhood changed irrevocably'.[7] The Great War was destructive of the Australian economy, culture and social cohesiveness; in the immediate post-war period, the Australian government struggled to form an economically and culturally independent nation.[8] The establishment of the Nationalist Party during WWI and the conservative domination of politics in Australia for most of the succeeding quarter century meant an enduring loyalty to the British Empire.[9] That sixty thousand Australian men had died in the name of the Motherland allowed imperial loyalty to be aligned with 'conservative, Protestant men as a sacral force', the fallen and returned soldiers thus providing a new sense of a masculine national identity.[10] Pre-war attempts at nation-building were set back by the war's toll on the Australian economy and social cohesion, creating both a stronger need for economic dependence on Britain and faltering confidence in imperial ties.[11] The white settler nationalism in the interwar period is invariably described as a nostalgic one, in which national identity was based on shared mythology of belonging to a distinctive 'Australian' culture and history.[12] According to Australian historians

Women's and other women's organisations formulation of women's citizenship during the interwar period. See: Lake, *Getting Equal,* chap. 4.

[7] Stuart Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia* (Cambridge; Melbourne : Cambridge University Press, 1999), 155.

[8] Macintyre, *Concise History*, 155-157.

[9] Macintyre, *Concise History*, 155-157.

[10] Marilyn Lake, 'Giving Birth to a New Nation,' in *Creating a Nation,* Rev. ed., ed. Patricia Grimshaw et al. (Ringwood, Victoria: McPhee Gribble, 1994), 218.

[11] Macintyre, *Concise History,* 166.

[12] Deborah Jordan, 'Palmer's Present: Gender and the National Community in 1934,' *Hecate* 29, vol. 2 (November

Paula Hamilton and Kate Darian-Smith, the dominant national image circulated in public memory during this period expressed a mythological Australian masculinity which collapsed characteristics of colonial bushmen (pioneers) into the Anzac soldier.[13]

'The citizen soldier'

The need to rebuild a cohesive society with a strong sense of national identity in the aftermath of the First World War bolstered commemorative practice.[14] In *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape,* Australian cultural historians Ken Inglis and Jan Brazier traced the formation of the masculinist and heroic culture of commemoration that saturated national public memory practices in the post-war period.[15] The Australian War Memorial in Canberra was authorised by an act of federal parliament in 1925, becoming one of thousands of war memorials dedicated to Anzac soldiers built across Australia, and Anzac Day was established as a national holiday on 25th of April in 1927.[16] Australian feminist historian Marilyn Lake argues that from the first anniversary of the mythologised 'landing at Gallipoli', Anzac soldiers were publicly heralded as 'giving birth to the nation'.[17] Indeed, Inglis notes that the Australian War Memorial depicts the figure of the Australian nation as a giant muscular solider, declaring to any visitor of the capital 'this memorial belongs to men at war.'[18] The 'citizen soldier' thus became the dominant figure of memorialisation and public memory in this period.[19] As Lake emphasises, the powerful myth equating the Anzacs with the birth of the nation rendered invisible the place of women as mothers and carers in society.[20] Indeed, in Melbourne, women were excluded Anzac Day celebrations at the Shrine of Remembrance during the 1930s.[21] Gendered divisions were therefore strengthened in post-war Australia, with the image of the paternalistic male protector and feminine vulnerability puncturing the relative autonomy of white Australian woman during the war. Women were both literally and symbolically excluded from identifying with citizenship and nationhood.

'The golden age of the woman citizen' and the National Council of Women Australia

From the 1920s, after a brief wartime hiatus, Australian feminists mobilised through various organisations, to exercise their power as recently enfranchised citizens.[22] Indeed, the interwar period in Australia has been characterised by Lake as 'the golden age of the woman citizen', which saw older

2003): 99-112.

[13] Paula Hamilton and Kate Darian-Smith, *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 2-3.

[14] Inglis, 'Men, Women, and War Memorials,' 44-49.

[15] K. S. Inglis and Jan Brazier, *Sacred Places : War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*, 3rd ed. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2008).

[16] K. S. Inglis and Jan Brazier, 'Capital Monuments,' in *Sacred Places : War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*, 3rd ed. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2008), 266-316.

[17] Lake, 'Giving Birth to a New Nation,' 218.

[18] Inglis, 'Men, Women, and War Memorials,' 44-49.

[19] Marilyn Lake, 'Monuments of Manhood and Colonial Dependence: The Cult of Anzac as Compensation,' in *Memory, Monuments and Museums: The Past in the Present,* ed. Marilyn Lake (Carlton, Vic: MUP, 2006), 43-57.

[20] Lake, 'Giving Birth to a New Nation,' 218.

[21] Inglis and Brazier, 'Capital Monuments,' 314.

[22] Lake, *Getting Equal*, chap. 4.

feminist organisations such as the National Council of Women (established in 1896), join newer, more socially progressive feminist organisations to 'promote women's status as citizens' through non-party, grassroots activism.[23] White Australian women got the vote federally in 1902; they were endowed with both rights and responsibilities, and both economic independence and self-determination were essential to the feminists' aims.[24]

The National Council of Women (NCW) was an umbrella organisation for most Australian feminist organisations during the interwar period.[25] According to Judith Smart and Marian Quartly, the NCW provided the 'principal means by which representative women in Australia could come together, exchange views…and often speak publicly with one voice'.[26] The NCW formalised as a national body in 1931 under the presidency of feminist activist and nationalist Alice Francis Mabel (May) Moss (1869-1948), a 'well equipped' choice for president.[27] Moss became a member of the Victorian NCW in 1904 and was president from 1928 to 1938; she was also an active member of the conservative Australian Women's National League (AWNL), yet her unwavering dedication to women's rights and equality set her apart from other league members.[28] Under Moss' leadership, the Victorian NCW became 'the largest, the wealthiest and perhaps the most innovative' state council, boasting one hundred and eight affiliated societies by 1935.[29] The South Australian Council encompassed fifty-three societies in 1936, making them the third largest body in Australia.[30]

The NCW's new federal constitution united each state council (except for WA) under a 'nationwide collective purpose': an agenda for social reform and a commitment to home and family.[31] Whilst the new constitution doubled down on old principles, it was decided that 'the ideals of the National Councils of Women covered citizenship in its broadest sense'.[32] The NCW drew on new post-war nationalist discourse to establish white settler women's unique place within the Australian body politic as 'citizen mothers', deserving of a voice and place in public life based on their capacity for motherhood.[33]

The Council's goals for reform were often conservative, shaped by their views on national characteristics: they emphasised the image of the pioneer woman as part of 'an emerging national tradition', to assert white settler women's place in both the national story and public life.[34] However, promoting the figure of the pioneer woman as representative of white settler women was not limited to conservative organisations and goals; the range of organisations supporting a pioneer women's memorial, particularly in Victoria, spanned different social and political strata.[35]

[23] Lake, *Getting Equal*, chap. 4.
[24] Lake, *Getting Equal*, chap. 1.
[25] Marian Quartly and Judith Smart, *Respectable Radicals: A History of the National Council of Women Australia, 1896-2006* (Clayton, Victoria : Monash University Publishing in conjunction with the National Council of Women of Australia, 2015), 1-2.
[26] Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 1.
[27] Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 132-133.
[28] Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 132-133.
[29] Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 135-136.
[30] Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 135-136.
[31] Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 51-52.
[32] National Council of Women, 'Presidential Address', July 1929, Executive Council minutes, SRG297/1/3, State Library of South Australia, Adelaide.
[33] Marilyn Lake, 'Depression Dreaming,' in *Creating a Nation*, Rev ed., ed Patricia Grimshaw et al., (Ringwood, Victoria: McPhee Gribble, 1994), 229.
[34] P. Grimshaw, 'Gendered Settlements,' in *Creating A Nation*, Rev. ed., ed. Patricia Grimshaw et al. (Ringwood, Victoria: McPhee Gribble, 1994), 182-183.
[35] Deborah Jordan, 'Palmer's Present,' 99-112.

Importantly, this 'golden age' did not extend to the advocacy of citizenship for Aboriginal women.[36] As new understandings of the relationship between First Nations people and their land were beginning to permeate Australian culture, many women's organisations adopted maternalistic policies regarding the health and safety of Aboriginal women, yet their citizenship status was not a concern for conservative organisations such as the NCW.[37] While the campaign within the women's movement for the extension of civic rights based on the specific qualities of women's capacity for motherhood continued as a leading cause for activists throughout the 1930s, the conception of women's citizenship widened as white settler women's place in society expanded.[38]

The 1930s: 'A Critical Defining Moment'

The 1930s witnessed the confluence of enormous change and contestation to established power structures in white settler societies amidst worldwide economic depression.[39] Australian historian Deborah Jordan characterises this period as a 'critical defining moment' in which the dreams of white nationhood in settler-colonial societies faltered.[40] Consequently, both racism and anti-feminist backlash rose in this period, and the need to bolster a cohesive national identity based on an imagined white community became central to the government's nation-building project.[41]

The Great Depression hit Australia in 1931, decimating Australian industry and creating widespread poverty, particularly in rural areas.[42] However, despite the effects of the Depression, Australia moved into modernity with the sense of cultural 'growth and post-war renewal'; the government invested in urban areas, introducing new industry into cities. [43] Urbanisation increased cultural activity such as literature, painting and theatre, adding to a sense of national uniqueness.[44] As modern cultural forms permeated Australian culture, younger generations of Australian women were drawn to urban areas.[45] Women were entering the professionalised workforce at unprecedented rates – as medical professionals, lawyers, artists, authors – bringing new feminist imperatives for establishing strategies for equal pay and anti-discrimination policies.[46] However, women's political representation was minuscule in the 1930s; Australian feminists began to focus on advancing their participation in public life.[47]

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[36] Lake, *Getting Equal*, chap. 5.
[37] Whilst feminist organisations were set up to advocate for the rights of Aboriginal women such as the Aboriginal Protection League, an affiliated member of the NCW, the citizenship rights of Aboriginal women were not a primary cause for the NCW see: Lake, *Getting Equal*, chap. 5.
[38] Lake, 'Depression Dreaming,' 227-231.
[39] Jordan, 'Palmer's Present,' 99–112.
[40] Ibid., 100-101.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia,* 167.
[43] Urbanisation and modernisation concentrated most of the population in Melbourne and Sydney; both cities surpassed two million inhabitants by 1928. See: Macintyre, *A Concise History,* 167 – 169.
[44] Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980* (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), 140-145.
[45] These 'New Women' engaged with international popular culture, embracing styles such as 'the flapper', 'the lesbian style', and 'the bachelor girl'. See: Lake, 'Depression Dreaming,' 239.
[46] Lake, *Getting Equal,* chap. 5.
[47] Lake, 'Depression Dreaming,' 240-252.

A Decade of Commemoration

The 1930s were an important period for nationalist commemorative practices. Occurring amidst post-depression reconstruction, the Centennials and Sesquicentennial of the 1930s were integral to the state-sanctioned nation-building project.[48] Australia's Sesquicentenary was celebrated in 1938, with events limited to New South Wales; Victoria and South Australia preferred to focus on their own Centenary celebrations in 1934 and 1936 respectively.

During these periods of heightened national feeling, governments sought to define both state and national identities amidst political and economic turmoil.[49] Pioneer mythology was essential to capturing a shared history, identity, and memory for white settlers during the celebrations.[50] As John Hirst has shown, the pioneer legend promoted a conservative foundation mythology that celebrated progress, individual achievement, a society with a common purpose, and ensured that future generations would carry on their work.[51]

Evoking the pioneer legend represented a rural nostalgia that masked a harsh reality: the poverty of many settlers in rural areas.[52] Indeed, Australia's economic downturn spurred public debate in Victoria and South Australia over government spending on centennial events and how much it would incur.[53] At a meeting held at Melbourne's Town Hall on the 28th of May 1933, Victorian Premier Stanley Argyle announced that the coming Centenary celebrations were dedicated in 'honour to the pioneers, who, by their hardships, have made conditions so easy for us today'.[54] Following Victoria's example, South Australian Premier Richard L. Butler's state government emphasised pioneering as central to their state spirit; the idea of 'progress' in the face of immense hardship shaped the form of events.[55]

Central to the national story of progress evoked during the centennials were frontier histories that highlighted, often through biography, the male pioneers in each state.[56] The Historical Subcommittee of the state Centenary Council produced a volume titled *Victoria: The First Century* to 'place before their fellow citizens a narrative which… will help them to appreciate more fully the honour owing to the pioneers who laid the foundations, political and social, upon which the superstructure of the state has been raised.'[57] Similarly, South Australia's historical anthology included the biographies of three hundred and fifty people who had shaped the state, none of whom were women.[58]

[48] Grimshaw, 'Gendered Settlements,' 182-183.
[49] Hamilton and Darian- Smith, *Memory and History,* 2-3.
[50] Richard Waterhouse, 'The Pioneer Legend and Its Legacy: In Memory of John Hirst,' *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society,* l03.1 (2017): 7-25.
Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, 181-185.
[51] John Hirst, 'The Pioneer Legend', *Historical Studies*, 18 no. 71 (1978): 316-337, doi: 10.1080/10314617808595595
[52] Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, 181-185.
[53] In both states, government officials decided that the events would bring inter-state and international tourism that would help bolster Australian industry and production, create employment and widen export markets throughout the British Empire. See: 'Memorial to Women', *Herald,* May 29, 1933, 4, http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article243112909.
[54] The celebrations would begin in Portland, to honour the Henty family, the first white family of 'pioneers' to settle in Victoria, and culminate in the anniversary of John Batman and William Fawkner's 'pioneering' of the Port Phillip district. See: 'Memorial to Women.'
[55] 'South Australia's Centenary Is Taking Shape', *Mail*, July 7, 1934, 16, http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article58851230; see also: Arthur C. Goode, 'The Romance of South Australia's First Century,' *Queensland Times,* July 25, 1936, 8, http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article117599185.
[56] The Historical Subcommittee of the Centenary Celebrations Council, *Victoria: The First Century* (Melbourne: Robertson and Mullens, 1934); *Who's Who, South Australia Centenary, 1936,* compiled by the Amalgamated Publishing Company (Adelaide: Amalgamated Publishing Company; Shipping Newspapers SA LTD, 1936).
[57] *Victoria: The First Century,* 'Preface', 16.
[58] *Who's Who,* 'Preface,' 6-8.

Sidelined from the central narratives of these histories were women, settlers from non-European backgrounds, and First Nations people. Whilst new understandings of the physical, spiritual and cultural relationship between Aboriginal people and their land were surfacing in Australian literature during this period, they were not reflected in the centenary festivities.[59]

Nevertheless, marginalised groups seeking public recognition during the celebrations challenged the conservative, monolithic white, male Australian identity the events sought to define. During the Sesquicentenary, the trade union movement staged protests seeking basic wages and social reform, and the Aborigines Progressive Association observed a National Day of Mourning, highlighting European destruction of Aboriginal land and cultures.[60] Perhaps the most successful challenge to the events' masculinist underpinnings came from Australian feminists, represented by the NCW, whose representatives demanded to be included in the celebrations in a meaningful way; after decades of trying, and in a political climate that incited anti-feminist feeling, white settler women claimed a public voice.

Figure 2. Elise Cornish, The South Australian Pioneer Women's Memorial, Adelaide, 1936, photograph, image by Author, July 11, 2019.

Women's part in the Centennials: The birth of the 'pioneer woman citizen'

To ensure women a part in the celebrations each state NCW formed a Women's Centenary Council

[59] Jordan, 'Palmer's Present,' 99-110.
[60] Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, 181-185.

acting as a decision making body for all affiliated member groups.[61] Conscious that national commemorations usually occasioned histories ignorant about women, each NCW seized the opportunity to assert the distinct place of women in national history and in public memory by promoting the establishment of a memorial to pioneer women.[62] In accordance with the events' nationalist mythology, the South Australian and Victorian WCC's used the figure of the Australian woman pioneer as an emblem of a distinctive past, present and future for white settler women.

However, this pioneer woman asserting her place in national historical consciousness departed in many ways from her late-nineteenth-century incarnation. The figure of the pioneer woman put forward by the WCCs as a historical and cultural subject and figure of memorialisation was shaped by the discourse on citizenship permeating the interwar feminist movement. In the language used by members of the WCC to promote the pioneer women's memorials, each council inserted into public discourse the figure of the 'pioneer woman citizen'.

To further the inclusion of women in public memory, each women's committee produced a commemorative anthology celebrating Australian pioneer women: *The Centenary Gift Book* (1934) in Victoria*, A Book of South Australia: Women in the First Hundred years* (1936), and *The Peaceful Army* (1938) in NSW.[63] These women's histories demonstrated white settler women as deserving of a place as citizens of the nation based on their contributions to nationhood throughout the first century of colonisation. Each anthology described the 'pioneer woman citizen' as an adaptable, evolving figure.[64] The Victorian WCC chose prominent socialist and writer Nettie Palmer to edit the *Centenary Gift Book,* compiled to 'place on record the story of the part which women have played through the century in the life of the state, not only as its home-makers and home keepers, but….in its social and public life… the story which is told is not confined to the past… it represents the work of Victorian women of today.'[65] In *The Peaceful Army*, author Kylie Tennant noted that the word pioneer 'has a future, it is a young word, it means something proud and daring.'[66] Tennant used the image of the pioneer woman to situate the history of white settler women in the present and the future. As Jordan notes, deploying the pioneer woman as both a past and present figure was a feminist innovation, 'they thus could retain something of the expectancy of labour and social experimentation in Australia.'[67] Through these anthologies, and through the corresponding memorials built to celebrate the pioneer woman citizen, pioneer mythology was given new meaning, and white settler women's status as citizens was given concrete form. Importantly, the colonial pioneer women whose spirit supposedly lived on in all white settler women assumed the land they 'pioneered' was empty and

[61] Smart and Quartly, *Respectable Radicals,* 22-30.

[62] Lake, *Getting Equal,* chap. 5.

[63] Nettie Palmer and Frances Fraser eds., *Centenary Gift Book* (Robertson & Mullens for The Women's Centenary Council, 1934); Louise Brown and Women's Centenary Council of South Australia, eds., *A Book of South Australia: Women in the First Hundred Years* (Adelaide: Rigby for the Women's Centenary Council of SA, 1936); Flora S. Eldershaw, Australia's 150th Anniversary Celebrations Women's Executive Committee, and Australia's 150th Anniversary Celebrations Women's Advisory Council, eds., *The Peaceful Army: A Memorial to the Pioneer Women of Australia, 1788-1938* (Sydney: Arthur McQuitty and Co., 1938).

[64] Palmer and Fraser, *Centenary Gift Book*, 99-112; Brown, *A Book of South Australia*, 1-251; Eldershaw, *The Peaceful Army*, 1-138.

[65] 'Centenary Gift Book,' *Argus*, 6 October 1934, 26, http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article10967947.

[66] K. Tennant, 'Some Pioneer Women Writers,' in *The Peaceful Army*, eds. Flora Eldershaw and Australia's 150th Anniversary Celebrations Women's Executive Committee (Adelaide: Rigby Limited for the Women's Centenary Council of SA 1936), 131-137.

[67] Jordan, 'Palmer's Present', 99-112.

there for the taking.[68] Indeed, Tennant framed the experience of pioneer women in such terms: 'a pioneer may be defined as a person who surveys his environment, decides it isn't good enough, sees what is needed, and gets to work to supply the need.'[69] Thus, historicising white women's contribution to colonisation and nationhood implicated them in the dispossession of Aboriginal land.[70]

The texts' authors often held maternalistic views of First Nations people, characterised as part of the harsh bushland the 'pioneers' faced. Vida Lenox's historical pieces reveal occasions of affinity between white settlers and Aboriginal women, most often in terms of childrearing.[71] *The Book of South Australia* has the most marked absence of Aboriginal women, a deliberate exclusion by the NCWSA. The only chapter regarding Aboriginal people titled 'Our Pioneer Women and the Natives' by anthropologist and writer Daisy Bates frames the relationship between Aboriginal women and British emigrant women in terms of maternalism: 'whenever the British woman penetrated the native woman benefitted by her coming in amongst them'.[72] However, similarly to Lenox's pieces, Bates description of these colonial encounters reveals that Aboriginal women and white women formed close relationships based on the exchange of knowledge and materials in SA.[73] In *The Peaceful Army,* Eleanor Dark discusses colonial policy regarding Aboriginal people, highlighting the 'guerrilla warfare' between British colonisers and Aboriginal owners, showing some progressive insight into the destructive nature of colonial policy on Aboriginal land.[74] According to Dark, during colonisation, NSW was called 'a new land, but it was only a new occupation of a very ancient land, a tide of human life, surging recklessly over a land it spared no time to know, or to attempt to know.'[75] In the process of colonisation, 'a nomad race finds its country invaded, its streams polluted, its hunting grounds commandeered, cleared, fenced, sown with crops'; resistance on the part of Aboriginal people was therefore 'understandable, excusable, inevitable.'[76] The critiques of these works as contributing to the processes of settler-colonialism are important, yet the anthologies also reveal the different ways some women conceived of the relationship between themselves and Aboriginal women. There is evidence in these texts that some white- settler women were beginning to understand the devastating effects of colonisation on the country's Aboriginal population.

The varied depictions of Aboriginal women from this memorialisation reflected contemporary tensions within the feminist movement, as an older generation of nationalist feminists clung to their visions of British civilisation and femininity in the face of socially progressive feminists who advocated for the rights of Aboriginal women.[77] Indeed, the assumed white identity of the 'pioneer woman citizen' was challenged by the Aboriginal rights activist and social reformer Constance Cooke (1882-1967), a member of the Aboriginal Protection League (APL), an affiliated organisation of the

[68] Lake, *Getting Equal,* chap. 1.
[69] Tennant, 'Pioneer Women Writers', 131-137.
[70] Mary Spongberg, Ann Curthoys, and Barbara Caine, eds., *Companion to Women's Historical Writing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 120.
[71] Vida Lenox, *Centenary Gift Book,* 58; 107; 114-115; 121; 130; 133; 142; 149; 153; 158.
[72] D. Bates, 'Our Pioneer Women and the Natives,' in *A Book of South Australia,* ed., Louise Brown (Adelaide: Rigby for the Women's Centenary Council of SA, 1936), 94.
[73] Bates, 'Pioneer Women', 94.
[74] Dark, 'Caroline Chisholm', 67-69.
[75] Dark, 'Chisholm', 67-69.
[76] Dark, 'Chisholm', 67-69.
[77] Lake, *Getting Equal*, chap. 5.

NCWSA and the WCC.[78] At an NCWSA meeting in August of 1936, Cooke attempted to secure 'justice for our original inhabitants' in the Centenary celebrations by expanding the definition of 'pioneer woman' to include Aboriginal women and proposed that 'a portion of the Centenary funds be used to provide a hospital bed for use of aboriginal women.'[79] Cooke's recommendations were rejected by the Council.[80] These tensions occasioned by the commemorative events highlight the inability of some middle-class conservative feminists to recognise their national history was the result of dispossession, exploitation and sexual abuse.[81] Therefore, by redefining the boundaries of citizenship to include the 'pioneer woman citizen', a feminist justification was lent to the dispossession of Indigenous land, strengthening the racial boundaries of citizenship.

Conclusion

The character of Australian nationhood and its culture of commemoration was indeed transformed in the interwar period, increasingly challenged as competing definitions of national identity entered the public arena. In this period, the outward expression of national coherence propagated by the Australian government masked the internal reality of socially fragmented and ultimately conflicted understandings of nationhood. The state-sanctioned idea of nationhood centred on a collective national/ist identity and historical narrative fusing the masculinist tropes of the pioneer and Anzac Legends. The dominant figure of memorialisation in the immediate post-war period – the citizen solider – encapsulated this idea of national identity and represented men as giving birth to the nation. However, in the 1930s, contesting narratives from working-class, Aboriginal, and feminist activists were voiced in the public sphere during state/national commemorations. These commemorations provided an opportunity for white-settler feminists to promote public recognition in the national story through the figure of the 'pioneer woman citizen.' Australia interwar feminists ensured that it was not only men whose contribution to the development of Australian nationhood would be set in stone in the cultural and physical landscape of Australia; the sacrifices made by women in colonial Australia, and the continuation of their strength into all fields of public life, were worthy of celebration and memorialisation. However, the past they sought to define for white settler women as pioneering citizens simultaneously rested on the exclusion of First Nations people from this status and from the national story. While some white-settler feminists demonstrated a newfound understanding of the effects of settler colonialism, ultimately, the recognition of white settler women's pioneering of Australia's 'empty spaces' implicated them in the dispossession, transformation and commodification of Aboriginal country.

[78] National Council of Women South Australia Branch, 'Minutes of council meeting', August 4th 1936, SRG297/1/3 State Library of South Australia Archives, Adelaide, South Australia.
[79] National Council of Women South Australia Branch, 'Minutes'.
[80] National Council of Women South Australia Branch, 'Minutes'.
[81] Lake, *Getting Equal*, chap. 5.