

Dealing With Difference

Essays in Gender, Culture and History

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Barmaids, Feminists, Ockers and Pubs, 1950–1970s

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The Australian pub and its public bar have been a crucial site for acting out sexual difference in Australia. The public bar and its associated drinking culture of mateship, 'shouting' and other public drinking rituals, have had a long history built around gender exclusiveness. From the nineteenth century onwards the pub was constructed as masculine space in which women had a place only as service providers: they were there either as sexual consorts or as the dispensers of the drink.¹ At times these two purposes were conflated and the women serving were subjected to innuendo and harassment. Keeping the boundaries was part of their job, limiting transgressions was part of the culture of the drinking rites of men. In other words, it was built into the culture of the pub on both sides of the bar. Women's knowledge of and participation in this culture set them apart from other women. In the decades after 1950 this pub culture came under sustained assault from forces for change. The exclusively masculine clientele and the drinking culture it fostered was subjected to new critiques. By the end of the 1970s the old public bar had been transformed. With the emergence of a new 'ocker generation', and a revolutionary women's movement for liberation, the public bar and its culture was re-formed. 'The barmaid' was a crucial figure in sustaining the old pub culture. She took on further significance in the new as her 'difference' from other women was rendered visible.

In this paper I explore those changes and reconstruct the sequence of events as they unfolded. I examine the way representations of 'the barmaid' and of women and men as 'customers' of the public bar performed knowledge of sexual difference, and the way that knowledge in turn reframed gender boundaries. I begin with the self-representation of 'the barmaid' in a well-known autobiographical novel and I conclude with the representation of 'the barmaid' and 'the customer' in women's liberation politics and the self-conscious popular ocker culture of the 1970s. Focussing on women's work, on women as workers in that space, reveals much about the dynamics of gendered subjectivities.

Writing in 1953 of her experiences of being a barmaid in Sydney during the previous three decades, Catherine Edmonds Wright, under the pseudonym of Caddie, claimed her first pub job was also the first time in her life that she had been in a bar. 'In 1924,' she said, 'not only was it forbidden by law for women to drink in a bar, but no woman who valued her reputation would have dared put her nose even into a Ladies' Parlour'.² The consequence was that, 'to most respectable Australians', she said, 'a barmaid was beyond the pale'.

Caddie was describing pub culture in the post World War I period when pubs in several states were forced to close at six o'clock in the evening. By the time she was recounting these experiences, Australian pub culture was infamous as 'the six o'clock swill'; it had become a tourist spectacle as men drank their daily quota of beer in the short hour between finishing work and the pub's closure. Women were largely excluded by law, custom, practice and desire from that culture, except as barmaids. Performing her duties in a forum where no other women were allowed, the barmaid risked her reputation and social status. It was not the fact that all women were excluded that shaped the character of pub culture: it was the fact that it was women perceived as 'respectable' who were excluded.³ Negotiating this fact was 'performing' the role of the barmaid.

Caddie's story is a rare autobiography of a barmaid which has been remarkable in its popular and commercial success as book and film. For me the significance of *Caddie* lies in the representation of herself as 'the barmaid' and for the part her story played in the transformation of Australia's pub culture in the post-war period. Caddie was conspicuously drawing attention to the popular perception of those women who worked in bars. As a woman working in a public space Caddie was forever alert to the powerful male gaze. Being subjected to that gaze, in a men-only space, placed her outside the limits of 'respectable' womanhood. 'Indeed,' she said, 'I felt that [first] morning as I took my place behind the long counter – imagining every eye on me – that I had put myself on the outer'. But by the time *Caddie* appeared this culture was beginning to crumble. Indicative of the shift in public opinion that had occurred since the second world war was the fact that, where the New South Wales population in a referendum in 1946 had voted overwhelmingly to retain six o'clock closing, by 1955 it had gone. Beer manufacturers had been targeting women consumers in their advertisements since the 1930s. In the 1950s, under the impact of immigration from Europe and the U.K., older Australian drinking practices were being assailed by expectations of more sophisticated behaviour. Women were drinking beer and visiting pubs and clubs in greater numbers than ever before. They were still excluded from the men's-only public bar, but pubs themselves, with their ladies' lounges, were not off-limits.

The publication of *Caddie* had another importance. The story of *Caddie: The Autobiography of a Sydney Barmaid* was written as the story of a struggling single mother in Depression Australia, battling for her children: 'a simple account of how a woman earned her keep and her children's keep in the bar of one pub after another' as she said, '...not from choice, but because I was broke and needed the money to support myself and my two young children'. Its appearance was timely. In 1951 the New South Wales government

established a Royal Commission under Justice Maxwell to enquire into the hotel trade. The Maxwell Royal Commission in 1953 came out solidly behind 10 p.m. closing, and this was enacted in new legislation in 1955. Maxwell's report led the way to entirely new drinking practices in Australia.



Fig.10:1 The public bar of the Bondi Hotel, in the Sydney beachside suburb of Bondi, 1951. Noel Butlin Archives of Business and Labour History, Australian National University

Significantly – ‘fortuitously’, and by ‘pure chance’, according to novelist Dymphna Cusack who wrote the Introduction – the story of Caddie appeared just as the Royal Commission in New South Wales exposed the opprobrious conditions under which the liquor trade was conducted: ‘the most uncivilised drinking conditions in the world’, Cusack called them. *Caddie* revealed in graphic narrative form, through the eyes of a woman and her children, the stark realities of Australia’s sex-segregated pub culture. English pub practices were different, Dymphna Cusack explained: there, wives accompanied husbands to drink, chat and watch matches of darts and dominoes. Thus ‘the English barmaid is more like the hostess of the assembled group’, she said, ‘than her Australian counterpart whose job, because of the deplorable conditions surrounding it, is despised by the “respectable” community, whatever her personal character may be’.⁴ There was irony in the fact that the pub culture of the six o’clock swill was a creation of laws sought by feminists and passed at the turn of the century, laws which also proscribed or prohibited

women’s work as barmaids.⁵ Then ‘the barmaid’ was symbolic of the evils of the pub and to be removed; now in the 1950s Caddie was also used to remove the evils of the pub, but to do so in a way that included women. Dymphna Cusack exploited the connections between Caddie’s story and the Maxwell Commission quite shamelessly in her introduction to the book (which no doubt accounted for some of the book’s popularity).



Fig.10:2 The lounge bar of the Bondi Hotel, at the same time. Noel Butlin Archives of Business and Labour History, Australian National University.

It was partly to bring Australian practices in line with overseas practices that laws were now being liberalised, but it was also in response to new demands from consumers. These were both men and women seeking more salubrious drinking conditions. Along with later trading went the idea that drinking was a universal pastime to be shared with women companions. The end of six o’clock closing was therefore the beginning of the end of the exclusively-male public bar. Increasingly it was no longer acceptable for women to wait outside on the footpath or in the car while Dad went in for a drink with his mates, something Maxwell, J. described as ‘a most unedifying spectacle’. Guided and shaped by Dymphna Cusack, *Caddie* tapped right into this changing culture. It was however, also the first shot fired by ‘respectable’ women in the battle to reclaim the culture of the pub. The process of change in the licensing laws, which began in the 1950s with the judicial assault on the drink-



Fig.10:3 A woman enjoys a counter lunch in the bar of a hotel in the Melbourne suburb of Fitzroy, c.1960s. National Library of Australia.

ing culture associated with six o'clock closing, continued in the 1960s and 70s as women became more vocal about their exclusion from pubs. They demanded the right to be served as customers.

The first sign of political action came in Queensland in 1963 when about 200 women wanting to attend an art exhibition in a pub were turned away by the licensee who thought it would be an offence under the Liquor Act for women to enter the private bar where the paintings were hung. The Licensing Commission Chairman pointed out there was no offence in a woman merely being in a bar. 'This aspect had not been considered because it had been felt that as women could not be supplied with liquor there would be no reason to enter the bar'.⁶ In 1965 Merle Thornton and Rosalie Bognor, 'two married women...and each the mother of two children', (wives of academics) tested this advice when they walked into the public bar of the Regatta Hotel in suburban Brisbane, and asked to be served a lemonade. Immediately someone called the police. When they were refused the lemonade, the women took out a thick dog-chain and padlocked themselves to the footrail. Several men bought them a beer, their husbands distributed pamphlets urging that women be allowed to drink in bars, and the police took their names, pointed out that

the Licensing Act clearly stated that women were not allowed in a public bar, then discreetly removed themselves rather than create a scene.⁷

The episode was small, low-key but extremely significant in its timing and purpose, and it got press coverage. The demonstration, Rosalie Bognor pointed out to the journalists present, had followed after a deputation of women to the Minister concerned had not persuaded him to alter the Licensing Act to allow women into public bars. Earlier that month Queensland had undertaken a major overhaul of its liquor laws, and sweeping changes were introduced, mainly to do with the consumption of food and liquor together, for example, for later hours in hotel dining rooms, and on Sundays for restaurants. It deleted the prohibition on the supply of liquor to women in rooms with direct access to bars, but otherwise did not liberalise the drinking restrictions on women in a public space. Thornton and Bognor thus took action themselves. The forty or so men in the bar at the time canvassed by the journalist admired the stand of the women; the licensee, on the other hand, opposed their presence.

A week later they tried again. In company with another eight women, dubbed 'Brisbane's "bar-room suffragettes"' by the *Courier-Mail*, they approached three different hotels, where 'men cheered them as they entered; offered to buy them drinks and gossiped with them on a "man-to-man" basis over a glass of beer'. A male bar attendant at one pub refused to speak to them or any of the reporters in the party, but the police refused to come in response to calls that male sympathisers were buying the women beer. 'And nobody tried to stop them', the article was headlined. One customer in the public bar when the women entered was reported as saying he was 'all for it. They can do it in New South Wales - why can't they do it here?' Consequently, Merle Thornton claimed, it had been 'a great victory for women's rights'.⁸ Historian Ann Curthoys subsequently claimed the action, for what seemed at the time isolated and small, was very direct and 'would become in retrospect a giant precursive step in the general direction of a more wide-ranging liberation'.⁹

Four years later, Marjorie Stapleton, 'equipped with a cold bottle of beer and the courage of my convictions', strode into another Brisbane hotel (this time the Saloon Bar) and 'demanded the services that until then had been the unique prerogative of the men of Queensland!' Stapleton was exploiting a loophole in the law which effectively enabled women to be in the bar provided they brought in their own unopened bottle. The publican cheerily opened it for her, 'seven terrified men put down their beers and disappeared into the middle distance', but the licensee quickly warmed to the idea; 'there should be more of it', he said. 'I like it'. Soon Stapleton was drinking with about twenty men 'all of whom agreed that women would be welcome in saloon bars so long as there was one bar kept for men only'.¹⁰ The law made it quite plain, the newspaper report pointed out, that women were not barred from public and saloon bars; nor were they barred from drinking there; it was however illegal for someone to supply them with liquor, whether that be the hotel staff or any of the other bar patrons.

By this time the press discussion had shifted to one of equality between the sexes.¹¹ Two years later women's liberation had taken hold. In several

cities groups of women were disrupting public bars. Being refused service in a public bar may seem 'a small thing perhaps to the uninitiated woman, but to your frenetic feminist, a barb in the delicate buttock', a Sydney woman said. A protest in several Manly beachfront pubs, that involved chanting, banging on the bar, 'seventeen or so women seated on the floor, demanding a drink, refusing to be moved', led to the arrest of four of them and some quite heated interjections from the pub's male patrons, 'roused as much by our gender as our din'.¹²

Other demonstrations got very nasty. In one demonstration in Melbourne about thirty or forty young women (later calling themselves The Polaris Forty) blockaded the public bar of a North Carlton pub when their request for service was refused. They then linked arms and prevented any service being provided to men customers. A fight developed, at least one of the women was hurt, 'felled, apparently kicked', and carried outside; the women then sat in a circle on the floor, singing women's liberation songs, until the police came and removed them bodily – they were 'dragged out by their legs', the daily press reported.¹³ Twelve of the women were subsequently charged with offensive behaviour.

The women's liberation press gave a more graphic account of the violence. Male customers 'deprived of their life-blood...became immeasurably infuriated...they started abusing us, assaulting us, calling us moles, pushing us, pinching breasts, knocking one girl to the floor and kicking her in the stomach, breaking a billiard cue over another girl's head'. When the police arrived and 'meekly' asked them to leave, the women 'sang and danced and laughed'. As the cops got serious the women 'bunched together and held on grimly to each other and to the bar', resisting all efforts to drag them out. 'Scenes of incredible brute force followed. Women were grabbed, and thrown out by the hair, legs, breasts, neck and clothes...some were thrown headlong into the vans. One girl was pushed over a car bonnet and beaten around the head'. Still the women resisted, surging back into the pub, 'angry and determined to reassert their rights'. Only by arresting the women were the police able to disperse the demonstration. This action was the third in what had become a campaign to desegregate a student 'drinking hole'. A month earlier a woman had tried unsuccessfully to get service; a week earlier about thirty women had similarly been refused service and were thrown out of the pub. Consequently, 'a spontaneous feminist happening sprang up in the streets...it was resolved that the *Polaris* would see more bands of angry women demanding equal rights. Word spread through the feminist underground and the next Saturday about 40 women gathered...'. The writer concluded, 'This marks the beginning of revolutionary action by women no longer content to sit down and merely talk of their oppression'.¹⁴

Obviously, drinking in pubs alongside men was a highly symbolic act and women's demands to be treated equally as customers a major challenge to the culture. Although it was being led by women themselves, it is also clear that there was support from men for whom older drinking customs had no appeal. A 1957 survey showed only 11 per cent of the population preferred the public bar, only 23 per cent preferred to drink in male company only, and most of these were over 60 years old.¹⁵

The women storming the Carlton pub also believed the pub's regulars were sympathetic to their struggle but that the management had brought in 'heavies' when the women's determination grew. In the end the publican had capitulated and allowed women into the public bar.¹⁶ Some Brisbane women



Fig.10:4 Australia's pub culture makes the front cover of *Time* magazine, *Time-Pacific Edition*, vol.75, 4 April 1960.

decided to liberate a pub they heard was refusing to serve women in the public bar. There the proprietor was a woman who instructed her women employees not to serve either the women or the men in their company. On the two occasions they visited the pub, the liberating forces found that 'most of the men in the bar had no opposition to our being served, and in many cases heartily supported our demands'.¹⁷

Sydney women similarly encountered staunch opposition from the publican and bar staff but sympathetic endorsement from many of the pub's patrons. An invasion of several pubs in the Leichardt area of Parramatta Road

by the Working Women's Group of Women's Liberation prompted a response from the men drinking there that was 'immediate and sympathetic'. The publican's determined resistance ('don't tell me how to run my pub') was, according to the account subsequently published, 'greeted by a lusty boo from the drinkers from around the bar'. Two of the drinkers attempted to buy the women a beer but were refused service so they went to another part of the bar where they succeeded. This support was not expected. Phone calls to a number of pubs previously had suggested the women would have no trouble being served but that they would have to face hostility from the customers. Certainly the sympathy for their campaign was not universal among the customers, but it took the form of argument: 'groups quickly formed all around the bar' as the women distributed leaflets and presented the case for ending discrimination. One drinker then invited them to demonstrate at his club where men and women were segregated in separate lounges. They said they would but first they intended to return - 'with more women and some men' - to convince this publican of the error of his ways. They had no trouble being served in any other pub they visited. They concluded in 'no doubt' they'd 'started discussions all over Leichardt about "women's rights"'.¹⁸

These attacks were directed not at the laws but at the customs and traditions of individual premises where the proprietors were exercising their own discretion about their clientele, sometimes clearly at odds with their customers' views. Having lasted so long, the legislative edifice that sustained Australia's sex-segregated drinking culture had already begun to be dismantled. 'Despite the backwardness of Queensland, even our laws now state women are allowed to drink in public bars', the Women's Liberation paper announced, 'and we are not going to stand for any discrimination, whether it be "protective" or otherwise'.¹⁹ Ten years after Maxwell's recommendations on licensing laws had been legislated in New South Wales, the Royal Commission in Victoria under Justice P.D. Phillips, Q.C., handed down its report on the liquor industry in Victoria. Phillips found that the amount of alcohol consumed in Victoria was no less than it was in New South Wales where drinkers had longer to consume it, but the rate of drunkenness in Victoria was proportionately greater and the amount of drinking away from hotel premises was greater. He recommended the extension of trading hours to 10 p.m. and more liberal licensing laws for restaurants. Two years later, South Australia at last followed suit and in extending the licensing hours, it also re-instated the employment of barmaids which had been taken away by law in 1908.²⁰

From that moment on, even before women began liberating the pubs, there came an outpouring of publications celebrating the masculinity of pub culture. Popular representations of 'the pub' and of the barmaid within it burgeoned. In 1966 J.M. Freeland published an academic study, *The Australian Pub* whose culture he captured as 'linoleum counter-tops patterned with beer rings...cold tiles, chrome glass, buxom genial barmaids, groups of singing bawling customers...football arguments...smoke...roll-neck sweaters, dirty dungarees and hacking jackets...voluptuously-shaped bottles...[and] batallions of up-ended glasses'. Craig McGregor used similar but more sexually-charged language in *Profile of Australia* published that same year. Drinking in Australia, he said, was 'an occasion for raucous bon-homie, yarn-spinning,

laughter, swilling down schooners, middies and ponies of beer and, occasionally, pumping drinks into the girl-friend or the wife...'.²¹

Three years later Sydney journalist and author Cyril Pearl wrote *Beer! Glorious Beer!* In 1972 novelist and humourist John O'Grady published *It's Your Shout Mate! Australian Pubs and Beer*, with cartoon illustrations of pub culture.

The next year John Larkins and Bruce Howard brought out a largely-photographic study, *Australian Pubs*, and by 1977 Douglass Baglin and Yvonne



Fig.10:5 Cartoonist Paul Pickering's representation of the 'Ocker', *Australian*, 22 December 1978.

Austin had produced *Australian Pub Crawl*, a celebratory photographic compilation which a decade later was into its fourth edition. There were others. In the 1980s these were followed by more serious studies of beer production in the histories of different brewing companies. The pub was thus being celebrated as a site of masculine pleasure in Australia, (with no attention paid to women's drinking customs) and central to it, along with the 'voluptuously-shaped bottles' was the presence of 'The Barmaid', not as drinking companion but as provider of service, commodified and sexualised 'buxom genial barmaids'. This culminated by the end of the decade in the publication of an

ostensibly satirical piece, John Hindle and John Hepworth's *Boozing Out in Melbourne Pubs*. This was the ultimate in Ockerism.

An Ocker, the Macquarie Dictionary tells us, is 'the archetypal, uncultivated Australian working man; a boorish, uncouth, chauvinistic Australian; an Australian male displaying qualities considered to be typically Australian...'. In practice Ockerism also contained a large component of parody. In the early



Fig.10:6 Illustration from humourist John O'Grady's 1972 book, *It's Your Shout, Mate!*

1970s 'the Ocker' burst on the national scene following Gough Whitlam's victory at the federal election, when advertising mogul John Singleton and filmmaker Phillip Adams, in a spirit of a 'new nationalism', reincarnated the nineteenth-century Australian larrikin.

Pubs and drinking were at the centre of Ockerism, epitomised in Barry Humphries' cartoon and subsequent film character, *Barry Mackenzie*. As the only woman allowed to enter the public bar, 'The Barmaid' had a crucial place in defining the masculinity of pub culture.

Thus Hindle and Hepworth parodied and paraded Ockerism and focussed on the barmaid's significance. To them barmaids were 'splendid gels', 'sonsy birds' who grew 'tits' and provided warm comforting bodies when wives turned 'reproving bums' and served up 'cold toast' in retaliation for husbands' excessive drinking. At the turn of the century 'the barmaid' was presented as a sexual lure, a seducer of young men and drunken customers, a victim not of larger economic forces but of unscrupulous employers, doomed to end her days as a prostitute.²² In the post-war period *Caddie* was 'respectable', a loving mother, 'an essentially decent human being', an unwilling participant in pub practices, 'her whole life-struggle...a conflict between her essential decency and an environment that would have debased a woman of lesser quality'.²³

But the image of *Caddie* on the dustjacket was more reminiscent of the 1890s barmaid than Cusack's introduction or the text of the story allows. And by the end of the 1970s with the advent of Ockerism, the sexual lure of the 1890s had fully returned, except that this time she was an alternative sexually-sympathetic wife.



Fig.10:7 A barmaid at work in Broome, Western Australia, 1953. BA 816B/TB b77, Batty Library, Perth, W.A.

Between 1966 and the late 1970s 'the barmaid' in Ocker culture became little more than her sexualised parts – in short, her breasts. 'It is in the nature of the barmaid species to lean *forward* over the bar when bending a sympathetic ear', Hindle and Hepworth wrote. 'This calls for a generous bosom. And since it calls for a generous bosom...if they haven't got it – they grow it! Nature is indeed wonderful'.²⁴ Similarly beer advertisements in the 1960s had begun targetting men rather than women, and the image of women shifted to that of sexual companion.²⁵ The liberation of pubs occurred in this context. And, by the mid-1980s Ockerism had peaked and passed. Sexualisation of 'the barmaid' was under sustained critique from women unionists who identified it as sexual harassment, and within another decade barmaids were presenting themselves as professional careerists.²⁶

The significance of 'the barmaid' within popular culture cannot be conflated with the value and importance of barmaids as workers to their employers, nor with the importance of that source of employment to women workers. Bar work has been an important source of income-earning for women in Australia since colonisation. Negotiating the sexual differentiation which is the foundation of pub culture – the expectations imposed by working in a place of men's leisure, under the constant unrelenting male gaze – has been their most important attribute as workers.

Women were wanted as barmaids by the employers, and by the customers, for the industry-specific skills associated with the workplace. Celebrating their sexuality (as bums and tits) denied their reality as workers and rendered it invisible. 'Contrary to the belief of many', a London barmaid wrote earlier in the century, the barmaid 'does not indulge much in flirtation or general sentimentality, though she will respond with a smile to a compliment that is sincere. Her chief characteristic is good humoured commonsense. She soundly assesses all sorts and conditions of men'.²⁷ Knowing men, handling their excesses, keeping their secrets – and allowing themselves to be objectified, reified and invidiously but not outrageously insulted – have been the barmaid's real workplace skills.

A 1975 textbook training manual pitched at bar staff made this explicit. 'It is one of the time-honoured features of the English public-house for the "regulars" to have a bit of fun with the bar staff – especially with pretty barmaids,' it said. 'You will be expected to take this in good part – and even join in'. The limits however also needed to be set and the responsibility for this rested squarely with the staff. 'The purchase of a Brown Ale, however, does not entitle anyone to take liberties and you should see that the conversation never degenerates below the level of propriety. If you find that someone is constantly being objectionable, or over-suggestive, it is correct to lay a complaint...Never...lose your temper – just make a report'.²⁸

In a detailed study of bar work and bar workers undertaken in the late 1970s, Sandra Grimes found that 'skilled bar staff exhibit[ed] a range of skills bordering on the diplomatic, for dealing with a variety of difficult behaviour as part of their everyday work'.²⁹ She explored the differences between male and female workers in the bar, and found that 'bar work entails a complicated and largely undefined range of requirements, not suggested by the largely unskilled routine tasks associated with the work'. 'Elements of discretion, disguise or subtlety' were highly personal in their individual style and manifestation; there was 'a need for a high degree of flexibility...with reference to customer expectations of sociable involvement', which could change within a short space of time even with the same customer. 'The core characteristics of bar work, regardless of differentiations among bar staff, entail service, sociability and social regulation'.³⁰

Sexual difference was obviously important in the manifestation of these subtle, discrete elements of the work, and the performance of sexuality was part and parcel of customer expectation. Dress – 'wearing a snug-fitting black dress to set off her blonde hair'³¹ – was not only part of the job, but very much part of the public representation of the barmaid. Explicitly sexual dressing became more pronounced in the 1960s. In 1963 barmaids in some Sydney and Brisbane pubs were being asked by their employers to wear matador pants or hipster slacks, 'frilly aqua blouses...teamed with high-heeled scuffs' on the understanding that 'men like to see girls wearing something a bit different'. The barmaids reported 'occasionally we get a rude remark'. Employers reported 'business has never been better'.³²

By the 1970s others were being paid to go topless. This created immense pressure on the other barmaids: they too were expected to remove much of their clothing, or the level of sexual innuendo and jeers from male customers

in the bar was raised to new heights, making their work that much harder to carry out. Constantly keeping a friendly, cheerful demeanour, and smiling at customers was the most important characteristic bar employees had. Bar staff were instructed: 'Make it a point of concern and pride that no customer ever walks out of your bar disgruntled or dissatisfied, if it is humanly possible to avoid it. Treat them as guests, with proper respect...'.³³ Relating well to customers was a valuable skill. 'The customer's always right and always be polite no matter what they say', was how one barmaid described it.³⁴ 'Spend a few hours behind a bar and you'll find, strangely enough, that it's the continual smiling at customers that takes its toll more than anything else', a Brisbane journalist, who had tried it, claimed in 1967.³⁵

In an atmosphere of harassment and derision, this became impossible to maintain and barmaids risked losing their jobs. As one South Australian barmaid said when she was forced to work alongside topless waitresses, 'I found it really embarrassing, really embarrassing...I felt like everybody was looking at me and trying to see through my clothes because these girls had their clothes off...'. Another told how stressful it was, not because it was necessarily degrading to the barmaid, but because of the risks attached from the kind of customers that were being attracted to the bar.³⁶ Melbourne journalist Kate Nancarrow, who when she worked as a barmaid had also been subjected to pressures from her employers to wear either a bikini or go topless in the bar, told of the stress and difficulties it caused her. It was getting hard to be cheerful as the pressure mounted and she feared that being grumpy and tired would count against her. The experience was scarring and she eventually resigned.³⁷ 'They think we're not going to get offended because we're barmaids and we're putting ourselves in that position', one barmaid complained, capturing that feeling that Caddie had described all those years ago, of having put herself 'on the outer'.³⁸

While barmaids were aware of this 'difference' between them and other women, women's liberationists storming the public bar were only vaguely aware of the paradoxical position of barmaids. Only the Brisbane group drew attention to it. 'Women drinkers are deemed too pure and innocent to hear "bad" language, but what about the barmaids?' they asked. 'Are they of a lower order or in a different category? Why doesn't the "ladies shouldn't hear bad language" argument apply to them?'³⁹

The answer lay in history. Barmaids were in a different category because of the long traditions of pub culture which had been inscribed in laws passed at the turn of the century. How these laws created 'the barmaid' as a category on her own has been discussed elsewhere.⁴⁰ In 1970 the history of women in Australian culture was yet to be written and most women's knowledge of barmaids was confined to the story of Caddie. It was to be another five years before Anne Summers' book appeared in which something of the story of the campaign against barmaids as 'respectable' women was told.⁴¹ By then *Caddie* had been made into a film that was released in 1976. A scene had been written into the film (which did not appear in the book) in which Caddie is having a tiff with her lover, Peter. He wants her to give up the work. 'I know barmaids have a bad name,' she says, and quotes what people say: 'You're only a bloody barmaid!' Peter replies, 'You are not like that. You are differ-

ent'. To which Caddie responds vehemently: 'I am not different at all...There are plenty of women like me...'. In the 1970s the question of 'difference' between white Anglo-Australian women was still subsumed in a discovery of the very fact that there were 'women' visible at all.

Notes

1. This is told in Diane Kirkby, *Barmaids: A History of Women's Work in Pubs*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997.
2. *Caddie: The Autobiography of A Sydney Barmaid*, Written by Herself with an Introduction by Dymphna Cusack, Constable, London, 1953, p. 1.
3. A point made by Sandra Grimes: *An Anthropological Perspective on Gender in the Workplace: A Case Study of Women Working in Hotel Bars*, PhD thesis, University of Adelaide, 1980, p. 106.
4. *Caddie*, p. viii.
5. Kirkby, *Barmaids*, pp. 109-134.
6. *Courier-Mail*, (Brisbane), 1 May 1963.
7. *Courier-Mail*, (Brisbane), 1 April 1965.
8. *Courier-Mail*, (Brisbane), 8 April 1965.
9. Ann Curthoys, 'Doing it for themselves: the Women's Movement since 1970,' in Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans, eds., *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, Sydney, Harcourt, Brace, 1992, p. 430.
10. *Sunday Truth*, (Brisbane), 22 June 1969.
11. *Ibid*; see also 25 May, 8 June 1969.
12. *Mejane*, (Sydney), March 1973.
13. *Sun*, (Melbourne), 29 April 1974, p. 7.
14. 'No room at the inn', *Vashti's Voice: A Women's Liberation Newsletter*, no. 7, June-July 1974, p. 5.
15. Reported in *ULVA Review*, Qld. Branch, May 1959, p. 33.
16. 'No room at the inn', *Vashti's Voice: A Women's Liberation Newsletter*, no. 7, June-July 1974, p. 5.
17. *Shrew: Women's Liberation Newsletter*, (Brisbane), vol. 1, no. 1, Jan. 1971, p. 4.
18. *Women's Liberation Newsletter*, (Sydney), Oct./Nov. 1971, p. 5.
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