A grim and fascinating land of opportunity: the Walkabout women and Australia
Abstract

The "story of a journey ... a picture of the country ... a record ...," Henrietta Drake-Brockman saw herself giving fellow Australians through her contributions to Walkabout magazine during the twentieth century. Along with Drake-Brockman several other well-known Australian female authors made regular contributions to Walkabout; including Ernestine Hill, Mary Durack and Patsy Adam-Smith. They wrote about their firsthand experiences of often remote parts of Australia, describing the landscape, the people who dwelt in it and their achievements for the edification of the largely urban readership of this popular magazine. These women wrote with enthusiasm and curiosity about the country in which they had been born. Still a young nation forming and forging an identity in the face of harsh beginnings and catastrophic world events, Australia in the mid 1900s was no longer a convict or pioneer nation, but what was it? This paper discusses representations of country in the articles of two of the female contributors to Walkabout magazine: Ernestine Hill and Henrietta Drake-Brockman. These writers saw Australia as both "grim and fascinating"; a vast land of opportunity to be "possessed" and made "productive" to the economic advantage of its inhabitants. As such they provide an intriguing insight into the development of the nation, and contributed to processes of inscription during the period of Walkabout’s run (1934 - 1974).

Keywords

Walkabout magazine; Ernestine Hill; Henrietta Drake-Brockman; middlebrow fiction

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