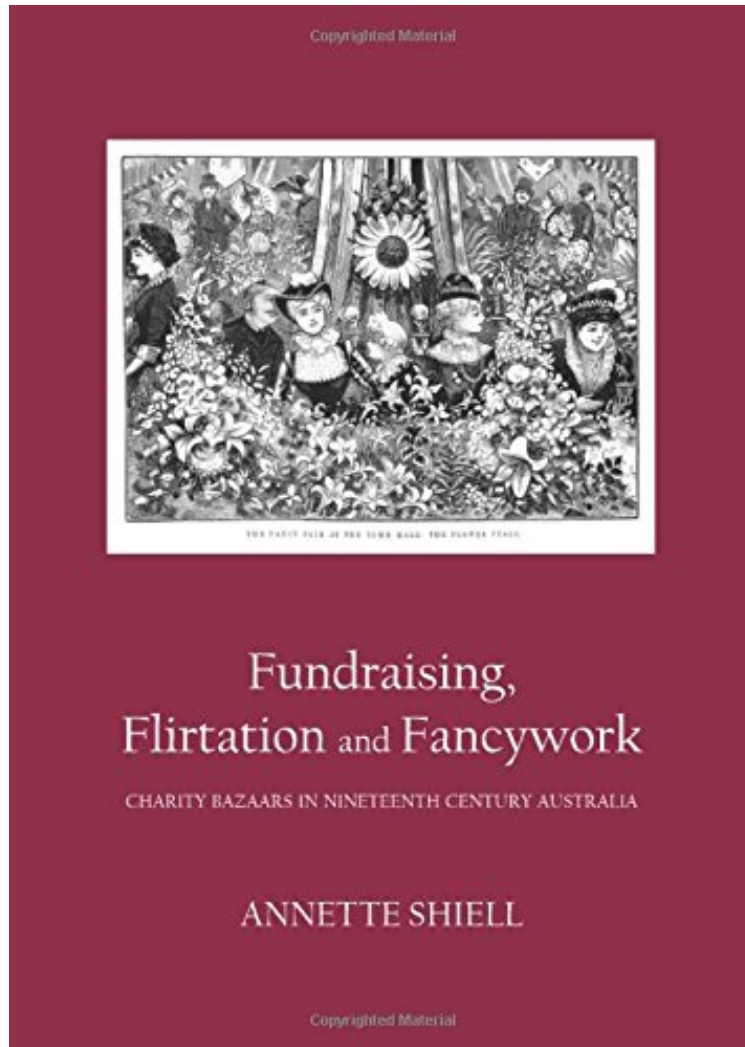


Fundraising, Flirtation and Fancywork: Charity Bazaars in Nineteenth Century Australia

Annette Shiell

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Annette Shiell : Fundraising, Flirtation and Fancywork: Charity Bazaars in Nineteenth Century Australia before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Fundraising, Flirtation and Fancywork: Charity Bazaars in Nineteenth Century Australia:

Fundraising, Flirtation and Fancywork: Charity Bazaars in Nineteenth-Century Australia examines the history and development of the charity bazaar movement in Australia. Transported from Britain, the charity bazaar played an

integral role in Australian communal, social and philanthropic life from the early days of European settlement. Ranging in size and scale, from simple sales of goods to month long extravaganzas, charity bazaars were such a popular and successful means of raising revenue that they sustained the majority of the nation's major public and religious institutions. The nineteenth-century charity bazaar was a paradox. On the one hand, it encapsulated responsibility and civic duty through its *raison d'être*, which was the provision of support for charitable causes. On the other, it encouraged a loosening of social and gendered restraint as women of the middle and upper classes repositioned themselves in a public space where the acquisition of material goods, gambling and interaction with men was actively encouraged. Nineteenth-century charity bazaars mirrored and shaped the social customs, mores and fashions of their time and are a rich, largely untapped, interdisciplinary historical source. From their inception, bazaars were the domain of women. They provided middle and upper class women with an opportunity to exercise their organisational, creative and social skills outside the domestic sphere, within a framework of socially acceptable philanthropic endeavour. Women's dominance and public role in charity bazaars destabilised conventional gender relations. The opportunity to view and flirt with women was an acknowledged attraction for men in attending bazaars and bazaar organisers capitalised on this drawcard; eliciting condemnation from religious spokesmen, social commentators and the press. The nucleus of the charity bazaar was the fancywork produced by women for sale on the stalls. Bazaars were an accessible and important repository for the display and sale of women's creative work and the bazaar movement was instrumental in shaping women's fancywork. Charity bazaars predated the birth of the great international exhibitions and the emergence of the larger shops and emporiums and were a formative influence upon both these forms. Equally, as the impact of the great international exhibitions and shopping and leisure experiences grew, bazaar organisers borrowed from them to ensure the currency of bazaars. Bazaars were revered and reviled in colonial Australia. Despite the criticisms and the many social and cultural changes that occurred in nineteenth-century Australia, charity bazaars continued to escalate in number, popularity and complexity until the end of the century witnessed the emergence of the grand bazaar. Held over several weeks, grand bazaars were themed entertainment spectacles that offered visitors shopping, refreshments, amusements, sporting events, games of chance and the sanctioned opportunity to mix and mingle with all society within an elaborate, often theatrical setting. The popularity of the charity bazaar as a fundraiser for larger institutions waned in the twentieth century but it remained a widely adopted method of raising revenue for smaller organisations and its continued use in Australia today is proof of the success and resilience of the bazaar model.