

Education or the bush: The origins of the Anzac legend

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Statement of originality

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

Signed:

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Abstract

The Anzac legend is one of the formative stories of the Australian national character. The Anzac character has its origins in the diverse cultural symbolism of the late Victorian and Federation decades in Australia. The Coming Man, the idea of the Australian as an evolved, stronger variant of the Anglo-Saxon type, the idea of the individualist Bushman who was toughened by having to survive a hostile environment, and the pioneers who risked life and forwent basic comforts to bring civilization to the edges of settlement.

Many of these ideas were masculinist, involving the profession of close cooperation and bonds between men—mateship—and extolled risk-taking and the use of innovation to succeed in life. Most of these ideas involved the unique element of the Australian landscape—the bush. C.E.W. Bean, as a man of letters, had all these concepts in mind when he extensively travelled the New South Wales outback between 1906 and 1910 settling on the notion that the Bushman was the distinctly Australian type and the source of the Australian character.

Bean and many subsequent scholars, the most critical being Russel Ward in his seminal *The Australian Legend*, argued the bush sets the standard for the Australian character. This thesis proposes that Australian education reforms of the 1880s and 1905–1907 made a significant contribution to the formation of the Anzac legend and therefore the national character. The particular type of education that resulted from these reforms also helps to explain the ready reception and embrace of the legend by the general public. The Australian public were literate and culturally aware as well as engaged in civic society. This was because of mass education which made them receptive to the Anzac legend in the form in which it was promulgated by Bean, John Treloar, Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett and others. Ironically the education that Australians received also promoted the idea and narrative of the bush as the definitively Australian scenario in children's literature and school reading material, and so they were predisposed to accept the bush explanation rather than their own experience of Australianness experienced in large measure in childhood in the schoolyard and the classroom.

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Introduction

The characteristics that distinguish the Anzac legend were substantially influenced by the liberal reforms of the education system in the Australian colonies (states from 1901) commencing in the 1880s. These reforms were the basis of the education received by most Anzacs and their civilian peers. This was achieved by the adoption of the various Public Instruction Acts, making a basic education compulsory throughout Australia from the early 1880s.

The disciplinary impact of education helps explain the ideas of meritocracy and innovation attributed to the Anzacs, while human solidarity or mateship was at least influenced by the impact of a democratised form of Arnoldian¹ pedagogy in Australian schooling. Bill Gammage describes the First AIF's use of sporting expressions such as 'the Game' and 'team' to describe battle.² A consciousness of conflict as sport owes more to the Australian adaptation of Arnoldian principles in Australian schooling and the public consciousness of sport than to the outback bushman.

The Anzac legend as a story of national character³ exhibits the various characteristics of myth, legend, and history. The manner of recollection generates new tensions and contradictions about the fundamental nature of the Australian national character or even

¹ Thomas Arnold, the headmaster of Rugby School. Arnold was responsible for a reform of the pedagogy of English public schools, emphasising the development of moral qualities such as courage and loyalty alongside intellectual development. Arnold's theories also emphasised the morally beneficial practice of participation in vigorous sports and physical fitness. He believed in the importance of schooling, disciplinary and social systems as a learning ground for a student's future life as a citizen.

² Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 1974), 106.

³ Character, according to Stefan Collini (*The Idea of Character in Victorian Political Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), is a concept popularised during and typical of the British Empire in the Victorian era. Character is constituted by behaviours and a mind-set of individual virtues gained from breeding. Hence character is the possession of an entire class or even potentially a nation. British character had a class aspect. Hence character determines circumstances rather than vice versa, and 'is a long sermon on the importance of character in making one family rich and another poor'. Reflecting the Arnoldian view, character can be demonstrated in the virtues required to play cricket: 'Cricket is a game which reflects the character—a game of correct habits, of patient and well-considered practice—the very last game in the world in which any youth without the power of concentration could excel (Collini, 48)'. The national character of Australians, according to Bean, demonstrated mateship, honesty, resilience, egalitarianism, and laconic cheer in the face of adversity. These were the principles of the Australian national character, which were quite different from the British view of good character and became the Anzac character and the personal basis of the legend.

whether a national character exists. The Anzac legend has become History, and Australian History cannot be understood without understanding the legend and its antecedents.

This thesis considers the most important historiographical compliments and criticisms of the Anzac legend, particularly its iconic origin against Bean's *Official History*. The very existence of an Australian national character, like the concept of Australian and more specifically Anzac exceptionalism⁴ is a phenomena of collective self-belief as the subject of external observation. The collective self-belief of the 1st AIF and the Anzac generation was based on the unique culture of Federation Australia, especially its relatively liberal education systems, combined with a reverence for the traditions of the British and loyalty to their Empire and a newfound sense of sacred nationhood despite Australia's dominion status. The Great War confirmed an invented narrative of national honour, at the heart of which was the Australian citizen-soldier: the Anzac. At home, this narrative produced legendary thinking about the achievements and sacrifices of the Anzacs.

This thesis is an argument about the origins of the Anzac legend, a key component of the wider disputed concept of the Australian character and the Anzac legend's impact on the representation of that character. A binary interpretation of the main argument of this thesis is

⁴ The notion of exceptionalism as a sociological and historical phenomena is explored in the Australian context by William Coleman. Coleman's work on Australian exceptionalism is an extension of the long standing political and scholarly study of a phenomena known as American exceptionalism. The 19th-century French political scientist and historian Alexis de Tocqueville_ was the first writer to have referred to the United States as "exceptional" his work is regarded as the origin of American exceptionalism as a term. However, the term has changed as historical circumstances determined. For example ,American exceptionalism was coined by communist activists in the United States between the wars, arguing that while Marxists were generally correct in asserting that countries could not make the transition to communism without a period of violent class warfare, the United States was a unique exception because of its blurring of class boundaries. Post war American exceptionalism evolved into an explanation for why the United States supposedly was not given to class conflict in either the past or present. According to this view the United States unlike European and Asian jurisdictions lacked a history of feudalism and therefore the U.S lacked class consciousness. In an echo of Australian historiography, it was also argued by the American "consensus" school of history(for example Richard Hofstadter, Louis Hartz, and Daniel .J. Boorstin) that the U.S benefited from geographic and social mobility, material abundance, a general acceptance of the pioneer and foundational virtues, mass education and a tradition of pluralism and tolerance occasioned by mass migration. This definition of exceptionalism was described by Dahl in his influential *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (1956). Dahl's outline of American exceptionalism held until about the early 21st century , when it was displaced by a less analytical more political doctrine of American economic and moral superiority. In this context exceptionalism came to be identified with hyper-patriotism, moral rectitude, and a general sense of American greatness. It is a combination of the post-modern American usage and the more scholarly meaning proposed by Dahl et.al that has informed Colman's study of Australian exceptionalism. This is the two overlapping senses of exceptionalism that I use in the context of the Anzac legend throughout the thesis.

encapsulated in the aphorism “education or the bush?” The work that follows summarises the orthodoxy of the Bush and pioneer legend’s role in the creation of Anzac, rather than supporting a heterodoxy that demonstrates the broad cultural impact of Australia’s education reforms and the effect those reforms had on popular literacy.

Examining any development in cultural history demands that nuanced distinctions be made. In reality the cultural idea of the Bush (rather than the reality of bush life) and education were both influences on the Anzac legend and key to its origin. However, they were also part of a broader cultural milieu.

Levi Strauss warned the historian seeking to understand the nature or origin of a national legend or perceived national character : “it may well be that a description of national character tells us more about the observer than the nation described”.⁵ As if following Levi Strauss’s observation, a great deal of the scholarship about the Anzac Legend has focussed on the historiography of the subject. This has tended to tell us more about the national preconceptions of the debate and the protagonists than it has about how the legend was formed, what sustains it, and broader contestations over the national character.

The role of education as a significant influence on the Anzac legend, and the framing of “the bush” as the key origin of the material reality and ideology of Anzac from C.E.W.Bean onward, must both be placed in their full historical context. This is particularly important as Bean’s bush thesis has been the dominant historiographical descriptor of the legend and its material origins even among those opposed to the balance of Bean’s interpretation of Anzac. Bean’s view has been a major influence on both academic and popular perceptions of the Anzac legend.

The alternative case for the role of Australian education reforms and practices as a major influence on the origins of the Anzac legend, which this thesis prosecutes, has a synergy with the bush trope. Education and literature were critical vehicles in the transmission of the bush trope to Australians from the 1870’s until the outbreak of the war. In some ways the Bush trope depended on education for its apparent hegemony as an explanation for the legend.

⁵ Shafer. B. C *Faces of Nationalism: new realities and old myths*, New York,1972, 327

This thesis contends that literacy and its attendant culture of literary appreciation, both of which were made possible by a reformed education system and a liberal curriculum, were significant contributors to the national character, and in particular the Anzac legend. More controversially perhaps, they also contributed to some of the “real” and highly contested characteristics that supposedly underlie the legend.

Although the principal argument of this thesis concerns the origins of the Anzac legend rather than the subsequent tropes of Anzac or war memory, it is impossible to review the case for education and literacy without reference to both the Bush legend and the Pioneer legend.

The tropes of the Anzac legend are among the most contested in Australian historiography. The authorial standpoint in any analysis of the history of the first AIF needs to contend with the difference between myth and legend. Some historians have employed the term ‘Digger myth’ to suggest that the heroic and iconic characteristics of the Anzacs are not based on material events but are essentially fictional.⁶

Historians who prefer to describe Anzac as a ‘legend’ suggest that some aspects of the legend are exaggerated or constitute behavioural characteristics rather than fictionalised stories or ideological distortions.

Bill Gammage, for example, assumes many aspects of the legend have their basis in fact, albeit, in some instances, exaggerated factual material. Similarly, so do Russel Ward and Graham Seal in making their respective interpretive cases. In *The Australian Legend*, Ward implicitly accepts that both the character and motivational elements of the legend are based on fact, relying on Bean for most of his evidence in this regard.

Other historians argue the Anzac legend is based on characteristics that are universal rather than peculiarly Australian. Joan Beaumont, for example, concedes that mateship was an important characteristic of the Anzacs. However, she also points out that intense male bonding and small group loyalty in war, which were both evident in the first AIF, are not uniquely Australian characteristics.

⁶ Ross, Jane, *The Myth of the Digger* (Marrickville: Hale & Ironmonger, 1985)

Yet whatever the power of mateship, it was not—as Bill Grammage has claimed—‘a particular Australian virtue’. All armies, no matter what their societal origins and values, rely on small-group cohesion and the desire not to let down the group as the motivation for men to overcome their fears in battle. This may take different names—comradeship, buddy systems, brotherhood or mateship—but it is this informal source of discipline, as much as military.⁷

Both Peter Stanley in *Bad Characters* and Joan Beaumont in *Broken Nation* take issue with the romance of Anzac larrikinism. They suggest that the behaviour of Australian troops in the Middle East, for example, was often racist and misogynistic. The Australians’ inclination to play jokes on those they labelled “gypos” was cruel and chauvinistic and often gratuitously violent. Both historians argue that the soldiers’ larrikinism should not absolve the Anzacs from the charge of dishonourable behaviour. They also assert that far from being ‘Treloar’s Bayards’, the Anzacs were prone to loutish, arrogant and ignorant behaviour.

Peter Stanley takes strong exception to the universalism of the legend, arguing that far from being gallant and dutiful egalitarians, a significant number of Anzacs were deserters. Some soldiers exhibited cowardice on the sacred day of the Anzac landing at Gallipoli, while others in the Middle East or the Western Front were mutinous, thieving, habitués of prostitution, rapists and even murderers.

The legend also begins with facts apprehended from original observer bias. Political or collective emotional justification often builds a daisy chain of singular interpretation. Joan Beaumont writes of a common Australian interpretation of the Dardanelles campaign, quoting the *Daily Telegraph*:

‘Whatever else may be said of the Dardanelles campaign, history will record it as a victory for Australian valour, and such a victory as there is nothing on the brightest scroll of fame to eclipse.’⁸

⁷ Beaumont, Joan, *Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2013). 119

⁸ Ibid. 152

The need to rationalise the then shocking casualty lists from Gallipoli meant that for political and ideological purposes, victory was salvaged from defeat and Gallipoli began to assume a central and lasting place as a legend of national character. Australia is the only nation to celebrate defeat in war rather than victory. Usually, national military commemoration days celebrate the defeat of an invader, such as St Stephen's Day in Hungary which celebrates the medieval defeat of the invading Saracens, or the Austrian victory over the Turks at the gates of Vienna in 1683. In stark contrast, The Anzac legend's curious embrace of defeat marks it as distinctive.

Most recent historiography has focussed on the political nature of the Anzac legend and the meaning of the revival of the legend which commenced in the 1980's and remains strong to the present day. Historians such as Marilyn Lake, Mark McKenna, Joy Damousi and Henry Reynolds focus on the political utility of the Anzac legend. From their perspective, it is possible to demonstrate a complete separation between the actual history of the First AIF and the beliefs embedded in the legend.

In *Anzac The Unauthorised Biography*, Carolyn Holbrook traces the ideological changes in the legend, demonstrating that the actions and characteristics of the First AIF have transformed as the national culture required different elements of the legendary characteristics to be emphasised. She posits the notion of 'Anzac 2.0' which extols the virtues of loyalty, sacrifice and mateship over the military prowess of the Anzacs. Charting the legend's malleability over time, Holbrook locates the origins of 'Anzac 2.0' in the political culture of the 1980s.

The first historical interpreters of the legend were the men who made the legend; they were first-hand witnesses to the material behaviour of the Anzacs. Bean, Scott, Gullet, Treloar, Mansfield, Ashfield-Bartlett and the rank-and-file contributors to the *Anzac Book* and the many trench and troopship journals not to mention Banjo Paterson. These are the witnesses and authors of key texts about the first AIF which described the action that became the basis of the legend and provided the catalyst for its perpetuation.

Bean claimed many times that he witnessed the exceptional prowess and character of the men who formed the AIF. He attributed this to the influence of the bush. The transmission of the bush as a symbol of Australian uniqueness and strength was a key element in the curriculum

materials of Australian schools. But the Anzac legend's creators are not limited to Bean and his representation of the bush. Other key observers who had a central role in the creation of the legend had many of their perceptions instilled by Australian schooling.

Liberal education reforms commenced in the 1880s and culminated in the adoption of the Board syllabus of 1905 and parallel curriculum reforms across the states. These reforms updated and more accurately codified the teaching practices, topics, and presentation of subject matter for both primary and secondary schooling. The Board syllabus was developed by Peter Board, the Director General of Education in New South Wales.

The impact of a syllabus focussed on Civics, Morals and Scripture is part of the explanation for the Anzacs' preparedness to voluntarily risk individual welfare and safety for the objectives of the nation. At the same time, the emphasis on the concentric nature of English history in Australian schooling and the retelling of British folklore left in young Australians a residual respect for the values of chivalry, and a romantic loyalty to Empire. The Concentric circle of English history assumed the civilising destiny of the English nation and the British Empire by analysing the pattern of English history.

The methodology of the thesis also includes a close analysis of Bean's *Official History* and the key events in the development of Australian education policy, this thesis aims to demonstrate that the character elements of the Anzac legend rest, to a significant extent, on the education system of the time combined with popular culture, literature, and journalism. Importantly, education made all these cultural elements accessible. Much of the historiography of Anzac starting with Bean himself is focussed on the contrary position that the bush, and the outback lifestyle, was the strongest if not the only influence on the development of the character of Anzac.

In sum, the methodology of this thesis analyses official documents, personal diaries, historiographical critiques, popular literature, memorial art, and school syllabus and educational material, to reassess the foundation and character of the Anzac legend. A particular concern is the influences on the Anzac legend's performative characteristics,

especially Anzac exceptionalism, including the belief that the Anzacs were exceptional soldiers.

This thesis examines the origins of the legend as a story of national character, by analysing the impact and content of the education reforms of the 1880s and the early 20th century. The analysis of national character follows to some extent the work of Benedict Anderson, Richard White and Henry Reynolds apprehending national character as the values, beliefs and personality traits that are imagined by most Australians as common to all or most of the citizens of Australia

Another contested theory about the Anzac legend which concerns this thesis is the historical reality or otherwise of the exceptional performance of the Anzacs in battle. The Anzac legend is based on three separate mythic and historical tropes: Gallipoli, Palestine, and the Western Front. Each theatre symbolised a different element of the Anzac legend and each was substantially created or amplified by the Anzacs themselves through carefully edited battlefield publications, the best known being *The Anzac Book*, but similar publications were prepared by and for the troops on the Western Front and the Middle East.

Prior to Anzac, a romantic attachment to the unique Australian landscape, particularly the bush or the outback, was part of the Australian urban cultural elite's conception of the national character. This was reflected in music, art, and literature. The education system played a more significant role than the experience of the outback in developing the character elements that came to be conceived of as the Anzac legend. The political and ideological reason for the pre-eminence of the outback theory was racial⁹, the need to validate white Australia's symbolic possession of the inland, which was a unique representation of all the land and resources taken from the Aboriginal people by the settlers.

In poetry, song and stories, the unique nature of the Australian bush was a lyrical confirmation of Australia's distinctiveness, especially underlining the adaptive differences between Australia and Britain. This cultural trend became most evident in the decade after Federation, coinciding with Australian education systems adopting curricula reform, which

⁹ David Walker, 'Race Building and the Disciplining of White Australia', in Laksiri Jayasuriya, David Walker and Jan Gothard (eds), *Legacies of White Australia* (Cawley: University of Western Australia Press, 2003).

among other things gave expression to the Australian landscape. The Anzacs and their civilian peers carried the bush and its culture as a symbol, a literary and creative trope. For the overwhelming majority, the bush was not part of their lived experience. Their experience was more likely to be of the classroom platform rather than the wool-classer's table.

Ernest Scott, the author of volume XI of *The Official History: Australia During the War*, was an early proponent of the generalisation which combined the idea of the racial superiority of the colonists and the evolutionary impact of their response to the antipodean environment. These were the essential elements of the 'bush thesis'. In an earlier work, *A Short History of Australia*, Scott argued that the Australian colonies exhibited an acceptance of British culture and were therefore granted a high level of independence within the Empire.

Scott argued that isolation and physical challenges had given Australians 'a field for the exercise of their racial genius for adaptation and for conquering difficulties'.¹⁰ Chapter 2 of this thesis refers to this myth as the outback theory or the 'Australian legend' and discusses the impact of the outback theory on the historiography of the Anzac legend.

One urban cultural elite of note that promoted the outback theory of Australian culture was the Sydney-based Bohemian Club (or the Dusk and Dawn Club). Both A.B. 'Banjo' Paterson and Henry Lawson were prominent members. Their influence and the influence of a range of other literary and artistic figures, such as the Victorian-based Heidelberg school of painters, promoted the masculinist bushman as archetypal hero.

War had been long anticipated by many Australians; Scott uses the language of prophesy to describe Lawson's poetic vision of the martial nature of the nation's future. Like Lawson, many Australians already subscribed to the idea that war would come and would be a test of nationhood. Lawson in his poem 'The Star of Australasia' wrote: '... I tell you the Star of the South shall rise—in the lurid clouds of war'.¹¹

¹⁰ Ernest Scott, *A Short History of Australia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1916), 336.

¹¹ Scott, *A Short History*, 337.

Not surprisingly, when war came there was a narrative logic to portray the character of the Australian soldier as an extension of the mythic character of the bushman of the outback. Rebecca Collins proposes that all histories contain some element of myth, reflecting a sense of mythic significance embraced by a nation to reinforce shared values.¹² The historiography of the Australian character encompasses a contested myth of racial adaptation as a claim for exceptionalism. The term ‘exceptionalism’ is borrowed from US historiography and refers to the suggestion that the Anzacs’ values, conduct, fighting skill and courage made them different and perhaps superior to others.

In Chapter 1 of this thesis, I examine the idea that some beliefs about the character were reinforced by the Anzac legend while other elements of the character construct were transformed by the Anzac legend. The Anzac legend was in many respects fashioned from the Australian legend of the bushman, and the related legend of the pioneer.

According to Mark Hearn, Max Crawford was the first historian to employ the term, ‘the Australian legend’, to describe a ‘national myth’ drawn from life on the land, and the need to distinguish Australian experience and achievements from that of the ‘old world’ of Europe.¹³ In his seminal work, *Australia*, Crawford continues an artful version of the outback theory:

*The heroism of the Anzacs was not different in kind from the courage and endurance of the early pioneers. Australia became a nation [at Gallipoli] because for the first time she was plunged into the responsibilities of nationhood.*¹⁴

The outback theory, combining the notions of national foundation and pioneering sacrifice, was championed at different levels by both Bean and Scott. This is despite evidence of the Anzacs’ urban backgrounds. Bean’s helpful footnotes record the birthplace and pre-war occupation of every Anzac he interviews or mentions. His statistics demonstrate that roughly

¹² Rebecca Collins, ‘Concealing the Poverty of Traditional Historiography: Myth as Mystification in Historical Discourse’, *Rethinking History* 7, no. 3 (2003): 341.

¹³ Mark Hearn, ‘Writing the Nation in Australia: Australian Historians and Narrative Myths of Nation’, in Stefan Berger (ed.), *Writing the Nation: A Global Perspective* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

¹⁴ Max Crawford, *Australia* (London: Hutchinson, 1952), 166.

20 per cent of the men of the 1st Division were born in Britain. The rest were Australian born, overwhelmingly from cities and large towns. Additionally, Appendix Six in Scott's volume of *The Official History* shows that most of the Anzac force were urban professionals, tradesmen, or labourers, with only a small proportion of them following country occupations.

Scott's analysis was close to Bean's idea of the conditions of the outback being the key element in the Anzac characteristics of mateship, meritocracy, innovation, and curiosity. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, Bean's relative conservatism became a field for radical nationalist historiography, the definitive account being Russel Ward's *Australian Legend*. In his critique of Ward's book, Richard White argued that Ward's radical nationalist synthesis of the bushman and the Anzac ignored the fact that both mythologies were devices for romanticising imperial expansion.

White also argued that the Anzac and the bushman were both 'symbolic of escapism from urban, industrial civilisation that Australia had become'.¹⁵ Chapter 3 further develops an alternative explanation for the narrative and the mythic elements of the Anzac legend. It argues that the education policies of the colonies—beginning in the 1880s with the introduction of publicly provided free and compulsory education—meant that many of the Anzac generation were products of a liberal education and were generally literate and intellectually curious. Chapters 4 and 5 focus on curriculum reform, culminating in the 1905 'new syllabus' and the effect it had on the intellectual, civic, and moral development of the Anzac generation.

The Anzac generation was as conscious of the martial traditions of ancient and medieval Britain as they were of the wool track, the stockyard, or the mining lease. Indeed, the official publication of Australian art in the Great War was composed by John Treloar and called *Australian Chivalry*, reflecting a romantic interpretation of British martial tradition. While Australians were intensely proud of Australian folk idioms and settings, the meaning systems they used for discourse about national destiny and gallantry tended to be extensions of British myth and iconography, such as the popular symbolic figures Britannia and Australia.

¹⁵ Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688–1980* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1981), 103.

The school syllabus and pedagogy created the imaginative preconditions within a literary and cultural marketplace for the acceptance of a popular embrace and celebration of Australian idioms and conditions. This fostered the creation of an antipodean form of chivalry accessible to the common man. The works of C.J. Dennis, a popular literary figure of the first two decades after Federation, exemplify this line of thinking, particularly *The Songs of a Sentimental Bloke*.

Dennis creates a literary fusion using allusions to Britain's chivalric and crusading heritage and Australian working-class suburbia. He borrowed from British high culture, including Shakespeare, Blake, and Tennyson, for both the themes and settings of his stories, and used parody, but always with a willing respect for the original tradition. He was not repudiating the value or authenticity of British chivalry but claiming it for Australians. The use of the Australian *lingua franca* and settings closely aligned to ordinary Australians confer verisimilitude. Dennis also recounts the impact of chivalry on the status of women. Although chivalry is perceived as a courtesy to women and is a societal duty to those widowed or harmed by war, it leaves them lacking agency and in a situation of dependency.

The digger in Dennis was at least as much inspired by the chivalry of Shakespeare's Henry V or Romeo as he was by the noble bushman or the 'lone hand'. Dennis was not unique in his understanding of the potency of literary tradition. The individual Anzac, by virtue of his schooling, was at least as aware—certainly in the way he and his fellows were perceived at home—of his inheritance from St George as he was of Ned Kelly. This had significant consequences for the popular culture and war memory of post-war Australia. The popular resolution of these new colonial traditions with their ancient imperial ones became an authorial project, eventually reintegrating with the war memory through the Australian War Memorial, the official histories and returned soldiers' movement.

Benedict Anderson argues in *Imagined Communities*, that nations are essentially a product of a collective invented imagination.¹⁶ The Anzac legend became a blend of narrative history and imagined common values and personal characteristics. As for the values, Richard White

¹⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

famously argued that ‘[t]here is no real Australia waiting to be uncovered. A national identity is an invention’.¹⁷

Consequently, to understand how such imagined identities were created, the historian must look to the inventors of the various forms of national identity cultivated since white settlement and ask, in Anderson’s words, ‘what their function is, whose creation they are, and whose interest they serve’.¹⁸

Today, there is a new Anzac legend that Carolyn Holbrook and other historians have styled as Anzac 2.0¹⁹, which came to prominence during and in the wake of the Anzac revival of the 1980’s. Anzac 2.0 discarded most of the imperial connotations and the emphasis on fighting and killing, highlighting instead a focus that valorises ‘mateship, sacrifice and courage’.²⁰

The original agents of the Anzac legend—Bean, Treloar, Arthur Bazley and their colleagues—acted through the Parliament and Executive to create a narrative history interpreted as heroic in a uniquely Australian way. They told Australians about their part in the Empire and what was perceived as their new well-deserved status as a young nation.

In 1907 the Prime Minister of Australia, Alfred Deakin, made a long-anticipated statement about defence matters²¹, including compulsory military training, to federal Parliament. Deakin’s statement prefigured what would become the idea of the Australian citizen-soldier and was possibly the first use of the term in an Australian context.²² It would also come to form a critical part of the incorrigible civilian reputation of the Anzac legend:

¹⁷ White, *Inventing Australia*, viii.

¹⁸ Anderson. B., *Imagined Communities*, viii.

¹⁹ Carolyn Holbrook and Keir Reeves (eds), *The Great War: Aftermath and Commemoration* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2019), 252.

²⁰ Holbrook and Reeves, *The Great War*, 253.

²¹ Mark Hearn, ‘Bound with the Empire: Narratives of Race, Nation, and Empire in the Australian Labor Party’s Defence Policy, 1901–1921’, *War and Society* 32, no. 2 (August 2013): 95–115.

²² Craig Wilcox, *For Hearths and Homes: Citizen Soldiering in Australia, 1854–1945* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988).

*What we aim at is the maximum of good citizenship, with the spirit of patriotism as the chief motive power of a civic defence force. For always, behind the weapons, behind the organization, behind the gun, there is the man. It is in the character and capacity of its manhood that the real strength and energy of resistance of a people must be found.*²³

The concept of the citizen-soldier became an important part of the claim and explanation for Anzac exceptionalism. These abilities were believed to have stemmed from the men's character, in essence, the Anzac legend. Bean and others argued that this exceptional Australian character was due to the outback racial theory. This thesis contends, as argued in Chapter 6, that education and urban culture far better explain the qualities that made the Anzac legend. Joan Beaumont, for example, summarises the relationship between character and performance in popular thinking: '[the Anzacs'] ... performance would be seen as a test, not of professional competence but of the national character'.²⁴

The Anzacs ended the war as they had begun, an entirely volunteer force. The mythology that the Anzacs twice joined their countrymen in voting against conscription bolstered the romantic notion of the great-hearted and heroic citizen-soldiers - the new Britons from the South. Anzac maintained an enduring place in Australian history and folklore. Despite the reality of post war trauma and disillusion for many returned soldiers, the rightness of their calling and the virtues of their performance would remain essentially untarnished in the years ahead.

Bean and many others who subscribed to the notion of the Anzacs as exceptional warriors also relied on the idea that the toughening of the British type (both morally and physically) was a result of the life of the bushman. The primal role of war in confirming national standing created a need for a tradition of success in national trial by combat. Australia's youth as a nation meant she possessed only a limited heritage of soldiering, but she could also selectively draw on British military heritage, which was obviously long and distinguished.

²³ Alfred Deakin, Australian Parliament, *Hansard*, 13 December 1907.

²⁴ Joan Beaumont, *Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2013), 32.

The Anzacs had to prove their worth as a national army, and as individual soldiers to themselves and the Australian and imperial public. Fusing the martial myths and legends of Empire with the popular idioms and customs of Australia was a logical response to this reality. This fusion of British and Australian iconography was something familiar from popular literature and school materials.

Why did one of the most urbanised societies in the world adopt a national mystique based on the mythic outback? The answer can be found in Australian and folkloric literature as it was translated into the Australian school system. The Anzacs partly accepted the character of the rural proletariat as a template for the Australian character, even though most Anzacs were from cities, suburbs, and towns. This belief was not limited to the self-belief of the Anzacs themselves. As this thesis observes, that view has been championed by many distinguished Australian historians and literary figures.

In sum, this thesis analyses official documents, personal diaries, historiographical critiques, popular literature, memorial art, and school syllabus and educational material, to reassess the foundation and character of the Anzac legend. A particular concern is the influences on the Anzac legend's performative characteristics, especially Anzac exceptionalism, including the belief that the Anzacs were exceptional soldiers.

This thesis examines the origins of the legend as a story of national character, by analysing the impact and content of the education reforms of the 1880s and the early 20th century. The analysis of national character follows to some extent the work of Benedict Anderson, apprehending national character as the values, beliefs and personality traits that are imagined by most Australians as common to all or most of the citizens of Australia.

Chapter 1 analyses the story of Anzac as an amalgam of myth, legend, and history. It draws on primary and secondary sources to demonstrate the extent to which the Anzac legend was transformative of many aspects of Australian culture, while reinforcing some other cultural policies, most notably White Australia.

Chapter 2 analyses in more detail the origins and impact of the outback theory, particularly from the perspective of Bean's pre-war journalistic interests. The chapter shows the

limitations of the outback theory as an explanation of some key elements of the Anzac legend.

Chapter 3 locates the life and work of C. E. W. Bean in the context of the Australian education system and seeks to demonstrate the extent to which Bean, though an adherent of the education theories of Thomas Arnold, gave only passing regard to the influence of Arnold on Australian public education. The chapter also seeks to demonstrate that the corporate and Catholic education sectors of the Australian education system conformed with the liberal syllabus adopted in piecemeal form from the 1880s, which was finally codified in New South Wales in 1905, and in the subsequent years by other states. Australia's liberal education reforms featured many ideas like Dr Arnold's in a democratised form. Just as Bean uses the New South Wales bush as the basis of his case study to subsequently support the outback theory of the Anzac legend, this thesis has focussed on the reforms of the New South Wales education system from the 1880s until 1905.

Chapter 4 demonstrates, by reference to pedagogical material, the ideological and literary influences at play on Australian children of the Anzac generation. It reviews in more detail the material and content of the syllabus reforms in Australian government schools and the intellectual and social impact on Australian school children.

In Chapter 5 I focus on the details of the relationship between the romantic literary forms that Australian children were exposed to in school at all levels of instruction and how that romanticism related to the teaching of history, scripture, and civics. I also examine the likely effects of this material on self-image, and national and imperial consciousness.

Chapter 6 is based on an historical review of a series of poems which were very popular with the Australian public, but even more so with serving Anzacs based on the sale of so called 'trench editions' of C. J. Dennis's work. These are poems about literary culture, urban larrikinism, and Anzac heroism.

Notwithstanding theories that the urban larrikin formed part of Anzac identity, the popularity of Dennis's work with the Anzacs demonstrates that the men understood enough Shakespeare to appreciate the parody, and like Dennis's heroes, had absorbed the obligations of romantic

chivalry. An appreciation of Shakespeare and an affection for lyric poetry and overall literacy did not come from the outback experience but from the Anzacs' education and appreciation of romantic literature, even in Dennis's bowdlerised form.

In Chapter 7 I review the relationship between corporate schooling and military sacrifice, looking at the story of the Pockley brothers. This chapter also explores the historical intervention of the Great War on Australian schoolchildren with a particular emphasis on the significance attached to Gallipoli by colonial and state education systems. The principal findings of the research are that the concept of the citizen-soldier was an important part of the claim and explanation for Anzac exceptionalism, was largely derived from and related to the civic culture promoted in Australian school curricula from the 1870's. The abilities attributed to the Anzac's and their character, in essence, the Anzac legend were derived from a range of characteristics and skills acquired through education and the associated culture of literacy rather than the culture of the Bush as argued by Bean and others .

This thesis contends, as argued in Chapter 6, that education and urban culture far better explain the qualities that made the Anzac legend. Joan Beaumont, for example, summarises the relationship between character and performance in popular thinking: '[the Anzacs'] ... performance would be seen as a test, not of professional competence but of the national character'.²⁵

The thesis concludes that there is sufficient evidence from literary, cultural and educational sources – outlined in successive chapters – that the evolution of the Anzac narrative was strongly influenced by the education reforms of the 1880's and the first decade after federation. The legend itself was transmitted in large part through education departments, schools and teachers. Ironically, in addition to education's seminal influence on the creation of the Anzac legend, it also constituted a significant influence on the creation of the bush and pioneer legends.

²⁵ Joan Beaumont, *Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2013), 32.

Chapter 1

The Anzac legend: Continuity and transformation

1.1 Beautiful lies: Myth, legend, and history

Australia's experience of the Great War created the Anzac legend. The legend became a dominant force in Australian cultural discourse, transforming some elements of Australian culture and reinforcing others. The Anzac legend occasioned a cultural, though not political, rift with Britain over patrician as distinct from meritocratic styles of leadership. The military sacrifice of the common man—the digger—became the defining story of the Australian individual, instead of the 'coming man' or the 'new woman'. The Anzac legend underlined the continuity and validity of the White Australia policy and the belief in an exceptional Australian character.

Four years before Federation, in 1896, Mark Twain, the American author and polymath, toured Australia.¹ While on tour, he read from his works and gave comical but insightful speeches about popular culture, literature and the arts. Later, he made a notorious claim about Australian history. In his travel memoir, *Following the Equator*, he observed that:

*It [Australian history] does not read like history, but like the most beautiful lies. And all a fresh sort, no mouldy, no old stale ones. It is full of surprises and adventures and incongruities, and contradictions and incredibilities; but they are all true, they all happened.*²

¹ Don Watson, in the Introduction to Mark Twain's *The Wayward Tourist* (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 2007), observes that 'Twain came to Australia at a very interesting time, with the rise in federalist sentiment, led by Sir Henry Parkes and others, whom Twain met, that would lead to the formation only a few years later of the Federation of Australia. Twain advised it would be "unwise" and unnecessary for the colonies to "cut loose from the British Empire". The fact that Twain was such a keen observer gives us a fascinating insight into Australia at the time from an outsider's perspective'.

² Mark Twain, *Following the Equator* (Hartford, CT: The American Publishing Company, 1897), Gutenberg Project, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2895/2895-h/2895-h.htm>, accessed 5 April 2021.

Australian history does, in some respects, read like ‘beautiful lies’. The fusion of history, myth and legend means that Australian history is a series of splendid images of the past. Many of the myths and legends have themselves become part of history.³ The Anzac legend, steeped in myth, is the outstanding example of this phenomenon a myth is a story or belief whose meaning and narrative have become disconnected from actual events.⁴ A legend requires a relationship between the story and the experience of heroes and an audience that believes in the reality of the experience.⁵ History tells a verifiable, systematic narrative in a temporal context. It is also concerned with the influence of beliefs about the past on the present and the future from this perspective, mythology and legend belong to history.⁶

Mythology, from the Ancient Greek *mythos*, is a traditional story about superhumans, demigods or imaginary heroes that explains or justifies natural phenomena or events through fantastic narratives.⁷ In anthropology, a myth is a collective belief built up in response to the group’s wishes without any rational basis for those wishes. Jane Ross describes the mythical qualities of the digger in this way:

... being an Australian soldier was not sufficient in itself; it was necessary to possess certain moral qualities such as belief in equality, a belief in competence as a basis for authority a reliance on mateship, and a feeling of patriotism. Armed with these qualities the Digger has

³ Craig Stockings, *Anzac’s Dirty Dozen: 12 Myths of Australia’s Military History* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2012), 4.

⁴ Arthur Berger, *A Sociological Analysis of Myth* (New York: Balgrave Pivot, 2013). In his Introduction, Berger quotes the semiotics philosopher James Jakob Lister on myth’s social meaning: ‘A myth is a symbolic, idealized representation of social reality to which it is organically related’.

⁵ The definition of ‘legend’ is complex as it has at least three older meanings that have implications for its modern use as might be applied to Anzac: legend—heraldry, the authorising inscription on a coin or medallion; legend—cartography, the instructions for decoding the symbols on a map; legend—as the lives of the saints or famous or exemplary people, the details of which are of disputed veracity.

⁶ Mary Ellen Brown and Bruce A. Rosenberg (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Folklore and Legend* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1999), 375. According to Brown and Rosenberg, ‘Legend is a conversational narrative whose reported events are set in historical (as opposed to myth’s cosmological) time and whose telling makes possible debate concerning the ‘real world’ occurrence and/or efficacy of the events, characters, folk beliefs, and/or folk customs described. Many legends are migratory—that is, their variants are widely known across different geographical areas. For this reason, as well as the fact that legends deal typically with the ambiguous and the unusual, their plots, character types, and motifs can provide a sense of both familiarity and strangeness for those literary works and films that draw upon them’.

⁷ *Macquarie Dictionary* 4th edn (Ryde: Macquarie Library, 2005), 948.

*come to enjoy an esteemed place in Australian history and literature and in military history all over the world.*⁸

Ross's account of the mythic qualities of the men of Anzac manifested as exceptional traits of the digger. These generalised personal qualities are the foundation of the Anzac legend's cultural identity, even though they more closely resemble mythology as they cannot be verified but only asserted by the tellers of the story. The 1st AIF's legendary fighting capability is fused with this mythology of character, even though the good and the bad of the Anzacs' fighting record is verifiable from contemporaneous records.

Australian historians have used the concept of myth, as distinct from legend, to describe Anzac stories because some narratives are exaggerated to the point that they bear little resemblance to actual events. In *An Anzac Myth*, Mark McKenna and Stuart Ward examine the stories of comradeship between the Anzacs and the Turks at Gallipoli.⁹ The mythology of friendship across the killing fields of Canakkale remains an important sentimental mythology of national association between Turkey and Australia.

McKenna and Ward demonstrate that even the famous quotation from Ataturk regarding Australia's Dardanelles war graves has no provenance in the great Turkish statesman's rhetorical oeuvre. The dedication is more likely an unsubstantiated eulogy collected from a veteran Anzac by Country Party M.P. and Gallipoli veteran Alan J. Campbell. McKenna and Ward write:

*Charged with the task of erecting a fountain in Brisbane's city centre ... Campbell drew on an account shared with him by another veteran who had heard of Ataturk's stirring speech ... Campbell attempted to confirm the purported speech; no evidence was found.*¹⁰

⁸ Jane Ross, *The Myth of the Digger* (Marrickville: Hale & Iremonger, 1985), 27.

⁹ Mark McKenna and Stuart Ward, 'An Anzac Myth', *The Monthly*, December 2015–January 2016, <https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2015/december/1448888400/mark-mckenna-and-stuart-ward/anzac-myth#mtr>, accessed 7/11/2022.

¹⁰ McKenna and Ward, 'An Anzac Myth', 2.

McKenna describes Anzac as ‘the most powerful myth of Nationhood’.¹¹

Anzac has been recollected differently at different times by veterans and commentators alike. The mythological element of Anzac has variously appealed to or been denigrated by subsequent generations of Australians because the myth fits emotionally and politically complex events into contemporary iconography. The myths become part of the legend. The nation may not have been born at Gallipoli on the 25th of April, but undoubtedly a national myth and a perpetual cultural battleground had their origins there. As Bean put it, ‘the consciousness of Australian nationhood was born’.¹²

The former Principal Historian at the Australian War Memorial, Peter Stanley, describes the recollection of the landing on the Gallipoli peninsula as the greatest Anzac myth of all: that military history is central and pre-eminent to the Australian historical experience, defining the Australian character.¹³ The Anzac apotheosis created by the work of Bean and John Treloar was based on the myth that the character of the Anzacs was a result of the direct experience of the outback. This thesis argues that the Australian policy of compulsory liberal education, including history, literature and civics and morals, and a profound emerging national liberalism, was the more credible foundation for the culture of Anzac than the individualist bushman legend. Bean’s pre-war writing, however, particularly *On the Wool Track*, although couched in the sentiment and language of the bushman legend, had more narratively in common with the communitarian pioneer legend.

A legend is an account of past events legitimised by tradition. Myths can become part of a legend. The Anzac legend contains elements of history as well as mythology. Applied to Anzac, legend retains much of its original hagiographical meaning. Historically, the Catholic Church recommended the faithful emulate the lives of the saints rather than read the Bible,

¹¹ Mark McKenna, *What’s Wrong with Anzac? The Militarisation of Australian History* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2010), 111.

¹² C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–18: Vol. II: The Story of Anzac from 4 May 1915 to the Evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1955), 910.

¹³ Peter Stanley, ‘Monumental Mistake’, in Craig Stockings (ed.), *Anzac’s Dirty Dozen: 12 Myths of Australian Military History* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2012), 264.

thereby exemplifying the Christian life.¹⁴ This practice is not dissimilar to the political use of the Anzacs as exemplifiers of Australianness. Protestant reformers scorned the emulation of the saints' legends, refuting both their validity and accuracy. This difference of opinion gave the word 'legend' its pejorative connotation and its adulatory meaning.¹⁵

In his final volume of *The Official History* in 1942, in the shadow of an even more horrendous conflict, Bean presents a clear image of the 1st AIF as legendary heroes.

The legend of Anzac thrived on three distinct historical tropes—Anzac is a legend in triptych. Each historical element reflects the diversity of Australian national self-belief. Each was created by a fusion of the work of the Official Historians and the work of the Anzacs themselves. This thesis argues that this formula was unique to the Anzac legend as no other combatant's Official Historians endured battlefield experience and few other armies were sufficiently literate to participate in the creation their own legend. Some of these anecdotes became icons and more closely resemble mythologies, the story of Simpson and the Donkey being the most obvious. The mythological digger—the common man as self-sacrificing, sometimes larrikin hero—exists in various contexts in the Official Histories and the works authored by members of the AIF, ranging from naive colonial citizen-soldier to daring knight-errant to hardened combat professional.

The first element of the legend is pride in the Australians living up to expectations in a test of character and manhood. Of course, the early casualty lists meant that sacrifice for a greater good became a key part of the legendary narrative. Many Australians came to believe that ultimately the Gallipoli landing (and withdrawal) is a story of heroic failure and loss of innocence on the part of the citizen-soldier as common man.¹⁶ The second element of the legend is romance. The Light Horse in the Middle East became a story of romantic chivalry and a widespread belief in their astonishing success at Beersheba and Damascus that for many Australians this symbolised Australia's induction into the romance of Western

¹⁴ W.G. Ryan, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), xvii.

¹⁵ Ryan, *The Golden Legend*, xii.

¹⁶ C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918: Vol. I, The First Phase* and *Vol. II., The Story of Anzac* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1935).

civilisation.¹⁷ The third element is modernity. The Australian media's reflection on the final push on the Western Front completed the picture. From the Battle of Hamel to the Armistice, the Anzac Corps fought as a unified army with apparent professionalism and innovative tactics under an Australian commander, John Monash.¹⁸ For many Australians this confirmed that the First World War despite the losses and the trauma had allowed Australia to take its place among the nations.

These elements of the Anzac legend can be more easily traced to school education than to the legend of the bushman. Pupils in Australia learned about the value of sacrifice through studies in Civics, Morals and Scripture, the adventure of romance from the cycle of English history and romantic fiction, and the importance of modernity from the discipline and collaboration of the classroom and playground and respect for scientific and mathematical learning and practical knowledge. Later, all three elements of the legend were expressed in Bean's *Official History*, contemporary journalism, and the letters, diaries, and literature of the Anzacs themselves.

While all three tropes make up the legend, the Western Front is the enduring source of the claim to Anzac military exceptionalism. In contrast, beliefs about the Light Horse in the Middle East made a significant contribution to the romantic imagery of the Anzacs. Of course, the Anzacs themselves and most Australians at the time believed Gallipoli was the critical proving ground of the resolute Australian character. Gallipoli remains the symbolic pivot of the emotional and political tension between Australia as an independent nation and its sublimation under the British Empire.

¹⁷ C.E.W. Bean, *The History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918: Vol. VII, Sinai and Palestine* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1935).

¹⁸ C.E.W. Bean, *The History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918: Vols III–VI, The AIF in France* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1935).

1.2 Australian exceptionalism: The vision splendid and the bush

The history of the 1st AIF gave rise to a rich legend, which is a form of exceptionalism particular to Australians. Like American exceptionalism, Anzac exceptionalism claims that the Australian historical experience is unique and was created by a unique ethical and material moment.¹⁹ The foundation of the argument attributes military achievements to the Anzacs way beyond their numerical strength. The achievements it is held by the legend were possible due to character traits shared exclusively by Australians (and New Zealanders).

The Anzac character traits are assumed to be uniquely combined or present to a greater extent in the Anzacs than in other soldiers.²⁰ Australia as a dominion could not aspire to great power exceptionalism like the United States, the British Empire or even the French Republic. The Australian nation produced a chauvinism of character derived from and celebrated in the perception of the Anzacs as ‘punching above our weight’.²¹ The abstractions of character, which can be inferred but do not have a material or temporal existence, are the basis of the Anzac legend. Bean, Treloar, John Masefield and Ashmead-Bartlett derived their notions of an Anzac character from theoretical constructs of character which they assumed existed before the war.

Anzac exceptionalism is based on character traits, which while best demonstrated in war, are also apparent in sport and volunteer services such as bushfire fighting and surf lifesaving, which adhere to the same masculinist tribal lore.²² The history, legend, and mythologies from Gallipoli to the Armistice are based on the same events but represent different ways of understanding the past’s relationship to the present. Each has a connection to how Australians construe their character in the present and project it into the future.

¹⁹ James W. Ceaser, ‘The Origins and Character of American Exceptionalism’, *American Political Thought* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2012).

²⁰ British correspondent Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett’s first reports of the landing at Gallipoli contain the inference that, although the Anzacs were inexperienced, they were already an elite: ‘These raw colonial troops, in these desperate hours, proved worthy to fight side by side with the heroes of the battles of Mons, the Aisne, Ypres and Neuve-Chapelle’. Most of the status Ashmead-Bartlett attributed to the Anzacs was about their attitude, as it conveyed their character. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 May 1915, 13.

²¹ Stockings, *Anzac’s Dirty Dozen*, 289.

²² Manning Clark, *A History of Australia*: Vol. VI (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 1987), 2.

The bush has been the basis of a unique Australian culture, especially as expressed in Australian literature, painting and popular music. By the time of Anzac, however, the bush identity was more ideology than material experience. Like the frontier ethos that has underpinned American self-perceptions, the Australian bush has shaped perceptions of the Australian character. Some obvious examples are Steele Rudd's Dad and Dave, the characters of Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson, and the rustic art of George Lambert and the paintings of Tom Roberts, whose popular works, such as *Shearing the Rams* and *A Break Away!*, portray the working men of the Australian bush in the late 19th century. These works all demonstrate the romantic idealisation of outback Australia during the depression of the 1890s. The bush was also lauded by *The Bulletin*, Australia's first national literary magazine.²³ However, there was a difference with implications for the later Anzac legend personified by Lawson and Paterson. Lawson saw the bush experience as one of hardship and suffering while Paterson and the romantics saw the bush as exemplifying Australianness and providing freedom and opportunity.

In *Sydney and the Bush*, Graeme Davison identified a turn-of-the-century journalistic, literary and artistic culture of urban intellectuals, including *The Bulletin* contributors and editorial staff as well as the Bohemians (a men's literary circle), who extolled the virtues of the Australian character.²⁴ These associations attributed that character to the experience of the outback, even though they were predominantly city dwellers with little personal experience of the bush, except as campers and bushwalkers. Bean, though not directly connected to any

²³ According to Richard White in *Inventing Australia: Images, and Identity 1688–1980* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1981), *The Bulletin* was nationalist, pro-labour and pro-republican in its writing. Editorially *The Bulletin* was also avowedly racist, strongly supporting the White Australia policy and masculinist to the point of misogyny in its policy bias. *The Bulletin*, and the Bohemian movement with which its writers and artists were closely associated, fostered a romantic view of the bush and the associated masculine pursuits, including rejecting the limitations of family life and seeking adventure, hard living and mateship. In some respects, it was a precursor of the Anzac legend. This view of the bush was not uncontested. Between 1892 and 1893 *The Bulletin* published a lively and sometimes personally caustic debate in verse between Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson. Lawson argued, as a 'real' son of the bush, that the bush life was hard and dominated by the land-owning class at the expense of the workers and that the comforts of the city were preferable to bush life and that romantics like Paterson were ignorant or mistaken about the realities of bush life. Paterson and other bush romantics argued aggressively that the bush defined Australianness and the bush lifestyle was the embodiment of freedom and egalitarianism. Although Lawson produced the most memorable poem of the debate ('Borderland', later retitled 'Up the Country'), *The Bulletin* school and its readers widely thought of Paterson as the winner of the debate. There was no official winner, but Paterson's popularity increased enormously with the public in the wake of the debate.

²⁴ Graeme Davison, 'Sydney and the Bush: An Urban Context for the Australian Legend', in John Carrol (ed.), *Intruders in the Bush: The Australian Quest for Identity* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1982), 109–130.

of these cliques, had a very similar view of the way in which the outback life influenced Australian character, integrating it with his beliefs about the Anzac:

*Fires, floods and even the concentration of sheep for shearing, or the long journeys in droving bullocks down the great stock routes across the 'backcountry' offer many similar conditions to those of a military expedition. The Australian was already half a soldier before the War; indeed, throughout the War, in the hottest fights ... the Australian soldier differed very little from the Australian who at home rides the station boundaries every weekday and sits on Sunday round the stockyard fence.*²⁵

This bush sentiment was imperial or at least British as much as it was Australian. relieving Australians of any tension between their emerging nationalism and loyalty to the Empire and the mother country. Lurking in the back of both the British and Australian imagination was the template of Romantic nationalism, with its seductive binaries: ancient/modern, country/city, rustic/sophisticated, oral/literate, indigenous/exotic. In Australia, the geographical divide between the 'civilised' coast and the mysterious, 'savage' inland reinforced its influence. In his book *The Australians* (1893), the English socialist Francis Adams contrasted the 'crude cosmopolitanism' of the capital cities and the innocence of the bush. 'The interior', he wrote, 'is the heart of the genuine Australia'.²⁶ This framework for understanding Australia is echoed in similar British commentary of the time which was read and subscribed to by Australians; including Gillen's diary "the camp jottings of F.J. Gillen" on Baldwin Spencer's and Gillen's expedition across Australia.²⁷

These romantic ideas were both nationalist and imperial and were part of the foundation of Australian nationalism on which the bush legend and the pioneer legend could easily be transposed. Thus, the contemporary writers and thinkers fashioned the Anzac from the bush regardless of equally potent cultural and political influences on Australians at the time, such as the emergence of organised labour; the establishment of Australian universities;

²⁵ C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History: Vol. I* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1935), 47.

²⁶ Adams Francis London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1893 38

²⁷ <https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/1819343>

sophisticated urban economies; and perhaps most centrally, the literacy achieved by rigorous compulsory education institutions and the civic consciousness produced by a rigorous curriculum and school discipline; all of which are central in understanding Anzac.

Bean's early statements propounding his theory of the outback as the basis for Anzac exceptionalism are a major part of the foundation of the Anzac legend. Bean proposed that the 'backcountry' or 'outback' experience explains the relative ease with which Australians could be trained in war. The bush experience also explained their endurance, courage, innovation, and battlefield prowess. Bean also saw the outback as having honed the ordinary AIF soldier's particular personal qualities of mateship, egalitarianism and meritocratic view of leadership.

Bean's 'outback' explanation for a variety of Australian competencies and personal qualities was not new. Bean based his views on his pre-war work as a correspondent touring the 'bush' for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, reporting primarily on the wool industry. His articles were sufficiently popular to justify their publication by Angus & Robertson as standalone volumes, *On the Wool Track* (1910) and *The Dreadnought of the Darling* (1911).

The great English warlord, Lord Kitchener, shared Bean's view. In a speech made in Melbourne before the Great War, Kitchener declared:

*A great deal of training that would, in the ordinary course have to be supplied to obtain an efficient soldier is already part of daily life of many of your lads.*²⁸

Inherent in Bean's theory is the belief that the real Australia is inland, not in the cities on the coast, which are like cities anywhere in the world. Lawson's 'Faces in the Street' and Paterson's 'Man from Snowy River', and 'Clancy of the Overflow' are popular Australian literary classics based on the same idea. It follows that the uniquely Australian economy and culture and, therefore, the uniquely Australian character type was an inhabitant of the outback—the uniquely Australian environment.

²⁸ C.E.W. Bean, *On the Wool Track* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1963), 70.

Wistful theories about inland Australia were common in political discourse, popular culture and Australian literature and art in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The British naval authorities set up the various colonies around harbours and estuaries but craved knowledge of the inland's mysteries. Later, Australians simultaneously admired and resented those who went beyond the boundaries of the colonies—squatters and those who worked for them, bushrangers and those who harboured them, and explorers who sought to discover the heart of the country, be it a river of gold or an inland sea.²⁹ Those of the latter who perished trying to unravel the mysteries of the outback were admired for their courage, if not their wisdom.³⁰ This was the precursor to the pioneer legend.

Alan Atkinson, in *The Europeans in Australia*, argues that Bean did more than anyone else to cut and polish the hero image of the Anzac, although he already had clear ideas about the land and people long before he did that.³¹ Bean based his views about the Australian character and the unique elements of Australian heroism on his many excursions to the bush as a reporter for *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Carolyn Holbrook, in *Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography*, separates the myths of Anzac from the historical events, concluding that 'it is time to separate myth from history: the Great War was a devastating event in which young Australians fought for the interests of a nation that was born on 1 January 1901'³², that is, not on 25 April 1915.

In the final decades of the 19th century and the first years of the 20th, the Australian Natives' Association in public affairs, the Bohemians in literature and lifestyle, and the Heidelberg school in art asserted the unique character of Australians by reference to the bush.³³ The idea that the Australian Anglo-Saxon was a stronger, better type than the British Anglo-Saxon was also becoming a popular cultural theme. Peter Cochrane observed that Bean's belief that national character in the colonies was evolving a superior being, an improved strain of the British bloodline, was an assumption underpinning his writing on the war.³⁴ The Anzac

²⁹ Hector Holthouse, *River of Gold* (Sydney: Eden Paperbacks, 1994).

³⁰ John Rickard, *Australia: A Cultural History* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1988), 57.

³¹ Alan Atkinson, *The Europeans in Australia: Volume 3, Nation* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2014), 28.

³² Carolyn Holbrook, *Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2014), 217.

³³ White, *Inventing Australia*, 73. The Australian Natives' Association, a cultural movement founded in 1871, pushed for the representation of distinctly Australian flora and fauna in architecture, art, and literature.

³⁴ Peter Cochrane, 'Fighting Words', *Inside Story*, <https://insidestory.org.au/fighting-words/>, accessed 07/04/2022.

legend consolidated these two crucial ideas. The bush and racial improvement were seen as intrinsically connected by Bean and many of his contemporaries.

Popular writers like Lawson and Paterson championed the idea that the real Australia was in the outback and real Australians were those who lived by and in it. Dorothea Mackellar, who was raised in the then well-to-do suburb of Point Piper in Sydney and subsequently lived in London, romanticised the national significance of the bush over the city in her hugely popular nostalgic outback lyrical homage, 'My Country', first published in 1908. Courtesy of the *Victorian School Paper*, 'Core of My Heart', as the poem was originally known, was published in 1909 and learned by heart by Victorian schoolchildren. Subsequently, 'My Country' became an informal anthem of the Anzacs.³⁵

Bean took the idea of the 'Coming Australian' to another level. As a journalist before the war, he observed that Australians lived in a social system of 'moral sunlight'.³⁶ Bean, even before the landing at Anzac Cove, was describing Australians as being marked by 'personal cleanliness', as 'lovers of truth' and as 'men of indescribable frankness'.³⁷ In his most extreme analogy, he likened the life of outback Australia to a constant battle with an enemy:

*The Australian is always fighting something. In the Bush, it is drought, fire, unbroken horses, cattle, and not infrequently strong men. Never was such a country for defending itself with its fists ... all this fighting with men and nature, as fierce as in warfare, has made of the Australian as fine a fighting man as exists.*³⁸

Fifty years later, Bean's observations were an indispensable source for Russel Ward, who revisited the theory of the outback as formative in the Australian character in his seminal

³⁵ Jan Keane, *National Identity and Education in Early Twentieth Century Australia* (London: Emerald Publishing, 2018), 53.

³⁶ Joseph McCabe, 'Australia as a Forecast of the Future', *Lone Hand*, 2 (October 1911): 485.

³⁷ C.E.W. Bean ['C.W.'], 'Australia: IV The Australian', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 June 1907, 6.

³⁸ Bean ['C.W.'], 'Australia: IV The Australian', 6.

historical work, *The Australian Legend*.³⁹ The Marxist Ward used and endorsed the selective observations of Australians made by the more conservative Bean in his *Official History*.

Ward was an 'old Marxist'. In conventional Marxist theory, the character of the working class should represent a potential revolutionary alternative to the bourgeois conventions of Empire or high capitalism. Character and political resolution resulted from evolving class consciousness, which meant workers identified with, and were accordingly potential liberators of, all oppressed people of the world. Ward's harsh critic, Humphrey McQueen, later wrote of Ward's thesis: 'The crux of the Legend is not a divide between the city and the bush, but rather their interactions within the conflicts between wage-labour and capital'.⁴⁰

Ward's Marxism envisaged the Australian character as predominantly formed by that of the Australian rural working class. Ward thought this working-class character was the dominant characteristic of the rank-and-file Anzac. The Australian character was antithetical to that of the British and their Empire. In Ward's view, a radical nationalism would emerge from class-conscious workers and their cultural allies. It would be the basis of a culture of solidarity and egalitarianism that rejected class distinction, upholding merit rather than privilege as the basis of social organisation. The ordinary Anzac, the working-class digger rather than the officer, was the defining character of Anzac for Ward.

For Ward, the material conditions of labour were the basis of class consciousness and action. Here Ward and Bean are as one, despite their different political attitudes. Their view is that the Australian character was formed by the economic, cultural, and environmental conditions of the outback working class. They envisage this solidarity as male and Anglo-Celtic, although Ward perhaps less consciously than Bean.⁴¹ They also subscribed to the mystique of the effect of the outback's harsh climate and its distance from the order of Empire: those men who survived becoming toughened and physically and mentally superior. More Darwin than Marx, this was a form of social Darwinism⁴² in which the material conditions of a new

³⁹ Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1966).

⁴⁰ Frank Bongiorno and David Roberts (eds), 'Russel Ward: Reflections on the Legend', *Journal of Australian Colonial History* 10, no. 2 (2008): 250.

⁴¹ Bongiorno and Roberts, 'Russel Ward', 199.

⁴² Barry Butcher, *Darwinism and Australia 1836–1914*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 1992.

society over-determined the culture of early modern Australia. Life in the colonies was creating a stronger type of Britisher.

The argument as to whether or not the Australian was an improved Britisher is a point of theoretical difference. Some argued that because of Australia's heat and isolation the Anglo-Saxon type would gradually deteriorate in Australia. The more popular theory among Australians was that the Australian represented a superior type of Britisher. A fundamental underpinning for the idea of racial improvement was a concept known as social Darwinism, which overlapped with but was not the same ideologically as the idea of the 'Coming Man'.⁴³

More generally, social Darwinism in Australia confirmed the view that migration of the Anglo Saxon or the Britisher to the challenging environment of Australia was improving the stock. This view tended to mesh with the pre-existing idea of the 'Coming Man': the notion that the class-bound passive moralisers and intellectuals of England were moribund, while the man who would make the new civilisation was a man of action—the pioneer and the explorer—concerned less with form than with getting things done. The colonial 'Coming Man' was admired by British thinkers of no less distinction than Rudyard Kipling and Robert Louis Stephenson, the prophets of the new imperialism. Kipling believed that it was the Empire that made Britain great, and that greatness did not come from the educated Englishman but from the common man of the colonies, as White writes:

[Colonial] Men embodied these values. The emphasis was on masculinity, and on masculine friendships and teamwork or 'mateship' in Australia (a

⁴³ Charles Darwin, the great naturalist, and author of *On the Origin of Species*, was not a social Darwinist, although he thought that his theory of evolution applied to human races in the same way as it applied to different species of animal and plant. This meant that even scientific Darwinism became a justification for the mistreatment, oppression and even genocide of Aboriginal people as it did across all the indigenous populations of the British Empire. In this way Darwin's theories became an ideological pillar of British imperialism. However, within racial groups Darwin speculated that sympathy, empathy, and compassion were adaptive human characteristics that supported altruism and would lead to an overall improvement in the human race. Darwin's speculation was generally ignored by most of his contemporaries. The broader misapplication of Darwin's theories led to a social doctrine that supported the British class system and justified the mistreatment by employers of their employees, landlords of their tenants, and those in power of their subjects. The philosopher Herbert Spencer was the most influential social Darwinist, even though, ironically, he did not support Darwin's theory of evolution but was Lamarckian. Spencer, not Darwin, coined the simplistic political and social catchphrase 'survival of the fittest'. The most critical impact of social Darwinism in Australia was that it confirmed what many believed: that the Aborigines were an inferior race, and their extinction was inevitably and morally right.

*preview of the Anzac legend) the ... man of action, white man, manliness, the common man, war, and battle as a test of fitness and manhood.*⁴⁴

The idea of Greater Britain is an often-neglected aspect of the political ideas of 19th-century British imperialism. Although separate to the New Imperialism, the much more specific debate around Greater Britain was part of the colonial and British thinking about race, security, and prosperity for the British and the white dominions. However, the debate about Greater Britain both in the United Kingdom and Australia formed an important backdrop to the ideas of the ‘Coming Man’ and social Darwinism, as well as military masculinity. This was not a debate limited to professional politicians or political philosophers. It was a debate widely canvassed in the popular press, the churches, and professions. It was essentially a debate about race and the crimson thread of kinship between the United Kingdom and her settler dominions.⁴⁵

The Greater Britain debate asked what form of union the United Kingdom should have with its settler colonies in the future. The debate existed because British global domination was under challenge from Germany, Russia and the United States, and unification with Australia, New Zealand, the Cape colonies, and Canada would give the UK unchallengeable strategic spread and enormous human and material resources. In addition, the transport and communications technologies of the mid-Victorian era made possible forms and speeds of contact between people and continents that were previously unthinkable. At one extreme, proponents argued for the existing relationships to be drawn closer; at the other extreme there was an argument for the creation of a democratic super state with an elected Parliament.⁴⁶

The idea of the ‘Coming Man’, the concept of New Imperialism, the image of the bushman as the iconic Australian type, and the notion of the pioneers and explorers as the spirit and spearhead of British civilisation, were dominant values in Federation Australia, but they were not universal. There were of course points of difference and dissent according to social class,

⁴⁴ White, *Inventing Australia*, 87.

⁴⁵ John Kendle, Review of *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860–1900*, by Duncan Bell, *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 4 (2008): 1245–1246, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30223396>.

⁴⁶ Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860–1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

gender, religion, and ethnicity. The most notable dissenters from imperialism, as we shall see in Chapter 3, were the Irish Catholics.

As well, many feminist intellectuals and writers, disputed the dominant ethos of masculinity and denounced overt and implicit misogyny, as Louisa Lawson sardonically noted:

Of course, the behaviour of men towards a recognised champion of 'women's rights' does not come within the scope of our comments, because it is understood that such a creature is little more than a perambulating vinegar-bottle armed with an umbrella, and she, being ready to eject acidulous language against any male creature of differing views, must expect an occasional exhibition of venom in return. No, it is not the treatment of the sour-tempered militant female (if such there be) which excites our indignation; the reservoirs of our wrath and contempt only overflow when we see some little woman, too timid to complain, wincing under an unprovoked discourtesy.⁴⁷

Those who held power ensured the dominance of these ideas, particularly the admiration for British civilisation and her Empire. The dominant imperial values were reinforced in the pedagogy of Australian schooling, as Joan Beaumont notes in *Broken Nation*:

Classrooms across the nation displayed world maps studded with reassuring splashes of Imperial red. Empire Day ... was the occasion for celebrating the glories of the British Empire, while books such as Fitchett's Deeds that won the Empire (1897) socialised young Australians into tales of Imperial heroism.⁴⁸

The notion of the outback intersects with another important historiographical idea. Both Bean and Ward idealised the horny-handed practical man and the tough boss who had to lead without recourse to law enforcement or civilised remedies. For Bean, these men formed the

⁴⁷ Louisa Lawson, *The Dawn* 2, no. 7 (1889), in *Selected Lead Articles from The Dawn*, <https://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks06/0606891h.html>, accessed 20/11sd/2022.

⁴⁸ Beaumont, *Broken Nation*, 14.

character of the AIF and were the basis of its successes and reputation for endurance, innovation, and solidarity. These were self-reliant, incorrigible civilians who were disrespectful of British authority.

In Bean's view, the outback Australian achieved his status as a leader by hard work, innovation, and merit. This was a diametric opposite to the British reliance on patronage and privilege when selecting leaders. This analysis, however, ignored the fact that many outback station owners were squatters or squatters' sons who had appropriated land from Aboriginal people without legal authorisation. By Federation, many were very wealthy. Other station owners had purchased their entitlement either corruptly or officially through land grants.

In explaining how leadership works in the egalitarian society of the Australian bush, Bean describes the 'station boss' in some detail in *On the Wool Track*. He draws a picture of a man whose life and leadership style are based on merit and who treats men under his charge as his equals (but still requiring subordinates to refer to him as 'Sir'⁴⁹) and, significantly, leading by example. Bean explicitly states that, should force of character fail to maintain order and discipline, the last resort of the station boss is not the police or society at large but aggression and violence.

In *The Official History*, Bean returns more than once to the stereotype of the outback boss. He lauds the decorated Major Percy Black, a former miner and outback labourer killed at Bullecourt, who led his men from the front, as a great bush Australian. Bean saw Black as exemplifying the self-made leader of the outback who epitomised the Anzac culture.

Paradoxically Bean's analysis of Anzac leadership assumes that the 'Britisher' style is better suited to the most senior positions. Whether British like William Birdwood or Ewen Sinclair-MacLagan, or an Australian perceived as possessing British characteristics like Cyril Brudenell White or 'Pompey' Elliott, he was the Brigade or Divisional leader, whereas the bush leader was most suitable as a Captain or a Major. Bean's suspicion of John Monash as a leader (which he renounced many years later) was racially and socially based. Monash was a

⁴⁹ Bean, *On the Wool Track*, 66.

professional engineer and a German Jew from the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. In Bean's view Monash represented neither a 'Britisher' style Australian nor an 'outback' Australian.

This paradox in Bean's analysis of leadership is resolved by recognising that, despite his admiration for the emerging nation, before and during the war he was still very much a man of Empire and imperial sensibility. Monash, in contrast, presents a modern view of Australian leadership consistent with an assessment of an educated and thoughtful constituency:

... he [the Anzac] was easy to lead but difficult to drive ... the Australian soldier when understood is not difficult to handle. He required a sympathetic handling, which appealed to his intelligence and satisfied his instinct for a square deal ... In short, the Australian army is a proof that individualism is the best and not the worst foundation upon which to build up a collective discipline.⁵⁰

By 1914, the colonies had become the states of a Federation and were already urban civilisations committed to the education of children and the provision of opportunities to pursue adult learning through numerous institutes, societies, and clubs. Book sales⁵¹, the proliferation of literary institutes and libraries, and the interest in Twain's tour, among many other literary events, indicate that Australians were avid readers. As previously noted, by Federation, Australia was already one of the most urbanised and literate societies in the world. L.L. Robson has shown conclusively through exhaustive statistical analysis of the data that the majority of the 1st AIF came from urban rather than bush backgrounds.⁵² If Australians made great soldiers it was not because of their personal connection to the bush.

⁵⁰ John Monash, *The Australian Victories in France in 1918* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1920), 292.

⁵¹ Evidence of Australia's voracious consumption of books and literary materials in the Federation decades is referenced in the *La Trobe Journal* of the State Library of Victoria (No. 59 Autumn 1997), <http://www3.slv.vic.gov.au/latrobejournal/issue/latrobe-59/t1-g-t1.html>: 'Over 50,000 titles were in stock in George Robertson's warehouse in Melbourne, and regular trade sales and trade catalogues offered retailers the opportunity to replenish their supplies ... [By 1890] ... Australia had become the largest external market for London and Glasgow publishers ... Sands and McDougall's Directory for Melbourne for 1897 shows 11 wholesale booksellers (including Cassell & Co. and Ward Lock & Co.), 247 retail booksellers, 30 bookbinders and paper rulers, 9 commercial circulating libraries (alongside the Mechanics' Institutes and public libraries scattered through Melbourne's suburbs) and even greater numbers of printers and publishers.'

⁵² L.L. Robson, *The First AIF: A Study of its Recruitment, 1914–1918* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 1982), 1–2.

Bean's faith in the 'bush theory' as the basis for Anzac exceptionalism is largely based on the romantic premise of the Australian pioneer ethos.⁵³ Bean conceives the real Australian as growing up in a constant battle with a hostile outback. Therefore, the Australian digger was, in the view of Bean, already hardened for battle and predisposed to the qualities of innovation and endurance that made the successful modern soldier.

In fact, more Anzacs had spent their childhood battling for room in the school yard than enjoying the endless space of the bush. As young adults, they were more likely to be confronted by a boss wearing a suit in an office, a factory or a shop than admonished by Bean's 'station boss' in dungarees and flannels, if they were lucky enough to have a job at all.

Bean allowed himself at least an 'out': in volume 1 of *The Official History*, he refers to urban-based Australian children as acquiring half the arts of the soldier before the war.⁵⁴ Ironically, through his careful and precise narratives in *The Official History*, Bean's historical discipline often contradicted his outback theory. For example, he lauded the 6th Brigade for its sterling efforts in the 'extreme test' of the Second Battle of Bullecourt in early May 1917. Yet, the Brigade, he writes, was mainly 'town-bred'.⁵⁵ Reflecting his ideological position, Bean credits the Brigade's commander, Tasmanian apple-grower John Gellibrand, with the 6th's effectiveness.⁵⁶ However, Bean's footnotes point out that the two junior officers he describes as performing with all the bush Anzac qualities were Roydhouse, a Perth schoolteacher, and Saivage, a draper from the Melbourne middle-class suburb of Hawthorn.

The Anzac legend has a great deal of continuity with *The Bulletin* school's cultural iconography, the Bohemians and Ward's *Australian Legend*, the magazine *The Lone Hand*, and the notion of the bushman. The outback culture iconography of the legend persisted well into the late 20th century: the fictionalised hero Archy Hamilton in the classic 1981 movie

⁵³ Richard Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid: A Social and Cultural History of Rural Australia* (Fremantle: Curtin University Books, 2005), 27.

⁵⁴ Bean, *The Official History*: Vol. 1, 47

⁵⁵ C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*: Vol. III, *The AIF in France 1916* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1935), 601.

⁵⁶ C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*: Vol. IV, *The AIF in France 1918* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1935), 482.

Gallipoli was an outback character. The over-determining nature of the transformation is the result of Bean and others pouring all the pre-war icons of Australian culture into one vessel—the Anzac. The Anzac legend became the new national cultural symbol that defined purpose, character, and masculinity, but its real origin was the modernity of mass education and a mass readership for literature.

The most legendary Anzac of them all, John Simpson Kirkpatrick, was a ship's fireman from Melbourne who reputedly joined the AIF to get free passage home to England.⁵⁷ Bean's helpful footnotes confirm that approximately one in four of the 1st Division of the original Anzacs were British-born and certainly not bred in the outback. As we have seen, only a relatively small minority of Anzacs came from the bush. Bean and Ward both try to work around this fact with very similar arguments, suggesting that the bush Anzac culture permeated the whole force through a form of cultural osmosis. The stronger explanation, however, is that the outback folklore, as a literary absorption of Australian rural iconography, came to prominence through education and recreational reading.

Contrary to Bean's analysis, this thesis argues that, to the extent there was any basis for Anzac exceptionalism, it was due to the unique cultural history of Australian education. Specifically, it proposes that the mythic importance of the 1st AIF's landing at Gallipoli and the wider Anzac legend became a popular basis for reinterpreting and transforming Australia's key images of national character, such as the solidarity of mateship and democratic beliefs. But the key images already existed, preserved in popular literature and schooling.

In supporting this argument, I show that the typical recruits of the 1st AIF and the Anzac generation were among the best educated in the world. This was due to the early adoption of colonial policies supporting compulsory, free and secular public education in the 1880s. Later, in 1905, a syllabus regulating and mandating already existing neo-liberal pedagogical values was adopted in New South Wales. The essential feature of the so-called Board syllabus was then adopted by the other states. This general availability of education and the

⁵⁷ Australian War Memorial, 'Private John Simpson Kirkpatrick', <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P11013269>, accessed 11/11/2022.

nature of that education had the most important implications for the development of the national character and the Anzac legend.

The availability of general education ensured that Australians were familiar with the literary and historical legacy of Britain and, indeed, the Western cultural aesthetic, as well as the more recent Australian literary canon. Through scripture lessons and reading and studying romantic literature and folktales, young Australians of the Anzac generation were immersed in and engaged with the virtue of self-sacrifice for the common good and individual duty to the State.

The Anzac legend can be understood as a literary and artistic creation that began with the diaries, letters, and records of AIF soldiers of all ranks, and embraced the contemporary journalism of Bean, Ashmead-Bartlett, Masefield, and Keith Murdoch. *The Anzac Book* is particularly relevant as it is the composition of the soldiers themselves under Bean's supervision.⁵⁸ The Anzac literary legend culminates in *The Official History* edited by Bean, and the work of the official artists and photographers compiled by Treloar and published as *Australian Chivalry*⁵⁹, and the architectural presence of the Australian War Memorial.

1.3 Education or the bush

An education in civics and morals required by the new syllabus introduced into the education systems of the Australian states, commencing in 1905, reinforced in the education of the young Anzacs the practical elements of pedagogy.⁶⁰ It also helped develop critical thinking and habits of mind and skills that promoted initiative and innovation. At the same time, the discipline of the classroom and the playground furthered the idea of promotion based on merit, teamwork and affiliation with peers, and leadership based on skill and experience rather than privilege.

⁵⁸ C.E.W. Bean (ed.), *The Anzac Book* (3rd edn; Sydney: UNSW Press/AWM, 2010).

⁵⁹ John Treloar, *Australian Chivalry* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1933).

⁶⁰ Atkinson, *Europeans in Australia*, 173.

This method of pedagogy also reinforced the cultural trends popular in Britain and Australia, including the revival of chivalry and the idea of social Darwinism. Due to the universality of education and the availability of 'historical' literature, notions of romantic chivalry had resonance for the generation that made up the 1st AIF. At the same time, a basic knowledge of science reinforced the social interpretation of Darwin's theories.

Literacy was widespread among the Anzac generation. The Anzacs were all but uniquely placed among the Great War armies to compose the elements of their own legendary trope. Under Bean's supervision, with Birdwood's enthusiastic support, the Anzacs produced their record of the battle incorporating the elements of the legend as *The Anzac Book*, a compilation of literary and artwork produced by the Anzacs themselves but carefully curated and edited by Bean. Many Anzacs, who were private soldiers, kept detailed diaries and conducted copious correspondence with home.

While the school curriculum favoured English history, stories of Australian life were increasingly common from 1905 onwards. In adult life, the Anzac generation read Lawson's 'Faces in the Street', lamenting the dominance, and numbing effect of urban life on the Australian condition. Lawson's 'The Loaded Dog', a comic portrait, and 'The Drover's Wife', a picture of existential bush heroism, Paterson's nostalgic 'Waltzing Matilda', his 'The Man from Snowy River' and his tales of the adventures and life of 'Clancy of the Overflow' are famous examples of the widespread Australian conviction that life in the bush was the basis of great human tests and strong people. These cultural representations were no longer reflective of the personal experience of most Australians by 1914.

Steele Rudd's and Paterson's stories and poetry are all told from the vicarious perspective of an urban dweller imagining life as a bushman. However, the most popular writer with the Anzacs themselves, measured by the sale of so-called trench editions, was C.J. Dennis, whose working-class, mainly larrikin characters were almost completely urban in character and neighbourhood.

The effect of the cult of the bush on the Anzac legend and the Anzacs was a matter of romance more than reality. While most came from cities and towns, the Anzac generation thought of the outback as a national symbol; for the majority, it was not a material

experience. In Chapters 3 and 4 I discuss at some length the relationship between compulsory education and the so-called ‘new syllabus’ and its effect on the generation of Australians who lived through the Great War. I refer to them as the Anzac generation.

In contrast to the cult of the bush, Monash’s own assessment as commander of the Anzac Corps favours the educated and civic Anzac thesis:

*The democratic institutions under which he was reared, the advanced system of Education by which he was trained—teaching him how to think for himself and to apply what he had learned to practical ends ... his pride in his young country and the opportunity which came to him of creating a great national tradition.*⁶¹

What Australia had in democratic institutions and an advanced system of education, it lacked in an independent and confident national sentiment and sense of national destiny. Manning Clark noted that, in 1913, only two years before Gallipoli, the first Australian stamp to be minted carried the British royal image because:

*Australia had no national heroes, no national literature, and no national days of commemoration ... (except the Melbourne Cup) which Mark Twain called the mitered Metropolitan of the Horse racing cult.*⁶²

This notion of a ‘blood’ connection to the British or blood shared and shed for the British Empire was reinforced by the Australian school syllabus, which emphasised Australia’s position in what it described as ‘the cycle of English history’. This racial identification, particularly the racism of Anzac, is not without irony. The outstanding sniper on Gallipoli was a much-admired Chinese-Australian Light Horse Trooper named Billy Sing, while the

⁶¹ John Monash, *The Australian Victories in France in 1918* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1920), 291.

⁶² Manning Clark, *A History of Australia: Vol. V, The People Make Laws 1888–1915* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 1981), 331.

outstanding scout in the Dardanelles was Wykeham Henry (Harry) Freame, a half Japanese-Australian who spoke English as a second language.

Mark Twain found in the Australian colonies a society ‘almost entirely populated by the lower orders’, a culture that heroised the semi-literate and uncultured. The ‘lone hands’—the boundary riders or drovers and the shearers who represented the unyielding, hardy types of the bush—were their champions. Nevertheless, Twain knew that Australians were among the world’s most literate audiences at the time from the popularity of his lectures and the status accorded to his poet friend Henry Lawson.⁶³

The Anzac experience enhanced and reinforced pre-existing ideologies about race and social interaction, particularly the notion of mateship and White Australia as defining characteristics of Australianness. Anzac altered the nature of the relationship between Britain and Australia.⁶⁴ Anzac liberated Australians from the burden of the convict stain.⁶⁵

Australian heroic citizenship through the words and pictures of Bean, Treloar and Will Dyson, among others, transformed from the lone hand or bushman into the digger.⁶⁶ Military training became compulsory for all healthy males of age. Pre-war literature and the culture of the street turned the larrikin and the independent-minded into urban heroes. Anzac, however, transformed the larrikin. Innovation, merit, learned skills and a sense of ironic humour became the mark of an independent Australian character rather than a lawbreaker. Despite the

⁶³ During Twain’s tour of Australia, he and Lawson became friends, Lawson making guest appearances at several of Twain’s lectures. They even picnicked and fished together on the Lane Cove River.

⁶⁴ Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War* (Canberra: ANU Press, 1991), 17. Gammage writes: ‘The English press blamed their generals or the British troops at Suvla Bay, considered the Anzacs “in no way to blame”, and hailed their first landing as the “supreme exploit of the British infantry in the whole of its history”. The Australian papers eagerly reported this because it preserved the nation’s heritage and was great comfort. “[T]he name of Gallipoli will never spell failure in Australian ears”, *The Argus* announced on 22 December’.

⁶⁵ Ken Inglis, ‘How Anzac Day Came to Occupy a Sacred Place in Australians Hearts’, *The Conversation*, 25 April 2017. Inglis writes: ‘Australians felt especially keenly their lack of bloody initiation (the frontier wars with Aboriginal peoples did not count), given our penal past. A good showing in battle would expunge the convict stain and prove us worthy members of the British race’.

⁶⁶ *The Lone Hand* was an Australian literary magazine, published in Sydney by W. McLeod from 1907 to 1921. It embodied the masculinist culture of the bush.

controversy over conscription, Anzac began the change away from religious sectarianism toward a common national Anzac memorialism as a pseudo national religion.⁶⁷

1.4 Blood lines and blood sacrifice

From the earliest days of the British invasion, the literate among the Australian settlers began writing of their experience, portraying a unique sense of place and people.⁶⁸ From early in the history of the colony the Australian-born, or ‘currency’, saw themselves as exclusive products of a new environment. Importantly, this perception was often shared by international observers.⁶⁹ Such foundational exceptionalism, however, did not provide the basis for an entirely positive claim to character. New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania were all founded as convict colonies. The stain of convict ‘blood’ adhered to the colonial psyche and was a significant contributor to the Australian sense of self-doubt.⁷⁰ John Hirst believes the events at Gallipoli made Australia respectable, particularly in the eyes of the Australian middle class, and overcame its convict origins. Legends have a variety of cultural purposes. The Anzac legend was a major factor in wiping the stain away.

In volume VI of *The Official History*, Bean observes that the 1st AIF diggers ‘knew only one social horizon, that of race’. Non-Indigenous Australians believed they shared ‘blood’ with the British. Nationalism became tied to evolutionary theories, specifically social Darwinism, justifying appalling ongoing discrimination and violence against Aborigines.⁷¹ Even humanitarians alluded to the extermination of the Indigenous people as ‘soothing the dying pillow’.⁷²

⁶⁷ Clark, *History of Australia*, 21.

⁶⁸ Grace Karskens, *The Colony: A History of Early Sydney* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2009), 7.

⁶⁹ Karskens, *The Colony*, 324.

⁷⁰ John Hirst, ‘An Oddity from the Start: Convicts and National Character’, *The Monthly*, July 2008.

⁷¹ Barry Butcher, *Darwinism in Australia 1836–1914*. Butcher’s thesis shows that Darwinism played a significant role in the intellectual life of Australia in the last part of the 19th century.

⁷² ‘Easing the dying pillow’ was a common expression used to describe the racial theory that the ‘full-blooded’ Aboriginal people were dying out, and the obligation of the Government-appointed protectors and remaining missionaries was to make the passing of the Aboriginal race as peaceful and humane as possible.

Meanwhile, policies of ‘racial hygiene’ based on the exclusion of non-whites from work or even citizenship to achieve racial purity were aggressively championed across the political spectrum.⁷³ These policies could extend to the deportation of Kanakas and Chinese and, sometimes, their Australian-born descendants.

The traditional or ‘old left’ view exemplified by Ward, and, to a lesser extent, Manning Clark, partly absolved the Australian working class of racism by arguing that such policies protected workers and immigrants from exploitation. Later, ‘new left’ scholars such as Humphrey McQueen debunked this view, arguing that the working class was indeed racist, and that both the working and middle classes wanted to maintain a ‘White Australia’ for overtly racist reasons.⁷⁴

In the absence of a unique genetic or linguistic basis for nationhood, the definition of national identity relied on the notion of an Australasian character or colonial ‘type’. A standard set of assumptions about personal honour, a similar resolve in the face of challenges, a shared sense of humour and accent, and even the collective attainment of specific skills and capacities evolved as critical indicators of the personal qualities most associated with the Australian identity. The pre-war ‘Coming Man’ was the proto-Anzac through the work of Bean, Treloar and their collaborators.

Benedict Anderson identifies belief in race and the bond of blood as a basis for human solidarity and as a reason for the prioritising of national identity over class consciousness:

... regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings.⁷⁵

⁷³ Stuart Macintyre, *A Short History of Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 141.

⁷⁴ Humphrey McQueen, *A New Britannia* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2004), 21–50.

⁷⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 6–7.

In modern nationalism, it is not always significant whether character is acquired by culture or genetic inheritance. In the Australian context, however, race was very important. Racial hygiene was to be protected as the basis for the collective belief in the components of character and individual aspiration within the national group. Maintaining the British bloodline was not merely important for sentimental reasons but was critical to survival. According to Anthony Smith, a nation is ‘a population with common ancestry myths and historical memories, elements of shared culture, some link with a historic territory and some measure of solidarity’.⁷⁶ Australians interpreted their destiny as racial, and the territory they had occupied was to be defended by law and, if necessary, by force.

The Anzac legend, aided by early stringent recruitment criteria, which emphasised physical size and fitness, added to the mythology of Australian racial superiority. It was widely believed that the outback conditions, the sunshine and a life of adventure had led the British colonists to evolve into a ‘higher racial type’.⁷⁷ Anzac consolidated this attitude, and, by the end of the war and the peace conference, Australians and their political leaders saw themselves as fighting for White Australia.⁷⁸ Many Australians came to think of their national type as a racial improvement on the British type. The Anzac legend is inherent in this political trope. Australia’s wartime Prime Minister described the conflict as a racial war and, somewhat anomalously, urged the men of the AIF in 1916 ‘to fight for White Australia in France’.⁷⁹

However, membership of the British race continued to define the colonists and, in the lead-up to and following Federation, Australians saw themselves as racially superior to Indigenous Australians, their Pacific neighbours (Kanakas) and Asians. In the lead-up to Federation, the evolving national sentiment was to imitate and perpetuate the characteristics and associated moral significance that were believed to be exceptionally Australian.⁸⁰ To be genuinely Australian was to share the ‘blood’ and culture of other white races, principally, the British.

⁷⁶ Anthony D. Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge, London: Polity, 1995), 57.

⁷⁷ *Lateline*, ABC TV, 23 April 2001, <https://iview.abc.net.au/show/lateline>.

⁷⁸ Peter Cochrane, *Best We Forget: The War for White Australia 1914–18* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2018), 171, 190.

⁷⁹ Cochrane, *Best We Forget*, 227.

⁸⁰ The Australian Natives’ Association, as we have seen, had developed an aggressive cultural nationalism.

Individuals could be exempted from these judgments, and they sometimes were, but the over-determining sentiment was racial exclusion and superiority.⁸¹

Bean would later renounce many of his ideological views, including his racism and anti-Semitism.⁸² However, there is no doubt that his role as official witness and Official Historian contributed to the national project of racial exclusion and Australian exceptionalism based on race, and this underpinned the Anzac legend.⁸³ The Anzac legend was used by politicians to consolidate and celebrate the idea and policy of White Australia.

1.5 The measureless harm of chivalry

Mark Twain, whose real name was Samuel Langhorne Clemens, was a Confederate veteran of the American Civil War. He left the conflict after only two weeks, objecting to the brutality and senselessness of combat. The title of his very first lecture in Australia was 'Knights of Wit and Humour', an improvisation on the themes of his great anti-romance satire, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*.

Reflecting on the wartime motivation and culture of his Confederate fellows in his memoir, *Life on the Mississippi*, Twain contemplated the impact of romance culture and the 19th century's medieval revivalism and its ongoing impact on the aspirations of his fellow Southerners:

⁸¹ White, *Inventing Australia*, 73.

⁸² 'We must ... adjust ourselves to the truth that the possibility of our maintaining a claim to racial superiority has passed beyond recall,' C.E.W. Bean, *The War Aims of a Plain Australian* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1943), 159.

⁸³ 'We see this racial essence in the thinking and writing of C.E.W. (Charles) Bean, the man who did more than any other to establish the legend. The beginnings of the national story that Bean would shape in his wartime journalism, and subsequently in his *Official History* of the war and other books, can be found in his pre-war writings. He had the template long before a shot was fired. This is not mysterious, for the racial legend he and others moulded was the pinnacle of half a century of meditations on race and anxious musings on the struggle for racial survival', Cochrane, *Best We Forget*, 5.

*... and sham chivalries of a brainless and worthless long-vanished society. He [Sir Walter Scott] did measureless harm; more real and lasting harm, perhaps, than any other individual that ever wrote.*⁸⁴

Like Clemens's Southern gentlemen, Australians had been steeped in the very same romanticism, or 'Sir Walterism', that Clemens claimed had helped drive Southerners to the madness of civil war. Simplified versions of Scott's narratives were frequently taught to Australian schoolchildren as recommended reading. These stories were easily adapted to romanticise the nobility of the British cause and added a veneer of nobility to the brutalities of combat.

Clemens's journalistic denunciation of the potential impact of literature on social action and ethics is paralleled in William St Clair's scholarly work. In *Reading Nation*, St Clair makes several critical observations on the social impact of literature in the romantic era in the context of the economic and industrial changes that were occurring at the same time:

*Lower income groups whose reading had long been chapbooks, and ballads, now had access to other print including book length literary texts. When at around the same time, school education began to make the reading of extracts of English literature a central part of the curriculum, whole communities were able, by means of reading, to make new imaginative escapes from their immediate here and now.*⁸⁵

Reading, literacy, and education shaped Australian culture. The pervasiveness of romance and romantic fiction among Australian readers of all social classes is evidenced by the frequency of borrowing from libraries.⁸⁶ Borrowing patterns

⁸⁴ Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi* (electronic edition, Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina, 1999), <https://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/twainlife/twain.html> 13/05/2021, 467, accessed 12/10/2022.

⁸⁵ William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 342.

⁸⁶ The Australian Common Reader, a database of digitised reading records, contains thousands of records of library borrowers between 1860 and 1918 supporting the view that Australians were a literate community: http://australiancommonreader.com/spotlight/australian-common-reader/catalog?f%5BbookTitle_s%5D%5B%5D=What+Will+He+Do+with+It%3F, accessed 17/04/2022.

featured not only Scott's *Waverley* series but Charles Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* and a variety of literary periodicals, many with romantic themes. Despite the occasional excursions into social commentary or Gothic horror, the dominant reading material follows the romantic form.

Romance formed a meaning system Australians could readily understand. John Treloar, the AIF's archivist, and the inaugural Director of the Australian War Memorial, held that the Anzacs' defining quality was a unique form of chivalry based on modern democratic liberal values rather than privilege. Like most Anzacs, Treloar went through the Australian education system with its emphasis on the citizen's duty. The literature of Empire gave youthful Australians a notion of chivalry. Unlike the class-based aristocratic chivalry of the British, French and Germans, the chivalry of Australians was based on civic duty rather than privilege and so was 'chivalry turned upside down'.

The mythology of Australian chivalry championed the common man's honour and the unlikely hero, rather than the privileged and the fortunate who were born to heroics but seldom rose to the occasion. This sentiment is summed up in Treloar's Preface to *Australian Chivalry*, the publication of the Australian War Memorial's artistic collection:

The day of knights in glistening mail on richly caparisoned steeds, riding forth with retinues of squires and pages in search of honourable adventure, had receded far into the mists of time, when the tragic events of 1914 shook the very base and fabric of civilisation. Their banners proved on countless occasions the most potent weapon in the armoury of Great Britain and her allies. Lances and their armour have decayed centuries since, but their spirit sent down through the generations.

This quote from Treloar, one of the founders of the Anzac legend, contains several assumptions. Treloar assumes that the metaphor of medieval chivalry is accessible to the general reader and is accepted as a valid comparison. First there is an unequivocal sense of nationhood rather than dominion status. There is tension here, in that the basis for the chivalrous analogy is inherently British. More than once in the texts Treloar uses the word 'Paladin', which connotes imperial origins. However later in the Preface he emphasises the

crusading nature of the AIF, using the word 'Bayard' as a descriptor. Treloar is presenting the view that the Crusade and the objectives of the Australian Bayards were a personal commitment—an enthusiasm as lofty as that of any knight of the old to the right to liberty, peace, and nationhood for voluntarily 'swearing fealty to the oppressed against the despoiler'.⁸⁷ Finally, he projects the exceptionalism of the AIF:

In Australia the inauguration of this new Order of Chivalry evoked a nationwide response. From all grades of society came Paladins to champion the cause of peace-loving people ...

And underlining that the exceptional nature of the AIF was recognised outside the nation and even the Empire, Treloar recounts:

Despite the barriers of blood and speech and faith, the foreign people among whom they sojourned grew fond of them discovering that beneath their terrible aspect they were gentle and chivalrous with a clean brave outlook and an unfailing respect for all that was good and just in life.

Allies and enemies alike enhanced the Anzac legend, and race was an important element of it. The British needed white men from the Empire to be heroes.⁸⁸ The British Army was relatively small and, although very effective, was shattered in the early campaigns on the Western Front. It was preferable that white Christians were to be the saviours of imperial pride. The Anzacs and Canadian dominion troops would continue to prove the fighting spirit of the white man's Empire.

The Young Turks movement, under the leadership of Kemal Ataturk, founded a republic in the wake of a teetering 500-year-old dynasty. The Young Turks' reputation relied on their defence of the Turkish nation at Gallipoli. Robert Manne has observed that this was the first

⁸⁷ Australian Common Reader.

⁸⁸ Tim Carew, *The Vanished Army* (London: William Kimber, 1964). Carew argues that the early casualties suffered by the BEF in 1915 were so severe as to be debilitating. Hence, the Anzacs and Canadians were an important moral and strategic reinforcement for the British. There was a racial element in this preference, as most other imperial troops were non-white and non-Christian.

Turkish military victory led by Kemal Ataturk.⁸⁹ It was politically imperative for Ataturk that the invaders be great and valiant soldiers. In this way, the Anzac legend helped to consolidate the Young Turks' version of the Gallipoli legend.

On the German side, General Erich Ludendorff's sense of honour meant that the termination of the *Deutsches Heer's* advance on Amiens via Villers-Bretonneux had to be the result of an assault of extraordinary courage and military brilliance, not simply the collapse from exhaustion and fatigue of his forces. The Australian Corps' 36th Brigade obliged at Villers-Bretonneux on 25 April 1918, the third anniversary of the Gallipoli landing.

1.6 Anzac and its discontents

Recent historical interpretations, such as those of Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, have described the Anzac legend as being largely responsible for the 'militarisation of Australian history'.⁹⁰ In this view, Australian history was militarised because the Anzac legend has come to dominate Australia's public discourse.⁹¹

This thesis contends a contrary position: that Anzac became central to the national narrative because there was already a nascent streak of militarism in Australian culture, partly motivated by racial insecurity and imperial fervour but also inspired by the romantic chivalry taught to children in schools and described in popular novels and poetry consumed as recreational literature or studied in school. Anzac was a catalyst to an existing militarist impulse, not a new and reverberating militarist response.

The extent of acceptance of militarism in the lives of Australians between 1905 and 1914, however, remains controversial. The argument that militarism was part of Australian culture prior to the Great War is evidenced by the fact that Australia implemented a scheme of compulsory militia training before the war. Pre-war Australia was characterised by popular

⁸⁹ Robert Manne, 'A Turkish Tale', *The Monthly*, <https://www.themonthly.com.au/monthly-essays-robert-manne-turkish-tale-gallipoli-and-armenian-genocide-459#mtr>, accessed 29/04/2022.

⁹⁰ Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds with Mark McKenna and Joy Damousi, *What's Wrong with Anzac? The Militarisation of Australian History* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2010).

⁹¹ Stockings, *Anzac's Dirty Dozen*, 2.

public movements concerned with military matters like the Australian Defence League and the Dreadnought movement.

The *Defence Act* of 1903 specified that uniformed service would be voluntary but that men aged 14 to 60 could be conscripted for home defence. The legislation for universal (compulsory) military training was introduced in 1909 by Prime Minister Alfred Deakin and passed into law in 1911 under the succeeding Fisher Labor Government. The legislation provided for three levels of compulsory training: junior and senior cadets, 12–14-year-old boys and 14–18-year-old youths respectively, and Home Defence militia known as Commonwealth Military Forces for 18–26-year-old men.

Exemptions from military training were given to those who lived more than five miles from the nearest training site, those passed medically unfit, resident aliens and theological students. Universal military training and the creation of the Commonwealth Military Forces prefigured the notion nascent in the Anzac legend of the civilian or citizen-soldier. John Barrett in *Falling In: Australia and 'Boy Conscription'* argues that most Australians, including those directly affected, accepted the idea of compulsory military training.⁹² Bill Gammage asserts more definitively that:

... they [Australians] supported the development of Australian naval and military forces within the Imperial framework.⁹³

Universal compulsory military service was part of an Australian policy that aimed 'to express Australia's individuality while elevating her Imperial status'. Militarism was the dominant theme of the popular literature that compulsory schooling enabled young Australians to read, such as Fitchett's *Deeds that Won the Empire*. Fitchett's work deliberately taught young Australians the virtues of patriotism and the glories of race and Empire. In Gammage's view, militarism was an integral part of the schooling children received.

⁹² John Barrett, *Falling In: Australians and 'Boy Conscription', 1911–1915* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1979).

⁹³ Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years*, 2.

In New South Wales State and Catholic schools, every educational influence—policy, the syllabus, textbooks, the School Magazine, school ceremonies and recreation—was designed to awaken in children a patriotic spirit, affection for both nation and Empire. A martial spirit was encouraged and channelled practically: from 1908 onwards boys in New South Wales could go twice a year to camps conducted by the Education Department run on military lines with Reveille at 5a.m., parades to honour the King and the flag and the last post at 8.30p.m. Schools in other States nurtured similar emotions.⁹⁴

One measure of the influence of militarism in pre-war Australia was the successful inspection tour of Australia in 1909 by Lord Kitchener, the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army. Lord Kitchener's camp at Seymour in rural Victoria became a site of celebrity during his stay.

The streets were gay with bunting, the usually quiet roads were filled with sight-seers of all ages, from grey haired grandfathers to toddlers with bright shiny faces, all clad in holiday attire ... The arrival of the train was the signal for a mad rush toward the North end and the great man stepped out in ordinary attire in that quietly unostentatious way ... The people had come to see a soldier—they only saw a man.⁹⁵

Lord Kitchener's subsequent report, submitted to the government the next year and immediately implemented, recommended the creation of the Royal Military College Duntroon and the formation of a Commonwealth military force by means of introducing universal military service. Australia became the only English-speaking country in the world to have a system of compulsory military service prior to the outbreak of World War I.

⁹⁴ Gammage, *The Broken Years*, 3.

⁹⁵ *Table Talk*, 'Lord Kitchener at Seymour', 20 January 1910, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/145854312?browse=ndp%3Abrowse%2Ftitle%2FT%2Ftitle%2F713%2F1910%2F01%2F20%2Fpage%2F17392888%2Farticle%2F1458543127>, accessed 18/10/2022.

The extent of pre-war militarism in Australia needs to be tempered by the fact that there was very substantial non-compliance with universal military service. There was extensive opposition to boyhood conscription, resulting in, by July 1915, some 34,000 prosecutions and 7,000 detentions of trainees, parents, employers, or other persons required to register.

Even though Australia adopted a universal scheme of military service, the scope of the military service was confined to Australia and her territories. When the war broke out, most combatant nations already had or introduced conscription for military service and had no such limitation on their conscription programs, while Australians voted in two separate plebiscites against conscription for overseas service.

The 1st AIF was unique as the only World War I fighting force consisting of citizen-soldiers supplemented by a small number of professionals who had graduated from the RMC Duntroon (assuming the Indian Army, which had a standing full-time force of 300,000 at the commencement of hostilities, is regarded as a professional army rather than a citizen force). The idea of the 'incorrigible citizen', as Bean characterised the Australian soldier, or the citizen-soldier, as the political actors and literary mediators tended to put it, the 1st AIF was a key part of the concept of the Anzac legend.

In practical policy terms, then, a citizen militia confined to Australia and its territories could only be deployed to repel an invasion. In fact, the British Navy had conducted the only invasion of Australia. From the earliest times, acts of organised violence were perpetrated against the Aboriginal population.⁹⁶ By the time of Macquarie's governorship, the conflict with Aborigines had become a war.⁹⁷ In the following decades, there was a genocidal war against Tasmania's Indigenous people. As late as 1940, organised resistance by Aborigines

⁹⁶ John Hirst, *Sense and Nonsense in Australian History* (Melbourne, Black Inc., 2009), 101.

⁹⁷ Michael Organ, 'Secret Service: Governor Macquarie's Aboriginal War of 1816', University of Wollongong, Research online, 2014, <https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1496&context=asdpapers>. Organ observes: 'On 9 April 1816 Governor Lachlan Macquarie, supreme representative of the Crown in the Australian colonies, declared War on the Aboriginal people of New South Wales. The declaration was never explicitly stated or announced publicly, and the official histories do not record it. However, the reality was clear from the secret orders issued to the military regiments under his command and from Macquarie's public proclamation of 4 May outlining punitive actions to be taken against the Aboriginal population. The fact that it was War was revealed when Macquarie announced that all Aboriginal people within the environs of Sydney who were encountered by the military were to be captured as "prisoners of war".'

was officially opposed by Commonwealth paramilitary forces in far north Queensland and the Northern Territory.⁹⁸ An armed struggle against the Indigenous population was a feature of Australian society for at least the first 125 years of white settlement.

In addition, military intervention in imperial affairs was part of the political culture of 19th-century Australian colonies. Australian colonial troops and volunteers were involved in conflicts in Sudan and South Africa. On each occasion, public support for Australian intervention on behalf of the Empire was overwhelming. Meanwhile, there was a strong desire for an imperial strategic presence nearer to home. The rapturous reception given to the US Pacific Fleet, which toured Australian waters in 1908, and the prior Dreadnought movement, a fundraising effort aimed at maintaining permanent Royal Navy presence in Australian waters, were evidence of an Australian preoccupation with strategic defence.

Cultural and political clubs and societies like the Australian Defence League agitated for the 'Swiss' compulsory military training system for all males, with ongoing service requirements. Even cultural clubs and artistic schools like the Bohemians, the Australian Natives' Association, *The Bulletin* school and even the Heidelberg school promoted assertive if not aggressive nationalist stances. These stances often included an emphasis on the colonies' and, later, Australia's ability to defend itself.

Although Bean and others emphasised the idea of bush masculinity, many Anzacs were men of letters, ideas, and aesthetics. Their educations had formed their character far more comprehensively than the sheep dip or the cattle crush. Bean eventually brought to Australia's war effort illustrators, artists, and practitioners of the new art of photography, while Treloar laboured at the war archives to capture as many details as possible, cataloguing an array of captured Anzac 'souvenirs' that would eventually become the heart of the Australian War Memorial collection and make the legend and the history.

There has been a surprising consensus from right and left about the relationship between the Australian outback experience and the national character and the development of the Anzac legend. Davison takes a different view, as does Richard White, arguing that the outback

⁹⁸ Fergus Robinson, *The Black Resistance: An Introduction to the History of the Aborigines' Struggle Against British Colonialism* (Sydney: Widescope, 1977).

character is largely a fictional literary image developed by predominantly urban writers and intellectuals. My research has failed to locate any evidence of scholars attributing—even in part—the evolution of the national character and the Anzac legend to the Australian education system, and yet I assert that early developments in curriculum and pedagogy in Australian schooling did much to influence, even develop, many of the characteristics of the culture associated with the Anzac legend.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that Anzac exceptionalism does have an historical basis, notwithstanding the exaggeration implicit in the recounting of the legend. However, the character evident in this exceptionalism and lauded in the legend is due not to the outback experience, as proposed by Bean and others, but to the evolution of the Australian compulsory education system, its pedagogy and syllabus from 1880 to 1915 and the modern and literate society it fostered.

The literary and material culture that produced the Anzac legend resides in the intellectual and moral pedagogy and disciplinary practices of the Australian school system and the socialisation of children and young people of the Anzac generation. This claim is balanced against the view that the cultural dominance of the outback legend in , Lawson, Paterson, Mackellar, and many others was in fact absorbed and revered more easily by Australians because of the literate nature of Australian society at Federation. The outback for this generation was a cultural symbol not a material reality.

The following chapter examines the importance of the outback legend in the formation of ideas about the Australian character and assesses the claims that the outback experience was the dominant influence on the character of the Anzac and the formation of the Anzac legend.

Chapter 2

The white man's dreaming: The outback.

C.E.W. Bean held firm beliefs about the national character of Australians long before the landing at Gallipoli.¹ Although Bean wrote his descriptions of the Australians as if they were based on empirical observation, many of his views were more a romantic literary creation than rational explanation, regardless of the realism of his style. In addition, Bean and many of his readers subscribed to the belief that migration to Australia had improved the moral and physical characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon.² The pre-war ideas about character based on these moral and physical qualities constituted a prelude for the creation of the Anzac legend. This chapter explores what Bean saw as the most important of these qualities: truthfulness, mateship, innovation, meritocracy, and the idea of a fair deal. The chapter analyses them in the context of the theory of racial adaptation to the outback as an explanation for the Australian character and the basis of the Anzac legend.

2.1 The formation of Australian character before Gallipoli

The political identity of Bean's Australian is familiar territory in the cultural historiography of Federation Australia. Bean's Australian assumed the domestic and public dominance of males, adhered to White Australia, and believed in the moral and ideological superiority of the British Empire and the Anglo-Saxon 'race'.³ Though based on ideas of moral and racial superiority, the characteristics attributed to the Anzacs by Bean and others, such as honesty, loyalty, directness, hospitality, and courage, were also distinctly personal qualities. Bill

¹ Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688–1980* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin 1981), 126.

² Peter Cochrane, 'Fighting Words', *Inside Story*, 2 August 2018, <https://insidestory.org.au/fighting-words/>, accessed 11/12/2022. In his pre-war journalism for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, and in several books, Bean's focus on national character is clear, as is his belief that national character in the colonies was evolving a superior being, an improved strain of the British bloodline. The true 'Australian native', he wrote, 'is not a black man ... [nor] an Englishman' but a new man 'hammered out of the old stock'. He described this new man as a 'tall, spare man, clean and wiry rather than muscular', and in his face he saw 'a certain refined, ascetic strength'. C.E.W. Bean ['C.W.'], 'Australia: IV The Australian', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 June 1907, 6.

³ Peter Cochrane, *Best We Forget: The War for White Australia 1914–1918* (Melbourne: Text, 2018), 23.

Gammage asserts that mateship is the central Australian and Anzac quality.⁴ The endorsement of these ostensibly racial qualities as collective and unique in some way to the Anzacs contributed to a peculiarly Australian emphasis on personal character as national war memory.

Bean did not create the characteristics of the heroic Anzac of Gallipoli inspired only by the men of the AIF at the landing. The Anzac legend and official and popular war memorialisation represent not so much the militarisation of Australian history as the civilianisation of war memory. Anzac war memory has been vital to the identity and development of Australian nationalism. The centrality of personal characteristics and the emotional power and political significance of Anzac explains the burgeoning literature aimed at either deconstructing or perpetuating the legend.

The character of Bean's pre-war bushman closely matched the idea of the semi-nomadic outback worker, a type endorsed by *The Bulletin* school. *The Bulletin*'s masculinist stance was conceived of and championed almost exclusively by urban dwellers but held that men had to fight out in the open most of the time and were seldom home except to beat their wives.⁵ Bean lived in the same city and was friendly with at least one of *The Bulletin*'s favoured poets, Banjo Paterson.

In Paterson and Lawson's *Bulletin* debate, Lawson criticised the city-based poets and writers like Paterson who romanticised the bush life.⁶ Lawson equated reality with morality, while Paterson emphasised the uplifting virtues of a romantic perception of the bush and the didactic value of the bush lifestyle. Like most of *The Bulletin*'s readership, however, Bean sided with Paterson and chose to focus on a romantic interpretation of the bushman. He downplayed the overt misogyny, and emphasised his resilience, strength, courage and above

⁴ Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War* (Canberra: ANU Press, 1991), 112.

⁵ Marilyn Lake, 'Historical Reconsiderations IV: The Politics of Respectability: Identifying the Masculinist Context', *Historical Studies* 22 no. 86 (April 1986): 12.

⁶ Doug Jarvis, 'Morality and Literary Realism: A Debate of the 1880s', *Southerly* 43, no 4 (December 1983): 405.

all his loyalty to mates, though in *On the Wool Track* Bean frequently referred to the threat and reality of violence between his bushmen.⁷

In his Preface to the 1925 edition of *On the Wool Track*, Bean laments the passing of the bushman, but he does pay tribute to his role in forming the Anzac character:

*So, life in the Australian back country, is not and never will be quite the same ... for men from this life and industry, together with similar folk from New Zealand formed a considerable fraction of the 'Anzac' ... the tradition of the back country weighed far more heavily than the mere number of its representatives among the influences that moulded the Australian and New Zealand soldier forces.*⁸

Bean in the same passage also endorses the character impact of the pioneer legend—a belief that the settlers had tamed the land by individual effort but brought overall civilisation to the benefit of the whole community and nation:

It may be that the conditions there are still only two steps removed from those of the pioneers ... indeed, for so far as one can see ahead the people there must always be pioneers in many respects—and, probably, therefore a source of strength for their nation.

Both of these legends had in common community and individual solidarity or mateship and the notion that Australians who worked and struggled in the uniquely Australian environment on the land were exceptional and the authentic Australians. Bean laments the passing of the bushman and pioneer types that made the Anzac:

The new types may be sturdy, heavy-limbed farmer, healthy fruit pickers and fruit packers; or they may be factory folk ... they will not be the old types ... [if the wool industry is supplanted] ... there will go with it some of

⁷ C.E.W. Bean, *On the Wool Track* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1963), 29.

⁸ Bean, *On the Wool Track*, xi.

the most vital types which a few years after our visits, went to make up the men of Anzac.

Bean's blending of the pioneer story and the bushman type in his description of the various types in *On the Wool Track* is the foundation of his Anzac narrative and the crucial element in the creation of the Anzac legend, though it was not the sole or even predominant basis for the moral and cultural characteristics of the Anzacs.

The outback thesis became the fundamental building block of Bean's construction of the Australian war legend. Anzac was a motif in 'Australia becoming fully conscious of itself as a nation', as he wrote in *The Official History*⁹, and the development of beliefs about a unique Australian identity. Bean's portrayal of this identity as an outback character followed a popular literary and artistic Australian convention of the time represented by *The Bulletin* school and *The Lone Hand* and the poets and writers associated with those publications, the most prominent of which were Lawson and Paterson.

Early in his life, Bean was an Australian when in the company of Englishmen; later he was an Englishman in the company of Australians. Bean returned to Australia as an adult and represented himself as an Englishman, 'a new chum'. As a boy, Bean attended the exclusive Clifton College in Bristol, England, where he was nicknamed the 'wrong'n', an allusion to his accent and his use of peculiarly colonial cricketing terms. Clifton was already rich in imperial tradition. Such old boys as Douglas Haig and William Birdwood were serving with gallantry in the Bengal Lancers or the Egyptian Army, and the feats of Clifton men were becoming the stuff of imperial lore thanks to another old boy, the poet Henry Newbolt, whose poem 'Clifton Chapel' demonstrates the apparent internal contradictions of the Arnoldian ethos characterised by underlying elitism at the same time as advocating sacrifice for others demonstrates:

*To set the cause above renown,
To love the game beyond the prize,
To honour, while you strike him down,*

⁹ Bean, C.E.W. *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918: Vol. I, The Story of Anzac* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1935), p. xlvi.

*The foe that comes with fearless eyes;
To count the life of battle good,
And dear the land that gave you birth,
And dearer yet the brotherhood
That binds the brave of all the earth—*

*My son, the oath is yours: the end
Is His, who built the world to strife.¹⁰*

Writing in 1907 under the pen name ‘C.W.’, well before the war, Bean permits an autobiographical hint as to his life experience. He sums up the moral character of the Australians for his *Sydney Morning Herald* readers:

*He [the Australian] is pre-eminently a lover of the truth, as I can
vouch, who have seen and admired that quality again and again in
Australian boys at English schools.¹¹*

After the war, as Official Historian and later as the Acting Director and on the board of the Australian War Memorial, Bean writes of honesty and a commitment to the truth as individual characteristics to be celebrated as part of a national identity. In the preface to the first edition of *The Official History*, Bean recalled that his ‘proudest and dearest memory [was] of the Officers and men of the AIF’. This focussed his ‘effort to produce a history in which he has striven to attain a truthfulness worthy of them and their nation’.¹²

The Anzac was no less a literary invention of Bean than were the protagonists in ‘The Man from Snowy River’, invented by Banjo Paterson. Paterson, who also created the iconic Clancy of ‘Clancy of the Overflow’, was Bean’s professional mentor, friend, and AIF

¹⁰ Ken Inglis, *C.E.W. Bean, Australian Historian*, The Anzac Tradition. The John Murtagh Macrossan Lecture, 1969. Delivered at the University of Queensland, 24 June 1969, and published by University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Queensland, 1970.

¹¹ C.E.W. Bean [‘C.W.’], ‘Australia: IV The Australian’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 June 1907, 6.

¹² Bean, *The Official History*, Vol. 1, xxx.

comrade.¹³ Paterson created his iconic equestrian hero from the idealisation of Australian bush life and the romantic imagination of a poet. Bean created his from an idealised view of bush life and the perspective of a reporter.

2.2 The Anzac narrative: Writing the future based on the past.

Bean brought the Anzac narrative to the Australian public after witnessing the same bush life as Paterson but from the perspective of a journalist in peace and, later, in war. His portrayal of the character of the wartime Anzac echoes his portrayal of the character of the pre-war bush Australian. In his pre-war journalism, he displays the same confidence as Paterson in the romance of the Australian character and the Australian landscape.¹⁴ Significantly, he was sure that the nature of the Australian romance was unique, in that it was:

*... no merely imported homesickness. It is acquired. It is the work of romance (The Australian calls it just 'the bush').*¹⁵

Bean was equally confident that the main signifier of Australian romance was 'the Bush'.¹⁶ However, Anzac as a literary project differed in two important ways from with the heroic balladry of the bush. First, the AIF were a collective sentient subject rather than a fictionalised individual. Individual AIF members could recognise the collective performative character and had agency both to identify themselves and their motives as well as observe their comrades. Bean made a practice of recording some of these reflections by individual types in the AIF—for example in Chapter 1 of volume VI, 'The Diggers', in *The Official History* AIF members are given voice—but these pieces are curated to be consistent with Bean's themes. In this way the AIF became part of the creative process, and the literature and reporting of Anzac in turn altered and reinforced the behaviour of the Anzacs.

¹³ Dudley McCarthy, *Gallipoli to the Somme: The Story of C.E.W. Bean* (Sydney: John Ferguson, 1983), 51.

¹⁴ C.E.W. Bean ['C.W.'], 'Australia: V The Romance of it', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 June 1907, 7.

¹⁵ Bean ['C.W.'], 'Australia: V The Romance of it', 7.

¹⁶ Henry Lawson insisted that the word 'Bush' be capitalised as it had a specific definition and importance in the Australian vernacular.

Individually and collectively, the men of the AIF itself helped invent the Anzac legend as they had agency both as actors and narrators. This was possible because of their relative cultural literacy, which most had acquired by virtue of compulsory public education and a comparatively well-developed educational infrastructure. Bean and his correspondent colleagues lived and worked with their subject and, in recording the AIF's deeds, sought to celebrate that fact.

The literary process of Anzac storytelling had one early expression that epitomised the collective nature of the Anzac narrative. In the months after the landing, Bean edited *The Anzac Book*—a literary contribution to the Anzac legend entirely written and illustrated by AIF troops while in the line at Gallipoli or recuperating from wounds or illness in the field hospital on Lemnos. The AIF was both the collective subject and the collaborators in the creation of the Anzac legend, which Bean, and other correspondents, sought to record.

2.3 *The Anzac Book*: The Anzacs writing themselves into history.

Despite the meticulous nature of Bean's work, he was possessed of a flourish for the destiny of the AIF. This is his most widely quoted reflection on the destiny of the Anzacs and their sacrifice, from volume VI of the *Official History* quoted in Chapter 1 of this thesis and commonly called the 'Athenian tribute' or 'Bean's last paragraph'.

With the support of Birdwood, Bean formed a committee to create an Anzac trench book. Contributions were sought from Anzacs of all ranks. From this initiative came *The Anzac Book*, published in 1916, a collection of original poems, short stories, graphics, cartoons, jokes, reflections, prayers and essays, written by rank-and-file Anzacs for their own amusement and the enjoyment of their comrades and, as Birdwood suggests in the Preface, with 'an eye to the legacy of heroism' they intended to leave behind.¹⁷ As Birdwood would later write in the Foreword, *The Anzac Book*

¹⁷ C.E.W. Bean (ed.), *The Anzac Book*, 105, 104. *The Anzac Book* was originally published in 1916 by the AIF, available at the Australian War Memorial.

... will show them [future generations of Australians] to some extent what their fathers have done for the Empire and indeed civilisation in days gone by.¹⁸

Bean selected submissions for *The Anzac Book* that highlighted the everyday challenges faced by the Anzacs. He excluded exaggerated sentiment, or anything that dealt with the harsh realities of war without humour. For Bean, the simple act of completing ordinary day-to-day duties in the face of adversity was an act of heroism. Simple poems about life's minutiae celebrated the bravery of facing the filth and drudgery of trench warfare with a sense of humour. It was the dignity of the Anzacs in the face of adversity that Bean was keen to present as heroic. Before the end of the war, almost every Australian household would have had access to a copy of *The Anzac Book*.

The Anzac Book was carefully curated by Bean. David Kent shows that Bean's editorial role ensured that the *Book* emphasised the strengths of the Anzac and ignored the weaknesses. Any contributions that contained imputations of fear, cowardice, drunkenness, or immorality were discarded. Items were chosen that enhanced and accelerated the emerging legendary status of the Anzac.¹⁹ The inference in the designated authorship of 'the men of Anzac' implied a level of culture and literacy beyond what was typical of the Australian bushman, and much more consistent with the educated citizen-soldier.

The Anzac Book also demonstrates the way the legend of the Australian soldier was developed by Bean to show that something good had come of the Dardanelles debacle. The Dardanelles campaign, of which Gallipoli was a part, in the end had been widely viewed as a military disaster exposed and roundly criticised by Ashmead-Bartlett and Murdoch and eventually other opinion leaders in Britain.

¹⁸ Bean (ed.), *The Anzac Book* (3rd edn; Sydney: UNSW Press/AWM, 2010), Foreword.

¹⁹ David Kent, 'Bean's "Anzac" and the Making of the Anzac Legend', *Kunapipi* 18, no. 2 (1996), 31, available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol18/iss2/5>.

The initial enthusiasm of the Anzacs during the landing, which was praised by both Bean and Ashmead-Bartlett to the point of having almost mystical status²⁰, was a source of immense pride to the Australian public. Later, however, the mounting casualties and the eventual withdrawal necessitated an explanation.

Bean's careful framing of the Anzac character and role of the AIF in *The Anzac Book* in part salvaged the Gallipoli campaign from being perceived as a military catastrophe to being a triumph of the Australian spirit, the germ of the Anzac legend.²¹ *The Anzac Book* introduced the Anzac character not only to the Australian public but to the whole Empire, if not the world. The Anzac portrayed in *The Anzac Book* was a character of exceptional loyalty through mateship, fighting spirit, larrikin chivalry and inventiveness—the men of Anzac were all these things and writers too. At the time these became the uncontradicted elements of the character of the 1st AIF.

The literacy and education levels of both the Australian public and the Anzacs themselves played a significant role in the rapid transmission, from the heroic but only partially successful amphibious assault on the Gallipoli peninsula to 'the landing', a legendary national feat. Although only a very small proportion of Anzacs made contributions to the *Book*, despite the impression given by the description of its authors, it was incredibly popular.

The relationship of *The Anzac Book* to the legend's dissemination and continued embellishment can be appreciated by considering that Bean consciously sold the book to the recruits of the new units arriving to reinforce the AIF so that they would absorb the sacred nature of their now revered undertaking.²² In other words, he was using the elements of the legend to create, or at least shape, the behaviour and attitudes of the next subjects of the legend.

Carolyn Holbrook notes in *Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography* that there is an extensive historiography which records the various editorial devices Bean used to fashion a vision of

²⁰ Kevin Fewster, 'Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, and the Making of the Anzac Legend', *Journal of Australian Studies* 6, no. 10 (June 1982): 17.

²¹ Kent, 'Bean's "Anzac" and the Making of the Anzac Legend', 27.

²² Kent, 'Bean's "Anzac" and the Making of the Anzac Legend', 36.

the ideal Australian soldier and the ways in which this figure passed the greatest trial of national character.²³

Thirty-six thousand copies of the initial print run of *The Anzac Book* sold out quickly²⁴, purchased by the soldiers of the 1st Division who could pay by instalments through their paybook. By September 1916, 104,432 copies had been sold, many of which went directly to family and friends back in Australia. This was by any measure a considerable audience²⁵, but it was a massive readership when considering that Australia's population was less than five million at the time. *The Anzac Book*, however, was more widely distributed than any other war souvenir, reaching every part of the Empire.

The contributors' creative writing and illustrations, including allusions to the culture of Australia, the Empire as well as Classical traditions, underline the role played by education in the creation and transmission of the Anzac legend. The style and format of the *Book* has a resonance within the material produced for school education—the Victorian *School Paper* and the New South Wales *School Magazine* both used short, informative, and occasionally humorous articles, instructive anecdotes, poetry and accompanying sketches and illustrations.

Without basic literacy and higher forms of cultural knowledge around imperial history, *The Anzac Book* could not have had such an enthusiastic and receptive audience. An audience that knew the literature and stories of the Western and Classical canons and had a sense of civic responsibility and a capacity for critical appreciation, created a resonance for the legend. Bean's *Anzac Book* did not rely on folk methods and idioms.

Reading *The Anzac Book* required basic literacy, but appreciating *The Anzac Book* required a capacity for critical comprehension of Australianness, whether it be in a humorous anecdote or patriotic verse. To form and propagate the beginning of the legend Bean relied on the literacy and education of Australians and the AIF.

²³ Carolyn Holbrook, *Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2014), Kindle Loc. 847.

²⁴ Peter Burness (ed.), *The Western Front Diaries of Charles Bean* (Sydney: Australian War Memorial and NewSouth, 2018), 33 and 76.

²⁵ Bean, *The Western Front Diaries*, 36.

Bean inferred that *The Anzac Book* had vastly more contributors than the 150 it did have. *The Bulletin*'s review of *The Anzac Book* claimed that there 'must have been as many poets than there were fighters at Gallipoli'.²⁶ The public's belief that every Australian soldier had a poet's pencil in his knapsack not only enhanced the role of the Anzac legend in the national consciousness but also underlined the significance of a literate culture to the legend's creation and transmission.

The Anzac Book was part of a wider tradition among the troops of the 1st AIF reinforcing the notion that citizen-soldiery and literacy were linked. Kent points to the 'unique ... sheer volume of trench and troopship literature it generated'.²⁷ The volume and interest in printed communication, from joke sheets to serious discussion of the issues facing the troops, is evidence for the AIF's exceptional general literacy and that the level of literacy was part of the transmission of the legend.

An important purpose trench and troopship literature, according to Kent, was connecting with the audience back home:

*The editor of Dragropes made it clear that the magazine was aimed as much at 'relatives and friends at home' as at members of the quota.*²⁸

And more seriously, there was an alignment of the personal and the ideological represented in the task of war for both the troops and the folks at home:

... nearly every ship's paper, and certainly every souvenir magazine, contained at least one morale-boosting exhortation to enlist. In 1914 and 1915 and thereafter with diminishing regularity, Australia's involvement in

²⁶ Bean, *The Western Front Diaries*, 31.

²⁷ David Kent, 'Troopship Literature: A Life on the Ocean Waves', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial* 10 (1987): 3.

²⁸ Kent, 'Troopship Literature', 4.

*the war was justified as a natural consequence of her place in the British Empire.*²⁹

Kent notes that with few exceptions these sentiments in Australian troopship and trench literature were expressed in verse. Hirst observes the literary and romantic nature of Australia during Federation, noting that the nation was born in a ‘festival of poetry’.³⁰ He points to an attitude that important or sacred matters should be committed to verse. The capacity to compose or appreciate verse was a direct function of literacy, which in turn was a product of education.

Hirst observes that:

*Nation building in Australia was regarded as part of this worldwide movement. That’s what made it noble, holy, and sacred. If Australians united, they would be carried to a higher form of life and be able fully to develop their potential.*³¹

Even the quality of the Anzac legend most closely associated with the bushman ethos—mateship—was communicated and reinforced by literary means. *The Anzac Book* would be a memento of mateship as in the future the old soldier could ‘summon up the faces of comrades with whom he stood in the Great War’³², and ‘preserve the camaraderie that arises between men thrown together in such circumstances’.³³ The ‘Golden memories’ born of mutual endeavour would bind the AIF to the tradition of mateship, creating a literary as well as a folk tradition.

²⁹ Kent, ‘Troopship Literature’, 5.

³⁰ John Hirst, ‘When Australia Was a Woman: A Point of View about Federation’, National Centre for History Education, Department of Education, Science and Training, Canberra, para.19, <https://hyperhistory.org/index.php?option=displaypage&Itemid=263&op=page>, accessed 14/10/2022.

³¹ Hirst, ‘When Australia Was a Woman’, para. 14.

³² Kent, ‘Troopship Literature’, 4.

³³ Kent, ‘Troopship Literature’, 4.

Troopship and trench newspapers used popular literacy to reinforce the basis of pride and sacrifice of the legend and its role in the nation's character and reputation.³⁴ The editor of the troopship newspaper *Ayrshire Furphy* wrote:

*We have a task before us of not only keeping the name of Australia untarnished but of adding fresh lustre to the name of the youngest nation in the English-speaking world.*³⁵

Taken together the romance of *The Anzac Book* and the many trench and troopship publications, as well as the newspapers back home, exerted moral pressure on the reinforcements and new recruits to live up to the ideal of the Australian soldier set on the battlefields of Gallipoli. This pressure was manifested in the printed word as much of the text directly and incidentally idealised the original Anzacs as soldiers and Australians.

³⁴ Kent, 'Troopship Literature', 5.

³⁵ Kent, 'Troopship Literature', 9.

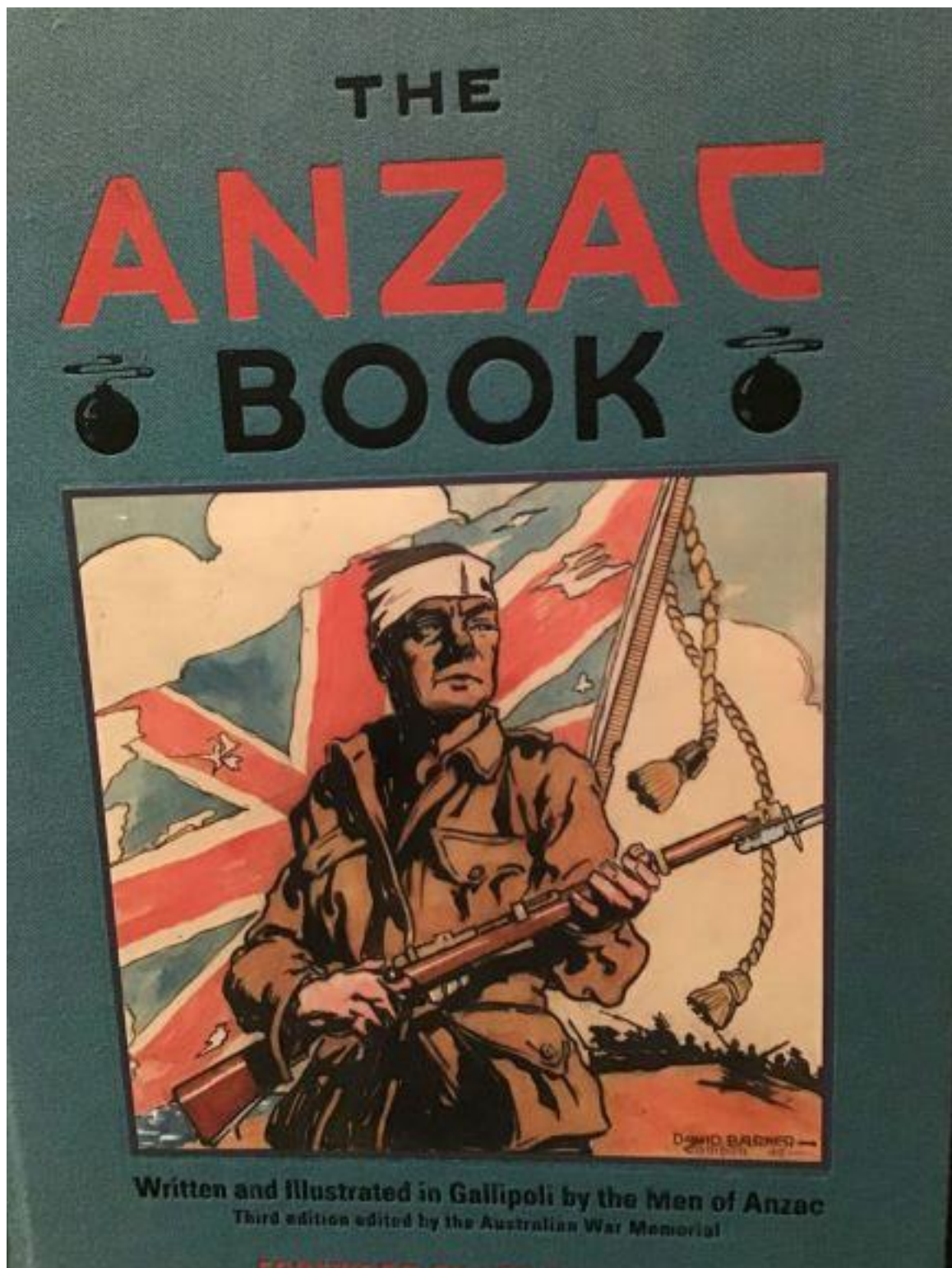


Figure 2.1. Cover of *The Anzac Book* (3rd edition). The original *Anzac Book* was edited by Bean with the assistance of his batman/clerk Bazley and written and illustrated by the Anzacs themselves. In the interest of morale Bean rejected any pessimistic or overly violent submissions.



Figure 2.2. In contrast to the *Anzac Book*, British Army trench publications, like these, were written and illustrated by staff officers. The Tommies were a passive audience rather than active participants.

The Anzacs and their character were scrutinised in letters from home, newspaper reports, and a steady stream of publications, popular songs, ephemera, ballads and poems.³⁶ The flourishing Australian trench magazines and publications, Anzac annuals and *The Anzac*

³⁶ Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), 45.

Book were all produced by the Anzacs as stories about their own experiences.³⁷ These self-publications were supervised by staff officers like Bean, Gullet and Treloar, who had a careful eye for the reputation of the AIF and Australia and a brief to make sure that the publications were good for morale, both at home and in the trenches. The Anzacs' various trench publications starting with *The Anzac Book* differ in both execution and content to British trench publications like *The Bystander's Fragments* ('Bystander' was Captain Bruce Bairnsfather's *nom de plume*) because the British publications were produced by staff officers and professional illustrators. The ordinary Tommies were a passive audience rather than participants in their publications as the Anzacs were. The best explanation for and understanding of *The Anzac Book* and its equivalents from other theatres of AIF activity is that it was composed by literate and educated men for the interest of a literate and engaged audience, who were the products of a modern education system as children and teenagers.

³⁷ For example, the trench editions of C.J. Dennis's 'Digger' stories sold more copies than the hardback civilian copies, showing that the Anzacs enjoyed reading about themselves even more than the public at home did.



Figure 2.3. The cover of *Australia in Palestine*, edited by Henry Gullet and Charles Barrett (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1919). The book featured many contributions by Light Horse troopers.

In the Middle East, the Australian Light Horse troopers produced *Australia in Palestine*. The publication is similar in style and execution to *The Anzac Book*. The title conveys the

representational role of the Light Horse troopers: they are Australia. *Australians in Palestine* contains examples of the troopers' performative reflection of the Australian character and their own deeds, demonstrating their literary and illustrative skills. Figure 2.4 shows an example of the illustrations contributed by troopers: a nostalgic and laconic reflection of troopers in formation making their way through the desert past a makeshift Christian grave, presumably of a fallen comrade.



Figure 2.4. One of the Illustrations contributed by troopers for *Australia in Palestine* (back page).

In a familiar pattern, Bean edited—with the enthusiastic support of General Birdwood—*From the Australian Front Xmas 1917* (Figure 2.5). A major difference between these Christmas books (there were three in all) and *The Anzac Book* is the large number of photographs by official photographers conveying both the heroism and good humour of the AIF despite the hardships.

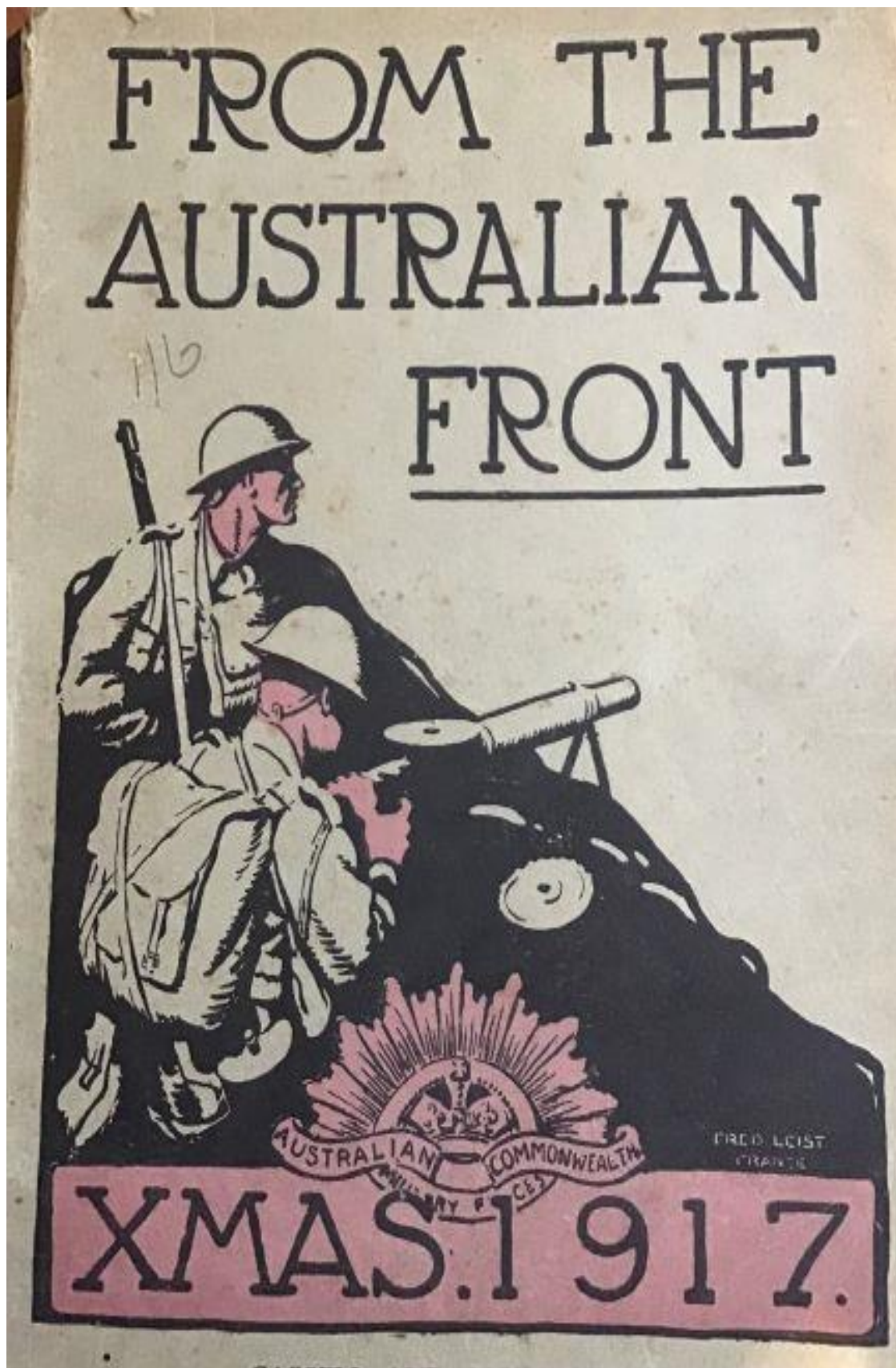


Figure 2.5. Cover illustration of *From the Australian Front Xmas 1917*.

In the same publication there are numerous illustrations, mostly humorous, that make observations about the Anzacs themselves (see, for example, Figure 2.6). The Anzacs' drawings convey self-confidence and solidarity and the same laconic humour present in *The Anzac Book* and *Australians in Palestine*. The most consistent aspect of these soldier-driven publications with an official editor and formal approval is the self-creation of the Anzac legend. The AIF are living and dying and creating their own legend as they go.

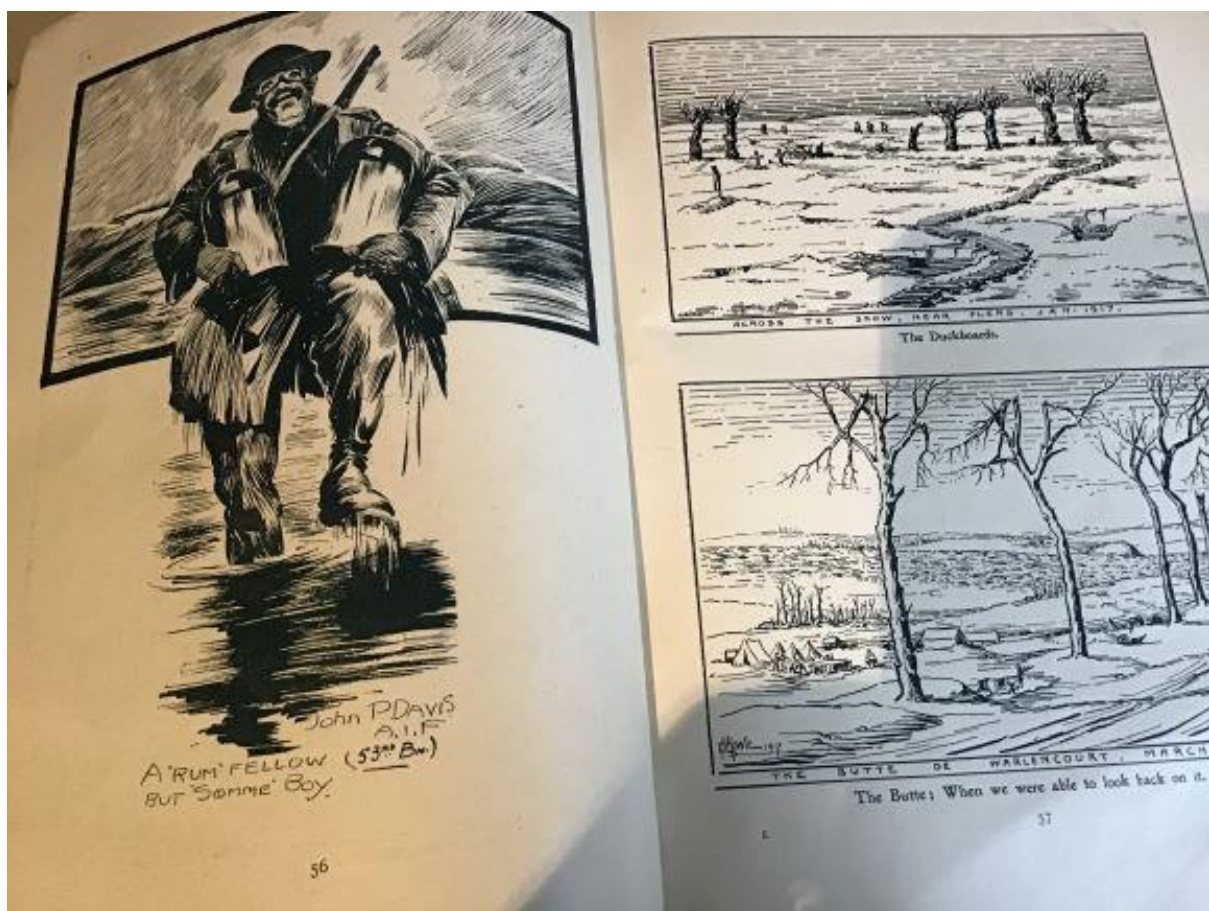


Figure 2.6. Illustrations from the *Australian Front Xmas 1917*.

Even in the surreal environment of the Western Front, Bean worked to keep his early observations about the Australian character aligned with the AIF's lived experience. Bean continued to contend that Anzac military success resulted from Australian solidarity,

individualism, and inclination to take the initiative, which he persisted were bush characteristics:

[I]t was a romantic one (Spirit) inherited from the gold-miner and the bushman, of which the chief article was that a man should at all times and at any cost stand by his mate.³⁸

Bean does not cite direct evidence for this claim of transference; it is more likely that these characteristics derived from the moral instruction of the schoolyard (see Chapters 3 and 4). The florid description below ignores the fact that schooling was a far greater influence on efficiency both temporally and existentially on Australian children at the time:

The bush still sets the standard of personal efficiency even in the Australian cities.³⁹

Soldier's literature reflected changes in the political orientation of the AIF. Kent cites the troopship and trench literature of 1916 as reflecting an increasing sense that Australian participation in the war was a national project and that fellowship with the Anzacs of Gallipoli was more important than loyalty to Britain.⁴⁰ The written word in popular form may reflect an existing mindset, but it also reinforces and confirms that view. In this way the literacy of the AIF helped shape and reshape the ideology and portrayals of the Anzac legend.

The Australian concept of masculinity included rugged independence⁴¹ and therefore Australians were not happy subjects of petty discipline. But the Australian citizen-soldier,

³⁸ Bean, *The Official History*, Vol. I, 6.

³⁹ Bean, *The Official History*, Vol. I, 46.

⁴⁰ Kent, 'Troopship Literature', 6.

⁴¹ Kent, 'Troopship Literature', 9.

according to the soldierly literature, showed his mettle when the real work of fighting⁴² had to be done, and his characteristics of strength, initiative and endurance came into play.

Kent demonstrates that although most of the AIF were recruited from the cities rather than the bush⁴³ it was a matter of literary convention that home was always characterised as bucolic rather than suburban with only rare exceptions.⁴⁴ The literary nature of the Anzacs informs and reinforces Bean's and others' faith in the bush as an explanation for the performance of Australian soldiers in the Great War and the legend they aspired to.

Joan Beaumont confirms that *The Anzac Book* '... fed the sense of a new national identity that was being constructed as a result of the Gallipoli campaign'.⁴⁵ However, Beaumont refers to the fact that the Foreword to the first edition of *The Anzac Book* was written by King George. The Anzacs would remain men of two nationalities. Despite suffering at the hands of uninspiring, arrogant British commanders and enduring the petty snobbery of British officers, they were citizen-soldiers of Australia and New Zealand, but they were sons of the Empire and subjects of its King.

A high level of basic literacy and a familiarity with fundamental British cultural texts throughout the ranks of the AIF ensured that the most intriguing piece of legendary writing about the Anzacs was written by the Anzacs themselves. The writing and graphics in *The Anzac Book* were produced by men of all ranks and are of a high standard. The self-styled egalitarianism of Australians is underlined by the fact that so many men of the lower ranks could make contributions to the work, and the book was so clearly prepared for all ranks. A poet proudly signs himself 'corporal sanitary section'.⁴⁶ Bean would later conclude that Anzac represented a 'people come nearer than perhaps any other to forming one class without distinction of birth or wealth'.⁴⁷

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Kent, 'Troopship Literature', 10.

⁴⁴ Kent, 'Troopship Literature', 10

⁴⁵ Joan Beaumont, *Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2013), 158.

⁴⁶ Bean, *The Anzac Book*, 107.

⁴⁷ Bean, *The Official History*, Vol. I, .5.

Throughout *The Anzac Book*, heroic, Classical, biblical, and historical allusions are commonplace.⁴⁸ Alongside satirical pieces, there are testimonies to the sacred nature of the Anzac's duty to liberty, and the risk of the ultimate sacrifice—death—are repeated throughout the text. The modernity of *The Anzac Book* is underlined by the fact that oral tradition was almost immediately given over to a literary form. The AIF, their commander and their correspondent literally invented the Anzac tradition as the narrative that embodied the legend was taking place. The participants were recording themselves as if they were simultaneously the heroes and troubadours of romantic fiction. The Anzacs consciously fashioned this identity as a national cultural project. They were present as volunteers and citizens of a nation only 14 years old, with a lot to prove to a very critical imperial audience and an anxious and expectant public at home.

Whatever the cultural significance to Australians of the Banjo's anonymous mountain horseman, it cannot compare to the political power and importance of the Anzac legend. Fundamental ideas about the national character of Australians justified and encouraged individual and national participation in the conflict. When the conflict started, the public hungered for information and looked to the professional war correspondents, particularly Bean, for accounts of the Australians' successes and welfare.

Bean based his observations and assessment on his preconceptions of the character of the men of Anzac. His pre-existing beliefs about the Australian character were incorporated into his reporting on the deeds and welfare of the AIF. In his wartime work, Bean contemplated the differences and similarities of Australians compared to the perceived national characters of enemies and allies. No foil was more important for understanding the pre-war 'Australian' and his subsequent Anzac identity than the character of the Englishman.

*Your first shock when you find the Australian native is to discover that he is not a black man; your second to discover that he is not an Englishman.*⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Bean, *The Anzac Book*, 68, 69, 195.

⁴⁹ C.E.W. Bean ['C.W.'], 'Australia: IV The Australian', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 June 1907, 6.

Bean coined this tongue-in-cheek starting point for portraying the character of the Australian people. In 1907, race and the customary affectations and characteristics implied by Englishness were distinctions of critical importance to Bean and to his readers. ‘The character’, built on this Australian identity in comparison to both the Englishman and the Aboriginal man is the ‘simplest imaginable. The key is just this—that he (the Australian) takes everything on its merits and nothing on authority’.⁵⁰

Bean’s reference to the Australian not being a black man is, of course, an immediate acknowledgment of the dispossession of Aboriginals by white settler colonisation. Bean’s remark ignores the fact that a significant minority of Australians were indeed black men (and women). The theme of the Australian not being an Englishman emphasises Australia’s exceptional national identity within the Empire. I look at this theme more closely in the following section.

2.3 The Australian versus the Englishman

According to Bean, the real Australia⁵¹ is in the red country—‘a second Australia—the larger of the two—of which most of our people know very little’.⁵² In the real Australia, the ‘inside country’, the people and their towns, subsisted on the mining and sheep industries. Conceding an element of self-selection, he theorises that the

*... hard-bitten, frosted old customers, the hard cases, the failures, the men who were battered and scarred, who because of some weakness had fallen behind the running of the ‘inner’ areas ... found their way to the red country.*⁵³

⁵⁰ Bean [‘C.W.’], ‘Australia: IV The Australian’, 6.

⁵¹ C.E.W. Bean, ‘The Barrier Railway. Menindee’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 June 1908, 8.

⁵² Bean, *On the Wool Track*, 44.

⁵³ Bean, *On the Wool Track*, viii.

The men of Bean's real Australia made their fortune by enduring hardships. The experience of the landscape and their industry created characters that were unlike the English; this observation had a moral and lyrical dimension:

*The real Australia is a region where bad men are very bad, and good men are magnificent, but where all men are interesting.*⁵⁴

Later, various portrayals of the Australian character encouraged Australians in battle and instilled dread in their enemies. Most importantly, the test of Gallipoli and subsequent theatres of conflict established the link between honour in death and sacrifice for the nation. It followed that the character of those who made the sacrifice represented the exceptional national values and characteristics. As early as 1917, Anzac Day was observed by schools throughout the country—celebrating Anzac Day when Australian troops were still in the field.

The Australian and imperial characters were associated with different personalities and temperaments in the pages of Bean's pre-war writings, long before the landing at Gallipoli. In his wartime writings, these Anzac characteristics came to the fore in personalising the account of the Official War narrative. Bean's evaluation of the character of Australians and Englishmen required that the behavioural bonds between imperial and national character be based on dualisms: Englishmen lived by discipline, Australians were unruly;⁵⁵ Englishmen breathed tradition, Australians had prospered by innovation.⁵⁶

The political consequences of these differences of character were dramatic. The Australian believed in a meritocratic leadership, conferred on those who had earned it.⁵⁷ The Englishman, on the other hand, placed his faith in aristocratic leadership, a habit of class and

⁵⁴ Bean, 'Australia', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 September 1907, 8.

⁵⁵ Bean, *On the Wool Track*, 20.

⁵⁶ Bean, *On the Wool Track*, 23.

⁵⁷ Bean, *On the Wool Track*, 20.

tradition, based on the duty to lead of those born to it, and the duty of those not born to leadership to follow without question.

Bean's description of the performative features of 'the Englishman' and 'the Australian' were studies in the construction of opposites. This sometimes resulted in allegations of serious mutiny but, more often, produced a theatrical storyline. A favourite example was the resentment felt by British officers when Australian soldiers declined to salute them.⁵⁸

Yet, the characteristics that Bean attributes to the outback character as the building blocks of the Anzac legend—a sense of civic democracy, a belief in leadership on merit, an acceptance of sacrifice and a modern proclivity for innovation—are all characteristics more likely to be learned in the school classroom than in the open paddocks of rural Australia. Paradoxically, he concedes that the red country is almost unknown to most of 'our people', which suggests that the outback was foreign to a large percentage of Federation Australians, and bush culture only available to them through the romantic fiction of the likes of Paterson and Lawson, which was only accessible because of the general high level of literacy among Federation Australians.

Notwithstanding Bean's view of the differences between Australians and Englishmen, it was necessary for the imperial project that there were emotional and material bonds of loyalty between them. These took the form of faith in honour and trust in birth right. Honour and 'blood' were aspects of character that operated at a fundamental political and cultural level between Empire and nation. In Bean's writing they became synonymous with a sense of moral superiority based on the learned traditions and innate characteristics of Anglo-Saxon culture and its assumptions of racial superiority. The Anzac generation learned about this Anglo-Saxon tradition at every level of schooling as the 'circular nature of English history'. A common folk and literary culture and a common history were the strongest sources of connection between the English and Australian character.

Bean had come to the view, long before that restless night on the Aegean, that Australia and Britain were indeed very different from one another, and that this was manifested in the

⁵⁸ Clare Rhoden, 'Another Perspective on Australian Discipline in the Great War: The Egalitarian Bargain', *War in History* 19, no. 4 (November 2012): 447.

distinctive characteristics of each type—the Britisher and the Australian. A good deal of Bean's work examined the dramatically different symbols of nationality that defined these distinct but interdependent national character types. He always returned, however, to the ties of birthright and custom that united them. In the war as in peace, a shared understanding of the meaning of honour and the reality of race were the values unifying imperial and Australian decision-making about the war. In the following section, I explore the expression of these values in Bean's view of the common bonds between Australians and Britishers.

2.4 The ties that bind: The unifying role of honour.

Like many of his fellow Australians, Bean believed that the British declaration of war on the German Empire and its allies was the rational response of civilised people to wilful tyranny and barbarity. For Bean and many Australians, this rational conviction coincided with an emotional response to the filial call of Empire. In Bean's view, the British Empire preferred peace to war, but valued honour even more highly.

At both a rational and emotional level, Bean believed that Australia's soldiers were about to fight and die for high moral principles and honour. His diary entry late on the evening of 24 April reads:

One is sometimes inclined to think of the utter hopeless wastefulness of this whole war. However, once a nation adopts the philosophy of Treitschke, I suppose war is inevitable. Our people are a peace-loving people, and one knows this for certain that if war could have been avoided with honour, we should have avoided it.⁵⁹

It is a mistake to interpret Bean's pre-war and wartime view of the war as simply a wasteful if unavoidable obligation of martial loyalty to Empire. Like many of his compatriots, and even Birdwood, the British General in command of Anzac, Bean saw

⁵⁹ Kevin Fewster, *Bean's Gallipoli: The Diaries of Australia's War Correspondent* (3rd edn) (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2007), 66.

the war as an opportunity to achieve a very particular form of honour for Australia. War was an opportunity for Australia to assert a claim to nationhood and a national identity.

Bean frequently defers to English opinion of Australia and Australians. While he does assert Australia's separate but equal claim to loyalty, loyalty to Australia was intrinsically a component of loyalty to Empire. Bean's diary infers without irony that the recognition of a corresponding duty of honour to or praise for Australia is most legitimate when it comes from the mouth of an Englishman. Bean quotes Birdwood's conclusion to his final address to the 1st Division AIF shortly before Gallipoli at church parade on Sunday, 11 April:

*I have complete confidence that you will do all the honour of England and Australia demand of you.*⁶⁰

In these words, Birdwood recognises the separate identities of Australia and England, while seeming to use England as a synonym for Empire and indirectly identifying the notion of honour as the common element in the reckoning between Australia and England and their troops. As such, a common bond of honour is, by definition, the honour of the Empire. If this dual loyalty mostly came easily to the Anzacs it is because they had known it almost all of their conscious lives and were taught it in school. Anna Clark writes:

So, Australianness and Britishness weren't seen as discordant. Even the Sutherlands' history, written for Australian-born schoolchildren, advanced that shared identity: "The Australian colonies are proud of their mother country...follow all her destinies in that great Career ...as the leading nation on earth...and if she ever needed their(Australians)help, assistance would flow spontaneously from loving hearts"⁶¹.

When Bean referred to 'our people', it is apparent from the context that he is referring to Australians, and the English are a symbolic proxy for the British Empire. The qualities that

⁶⁰ Fewster, *Bean's Gallipoli*, 61.

⁶¹ Clark, Anna. *Making Australian History* Viking, 2022, 87

Bean's people share as 'peace-loving' societies include a moral superiority based on their common political culture. Bean's speculation that war would have been avoided if it could have been done with 'honour' assumes a common intention and destiny of Australia and the British Empire. Australia and England were different in sentiment and character but governmentally inseparable, and they acted with a common purpose because of a shared notion of honour.

In Bean's writing, the governmental choice of war or peace rested on a shared conception of 'honour'. The importance of honour in Australian and imperial decision-making is central to Bean's understanding of the events at Gallipoli the following day and in the ensuing months. The notion of honour, particularly masculine honour, explained and justified the role Australia played in every theatre of the Great War, from the Dardanelles campaign until the Armistice.

2.5 War, friendship, and death

One of Bean's preoccupations was the approach of his AIF comrades to simple everyday tasks and their unpretentious personal exchanges, set within the context of the vast presence of Empire and its massive economic and military enterprises. The relationship between the life and work of the Australian native and the traditions and authority of the British Empire had preoccupied Bean long before he became the official war correspondent and long before the coining of the code word Anzac.

Bean's two iconic works based on his outback observations of the wool industry, *On the Wool Track* and *The Dreadnought of the Darling*, and his study of Britannic-Australian maritime history, *Flagships Three*, prefigure his subsequent thinking about Anzac and its significance. These diverse works present a conventional view—namely, that the Australian character was part adaptive custom and part innate birthright in both its inherent racial and traditional connections to Britain.

Bean's understanding of Empire was more complex, rooted in childhood fancy about Britain at war. From an early age, his father Edwin had exposed Charles and his brother Jack to nostalgic tales about the heroism of great men of Empire like Wellington and Nelson. This

fanciful idyll was tempered by an exclusive education in Britain at Clifton College and Oxford University. Bean qualified his conception of the range and solicitation of Empire by his subsequent assessment of the relationship between the Australian bushman and the Empire.

These views become the basis for much of Bean's characterisation of the Anzac narrative and explain why Australia needed no threat of shame or coercion to commit to the war. A shared sense of honour and a shared history meant that it was Australia's destiny to act together with Britain on the great questions of history, including war and peace. The only important unanswered question about the war, asked by both Empire and nation when confronted with the evidence of Gallipoli, was: Will the Australian character pass the test of combat?

Bean greatly admired the hardy, egalitarian and cooperative spirit of the Australian bushman. He interpreted this spirit as being present in the AIF, despite his recognition of the fact that Australia was an increasingly urbanised society by 1914. Bean believed this ethos was the critical causal element in the development of the Australian national type and the Anzac. Bean called this custom of collaborative independence 'mateship', and mateship was the defining characteristic of the 1st AIF. Like many Australians, however, Bean had great respect and deep affection for the perceived British characteristics of a sense of order and honour and the tradition of command and hierarchy that these qualities necessitated.

2.6 Work, honour, and imperial commerce

Even before 1914, imperial sentiment rather than national interest was seen as a potential motive for Australia to go to war.⁶² Hence, another theme of Bean's work, reflected in his diary entries and subsequent official and commemorative writing, is the relational basis for assessing the quality of Australians as soldiers. Throughout Bean's work, he treats the views and assessments of British officers as the highest measure of the professionalism and character of Australian troops.

⁶² C.E.W. Bean, *Flagships Three* (London: Alston Rivers, 1913), 338.

On the cold decks of his transport, the *Minnewaska*, surrounded by men of the AIF snatching their last hours of peaceful sleep for what could be weeks or even eternity, Bean takes satisfaction in knowing that the men of the ‘covering force’, the 3rd Brigade, would be the first to land on a small beach which the Australians had named ‘North beach’, and that this was so because of the confidence a British officer had in them. The purpose of this landing was to distract and flank the Turkish defenders and protect the main body of troops landing on the adjoining Ari Burnu beach. Ari Burnu would become known to Australians as Anzac Cove:

*... the Australian troops and officers are pleased with the compliment that has been paid them: and the 3rd Brigade most of all. Col. Sinclair-Maclagan, who is a fine British Officer and a capable one told the 3rd that ‘few if any finer brigades had ever taken the field’.*⁶³

Long before Bean became the official war correspondent, his views about the Australian character, its nature and origins first came to the attention of the Australian public through a series of articles commissioned in 1909 by *The Sydney Morning Herald*. The articles were the result of an extensive field excursion, including comprehensive observational essays and interviews with the people of the Australian wool industry in western New South Wales. The *Herald* serialised the results of Bean’s travels as feature pieces in 1909. These articles were compiled and published in Britain as a book entitled *On the Wool Track* the following year.

Chapter 16 of *On the Wool Track* is called, somewhat curiously, ‘Honesty’. It describes in detail the daily activity and the division of labour in a large shearing shed. The transformation of wool from the sheep’s back to its baling and branding is his ostensible subject. Bean, however, uses this backdrop to make a deeper point about the formation of the Australian character, one important aspect of which—an Australian sense of honour—is shared in his view by Australians and Englishmen.

As he depicts the working customs of ‘the shearers’, ‘the broomeys’, ‘the roustabouts’, ‘the classers’ and ‘the boss’, Bean reveals the culture of an industry based on a complex, unstated

⁶³ Fewster, *Bean’s Gallipoli*, 67.

but hegemonic honour system. This was an industrial honour system operating between the various classes of worker in the industry and between the employees as a whole and their employer. Bean's clearest example is the shearers' practice of ensuring a fair distribution among them of the more difficult-to-shear sheep. He characterises this as 'an etiquette in shearing ... Every shearer I saw worked straight ahead like a good mate'.⁶⁴

Bean explains many of the techniques of the shed, some of them time-honoured, some the result of 'pretty' Australian inventions, such as 'little' handheld machines that had superseded the blades used in previous decades. He notes, somewhat lyrically, the otherwise functional and prosaic introduction of the electric motor to the shearing trade. Bean paints a subtle but persuasive picture of Australians at work as innovators. The workers of Bean's wool industry, however, are not industrial automatons. They practise and collaborate on overall tasks and take individual initiative when specialisation is appropriate. The Australian accepts leadership when leadership is based on merit, skill, or courage.⁶⁵

Bean's stories of courage and resilience about the Shearer and the Boss and the other characters of the wool track are the beginnings of folkloric beliefs which later he consciously incorporated into his description of the Anzacs. Graham Seal could have been exactly describing Bean's account of the bushman as citizen-soldier when he noted that

*... folklore is the product both of a set of historical circumstances and of subsequent events and beliefs related to the ordinary event/s and their initial encapsulation in story, song, poem, custom, belief. This process is often shorthanded in the term 'tradition.' ... The 'digger' – as a type – certainly derives much from the earlier figure of the Australian bushman, a heroic worker who liked to fight, drink, swear and gamble, was anti-authoritarian, egalitarian and resourceful.*⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Bean, *On the Wool Track*, 97.

⁶⁵ Bean, *On the Wool Track*, 21.

⁶⁶ Graham Seal, 'Folklore, History and Myth at an Anzac Memorial', *Australian Folklore* 25 (2010), 2, https://espace.curtin.edu.au/bitstream/handle/20.500.11937/7272/152454_152454.pdf?sequence=2, accessed 21/12/2022.

Bean describes the various changes that had occurred in the wool industry over a short period. He reflects on the change in shearers' mode of travel, from horse to bicycle⁶⁷, the boss's mode of inspection, from horse to motor car, and the change from manual shears and kerosene lamps to electric-powered mechanical shears⁶⁸ and electric lighting, and from bullocky to motor-carrier.⁶⁹ Bean was mainly concerned with how these innovations had improved the efficiency and the working conditions of the industry and how they demonstrated the Australian interest in invention and improvement.

His account includes references to the changing nature of labour contracts and the different employment relations and conditions of the various types of workers in the shed.

Interestingly, as a testament to his conservatism at the time, Bean is all but silent on the prevalence or otherwise of industrial unionism. He summarises the day's shearing and the industry overall as:

*... a long diplomatic relation between strong men, a mixture of genial autocracy, red republic, crosscurrents, undercurrents, deep arguments, deeper silences, tact, pitched battles, real friendship, [and] frank hostility.*⁷⁰

The theme of strong men of the bush continues into Bean's war writing. The extent to which the national type he observed became the digger, or there was significant observer bias, is not as important as the general belief about the relationship between the two types. Geoffrey Serle describes the process:

After the war the digger joined the bushman as a second national stereotype or idealised Australian type. But in most essential respects, the 'digger' was only a new version of the 'bushman'... In crises, nations tend to hark back to an existing stereotype which becomes elaborated and

⁶⁷ Bean, *On the Wool Track*, 84.

⁶⁸ Bean, *On the Wool Track*, 98.

⁶⁹ Bean, *On the Wool Track*, 126.

⁷⁰ Bean, *On the Wool Track*, 97.

*reinforced ; army life had similar characteristics and required similar qualities to that in the bush.*⁷¹

A critical role in the long diplomacy of the shed is that of wool-classer. ‘The boss’ contracted the wool-classer in a general way, but the wool-classer had control of all the wool in the building once the shearing started. The wool-classer ‘acts as the scientist, the expert in wool’⁷² and the arbiter of quality: ‘like a Sherlock Holmes’, when the wool-classer detects a bad fleece, it is shot out at once into a bin labelled ‘cast fleece’.⁷³

The wool-classer’s main work, according to Bean, is to ‘settle, here and now, at his own table, what use will be made of the fleece’.⁷⁴ The classer uses his fingers to run quickly through the wool, tugging and testing it to determine its cleanliness, fibre, and length, pronouncing it fine or coarse. He then judges the wool’s quality and allocates it to a particular bin. The wool is then taken from the bin, baled, and branded.

The highest quality wool is allocated to the classer’s ‘first clothing’ bin. He scrupulously guards the consistency of the bins, especially the ‘first clothing’, to ensure buyers will be prepared to pay the best possible price for his station’s wool. Bean infers that the honesty of his station’s classing is a matter of both commerce and pride. A moral value like honesty is as important to the bushman type as ‘the manhood and muscle’⁷⁵, so essential to their survival and prosperity. The classer encapsulates the connection between honesty, manliness, and the commercial life of Empire. Bean’s summary of the classer’s craft and character explains the connections:

It is the remorseless honesty, with which Australian wool-classers draw distinctions against the wool of their own employers, that makes it possible for a buyer on the other side of the world to ask year after

⁷¹ Geoffrey Serle, ‘The Digger Tradition and Australian Nationalism’, *Meanjin Quarterly* 24, no. 2, June 1965, 149–158.

⁷² Bean, *On the Wool Track*, 101.

⁷³ Bean, *On the Wool Track*, 101.

⁷⁴ Bean, *On the Wool Track*, 101.

⁷⁵ White, *Inventing Australia*, 72.

*year for the first clothing of a particular station in order that he may use it for making billiard cloths. It was this that particularly impressed the English commerce delegates who visited a Northern shed about the same time as we did.*⁷⁶

Bean asserts that honesty is critical to the cultural and economic life of the shearing shed and is the basis of its material and moral connection to Empire. *On the Wool Track* concludes with a vignette describing a bucolic valley in the hills of Gloucestershire, in which generations of English artisans have laboured to weave the finest of cloths: whole ‘honest lifetimes’ spent in this valued craft. The cloth they make is truer and softer than any other cloth in the world. The wool is used to make, among other things, billiard tablecloth—an essential item for that most symbolic of British imperial amusements, billiards.

To recognise and purchase that ‘first clothing’ used for this wool of ‘exquisite quality’, it is essential that these far-away tradition-bound English craftsmen can rely on the ‘honesty’ of the ‘independent sometimes unruly men’ of the ‘real Australia’. Bean describes how bidders from all nationalities came and went to the Sydney wool auctions as conditions in the world economy changed. One constant, he observed, was the honesty, a blood bond of trust, between these Gloucestershire valley artisans and the unruly men of Kukuburra station on the Warrego. In Bean’s view, this honesty and sense of honour provide a critical underpinning of the imperial wool trade and, by implication, the entire project of Empire.

Before I finish with Bean’s analysis of the imperial value and national character of honesty, and the role of the wool classer, I will examine Bean’s evidence. Bean cites a delegation of Englishmen as evidence of the unique honesty of the Australians, and the quality of their craft. Here, again, Australians’ value needs to be endorsed by Englishmen—a theme so often seen in Bean’s later work on the AIF and the Great War.

Honesty in Bean’s analysis is a characteristic rather than simply a value. There is a clear implication that this is a characteristic shared by Australians and the British as a matter of culture and inculcation, and that it is economically and politically part of the fabric that unites

⁷⁶ Bean, *On the Wool Track*, 102.

the Empire. Of course, there is an implication that an absolute honesty is unique to the Anglo-Saxon.

2.7 The Australian boss

Early in Bean's account of character and leadership in the wool industry, he speaks of the 'boss'.⁷⁷ The boss is the man who owned and managed the sheep station and had 'unquestionable authority'.⁷⁸ Bean described the boss's relationship with the 'strong, independent—sometimes unruly—men' of the sheep industry in stark contrast to the landlords of British agriculture at the time:

*He [the Australian boss] had no immemorial feudal tradition to prop him up; the people had no respect for any 'claims of birth'—often he had none to respect.*⁷⁹

Bean makes it clear that the Australian boss had to rely on 'common sense' and 'courage' to lead. This implies that these qualities were more important to the Australian leader and, by implication, to his men than they were to the Briton and were a more prominent feature of their character. Bean, very much a man of his generation with very particular personal perspectives, cannot refrain from referring to innately British abstractions of leadership qualities, which he characterises as products of race (birth):

*... all of his [the Australian boss's] life he had to depend on his common sense, his courage, and the sheer ability to lead which generally exists somewhere deep down in people of British birth.*⁸⁰

In spite of his genetic explanation, circumstances created by environment are the keys to understanding the development of the unique nature of Australian leaders. While race or

⁷⁷ Bean, *On the Wool Track*, 17.

⁷⁸ Bean, *On the Wool Track*, 20.

⁷⁹ Bean, *On the Wool Track*, 20.

⁸⁰ Bean, *On the Wool Track*, 21.

‘blood’ is the immutable link with the British gift for leadership, the harsh environment of the Australian continent is the explanation for the unique change. In *On the Wool Track*, Bean suggests that even the Australian boss with no claim to inherited wealth or authority retains some innate qualities of leadership by virtue of his British birthright, working in concert with his environment. His lifetime of taking responsibility and command in this harsh environment with its fluctuating fortunes has ‘hammered out of the old stock a new man’.⁸¹

As well as the racial advantages implied by British birthright, ‘the boss’ is portrayed in *On the Wool Track* as typical of his class and is not afraid to talk about his trade, unlike the ‘reputed English aristocrat’. The Australian boss must invent or ‘make do’ to survive the conditions, unlike his British aristocratic equivalent. The Britisher presumably lives by means of the ordered economy of tradition.

2.9 Conclusion

Throughout the early phase of his reporting of Anzac, Bean goes to great lengths to align his analysis of the characteristics of the outback Australian with the characteristics of the Anzacs. As a skilful journalist, he succeeds in the initial persuasion despite the appearance of inconsistencies. For example, the station boss was generally in charge because he owned and controlled the assets of the station, not necessarily because of intrinsic merit. While civic democracy and the rough democracy of bush unionism had some parallels, Bean never mentions union organisation as an explicit characteristic of his outback labourers. Of course, the fact that most of the 1st Division of the AIF were either British-born or born and bred in Australian cities and towns rather than the Australian outback is probably the most challenging flaw in Bean’s argument. L.L. Robson demonstrated this fact statistically.⁸²

To absorb the cultural symbolism of the outback, the Anzacs and their generation needed to be literate and culturally educated. It is also the case that a range of the key performative and ideological characteristics of the Anzac legend are better explained by having the benefit of

⁸¹ Bean [C.W.], ‘Australia: IV The Australian’, 6.

⁸² L.L. Robson, *The First AIF: A Study of its Recruitment, 1914–1918* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 1982).

liberal education based on moral self-discipline and sense of duty and a program of intellectual stimulation, as described in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

Education and the Australian character

All who have meditated on the art of governing mankind have been convinced that the fate of Empires depends upon the education of youth
(Aristotle, *The Politics*).

Ken Dowding argues that exceptionalism requires a rule systematically explaining difference.¹ He claims political institutions are the best bet for finding such a rule. In Federation Australia one of the most critical public institutions other than the parliaments themselves was the education departments of the colonies and then states. According to William Coleman, Australian exceptionalism is most acutely observable over the decades leading to Federation and after in the field of school education. Coleman shows that in administration, funding and regulation of standards and attendance Australia was almost uniquely advanced. These same arrangements also provided for the centralisation and consolidation of syllabus and learning materials. This enabled uniquely consistent themes in civics, scripture, history, and literature:

... the best illustration of Australia's tendency to keep pressing along a path it has cut for itself is school education. From the start of the government school system in the 1870s, Australia's administration has been unusually centralised. The 'boards of education' which governed Australia's government schools at the very foundation of the system—themselves 'feeble parodies' of British school boards—had been by 1880 abolished, and the entire conduct of schools vested in the education departments of the (colonies) states under identical arrangement.²

¹ Ken Dowding 'Australian Exceptionalism Reconsidered', *Australian Journal of Political Science* 52, no. 2 (2017): 166.

² William Coleman, 'Theories of Australian Exceptionalism', in William Coleman (ed.), *Only in Australia: The History, Politics, and Economics of Australian Exceptionalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Bean would become the most crucial individual in the perception of the Australian character through the prism of the Anzac legend. In his role as official observer of the 1st AIF, as author of *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918* and the initial Acting Director and then board member of the Australian War Memorial, Bean's influence on the interpretation of the Australian character and Anzac would extend for generations.

Bean's most important historiographical contention has been almost hegemonic in debates about the Australian character among academic historians.³ Bean's assertion that the basis of the exceptional fighting ability and the heroic characteristics of the AIF originated in the ethos of the Australian outback has been a pivotal theme in Australian cultural history. Like Marx's theory of capital and revolution, most theories of Australian character propounded after Bean have been either an endorsement or a critique of his analysis. Bean's observations about Anzac and the Australian character cannot be ignored. Yet, there are profound flaws in his argument. This chapter argues that Bean, the son of a schoolmaster, and who had himself acted as an assistant schoolmaster, failed to recognise an obvious aspect of the explanation for the Australian character every time he walked past a government school in Sydney or the bush.

3.1 Australianising education

When Bean returned to Australia as a 'new chum', his career as NSW circuit court judge's associate and then as a reporter on rural affairs for *The Sydney Morning Herald* reintroduced him to the Australian bush and countryside.⁴ To Bean, this outback country and the people and industries that inhabited it were unlike any he had seen in Britain and, given that Australians were British, the differences in character must be attributable to the outback environment. It was therefore most likely, in Bean's assessment, that the Australian qualities

³ Carolyn Holbrook, 'Marxism for Beginner Nations: Radical Nationalist Historians and the Great War', *Labour History* 103 (November 2012): 123–144, <https://doi.org/10.5263/labourhistory.103.0123>.

⁴ Bean wrote a book entitled 'The Impressions of a New Chum'. He failed to find a publisher, but most of the book was subsequently published as a series of articles under the *nom de plume* 'C.W' in *The Sydney Morning Herald* about English perceptions of Australia and Australians. The most popular articles in the series were about the wool industry and were later published as *On the Wool Track*. In these articles Bean, usually an emotionally subdued man, betrayed a great deal of affection for what he regarded as 'the Australian type'. Bean had spent his early childhood in the central western New South Wales town of Bathurst, where his father Edwin had been headmaster of All Saints, an Anglican school.

as fighting men came from fighting this environment, and it was logical to see the unique Australian personality traits as having their origins in the entirely unique environment of the Australian bush.⁵

A man of intellectual curiosity, Bean formed friendships with some of the formative figures of early 20th-century Australian culture: Banjo Paterson, the ‘bard of the Bush’ and editor of the *Sydney Evening News*, the artist Daryl Lindsay, and illustrator Will Dyson, among others. Bean lived in a Sydney that hosted drinking and dinner clubs like the *The Bulletin* school and the Bohemians, who were committed to promoting the idea that the bush was the heart of Australian identity and culture.⁶ Also, significantly, Paterson and Dyson both served as war correspondents.

Before Bean left Australia as a child with his family, he and his brother Jack had attended All Saints school in Bathurst. His father, who was the headmaster at All Saints, used the method of pedagogy and school governance established by Dr Thomas Arnold, the famous headmaster of Rugby School in mid-19th-century England. Dr Arnold had been a leader of a reform of the English public school system. Arnold’s reforms emphasised co-option of students into the creation of school discipline and ethos and stressed the value of the physical life to enhance the intellect and the whole person. Arnold also emphasised the importance of solidarity and intimate relationships between students as part of natural development. Clifton College, which Bean attended, was an excellent example of Arnoldian reforms.

His family’s return to England ensured that Bean was educated by a very different regime to most Australians: Brentwood, where again his father was the headmaster, the prestigious Clifton College, and then Oxford University—all institutions at the heart of Empire. Bean’s entire primary and secondary education was conducted under the elitist principles of Arnoldian pedagogy and school administration.

⁵ C.E.W. Bean [‘C.W.’], ‘Australia: IV The Australians’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 June 1907, 6.

⁶ White, *Inventing Australia*, 93.

Maintaining this view in 1950, Bean conceded that the Arnoldian tradition had been incorporated into the government school system in Australia.⁷ The self-belief in the AIF and many aspects of the character observed as part of the Anzac experience were instilled in the Anzac generation as children and youths by Australia's pre-war school education system and the literary and civic culture the education made available to them.

The mustering yard and the shearing shed were symbolic rather than experiential for the Anzac generation.⁸ For the majority their daily lives, expectations and attitudes were shaped by city life⁹ and were the result of economic changes which had established Australia as an urban civilisation.

Along with this economic change, an all but unique policy aspiration of the bureaucratic and political elites of the colonies was the introduction in the 1880s of a policy of democratising education and making it not only accessible to but compulsory for all children between five years and thirteen and nine months. Australia's education reformers also made the study of a rigorous universal curriculum taught by a fully professionalised teaching workforce a feature of Australian public policy, long before this was accepted as comprehensive practice in England and indeed in most jurisdictions in the world. These liberal educators fused elitist Arnoldian pedagogy ideas with other key concepts derived from liberalism, and the Hegelian philosophy of the individual and the State.

The reformers fashioned an education that aimed at enhancing the individual's capacity to contribute to the State and the economy. This set of educational ideas fostered democracy and egalitarianism, civic responsibility, social solidarity, innovation, and intellectual curiosity, as well as an interest in the folklore of Australia and the literature and history of Britain.

In the Introduction to volume, I of *The Official History* Bean argues the soldierly traits of resilience, toughness and mateship were due to a creed, '... a romantic one inherited from the

⁷ C.E.W. Bean, *Here, My Son* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1950), 3.

⁸ L.L. Robson, 'The Origin and Character of the First AIF, 1914–1918: Some Statistical Evidence', *Historical Studies* 15, no. 61 (1973), 737–748.

⁹ L.L. Robson, *The First AIF: A Study of its Recruitment, 1914–1918* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 1982), 1.

goldminer and the bushman'. In volume VI his argument is more nuanced. He argues that the traits of intellectual curiosity and innovation as manifested in the diggers were the character traits acquired '... from early childhood' and that the average Australian and everyone around him were 'masters of their own life'.¹⁰ Again, this can be interpreted as a reference to childhood, of the pioneer or the bushman, but it is followed by an explicit nod to the cultural impact and civic consequences of the Australian education system. Bean writes in volume I:

*The younger generation was largely trained in State schools, and such remnants of the old feudal class distinctions as had survived among earlier colonists were daily losing their hold.*¹¹

Later, in Volume VI of *The Official History*, Bean emphasised the outstanding performance of Australians of all ranks in problem-solving and organisation, especially in the formal learning environment of British Army Brigade schools.¹²

*[The] ... consistent success of Australians in the army schools was phenomenal—indeed, it furnishes a problem to which their keen ambition and interest in the tasks gives probably only a partial clue. It was normal for the whole of each small quota of Australian entrants to secure good passes, and common for two or three of them to share with as many from other forces the top places on the list.*¹³

Australian performance in these schools demonstrating a propensity to perform so well in a formal learning environment is most likely attributable to the experience and skills learnt from a modern school education.

¹⁰ C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–18: Vol. VI, The A.I.F. in France During the Allied Offensive, 1918* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1942), 7.

¹¹ C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918: Vol. I, The First Phase* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1935), 5.

¹² Bean, *The Official History*, Vol. VI, 20–21.

¹³ Bean, *The Official History*, Vol. VI, 23.

Bean unambiguously confirms the analogy to education, noting that ‘Each Officer had to be largely a schoolmaster’¹⁴ to his men in terms of training and discipline and that the success in army schools had also been noted in Egypt¹⁵ and of Australians in the naval schools.¹⁶ Bean does not claim that the harsh working life of the bushman would qualify the Anzacs for success in these military schools. Rather, he focusses on the result of this success to make a different observation:

The result was the emergence of an exceptionally capable determined body of young men—often very raw material for moulding in the great traditions of responsibility, noblesse oblige, and self-sacrifice of the old British officer corps. But the very freshness of their outlook caused them to be more deeply by those traditions—they did not talk about them but they accepted them with a fiery earnestness ... a beneficial result of the whole system was that the Australian was much closer to his men than was his British colleague.

Bean is clearly saying that to be a good officer involves being sympathetic to the British traditions, but that the resulting Australian officers are in important ways superior to the British. This continues the theme of colonial improvement of the British type, in a more cerebral context than allowed for in the bushman, as superior Briton by physique and temperament. Interestingly, Bean’s use of the words ‘*noblesse oblige*’ and ‘self-sacrifice’ hint at a reference to the duties of chivalry. Most importantly, the transformation of Australians through military schools and the high standard Bean believes was set by the AIF establish a new tradition made possible by the Australian receptiveness to education.

3.2 Public education in pre-war Australia

Peter Board was the first Director General of Education in New South Wales. After a series of political controversies about public education, Board presented the government of the day

¹⁴ Bean, *The Official History*, Vol. VI, 22.

¹⁵ Bean, *The Official History*, Vol. VI, 23.

¹⁶ Bean, *The Official History*, Vol. VI, 23.

with a suite of solutions, including a new syllabus, which was implemented in 1905. Board also overhauled teacher training and pedagogy and, borrowing from Victoria, Australianised (while maintaining British values) much of the reading and learning resources for students. Board's reforms were a major influence on his peers in other states.

The presentation of British history as taught in the 'Board syllabus' located Australia within the framework of the British Empire's long history. Australian history was but a brief extension of English history, which dated back to Roman Britain.¹⁷ The immediate result of this pedagogical position was to exclude Australia's Aboriginal history and underline the notion that to be Australian was to be English, or at least British.¹⁸ The members of the Anzac generation were taught that Australia's destiny was as a continuation of English history.

Education reforms played a key role in Australian gender and race relations. The syllabus materials and school readers commonly treated masculinity as synonymous with civic obligation and the anticipation of military duty. The corresponding feminine role was as nurturer of, and inspiration for, masculine action. These archetypes were pervasive in the reading materials provided for schools and later recur in popular literature. The heroes and heroines—indeed, almost all the characters of school study in both fiction and history—were white.

The heroism of European romance was also prevalent in *The School Magazine* as part of the core history and English syllabus. The chivalry and vaunted courage of medieval kings and knights and their pursuit of moral purpose at great personal risk was a recurring theme in the

¹⁷ Peter Board was the first Director General of Education in New South Wales and oversaw the implementation of the *Public Instruction Act 1880*, which made education compulsory for all children between the ages of five and 13 and nine months. The Board syllabus introduced in 1905, of which he was the main protagonist, was subsequently used in New South Wales schools and formed the basis of the curriculum for the other states. It was a detailed and significantly revised version of what had been taught before.

¹⁸ The syllabus assumed the concentric pattern of British history. It effectively subsumed important British historical events and key tropes in British historical and mythological literature across all subjects, including Civics and Morals, and Scripture.

syllabus materials. The role of the women in romance was as objects of love—mothers, sisters or the betrothed—who inspired the missions pursued by men.¹⁹

While the moral uprightness and superiority of the English race and British values were emphasised in the History syllabus, the Geography syllabus focused on the sea-going ties between Australia and Britain via the deeds of the earliest maritime heroes and explorers. Drake, Nelson and, of course, Cook were studied. The economic and cultural significance for Australia of the trade in resources and manufactured goods between Australia and Britain was regarded as critical.

Civics and Morals was an independent and compulsory stream of instruction in Australian schools from the 1880s.²⁰ Civics and moral instruction were also threaded through almost all the elements of the syllabus. The duality of patriotism was also in evidence in Public Instruction, which focused on developing pride in Australia and the Australian identity while contextualising Australian patriotism within the wider loyalty to Empire. This artefact of education explains another of Mark Twain's quirky observations. In *Around the Equator*, Twain noted that native-born Australians who had never been to England and were unlikely ever to do so referred to England as 'home'; he was even more surprised that Australians saw this mindset as acceptable, even normal.²¹

The bush images of masculine endurance and mateship are generally assumed to be definitively Australian. These images were taught alongside British folklore of chivalry and crusading. The relationship between the imperial and national symbolic cultures is symbiotic rather than antagonistic. The folklore of chivalry was embedded in the minds of Australian children through the study of English history, romance literature and the simplified tales of adventure used in school instruction, *The School Paper* in Victoria and the readers in all

¹⁹ *The School Magazine*, 1916–1935, Part 1, Class 3, Index, Volume 1 (April 1916): 40. Archives of the New South Wales Department of Education (Sydney: Department of Education Library).

²⁰ New South Wales, Department of Public Instruction, *Course of Instruction for Primary Schools 1905* (Sydney: Government Printer). Held in the State Library of New South Wales, 372.991/N.

²¹ Mark Twain, *Following the Equator: A Journey Around the World* (Hartford, CT: The American Publishing Company, 1897). Gutenberg Project. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2895/2895-h/2895-h.htm#ch11>, accessed 11/11/2022. '[T]he native Australasian's custom of speaking of England as 'home'. It was always pretty to hear it, and often it was said in an unconsciously caressing way that made it touching; in a way which transmuted a sentiment into an embodiment, and made one seem to see Australasia as a young girl stroking mother England's old gray head.'

colonies and then states. Such tales were sometimes treated as exotica, and sometimes adapted to the Australian environment.²²

The relative power of imperial culture is evident in the overt presence of imperial symbols in public life. The ideological power of Empire is also inherent in the evolving national culture and the personal, intellectual, moral, and emotional development of the citizen's loyalty. This partly explains why national freedom and imperial duty are simultaneously celebrated in the digger myth and the Anzac legend. Australian schoolchildren were encouraged to believe in the resolution of the national symbols of Australia with the traditional symbols of Empire. While Australians had faith in the Empire, Britain's liberals believed in the settler colonies, of which Australia was prominent in the imagination of English popular literature and with the proponents of imperial policy, as Duncan Bell explains:

*Many British liberals regarded settler colonialism as a preferable model of Empire to the conquest of alien rule associated with India, and they invested their hope in assorted projects of colonial reform.*²³

Through the education system and popular literature, Australians absorbed and transplanted Britannic myth, legend, and history. Male honour as chivalry and the pursuit of honourable war or crusade against evil or dishonourable opponents were represented in the school syllabus and supporting materials, as well as in the works of popular Australian authors. Accordingly, when hostilities commenced in the Great War, the Anzac generation had already internalised the notion of war as ennobling or purifying. In the minds of many Australians, the bushman and the urban larrikin would reach their apotheosis only in combat for the nation. For its part, the nation would be required to sacrifice her sons for civilisation, King and Empire and earn her place as a nation within the Empire. Of course, most Australians saw civilisation and the British Empire as one and the same. War was

²² Jane McGennisken, *Twentieth-Century Australian School Readers*, unpublished thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, University of Tasmania, August 2009.

²³ Duncan Bell, *Reordering the World: Essays on Liberalism and Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 283.

apprehended as a proving ground for Australia's sons well before the Kaiser's fatal invasion of Belgium.

The image of endurance and pioneering exertion that characterised Britons in the colonies supported the social Darwinist account of colonial populations as an ideological and biological extension and potential improvement of the British race. Social Darwinism was implicit in the culture of the Empire and within Australia.

As previously noted, the 'new syllabus' was the culmination of a program of educational reform based on universal access to education as both a benefit and obligation of citizenship. There was a close temporal and political relationship between Federation and education reforms. Indeed, Sir Henry Parkes, one of the fathers of Federation, spearheaded educational reform as Premier of New South Wales.²⁴ Parkes's educational work resulted in the *Public Schools Act* of 1866 and the *Public Instruction Act* of 1880, which introduced compulsory, free education and severed connections between the Church and the public schools. Similar reforms in Victoria were replicated by the other colonies so that, by the time of Federation, the education systems in the Australian states were among the most advanced in the world. Australians entered the 20th century with a very high level of literacy.

In the tradition of modernity, the heritage of the British Empire needed to be honoured by being 'made new' again by Australians. Public schooling played a part in the establishment of new Australian myths and legends, which apparently displaced British symbols with new Australian ones largely based on the British originals. The 'new syllabus' and the ideology that supported it was, to use Baudrillard's words about history and ideology, a 'refusal of history masked by an exaltation of the signs of history: history simultaneously invoked and denied'.²⁵ Anna Clark observes:

...that broad and growing momentum towards nationhood was a widely held belief that school children needed to learn Australian subject matter as this call to arms from the poet Henry Lawson in 1888 exalts: "If this is

²⁴ A.R. Crane, 'One of Our Yesterdays: Sir Henry Parkes and the Passing of the 1880 Public Instruction Act of N.S.W', *The Australian Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (1951): 25, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20633367>.

²⁵ Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, trans. James Benedict (London: Verso, 1966), 74.

Australia and not a mere outlying suburb of England...it behoves us to educate our children to a knowledge of the country they call their own"²⁶

The cultural context of both federation and the colonial and then state-based education reforms included a milieu of imperial war in which Australians would be significant and sometimes controversial participants. The Boer War brought into serious doubt the notion that British forces were superior militarily and physically to other armed forces. It was the alleged superiority of British forces that saw the first airing of narratives which celebrated the rugged and innovative new Britons of the South. The Boer War gave further impetus to theories of social Darwinism and fostered a new belief that the future of the British empire lay in the inculcation of children. This was demonstrated powerfully by Baden Powell's popular and successful scouting movement, which gained widespread acceptance in Australia, including throughout the school system.

The Empire, though still mighty in the minds of its subjects, had experienced setbacks. These setbacks created further opportunities for Australians to imagine a powerful destiny for their new nation. The shock to the Empire following the reversals suffered by the British Army against the Boers inspired a movement for 'National Efficiency'.²⁷ This movement advocated that appointments to public office be made based on merit, rather than on reliance on the class system and its traditions. To many, the success of the Boers provided evidence for a Social Darwinist perspective, which privileged policies that ensured that the corrupt and weak elements of society would die out, with individuals and the State being replenished by the struggle to survive.

The course of the Boer War simultaneously underlined British admiration for the moral character of Germanic culture, and undermined British self-confidence in key British institutions, especially privilege and social class.

²⁶ Clark. A. op.cit 86

²⁷ James Walter and Tod Moore, 'The New Social Order? Australia's Contribution to "New Liberal" Thinking in the Interwar Period'. Paper presented to the Jubilee conference of the Australasian Political Studies Association, 2002, Australian National University, Canberra, 9.

*London's colonial war effort was characterised by humiliating military reverses, an increasing financial burden, and a rising moral fuss within domestic Liberal and other anti-war opinion over the rigour of its internment policy and other anti-guerrilla tactics which inflicted great suffering upon Boer civilians, especially women and children.*²⁸

Their lack of 'gratitude' to the Empire aside, the Boers' endurance, resolution and dedication to individual and collective struggle and their adaptability and solidarity in the pursuit of freedom were widely admired by many British intellectuals. This was in stark contrast to the propaganda aimed at the British middle class, which portrayed the Boers as ruthless and inflexible in their demands and as agents of the rival German Empire and its Kaiser.

In Australia beliefs about the Australian troops in the Boer War provided a faint preview of the Anzac legend and its difficulties. The mounted infantry, which made up a significant proportion of the Australian volunteers, were valued by the British command even though the performance of the Commonwealth troops as a whole was unspectacular.²⁹ However, the success of the Australian Mounted Rifles was attributed to their national heritage as bushmen, but as Craig Wilcox points out many were recruited from Australian cities and towns:

*... Australian soldiers were more likely to have lived in cities and towns than in the bush, and highly likely to have been born and raised in Britain or to have grown up in a household under adults who had been. The difference between Tommy Cornstalk and Tommy Atkins was less geographic than institutional—the difference between the citizen soldier and the professional.*³⁰

²⁸ Bill Nasson, 'South Africa's Post Boer, Boer War', in Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey (eds), *The Boer War: Army, Nation and Empire*, the proceedings of the 1999 Chief of Army/Australian War Memorial Military History Conference, 1, https://www.army.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-11/1999_boer_war_army_nation_and_empire_0.pdf, accessed 26/09/2022.

²⁹ Frank Hickling, 'Introduction', in Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey (eds), *The Boer War Army, Nation and Empire*, the proceedings of the 1999 Chief of Army/Australian War Memorial Military History Conference, 2, https://www.army.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-11/1999_boer_war_army_nation_and_empire_0.pdf, accessed 26/09/2022.

³⁰ Craig Wilcox, 'Looking Back on the South African War', in Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey (eds), *The Boer War: Army, Nation and Empire* *The Boer War*, the proceedings of the 1999 Chief of Army/Australian War

But the early mounted recruits gave the sense of fulfilling the antipodean romanticism of the time, as L.M. Field argues:

But before the voice of the street crowds died away to almost nothing, the departure of the two Bushmen contingents attracted a lot of interest because they were also a novelty: purely citizen soldiers [like their Boer counterparts] who bore no taint of militarism as the militia did. They also carried about them the romanticism bestowed on bush dwellers by the literature of the nineties.³¹

The performance of the Mounted Infantry from the colonies was viewed as part of the wider success of mounted volunteers, which included the British yeomanry. The voluntarism and differences over discipline, motivation, education, and adaptability to the terrain were seen to be a more important influence on the performance of the troops than the national origin of the recruits. Irish writer and Boer War veteran Erskine Childers wrote of the mounted colonials and British yeomanry as if they were a distinct force separate from the rest of the imperial soldiers:

[A] ... 'great throng' of volunteers as 'an army in itself'. Not only numbers but shared institutions and expectations gave that great throng its identity, marking it out from the regular soldiers of the British Army they fought beside. Most were taller, fitter, better educated than Tommy. Perhaps they shared a mental superiority too.³²

Later in the war, ordinary Australians, supervised by their governments, raised further contingents whose members had little experience as part-time citizen-soldiers but were supposed to possess rough martial virtues inculcated by years of frontier life. The third wave,

Memorial Military History Conference, 5, https://www.army.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-11/1999_boer_war_army_nation_and_empire_0.pdf, accessed 26/09/2022.

³¹ L.M. Field, *The Forgotten War: Australian Involvement in the South African Conflict of 1899–1902*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 1979), 129.

³² Craig Wilcox, 'Looking Back on the South African War', in *The Boer War: Army, Nation, and Empire*, the proceedings of the 1999 Chief of Army/Australian War Memorial Military History Conference, 6, https://www.army.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-11/1999_boer_war_army_nation_and_empire_0.pdf, accessed_26/09/2022.

called 'citizen's bushmen', was raised, equipped, and trained partly at public expense. The fourth wave, called 'imperial bushmen', relied almost entirely on the British taxpayer.

Jean Bou shows that the notion of Mounted Rifles which gives rise to much of the theory of the Australian soldier and the bush heritage was a result of a strategic preference firstly for mounted police and then mounted army units³³

Several elements of the Anzac legend are manifest in the Boer War. Firstly, the relationship to the performance of British soldiers. When tactically and operationally comparing like with like there is little apparent difference between the Australian Mounted Rifles and the British yeomanry. The volunteer nature of the Australians and their level of education create an opportunity to argue points of difference with British troops at large. The differences between those Australian Mounted Rifles specifically recruited from the bush and other Mounted Rifles units are moot.

3.3 The government syllabus and other people's schools

Leading up to the 1880s, the Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian churches had successfully established a wide network of schools across all the colonies. The funding system provided by the various colonial governments encouraged the establishment of religious schools which, in the case of the Catholic Church, were originally largely staffed by Catholic laity who were often volunteers, many of whom had little or no professional training as teachers.³⁴

In the late 1870s political and ideological pressure mounted in each of the colonies to introduce free secular and compulsory education. The policy imperative championed by the new liberals was to be realised by the establishment of an influential and well-funded colonial

³³ Jean Bou, 'Modern Cavalry: Mounted Rifles, the Boer War and Doctrinal Debates', in *The Boer War: Army, Nation, and Empire*, the proceedings of the 1999 Chief of Army/Australian War Memorial Military History Conference, 76, https://www.army.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-11/1999_boer_war_army_nation_and_empire_0.pdf, accessed 26/09/2022.

³⁴ Edmund Campion, *Australian Catholics* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1987), 51.

(later state) authority which would administer schools, train teachers, and regulate the syllabus of instruction and the pedagogy practised in delivering it.

In the 1870's Australia's quiet education revolution was in full swing. Anna Clark points to the fact that in that decade each of the colonial governments had established centralised departments of Education, compulsory school attendance, abolition of school fees for compulsory years and the establishment of a secular curriculum.

Clark goes on to refer to Manning Clark who suggests that there was a popular belief that “*Knowledge was the handmaiden of happiness and the creator of better citizens*”, and John Gascoigne, who argues that the educating urge of the nineteenth century expressed confidence that ‘*the possibilities of human improvement rested largely on the belief in the saving power of education*’.³⁵

The passage of the various colonial Education Acts in the 1880s largely spelt doom for the low-cost Protestant local schools, partly because the Protestant church schools were more costly to administer but also because the Anglican, Presbyterian and, later, Methodist evangelical approach to religious instruction was accommodated by the colonial syllabus. The syllabus compromised secularity by incorporating scriptural lessons in the curriculum. Generally, only the more prestigious high-fee Protestant schools survived.

The Catholics, however, decided to make a fight of it. They wanted to keep their schools operating for reasons that were part political, part social and part theological. As Archbishop Vaughan, the Archbishop of Sydney, and an Englishman (originally the preferred candidate of the imperial authorities), put it:

If our Catholic people ... bring up their Children thorough Catholics, that is, educate them in thorough Catholic schools, the victory is ours; if on the contrary the State takes possession of them and they

³⁵ Clark. A. op.cit.84

*are thrown into public schools, the victory will eventually be with our opponents.*³⁶

The Catholic authorities suspected that the compromise on scriptural teaching in the new government schools reflected a theological and denominational bias against their religion. The liberalism that underpinned the ‘new syllabus’ had already been declared by the papacy to be one of the ‘errors of the modern age’.³⁷ The Catholic hierarchy held that proper religious instruction required the teaching of faith and morals via the catechism, the sacraments, Church history and the lives of the saints. Routine prayers before and after school and ritual prayers like the Angelus were necessary for a sound Catholic education. Religious teaching based solely on the scriptures was not only inadequate to the Catholics of the time but a provocation, even an insult, to their religious sensitivities.

There was plenty of reason, apart from the apparent bias in favour of Protestantism, for Irish Catholics to be suspicious of the Education Acts, government schooling and a secular curriculum. Sir Henry Parkes, the architect of the *Public Instruction Act*, never seriously hid his anti-Catholic animus and his belief that Catholicism was a religion for the feeble-minded who could be manipulated by the enemies of Empire.³⁸ More generally, Parkes never hid his contempt for the Irish community’s lower orders.³⁹ Parkes’s attitude would become a major underwriter of Catholic sentiment in New South Wales, but similar sentiments were spread across the states. The legacy of the two-school system and the failure of ecclesiastical and

³⁶ D.E. McCorkell, *Catholic Education in Australia 1806–1950: A Reappraisal*, unpublished thesis, University of Melbourne, 1999, 52.

³⁷ *Syllabus Errorum* (The Syllabus of Errors) was an appendix to the encyclical *Quanta Cura* (Condemning the Errors of the Age) issued by Pope Pius IX on 8 December 1864. It condemns more than 80 modern philosophical and political errors or heresies, including liberalism, the moral primacy of the State, capitalism, and secularism in public life.

³⁸ Campion, *Australian Catholics*, 34

³⁹ Parkes championed two separate parliamentary inquiries into the immigration of Irish orphan girls to New South Wales. The girls were assisted migrants from Irish poor houses. The objective of the policy was to find domestic work suitable for the girls in the Australian colonies, specifically New South Wales. Parkes was not successful in his attempt to stop this migration. His motivation was a matter of record and quite transparent. He regarded the Irish orphan girls to be of an inferior type who would corrupt the religious sentiment and even the moral life of otherwise respectable colonists.

state authorities to reach a compromise would have catastrophic consequences for social harmony. The trigger would be the conscription issue.⁴⁰

Part of the eventual bitterness of the conscription debate lay in the foundation of the two-school system. The Catholics maintained a core curriculum that would see their students being competitive in exams and eventually matriculation. Students in both systems were taught the basic moral political economy based on the ethic of work hard and being thrifty if you are to succeed in life.⁴¹ But much of the meta-curriculum was diametrically at odds.

For example, the Catholics were taught that all people had souls and were brothers in Christ, even the Aborigines and the much-maligned Chinese, whereas the extent of British triumphalism in public schools almost inevitably gave rise to social Darwinist interpretations of race. Public school students were taught under the subject heading ‘natives and their customs’ that while the Aborigines who accompanied the explorers were loyal servants to their masters, in general, according to the *Commonwealth School Reader*, the blacks were cowardly, vengeful, and cruel. Catholics, on the other hand, were taught that the natives had a fine sense of manliness and fairness and harmonious personal relationships and showed commendable respect for the sick and the aged and cared for their children.⁴²

The Catholic school readers had poems, stories and sayings from Irish intellectuals and poets, none of whom were featured in the public-school readers. One of the few Englishmen featured in the Catholic school readers was Thomas More—not a favourite of the Anglo establishment. Even when both sets of readers had a similar topic they dealt with the narrative in a very different way. For example, both had stories of Columbus discovering the Americas, but the public school account dealt with the voyage and its geography, while the Catholics dwelt on the fact that Columbus took the Blessed Sacrament to America and began the process of converting the natives to Christianity. The Catholic readers contained accounts

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Malcolm and Dianne Hall, *A New History of the Irish in Australia* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2018), 231.

⁴¹ S.G. Firth, ‘Social Values in the New South Wales Primary School 1880–1914: An Analysis of School Texts’, *Critical Studies in Education*, 12, no. 1: 157, DOI:10.1080/17508487009556025.

⁴² Firth, ‘Social Values in the New South Wales Primary School’, 157.

of ‘High Mass at St Mary’s’, ‘My Rosary Beads’, ‘the catechism clock’ and ‘the cardinal virtues as taught by the Church’.⁴³

Although many supporters of Empire adopted the view that the Celtic Irish were an inferior race⁴⁴ to the English Anglo-Saxon, the bigotry was a two-way street, as this quote from a story ‘The Demon Drink’ in the Catholic school reader demonstrates: ‘He had been brought up as a Protestant and looked on religion very much as a Sunday dress, to be put on when necessary for appearance’s sake’.⁴⁵

The Catholic readers extolled martyrs who died for their principles, while the public schools praised warriors and heroes who achieved eventual victory, even if, as in the case of Gordon and Nelson, they did not live to see the victory they fought for. Catholic children were reminded that only a few generations before, the English had outlawed their religion⁴⁶ in their own land and condemned to death priests for saying mass. Catholics could agree with public schools in eulogising the Australian explorers and Abraham Lincoln, but they did not praise the empire builders or even Isaac Newton, Washington, or Shakespeare. The Catholics drew largely on a tradition of defeat, of being the conquered rather than being the conquerors.

The Catholic Irish saw themselves a doubly defeated by race and class⁴⁷—as Irishmen and as workers.⁴⁸ But as frequently pointed out by Cardinal Moran, the Archbishop of Sydney (and of Irish heritage), who succeeded Vaughan, Ireland was the land of saints and scholars and had been the university of the Western World, and that despite their history and their contribution to Australia the Irish had still been persecuted and were only now tolerated. While public school children were taught that they were the scion of a race of civilisers on par or even greater than the greatest conquerors the world had ever seen.

⁴³ Firth, ‘Social Values in the New South Wales Primary School’, 151.

⁴⁴ Malcolm and Hall, *A New History of the Irish in Australia*, 89.

⁴⁵ Firth, ‘Social Values in the New South Wales Primary School’, 151.

⁴⁶ Malcolm and Hall, *A New History of the Irish in Australia*, 150.

⁴⁷ Malcolm and Hall, *A New History of the Irish in Australia*, 29.

⁴⁸ Firth, ‘Social Values in the New South Wales Primary School’, 156.

Of arguably greater importance was the fact that most of the Catholic laity and an overwhelming majority of priests, nuns and religious brothers were Irish, or of Irish descent. Though Ireland at the time was still part of the Empire, many Irish remained suspicious of, even hostile to, the British Empire. This was nothing new in the Australian colonies. It was evident as far back as the uprising known as the Second Battle of Vinegar Hill in 1804, and in the Irish presence at Eureka, where the rebellion was led by the Irishmen Lalor and Duffy, and continued with the dominance of Irish leaders in the labour movement.

The penultimate manifestation of the tension was the Catholic hierarchy's sometimes tacit, sometimes overt support for the strikes of 1891, which later boiled over into mutual outrage between Protestant politicians and opinion leaders and the Catholic hierarchy over the conscription referenda of 1916 and 1917. In folk culture, the preponderance of Irishmen in the ranks of bushrangers confirmed the existence of a cavernous divide between the religious communities, based on the perception of opposition between the rebel appeal of outlaw romance and the need to condemn felonious transgression.

The Irish transferred their love of land to the new country, and some were indifferent, even hostile, to the ties of Empire. Because of this they tended to see themselves as the true patriotic Australians. This sentiment culminated in the notorious declaration by Archbishop Mannix, the Irish-born firebrand Archbishop of Melbourne, during the bitter battles over conscription during the war: 'Australia first, Empire second'.

Despite the subsequent bitterness over conscription, the Anzac generation of Catholics were brought up on their own version of the romantic interpretation of the Australian character. The strongest driver of this was the determination of the Catholic community and the hierarchy to prove that their schools and their students were more than competitive with the state system. The reforms of late colonial times and subsequently in each state required public exams at key stages of education. To do well, the Catholic system had to stay close to the public syllabus if its students were to succeed in the exams.

In 1905, the plenary council of Australian Catholic bishops agreed that Catholic schools would conform to the standards of state schools.⁴⁹ This meant that most of what was taught in government schools was taught in the Catholic system, with some variations based not so much on religion as on culture. For example, in the History element of the syllabus, specific events of significance in Irish history were emphasised, and Irish folktales and stories and Irish culture were distinct elements of Catholic schooling. These differences had a profound effect on the most significant political development on the home front during the war. The depth of bitterness and sectarian bigotry that emerged during the two conscription plebiscites would be a defining point in Australian public culture for decades to after.

Catholics still observed different school holidays to government schools based on religious feasts, and incorporated prayers into lessons. Likely there was an ethereal sense of patriotism towards Australia and loyalty to Irish culture in preference to devotion to Empire. Otherwise, the basic education of young Catholics was very similar to that dispensed in government schools.

Catholic Anzacs and Catholics of the Anzac generation more broadly, then, were schooled in the same or similar stories of chivalry and tales of courage as their brethren who attended state schools, perhaps learning about Brian Boru along with Alfred, and St Brigid rather than Boudica, and maybe St Patrick rather than Canute. As the legend was being confirmed in the post-war context, the Irish Catholics took the opportunity to continue the theme of promoting Australian nationalism over the Empire.

For example, during the war there was a push—championed by the New South Wales *School Magazine*, acting as the propaganda arm of the New South Wales school authorities—to have Empire Day and Anzac commemoration combined, the rationale being that the Anzacs had answered the call to Empire. The Irish and their Church would have none of it, insisting that Anzac Day had to be a sacred standalone commemoration of sacrifice and nationhood. On Anzac Day 1917, Father John Roche preached a sermon proclaiming Anzac Day as a festival of nationhood:

⁴⁹ McCorkell, *Catholic Education in Australia*, 57.

Before the Anzacs astonished the watching nations, our national sentiment was that of a flabby and sprawling character. We were Australians in name, and we had a flag ... we were constantly admonished by our daily journals to remember that we were nothing better than a joint in the great tail of Empire ... generally it was assumed that Australia lived by the grace of England; and the Empire Day orators had a better hearing than the faithful souls who clung to Australia Day and Anzac Day gave special honour to their own starry Banner.

Anzac has changed all that. The Australian flag has been brought from the garret ... Anzac Day and Australia Day honoured by hundreds of thousands of deeply stirred people—what a great change is this! What a miracle ... not so long ago, we noted with sadness that the name of our country had no meaning.⁵⁰

In spite of the sectarian and ethnic divide, the conscription debate, and the different interpretations of both national and imperial history, the Catholics followed a near identical curriculum to the compulsory, free, secular curriculum of the colonies, then States.

Not all the schools associated with the Protestant churches closed in the wake of the Public Instruction Acts. There were also a relatively small number of Catholic schools operated by religious orders that were independent of direct parochial or diocesan control. These schools, Protestant and Catholic, made up what came to be known in New South Wales, somewhat anomalously, as the Greater Public Schools (GPS). In other states slightly different descriptions apply: Associated Public Schools of Victoria, the Public Schools Association of Western Australia, the Greater Public Schools Association of Queensland. These schools were the most prestigious, charged the highest fees and functioned as boarding schools.

Another group, known in New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland as the Associated Schools, followed a similar educational ethos to that of GPS schools, but their fees were

⁵⁰ Quoted in Campion, *Australian Catholics*, 76.

generally lower and, while boarding was usually preferred, an option for day students was also approved. They were non-profit institutions, generally connected directly or through Trust arrangements with one of the major religious denominations. They were commonly referred to as corporate schools at a national level because of the varying usage of the term ‘public schools’ and Associated Schools in different states and the terminological confusion created by the advent of the public high school system.

In 1946, the Headmasters Conference of Australia, the peak body representing the headmasters of these corporate schools, resolved to commission a history of the Australian corporate schooling movement. C.E.W. Bean was approached and agreed to write the history if he was given unfettered access to the schools’ records and was duly accorded complete editorial independence. The resulting history was published in 1950 under the title, *Here, My Son*. Bean took the title from a poem by another Clifton College ‘old boy’, Henry Newbolt. It is an ode to the character-forming qualities of intellect and tradition instilled by the school and is called ‘Clifton Chapel’:

*... here, my son,
Your father thought the thoughts of youth,
And heard the words that one by one
The touch of life has turned to truth.*⁵¹

In *Here, My Son*, Bean describes ‘the Arnold tradition’ of pedagogy and school governance as adopted by Australian corporate schools. Bean describes it as a form of Christian humanism of a democratic but patrician kind.⁵²

The Arnoldian ethos encouraged by the GPS and Associated Schools in Australia placed emphasis on individual character, self-worth and qualities associated with ‘good character’: trust and reliability, honesty, openness, self-discipline, self-reliance, independent thought and action, friendship, and concern for the common good over selfish or sectional interest, as well

⁵¹ Bean, *Here, My Son*, Frontispiece.

⁵² Bean, *Here, My Son*, 3.

as ‘loyalty and fairness to friends and opponents alike, to the school, the nation and humanity’, as Bean puts it.⁵³

Though not a religious man, Bean was a firm believer in the Arnoldian educational tradition, a pedagogy that married to Classical philosophy and Christianity as ‘Christian ethics’ and ‘muscular Christianity’. Arnoldian education aimed to teach students a belief that their task in life was to help advance their own lives and those of others. This could only be achieved by learning about the universe and the moral order that underpinned it, as Bean said:

*For civilised men this involves our having, in every sphere, freedom to seek and learn and teach the truth as to the laws of our being—or of nature, or of God, by whichever name you choose to call them.*⁵⁴

Arnold’s model had direct personal impacts on Bean and his family. Each of the schools with which he, his brothers Jack and Montague and his father, Edwin, were associated were Arnoldian, and his mother’s family were patrons of the distinguished Hutchins School in Tasmania. Bean was also a recipient of the social benefits conferred by an elite education. Much of what he was able to achieve in his professional career, first as a solicitor and barrister and then as a journalist, moving at all levels of society, was due to his being a former student of Clifton College. For example, he had an ‘old boy’ connection with two senior British commanders, Generals Haig, and Birdwood, both of whom were former students of Clifton.

The ‘Arnold’ name even gave him a connection with Prime Minister W.M. Hughes. Early in his career, Bean had acknowledged Hughes as the ‘coming’ politician in the federal Parliament. By coincidence, Hughes himself had been exposed to the Arnoldian education philosophy. As a student teacher before he emigrated to Australia, Hughes had as his tutor Matthew Arnold, poet, and son of Thomas Arnold.

⁵³ Bean, *Here, My Son*, 133.

⁵⁴ Geoff Lindsay, *The Forgotten CEW Bean*, transcript of a lecture delivered at Banco Court, Sydney, November 2016, 10. Lindsay is quoting Bean.

Arnoldian ideas were unavoidably in Bean's mind when he returned to Australia in 1905. In 1907 he wrote a series of feature articles describing the Australian character for *The Sydney Morning Herald*. He refers to his own childhood as an example of the impact of early experiences such as schooling on the grown man: 'such tags and scraps in his early years as a child will carry with him into manhood'.⁵⁵

The Australian character is simple: 'he takes everything on its merits and nothing on authority'. In a reference to the egalitarianism, perhaps even inverted snobbery, in the Australian mindset, Bean writes: 'The fact that a man comes to him recommended by his clothes or his birth or his wealth makes the Australian suspicious of him at the outset ... Every man dealing with any other has a certain unaffected assurance foreign to the ingrained feudalism of England'.⁵⁶ The Australian is 'pre-eminently a lover of truth'⁵⁷:

*... as a friend the Australian has absolute trust in you and absolute fidelity on his side; generosity unsurpassed in life or even in literature ... he will trust you to death and beyond if that may be.*⁵⁸

Reflecting on the withdrawal from Gallipoli, he famously described the same qualities in the 'ANZAC spirit':

*But Anzac stood, and still stands, for reckless valour in a good cause, for enterprise, resourcefulness, fidelity, comradeship, and endurance that will never own defeat.*⁵⁹

Charles Bean was meticulous. His writing was evidence-based, but the evidence he saw was influenced by his prior beliefs and assumptions. Like every Anzac, he

⁵⁵ C.E.W. Bean ['C.W.'], 'Australia: I First Impressions', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 June 1907, 7.

⁵⁶ .E.W. Bean ['C.W.'], 'Australia: IV The Australian', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 June 1907, 6.

⁵⁷ Bean ['C.W.'], 'Australia: IV The Australian', 7.

⁵⁸ Bean ['C.W.'], 'Australia: IV The Australian', 6.

⁵⁹ C.E.W Bean, *Anzac to Amiens* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1946), 18.

was a product of his education. Like every observer, he had philosophical assumptions that over-determined some of his observations.

He was an ardent admirer of the schools that continued the educational legacy of Thomas Arnold, and of the Australian Government school system: ‘The general education of the Australians in the State schools is rather wider and more rational than in England’.⁶⁰ There is no biographical evidence that he considered the ideas of the Australian ‘education new liberals’ as democratising and modernising many features of the Arnoldian method, although (as noted in Chapter 5) much later on he is quite sure of this point. Much of Arnold’s approach was assumed in the reforms implemented by Board and his colleagues around Australia in the early 20th century, yet Bean either ignored or failed to see the significance of the influence.

Curiously, Bean contradicts the outback thesis to which he so rigidly adhered later when explaining the Anzac character. In the same series of newspaper articles, he writes: ‘Australian wool is produced in the capital cities just as much as in the country’.⁶¹ As early as 1907, he had evidence before him that what he regarded as the outstanding features of the Australian character, which later became the Anzac spirit, resided in the cities and towns as well as the outback. In *Here, My Son* Bean concedes that corporate schools and state schools influenced one another, but he does not pursue the ideological implications of the character-based educational ethos in both as being part of the explanation for the Australian character and, subsequently, the spirit of Anzac.⁶²

It could also be argued that the Australian foundation myth of the Anzac legend, the idea of ‘mateship’—a cult of loyalty, altruism, and friendship between men—which Bean and many others attribute to the outback thesis, may in fact, owe much to the ethos of the playing fields and dormitories of English public schools and their Arnoldian traditions as distilled and transferred to Australian government schooling through the education reforms of 1905. As

⁶⁰ Bean [‘C.W.’], ‘Australia: IV The Australian’, 7.

⁶¹ C.E.W. Bean [‘C.W.’], ‘Australia: II The Australian City’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 June 1907, 6.

⁶² Bean, *Here, My Son*, 92.

Paul Puccio has observed, ‘Thomas Arnold believed that highly emotional friendships based on shared Christian values could redeem boys from the naturally evil state of boyhood’.⁶³

In relation to curriculum and conformity with the ‘new syllabus’, the corporate schools generally placed greater emphasis on Classical scholarship than government or Catholic schools. Greek and Roman history and literature and Latin and Ancient Greek were an important part of the curriculum in Australian corporate schools. In government schools, if language study was offered, it was almost exclusively French, while most Catholic schools continued to offer Latin and sometimes French.

However, with echoes of Bean’s assessment of the qualities of the Anzacs, Australian corporate schools placed greater emphasis on the individual than had the original Arnoldian model as it applied in England. In the Australian corporate model, the individual student’s opportunity for excellence and choice in talent development and the role of the curriculum in instilling self-confidence were considered vital. In *Here, My Son*, Bean quotes the headmaster of Geelong Grammar, Sir James Ralph Darling, in 1938:

*A school should by its whole organisation, in school and out, aim at developing this self-confidence ... It is very important therefore to arrange a school timetable in which every boy should have some chance of excelling, and this implies a large choice of subjects and freedom in the treatment of at least some of them.*⁶⁴

Corporate schools needed to ensure their students performed well in public examinations. Therefore, at that time the corporate schools in Australia, unlike their English counterparts, gave significant weighting in their curriculum to general science, mathematics, and English.

⁶³ Paul M. Puccio, ‘At the Heart of “Tom Brown’s Schooldays”’: Thomas Arnold and Christian Friendship’, *Modern Language Studies* 25, no. 4 (Autumn, 1995): 63. The moral dilemma of the promotion of these intimacies is obvious. The campaign against the potentially sexually dangerous friendships between older and younger boys raged in England throughout the latter years of the century. In 1882, the *Journal of Education* printed a correspondence addressing the issue of schoolboy sex, in which the Rev. J.M. Wilson, headmaster of Clifton, Bean’s alma mater, argued that all schoolboy sexuality was evil, but a surprisingly considerable number of (largely anonymous) correspondents argued that the practice of older boys adopting younger boys as ‘pets’ was mutually beneficial.

⁶⁴ Bean, *Here My Son*, 153.

Curiously, there is no reference to Civics as a subject in Australian corporate schools in Bean's history. This absence is likely explained by the continuing emphasis in most of these schools on Christian humanism and religious instruction, which was seen by corporate school headmasters and Boards of Trustees as a more suitable framework than secular civics for moral instruction of the cultural elite.

As official war historian, Bean took the view that the AIF's reputation for collective and individual soldierly ability stemmed from the widespread admiration of the inhabitants of the bush. This promoted the desire for young men and boys, even those raised in an urban environment, to imitate their pioneering qualities of the bushman. Of course, the bushman had, by the time of the outbreak of the Great War and the beginning of AIF recruitment, almost disappeared, a point conceded by Russel Ward, author of the seminal *The Australian Legend* and the 'noble bushman' thesis.⁶⁵ Ward acknowledges that the 'extinct bushman of Lawson and Furphy' was subject to embourgeoisement into a yeoman farmer type, or syndicalisation into a union-contractor.⁶⁶ In any case, more than 60 per cent of diggers in the 1st AIF came from the ranks of urban labourers and tradesmen.⁶⁷ Both Ward and Bean effectively concede that it is the idea—the imaginative apprehension of the 'noble bushman'—rather than the lived experience of pioneering, that provides the basis for the digger and the Anzac type.

A tension exists between the imperial 'Britishness' and the Australian 'colonialness' within the Anzac legend and the digger mythology. Ward's 'noble bushman' is a credible precursor to the digger, but he is only part of the story. The generation that fought the war were far more likely to come from the suburbs of large cities or regional towns than from the fraternity of the wool track or the stock route. Bean and Ward stretch their point to argue that 'the bush sets the standard', even for urban youth. The evidence from the documentation of the 'new syllabus' and the regulation of public education in all the Australian colonies supports the view that, whether they hailed from the city or the bush, the younger Anzacs were accustomed to and at least in part socialised into the hierarchical organisation, moral

⁶⁵ Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988).

⁶⁶ Ward, *The Australian Legend*, 211.

⁶⁷ J. Williams, 'Art, War and Agrarian Myths', in Judith Smart and Tony Wood (eds), *An Anzac Muster: War and Society in Australia and New Zealand 1914–1918 and 1939–1945* (Melbourne: Monash Publications in History, 1992), 46.

regulation, and psychological surveillance of the classroom rather than the isolation, reflection and endurance that characterised the life of the 'lone hand'.

The content of that education from the 1880s to Federation was determined by a regulated intellectual and moral system enforced by the State, as represented by the various colonial administrations. The teaching materials were inconsistent, and many teachers were only semi-skilled, but the subjects of study and the pedagogy consistently emphasised literacy, numeracy and the inculcation of basic History, Geography, Civics and Scripture. By the time of Federation, schools in most of the states were teaching Australian folklore, children's stories and poetry, and an Australian version of Civics and Geography. This was often taught side by side with English History, particularly accounts of imperial triumph, such as Nelson and Wellington, and folktales, like the adventures of Robin Hood and Sir Walter Raleigh.

Later, in 1905, a new curriculum, known as the 'new syllabus', inspired by liberal ideas shared with the 'new liberals' of the British Empire, became the dominant basis for instruction. By world standards, diggers were generally well educated, most of the Australian-born of their number having had at least eight years compulsory schooling and the younger of them having experienced their entire education under the 'new syllabus'.

3.4 The new syllabus and the governmentality of children

Drill was an ever-present feature of the pre-Federation and early 20th-century curriculum in all colonies/states. The children were required to perform the marching drill of the military parade ground. Senior boys, of course, were expected to master rifle drill as well. Senior girls followed an alternative course of wand-and-dumbbell drill. While there was an element of physical fitness instruction, the whole exercise was conceived in military terms. The example below, from 1898, is for infants and clearly demonstrates the extent of the militarisation of this aspect of schooling:

ARM MOVEMENTS Standing

READY Attention ONE Raise the left arm forward to the full extent above the head

TWO Replace it by the side

THREE Raise the right arm as at
ONE and FOUR Replace it by the side
FIVE Raise both arms as in
ONE and THREE SIX Replace both by the sides
SEVEN Raise both arms above the head and clap the hands
EIGHT Lower both arms behind the back and clap the hands ATTENTION.⁶⁸

French philosopher Michel Foucault proposed the phenomena of governmentality as any activity meant to control or shape the conduct of people. The power to shape and control people goes beyond the notion of sovereign power of the State. For example, schooling in Federation Australia used various techniques of power to control and shape students, including using the curriculum to shape the notion of national identity and imperial loyalty. Foucault believed that power extends beyond the State and is exercised in institutions like the local school or the Department of Public Instruction or even the relations between individual teachers and their students. While the notion of governmentality is useful for understanding the power of schooling, Australia's pre-war Ministers for Education and Directors General of departments were committed to certain aspects of the schooling experience, most notably 'the drill' being the subject of sovereign power.

By the year of Federation, the growing power of an Australian patriotic consciousness stirred Australians to aspire to a national destiny. The heritage, rationale and opportunity forecast by this destiny were underscored by a popular faith in the fate of the British Empire. A modern Australia would be fashioned by 'toil of heart and hand', assuming the best of the heritage of the English race and overcoming the insecurity and cultural isolation imposed by spatial and temporal isolation.⁶⁹ 'Australia', the dutiful daughter of 'Britannia', would be sanitising the racial and political brutalities of settlement.

⁶⁸ *Handbook for Teachers of Infants' Schools and Junior Classes* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1898).

⁶⁹ Peter Dodds McCormick, 'Advance Australia Fair' (performed Under Govt. Patronage N.S.W., and League of the Empire, London. Performed by Massed Bands at the Naming of the Federal Capital Celebrations,

The cultural and political milieu of Federation had great implications for Australian schooling and the literary culture supported by widespread literacy. The education system reflected the duality that the Anzacs were children of Federation and sons of Empire. At the time of Federation, a new century was commencing. John Hirst argues in *The Sentimental Nation* that this coincided with a rising tide of national identity and sentiment in Australia.⁷⁰ By the time of Federation, each of the Australian colonies had been enforcing compulsory education for a generation. Most Australian parents of school-aged children had themselves had at least nine and a half years of schooling.

This relationship with Empire was complex when viewed through the prism the campaign for Federation. John Hirst argues in *The Sentimental Nation* that the process of Federation was as a sentimental moment rather than an economic one, and with broad public support. Hirst shows that the poetry and songs of the time pointed to the idea of Australia's unique destiny.

Hirst contends that Federation was not motivated by economics but a sacred nationalist and democratic cause. The sanctified nature of the campaign is why poetry was considered the most appropriate medium to express its rationale and purposes. Poetry would convey what was noble, profound, and elevating to the ordinary colonial as well as the intellectual elite because of the functional and cultural literacy of the general population. Hirst refers to innumerable Federation poems scattered through newspapers, periodicals, and sheet music of the time: 'The nation was born in a festival of poetry'.

*Was Federation chiefly to secure a customs union, or a united immigration policy or a national defence? To federalists none of these things was sacred ... It was the making of the nation, apart from anything it might do, that was sacred.*⁷¹

Canberra. Sung by the great choir of 10,000 voices at the inauguration of the Commonwealth and played by Bands at all Reviews).

⁷⁰ John Hirst, *The Sentimental Nation: The Making of the Australian Commonwealth* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000), 124.

⁷¹ John Hirst, *Federation: Destiny and Identity*, Papers on Parliament No. 37, November 2001, Australian Parliamentary Library, Canberra, https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Senate/Powers_practice_n_procedures/pops/pop37/hirst, accessed 9/08/2022.

The period of compulsory education featured a cumulative increase of investment in both public education infrastructure, administration, course materials, teacher training and syllabus.⁷² In short, the quality of education for the general population steadily improved in the 20 years prior to Federation. Australia was one of a small number of countries with an advanced universally accessed education system. This meant, with very few exceptions, that any Australian-born Anzac under 45 had a basic education and was almost certainly literate and numerate.

The trend of concerted commitment to educational improvement in Australia became even more pronounced in the wake of the perceived limitations of the pre-Federation systems and the idealism generated by the new century and the Federation of the new nation. Though the new Constitution left education as a residual power with the states, there was considerable cross-fertilisation of ideas and a common concentration by leading education public officials and most ministers of education across Australia to be committed to address the flaws in the old system and develop what became known as the ‘new education’.

The ‘new education’ was underpinned by a ‘liberal’ humanistic view of the task of education. In this view schools could contribute to the making of better people, better societies, and better citizens⁷³ of the new nation and loyal subjects of the Empire. Less than six months after Federation, Francis Anderson, the Professor of Philosophy at Sydney University, addressed the Conference of the New South Wales Public School Teachers’ Association. In his address he lambasted the old rote learning techniques characteristic of the lessons of pupil-teachers and called for further widespread reform of teacher training, pedagogy, and syllabus. Anderson was regarded as the leading educationist in Australia. He described himself as a Christian humanist influenced by the so-called British Hegelians, tempered by the sceptical Enlightenment of his native Scotland. His specific ideas on education reform were also heavily influenced on one hand, by the British reformer Arnold and the American educational giant John Dewey, on the other.

⁷² Craig Campbell and Helen Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2014), 66.

⁷³ Campbell and Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*, 123.

Joan Beaumont in *Broken Nation* notes that at the time of the outbreak of the Great War, generally Australians saw themselves as loyal to Britain⁷⁴ and Australia as a dominion of the Empire. Beaumont points out that though it was a dominant value held by those in power it was not a universal value. Beaumont also notes the influence of school education in reinforcing Empire loyalty:

*Classrooms across the nation displayed world maps studded with reassuring splashes of Imperial red. Empire Day was the occasion for celebrating the glories of the British Empire.*⁷⁵

By the time of Federation in 1900 the option of separating from Britain had really gone, and there was an emerging consensus that Australian Federation was part of this larger, grander theme of the British Empire.

As reflected in the later conscription debates, there remained dissent, a considerable component of which was on ethnic grounds. In this view, the differences were reflected in the differences between the curriculum of state schools and Catholic schools. So, the details of Australia's story were subsumed in that grander story of belonging to Britain and the British Empire's role in the world.⁷⁶ The approach to teaching civics in the pre-war curricula is undoubtedly nationalist while the teaching of History is unabashedly imperialist in orientation. The school curricula of the various colonies (later states) reflected the political compromise and ideological duality of Federation, which in turn reflected the complex settlement of Australian nationalism within the British Empire.

The curriculum that Parkes himself had approved and presided over as minister while maintaining the loyalty to Empire also projected the destiny of Australia. The great contemporary poet of Federation, Brunton Stephens, had a close connection with education as he was the Headmaster of a Queensland Public School. Hirst emphasises that Lawson and

⁷⁴ Joan Beaumont, *Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2013), 14.

⁷⁵ Beaumont, *Broken Nation*, 14.

⁷⁶ Beaumont, *Broken Nation*, 17.

Paterson were relatively late to the cultural debate and though very popular by the time of Federation, had not been as influential in the debate as some of the earlier romantic poets.

Australia's parliaments looked to new ideas in the management of economic and social relationships. The new syllabus and its analogues across the states offered a new form of citizenship to all, based on an Australian identity within 'the concentric plan of English history'. Accordingly, an official ideology of citizenship flowed through the new syllabus and the practice of schooling it informed.

3.5 Peter Board's 'new syllabus': A case study in Australian educational reform

In the heritage of Australian ideas, Peter Board's 'new syllabus' is a landmark of 20th-century Australian culture. The new syllabus concluded the cycle of reform that began in the 1880s and climaxed with the regularisation of school administration, teacher training, pedagogy, and curriculum. Board was the inaugural Director General and Under Secretary of Education in New South Wales, appointed in 1905. He was the undisputed author of the new syllabus, which was introduced in that year. This reform had an enormous impact on education in New South Wales and, in turn, on the other Australian education authorities. Board's reforms were a critical development in the institution of public education and the egalitarianism espoused as a foundational value of the national character.

In practice, Board's syllabus was an instrument of social control and a regulator of social knowledge. As if to lay bare a routine functionalist perspective, the syllabus had an explicit objective of channelling students into occupational and citizenship roles based on their ability and background. From this perspective, schooling tended to reinforce and facilitate the power of the upper and middle classes at the expense of the working classes, particularly the urban poor, and racial and ethnic minorities.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ T.S. Popkewitz, M.A. Pereyra and B.M. Franklin, 'History, the Problem of Knowledge, and the New Cultural History of Schooling', in T.S. Popkewitz (ed.), *Cultural History and Education* (New York: Routledge Farmer, 2001), 24.

Over time, the power of Board's reforms had far greater significance than reinforcing the relationships of social class. Indeed, Board and his colleagues saw educational reform as a means of ensuring that talent and merit became more important in social and economic life than reputation or family background.

Board's comprehensive approach to pedagogy sought to harness the imaginations of young Australians so that the moral and intellectual development of the student as citizen was at least as important as the development of the skills they needed to play a role in the economy. The syllabus would offer the promise of a new form of citizenship to all, based on an Australian identity within 'the concentric plan of English history'—a form of citizenship based on racial solidarity, sacrifice for the nation, meritocracy, and freedom. As Anna Clark has argued, 'the figure of the Anzac in Australia's national memory, therefore isn't simply mournful but also didactic', confirming the model of citizenship made by the Anzacs.⁷⁸

An official ideology flowed through the practice of schooling under the 'new syllabus'. This culture of education was clearly articulated in the text of the new syllabus and its supporting documents, such as the teaching instructions published in *The New South Wales Education Gazette* and the reading materials for students in *The School Magazine*.⁷⁹ The primary tradition was always British; symbolically Australian children learned about the British Empire from an Australian historian, Arthur Jose, and about the Empire's heroes. Later, Australian heroes were added, but they of course were explorers and navigators and almost exclusively British.⁸⁰

The ideas that were directly formative of the new syllabus owed much to the neo-Hegelianism of British New Liberalism. Notions of meritocracy and egalitarian social improvement were threaded into this philosophical hybrid. The syllabus included faith in the vision of humanity and human society, which stemmed from the moral disciplines of Protestant Christianity, tempered by respect for the Classics and the rigours of empiricism championed by the Scottish Enlightenment. However, as Robson points out, 'the greatness

⁷⁸ Clark. A. op.cit.105

⁷⁹ NSW Department of Public Instruction, *Course of Instruction for Primary Schools*.

⁸⁰ Firth, 'Social Values in the New South Wales Primary School', 145.

and merit of the Empire and the role of Australia with in it' was inculcated in Australian children by word of mouth 'and especially through schools'.⁸¹

The ideology of public education, as distinct from elements of its practice, was to reform the politics of class in Australia. A principal assumption of the educational reformers was that mass education was the way to improve the prospects of the urban poor and give them opportunity and choices. This would also 'civilise' Australians, particularly the ethnic and racial minorities (mainly the Irish and Aborigines).

The official ideology of New South Wales public education for two generations was a hybrid of civic idealism, historical and literary romance, and scientific management. This ideology produced the methods and ideas of the new syllabus. The pedagogy that accompanied it used cultural knowledge and literary texts to alter and control the individual and collective imagination. This control facilitated the regulation of individual consciousness, identity, and personal interaction by the state, and established the imagination as an arena of political contest.

Writing in the *New South Wales Education Gazette* of 1 November 1905, C.H. Northcott reminded teachers that:

*... the object of instruction is by no means mere knowledge, but the free, self-active development of the mind from within. Nothing is added from without except to enlighten the mind, to strengthen the pupil's power, and to add to his joy by enhancing his consciousness of growing power.*⁸²

Hegel was a German academic philosopher who had an incredible output on a mind-boggling diversity of subjects, but he was best known and most appreciated in the English-speaking

⁸¹ L.L. Robson, *The First AIF: A Study of its Recruitment, 1914–1918* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 1982), 18.

⁸² C.H. Northcott, 'The Self Activity of the Pupil', *The New South Wales Education Gazette* (November 1905). Held in the archive of the New South Wales Department of Education. Sydney.

world as a political philosopher. He was a particular authority on the relationship between the individual and the State and the nature of the State and culture, which included education:

*'The state' for Hegel means any ethical community which is politically organised and sovereign, subject to a supreme public authority and independent from other such communities.*⁸³

It was Hegel's idea of the State that gained most interest in Britain, leading to the emergence of a cohort of writers and thinkers generally described as British Hegelians or neo-Hegelians. Many of Australia's education reformers and many liberal politicians and intellectuals were influenced either directly or indirectly through neo-Hegelian policymakers in their view about the nature of the State and the character development of students, as well as formal instruction in civics:

*... the prominent thinkers who are properly known as Hegelian, though they may differ in many things, agree in thinking that a true ideal of political theory lies in the direction of maximizing rather than minimizing the control of the State. This influence, then, it will be convenient to examine more closely.*⁸⁴

In a rather curious philosophical turn, the neo-Hegelians, like Hegel himself, believed that sublimation of the individual mind to the State was the highest form of freedom. Hegel saw the development of the State as occurring in 'dialectical' stages, the highest form of which resulted in the highest form of human freedom:

The relationship between the individual and the state is marked by freedom. According to Hegel, it is in the state that freedom is first realized. The freedom of the individual is therefore inexorably tied to her membership of the state. Natural freedom or natural right is only realized in the state and

⁸³ Z.A. Pelczynski (ed.), *The State and Civil Society: Studies in Hegel's Political Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), viii.

⁸⁴ H.S. Shelton, 'The Hegelian Concept of the State and Modern Individualism', *International Journal of Ethics* 24, no. 1 (October 1913), 23–37.

*outside of it is empty. 'The freedom of nature, the gift of freedom, is not anything real; for the state is the first realization of freedom.'*⁸⁵

The echo and origin of Anzac self-reliance and self-confidence is powerful. Australians looked to education, specifically the egalitarian prospect of public education, as a key driver of individual opportunity and general social improvement. Australian educators were heavily influenced by British Idealism, which assumed a modified Hegelian vision of the State and the individual. Hegel's complex and comprehensive philosophy included the notion that the State should be based on reason and that this was an inevitable consequence of human will. Hegel also held that the individual would find his greatest freedom and happiness when his personal ideals reflected the will and spirit of the State. Regardless of the intention of British Hegelians, the underlying philosophy became one of directing individuals' lives and interests towards the campaigns of the State. This idea of the individual's sublimation to the idea of the State is consistent with Ashmead-Bartlett's declaration following the landing at Gallipoli that the Anzacs were 'happy in their wounds'⁸⁶ because they had established a place for Australia in the Empire and the world.⁸⁷

The intellectual fashions and traditions of modern English-speaking cultures in both the United States and the British Empire were the source of most of the thinking behind Australia's 'new education' policy project. Board and others were impressed by F.W. Taylor's principles of scientific management.⁸⁸ Taylor's theories turned on the notion of creating an industrial culture in which human beings were measured and developed as units of economic production.

The ethos of universal schooling championed by Australia's 'education liberals' in the various colonial and then state bureaucracies envisaged schools as units of cultural production, based on the British Hegelian's ideal citizen and the future Australian State. In 1915, the *Commonwealth School Paper* made it absolutely clear to its primary school

⁸⁵ *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol III, translated from the German by E.S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; New York: The Humanities Press, 1968), 401–402.

⁸⁶ This is a quote from Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett's first despatch about Gallipoli, which was published in Australian metropolitan dailies on 8 May 1915.

⁸⁷ Walter and Moore, 'The New Social Order?', 9

⁸⁸ Walter and Moore, 'The New Social Order?', 7.

readership that ‘men and women, young and old, rich and poor, all alike must place everything at the service of the State’.⁸⁹

The relationship between this school-based citizenship and the development of the citizen soldiers of Anzac legend is discernible, especially when one considers the relationship between the cadets and schooling, which was an official State-sanctioned and compulsory activity. This ran parallel to voluntary military-oriented youth activities such as the Scouting movement. Students, particularly male children, were encouraged by their schooling to take an interest in the military affairs of the Empire. Heroic sacrifices like Gordon at Khartoum or famous victories like Rorke’s Drift, Waterloo or Trafalgar were typical reading fare in Australian schools.⁹⁰ The assertion of citizenship in a way that was separate from England though still part of the Empire was the increasing focus on the Australian landscape, particularly after 1905, and an increasing emphasis on and acceptance of Australian literature and uniquely Australian stories. Wattle Day and Native Bird Day were introduced tentatively after 1905 and given full ministerial and departmental support in 1910.⁹¹

Peter Board and his colleagues accelerated an educational revolution that had started in Victoria in the 1880s and rapidly spread to the other states. The New South Wales syllabus of 1905 and its equivalents in the other states demonstrated that Australia, along with a few other nations, was pioneering a new form of human cultural production: universal schooling via ‘free, compulsory, secular education’.

The new educationists aimed to remake the notion of the citizen and the individual citizen’s relationship to the modern State. Board wanted Australian schools in the new environment after Federation to be ‘the nurseries of the nation’s morality’, and the ‘training ground for national defence’.⁹² The new education taught through civics classes, readings and history, and the moral and intellectual authority of the teacher consciously aimed to develop active citizens regardless of social background, who understood their role and the rights and

⁸⁹ Firth, ‘Social Values in the New South Wales Primary School’, 136.

⁹⁰ Firth, ‘Social Values in the New South Wales Primary School’, 146.

⁹¹ Firth, ‘Social Values in the New South Wales Primary School’, 147.

⁹² Peter Board, *Public Instruction Gazette*, NSW, Sydney, 30 April 1909, 91.

obligations of themselves and others in society. This call of loyalty to Australia mediated by a notion of active citizenship as an artefact was a critical building block of the Anzac legend.

3.6 A new history for nation and Empire

As far back as 1901, Edwardian ‘new liberals’ had an established pattern of imperial and British social criticism, which explained the dichotomy between intellectual and popular opinion about many things, including the Boer War.

Arnold White, in his book *Efficiency and Empire*, exemplified eugenic fears of the decline of the British race when he referred to the

*... shrill denunciations of political corruption, lamentations regarding the Boer War, and rhetoric about [efficiency] and eugenics becoming the salvation of the Empire, itself being run like a business by a new breed of professionals.*⁹³

Many ‘new liberals’ came to believe that there was a greater prospect of achieving the ‘Great Society’ in the white settler colonies.⁹⁴ A Fabian thinker, Graham Wallas, described the ‘new liberal’ aspiration in his book published just weeks before the outbreak of the Great War. *The Great Society* proposed a eugenic thesis of the English race, arguing among other things that the racial stock improved in the new colonial conditions of Empire.

Wallas argued that in the ‘New Britannia’ of the colonies, there was a greater possibility of empirical social policy based on merit and leadership by those with social vision, rather than a society based on privilege and anti-competitive traditions. Echoing Australian national egalitarianism, Elton Mayo later argued: ‘In all matters of social skill the widest knowledge and the highest skill should be sovereign rather than the opinion of [collective] mediocrity’.⁹⁵ This rudimentary social engineering dovetailed with the social Darwinist endorsement of

⁹³ Walter and Moore, *The New Social Order?*, 9.

⁹⁴ Graham Wallas, *The Great Society: A Psychological Analysis* (New York: Macmillan, 1914).

⁹⁵ Walter and Moore, ‘The New Social Order?’, 9.

colonial culture, which proposed that success in the struggle with nature in the colonies by individuals, families and communities had led to the creation of a stronger breed of Britisher.

This notion of polity prefigures Bean's later discernment of a meritocratic solidarity between and within the men of the A.I.F. The paradox of a social policy based on the individual achieving liberty through subordination to the State, as Walter and Moore observed, would later echo in Bean's view of the spirit of the Anzacs:

... [A] feel for the common good was enough to defeat vested interests and achieve gradual progress, and in this endeavour, they unambiguously enlisted the state. However, their state was not ours. It was guided by cadres of Balliol idealists, trained moral and intellectual athletes of the type Jowett used to struggle to insert into the most strategic administrative positions in the Empire.⁹⁶

The 'scientific view' of social policy and educational theory, when hybridised with American 'scientific management' and blended with local ideas such as mateship, gave rise to a distinctive Australian variant of the 'new liberal thinking'. Among other British Hegelian thinkers, Australia's leading 'new liberals' were influenced by Benjamin Jowett of Balliol College. Francis Anderson (the first Challis Professor of Logic and Mental Philosophy at Sydney University), Sydney academic educationist Meredith Atkinson, Walter Scott (Professor of Greek at Sydney University) and Arnold Wood (the inaugural Professor of Modern History at Sydney University) all completed their PhD theses under the supervision of Jowett.

In 1908, Henry Bournes Higgins, author of the 'Harvester Judgment' and the first president of the Australian Industrial Arbitration Court, Bernard Wise, the New South Wales Attorney-General and the legislative architect of Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration, and Alfred Deakin, the second Commonwealth Prime Minister, were all part of the ecstatic reception given to the Australian lecture tour of Henry Jones.⁹⁷ Jones was Professor of Moral

⁹⁶ Walter and Moore, 'The New Social Order?', 8.

⁹⁷ Walter and Moore, 'The New Social Order?', 6.

Philosophy at Glasgow and, arguably, the leading Hegelian British ‘new liberal’. Jones, Jowett and the ‘new liberals’ strongly argued for an expanded role for the State in providing equality of opportunity for individuals, as well as the more familiar liberal stance of guaranteeing the operation of the market. ‘They imagined a society dedicated to moral rules’, internalised by the individual through solidarity with peers.⁹⁸

Jowett was an advocate of the ‘new criticism’, a view that the meaning of both religious and cultural texts could only be established by a modernist analysis of the historical context of the original author’s consciousness and intention. As a young academic, Jowett had identified with Matthew Arnold’s view that ‘public schools could and should fulfil an important role in national life, civilizing and humanizing the children who would in years to come hold most of England’s political power’.⁹⁹

Jowett and Jones were advocates of the reform of the British public school system consistent with the principles of modernity—‘a qualitative, selective democracy reinforced by moral criticism’ in education.¹⁰⁰ Arnold’s view of the importance of the State’s pursuit of high standards in education was based on reciprocity: ‘an education that was to be held up to high standards by the state and was in turn to supply the state with trained leaders’.¹⁰¹

As Walter and Moore observe, the most enduring influences on Jowett, and his most important cultural and intellectual legacies, were the theological and cultural romance of High Anglicanism and a British reworking of the Hegelian theory of the State and the individual. Both Jowett and Jones argued for equality of opportunity as the best way for the State to produce its collective highest attainments, imbuing policy discourse with a strident aura of civic idealism.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Walter and Moore, ‘The New Social Order?’, 7.

⁹⁹ M.E. Black. ‘Matthew Arnold as School Inspector: A Revaluation’, *Pacific Coast Philology* 22, no.1/2 (November 1987): 15–21.

¹⁰⁰ Irving Babbitt, ‘Matthew Arnold’, a review of *Matthew Arnold: How to Know Him*, by Stuart. P. Sherman, 2 August 1917, <http://nhinet.org/arnold.htm>, accessed 21/5/2021.

¹⁰¹ Babbitt, ‘Matthew Arnold’.

¹⁰² Walter and Moore, ‘The New Social Order?’, 7.

Jowett and his followers continued to share Arnold's abhorrence of philistinism and advocated that the learning of high culture and the liberal arts be based on merit rather than class. The Australian 'new liberals', like Anderson, Wise, Higgins, Deakin and Board took this theory a step further, believing this could be a more democratic opportunity for training a wider range of citizens, thereby promoting the common good and national solidarity.

Clarence H. Northcott was a student of Sydney University's Francis Anderson.¹⁰³ He became a leading Australian academic philosopher, social critic, educationalist and 'W.E.A founder and theorist'.¹⁰⁴ Northcott had been a strong supporter of the New South Wales 'new curriculum' of 1905 and 1916. By 1918, he was arguing for further policy reforms, but Australian public opinion and therefore, Australian governments, remained stubbornly committed to the principles of the 'new syllabus' for two generations to come. This meant that it was not only the Anzac generation and their immediate generational successors who were subject to the same problematic of civics and citizenship, but also the concentric plan of British history and the folktales of chivalry and warrior romance. This gave the Anzac legend ideological power over subsequent generations of Australians.

The achievement of a 'scientific education' or 'expert social policy' in practice rested on the ability of its advocates to negotiate within the political dynamic of the pre-war and inter-war years. Elton Mayo, Meredith Atkinson, Clarence Northcott, Francis Anderson and Peter Broad were key 'new liberal' 'ideology makers', mediating and working on a series of policy projects critical to the ethos and objectives of public education in Australia.¹⁰⁵ Education policy was, as Walter and Moore observe, a very important part of 'an idealist theory of industrial efficiency and social solidarity, and an organic view of the state, coupled with a defence of the British Empire and of Australia's role within it'.¹⁰⁶

Writing in the December edition of *The New South Wales Education Gazette*, Northcott reminds teachers that their task is to build civilisation, create citizens and cultivate the

¹⁰³ L. Taska, 'The Workers Education Association and the Pursuit of National Efficiency in Australia between 1913 and 1923', UNSW School of Industrial Relations and Organisational Behaviour, Working Paper 111 (Sydney, 1997), 15.

¹⁰⁴ Walter and Moore, 'The New Social Order?', 10.

¹⁰⁵ Walter and Moore, 'The New Social Order?', 6.

¹⁰⁶ Walter and Moore, 'The New Social Order?', 5.

interests and tastes of the public of the future. Reflecting Hegelian thinking, the objectives of education for individual pupils were to be shaped by the demands of the real ‘spirit’ of the state and not limited to utilitarian industrial objectives:

... progress of education consists in development of new attitudes toward and interests in, experience ... A body of interests, a [many sided interests,] as Herbart calls it is the most valuable acquisition to be derived from school life. The man with narrow views, with no appreciation of the beautiful, no high aspirations, no finer feelings, no social spirit, is a burden on the wheels of civilization. The specialist who centres his interest on one science or group of objects, may be a very valuable man from a utilitarian standpoint, but from the point of view which makes the creation of citizens the primary aim in education, he is the excrescence of modern civilization.¹⁰⁷

The ideological and political implications of the New South Wales education debate and the implementation of the principles of Australian ‘new liberalism’ in education were linked to the creation of the idea of sublimating individual wants for the common good and thereby achieving a form of citizenship. This was a grounding in the citizen-soldier ethos of Anzac. Education also explains the observation Bean made more than once that ‘The world’s business was the average “digger’s” business’.¹⁰⁸

Board’s and Northcott’s views reflect eclectic academic and popular influences, including British Hegelianism, English Romanticism, Social Darwinism, Arnoldian meritocracy, the authorised Protestantism of the Empire and ‘scientific management’ from the United States. This fusion produced an ideological hybrid unique to Australia as it was further modified and reshaped by the economic and cultural interests and governance institutions of the colonies, and, after 1901, by the state education authorities of the Australian nation.

¹⁰⁷ C.H. Northcott, ‘Interest and Interests’, *The New South Wales Education Gazette*, December 1905, 78. Held in the Archive of the New South Wales Department of Education, Sydney.

¹⁰⁸ Bean, *The Official History*, Vol. VI, 7.

Board's and Northcott's views were critical influences on education in New South Wales and nationally. A national network of liberal education reformers in senior positions across the states made remarkably similar curriculum and pedagogy changes to their respective systems.

Frank Tate in Victoria emphasised the expansion of secondary education. Cyril Jackson in Western Australia focussed on the notion that a curriculum based on the pedagogical theory of learning by doing would be useful in developing both the skills of the bushman and the townsfolk. While a little later the Queensland Director General focussed policy on the 'Faculty' approach to schooling, based on a theory of mental development the department held that the mental powers of a student once trained could be usefully adapted to any future tasks. All these reforms were related to the 'object lesson' approach.

The 'learning by doing' approach involved engaging with the world outside the classroom, with the emphasis on putting theoretical knowledge into practice. Bean later made observations about some Australians of the same generation on the Western Front which echo the lessons of Australian educational reform in the first decade after Federation:

... this did invest the war with one powerful attraction for him. Perhaps to no other soldier, except his cousins from the Dominions and the Americans, was it so interesting an adventure. If there was an aerodrome within reach of their billets, Australians would be found there all day, questioning the mechanics as they overhauled the machines, gaining what knowledge they could of the latest devices and the adventures of the pilots. If there were tanks in the neighbourhood, they would act as magnets for any Australian bivouacked nearby.¹⁰⁹

A final point is that the Americans, Canadians, and New Zealanders had gone through similar educational reforms in similar timeframes to the Australians.

¹⁰⁹ Bean, Bean, *The Official History*, Vol. VI, 7.

3.7 Conclusion

Critical elements of the Anzac legend existed in the popular imagination and elite discourse in Australia before April 1915. One view is that this was an artefact of the bush legend or outback thesis as advocated by C.E.W. Bean. The outback bushman or 'lone hand' thesis has been adhered to by a range of 19th-century literary figures such as Paterson, Furphy and Lawson, through to 20th-century historians like Ward¹¹⁰ and the related pioneer legend promulgated by Hirst, Belich and Waterhouse.¹¹¹ An alternative view is that the sense of intellectual curiosity, belief in merit and innovation are based on knowledge and critical thinking that were most likely to have been learned in a school room rather than on a sheep station.

A key question about Australian national and gender identity revolves around whether the characteristics of the Anzac legend are Australian and modern, or based on ancient British myths and English folklore, or on the outback thesis first promulgated by Bean. The experience of education and, therefore, its effect was virtually universal for 35 years before the war, yet experience of the outback was confined to a dwindling few. The influence of the education reforms on young Australians was far more widespread and profound than the influence of the bush.

The education reforms of the 1880s in the Australian colonies, followed by the curriculum reforms of 1905, had a substantial influence on the material and ideological lives of the Great War generation—the Anzac generation.

The elements of the Anzac legend, though mythologised, had some basis in material reality. Anzac exceptionalism, however, had more to do with the literacy, numeracy and social skills

¹¹⁰ Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1966, 2nd edn).

¹¹¹ Richard Waterhouse, 'Rural Culture and Australian History: Myths and Realities', *Arts: The Journal of Sydney University Arts Association* 24 (2002), <https://openjournals.library.sydney.edu.au/index.php/ART/article/view/5621>, accessed 20/12/2022. Waterhouse writes: '[T]he notion of the cultural superiority of a rural society characterised by a farming yeomanry lived on in the twentieth century' (1) ... [I]n the rush of historians to insist that Australia is, and almost always has been, an urban nation, we should not forget the critical role that rural Australia has played in determining our prosperity, our values, our "place" in the landscape and the myths we have woven about our past, present, and future' (20).

acquired from the school system than with the outback life. Education was the basis for Anzac exceptionalism in so much as it existed. In the last decades of colonial times and the first decade after Federation, most Australians entered adult life far from living *On the Wool Track*, but having experienced intimate ideological, moral, and material engagement with formal schooling. Australian values gave them their schooling, and schooling gave them their Australian values.

Chapter 4

The education of the young Anzac

God bless our splendid men.

Send them safe home again.

God save our men.

Keep them victorious!

Patient and chivalrous

They are so dear to us.

God save our men.¹

In the Australian colonies during the 1870s and 1880s great advances were made in the governance and organisation of Australian schooling. A basic education became all but universally available and compulsory for all children between five and 13 and nine months. The centralised control of state schools was established under Departments of Public Instruction, first in Victoria in 1872², most colonies in the 1870s and in all jurisdictions by 1895.³ Both the decision to make these changes and the consequences of the changes had very significant implications for the Australian character. A.G. Austin observes:

These were obviously decisions of the greatest consequence for Australian society. At one stroke the colonial governments had abandoned the educational policies which were traditional in the Old World. They had dispensed with the co-operation of local governments and with the co-operation of the Churches—and in doing this they had taken on the enormous responsibility of providing, without any public co-operation and

¹ Additional verse of *God Save the King* sung in every school in the state of Victoria from May 1915 until the end of the Great War.

² A.G. Austin, *Australian Education, 1788–1900: Church, State, and Public Education in Colonial Australia*, (Carlton, Vic.: Pitman, 1961), 14.

³ Austin, *Australian Education*, 31.

*in the face of strenuous opposition from many citizens, a network of schools for this vast continent.*⁴

Politicians saw education as inherently linked to the health of democracy, the utility of the franchise and the practicalities of citizenship. Sir Henry Parkes, education reformer, one of the most eminent of Federation advocates and Premier of New South Wales asked rhetorically:

*How will they [the general public] be educated except through participation in the great business of our common good. We must unite to protect our common interests, our common privileges as Englishmen, so that we can take our entitlement as free men.*⁵

The reformers of education -both politicians and public servants—were focussed on the production of syllabi and related reading and pedagogical material that reflected the challenges of modern citizenship. Citizenship in the classroom would involve encouraging the continuing culture of landscape unique to Australia—the bush—and antithetically imbuing the skills and disciplines required in the post-agricultural labour market.

In terms of reconciling the ideology of Empire with the burgeoning colonial nationalism which culminated in Federation, the emerging nation through its education system promoted meritocracy in opposition to the British class-based system. Australian schools and their students required stories of national growth that would justify significant change in the status of the colonies, without undermining the sentiments of loyalty to the Empire and the King. This tension is apparent in many school materials of the period.

It is also worth noting that one of the influences on Australia’s education reformers was the Arnoldian system. Thomas Arnold’s educational philosophy was directed to the elite, predominantly male, privileged middle-class attending privileged Greater Public Schools

⁴ Austin, *Australian Education*, 32.

⁵ Henry Parkes, ‘In His Own Words’ (devised by Richard Hall and Helen Irving), The Henry Parkes Foundation, NSW Parliamentary Library, 1999, <https://parkesfoundation.org.au/resources/sir-henry-parkes-2/in-his-own-words/>, accessed 18/09/2022.

(which were in fact private schools). His pedagogy emphasised the development of character through organised sports and fitness, fair play and chivalry, loyalty to teammates and fellows, otherwise known as athletic chivalry. Arnold's educational philosophy gave rise to an educational and social movement in Britain and more generally in the Empire known as muscular Christianity. A strict and disciplined hierarchy in the management of the school and the lives of the students.

The most significant Arnoldian innovations in educational practice were the incorporation of students into school governance via a system of prefects and monitors; the introduction of competitive games and an emphasis on fitness; the cultivation of loyalty to fellow students and the school; the introduction of uniform dress; and the incorporation of science in the curriculum, while preserving Classical study.

Possibly the most powerful of Arnold's ideas was the gendered ideal of Christian manliness or muscular Christianity. This ideal was underscored by an emphasis in schools on 'moral scrutiny' and 'character development'.⁶ 'Indeed, the development of a moral character in students was to be a core responsibility of the school. This has significant implications for the notion of the Coming Man of the colonies and later the Anzac.

Arnoldian culture in Australian in its earliest manifestation can be associated with the appointments of certain headmasters and masters in specific schools. Sherrington's list of the earliest significant founders are: Edward Morris in Melbourne Grammar School, from 1875; Henry Andrews in Wesley College, Melbourne, from 1876; Edwin Bean (C.E.W. Bean's father) in Geelong Grammar and then Sydney Grammar School, from 1874; and James Cuthbertson in Geelong Grammar, from 1875.⁷

⁶ Geoffrey Sharples, 'Clockwork Education: The Persistence of the Arnoldian Ideal', *Postmodern Culture Journal of Interdisciplinary Thought on Contemporary Cultures* 4, no. 3 (May 1994).

⁷ Geoffrey Sherrington, R.C. Petersen, and Ian Brice, *Learning to Lead: A History of Girls' and Boys' Corporate Secondary Schools in Australia* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987).

The influence of Arnoldian culture before Federation remained largely confined to corporate schools and elite Church schools. But sometimes the flow of ideas entered the public sector, as when Thomas Arnold's own son became Tasmania's first Inspector of Schools.

Government high-school education expanded in the late 19th century and early 20th centuries. Schools incorporated a meritocratic culture, and also adopted, by virtue of the education reformers of the time, certain characteristics of Arnoldian practice.⁸ For example, most government schools adopted a system of prefects. And, of critical importance to Australia's popular culture, most schools developed sports, games, and fitness regimes, which included interschool sporting competitions fostering school loyalty and the notion of leadership and championship.

Scholars specializing in the history of Australian education such as Barcan and Campbell have only dealt in detail with the influence of Arnoldian theory on public education. By and large, they have attributed developments in school governance, such as prefects; and school culture, such as organised sports and assemblies; all of which emphasised the school's loyalty to country and empire rather than the evolution of a distinctive local culture⁹.

An examination of public schooling in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century supports the view that many aspects of curriculum reform in Australia are partly derived from British Arnoldian theories. Australian public educators exchanged divinity for scripture and morals and included civics as a core part of the curriculum. Australian educators also enforced skills as part of the curriculum for male students of woodwork and metal work, and where practical, for female students of sewing, handicrafts and cookery.

Some government high schools even found their way into the increasingly exclusive sporting associations that governed intercollegiate sport. The curriculum reforms introduced in the first decade after Federation strongly emphasised the development of character through the

⁸ Craig Campbell, 'Arnoldian School Culture: Australia, 1860–2010', *DEHANZ Dictionary of Educational History in Australia and New Zealand*, <https://dehanz.net.au/entries/arnoldian-school-culture/>, accessed 05/11/2022.

⁹ Barcan, Alan, *A short history of education in New South Wales* Alan Barcan Martindale Press 1965 Sydney

Civics courses and incorporated science study. Many public schools even went as far as adopting the Arnoldian practice of having Latin school mottos.¹⁰

Australia's reformers took some elements of Arnold's philosophy—the discipline of the school, an emphasis on competitive sport, loyalty to classmates and the school—and democratised those concepts, emphasising a moral construct that was based on merit rather than privilege.

Triggered by increasing public interest in education, a series of Royal Commissions were established to enquire into the state of the educational systems. In 1899 in Victoria the government appointed a Royal Commission under the chairmanship of Theodore Fink, in New South Wales the Knibbs-Turner Commission was set up in 1903, and in 1904, Tasmania set up the Neale Commission.

The recommendations of these Royal Commissions resulted in every state making further far-reaching changes to the administration of education. Each state except Queensland appointed an administratively powerful Director of Education. Directors were authorised to reform the various school systems.¹¹ Important changes were introduced to pedagogy and the curriculum.

The Directors and their departments, with effective control of public education in each state, created a highly regulated system of education, specifying exactly what its schools would teach and how they would teach it.¹² Of course, such regulations mandated the use of particular school textbooks:

Prior to the Royal Commissions, the Queensland, New South Wales, and Victorian school systems had been based on the Irish National System of Education and employed the Irish National Readers. The Irish readers lacked relevance to the lives of children in colonial Australia. In 1878, the Australian Readers, which were published in Scotland, replaced the

¹⁰ Campbell, op.cit. 'Arnoldian School Culture'.

¹¹ Craig Campbell and Helen Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2014), 40.

¹² Campbell and Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*, 53.

Irish National Readers. The Australian content was limited to the inclusion of stock stories about Australian flora and fauna and Australian exploration.

In 1892, the Royal Readers, which were originally prepared for Victorian schools, were introduced into Queensland, but these readers still failed to give effect to the emerging national sentiment educationists thought should be reflected in lessons.

In Queensland in 1905, as in New South Wales and Victoria, the introduction of a new syllabus meant a new, more relevant reading series. For the next decade the various colonial education ministries experimented with different school readers.

In his study, D.R. Gibbs highlights three relatively distinct periods: the Irish monopoly, 1848–1877, the British phase, 1877–1896 and a national phase, 1896–1948.¹³ More interestingly, in terms of imperial–colonial relations, there were occasional and consistent moves for Australianised reading material. Concerns about the lack of Australasian material persisted. One Director after another struck upon a uniquely Australian solution.

The school paper could provide a more relevant reading program for Australian students. The Victorian *School Paper* was introduced in 1896, and in the following two decades, Education Departments in New South Wales and Queensland began their own papers. The Victorian-produced paper became prescribed reading in Tasmania and Western Australia.

A survey of the development of education in Australia, particularly the history of readers and school papers, allows for the contemplation of, firstly, the tension between national sentiment and imperial difference and loyalty; and secondly, the cultivation of strong bonds of loyalty between friends as in many of the adventures from both Australian and British sources. The repetition of these stories with varying degrees of complexity over the five or six years of lessons has its own logic of internalisation. Of course, this subject formation extends beyond the child reader.

¹³ D.R. Gibbs, *Victorian Schoolbooks: A Study of the Changing Social Content and Use of Schoolbooks in Victoria, 1848–1948, with Reference to School Readers*, PhD thesis, Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne, 1987, 9.

4.1 Australian education compared to Britain and the United States

I contend that the typical Australian, and by extension, the typical Anzac had a far more thorough education than their British counterpart. The evidence for this claim is that by 1880 all Australian states required compulsory schooling from age five to 13 and nine months. In addition, there was a very rigorous operational enforcement of the legislation, achieved by the deployment of professional truant officers and school inspectors and a rigorous regulatory regime enforcing the strict application of attendance rolls in schools. Though there were some deviations¹⁴ from this norm, particularly among families dependant on child labour on farms and in shops, this policy led to a relatively high rate of compliance with schooling, meaning most children in Australia received a consistent, basic education for nearly ten years.

The equivalent English legislation, the *Education Act 1870*, only required school attendance from six to ten years of age, and there was no mechanism to enforce the policy until a decade after it was first legislated. As late as 1890, English education authorities agreed there was poor compliance (as low as 60 per cent in some regions) and ineffective enforcement, especially in Wales and northern England.¹⁵

There is evidence for Anzacs being well educated and literate, when compared to the combatant nations at the outbreak of war. Only the Canadians, and New Zealanders (who, of course, were Anzacs too) and Germans educated in Prussia¹⁶ could claim an education as comprehensive and universally accessible as the one in which the Anzacs had come of age (see Table 4.1).

Of significance for the development of the Anzac legend is the relationship between the individual and the culture of the nation. Boli, Ramirez and Meyer identify one of the three

¹⁴ *History of Schooling in Australia*.

¹⁵ 'The 1870 Education Act', Parliament of the United Kingdom, <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/livinglearning/school/overview/1870educationact/>, accessed 11/11/2022.

¹⁶ Prussia had a similar system to those of the Australian colonies/states. It is also true that some states of the United States had very comprehensive and modern schooling, but not a majority of states; and in any case the United States was not a combatant at the outbreak of war. Even the typically progressive Scandinavian countries of which Denmark was the education leader did not have effective compulsory education to secondary and modern pedagogy until 1903. In any case, the Scandinavian countries were not World War I combatants.

goals of mass education was to provide socialisation for each individual, who was considered to be the main social unit.

The policy motivation is also interesting. The obvious transnational trend to industrialisation and the need to regulate and skill the individual as an industrial worker was an important part of the decision to reform schooling. Prussia's defeats in the Napoleonic Wars were part of the motivation for her leadership in compulsory schooling. Prussia's policymakers assumed that a better educated soldier inculcated with the values of the State through education would be more capable of taking orders and more resilient on the battlefield.

Table 4.1

Primary education enrolment among the school-aged, 1900 and 1935–1940, %¹⁷

Region	In 1900, %	In 1935–1940, %
North America / Australia and New Zealand	86.0	79.1
Northern Europe	67.3	72.0
Southern Europe	37.5	50.8
Eastern Europe	28.6	48.2
South America	22.3	40.7
Central America	21.0	33.7
The Caribbean	41.5	59.0
Asia	13.7	30.6

¹⁷ Julia Zinkina, Andrey Korotavev and Alexy Andreev, 'Mass Primary Education in the Nineteenth Century', *Social Studies* (July 2022), https://www.sociostudies.org/almanac/articles/mass_primary_education_in_the_nineteenth_century/, accessed 04/10/2022.

Middle East and North Africa	11.1	22,5
Sub-Saharan Africa	14.9	19.6
World in general	32.9	40.8

Source: A. Benavot and P. Riddle, 'The Expansion of Primary Education, 1870–1940: Trends and Issues', *Sociology of Education* 61, no. 3 (1988): 202.

4.3 The new syllabus: Meditating on the future.

By the outbreak of the Great War, most states had had free, compulsory, comprehensive education for at least 25 years, but many reformers became impatient that universal access had not had a profound change as promised. Francis Anderson was a Scottish immigrant whose highly regarded lecture series on David Hume placed him in the mainstream of the Scottish Enlightenment. Although neither a Marxist nor a Hegelian, he was influenced by both and wrote extensive critiques of their works.

In June 1901, Professor Anderson launched a scathing attack on the state of education in New South Wales at a conference organised by the New South Wales Teachers' Association. His call for a new approach to education, based on liberal principles, to fulfil the promise of equal opportunity captured the imagination of the public and the press. John Perry, the Minister for Public Instruction, called a conference of school inspectors, at which Peter Board was the most impressive performer. Perry also appointed G.H. Knibbs and J.W. Turner as Royal Commissioners, tasked with examining and reporting on educational practices overseas.

Board had already had an outstanding career as a school inspector. During a self-funded study tour to the United States while on long service leave, he reviewed the education reforms being put in place by many American jurisdictions. US state legislatures were responding to the influence of 'scientific management' on American manufacturing, particularly the work of F.W. Taylor.¹⁸ Although manufacturing was not nearly as powerful a component of the Australian economy as it was in the United States, 'scientific management'

¹⁸L. Taksa, 'The Diffusion of Scientific Management: Reconsidering the Reform of Industry Related Training in the USA and NSW during the Early 20th Century', UNSW School of Industrial Relations and Organisational Behaviour, Working Paper 100 (Sydney, 1997).

had a profound effect on Board's views about the administration of education and the dissemination of standardised pedagogy and methods of school administration.

Board submitted to the Minister a succinct report with immediate practical recommendations, which was received simultaneously with the massive and ponderous *Interim Report of the Commissioners on Certain Parts of Primary Education*. Board's report, *Primary Education*, became the better known and the more influential.¹⁹ Board also made an outstanding contribution to a more representative and comprehensive Inspectors' Conference convened by the Minister in 1904.

Meanwhile, Royal Commissioner Turner, showing signs of an inverted 'New World' chauvinism, noted that 'American models were far superior to British ones ... the former was more appropriate for Australia since both countries belonged to the new world'.²⁰ Two of the Royal Commission recommendations were immediately implemented: the creation of an Under-secretary and Director of Education in a single office, and the implementation of a comprehensive syllabus for New South Wales primary schools. Board was appointed Under-secretary and Director for the Department of Education in February 1905.²¹ He introduced a more comprehensive system of school inspection with an active Inspectorate reporting through the Director General of Education to the Minister and the Parliament.

Australia's economy was still commodity-based when the 1905 syllabus was adopted. The Australian economy and culture would ride the sheep's back for many years to come. New South Wales educators put 'scientific management' into the service of the ideology of citizenship and culture rather than industry, to ensure that schooling exerted a significant influence on individual development and the gendered experience of pupils. Education was to help guarantee the readiness of boys and girls for the challenges they would face in the future task of nation building.

¹⁹ Harold Wyndham, 'Board, Peter (1858–1945)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/board-peter-5275/text8893>, accessed 11/11/2022.

²⁰ Taska, 'The Diffusion of Scientific Management', 27.

²¹ Wyndham, 'Board, Peter (1858–1945)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

Immediately after his appointment, Board introduced three critical reforms. First, he put in place a strong didactic central authority and established an authoritative means of communicating with and directing the teaching workforce. His managerial method was heavily influenced by a more humanistic version of Taylor's principles of scientific management.²² This approach emphasised standard forms, standardised reports, standardised documentation, the allocation of carefully measured time periods to teaching and learning subjects, timetables, uniform classifications, and standards of proficiency for teachers and pupils alike. It also recommended that teachers use 'printed outlines, seating plans, recitation cards, attendance sheets and other [labour-saving devices]'.²³

Second, alive to the egalitarian potential of maintaining consistent standards across regions and social classes, Board ensured that the department published a monthly *Education Gazette*. The *Gazette* included directives from the Director General, school, and educational news, and officially endorsed opinions from academics and educational experts. The *Gazette* also contained instruction and advice for teachers and school administrators, as well as pedagogical suggestions and advice about methods and materials for the classroom.

Third, Board pushed ahead with a new primary syllabus of instruction based on the principles of 'new education'. Board so dominated the work of the committee he set up to draft the new primary syllabus that it became known simply as Board's syllabus.²⁴ In 1905, the *New South Wales Education Gazette* published what became known as the 'new syllabus'.²⁵ The *Gazette* continued to provide suggestions to teachers and school administrators, now based exclusively on the 'new syllabus', which embodied the official educational objectives of the Parliament of New South Wales and the newly created Australian nation-state.

In each of the monthly editions of the *Gazette* for 1905 and 1906, Board published an essay by Northcott in the form of a contributed article. These appeared as commentaries on the rationale for the 'new syllabus' to provide teachers and school administrators with a social

²² Taska, 'The Diffusion of Scientific Management', 28.

²³ Taska, 'The Diffusion of Scientific Management', 25.

²⁴ Wyndham, 'Board, Peter (1858–1945)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

²⁵ *The New South Wales Education Gazette* (1 March 1904): 234. Archives of New South Wales Department of Education.

context for their work, ‘In order that teachers of limited experience may be assisted in applying this syllabus in their schools’.²⁶ These articles always contained ideological guidance for the education profession.

4.4 Civics and morals and the future citizen-soldier

In the Board system, teachers themselves were addressed using the paradigm of the ‘concentric plan of English history’. An excerpt from the October 1905 edition of the *Education Gazette* carried an article on ‘New Syllabus History’, entitled simply ‘Norman Institutions’. The article was pervaded by an amalgam of Whig and ‘evolutionist’ analysis to highlight the role of education in the development of the Australian State, as well as to identify the key themes teachers should convey to their pupils:

*The Norman Conquest did little towards any direct abolition of the older English laws or institutions. But it set up some new institutions alongside of old ones, and it brought in a few new names, habits, and ways of looking at things which gradually did their work ... The Norman Conquest was not a revolution, it was more of an evolution.*²⁷

Other key themes in this article included the observation that the differentiating characteristic or ‘spirit’ of continental politics was despotic, while the English spirit was democratic. According to both Bean and Treloar, the Anzacs fervently believed that they were crusading for democracy.²⁸ Bean repeatedly asserted that the Anzacs believed authority was not absolute, but leaders led with the consent of those being led. As Bean observed:

he was quick to act on his own initiative and as a result others instinctively looked up to the Australian private as a leader, sometimes too good, sometimes too bad’. He also saw himself as a civilian that had come to do a

²⁶ *The New South Wales Education Gazette* (1 March 1904): 234.

²⁷ C.H. Northcott, ‘Norman Institutions’, *The New South Wales Education Gazette* (October 1905): 102. Archive of the New South Wales Department of Education, Sydney.

²⁸ John Treloar, *Australian Chivalry* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1933), Preface.

*job, and not as a regular soldier that was more used to parade ground rigours and rules. Such men could not be easily controlled by the traditional discipline methods used in most armies; however, they were seriously intent upon learning and readily controlled by anyone that showed real competence.*²⁹

Yet another lesson from the Board syllabus that prefigured this attitude was the belief that political and ideological compromise produced superior outcomes, and that British history and political culture was distinguished by a balance of power between the individual and the State.

*From the start the Norman King perceived that the old English institutions were good; they merely needed to be organised and adapted to the circumstances of the time ... On the continent ... the conquerors had adapted a system that was jointed from the top ... the king was supreme ... But in Anglo-Saxon England the free-man in his parish was the unit of administration. In the struggle under Harold, son of Godwin, this system had proven defective—it needed strengthening from above. An amalgamation of the two systems would unite the strongest elements of both.*³⁰

The September 1906 edition of the *Education Gazette* carried an essay by Northcott entitled ‘The School and Society’.³¹ It summarised for teachers and school administrators the relationship between the school and the State:

²⁹ <https://anzac-22nd-battalion.com/discipline-within-the-aif-on-the-western-front/> accessed 19/06/2023

³⁰ Northcott, ‘Norman Institutions’, 102.

³¹ C.H. Northcott, ‘The School and Society’, *The New South Wales Education Gazette*, September 1906. Archive of the New South Wales Department of Education, Sydney.

*[T]he school is the place in which those who are to form the state are educated and moulded. For the duty of the teacher is to educate citizens, he is to develop the child in every faculty of his nature.*³²

The combination of Hegelian idealism and the social Darwinist notion of improvement in Board's and Northcott's frame of reference is evident in the advice to teachers about the experiential dimension of schooling and the child-citizen, many of whom would become the citizen-soldiers of Anzac: 'The root ideas required in the evolution of the child-soul are three: (1) The supremacy of law, (2) a true idea of punishment, (3) the idea of nationality'.³³ These key components of child formation were seen as the building blocks of national character.

In the same article, Northcott defined the desired outcomes and the role of schooling in achieving them, suggesting that the process was one of persuasion involving political confrontations. He described the key ways in which the entire experience of school was part of a wider social network. In what can be seen as a curtain-raiser for Anzac mateship, he points to comradeship as an ideological State apparatus of primary influence on the formation of citizens:

*Now the adult mind has experienced the keen competition of existence, the power of public opinion, the influence of comradeship, but the child has not been beaten into strength by these dynamic forces. Yet they are all available in school life and should be judiciously used. The school would then be in itself a governing element as a miniature of society at large.*³⁴

The informal elements of the curriculum and surveillance of the individual pupil, far from cultivating the rugged individualism of Australia's mythic heritage, focussed on a 'modernist' view of the individual pupil and the contrived society of the school group and its identity.

³² Northcott, 'The School and Society', 78.

³³ Northcott, 'The School and Society', 76.

³⁴ Northcott, 'The School and Society', 78.

The discipline of the reformed schoolyard and classroom is much more consistent with the culture of Anzac than that of the bushman.

A critical task of teachers was to ‘show’ that the body of school laws and social traditions existed for the good of every individual. Teachers were expected to teach meritocracy, individual responsibility, institutional loyalty, and conformity with group norms from ‘actual life’—in play, friendships, and the classroom. The inculcation of friendship reflected and reinforced the existing Australian predisposition towards mateship, which would become essential to the Anzac legend.

Every aspect of the school was to be subject to observation and supervision by the teachers and turned into a controlled educative social experience:

*The playground, with its rules of the game, its majority rule, and its prompt punishment of sham and fraud, affords a fine lesson in the supremacy of law. The second idea is closely connected with the first, since punishment is inflicted for violation of the law, which meanwhile remains supreme ... it is a crime against the growing consciousness of the pupil to allow or condone a violation of a school rule.*³⁵

Board continued to work well with subsequent Labor administrations under Ministers Beebe and Carmichael. The latter resigned as a Cabinet Minister to join the AIF and become a member of the Anzac Corps.³⁶ Both supported Board’s further reforms to teacher training, bursary endowment, and secondary and technical education.³⁷

Board’s success at working with Labor administrations reflects not only his own political skills but also the sympathy between ‘the new liberals’ and Labor on many social issues, including the new liberal agenda in education, which was particularly popular among the

³⁵ Northcott, ‘The School and Society’, 72

³⁶ L. Blayden et al., *Politics and Sacrifice: NSW Parliament and the ANZACS* (Sydney: NSW Parliament, 2015), 67.

³⁷ Wyndham, ‘Board, Peter (1858–1945)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

middle class and organised working class. Board's educational philosophy occupied broad Australian political and cultural ground.

Board was an advocate of collective self-help, arguing for 'a conception of citizenship in which authority flows up from the people and the state survives only because mutual obligation is recognised—interdependence, recognition of the common good as a constraint on individualism'.³⁸ This view resonates with Bean's philosophy of Anzac leadership, namely, that the Anzacs demanded leadership only if it was interesting, competent and based on promotion according to merit. Board also acknowledged that the *laissez-faire* doctrine had observably failed to deliver social equity. This was the basis for his support for primary and secondary education and a strong bursary system to support merit rather than wealth.

The curriculum, standard pedagogy and standard curriculum materials introduced by the 'new syllabus' remained in place, almost unchanged, until the mid-1930s. In New South Wales, the 'new syllabus' was not significantly revised until after World War II in response to the post-war expectation of a much larger proportion of pupils proceeding to senior secondary education. This was the pattern in the other states.

The moral and social agency of schooling was of such importance that the Preface of the *New South Wales Education Gazette* of 1 March 1904 gave explicit guidance to public school 'teachers of limited experience' by describing and 'reinforcing the main principles upon which it [schooling] is based'.³⁹ The *Gazette* identified the moral and social role of teaching as bringing 'the pupil into closer touch with his home and social surroundings'.⁴⁰ The *Gazette* also noted that '[t]he school curriculum is not a set of detached and independent subjects but is made up of various related parts dependent upon and contributing to one another and that History and Geography should contribute to one another'.⁴¹ In the *Gazette*, however, the

³⁸ James Walter and Tod Moore, 'The New Social Order? Australia's Contribution to "New Liberal" Thinking in the Interwar Period'. Paper presented to the Jubilee conference of the Australasian Political Studies Association, 2002, Australian National University, Canberra, 5.

³⁹ *The New South Wales Educational Gazette* (1 March 1904): 234. Archives of New South Wales Department of Education.

⁴⁰ *The New South Wales Educational Gazette* (1 March 1904): Preface

⁴¹ *The New South Wales Educational Gazette* (1 March 1904): Preface.

study of History is not grouped with Geography but is categorised under the heading ‘Civics and Morals’ along with ‘Scripture, moral duties [and] citizenship’.

This moral and social conception was a very important element of the Australian school syllabuses and their contribution to the consolidation of the Anzac legend and the myth-making around the Australian character. Australian and British history were threaded together through wide-ranging assumptions about civics and morals to construct a form of Australia exceptionalism. This exceptionalism is best summed up as the constellation of ideas—fairness, innovation, engagement with and curiosity about the immediate social environment, mateship, advancement through merit and sacrifice—that constitute the elements of the Australian character we know as the Anzac legend.

The Preface declares that knowledge of the ‘social environment’ is at least as important as ‘nature knowledge’, stipulating that contact with the child through lessons in the ‘social environment’ should ensure that ‘the right relations of the individual to the family, to society and to the State are introduced in lessons in scripture, history and on moral duties and civic institutions’.⁴² The reciprocal obligations of citizenship or family to the wider society are similarly fundamental to Anzac solidarity and duty.

The 1905 *Gazette* assumed that the History to be taught would be exclusively English History. There is no reference to any ‘World’ or even ‘Australian’ History—both were regarded as subsets of the history of the English people and their Empire. The method of teaching English History was quite explicit and conceptually reinforced throughout the 1905 *Gazette* and in New South Wales curriculum materials for many subsequent years. The Preface prescribes the following instruction to teachers of History, which suggests repetitive indoctrination as a pedagogical method:

It is recommended that English history be treated on the [concentric] plan, which provides first for a general survey, dealing with those men and events around which the history of the English people in its broad aspects gathers

⁴² *The New South Wales Education Gazette* (1 March 1904): Preface.

*itself, followed by another year of study in greater detail, and again by another year, in which the subject receives still fuller treatment.*⁴³

The curriculum documents of 1905 do not hide the political and ideological assumptions around the purpose and meaning of compulsory public instruction. In relation to gender, for instance, history is almost always about men. In phenomenological terms, it is about constitutional and military events. Politically, it is about leaders and State institutions, and a racial destiny. The key elements that make up the Anzac legend are evident: the militarisation of citizenship, the masculinisation of the Australian identity, a concern with great deeds and the exclusion of non-white races.

With a distinct sense of Australian national purpose, the Preface to the 1905 *Education Gazette* recognises the need to create an ideological basis for Australian nationalism and the importance of instilling a sense of duty in its pupils. The *Gazette* states bluntly that the ultimate value of historical study in schools is that:

*In a country with a comparatively brief history, the study of public institutions and civic obligations should form the foundation of a genuine patriotism.*⁴⁴

The conclusion of the Preface spells out the role of history as a key connecting point between Australian patriotism, civic duty and the myths and legends implied in this history of Empire, which created an easy vessel for the Anzac legend:

The course, then, will begin with those institutions and functions of government of which the pupils' immediate surroundings will furnish concrete examples; and as the details of instruction multiply, the tracing of the growth of public institutions will link the present with the past, and furnish the alphabet to spell out the lessons of history. It is important that

⁴³ *The New South Wales Education Gazette* (1 March 1904): 235.

⁴⁴ *The New South Wales Educational Gazette* (1 March 1905): 235.

*as pupils reach an age when they can appreciate the rights of citizenship, they should also realise the duties which those rights involve.*⁴⁵

New South Wales primary and secondary schoolchildren were connected in very direct ways to the Empire. The key ideas of Empire included a common racial destiny. Fable, mythology, and legend were incorporated into the British version of modernity. The romantic interpretation of history and literature co-existed with the British championing of reason and science, the prudence of commerce and the hubris of exploration. The idea of exceptionalism of the Anzacs, as the New Britons from the South, was easily built from this raw material.

Despite the increased Australian sense of commonality with the United States, this destiny assumed the cultural and economic pre-eminence of English civilisation based on the language and dominant race of England and the British Empire. The October 1905 *Education Gazette* carried a challenge to public school teachers and pupils to participate in The League of Empire essay competitions (the Lord Neath Empire Day Prizes) for the best 2000-word essay in response to the questions: ‘The ideas expressed by the word [Empire]’ for secondary students, and ‘The chief stages in the growth of [Greater Britain]’ for primary students.⁴⁶

The body of the syllabus in the 1905 *Gazette* conveys policymakers’ beliefs about the influence that schooling in History would have on developing minds. Each level of development was accompanied by persuasive material appropriate to the pupils’ perceived age-specific developmental capacities. Although schooling in some respects championed the national project, the over-determining ideology was that of Empire. When Andrew Fisher, who became Prime Minister, announced that the Australian commitment to Empire was to ‘the last man and the last shilling’, he was articulating a national sentiment echoed in the early recruitment of the AIF and the popular press that Australia must stand by the Empire. The Anzac legend has within

⁴⁵ *The New South Wales Educational Gazette* (1 March 1905): Preface.

⁴⁶ *The New South Wales Education Gazette* (3 October 1905): 102. Archives of the New South Wales Department of Education, Sydney.

it the contradiction of being born of imperial loyalty and suspicion of imperial competence and motives.

Of course, no formal History was taught in First Class or Infants. In the 1904 syllabus, under Civics and Morals, in place of the category Historical Study, very young children were taught ‘fables with a moral purpose’ that laid the foundations for ‘the virtues of truthfulness, politeness, gentleness, control of temper and obedience’.⁴⁷ Interestingly, this parallels Henry Gullett’s description of the Light Horse in Damascus as ‘the only calm and purposeful men in the city’.⁴⁸ It also contrasts with the widely perceived secularism of the public school system of the day: in fact, the authorised (Anglican) New and Old Testament was the only prescribed text for the first years of compulsory primary schooling in 1904 and for the life of the 1905 syllabus.

According to the 1880 Act, public schools were ‘non-sectarian’ rather than secular.⁴⁹ Section 7 of the Act defined ‘secular instruction’ to include ‘general religious teaching as distinguished from dogmatical or polemical theology’.⁵⁰ Since the Civics and Morals, and History syllabus required scriptural readings, this meant that the *sola scriptural* catechesis favoured by the ‘non-conformist’ and ‘Low’ Anglican communions was all but the official religion of New South Wales public schools. This heritage of English Christianity had a critical impact on public schooling, opening the legacy of symbolic chivalry to the Anzacs.

The New South Wales public schooling system sought to foster pedagogical methods that were expected to develop personal qualities in pupils from their earliest introduction to literacy. Key to these personal qualities were the elements of the heroic characters of British myth and legend, as reflected in the poems and anecdotes that formed the raw material of the syllabus. These qualities were

⁴⁷ ‘The New South Wales Syllabus of Primary Instruction’, *New South Wales Education Gazette* (1 March 1904): 236.

⁴⁸ John Treloar, *Australian Chivalry* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1933), 23.

⁴⁹ *Public Instruction Act* of 1880, as Amended 1912 (Sydney: W.G. Gulick Government Printer, 1912).

⁵⁰ *Public Instruction Act* of 1880, as Amended.

emphasised to Infants' teachers as being at least of equal importance as scholastic content. An official margin note to teachers in the 1904 Primary syllabus reads:

NOTE—Moral teaching should permeate the whole management of the school and be embodied in the methods of discipline, in the treatment of the children, the teacher, in the [proprieties] and [manners] required from the children, and in the example of the teacher. The moral influence of the teacher should also be felt in the freedom of the playground.⁵¹

The influence of this thinking on the future development of citizens and the implications for future attitudes to the outbreak of war are obvious. The internalisation of individual and collective character traits is reflected in many of the future components of the Anzac legend. The 1905 syllabus for Civics and Morals required the enmeshing of the contemporary State, the heritage of British imperial culture and Protestant Christianity:

Lessons from the authorized scripture lessons—Old and New Testament. Stories from history, ancient and modern, illustrative of moral attributes. Lessons on local Public institutions and on regard for public property.⁵²

4.5 The new syllabus and the pattern of the Anzac mind

The 1905 syllabus assumed the Hegelian aim of history, which had implications for the development of Australian chivalry and the Anzac legend.⁵³ The individual attains his or her highest fulfilment through commitment to society in general and the nation in particular. The study of History was gendered and based on an

⁵¹ 'The New South Wales Syllabus of Primary Instruction', 236.

⁵² 'The New South Wales Syllabus of Primary Instruction', 236.

⁵³ NSW Department of Public Instruction, *Course of Instruction for Primary Schools* (Sydney, 1905). Archives of New South Wales Department of Education.

imaginative connection to the past as a reflective spirit or force to ennoble the pupil and develop his (sic) character:

*... to give such an account of the past as will enable the pupil to have some insight into the present and furnish him with noble ideals of life and character on which he may model his own.*⁵⁴

The Civics and Morals syllabus for Third Class reads almost like a summary of many aspects of *The Anzac Book*—composed by the Anzacs themselves at Gallipoli and edited by Bean—with the addition of an emphasis on political and gender historicism, introducing concepts of Christian stoicism and chivalry that are clearly relevant to the development of the Anzac spirit:

Stories from history and biography, stimulating to self-reliance, the facing of difficulties, benevolence, and helpfulness towards the weak and unfortunate. Good manners in the home and public places.

English history treated 'on the concentric plan'. Series of stories of great men and great events from early times to the present.

*Australian History—Stories of [British] discovery and exploration. Lessons on local public institutions in greater detail.*⁵⁵

The 1916 update of the 'new syllabus' added '[s]tories from Greek and Roman history, told to arouse noble feelings'.⁵⁶

The prescribed instruction for Fourth Class explicitly introduces the importance of patriotism, a theme that is continued in scripture lessons and stories from history and biography but is now added as a component and objective of historical study.

⁵⁴ NSW Department of Public Instruction, *Course of Instruction for Primary Schools, 1916*. Archives of New South Wales Department of Education.

⁵⁵ 'The New South Wales Syllabus of Primary Instruction 1905', 2367.

⁵⁶ *Course of Instruction for Primary Schools, 1916*.

This implies that Australian institutions should be considered from the perspective of continuity with imperial institutions, including (of course) the army and navy:

Lessons on personal and family obligations, temperance in its individual and social aspects, industry, honesty and regard for the public good as elements of patriotism. Treatment of animals.

Public institutions further considered in association with Australian history from 1850. English history, a second course on the concentric plan (see Preface). Leading dates as a principle of order in the pupils' ideas should be committed to memory. The connection between geography and history should be kept clearly in view, and the study of existing public institutions should be associated with their history.⁵⁷

The key additional competency required of pupils in Fourth Year in the 1905 syllabus was the capacity to make temporal and spatial connections and distinctions between the State and its main ideological supports. History was taught as a verification of the customary basis for British institutions in Australia and the beliefs that underpinned them. These beliefs and customs and their origins were conveyed as immediate and relevant, even though in temporal and spatial terms they were far removed from Australia.

Local institutions studied in the Civics and Morals curriculum included the courts and police, parliaments and viceroys, the fledgling army and navy and the symbols, flags, crests, crowns, and seals associated with them. These Australian public institutions had the British monarch as their ideological and constitutional head. Anzac subsequently became a unique Australian institution, emphasising the importance of the uniquely Australian extension of the British military tradition.

The concentric plan of history taught in New South Wales schools affirmed the legitimacy of the British monarchy and the local institutions it presided over. This legitimacy was verified by a long cycle of cultural leadership based on the

⁵⁷ 'The New South Wales Syllabus of Primary Instruction 1905', 2367.

privileging of English stories, language, and customs. Australian stories were also celebrated and began the slow process of displacing English stories. Eventually, during and after the war Anzac became the dominant Australian historical narrative, displacing much of British history as the basis for folk legend. However, Anzac derived many of its symbols from these British icons, creating a new Australian folklore.

The legitimacy and status conferred on these institutions by English history was gendered by the elements of chivalry between boys and girls and, as it shaped the expectations of their future duties as men and women, resulted in an unequivocal differentiation between the destinies dictated by masculinity and femininity. The legitimacy of the State rested on assumptions unique to white British settler colonies, in which authority was based on the citizen's loyalty to the monarch and Empire and the benefits bestowed on subjects by the imperial culture and economy.⁵⁸ The masculinity of the Anzac and the feminine role as helpmate and inspiration on the home front is prefigured by this aspect of the teaching of chivalry.

The dominant ideology of the white settler dominions, unlike the other colonies and Britain herself, was based on a notion of political reciprocity between economically independent individuals of a common race and the State, rather than subjugation of subordinate classes or ethnicities by a ruling class and race. This white settler ideology was built into the Australian Public Instruction syllabus as the basis of power and authority in the Australian states. History lessons showed how far-reaching this legitimacy was in temporal terms. The legitimacy of the call of Empire on the AIF and the subsequent deeds of the AIF made the Anzac legend an imperial as well as a national project.

Lessons about the Roman invasion of Britain and Boadicea contributed an ancient context. The authority of British institutions went all the way back to the Romans, passing through the great men and events of Dark Age Britain—Canute, Arthur, and Alfred—and the key events of the English in the 'Middle Ages'—the Norman

⁵⁸ J.A. Mangan (ed.), *Benefits Bestowed? Education and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

invasion, the Crusades, and the signing of the Magna Carta—with little concern for scholarly distinction between legend, myth and verifiable occurrence. Indeed, in Fourth Class the syllabus inverted the position of history and mythology. Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table were studied as if the accounts were narrative history, while King Alfred's story (though he was a largely verifiable figure in history) was told as a 'moral tale' about attentiveness—'Alfred and the cakes'.⁵⁹

In geographic terms, the Empire in 1904 existed in every climate. Anglophones perceived themselves to be the dominant economic and cultural influence on almost every continent. The lessons on Morals and Civics in the 1905 syllabus, incorporating History and Scripture and supplemented by English reading and writing, offered a hegemonic imperial worldview by the time pupils were aged nine. The Anzac generation had a thorough indoctrination in racial and cultural superiority.

The Fourth-Class course, as described in the original 1905 syllabus, was significantly slimmed down in the 1916 version, presumably because the material proved too voluminous for this age group. In its original form, it presented a clear summary of the topics involved in the concentric plan. The plan dealt with the key myths and legends with noble or moral themes. The ideological assumptions included the identification of England as 'home' and the racial interpretation of the Norman and Saxon heritages. The narrative of the plan as it was presented in the syllabus and supporting materials involved male military heroes who either sacrificed themselves or risked self-sacrifice to avenge the Empire, confirming the underlying heritage of chivalry as a characteristic of and reason for English superiority. Australian males could find any number of heroes to emulate in this material, which can be seen to lay the psychological foundations for the creation of Anzac.

In local imperial terms, the commencement of the Australian History syllabus according to the 1905 syllabus occurred in 1850 and showcased the work of

⁵⁹ *Course of Instruction for Primary Schools, 1916.*

imperial heroes like missionaries and explorers, and the cultures that developed in the wake of industries like mining, pastoral enterprises, and shipping. These latter demonstrated the importance of co-operation and economic individualism and provided a respectable meeting point for the study of Geography and History. There were ideological risks in studying Australian History prior to 1850, involving uncomfortable stories of mutiny and brutality under the convict system and direct and malevolent clashes with Aborigines. Importantly, school History implied that ‘Australian’ history before 1850 was one and the same as English History.

In Fifth Class, a new Civics program was introduced in a recognisably modern form. The program incorporated the same emphasis on scripture and reading as Fourth Class, with the additional note: ‘History of England on the [concentric] plan. Third course [see Preface] to proceed in a similar manner to the second course but still further expanded’. Under ‘History of Australia’, a new element was introduced: the study of the design of Australian liberal democracy and its place within liberal imperialism.⁶⁰ The syllabus required pupils to learn about ‘[t]he [franchise], and the duty of the citizens in promoting the well-being of the community’.⁶¹ As the syllabus began to address the more mature age groups, the improvements Australia had made to the traditions of British citizenship became more central to learning. These included the franchise, which was extended to both men and women and was something the Anzac could be fighting for in the future. Australian liberal democracy was just a part of the Anzac boast.

Unsurprisingly, the Anzac generation believed absolutely in a reciprocity between the Australian nation and the British Empire. A concept of reciprocal citizenship, conveyed as a perception of choice within the imperial polity, was taught as assumed fact. The Empire bestowed benefits, including national and citizenship rights, in exchange for the performance of duties to the Australian State. The Australian State and Australians as individuals in turn had rights and duties in relation to the Empire. The specifically ‘Australian’ component of the historical narrative was entirely about exploration from ‘the unknown Southland to The

⁶⁰ ‘The New South Wales Syllabus of Primary Instruction, 1905’, 238.

⁶¹ ‘The New South Wales Syllabus of Primary Instruction, 1905’, 238.

Overlanders'.⁶² The only exception was a reference to the gold diggers, who were portrayed as more risk-taking economic individualists.

The Eureka Uprising, the strikes of 1891, the Kelly outrage, and the dispossession of the Aborigines were not canvassed as events in the 'new syllabus', despite their respective momentous implications for Australian history during and after the war. As the Anzac legend grew in significance in schooling and civil society, it cancelled out the significance of these events, thereby contributing to the process of historical forgetting. This is, of course, deliberate forgetting, involving the suppression of historical events inconsistent with the underlying narrative. As a result, these important events formed part of an irregular or folk recollection by the Anzacs.

The syllabus for classes Six and Seven recognised the need for schools to take account of the 'class of employment they [the pupils] are likely to enter after leaving school'.⁶³ However, the notes to teachers went on to emphasise the civic and ideological importance of the final years of compulsory schooling:

*It is important that the instruction in these classes should fully recognise the wider demands which all vocations in their higher reaches and the claims of citizenship, make upon the range of information, mental grasp, and general intelligence of each individual.*⁶⁴

The Civics and History approach for older children laid fertile ground for the ideology of the volunteer citizen-soldier, an element critical to the Anzac legend. By the time they reached Classes Six and Seven, most pupils were approaching the age of 13, then the legal minimum age of compulsory schooling. It was recommended that classes be divided according to academic ability into 'Upper Division' and 'Lower Division'. Civics continued to be important for teachers of these classes, who were reminded again that 'Moral teaching should permeate the

⁶² *Course of Instruction for Primary Schools, 1916.*

⁶³ 'The New South Wales Syllabus of Primary Instruction, 1905', 238.

⁶⁴ 'The New South Wales Syllabus of Primary Instruction, 1905', 238.

whole management of the school'. In the last year of compulsory schooling, the Anzac generation received even more ideological instruction in the obligations of citizenship, and teachers sought to imbue the importance of independent thought in problem solving in relation to both citizenship and vocational matters.

A rudimentary meritocratic school leadership was explicitly linked to evangelising scripture and the key components of Christian respectability (with a palpable Protestant cultural orientation) and key elements of chivalry:

*The Upper and Lower Divisions—Civics and Morals. The authorized Scripture lessons—the Old and New Testaments, No.1 and 2—to be read by the upper divisions and made the basis of moral teaching to the whole school. Temperance and its advantages to the individual and the State. Stories illustrative of such virtues as truthfulness, helpfulness to others, self-control, obedience to parents, respect for the aged and for public property.*⁶⁵

Recreation was not to be taken as a release from the moral discipline of the school for teachers or pupils. In the same way, Anzacs could engage in preferred activities like football and cricket as an alternative to 'Swedish drill' (calisthenics). Indeed, it seems that moral control of the pupils' recreational time, especially for the teachers responsible for the older children, was particularly important to the educational authorities. 'The moral influence of the teacher should be felt in a special manner in the freedom of the playground.'⁶⁶ The authority of teachers finds an echo in the subsequent authority of NCOs in Anzac.

In Classes Six and Seven the Upper Divisions were prescribed yet another course of 'English history in the concentric' plan, more detail about the 'franchise', and Australian exploration and discovery post-1850. It was noted:

⁶⁵ 'The New South Wales Syllabus of Primary Instruction, 1905', 239.

⁶⁶ 'The New South Wales Syllabus of Primary Instruction, 1905', 239.

*Leading dates as a principle of order in the pupils' ideas should be committed to memory. The connection between Geography and History should be kept clearly in view, and the study of existing public institutions should be associated with their history.*⁶⁷

This was to emphasise the connection between the English heritage, the Australian State and polity, and the concession of the individual pupil—a vital lesson for future Anzacs.

In 1916 the first edition of *The New South Wales School Magazine* was published by the New South Wales Department of Education. Based on material already in use from 1905 and before, the *Magazine* provided enriched reading material to all pupils regardless of the availability of reading material in the home.⁶⁸ It is a useful historical resource not only for its graphic representation of the 1905 syllabus but also because most of the generation that subscribed to the Anzac legend as observers rather than participants were schooled through its pages.

The *Magazine* regularised the basic teaching resources available in public schools. It was complemented by the publication of an even more simplified syllabus document and pedagogical and school management reforms based on modified Taylorist principles.⁶⁹ Although the *Magazine* was first published two years after the Great War broke out, it is indicative of the material and pedagogical outlook from 1905 onwards. The *Magazine*'s primary objective was to make reading material that was sympathetic to the syllabus available to poorer students and those from homes with few or no books and magazines. The ethos of egalitarianism in the availability of reading materials was not only part of the education ethos; it also ensured that all members of the Anzac generation had access to the material so critical to their moral and intellectual development.

⁶⁷ 'The New South Wales Syllabus of Primary Instruction, 1905', 239.

⁶⁸ *Course of Instruction for Primary Schools, 1916*, 6.

⁶⁹ *Course of Instruction for Primary Schools, 1916*, 9.

4.6 Conclusion

The Australian schools' syllabus documents and school materials provide evidence for the impact of school education on the interrelated notions of Australian citizenship and loyalty to the British Empire. Moreover, they help to explain the intellectual curiosity and literate nature of the generation of Australians that became the Anzacs, and the generations that created and sustained the earlier version of the legend. It was during this education that many mythologies as well as moral precepts were learned.

Chapter 5

Teaching morals and mythologies

Moral leadership by teachers and the recounting of heroic deeds from the biblical and imperial canon was an essential part of ‘new syllabus’ pedagogy. The resources and materials made available through *The School Magazine* supplemented classroom teaching and sought to build on what the new liberal ideology held to be the innate instincts of children. This chapter draws on editions of the *New South Wales Educational Gazette* and *The School Magazine* between 1905 and 1916 to demonstrate that the children who became the Anzac generation were inculcated with the sense of civic obligation, loyalty to Empire, liberal social principles, and romantic literature from a young age and throughout their schooling.

5.1 The culture of imagination

In the October 1905 edition of the *New South Wales Education Gazette*, Clarence Northcott emphasised the importance of the instinct for imitation, which he linked to the faculty of childhood imagination: ‘Imitation ... is very popularly known as [make believe] and is exemplified every time that a group of children meet with their toys’. This approach to teaching reinforced the influence the curriculum would have on the developing imaginations of young Australians, as well as their cultural assumptions and intellects. The culture of imagination played a role in developing the self-belief of Australians of the Anzac generation. The imitation of heroes and tales of Britannic honour carried through into adult life. Most importantly, the authority of the schoolteacher in the playground and the classroom, an authority based on the perception of merit, was a far more universal model of discipline for future Anzacs than Bean’s station boss.

The ‘education liberals’ were so influenced by American progressivism that they treated the nostrums of one of its doyens, John Dewey, as received knowledge. The US influence, combined with Whig predispositions, saw the instinct to individual imagination as an ‘innate’ quality to be fashioned into collective consciousness and meaning by the education system. In his 1905 article in the *Gazette*, Northcott concluded:

*It has been laid down by Dr. Dewey that [the image] is the great instrument of instruction. To utilise this, we must ransack the storehouses of mythology and fairy lore, of ballads and stories of every description for material which either as supplementary reading furnished from the blackboard or as oral rendering from the teacher may go to enlarge the child's store of images. The aim of all reading would appear to be, not power in oral recitation, but command of images and thoughts. Should we not then make it our aim to see that the child gets these correct images and thoughts ... this applies not only to reading, but also to subjects such as geography, history [and] civics ...*¹

Northcott and Board subscribed to an eclectic mix of individual influences but were centrally concerned with the relationship between literature and history, civics and morals, the Christian religion, and the moral conduct of the school.² This set of topical preoccupations provided an historical basis for modern chivalry and a thorough inculcation of civics into future citizen-soldiers, giving school education its moral perspective. The 'new syllabus' reflected the central role of historical and literary tradition in creating the imagination as well as directing the gendered instincts of the future citizen, many of whom would become the future Anzacs. Northcott wrote in the September 1905 *Gazette*:

*Since, however, man as a citizen is to be active, history becomes indispensable. It is the record of how civilization has been achieved; it shows the pupil his place, his duties, and his privileges. It makes the movements of the day intelligible ... and sends him forth to do his work nobly and well.*³

¹ *The New South Wales Education Gazette* (3 October 1905): 103. New South Wales Department of Education Archives.

² *The School Magazine*, 1916–1935. New South Wales Department of Education Archives (Sydney: Department of Education Library).

³ *The New South Wales Education Gazette* (1 September 1905): 79. New South Wales Department of Education Archives.

5.2 War and the Australian school

The moral and ideological lessons can be scanned through the pages of *The New South Wales School Magazine*, where history, literature, religion, and the fables and legends ‘of the race’ were intermingled.⁴ The material became public education’s literary and historical canon—a comprehensive source of nourishment for imitative, imaginative minds as they reflected and projected their consciousness and formed their identities as Australian citizens and as subjects of the British Empire. History, religion, literature, and civics blended into a didactic structure that laid the existential foundations for Anzac exceptionalism.

Teachers, too, had a reliable source of theory and practice. Northcott barely disguised his Hegelian tendencies in his synthesis of English, Geography and History as the means of privileging the English race, its ‘spirit’ and destiny. The ‘new syllabus’ is afforded the same psychical and cultural treatment as a secular religion:

By literature we mean all the books the child reads and all the poetry he memorises. Especially do we lay stress upon the supplementary reading which should open up to the child the treasure houses of the experience of the race. Reading thereby increases both the length and the wealth of life. It enables the pupil to realise that he is the heir of all the ages. But it does more; it gives expression to the spiritual element within him, which would otherwise have remained silent and perhaps atrophied. The dim vague feeling of reverence of yearning after the highest and the best are thereby fixed and made concrete.⁵

Teaching followed the ‘concentric theory’ of English history and the destiny of the British Empire, including the ‘New Britannia’ of the white settler colonies, thereby shaping, and confirming the racial destiny for which the Anzacs would later fight. English History and the biographies of its heroes were taught as having an immediate moral and political relevance.

⁴ *The School Magazine*, 1916–1935.

⁵ *The New South Wales Education Gazette* (1 September 1905): 79.

History, especially the history of the race, was recounted to convey the past as a living force or ‘spirit’ in the present and to allow assumptions about the course of the future:

*The problems of the past are closely connected with the near present. The characteristics of the English and the Normans have not died out, Saxon and Norman institutions are not dead letters, the Elizabethan seamen have launched their spirit down through the centuries; the problem of the American Revolution was the modern one of Imperialism.*⁶

In the ‘concentric plan of English history’, the most significant personality of Britannic legend in the juvenile cultural iconography introduced by the New South Wales curriculum was St George. The stories about St George recounted in the classroom and later published in *The School Magazine* reflect an amalgam of history and literature, including suppositions about the circumstances of his Christian martyrdom.⁷ The hagiographical legend is threaded into the historical narrative and seamlessly woven into the mythological: St George as dragon slayer, maiden saver, and kingdom redeemer. The stories and allegories of *The School Magazine* were age-appropriate means of ensuring, as one school Inspector observed in 1908, that the school was ‘not so much a place for making scholars as a place for making souls’⁸. And Peter Board regarded schools as the future ‘nurseries of the nation’s morality and its training ground for defence’.⁹

From the introduction of the ‘new syllabus’ until at least 1935, St George would have been a familiar compound character to young Australians by the end of their primary schooling. He embodied the preparedness to risk, and even sacrifice, his life without consideration for his own lost potential, out of duty to his mother and fidelity to his lover. Within the same narrative he demonstrates the power and skill to destroy the life of an enemy given over to evil purpose, as embodied in the monstrous dragon. The avenging spirit of combat is combined with the thanatotic super-ego of defiant martyrdom to create an imaginary of noble

⁶ *The New South Wales Educational Gazette* (1 September 1905): 79.

⁷ *The School Magazine*, 1916–1935.

⁸ S.G. Firth, ‘Social Values in the New South Wales Primary School 1880–1914: An Analysis of School Texts’, *Critical Studies in Education* 12, no. 1: 125, DOI:10.1080/17508487009556025.

⁹ Firth, ‘Social Values in the New South Wales Primary School 1880–1914’, 125.

masculinity: chivalry. The Australians, like other Entente citizens and soldiers, saw the Germans as having been given over to evil, as evidenced by their assault against Belgium and their alliance with non-Christian Turkey. St George may have been only a school memory, but the residual psychological icons are likely to have played on the Anzacs.

Bill Gammage quotes a soldier in 1919, whose idealistic views of youth:

*...were built chiefly upon the spirit of chivalry and romance that permeated my history books and such poems as Macaulay's Lays of Ancient Rome and his ballad of 'How Horatio Kept the Bridge' in the brave days of old. War presented itself chiefly under the mantle of brilliant uniforms, marching soldiers, music, drums, and glory.*¹⁰

St George's beautiful Princess Sabra and pious mother embody the virtues of Victorian and Edwardian femininity: modest yet beautiful, passive but faithful, supportive—symbolic personifications of gentility and muses of the crusade for civilised behaviour. Women should aim to be worthy of the heroes who risked or sacrificed their lives for them. Prior to his martyrdom and his dragon slaying, St George, according to the April 1916 edition of *The School Magazine*, was a successful crusader and a worthy patron of English kings, crusaders, and soldiers. This is an example of legend as accepted wisdom taught as if it were history; of course, the historical George lived at least 800 years prior to the preaching of the First Crusade. *The School Magazine's* retelling of the story of St George, the maiden Sabra and the dragon emphasised his racial and familial destiny: birthmarks from infancy distinguish him and hint at his future vocation. The ultimate objective after a troubled and adventurous life is domesticity: St George and Sabra were eventually married and lived happily ever after.¹¹

This 1916 retelling is introduced by specific reference to St George's Day, 23 April, and the fact that 'April is a month full of great memories for all true Australians'.¹² St George's Day,

¹⁰ Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 1974), 9.

¹¹ *The School Magazine*, 1916–1935, Part 1, Class 3, Index Vol. 1 (April 1916): 40. Archives of the New South Wales Department of Education (Sydney: Department of Education Library).

¹² *The School Magazine*, 1916–1935, Part 1, Class 3 (April 1916): 40.

according to the magazine, reminded pupils of Cook's landing and the birth of William Shakespeare: 'one of the greatest men of all time'.¹³ Most importantly, 25 April was when 'our brave soldiers won undying fame by their heroism at ANZAC'.¹⁴ The figure of speech used by the author is noteworthy: as soon as the first anniversary of Gallipoli, the children are being told in age-appropriate language of the apotheosis of the Anzacs. The language used to describe their efforts claims their fame is 'undying', that is, immortal. The suggestion of immortality infers the possibility of divinity or at least sainthood, and certainly of something superhuman.

Though much of the subject matter is medieval or ancient and folkloric, the meaning translated to schoolchildren was clear. Children were being exhorted to emulate more immediate and practical examples of sacrifice and courage, like Gordon and Nelson. The political and policy designer of the curricula and materials were preparing young Australians for the likely test to come. The stories were to penetrate their conscious minds.¹⁵

A regular subject of the historical literature in the new syllabus and *The School Magazine* was King Alfred. The anecdotes about Alfred fall into two categories. The first, generally for the younger classes, emphasised Alfred as a child interested in reading and 'the poetry of his race'.¹⁶ He learned to read, unlike his older brothers and father, who were only 'interested in sport'. Alfred's impulse to learn was an echo of St George's heroism, incorporating the sense and importance of Oedipal resolution. Alfred's motivation for reading was to compete with the older males of his family for the attention and approval of his beautiful mother, Queen Osburga. These stories portrayed Alfred as a bibliophile who became an excellent leader in difficult circumstance because of the knowledge he gained from study. The same stories, however, stressed that Alfred did not 'forget to learn the use of arms and make himself strong in battle'.¹⁷

¹³ *The School Magazine*, 1916–1935 Part 1, Class 3 (April 1916): 40.

¹⁴ *The School Magazine*, 1916–1935 Part 1, Class 3 (April 1916): 40.

¹⁵ Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688–1980* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1981), 126.

¹⁶ *The School Magazine*, 1916–1935 Part 1, Class 3, Index Vol. 1, no. 5 (June 1916): 40. Archives of the New South Wales Department of Education (Sydney: Department of Education Library)

¹⁷ *The School Magazine*, 1916–1935, Part 1, Class 3 (June 1916): 40.

Alongside the stories of ancient chivalry, important Australian symbols were instilled in the classroom readers. The Australianising of schoolchildren in Victoria and other states focused on pioneer and bushman anecdotes. Musgrave argues that ‘two main types of pioneer were presented to elementary school children: those who cleared the bush to farm and the diggers who sought gold’.¹⁸ Yet there were more diverse child adventure/pioneer stories which involved survival narratives and the need to understand the bush (often including the Aborigines) in both the literary and visual production of a pioneering paradigm in school readers.

The trope of the bush-lost child is one of the central themes of school readers, especially the figure of the lost (and found) child, and the way in which he or she is interwoven with uncertain and anxious ideas about nation. The narrative the bush-lost child exerts is a particularly potent influence. It speaks to both national anxieties and aspirations for survival, as well as being a consistently significant way to portray and read a story of national growth.¹⁹ A lost child is the ultimate symbol of a nation’s fears, uncertainties, dreams, and aspirations. By the same token, it is hardly surprising that the lost child figure (and all that he or she stands for) features so prominently across school readers.²⁰

Other stories for older classes emphasised Alfred’s adult adventures and triumphs over adversity: his hidden nobility and sense of compromise (Alfred and the Danes), learning persistence from nature (Alfred sheltering in a cave after defeat observes a spider rebuild its web) and the lessons he learned from the common people about practicality and concentration on the basics (a preoccupied Alfred is chastised by a peasant woman, who is unaware he is the King, after he burns the cakes she has left him to look after). All these stories shared racial and religious truisms and the conclusion that ‘Above all things, he loved and served his God as a true Christian should’.²¹ The narrative describes the ordinariness of Alfred’s tests, in which his exceptional qualities are concealed from general observation. A

¹⁸ Peter Musgrave, ‘To Be an Australian?: Victorian School Textbooks and National Identity 1895–1965’, *Paradigm Textbook Colloquium*, Melbourne, 1996.

¹⁹ Jane McGennissen, *Learning to Read the Nation in Twentieth-Century Australian School Readers*, unpublished thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, University of Tasmania, August 2009, 43.

²⁰ McGennissen, *Learning to Read the Nation*, 45.

²¹ *The School Magazine*, 1916–1935 Part 1, Class 3 (June 1916): 40.

hero disguised as a common man echoes the Anzac legend, based as it is on the heroism of the ordinary digger. His heroism makes him special, if not a king. The Anzac character was seen as one of resilience and a learner of life's lessons.²²

Another subject which the new syllabus and *The School Magazine* found suitable for didactic political lessons and tributes to humility by the great was King Canute.²³ The story tells of how Canute, reputedly a Christian at the time when many English were pagans, demonstrated to his followers in a wise and engaging way the limitations of royal authority. It is difficult not to read this story as other than a didactic refutation of despotism and ultramontanism, and of theories of government which suggested that an individual could 'rule the earth, sky and sea'—an endorsement of the English '*via media*' in both constitutional and theological matters.²⁴ The Anzacs rejected leadership based on inheritance, insisting, as Bean emphasised, on promotion by merit.

The Celtic heroine Boadicea was often the subject of stories and snippets from New South Wales school materials. She is important because of her symbolic identification with Britannia (ironically, the Roman goddess of the islands of Britain) and her popular identification with Queen Victoria. Boadicea's spirit of resistance was celebrated as an important founding characteristic of the English and their relationship to the destiny of Western civilisation. Her story endorsed the heroic English spirit of charismatic leadership and courage.

Boadicea seeks revenge for unfair treatment by invaders who have dishonoured a treaty with her English (Celtic) people. In contempt of Boadicea, the Romans have 'whipped and humiliated her'. This, of course, is an age-appropriate euphemism for the sexual brutality of the patriarchal Romans against the matrifocal Celts: the Romans had raped Boadicea's kinswomen, including her daughters, as punishment for dissent. Boadicea's raising of a mighty army is seen as a great achievement and the Roman victory is diminished, even though a defeated Boadicea poisoned herself. *The School Magazine* observed that, from this

²² Bean boasts that the Australians were reputed to be able to 'do a nice clean job' in battle.

²³ *The School Magazine*, 1916–1935, Part 2, Classes 4 and 5, Index Vol. 1, no. 6 (July 1916): 83. Archives of the New South Wales Department of Education (Sydney: Department of Education Library).

²⁴ *The School Magazine*, 1916–1935, Part 2, Classes 4 and 5 (July 1916): 82.

time on, the Romans had a newfound respect for the Britons. In a forecast of other great English queens like Elizabeth and, more importantly, Victoria, Boadicea's song in *The School Magazine* ends:

*She with a monarch's pride,
Felt them [prophecies of British greatness] in her bosom glow.
Rushed to battle fought and died –
Dying hurled them at the foe:*

*Ruffians pitiless as proud,
Heaven awards the vengeance due;
Empire is on us bestowed –
Shame and ruin wait for you.*²⁵

The Boadicea narrative has embedded within it the iconic notion of a queen of purity and courage leading her people, winning a moral victory even in defeat. Noble defeat establishes and re-emphasises a moral destiny for the English.

Canute, Alfred, St George, and many other legendary Britannic male heroes had inspirational mothers. A theme promoted strongly in many of the stories and poems in *The School Magazine* was the obligation of a son to his mother as the symbol of domestic, civilised, and respectable values. The social prestige and emotional satisfaction achieved by mothers who nurtured future leaders and heroes was also a central concern of the material in the magazine. The implications were summed up by the Walter Scott poem, 'Lullaby of an Infant Chief', published in the June 1916 edition of *The School Magazine*:

*Hush thee, my babie, thy sire was a knight,
Thy mother a lady, both lovely and bright;
The woods and the glens, from the towers which we see,
They all are belonging, dear babie, to thee.*

²⁵ *The School Magazine*, Part 2, Classes 4 and 5 (June 1916): 73.

O ho ro, i ri ri, cadul gu lo,

O ho ro, i ri ri, cadul gu lo.

*O fear not the bugle, though loudly it blows,
It calls but the warders that guard thy repose;*

*Their bows would be bended, their blades would be red,
Ere the step of a foeman drew near to thy bed.*

O ho ro, i ri ri, cadul gu lo,

O ho ro, i ri ri, cadul gu lo.

O hush thee, my babie, the time soon will come.

When they sleep shall be broken by trumpet and drum;

The hush thee, my darling, take rest while you may,

For strife comes with manhood and waking the day.

O ho ro, i ri ri, cadul gu lo,

O ho ro, i ri ri, cadul gu lo.²⁶

The moral intention of the motif of heroic motherhood in this poem had implications for the respective masculine and feminine societal roles that pupils would be called upon to play, as well as the mindsets that they took as citizens into the Australia polity. It is important to note that while the illustration that accompanies the ‘Lullaby of an Infant Chief’ features a woman in middle-class Edwardian clothing, the poem clearly uses the metaphor of medieval warfare and more contemporary political allusions to depict the role of Womanhood as the harbour of repose and rest as the child prepares for the ‘strife [that] comes with manhood’.²⁷

The School Magazine literary/historical collection also contains many accounts of two Norman kings. The Plantagenet brothers, John, and Richard, make their political contributions to the ‘concentric plan of English history’ through its pages. John, of course, is portrayed as a villain, a coward easily manipulated by greedy advisers and despotic peers.

²⁶ *The School Magazine*, Part 1, Class 3, Vol.1, no. 5 (1 June 1916): 77.

²⁷ *The School Magazine*, Part 1, Class 3, Vol.1, no. 5 (1 June 1916): 78.

The principal evidence cited for John's vices was the apparent shirking of his princely duty to fight in the Crusades and the betrayal of his virtuous brother Richard.

John's contribution to the concentric plan of English history is that of the weakling pretender who is ultimately pardoned for his misdeeds by his chivalrous elder brother Richard when he returns from the Crusades and exile. Otherwise, John is the hapless and incompetent despot forced by the nobles at Runnymede to sign the Magna Carta.²⁸ This event is portrayed in *The School Magazine* as a popular step towards the anti-absolutism which was seen by the British Empire's ideologues as the defining heritage of English governance institutions.²⁹ Importantly, it was seen as a safeguard against poor leadership rather than a condition of good governance.

Richard on the other hand is recalled as a worthy king. He undertook his vocational duty as the King of England. He raised a mighty avenging army to defend the weak Christian civilisation against an uncivilised and unjust opponent. Richard fights overwhelming odds and deals generously with treachery by other European princes, even his own brother.³⁰

The Richard of *The School Magazine* defines leadership and greatness for his young Australian readers. The Anzac generation heard much of King Richard and Robin Hood, who spread the fame of the English as leaders in the fight for civilisation, Christianity, and justice.³¹ Richard was proud and impetuous but also noble, fair-minded, and courteous, even to his enemies.³² In story after story, Richard is courageous and adventurous but forgiving. He is respectful of women and always fair to the ordinary people.³³ Like Alfred, Richard is prepared to learn from the 'common folk' in his role as a hidden noble.³⁴ Richard also carries a hint of the magical inheritance of King Arthur and is loyal to his friends and allies even at

²⁸ *The School Magazine*, Part 3, Class 6, Vol. 1, no. 1 (1 February 1916): 11.

²⁹ *The School Magazine*, Part 3, Class 6, Vol. 1, no. 1 (1 February 1916): 11.

³⁰ *The School Magazine*, Part 2, Class 4 and 5, Vol. 1, no. 6 (1 July 1916): 87.

³¹ *The School Magazine*, Part 2, Class 4 and 5, Vol. 1, no. 6 (1 July 1916): 85.

³² *The School Magazine*, Part 2, Class 4 and 5, Vol. 1, no.6 (1 July 1916): 85.

³³ *The School Magazine*, Part 1, Class 3, Vol. 1, no. 7 (1916): 121.

³⁴ *The School Magazine*, Part 1, Class 3, Vol. 1, no. 7 (1916): 122.

great personal risk. The Richard of *The School Magazine* was a fearsome warrior and a fearless risk-taker and adventurer who deserved his legendary epithet, Lionhearted.

The war, in particular the deeds of the Anzacs at Gallipoli, eventually gave Australian schoolchildren their own heroes. This was evident in the texts of *The School Magazine* and the Victorian and Tasmanian School Readers. Some school texts gave early life to the Anzac legend. For example, the School Readers include *The Departure of the Anzacs from Mudros* (The Tasmanian Readers Grade VI) and (The Victorian Reading Books—Eighth Book), *The Landing of the Anzacs*, *Leaving Anzac* and *Anzac Day* (from The Victorian Reading Books—Seventh Book) and *At Anzac*, *Greater Than We Knew*, *To the Fallen* and *The Legacy* (The Victorian Reading Books—Eighth Book).³⁵ All these were first published as narratives based on John Masefield's *Gallipoli*. Each was first published in the Victorian School Reader between 1916 and 1918. These texts were repeated across years and between the various state education jurisdictions.

Masefield's accounts of the experience, of his time as a non-combatant at Gallipoli, maintain a note of historical accuracy, but they are nonetheless emotive and subjective. Like Bean, Masefield wrote of events as an eyewitness while being acutely aware of his role as a maker of heroes and writer of legend, making both his style and subject matter consistent with the romantic turn of history that Australian schoolchildren were already inculcated with. Anna Clark quotes Peter Board during the war in a 1916 address to the Australian Historical Society. Board was then the Director General of Education in New South Wales, a liberal reformer, and a champion of Australianising the curriculum:

*One year ago, she(Australia) entered adult nationhood. On the 25th of April history and Australian history were fused, and fused in white heat...Australia as young as she is, has her memories of great men and great deeds...lest we forget that the past can give us inspiration...*³⁶

³⁵ McGennissen, *Learning to Read the Nation*.

³⁶ Clark .A. op.cit.103

Relatively soon after the war, Anzac was associated with these great legends of Empire. The April 1921 Anzac Day edition of *The School Magazine* for Classes 5 and 6 carries a story that weaves together the narrative of St George's Day, Richard the Lionhearted and modern English naval tradition. It concludes:

*The Church and palace of Saint George have long since crumbled to dust, but St George is not forgotten. From the masts of the proudest ships in the British Navy flies the flag of Saint George, and as long as there are English men and English women in the world, the Red cross of Saint George will hold pride of place in the Union Jack.*³⁷

A subsequent favourite, who makes a few important appearances in *The School Magazine* and is a key part of the Richard the Lionheart romance, is Robin Hood. The story follows a common romance convention, introducing him as a ruffian but quickly identifying him as a chivalrous nobleman who has been wronged and is fighting for fairness and justice while the true King, Richard, is in exile. Robin continues the motif of hidden nobility, but in the spirit of Edwardian respectability.³⁸ *The School Magazine* never draws a parallel between the Australian outlaw tradition and outlaw nobility in chivalric romances: bushrangers remain part of the invisible history of *The School Magazine*. One can assume that the bushranger folktales of the playground and the home became entangled in the childhood imagination, allowing the transgressive bushrangers and the rough-hewn code of honour to be reinterpreted as chivalry by some.

Stories, poems and allusions to the Coming of Arthur and the Return to Camelot frequently punctuate the pages of *The School Magazine*.³⁹ Typically, these stories follow the conventional Victorian rendering. The round table is a symbol of British governance: fairness, decency, and a sense of mission in dealing with evil. Many of the historical stories

³⁷ *The School Magazine*, Part 2, Classes 4 and 5, Vol. 6, no. 3 (April 1921): 33.

³⁸ *The School Magazine*, Part 1, Class 3, Vol. 9, no. 3 (May 1912): 63.

³⁹ *The School Magazine*, Part 1, Class 3, Vol. 7 (1 April 1922): 37.

and poems of *The School Magazine* underline classic chivalric themes: Arthur is the messianic British hero unifying elements of Celtic, Saxon, Danish and Norman legend and mythology with Christianity. These inversions, where history is treated as moral tale, as in Richard the Lionhearted and King John, while tales of Camelot and St George are treated as history, are explicable because ‘true meaning’, not empirical authenticity, is the first criterion for a story worthy of being school reading material.⁴⁰

Gendered roles are clearly emphasised here; Arthur and Lancelot stand for the same kind of masculine virtues as Alfred and Richard. The female heroines define an inspirational, highly conventionalised combination of maternalism and eroticism.⁴¹ They are the inspiration for masculine adventure, and the measure of a woman’s value is the grace that enables her to inspire the physical and moral deeds of men, whether they are sons, lovers, or brothers.

The interaction between the national ideology, the child’s imagination and the inculcation of the myths and legends of British chivalry established beliefs about gender and duty that were critical to the evolution of early 20th-century notions of Australian character and the Anzac legend. The methods of the ‘new syllabus’ established a relationship between the individual consciousness of the child, the collective imagination of the classroom and the Australian State and its place within the Empire. It allowed the Australia of the Anzac generation to believe that a new country, made up of citizens with questionable pedigrees, had an ancient and inspirational heritage of duty. Ominously, the association between chivalry and military obligation easily converted into a sense of military duty when the Empire was threatened.

During and after the war, *The School Magazine* contained messages from and stories about the British imperial leadership, such as this story about the British Admiral Sir John (later Lord) Jellicoe:

Kathleen Toor, a little blind girl from York, who knitted and sent Sir John, the Admiral of the British fleet in the North Sea, a woollen scarf, said in a letter in Braille that she would be the happiest girl in England if he would

⁴⁰ Firth, ‘Social Values in the New South Wales Primary School’, 134.

⁴¹ *The School Magazine*, Part 3, Class 6, Vol. 12, no. 8 (September 1916): 127.

*accept the gift, adding: 'all the other girls thank you and all the brave sailors and soldiers for defending us'.*⁴²

This is a tribute to modern chivalry as a component of the imperial propaganda apparatus, of which *The School Magazine* became a part. The blind girl still playing her part emphasises the importance of respect for those risking their lives in the defence of the innocent and vulnerable. Combined with the presentation of a token from a feminine figure to a masculine fighting figure, as both a talisman and a token of esteem, this image is rich with the symbolism of tournament chivalry referred to in other stories about medieval times.

As a boy of 16, General Gordon, 'the last of a famous race of soldiers ... [was] very brave and fearless, loving the right and scorning to do anything that he knew to be mean or wrong'.⁴³ The contribution by Sir Ian Hamilton, the commander of the Mediterranean force of which 'our brave Australian troops formed such an important part', was serialised in *The School Magazine*, first appearing as an admonition for young Australians to treat 25 April, Anzac Day, in the same way that 'Henry the 5th treated St Crispin's Day'.⁴⁴ *The School Magazine* carried a eulogy celebrating the life and times of Lord Kitchener as an adventure story, recounting how Kitchener overcame severe difficulties in his schooling before he became the 'greatest soldier of the age'.⁴⁵ The intertwining of imperial heroism, Anzac and the traditions of chivalrous myth underlines the close relationship between the myths of Empire and the Anzac legend.

Jane McGennissen comments on the duality of Australian nationalism and loyalty to Empire using the story of General Gordon to illustrate her point. Khartoum anecdotes are common to all school reading materials across the states from Federation onwards. In the *Victorian Readers Fourth Book*, Gordon's heavily symbolic narrative of heroism and sacrifice has rather more concrete connections to Australia's colonial history. Gordon's death is the catalyst for an historic occasion—the first time that soldiers of a self-governing Australian colony, New South Wales, depart to fight in an imperial war. Therefore, for an embedded

⁴² *The School Magazine*, Part 2, Classes 4 and 5, Vol. 1, no. 2 (1 March 1916).

⁴³ *The School Magazine*, Part 2, Classes 4 and 5, Vol.1, no. 5 (June 1916).

⁴⁴ *The School Magazine*, Part 3, Class 6, Vol. 1, no. 1 (February 1916): 25.

⁴⁵ *The School Magazine*, Part 2, Classes 4 and 5, Vol. 1, no. 8 (September 1916).

imperial curriculum in a reader meta-narrative, the story of Gordon recalls the New South Wales Contingent to the Sudan. In turn, this highlights the duality of Australian colonial identities where a commitment to a local imaginary is formed in relation to Empire and England.⁴⁶

In the April 1916 *School Magazine*, the Sixth-Class contemporary news about the beaching of the *Emden* by the *Sydney* was noted, with this admonition: ‘23rd April is the tercentenary of the death of William Shakespeare and St George’s Day. This year Shakespeare’s tercentenary will be celebrated on Anzac Day (April 25th)—a day of glorious memories for all Australians’.⁴⁷ A poem titled ‘The Australian: The Bravest Thing God Ever Made’, a tribute to Anzac courage and sense of duty written by an unnamed British officer, continued the theme of British admiration for the gallantry of Australians as a high point of patriotic aspiration for Australia and a statement of Anzac exceptionalism as a measure of the quality of the Australian character.⁴⁸ This story was the culmination of a series of galvanising lessons in the heritage of Anzac for 12-year-olds.

There was a great deal of symbolic flag worship⁴⁹ that particularly emphasised the synergy between the imperial inheritance of the Union Jack and the Southern Cross⁵⁰ and the ongoing acknowledgment of the imperial flag.⁵¹ Patriotic songs generally incorporated the notion that, to be British (the ‘Motherland’) and therefore Australian (the ‘fairest daughter’), was synonymous with ‘Honour, truth, and justice as the watchwords’ of the Empire and the emerging nation.⁵² Unification of the British races (Celtic, Norman and Saxon) as ‘the English’ was an important feature of *The School Magazine*, which almost ignored the

⁴⁶ McGennissen, *Learning to Read the Nation*, 103.

⁴⁷ *The School Magazine*, Part 2, Class 6, Vol.1, no. 3 (April 1916).

⁴⁸ *The School Magazine*, Part 3, Class 6, Vol. 1, no. 4 (May 1916): 51.

⁴⁹ *The School Magazine*, Part 3, Class 6, Vol. 1, no. 4 (May 1916): 54.

⁵⁰ *The School Magazine*, Part 2, Classes 4 and 5, Vol..1 no. 5 (July 1916).

⁵¹ *The School Magazine*, Part 2, Classes 4 and 5, Vol. 1, no. 4 (May 1916).

⁵² *The School Magazine*, Part 2, Classes 4 and 5, Vol.1, no. 7. (August 1916).

separate identity of the Scots, Welsh and Irish.⁵³ This is captured in the poem, ‘The Old Flag’:

The Old Flag
Only a bit of bunting!
Only a tattered rag!
But we’ll fight to the death as our fathers fought
For the brave old British Flag

Who dare to lay on it a hand,
Who dares to foul a fold,
Shall learn that Britain’s sons to-day.
Can fight as they fought of old.

For the brave old British flag; my boys,
The dear old British flag;
Though we dwell apart, we are one at heart,
And we’ll fight for the grand old glory.⁵⁴

The School Magazine did not neglect the Classical, though this aspect was not as prominent as it might have been in the corporate schools. Simplified accounts of various aspects of the Homeric epics, particularly the story of Troy, were commonplace in editions from 1916 until the 1930s.⁵⁵

In an explanation of the Victoria Cross in a *School Magazine* article, Arnold Wood, Professor of Modern History at Sydney University, explained to pupils that ‘Britain’s involvement in The Great European War is a fight for liberty ... It was liberty that Trade Unionists and chartists in their long hard victorious fight to save Englishmen from the servitude of man-made poverty’.⁵⁶ Referring to the motivation for the Empire’s entry into the war—the honouring of vulnerable Belgians’ right to neutrality—Arnold noted: ‘the greatest and most

⁵³ *The School Magazine*, Part 3, Class 6, Vol. 1, no. 7 (June 1916): 112.

⁵⁴ Vincent Pyke, *The NSW School Magazine for Class III*, 2 October 1916.

⁵⁵ *The School Magazine*, Part 2, Classes 4 and 5, Vol. 1, no. 11 (February 1916): 167.

⁵⁶ *The School Magazine*, Part 3, Class 6, Vol. 1, no. 1 (February 1916): 9.

glorious distinction of British history is to live by the teaching that the British have always sought to act justly and respect the liberty of others'.⁵⁷

The School Magazine used spatial references to bridge the temporal distance between the Anzacs and their legendary forebears. For instance, the Dardanelles and Palestine, as the settings of Anzac heroism, featured prominently in its stories. In this way, a freshly made legend of the Anzacs was transposed onto the stories of Herodotus, Homer, the Spartans, and Troy.⁵⁸ By focusing on the geographic location of the Middle East, as the setting of the Old and New Testament and the adventures of St George and King Richard, *The School Magazine* created a connection between the Anzacs and the myths and legends of Empire.

5.3 Simultaneously forgetting and remembering: Schooling after the war.

Karl Cramp, the Chief Inspector for New South Wales high schools, author of several standard school history texts of the inter-bellum period, and Secretary of the Royal Australian Historical Society, successfully argued that Sydney's 1938 re-enactment parade celebrating the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the colony should not include any depictions of convicts.⁵⁹ Cramp also ensured that the representation of Aborigines in the parade was limited to a float showing some natives 'with their gins cooking possum outside their gunya'.⁶⁰

Cramp and his collaborators were, of course, perpetrating an obstinately false heritage for the civilisation of New South Wales. The absence of convicts and Aborigines from the state's official foundation iconography was rendered even more paradoxical by the fact that four ceremonial trumpeters in medieval armour led the parade. This cameo of chivalric tournament symbolism highlights the role of wider Britannic historical references in preparing the audience for the penultimate and ultimate floats, which portrayed the

⁵⁷ *The School Magazine*, Part 3, Class 6, Vol. 1, no. 1 (February 1916): 9.

⁵⁸ *The School Magazine*, Part 3, Class 6, Vol. 1, no. 2 (March 1916).

⁵⁹ Donald Horne, *Looking for Leadership* (Melbourne: Viking Penguin Books, 2001), 53.

⁶⁰ Horne, *Looking for Leadership*, 53.

‘triumphal spread of British institutions through the colony’ and ‘the elevation of Australia to nationhood in the Gallipoli landing’.⁶¹

By the 1930s the notion that the history of Australian nationhood started with the landing on Gallipoli was well and truly established as an historical truism. Anna Clark writes: Fredrick Watson (the editor of the historical records of New South Wales) declared ‘The history of Australia is yet to be written’ but by 1916 Ernest Scott filled that blank space “The Short history of Australia begins with a blank space on the map and ends with the record of a new name on the map, that of Anzac.”⁶²

As the state’s premier historical school educator and author, Cramp’s ideological role in the cultural production that was the 1938 parade was significant. The parade punctuated a cycle that started with the era of compulsory education in the Australian colonies. The exclusion of the convict period and the marginalisation of Indigenous Australians concealed the existence of two historical factors that had immediate geographic and temporal relevance to the celebrations. A central role for the Anzac legend and the presence of implausible, medieval tournament trumpeters were apparently an indispensable introduction to the proceedings, despite the vast temporal, geographic and apparent contextual distance from the foundation of Australia’s histories.

The ‘concentric plan of English history’ is explicitly referred to as a key element of compulsory high school study in New South Wales.⁶³ It is also evident in Victorian school curriculum documents from the earliest syllabus papers through to the curriculum documentation of the 1960s.⁶⁴ The early syllabi were sketchy in detail but explicitly dealt with the moral, ideological and political lessons to be learned from the key events and personalities in what was understood as the English historical cycle.

⁶¹ Horne, *Looking for Leadership*, 54.

⁶² Clark, A. op .cit 103

⁶³ NSW *Syllabus of Primary Instruction, 1905, The New South Wales Education Gazette*, 1 March 1904.

⁶⁴ Victorian Department of Education, *A History of State Education in Victoria* (Melbourne: Critchely Parker, 1922), https://openlibrary.org/books/OL7161157M/A_history_of_state_education_in_Victoria, accessed 1/5/2021.

The legend of the exceptional achievements of the Anzacs at Gallipoli, together with the mythology that the landing ‘made’ Australia as a nation and that the sacrifice of the Anzacs was to ensure the freedoms of citizenship for all generations of Australians, continued to be part of the curriculum of Australian schools, thereby extending the influence and power of the legend and its associated myths well beyond the living memory of any combatants. To this day, most schools formally commemorate Anzac Day. Anzac, then, has continued to play a key role in the Australian component of the ‘concentric plan of English history’ through various forms of both teaching and commemoration.

The romantic content of the ‘concentric plan of English history’, harnessed by the Australian variant of the liberalism of the Oxford Idealists, envisaged the cultural history of civilisation as culminating in the natural ‘spirit’ of the British.⁶⁵ History and moral progress followed, as Hegel observed, the path of the sun in time and space from east to west. In the minds of the British Hegelians and their ideological successors, this culminated in the illumination of a ‘new Jerusalem’ in England itself. To this vision, Australia’s education reformers added elements of social Darwinism and US managerialism and sought to take the best of British culture and adapt and refine it in the colonies.

The idealist intellectual consensus that supported the ‘new romanticism’ created much of the early national symbolism and iconography, including that of ‘Australia’ herself. The educational consensus, responsible for the ‘new syllabus’, assumed that the meanings and values of the State or Empire and its heritage was the basis for a new civilisation. The conception of knowledge used to educate future citizens on their part in the building of a new nation lived in the values and spirit embodied in the myths, legends and narratives manifested in the study of the ‘concentric plan of English history’, supplemented by an appreciation of the Australian temporal and spatial landscape, rather than the other way round. The outcome of this form of pedagogy within the ‘new syllabus’ provided fertile ground for the creation of a national myth of imperial heroism, such as the Anzac legend.

⁶⁵ James Walter and Tod Moore, ‘The New Social Order? Australia’s Contribution to “New Liberal” Thinking in the Interwar Period’. Paper presented to the Jubilee conference of the Australasian Political Studies Association, 2002, Australian National University, Canberra, 1–18.

In *National Identity and Education in Early Twentieth Century Australia*, Jan Keane demonstrates that similar discourses are repeated through school curriculum over many decades, including in the very popular *School Paper*, and *The School Magazine* through celebration days such as Arbour Day and Wattle Day—giving Australians that pride in Australianness often expressed as nostalgia for the landscape that Treloar and Bean commend in *Australian Chivalry*.⁶⁶

Keane's thesis adds weight to the notion that the bush identity even of city Australians owes something to the curriculum, which while seeking to identify uniquely Australian features inevitably turned to the interior of the nation in order to develop a national identity. Through stories of Uluru (then Ayers Rock), inland rivers, flora and fauna, many aspects of the curriculum were tied to 'landscape, history and mythology'.

5.4 Conclusion

The new liberalism embedded in the civics, history, and literature syllabus, combined with the moral sentiment inculcated by scripture and the discipline of the classroom and the playground, provided the foundation for Australian voluntarism, egalitarianism, and solidarity, rather than the working life of the bushman. The patriotism of formal schooling was amplified by popular and recreational histories such as Fitchett's *Deeds that Won the Empire* and the *Boy's Own* series.⁶⁷ The moral dimension of education offers a much better explanation for the paradoxical nature of the legends of the Anzacs' deeds and myths about their character. The discipline of education showed the Anzac generation how to reconcile soldierly discipline with individualism. Monash, writing after the war, provides part of the answer:

[N]o officer caste, no social distinction in the whole army ... the whole Australian Army became automatically graded into leaders and followers, according to the individual merits of every man, and there grew a wonderful understanding between them [officers and men] ... proof that

⁶⁶ Jan Keane, *National Identity and Education in Early Twentieth Century Australia* (Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing), 18.

⁶⁷ Carolyn Holbrook, *Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2014), 25.

*individualism is the best and not the worst foundation upon which to build up a collective discipline.*⁶⁸

Monash's statement was not only true of the army; there was also an inclination to ignore or break down the social distinctions commonly inherent in culture. The work of C.J. Dennis, examined in the next chapter, embodies a blend of high- and middle-brow culture which was very popular in the Australia of the Great War. The trench editions of his work were extremely popular with members of the AIF. His parodies of high culture and snobbery are important demonstrations of the fact that the Anzacs were unusually well educated. To appreciate the middle-brow parody, they needed at least a basic understanding of the forms of high culture.

⁶⁸ John Monash, *The Australian Victories in France in 1918* (London: Hutchinson, 1920), 291 and 293.

Chapter 6

C.J. Dennis's Anzac: 'The chivalrous bloke'

The bushranger contribution to Australian chivalry was significant. In the oral and balladeering tradition of the bushrangers, Australia's newly respectable folk established a culture that reflected both the suppressed rage of the convict era and the pattern of the hidden nobleman of chivalry. The pathway from bushman to digger is a complex one. In the digger, the dyad of gentleman and larrikin was comprehensively resolved by World War I and the creation of the Anzac legend. The digger is simultaneously the gallant gentleman of Australian chivalry and the familiar larrikin of the towns and cities. This chapter explores the poetry of C.J. Dennis to demonstrate the relationship between the extent of Federation Australia's literacy, the popular culture of the time, and the acceptance of the aesthetics of romance as a basis for the character of Anzac and the meaning system of the Anzac legend.

6.1 A culture of equals

For much of the 19th century, '[n]ostalgia for British social rituals and material artefacts were typical responses by Anglo-Celtic protestant colonialists, who were confronted by a tyranny of distance that was not simply geographic but cultural'.¹ Members of the colonial and Federation middle classes who attended grammar schools or corporate schools were taught, as Manning Clark argues, from 'the great creations of the British—the book of common prayer, the King James Bible, the plays of Shakespeare, the works of John Bunyan and John Milton'.²

The generation that fought the war lived in a society that experienced the same separation of high culture and popular culture that occurred in the second half of the 19th and early 20th century in every Western society. One of the many artefacts of Blainey's *The Tyranny of Distance*³ was that neither private philanthropy nor public treasury was prepared or able to

¹ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Chatto & Windus, 1973), 280–281.

² Manning Clark, *A History of Australia*, Volume V (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 1981), 72.

³ Geoffrey Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan 2001).

fund the institutions required to give effect to the split between ‘Kultur’ and culture.⁴ High culture in Australia struggled on without the institutions which, in so many other societies, reinforced the class differences inherent in the high-priced consumption of high culture. While ‘Shakespeare, Beethoven and Wagner were valorised as a holy trinity’ of culture, locals, regardless of their financial status, had to rely on intermittent visits from touring companies to see their works performed.⁵ The combination of compulsory publicly funded education and widespread aspiration on the part of many outside the ‘directing class’⁶ to the affectations of a middle-class education led to a respect, perhaps an ironic ‘grudging’ respect, for the moral and aesthetic superiority of high culture. These factors reduced the extent to which high culture was ‘owned’ by the upper class in the Australian colonies/states.

6.2 ‘The play’s the thing’: Performativity and the larrikin

The definitive example of ironic Shakespeare appreciation by ordinary or working-class Australians are the accounts created by C.J. Dennis in *The Songs of a Sentimental Bloke*.⁷ In one instalment, called ‘The Play’, ‘the bloke’ accompanies his ‘sweet-tart’, Doreen, to the theatre. ‘The Play’ was first published in *The Bulletin* on 16 July 1914, only a month before the outbreak of hostilities in the Great War. During the performance, ‘the bloke’ makes several raucous observations on the action in *Romeo and Juliet*, including the notorious ‘put in the boot’ during the sword fight scene between the feuding Montague and Capulet families. In an insightful stanza, the poem anticipates both the destiny of the fictional character, Ginger Mick, and the effect of different temporal and spatial contexts on the interpretation of events:

*Wots just plain stoush wiv us, right ere today,
Is ‘valler’ if yer fur enough away.
Some time, some writer bloke will do the trick
Wiv Ginger Mick,*

⁴ Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White, *Cultural History in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003), 121.

⁵ Teo and White, *Cultural History in Australia*, 121.

⁶ Geoffrey Sherington, R.C. Petersen, and Ian Brice, *Learning to Lead: A History of Girls’ and Boys’ Corporate Secondary Schools in Australia* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987), viii.

⁷ C.J. Dennis, *The Songs of a Sentimental Bloke* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1915), 39.

*Of Spadger's Lane 'E'll be a Romeo,
When 'e's bin dead five 'undred years or so.*⁸

On one level, courtly love and chivalry are parodied. Dennis, however, also shows that the context of events and motivations may change the observer's view of the action but not its intrinsic significance. In 'The Play', it is the icons and images that are potentially incongruous to the Australian audience, not the decisive signifiers of romantic love, tribal loyalty, and gender-based honour. Dennis and 'the bloke' are also clear that it is not the temporal and spatial context that makes the actions and passions in the play noble. The poetry and sincerity of 'the bloke's' feelings for Doreen or Ginger's for Rose are just as noble and worthy as Romeo's for Juliet. 'The bloke', though, prides himself on common sense, which he believes Romeo self-evidently lacks.

As for the Montagues and the Capulets, to the early 20th-century working-class Australian male, a stoush is a stoush and a Push is a Push. As any intelligent observer of Shakespeare's masterpiece would conclude, the conduct of clannish violence by young men is foolish and may lead to tragedy, whether it is on the streets of 15th-century Verona or Federation Australia's Spadger's Lane. 'The bloke' and, one suspects, Dennis's readership, gets the message, making Shakespeare, even in this bowdlerised form, a cultural indicator for early 20th-century Australian nationals.

Dennis created the character of the 'sentimental bloke', a fictional narrator and Australian everyman, in 1909. 'The bloke' or 'the kid' became a keen observer of the social and emotional lives of his fictional 'cobbers' and assorted 'toffs' and 'tarts' of his and Doreen's acquaintance. 'The bloke' was the narrator of 14 verse compositions that painted a picture of working-class life in *fin de siècle* wartime and post-war Melbourne. Dennis's heroes were 'the bloke's' mates, Digger Smith, and Ginger Mick. In summing up his authorial project as romance, Dennis wrote to Henry Lawson: 'I have tried to tell a common, but very beautiful

⁸ Dennis, *Songs of a Sentimental Bloke*, 41.

story in coarse language, to prove—amongst other things—that life and love can be just as real and splendid to the ‘common’ bloke as to the ‘cultured’’.⁹

Dennis’s ‘bloke’ represented this Australian Everyman, for whom access to the profundities and historical antecedents had been provided courtesy of compulsory basic education and popular literacy. In a precursor to the ‘cultural cringe’, Dennis, his characters and his audience were aware that even a toff in Australia did not have the access to high culture necessary for him to be immersed in the benefits bestowed by Empire. These benefits, of course, were only completely available in the seat of the Empire.¹⁰ Jealous teasing rather than a resigned acceptance of English cultural advantages, and a pride in Australia’s idiosyncratic experience of the Britannic cultural heritage, were the norms of Dennis’s characters and apparently much of his audience.

The difference between the critical and popular reception of *The Songs of a Sentimental Bloke* is perhaps the best indicator of the difference between the aspiration to high culture and the power of popular culture in Federation Australia. Norman Lindsay, the poet Bernard O’Dowd, John Shaw Nielson, Mary Gilmore and John Le Gay Brereton, a sample of Australia’s cultural elite at the time¹¹, received and reviewed the work with varying degrees of negativity, even hostility in the case of Lindsay.

Meanwhile, *The Bulletin* which regularly published Dennis, called the work ‘uniquely Australian’ and ‘finely patriotic’. *Melbourne Punch* and *The Argus* echoed *The Bulletin*’s enthusiasm. The most definitive measure of popular appeal, however, were the sales figures, which by the standards of the time, were gigantic. In October 1916, one week after publication, Angus & Robertson had orders for more than 22,000 copies. By the time of its

⁹ K. McKenry, *Bugger the Music: Give us a Poem!* CD (Canberra: Fanged Wombat) cover notes, <https://www.folkmusic.net/htmlfiles/webrevs/fwd002.htm>.

¹⁰ J.A. Mangan, *Benefits Bestowed? Education and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

¹¹ Philip Butters, *An Unsentimental Bloke: The Life and Work of C.J. Dennis* (Kent Town, SA: Wakefield Press, 2014), 107.

London publication in December 1917, 63,000 copies had been printed, including special trench editions for sale to the AIF.¹²

Australians democratised many of the concepts of honour and symbols of culture involved in the myths and legends of Empire, thereby increasing their inspirational and seductive power for the Aussie in comparison to the ordinary Tommy, who typically lacked the education that would have given him even rudimentary knowledge of the action in Shakespeare's plays or a basic understanding of British history. The ordinary Australian was much more likely to read the signifiers of imperial myth and legend and reinterpret them in his own way than the working-class Tommy. In this sense, the AIF rank-and-file had more in common with the British officers, who had the benefit of a more comprehensive immersion in the imperial signals that motivated the Australians. Perhaps it was envy as much as egalitarianism that explained the Australian contempt for 'Pommy Officers'.

6.3 Anzac popular literacy and chivalry upside down

The significance of Dennis's work, including the *Sentimental Bloke* as well as the *The Moods of Ginger Mick*, is the reception it received from such a wide popular audience. Something only possible because of the extent of literacy among Australians in the era of Federation, a literacy which reflected more than a functional capacity to read and write but to appreciate irony and the ironic interpretation of the icons of high culture, be it Shakespeare or the legends of chivalry.

Dennis describes the state of colonial schooling and the nature of its relationship to British culture and military tradition in the poem 'The Boys Out There', which was published in the collection *Digger Smith* in 1918, the year the war ended:

*Yeh 've got to take the kid at school,
Gettin' 'is 'ist'ry lesson learned—*

¹² Butters, *An Unsentimental Bloke*, 108.

*Then tales uv Nelson an uv Drake,
Uv Wellington and fightin' Blake.*

*Is little 'eart 'as burned
To get right out an' 'ave a go
An' sock it into some base foe.*

*Nothin' but glory fills 'is mind;
The British charge is somethin' grand;
The soldier that 'e reads about
Don't 'ave no time for fear an' doubt;
'E's the 'eroic brand.
So, when that boy gets in the game,
'E jist wades in an' does the same.¹³*

Dennis's work and its popularity reflect the key ambiguities within the Anzac legend. Dennis emphasises throughout the various narratives that the Anzacs are distinctly and uniquely Australian. So, on one hand there is a celebratory view that Australia's distinct and unique Anzac soldiers have passed the test of nationhood. Dennis and his readers delight in the idiosyncratically Australian nature of the gallant heroes of Gallipoli, but as if reaching into the deep insecurity and a need to reassert the relationship with Empire the commentary and ultimate approval of Mick is provided by Kent. Mick's comrade Kent is an aristocratic Englishman. The denouement of the story suggests that Australians still crave the approval of the British before their gallantry can be ultimately vindicated. Anzac has not broken the ties of Empire but has redefined them.

His works are studded with popularised allusions to the notion of chivalry, as a set of principles or code of honour for the conduct of both love and war.

In a neat inversion of Cervantes's battle between Don Quixote and the vagabonds assaulting his Lady Dulcinea, in the poem 'Duck and Fowl' Dennis has Ginger come to the rescue of the honour of his 'tart Rosie' after an assault on her honour by a 'shickered toff' (an intoxicated

¹³ C.J. Dennis, *Digger Smith* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1918), 75.

member of the middle class). As in Cervantes, the hero's perception of his lady's honour and the importance of its defence are more significant than conventional ladylike behaviour on the part of the love object. In the poem, a 'shickered toff' who is 'flamin' all uv scarlet vice', tries to 'play 'andies and arrange a meet' with Rosie; she, however, 'fetches him a welt that shifts him in his seat'. Ginger is otherwise engaged making bargains in the market, but returns to Rosie in time to see the 'toff jump frum 'is seat, an call the girl a name'. In a humiliating but comedic concession to honour, Mick moderates the use of his superior power against the atrocious upper-class weakling: 'Mick never really stoushed him, but he used him for a mop'. To complete the social inversion in this episode of Australian romance, both Rosie and Mick escape the subsequent police intervention in the market, later cooking a banquet with produce they had stolen during the confusion.

Dennis and his audience had a common starting point for this episode. Irony is clearly an important part of the anecdote and a major part of the humour. In the larrikin tradition, Mick and Rosie steal their dinner in the confusion and feast at the expense of the 'chows'. The monstrous 'other', in an inversion of class-based chivalry, is a drunken and offensive toff. Dennis's message is clear—the larrikin Australian is the real chivalrous gentleman. Ginger, like many of his British literary antecedents, mourns the death of chivalry, alluding all the way back to the Arthurian legend as his authority and moral inspiration in the introductory stanza of the poem:

*Now, when a bloke 'e cracks a bloke fer insults to a skirt,
An' wrecks a joint to square a lady's name,
They used to call it chivalry, but now they calls it dirt,
An' the end of it is cops an' quod an' shame
Fer insults to fair Gwendoline they 'ad to be wiped out;
But Rosie's sort is just fair game—when Ginger ain't about.¹⁴*

Dennis's observations about Ginger Mick, the archetypal larrikin and 'leery' bloke, continue to follow Australia's entry into the war. In the poem 'The Call of Stoush', Ginger's motive for joining the AIF has 'the bloke' puzzled: 'Wus it fer glory, or a woman's sake ... / 'is

¹⁴ C.J. Dennis, *The Moods of Ginger Mick* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1982), 15.

motives got me beat'. 'The Sentimental Bloke' observes that Mick had always rejected the conventional forms of patriotism: 'E never flapped no flags or sich like rot; / 'E never sang "Gawsave" in all his life'. In fact, according to Dennis, the respectable patriots despised people like Mick until he became 'one of our brave boys'.¹⁵ Dennis, with unsubtle irony, elaborates on Ginger's suitability for recruitment: 'Trained' in his fictional, violent, working-class neighbourhood 'Spadger's Lane', 'Slick wiv 'is hands an' 'andy wiv a brick', his lack of 'culcher' 'is 'is country's gain' as it had prepared him 'fer this all-in fight' (the war).

Dennis, through 'the bloke's' observations, warns those whose wealth has 'stuffed' them with pride to remember that 'all men is brothers' when it comes to the 'lash' (fighting) and that 'the call' to which Mick has responded is sacred: 'The call wot knights 'eard in the minstrel lays, / That sent 'im in tin soots to Palestine'.¹⁶ The reference is unmistakable: Dennis is analogising Australian participation in the war to the Crusades, and the motives and inspiration of even the uneducated Ginger to that of the crusaders. The context in which 'the call' is used implies that the decision to join the AIF was like a religious conversion or obligation on the part of Ginger and his cobbles.

As Dennis portrays him in 'The Call of the Stoush', Ginger is likely to be a successful soldier because 'war ain't no giddy garden fete—it's war: / A game that calls up love an' 'atred both'. Things happen both in war and in a tough neighbourhood like Spadger's Lane that 'ud fairly freeze the gentle 'earts / Uv them 'oo knits 'is socks—the Culchered Tarts'.¹⁷ Dennis's reference to the sensibilities and philanthropic contribution to the war effort by respectable women positions Ginger as an unlikely hero of domesticity and respectability, social conventions which he had previously avoided and a social group which would have shunned Ginger in peacetime. Having accepted 'the call', Ginger becomes the romantic hero of a way of life in which he had no place and which he, prior to the war, would have held in contempt.

The ninth and thirteenth stanzas of the poem emphasise the seriousness of the risks involved in the war. The use of Australian idioms emphasises the similarity of war to a 'game'. The further linguistic irony—that 'game' also means petty crime—indicates that, for all their lack

¹⁵ Dennis, *The Moods of Ginger Mick*, 30.

¹⁶ Dennis, *The Moods of Ginger Mick*, 31.

¹⁷ Dennis, *The Moods of Ginger Mick*, 31.

of culture, ‘the bloke’, Ginger and, indeed, Dennis and his audience think of the war in certain explicit ways. War, like ‘footer’, is a sphere of male bonding and intimacy. The game of war is a robust but rules-based undertaking. To do the job properly, ‘niceties’ may need to be ignored, but there are clear, if informal, ethical boundaries. The ‘call’ involves a determination to win and a pragmatic notion of both excellence and fairness. Already at Gallipoli, Ginger reflects in Dennis’s poem, ‘Rabbits’, ‘Australia’s got a name / Fer doin’ little jobs like blokes ’oo play / A clean straight game’.¹⁸

Sport has lessons for the AIF—‘Wot time the footer brings the clicks great joy, / An’ saints er Carlton roughs it up wiv ’Roy’. Sport, however, is only a secondary metaphor. In ‘The Call of the Stoush’, Ginger is not being transformed into a football hero. Football can teach him lessons, but it is not the Fitzroy Football Club that inspires him. According to ‘the Sentimental Bloke’, Ginger never had a chance to find the glory of the world, but he joined the AIF because of the ‘beauty ’idin’ in ’is mind’ that ‘wus not writ plain fer blokes like you an’ me’.

The essential simile of the poem compares Ginger to ‘them noble ’ero blokes ’uv old’, and Dennis’s central theme is that, like Ginger Mick, they were ‘the crook ’uns uv their day’. The signifier on which the poem is drawing to produce its meaning is the common ground between an Australian larrikin and the risk-taking heroes of imperial legend and myth, like St George, Lancelot, and Richard the Lionheart. In this way, identification with the British heroes of history and folklore is directly connected to a Federation Australian hearing ‘the call’ to the war. In this view, joining the AIF is transformative and inspirational, an opportunity to overcome social disadvantage and cultural deprivation by following in the tradition of imperial heroes. Ginger does not do this out of crude economic opportunism, for Ginger ‘’ad a decent job’. It was a more profound aspiration, an unseen characteristic of the larrikin Ginger who, in Dennis’s view, was:

*... strange, soft thorts that never showed out;
An’ down in Spadger’s Lane, in dirt an’ din,
’E dreamed sich dreams as poits sing about.*

¹⁸ Dennis, *The Moods of Ginger Mick*, 107.

*'E's 'ad 'is visions uv the Bonzer Tart;
An' stoused some coot to ease 'is swellin' 'eart.¹⁹*

Under his tough larrikin exterior, Ginger is a romantic, and war is his chance to live the romance. He aspires to a vision inspired by the transcendent feminine, the 'Bonzer Tart'. He also honours his chosen 'sweetart', Rosie. His love of the game (petty gang crime) and the Push (working-class urban gangs in *fin de siècle* Australia) and love of a stoush (a fight) are a response to the frustrations imposed by the limited horizons of his social circumstance.

Dennis introduces a further ironic inversion of the social order in 'To the Boys that took the Count', where, in another sporting metaphor, being knocked out in a boxing match is analogised to being killed in action.²⁰ Returning wounded soldiers are referred to as 'toughs' and 'crooks': 'they wus'ev'ry bad thing, / But they mixed it [fought] like gentlemen should':

*Now, the Turk is a gent, an' they greets 'im a such,
An' they gives doo respect to 'is nibs;
But 'e never 'eld orf to apolergise much
When 'e slid cold steel in their ribs.
An' our boys won the name that they give 'em of late
'Cos they fought like a jugful of crooks,
So 'ere's to the bloke wiv the swaggering gait
An' a bullet mark spoiling 'is looks.²¹*

The laws of chivalry entail a heightened, even exaggerated respect for an honourable enemy. In the poem, Dennis reflects a sentiment often conveyed about Gallipoli, that the Turks, though ferocious fighters, were worthy and honourable opponents. This Australian view of the Turk is, of course, part of a longstanding inversion of the antagonism of war. In chivalry an enemy in war may be admired, even more than allies. In Walter Scott's the *Talisman*²² and

¹⁹ Dennis, *The Moods of Ginger Mick*, 32.

²⁰ Dennis, *The Moods of Ginger Mick*, 111.

²¹ Dennis, *The Moods of Ginger Mick*, 113.

²² Walter Scott, *The Talisman* (London: Dent, 1973).

*Ivanhoe*²³ the romanticisation of the real-life respect of Richard the Lionheart for Saladin is an iconic romantic Victorian portrayal of this phenomenon. The historical attitude of the discontented Christian princes of the Third Crusade towards their Muslim opponent is one explanation for the tendency for chivalrous regard of opponents. Chrétien de Troyes, who composed the definitive 14th-century manual on European chivalry, cites Saladin, a non-Christian, as the model of princely chivalry.²⁴

Using the words ‘gent’ and ‘gentleman’ with irony, Dennis is emphasising that the nobility of ‘the call’ does not negate the brutal reality and violence of combat in any way. He is also deliberately uncoupling honour from class and, in part, inventing it—again, chivalry turned upside down. Dennis is suggesting not so much that the diggers are like knights, but that the knights must have been like the diggers.

The overall theme of ‘The Boys that Took the Count’ is to reprimand those who judge harshly the behaviour of returned men (in 1915, essentially only the disabled wounded and VD sufferers) in relation to public drunkenness or indiscretion, ‘spragging a stray toff fer a loan’ or ‘owling a song on the bus’. Again, snobs and those who see themselves as respectable or sensitive are to blame for this injustice and ingratitude. The poem ends with ‘the bloke’ writing to Mick: ‘An’ I ends with the solemnest toast: / ’Ere’s to ’im—(raise yer glass)—’oo left pride in our ’earts / An’ ’is bones on Gallipoli coast’. The obligation on civilians to tolerate even poor behaviour on the part of returned men in gratitude for the sacrifice of the fallen has parallels in traditional chivalry: toleration of the nobility’s excesses was a trade-off for the protection their nobility (originally, military skill) conferred on society.

Ginger sees his Company as a ‘Push’, a male gang involved in petty crime. Dennis describes Ginger’s perception of the personnel in his platoon in the delightful poem ‘The Push’.²⁵ Ginger’s new cobbbers are socially, geographically, and culturally diverse. They include a shy English migrant, a mother’s boy called Trent (whose ‘lingo smells ’uv Oxford—but ’es a good Australian too’), a middle-class snob from the suburbs called Keith who ‘cleans his

²³ Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe* (London: Dent, 1970).

²⁴ Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

²⁵ Dennis, *The Moods of Ginger Mick*, 37.

teeth and wears pyjamas’, which both Mick and his correspondents think is quite eccentric. Ginger calls him ‘his Lordship’. Keith had to ‘loose some chunks of beauty’ to become a good Australian. Then there is Snifty Thompson, a ‘Sydney Rat’ and fellow Push member from ‘the Rocks’. There are lumpers (labourers), lawyers, clerks, farmers and bushmen, and college men with ‘letters to their name’.

*‘An’ if yeh want a slushy or a station overseer
Or a tinker, or a tailor, or a snob,
Or an ‘andy wiv ’orses or a minin’ ingineer,
Why we’ve got the very man to do yer job.
Butcher, baker, undertaker or a Caf’ de Pary chef,
‘Es waitin’, keen an ready in the little AIF’.*

The scholar—‘a bloke ’oo ’olds the boodle’—and the intellectually slow—‘the coot without a bean’—‘Knock around like Khaki twins’.

Interestingly, Dennis observes that the collective language that binds the Push comes not from ‘the college men with letters after their names’ but ‘Wiv ixpressive contributions from the stock uv Ginger Mick’.²⁶ This suggests that the language of the street became the *lingua franca* of the AIF because of its accessibility to all, and perhaps because the likes of Ginger Mick were perceived to be the cultural leaders, a sort of moral common denominator. The language of the Push—young, urban male risk-takers, prone to the culture of gang-style violence and group solidarity—best suited the linguistic persona of the Anzacs. Clearly, they were young men now engaged in a high-risk world of violence in which solidarity was crucial to the chances of survival and the achievement of honour.

6.4 Mateship and the battlefield

Importantly, Dennis’s explanation of the Anzac legend is that the acts of aspiring to the goal of soldiering and responding to ‘the Call’ created egalitarianism and mateship. This

²⁶ Dennis, *The Moods of Ginger Mick*, 37.

contradicts Russel Ward's interpretation in *The Australian Legend*.²⁷ Ward attributed the introduction of mateship to the battlefields to the radical nationalism of the organised working classes which, in turn, had internalised the rural tradition of the 'noble bushman' and the 'nomad tribe', rather than the urban or town larrikin of the Push. Bill Gammage claimed mateship to be 'a particular Australian virtue'.²⁸ Joan Beaumont refutes this, pointing out that 'all armies ... rely on small-group cohesion'.²⁹ Dennis clearly persists with the importance of mateship as part of the Anzac ethos, but his treatment of mateship is highly romanticised and focussed on the notion of a common response to 'the Call'.

Ward offers linguistic evidence suggesting that, by 1915, the term 'typical digger', with its Australian Workers' Union connotations, was used at home universally to cast the 'noble bushman' as soldier.³⁰ He fails to realise that the term 'digger' was not used by Australian soldiers at Gallipoli but only later, on the Western Front. Ward relies heavily on Bean's assertion that in 1914 '[t]he bush still sets the standards of personal proficiency even in the Australian cities. The bushman is hero to the Australian boy'.³¹ This is in stark contrast to Dennis's allusions to the crypto-religious nature of 'the Call' and the perception that mateship is really only an aspiration of pre-war Australians, properly consummated by the sacrificial experience of the AIF: 'Shy strangers till a bugle blast preached 'oly brother'ood; / But mateship they 'ave found at last; an' they 'ave found it good'.³²

Ward's and Bean's insistence on the 'noble bushman' as inspiration does not fit easily with Dennis's references to Nelson and Drake, crusaders and the 'noble heroes of old' cited as inspiration for Ginger and his ilk. But there are other strong connections. The contemporary popularity of Dennis adds weight to the view that the myths and legends of Empire were at least as familiar as the 'lone hand' as a signifier of national character to the people in the trenches and at home.

²⁷ Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1958), 212.

²⁸ Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War* (Canberra: ANU Press, 1991), 112

²⁹ Joan Beaumont, *Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2013), 119.

³⁰ Ward, *The Australian Legend*, 213.

³¹ Ward, *The Australian Legend*, 213.

³² Dennis, *The Moods of Ginger Mick*, 37.

On the other hand, Dennis's focus on masculinity and the proclivity for fighting provides a common connection between the bushman, the pioneer, and the Anzac. The importance of a relationship with the unique Australian landscape also unites these three figures. In 'A Letter to the Front', 'the bloke' writes to Ginger reminding him of the beauty of the Australian bush and hoping he will be home to see it soon. Finally, of course, Kent decorates Ginger's grave with mimosa—the closest thing he could find to a wreath of wattle.

In Dennis's works, class-based habits of mind were derided as snobbery and their practitioners held in contempt as toffs. Those Australians who tried to impersonate the class-based performative artefacts of British chivalry, like Dennis's fictional character Keith, were shunned and derided. Notwithstanding this, the key signifiers of sacrifice, fair play, persistence in the face of overwhelming odds, comradeship, and dedication—the substance of chivalry—were aspired to. Just as the eugenicists believed that Australia had produced a better physical specimen of the British race, her poets and artists believed she had produced a finer, more democratic, and accessible form of chivalric championship.

According to the narrative of *The Songs of a Sentimental Bloke*, Ginger is eventually killed in action. Before his death, he is promoted to 'corporiel', a position of trust to which he would never have been able to aspire in peacetime. In a letter home, Ginger 'skites', adopting an ironic sense of propriety: '*Corpriel ... an' minds yer spell it right*'.³³ Ginger muses, somewhat ironically, in the penultimate poem in the collection, 'The Game', that if only he had applied military discipline to his days in the Push they could have taken Melbourne 'off the police in a night'.³⁴ In Ginger's tone, there is a grudging acknowledgment that in war and, perhaps, in life, discipline and the responsibility and respectability it bestows, is a necessary evil. Even a 21st-century reader gets the sense that war is making a gentleman of Ginger and that, even before 'e cashed in 'is check', his larrikin days were over.

In *Bad Characters* Peter Stanley examines 'the full spectrum of indiscipline of the men of the A.I.F, from petty crime absenteeism and desertion to murder and mutiny'. Stanley contextualises the Anzacs as 'male citizen volunteers of Federal Australia as temporary

³³ Dennis, *The Moods of Ginger Mick*, 123.

³⁴ Dennis, *The Moods of Ginger Mick*, 120.

soldiers and survivors of traumatic events'.³⁵ In his analysis, Stanley inverts the logic of 'the bloke', pointing out that some members of the AIF used the 'discipline' of the larrikin to subvert the reputation and legitimate agency of the of the AIF. Stanley's analysis follows Bean's tribute to the AIF, acknowledging the 'bad' and declaring that 'the only memorial worthy of them was the bare and uncoloured story ...'.³⁶

Dennis's 'bloke' is a midpoint between the bad characters of Stanley's account and the heroic Anzacs of Ashmead-Bartlett's landing narrative and the chivalrous Bayards of John Treloar. Ginger's larrikinism retains a moral purpose and any wrong he has done as a petty criminal and a violent hoodlum is absolved by his subsequent soldiering and ultimately his personal sacrifice. The larrikin had to be subsumed into the legend because he was part of the uncoloured story, but he was cleansed of the moral and political consequences of his actions, leaving for most working-class and many middle-class Australians only an endearing familiarity. Indeed, Dennis transforms the backstreet brawler and petty criminal into a loyal and extremely useful imperial battlefield leader.

The final poem in the series is 'the bloke's' reflection on receiving a letter from one of Ginger's comrades confirming the circumstances of his death. In 'A Gallant Gentleman', 'the bloke' is very proud but perplexed that Ginger's headstone is marked with the simple epithet, 'A gallant gentleman', and that this is how Ginger's Oxford-educated English mate, Trent, describes Ginger in his letter of condolence to Rosie, Ginger's 'sweetart'. Dennis and his readers thought it most appropriate for Ginger's measure of chivalry or gallantry to be assessed by an educated Englishman, accepting the Australian larrikin as a peer in gallantry and, perhaps, a superior. This was the appropriate sign-off for Dennis's ironic hero, and the basis of his contribution to the Anzac legend as an icon of egalitarian masculinity.

³⁵ Peter Stanley, *Bad Characters: Sex, Crime, Mutiny, Murder, and the Australian Imperial Force* (Sydney: Murdoch Books, 2010), LOC 3075.

³⁶ C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918: Vol. I, The First Phase* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1935), xxx.

6.5 Anzac, chivalry, and the status of women

One more thing is necessary to complete Dennis's picture of Australian chivalry: the position of women in the landscape supporting the digger myth. Ginger's dying wish is a request to his comrades to 'Look after Rose ... Mafeesh [I'm finished]'. Dennis refers to 'The claims uv women; mother, sweet'ear, wife? / An' 'oos to 'ear our soljers' dyin' wish? / An 'oos to 'eed?'. Chivalry is reciprocal; it now becomes an obligation of the survivors to honour the obligations of the 'fallen' to their womenfolk. The valorisation of sacrifice, solidarity with the new identity and acceptance of new obligations are essential features of the chivalry required of civilians, to honour the 'fallen' and their surviving comrades and women. The transformation brought about by the war is complete. Ginger—a larrikin, Push member, the antithesis of domesticity—dies a romantic hero, leaving behind him a legacy of gallantry and a society obligated to the honour and respectability of 'his lady' who, pre-war, had been exploited by toffs as a tart. Dennis prefigures an important chapter in Australian social policy and the Australian urban landscape.

Australia's inter-war policies on family welfare, widows' pensions, child endowment, even infant healthcare, were created in the wake of the inverted chivalry of pre-war feminism and the traumatised chivalry of the returned men.³⁷ At the same time, obelisks, honour rolls, statues, Anzac parks, and memorials were built and became the most esteemed public spaces in almost every town and suburb, creating the sacred places of a new legend.³⁸

Imperial chivalry, as a masculinity, is a social personality and a class identity as well as a subjectively held psychological consciousness. Australians would see it as aristocratic, arrogant, hierarchical, formalised, and conformist, a self-image based on class and tradition. Australian chivalry, like imperial chivalry, was a guide to masculine performance in living and dying, in the public sphere, but it emphasised the Australian mindset in favour of the underdog, protection of the vulnerable, and a culture of innovation, improvisation and teamwork.

³⁷ Jill Roe, 'Chivalry and Social Policy in the Antipodes', *Historical Studies* 22, no. 88 (1987): 403.

³⁸ K.S. Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2008).

In turn, these conditions modified and constricted the adventurous ‘colonial girl’. In the interbellum and post-war period, she became the ‘housewife’. The digger myth encompassed and absorbed the chivalry narrative. Chivalry disappeared as an explanation and the digger spirit became the measure of the national character. The imperial and Australian revision of chivalrous masculinity interacted to suggest a tension within and between these two masculinities, supporting the imperial order of things in temporal and spatial context. Australian chivalry was an idea and part of a set of gendered relationships and cultural identities which helped create, responded to, and was challenged by the Anzac legend. Romance legends and the cult of high risk and dissenting behaviour played a major part in defining the Australian masculine identity of sacrifice honoured as ‘The Digger’—swaggering in life, sacred in death.

Almost all the champions of early Australian folklore—miners, explorers, bushrangers—were men and masculinist. By Federation, there were some exceptions to this male dominance of Australian culture. Women poets, journalists, lawyers, and feminists were transforming the perception of Australian womanhood. Leading up to Federation, the iconographic symbols of the nation were women, at least as female mythological figures representing the abstractions of the states (colonies), the Commonwealth and the Empire.

Early Federation popular fiction portrayed women like the indomitable Mum Rudd, who was the force holding the hard-working but comically inept small selector family together. Miles Franklin and her headstrong, modern protagonist Sybilla dominated the Australian literary scene before the war. The expatriate Thea Proctor and the Australian modernist Margaret Preston were feisty and original forces in the pictorial arts. Louisa Lawson in journalism and Vida Goldstein in radical politics are just two examples of a perceptible trend.

By Federation, the Australian ‘new woman’ had been practising medicine for a decade, and had been completing medical, engineering, science, and legal studies at university level since 1891.³⁹ In contrast, the first women graduated from Oxford University in 1920. The independent ‘colonial girl’ or the ‘sporty girl’ did not need a man to validate her place in society. She had been admitted to the professions and was about to achieve the franchise

³⁹ Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688–1980* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1981), 77.

(among the first women in the world to do so). Australian women were making great strides towards an independent, if not an equal, place in Australian society, except for public affairs; at the outbreak of war, there were no women in any Australian Parliament. However, Australian women had the right to vote from 1902, while their sisters in Britain were still being gaoled for demanding that same right.

Australia's feminist successes would be dramatically transformed by the Great War experience and the development of the Anzac legend. The Anzac legend and the mythical digger would displace the female symbols of nationhood. The public representation of Australian women would go from an independent, socially confident woman to a teary and fraught woman in need of a man to protect her from society's ills. Notwithstanding the courage and dedication of the so-called 'Anzac girls' of the Australian Army nursing corps, the Anzac legend transformed, if not snuffed out, the potential for the advancement of Australian women for many decades.⁴⁰ The legend emphatically reinstated masculinity as a defining quality of the Australian character.

6.6 Conclusion

The events of the Great War and the popular significance of the Anzac legend meant that the virgin Australia and the empress Britannia, as the icons of nationhood and Empire respectively, were replaced. Installed in the place of these feminine icons was the laconic Anzac. For a century, the defining national icon was masculine, idiosyncratically Australian, almost invisibly, but nonetheless significantly connected to the ancient myths and legends of the British. Hidden from view are the Anzacs' very British historical predecessors and his female analogue.

The performativity, critical appreciation and self-description of the Anzac partly explain the character attributed to the Anzacs. The next chapter of this thesis deals with the ways in

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Stewart, 'Nurses under Fire', *Wartime Magazine* 50, https://www.awm.gov.au/wartime/50/stewart_nurse, accessed 13/11/2022: 'During the First World War, eight Australian nurses were awarded the Military Medal, the highest Imperial award that was available to them. It was the nurses' equivalent of the Victoria Cross, but little is known of these women or their extraordinary actions.'

which this lived experience was translated into the legend and endured as representation of the symbolic heroic elements of the national character.

Chapter 7

Schooling and the origins of legendary thinking

In *The Official History*, Bean asserted that the Anzac Corps was an exceptionally effective fighting unit.¹ But the Anzac legend is not only about fighting. Bean attributed to the Anzacs a democratic form of nobility which he believed was unique to Australians.² Dale Blair and others have questioned the unequivocal egalitarianism of the Anzacs reported by Bean, looking particularly at the apparent class bias in *The Official History*³ in which Bean identifies and discusses the middle-class and educated Anzacs in more detail than the more numerous working-class diggers.

This criticism of Bean needs to be put into context. Bean is not describing himself but rather his observations of the Anzacs who he saw as egalitarian to a fault: '[The digger] knew only one social horizon, that of race'.⁴ The nobility Bean attributed to the Anzacs referenced the voluntarism of the AIF, the culture of mateship and the bush heritage of self-reliance as not only contributing to the Anzac as a fighting soldier but to the Anzacs as representatives of his countryman's unique moral character.

The idea of the bush and the pioneers were not the only influence on Bean when it came to describing the Anzac and his role in the conflict. Martin Ball has shown Bean's observations and analysis were also derived from the philosophies and rhetoric of military heroism of the Great Greek historians Herodotus and Thucydides and the 19th-century British military historians of Empire such as W. Kinglake.⁵

¹ C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918: Vol. I, The First Phase* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1935), xxx.

² Dale J. Blair, *An Army of Warriors, these Anzacs: Legends and Illusion in the First AIF*, unpublished thesis, Victorian University of Technology, 1998, 4.

³ Blair, *An Army of Warriors*, 54.

⁴ C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–18: Vol. VI, The A.I.F. in France During the Allied Offensive, 1918* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1942), 6.

⁵ Martin Ball, 'Re-reading Bean's Last Paragraph', *Australian Historical Studies* 34, no. 122: 231–247, DOI: 10.1080/10314610308596253 2003.

Bean wrote *The Official History* as a ‘bottom up’ narrative in the sense that he engaged not only with commanders but with the ordinary soldier and the platoon commander. In volume III, he is explicit about his desire to ensure that ordinary soldiers were given credit for their work. He perceived this approach as a point of difference with historians of Empire:

*The colonial historian, convinced that the true credit for famous achievements in war as in politics lies often with unknown subordinates, endeavours to sift the details until he can lay a just share of praise at the feet of those to whom it is due.*⁶

This egalitarian resolution and Bean’s adherence to the bushman and the pioneer character types as the critical identities of the 1st AIF, obscure the Classical references derived from his Arnoldian education in the formation of the Anzac legend. Notwithstanding the often-repeated inaccuracy that Bean never used his Classical education in composing the history, except in reference to Troy (a Sergeant of the name), several critical passages in *The Official History* draw analogies between the Anzacs and the heroes of the Classical world derived from his education.

Bean engages only once or twice with the subject of public education and its influence on the character of Anzac. Adherence to the AIF’s egalitarianism made it axiomatic that Bean refrained from directly associating the elitist GPS tradition of education with the Anzacs. The Arnoldian ethos borrowed into public schooling—and most explicitly as part of the ethos of GPS schools in both England and Australia—is a partly concealed element of Bean’s construction of the Anzac legend.

Seeking to refute, the post-war ‘both to blame’ theory of ‘impatient radicals’, Bean whimsically emphasised the moral superiority of the Entente, speculating

⁶ C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918: Vol. III, The AIF in France 1916* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1935), v.

about the relationship between humanity, peace and progress and the institution of English Public Schools:

It did not really favour progress in humane ideals to teach that a ruling class deliberately schooled in the principles of Clausewitz and Bernhardt would tend to mould human affairs as generously as one brought up in the creed of the English Public Schools.⁷

The ethos of the Arnoldian system of education both in its elite form and in its democratised form as practised by Australia's education reformers was not far away from Bean's mind and pen. Yet it is seldom developed as part of the contribution to the Anzac legend. What is less commonly explored is the influence on Bean's account of the Anzac legend of his study of the Classical tradition. Bean acquired his knowledge of the Classics during his schooling at Brentwood and Clifton and later at Oxford. These encounters represented much longer associations than his romance with the Australian bush.

Through his exposure to the Arnold tradition as pupil, teacher and the son of a career headmaster, Bean absorbed the importance of Western philosophy. Though not a believer, Bean wedded Classical philosophy and Christianity into Christian humanism; for all of his life he was committed to the social value of Christian ethics.

Bean associated that tradition with Dr Thomas Arnold, the headmaster of Rugby School. The Arnoldian model featured in each of the schools his father, Edwin Bean, worked: All Saints College, Bathurst; Brentwood Grammar School, Essex; and Clifton where Charles went as a senior; and Sydney Grammar School where Charles himself briefly taught.

Bean's maternal family were involved with the exclusive Hutchins School in Hobart, a school that identified with the Arnold tradition. Demonstrating again the Arnoldian connection

⁷ C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–18: Vol. VI, The A.I.F. in France During the Allied Offensive, 1918*. (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1942), 1074.

between GPS traditions and public schooling, Thomas Arnold junior was Tasmania's first Inspector of Schools, between 1850 and 1856.

Bean's *Here, My Son*, written much later, in 1950, is a history of Australia's non-government schools. Bean describes 'The Arnold Tradition' as a form of Christian humanism, a democratic but intellectually elitist theory, emphasising individual self-worth and qualities associated with 'good character': trust and reliability, honesty, openness, self-discipline, self-reliance, independent thought and action, friendship, and concern for the common good over selfish or sectional interests⁸. If Arnold's description of good character sounds close to Bean's various descriptions of the Anzacs, it is not coincidental.

Bean's account of himself as a childhood learner emphasises the importance he placed on a moral pedagogy based on learning by doing, or modelling from the moral leadership of teacher, prefects, and parents. Bean believed the essentials of character were formed very early. It is curious that despite his lifelong interest in education, character, and the Arnold tradition he pays little regard to the role of Australian education policy and curriculum in the formation of the Australian and ultimately the Anzac character:

*... a child's outlook on life is 'caught' rather than 'taught'—that is to say that until about the age of 15 it is learnt from the example and dogma of parents or other leaders who are the child's heroes.*⁹

Schooling and the Arnoldian ethos supported and shaped Bean's career. He shared status as an old boy of Clifton College with Birdwood and Haig, which gave him access to the Imperial Command at the highest levels. Even Bean's relationships with Australian leaders were influenced by the Arnoldian tradition. Early in his journalistic career Bean had identified wartime leader W.M. Hughes as a rising star and they continued to have a cordial relationship.

⁸ C.E.W. Bean, *Here, My Son* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1950), 53, 108–109, 109–110, 177, 130 and 143–144.

⁹ C.E.W. Bean, 'I Believe ...', ABC Radio in 1948 (reprinted in *The ABC Weekly*, Sydney, 3 April 1948).

Hughes's mentor as a student teacher, before he migrated to Australia many years earlier, was Matthew Arnold, the famous poet, who demonstrated yet another filial connection between public education and the elitist Arnoldian tradition. Matthew, the eldest son of Thomas Arnold, was an Inspector of public schools in England who placed particular emphasis on the education of the underprivileged.

Bean's allusion to the Classics can be glimpsed by examining the last paragraph of his volumes of *The Official History*:

*But the Imperial Force is not dead. That famous army of generous men marches still down the long lane of its country's history, with bands playing and rifles slung ... What these men did nothing can alter now. The good and the bad, the greatness and smallness of their story will stand. Whatever of glory it contains nothing now can lessen. It rises, as it will always rise above the mists of ages monument to great-hearted men; and, for their nation, a possession forever.*¹⁰

The words 'a possession forever'¹¹ is a quote from Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, a Classical history which heroised and made immortal the Athenian warriors of the Peloponnesian War in the same way Bean wished to make lasting heroes for Australia of the Anzacs.

Bean repeatedly uses the phrase 'great-hearted men' to describe his comrades in the AIF and the Anzacs in general. According to Martin Ball this phrase is Homer's from the *Iliad*. Homer describes both the Trojans and the Achaeans in these terms. This usage encapsulates Bean's vision of the Australian soldier as a noble character with a heroic heritage going back 3,000 years. Bean's literary allusion would not be complete without an appropriate 'militant' Christian reference. He achieves this by

¹⁰ Bean, *The Official History*: Vol.VI, 1096.

¹¹ Ball, 'Re-reading Bean's Last Paragraph', 233.

referring to the ‘mists of ages’, which of course is a direct allusion to the ‘Rock of ages’.

With Bean’s education he could hardly have avoided the geographic coincidence of the Dardanelles and the Hellespont. As Dudley McCarthy described it:

At least one of his [the captain of the Minnewaska] passengers knew these seas, though he [Bean] had never sailed them before, for the Iliad and the Odyssey were open books to him as Homer had written them—and so were the Greek Testaments.¹²

Bean was not the only classically educated officer to commit the allusion of the Classical wars to paper in diaries and letters home. Literary figures who recognised the significance of the location included the novelist Compton McKenzie and the poet laureate John Masefield, whose apologia of the campaign incorporates the medieval chivalry story *The Song of Roland*.

As John Keegan observes:

Troy and Gallipoli make two separate but connected epics, as so many of the classically educated officers recognised and recorded.¹³

But Bean is less interested in the seascape or the landscape and far more focussed on the comparisons between the Anzac heroes and the Classical heroes and the symbols of chivalry.

The link between literary knowledge acquired through education and the interpretation of the events of Gallipoli and the character of the men who fought and died there supports the relationship between the Anzac legend and education. In the same passage from *The Official History*, Bean forms a metaphor between the vigour

¹² Dudley McCarthy, *Gallipoli to the Somme: The Story of C.E.W. Bean* (Sydney: John Ferguson, 1983), 106.

¹³ Ball, ‘Re-reading Bean’s Last Paragraph’, 234.

and life of the AIF and the cross of St George rising ‘as it will always rise’ (as the ensign of the Australian navy). St George is not only the patron of England (and Greece) but is the champion of chivalry-slayer of symbolic evil, rescuer of the defenceless and the vulnerable a heroic agent of masculine sacrifice for the greater good.

At the conclusion of the first phase of the Gallipoli campaign, Bean observed the determination of the Anzacs to persist in spite of the difficulties. He speculated on their motivation. Bean notes they were not impelled by the love of a fight, or hatred for the Turks, nor purely patriotism or the ties of Empire or a desire for fame, but rather to be one of the strong men who ‘were masters of their own minds and decisions’, who their mates depended on. Bean goes on:

It lay in the mettle of the men themselves. To be the sort of man who would give way when his mates are trusting to his firmness; to be the sort of man who would fail when the line, the whole force and the allied cause required his endurance; to have made it necessary for another unit to do his own unit’s work; to live the rest of his life haunted by the knowledge that he had set his hand to a soldier’s task and had lacked the grit to carry it through—that was the prospect which these men could not face. Life was very dear to them, but life was not worth living unless they could be true to their idea of Australian manhood. Standing upon that alone when help failed and hope faded, when the end loomed clear in front of them, when the whole world seemed to crumble and the heaven to fall in, they face its ruin undismayed.¹⁴

This dramatic rhetoric by Bean is significant for the fact that it sets out the tactical and existential value of mateship to the AIF and the allies. He claims an almost transcendent form of obligation to the State and the allied cause through being a dependable mate. It is also an endorsement of the Arnoldian tradition, which holds that character is the most important element of a man’s being. For Arnold and for

¹⁴ Bean, *The Official History*: Vol. I, 607.

Bean, education was primarily the religious and moral training of character.¹⁵

Consistent with the Arnoldian tradition, Bean urges Australians about the importance of education and moral character in his 1918 booklet, *In Your Hands, Australians*.¹⁶

“A monument to great hearted men, and for their nation – a possession forever”¹⁷

The above passage from *The Official History* confirms what is already evident: that Bean carried the pre-existing notion of heroism and manhood into his work as an observer and historian. The passage has more than an echo with another Classical piece—the funeral oration of Pericles, which reads in part: ‘They thought it more honourable to stand their ground and suffer death than to give in and save their lives’.

John Treloar was Bean’s long-term collaborator. A staff officer in the 1st AIF, Treloar landed at Gallipoli on the same day as Bean. Later, Bean recruited Treloar to manage the Australian War Records Section in London. After the war Treloar was deeply involved with Bean in the establishment of the Australian War Memorial and was a longstanding Director of the Memorial and the author of *Australian Chivalry*, a selection of the War Memorial’s war paintings and photographs.

By the time of the preparation and publication of *Australian Chivalry* in 1933, Bean and Treloar had become concerned at the rising tide of literature and opinion that held that the Great War had been a meaningless waste of life and that there was no ultimate right and wrong between the combatants¹⁸. Treloar and Bean adhered for most of the interbellum to the British orthodoxy that the Great War had been the ‘War to end Wars’. Evidence for Bean actively holding this view commenced with the production of an official ‘Peace’ medal; Bean’s speech, which launched the medal, was circulated to all schools to be read on the

¹⁵ Michael McCrum, *Thomas Arnold, Headmaster: A Reassessment* (Oxford University Press, 1989), 116.

¹⁶ C.E.W. Bean, *In Your Hands, Australians* (London: Cassell and Company Ltd, 1918), 94.

¹⁷ C.E.W. Bean, Volume 6, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–18*. (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1942).

¹⁸ Bean C.E.W. Letters, 1932 addressed to A. W. Bazley concerning *Australian Chivalry*.

occasion of the presentation of the ‘Peace Souvenir Medallions’ to all Australian school children¹⁹. This served to further reinforce Australia’s role in the conflict and the Anzac legend. As the Australian War Memorial explains:

*Bean’s speech was written to be read to children, not only as a celebration of the Allies’ victory to mark the end of the Great War but also as a celebration of the peace. The text of Charles Bean’s document was written in a style designed to emphasise to children the sacrifice of Australian service men and women. It also encouraged recognition of Australia’s role on the world stage as a consequence of our willing participation in the conflict.*²⁰

The obvious concern for Treloar and Bean, even though Bean was well on the way to holding a pacifist position as an active member of the League of Rights Union)²¹ was that the whole construct of the Anzac legend was in jeopardy. If the public believed that the war and the Entente cause generally was pointless, then the nation-defining role of the Anzacs at Gallipoli - their moral character, selfless heroism, fighting ability and courage - were all in jeopardy.

Bean and his colleagues had good reason to be concerned as there was an impressive catalogue of mainly international literature produced during the 1920s which argued exactly the radical position, so potentially offensive to the Anzac legend. Just some of the more popular works included *All Quiet on the Western Front* by Erich Maria Remarque, *Goodbye to All That* by Robert Graves, *The Good Soldier Svejk* by Jaroslav Hasek, *A Farewell to Arms* by Ernest Hemmingway and *Three Soldiers* by John Dos Passos. Not to mention Herman Hesse’s dystopic classic *If the War Goes On*. And as Jay Winter²² describes them, the anti-romantic ‘truth telling’ war poets Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, and of course T.S. Elliott’s epoch defining poem ‘The Waste Land’, considered by many critics to be a

¹⁹ <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/stories/great-war-memories/charles-bean-speech-canberra> accessed 16/06/2023.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ K.S. Inglis, ‘Bean, Charles Edwin (1879–1968)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bean-charles-edwin-5166>, accessed 21/11/2022.

²² Jay Winter, ‘Prose, Poetry, and the Voice of the Witness’, in *The Cultural History of War in the Twentieth Century and After* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

meditation on the pointlessness of the war. This cultural input combined with the strain and bitterness caused by the Depression and the partial failure of Soldier Settlement meant there was a potential ground for anti-war and potentially anti-Anzac sentiment in Australia.

For both Bean and Treloar the war had to have a moral purpose, and this purpose could be divined in the traditions of Western civilisation imparted through education, particularly an education in the classic works of ancient and medieval heroism. Bean and Treloar were raised in the traditions of ‘muscular Christianity’—the Arnoldian concept which embodied a modernised form of chivalric heroism—of which an important part was to use physical power for good ends. The morality of muscular Christianity was easily transferred to warfare. Bean was educated in muscular Christianity in the crucible of exclusive British private schools—Brentwood and Clifton and an Australian corporate school, all Saints Bathurst. Treloar was educated at Albert Park State School; though an outstanding athlete and a fine student, he had a modest family background and so he did not attend university.

Treloar was impressed with Bean’s Classical education and Oxford degree, while Bean pre-war had had the experience of living *On the Wool Track* and admired greatly the tradition of working-class self-reliance and meritocracy complimented by the ethos of mateship represented by Treloar. Treloar’s government school education also gave him a metaphor for the nobility of the Anzacs. That metaphor was the cycle of English History as described in the New South Wales, Victorian and Queensland school syllabuses, tales of knights, the Arthurian legends, Richard the Lionheart, and Robin Hood and later, for the more capable, Shakespeare’s History Plays. As I have shown in previous chapters, references to notions of chivalric honour were common in the literature of the school readers and the school papers and magazines in class, and in the works of Kingsley and Scott at leisure. Treloar’s metaphor for Anzac immortality and nobility—the Anzac legend—was chivalry.

Both Treloar and Bean saw Western civilisation as a continuum, starting with Greece then Rome then the Middle Ages, including the Crusades, and finally peaking in the British Empire. Therefore, the admixture of Classical allusion, chivalric analogy and modern British heroism was perfectly consistent with their mindsets and experience. Jay Winter has argued that there has been far too much emphasis on the modernist or progressive cultural outcomes

from the Great War. Instead, Winter emphasises the importance of traditional motifs and icons in the myriad responses to war. Winter writes:

*... this vigorous mining of eighteenth and nineteenth century images and metaphors to accommodate expressions of mourning is one of the central reasons why it is unacceptable to see the Great War as the moment 'modern memory' replaced something else, something timeworn and discredited, which I have called 'Tradition'.*²³

In composing *Australian Chivalry* John Treloar reaches into the past to the tradition of romance, a 12th-century cultural and political phenomenon. Treloar references chivalry not as an act of mourning but as a tribute to the gallantry and sense of purpose of the Anzacs. Chivalric Romance was revived in the 19th century largely by the British aristocracy and middle class as an elitist social and cultural point of reference. Treloar seeks to invert that type of chivalry, emphasising the unique aspects of the Australian character in very much the same way as Dennis in *The Sentimental Bloke*. To make the real gallant crusader the ordinary Anzac.

Winter argues further that when individuals and groups express, embody, interpret or refute a script about the past, they generalise the ties that bind the group together and deposit additional memory.²⁴ John Treloar, like most Australians of his generation, attended Catholic parochial or government schools, meaning they had in common a familiarity with the Romance literature of the 19th century, especially Sir Walter Scott and his Waverley novels, but more generally tales from history and even Shakespearean literature (generally simplified for age-appropriate consumption.)

Apart from the symbols of knights, Crusades, hidden nobility and comradeship of Romance literature and history, much of Australian children's literature of the time indirectly referenced chivalry and adventure but in an Australian setting. Ethel Turner's *Seven Little*

²³ Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 5.

²⁴ Jay Winter, *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press), 2010, 11.

Australians, for example features a number of chivalrous motifs. The most telling is an act of female chivalry by the character Judy, who gives up her life to save her younger half-brother. *Australian Chivalry* was an act of memory, but many in the AIF were carrying at various levels of consciousness a characterisation of military masculinity based on the romance of childhood heroics.

Treloar made it very clear in the Preface to *Australian Chivalry* that the Australians were part of a long heritage of chivalry and romantic honour, the spirit of which was a potent weapon of the allies. He wrote that the Australians were the very embodiment of the knights of old:

*The slouched hat replaced the crested heaume, the sombre khaki tunic
the hauberk and the magazine rifle the sword or lance ... these young
men swore fealty to the oppressed against the despoiler ...*²⁵

Australian Chivalry is the official Australian artistic record of the Great War and features the key paintings and photographs of the Australian War Memorial's collection. Paintings and drawings reproduced in this volume include those of Arthur Stretton, Sir John Longstaff, George Lambert, Septimus Power, Will Dyson and Louis McCubbin, some of the most important Australian artists of the first half of the 20th century. The paintings are various impressions of scenes of Australian involvement in the Great War, by each official Australian war artist. Each plate is accompanied by paragraphs that describe the significance of the scenes, or the context in which actions took place. A number of these summaries are from *The Official War History* edited by Bean²⁶, others are from the notes of the artists, or are explanations composed by Treloar or Bean.²⁷

As was the custom for collectable publications in the thirties, the book is contained in a separate box or case. The box has pasted on to the front and centre of its top, an illustration by the minor Australian artist and lithographer Fred Leist. The illustration has a cream border and a white vertical rectangular background; against the white background are the

²⁵ John Treloar, *Australian Chivalry* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1933), Preface.

²⁶ C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1937).

²⁷ Treloar, *Australian Chivalry*.

unmistakable long horizontal and shorter vertical red lines that intersect to form the colours of St George. In the foreground a digger shakes hands with a medieval knight in crusader garb. The crusader's soutane features again the cross of St George.

The English had not used the colours of St George as a national symbol during the war. The flag of Empire 'the emblem of greatness and fair dealing for every man' was the Union Jack.²⁸ Yet *Australian Chivalry* features a flag without immediate imperial or Australian provenance.²⁹ The preoccupations and intentions of the publisher, the editor, the artists and most importantly their subjects was the reconciliation of Australian chivalry and the legends of Crusader Britain.

Alluding to an older allegiance of the Australian military self-image, Leist associates the Anzac legend in the Great War not with Wellington or Nelson, but with older myths and legends of Empire. Leist's work conveyed, as Peter Dodds McCormick – the poet who authored the Australian national anthem 'Advance Australia Fair' – had anticipated, that Australians had been roused 'to arms like the sires of yore'. The colours of St George became the uniform of the English crusaders in the 11th century. Seven hundred years later they played an important part in the valorisation of Richard the Lionheart and Scott's gallery of chivalrous Britons and the Victorian canon of Gothic Romance.

Chivalry and crusading allusions specifically focused on Gallipoli are present in the Victorian and Tasmanian school literature. A poem by Doris Kerr, originally published in *The Australasian* and reproduced in school readers and magazines, draws a far more direct connection to the sacrifice of Gallipoli. Despite the time that has passed, the Anzacs are remembered:

... where Turk and Christian met,

²⁸ The Union Jack or Union Flag became the State Flag of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland on 1 January 1801, after the passage of the *Act of Union* in July 1800 by the Westminster Parliament. Until this time the Celtic nations had only been subject to 'Personal Union' with England by virtue of the monarch of England also being the sovereign of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland separately. The Union Jack has as its base detail of the St George Standard and became the symbol of Empire in Victorian times.

²⁹ J.A. Mangan (ed.), *Benefits Bestowed? Education and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 45.

*And stark against an alien sky the cross of Christ is set
... From north and south and east and west, with eager eyes aflame,
With heads erect and laughing lips the young Crusaders came.*³⁰

Gallipoli itself, has become sacred. In this poem, the Anzacs have become crusaders in a juxtaposition similar to the work of Treloar. Although the idea of crusaders is a borrowing from ancient British lore, its presentation is Australianised. The diggers have possessed the crusaders rather than the other way around.

The canon of Victorian romance created a popular ‘middlebrow’ historiography of the English and the Third Crusade, of which the works of Sir Walter Scott were the best known. Meanwhile, there was a parallel literary revival of the Grail legends and crusader hagiographies and ‘High’ Christianity in the universities of the Victorian and Edwardian Empire. This canon was repeated on a cyclical basis in a form accessible to schoolchildren in the History, English and Civics syllabus of Australian primary and secondary schools.

7.1 School goes to war: The first casualty.

Australia’s first Great War casualty was a non-combatant and not a member of the AIF, but a member of the Australian Naval Expeditionary Force. Brian Pockley was very much a product and an embodiment of Bean’s Arnoldian school tradition, and whose death symbolically and iconographically pointed to the chivalrous self-sacrifice so admired by Treloar and Bean.

Pockley’s death was a poignant example of chivalric sacrifice with a foreboding irony for the citizen-soldiers of what would become the Anzacs. The first plate in Treloar’s *Australian Chivalry* features the Australian Naval Expeditionary Force, which was hurriedly recruited to engage the Germans in their various South Pacific colonies. Chronologically, this is an

³⁰ Jane McGennissen, *Twentieth-Century Australian School Readers*, unpublished thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, University of Tasmania, August 2009, 198.

appropriate position in the book as the Australian capture of the German colony and military outpost in northern New Guinea was the first hostile action involving Australian military forces in the Great War.

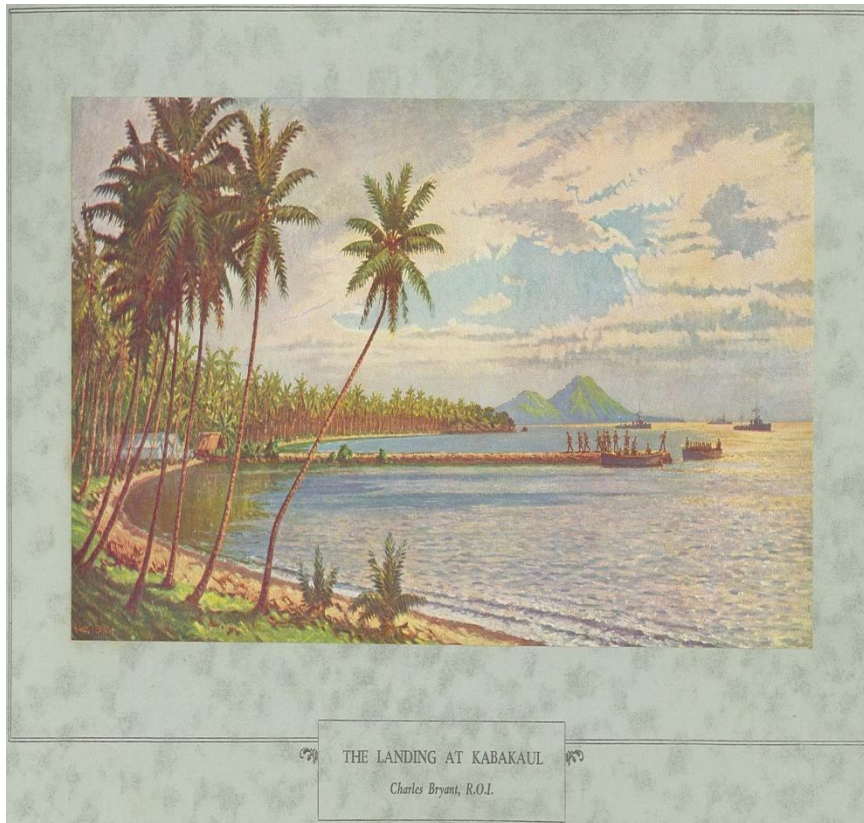


Figure 7.1. Charles Bryant, *The Landing at Kabakaul*, in Treloar, *Australian Chivalry*, p.1.

The Landing at Kabakaul (Figure 7.1) is a poignant introduction to an important narrative element and a key to the iconography of Australian military heroism as modernised chivalry and traditional Christian sacrifice. The background to the account demonstrates a curious synchronicity between several elements: the symbolism of the Red Cross, Australian military non-combatants, the masculine cult of risk and self-sacrifice, and the notion of a ‘call’ to military service as an obligation of male citizens promoted by many Australian opinion leaders, as we shall see, prior to the outbreak of war.

Brian Colden Antill Pockley was an ‘old boy’ of the exclusive Sydney Anglican school, Shore, and St Paul’s College, Sydney University. At the time of his death, he was a young doctor serving as a non-combatant. One of his comrades was wounded in a German ambush on a track leading to an enemy signal post. Concerned that the soldier would be the target of further fire, Pockley took off his Red Cross armband and left it with his comrade. After attending the wounded man, Pockley proceeded up the track. A short time later he was fatally wounded by a sniper and died of his wounds a few hours later. Three years later, Pockley’s younger brother John died on the Western Front at Corbie during the German counterattack, having insisted that the stretcher-bearers take another man before him. *The Official History* notes:

[Brian] Pockley’s actions in giving up his Red Cross badge, and thus protecting another man’s life at the price of his own, was consonant with the best traditions of the Australian army. ...³¹

Post-war the Pockley brothers were commemorated in stained glass in the chapel of their old school and their names inscribed on the roll of honour at the gates of Shore’s sporting grounds at Northbridge. Their deaths bring together the notions of chivalry, heroism, sacrifice for others with the religious overtones of Christ’s sacrifice for others. The Pockley brothers became an example for the students at their old school—and the circumstances of their deaths are reminiscent of ‘Vital Lampada’, a poem written by Henry Newbolt, an old boy of Bean’s school, Clifton—and certainly an extreme example of a life lived in the Arnoldian traditions.

The most poignant link in the Pockley story, however, is the irony of the pre-war activities of the brothers for their father and the power of the notion of ‘the call’ to service in war. The highly personalised account in Treloar’s *Australian Chivalry* warrants its prominent place because of Pockley’s intimate familial links to the political network and ideologies that primed public opinion about ‘the call’ to military service in Federation Australia. Pockley was the son of the foundation

³¹ S.S. Mackenzie, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918: Vol. X, The Australians at Rabaul* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1941), 59.

editor of a journal, *The Call*, which was published by the Australian Defence League. The Pockleys' father was an advocate for and founding member of the League which, among other things, advocated compulsory military training for all adult males.

The League was established in September 1905 in the wake of a heightened focus on national defence and racial and cultural anxiety after the Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War. News of the defeat of a white Christian power by an Asiatic non-Christian nation using the industrial technology and meta-technology of modernity was profoundly disturbing for Australians. One response was nostalgia for British power to be reasserted in the Pacific.³² An example of this sentiment is the Dreadnought Fund, which was formed to raise funds through Australian philanthropy to support a permanent Royal Navy presence in the South Pacific. The League's activities included successfully lobbying the Commonwealth Government for universal service, including for school-aged boys, and the widespread introduction of cadet corps to state schools as well as Catholic and private schools. Another response was Deakin's invitation to the US Great White Fleet. The Fleet's arrival in 1908 was no doubt a memorable experience for many Australian schoolchildren as it resulted in not one but two public holidays.

The League not only dealt with defence issues but sought a place within modernity for the Australian nation using the familiar and all-but-indivisible compasses of race, religion, and culture.³³ It was a non-party organisation that included prominent political, academic, professional, business, and religious leaders. Its founders included John Christian Watson, Australia's first Labor Prime Minister, Professors Mungo MacCallum and J.T. Wilson of Sydney University, and the Anglican Bishop of North Queensland, among others.

The League's objectives were 'universal compulsory training ... of the boyhood and manhood of Australia and the establishment of an adequate and effective national defence'. These objectives were inextricably linked to Australian masculinity. Future Prime Minister

³² *The Call* (August 1906): 3.

³³ *The Call* (August 1906): 2.

William Morris Hughes, then a member of the ALP, wrote several articles for *The Call*.³⁴ At that time, Hughes was not a supporter of conscription, subscribing to the Labor orthodoxy that conscription bred militarism. He favoured the ‘Swiss’ model of compulsory training.³⁵

The Call also heavily promoted the idea that women should be involved in vigorous activities like horse-riding, hiking and even shooting as sports not for their own sake but for the socially valuable reason of shaming their male peers into military and therefore chivalrous preparedness to defend their women.³⁶

Many Australians, motivated by isolation and a desire to be regarded as capable of defending the country and Empire, took strategic problems seriously. The public debate about naval and military affairs in Australia at the time was underpinned by social and political egalitarianism. In Britain, the defence and administration of the Empire was a problem for the ruling class; in Australia national defence was a problem for all citizens.

The Anzac generation was conditioned to be curious about the world, including the problems of national defence, through both schooling and public debate. In an echo of traditional chivalry, the League proposed that being an Australian man meant being prepared to attend to and be skilful at military duty and ready for sacrifice. Like the Swiss, Australians had to ‘all learn how to defend our women and children’.³⁷

On the Gallipoli-bound *Minnewaska*, Bean spent most of that last night before the landing looking around at his AIF comrades. Speculating about their thoughts, he was not alone in his contemplations that night. The diary of Lieutenant Richards, 1st Battalion AIF, a former rugby international for both Australia and England, noted in a more nationalistic tone than Bean (including a nod to the Australian penchant for a punt):

³⁴ Manning Clark, *History of Australia: Vol. V, The People Make Laws* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 1981), 304.

³⁵ Clark, *History of Australia: Vol. V*, 295.

³⁶ *The Call* (February 1908).

³⁷ *The Call* (November 1907).

*We Australians have a chance to distinguish ourselves at last. It will be hard and thrilling [but] ... my money is on our boys tomorrow ... Tonight, the fellows are naturally a little excited, they are in good spirits. They have shown up splendidly since we left the loafing and waiting ground in the sands of Egypt.*³⁸

The private school-educated Richards then goes to the Classics:

Gallipoli has mythology interests as the great warrior of the siege of Troy—Achilles—is buried here, or at any rate there is a place described as the ‘Tomb of Achilles’.

The diaries of many Anzacs support Bean’s view of the significance of the day. Private Harry Smith, a cadet draughtsman in civilian life, wrote: ‘[T]he day is a most momentous day in Australian history’.³⁹ A few weeks later, *The Sydney Mail* would report, using a basic map of the peninsula, ‘that the point where the Australian troops landed, covering themselves in glory in doing so, is called Gaba Tepe’.⁴⁰ The historical and geographical setting for the Anzac legend would become established in the Australian public’s mind. Bean, and many of his fellow Australians, believed the national destiny would be altered by the AIF’s role in the Dardanelles campaign.

To understand the public reception of Anzac it needs to be noted that Charles Bean was not the first to report the Anzac landing to the Australian public. The first reports came from a distinguished Englishman, Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett. Bean was struck by the opulence of Ashmead-Bartlett’s camp at Imbros, writing somewhat disdainfully that ‘in camp he lives like a king and couldn’t think of putting up with the sort of discomfort that satisfies some of us’.⁴¹ On 25 April, Ashmead-Bartlett claimed that the pinnaces from the battleships were so

³⁸ T.J. Richards, *Personal Diary*, Australian War Memorial Digital Collection. <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P11013333>, accessed 11/12/2022.

³⁹ Peter Stanley, *Digger Smith, and Australia’s Great War* (Sydney: Pier9, 2011).

⁴⁰ Richard Reid, *Gallipoli 1915* (Sydney: ABC Books, 2008).

⁴¹ ‘Anzac Portal’, Australian Government, <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/biographies/ellis-ashmead-bartlett>, accessed 11/12/2022.

busy transporting men to the beach that he could not step onto the peninsula until about 9.30 pm. Instead, he spent the day travelling from ship to ship with the messengers. Ashmead-Bartlett had spent the previous evening entertaining senior officers in the wardroom of his transport. This lack of first-hand observation did not prevent him from writing an account of the events of the day and the night before.

Bean was the Australian Government's official observer, elected to the position by the Australian Journalists' Association. However, neither the British military censors nor the military bureaucracy recognised this colonial arrangement. As a result, Bean's more restrained and detailed account of the landing reached the Australian public on 13 May, several days after that of Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett on 8 May. Ashmead-Bartlett, in contrast to Bean, was the correspondent for the British Newspaper Proprietors' Association and had family and political connections to the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill.

Ashmead-Bartlett's florid and passionate descriptions of the landing at Anzac praised the Australians. Under the headlines 'THRILLING DEEDS OF HEROISM'; 'STORY OF THE LANDING—AUSTRALIANS FACE DEATH' and 'THEY ROSE TO THE OCCASION', Ashmead-Bartlett described the calm resolve of the Australians:

*The Australians, who were about to go into action for the first time in trying circumstances, were cheerful, quiet, and confident. There was no sign of nerves nor of excitement.*⁴²

He acknowledged their unique status as volunteer citizen-soldiers:

*... and men who six months ago had been living peaceful civilian lives had begun to disembark on a strange and unknown shore in a strange land to attack an enemy of a different race.*⁴³

⁴² 'Mr. Ellis Ashmead Bartlett's Account', *The Melbourne Argus*, 8 May 1915, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/rendition/nla.news-article1515516.txt>, accessed 12/10/2022.

⁴³ 'Mr. Ellis Ashmead Bartlett's Account', 10.

and their enthusiasm and competence:

*The moment the boats touched the beach the troops jumped ashore and doubled for cover ... removing their packs and charging the enemy.*⁴⁴

Most memorably, he reinforced the view that Australians were determined to prove their national worth at Gallipoli, tolerating pain and death to do so, and that they were comparable to the greatest British military heroes:

*I have never seen anything like these wounded colonials in war before. Though many were shot to bits, and without hope of recovery, their cheers resounded throughout the night, and you could see in the midst of a mass of suffering humanity arms waving in greeting to the crews of the warships. They were happy because they knew they had been tried for the first time, and had not been found wanting ... No finer feat has happened in this war than this sudden landing in the dark, and the storming of the heights, and, above all, the holding on while the reinforcements were landing. These raw colonial troops, in these desperate hours, proved worthy to fight side by side with the heroes of the battles of Mons, the Aisne, Ypres and Neuve-Chapelle.*⁴⁵

Years after the war, in 1927, Arthur Bazley, Bean's batman at Gallipoli and, later, assistant to Bean as official historian, acknowledged the extent to which the work, sometimes extravagantly stated, as in Ashmead-Bartlett's article, helped the cause of the State by increasing recruitment:

⁴⁴ 'Mr. Ellis Ashmead Bartlett's Account', 10.

⁴⁵ 'Mr. Ellis Ashmead Bartlett's Account', 10.

*Bartlett's dispatch was a brilliant one, despite a number of inaccuracies, and its publication in Australia led, I believe, to an immediate increase in the number of volunteers offering for the AIF.*⁴⁶

The most critical inaccuracy in Ashmead-Bartlett's narrative was the assertion which was central to his report that the Australians were happy when wounded and tried to leave their field hospital beds to get back to the firing line. Bean praised Ashmead-Bartlett's intent and style:

*His written dispatches are full of life and colour, hit hard, and give a brilliant idea which is remarkably true. He exaggerates a bit to make his points ... and yet he's a lover of the truth.*⁴⁷

Ashmead-Bartlett's dispatches praised the prowess and bravery of the Anzacs. He became critical of British leadership and political control, suggesting that the Australians were being expended for incompetent British decisions. He later declared:

*I thought there were limits to human stupidity but now I know there are none. The censorship has now passed beyond all reason. They won't let you give expression to the mildest opinions on any subjects.*⁴⁸

John Masefield, another British witness to the Anzacs at Gallipoli, would, as a future poet laureate, write a stirring account of the Dardanelles campaign. Masefield's book, *Gallipoli*, is sometimes dismissed as propaganda rather than record. It includes references to chivalric sacrifice, quoting among other works of crusader romance the *Song of Roland*. In the book Masefield had this to say about the Anzacs:

⁴⁶ A.W. Bazley, Letter to John Treloar, 7 February 1927, 12/3/47, Australian War Memorial, 93.

⁴⁷ C.E.W. Bean, 'Ashmead-Bartlett and a Crisis', diary entry, 26 September 1915. 3DRL/6673 892, Australian War Memorial, 38.

⁴⁸ Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, diary, 18 July 1915, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

... but the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps ... were almost all men who had enlisted since the declaration of war and had had not more than six months' active training.

They were, however, the finest body of young men ever brought together in modern times. For physical beauty and nobility of bearing they surpassed any men I have ever seen; they walked and looked like the kings in old poems and reminded me of the line in Shakespeare: 'Baited like eagles having lately bathed.' As their officers put it, 'they were in the pink of condition and didn't care a damn for anybody.' Most of these new and irregular formations were going into action for the first time, to receive their baptism of fire in 'a feat of arms only possible to the flower of a very fine army'.⁴⁹

The notion that the nation needed to experience war and its sufferings to mature or be 'blooded' was common in Australia even before 'the blood of its young men [was poured] into the soil of the Dardanelles'.⁵⁰ The idea of a blood bond between white nations and Australia, particularly those of the British Empire, was intrinsically linked to the idea of shedding blood as sacrifice. This notion of a blood connection to the British or blood shared and shed for the British Empire was reinforced by the Australian school syllabus, which emphasised Australia's position in what it described as 'the concentric cycle of English history' (see Chapter 3).

⁴⁹ John Masfield, *Gallipoli* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), 26.

⁵⁰ L. Blayden et al., *Politics and Sacrifice: NSW Parliament and the ANZACS* (Sydney: NSW Parliament, 2015), 15.



Figure 7.2. G.J. Coates, *Third London General*, in Treloar, *Australian Chivalry*, p. 12.

Another painting selected by Treloar for *Australian Chivalry* was a work by G.J. Coates entitled ‘Third London General’, which showed British nurses in London tending to Australians wounded at Gallipoli (Figure 7.2). Bean’s commentary in the book is headed ‘The Arrival at Wandsworth Hospital of the First Australian Wounded’. Here Treloar and Bean leave the commentary on Australians and Australianness and the Anzac ‘spirit’ to the memoirs of a senior British nurse, D. Eardley-Wilmot, who describes their general disposition in terms of a form of antipodean chivalry, and directly attributes their moral and sentimental qualities to the imperial social Darwinist narrative about the ‘white-settler’ colonies. Treloar quotes Sister Eardley-Wilmot extensively as follows:

[I]n they came, tall, loose-limbed wondering greatly what it was all going to be like ... [Y]ou could see them dreaming of huge expanses of sky and land ... A cheery lot speaking eagerly of Australia with a warm boyish pride—speaking her name like a challenge and an inspiration in one; very susceptible to their colonial independence, an independence which by

*looking at them, one knew had been earned by sheer hard work—the sort of work that an all-wise God assigned to man so that he might live closer to nature and learn to love her.*⁵¹

The relevant chapter of her war memoirs, *Happy, though Wounded*, is titled simply, ‘The Australians’, and is another example of the way in which the imperial English sensitivities about the heroic nature of these citizen-soldiers who had ‘travelled from one end of the world to the other’ to fight for ‘all that was just and good in life’⁵² became another foundation of the Anzac legend.

7.2 The war comes to school: Commemorating Gallipoli

In Queensland in preparation for 25 April 1916, school services were mandated by a directive from the Minister for Education, Herbert F. Hardacre, in the *Education Office Gazette* of April 1916. State schools were instructed that they should:

*Commemorate Anzac Day by suitable addresses to their pupils, dwelling upon the gallant landing of our Australian and New Zealand troops on the Gallipoli Peninsula, their splendid achievements, their sacrifices, and their loyal devotion to duty, our grief at the great loss they suffered; and our country’s debt of gratitude to them and theirs.*⁵³

A special edition of the *School Journal* was issued to Queensland schools in time for the first Anzac Day in 1916.⁵⁴ From the beginning, schoolchildren had impressed on them the historic significance of Anzac Day. Separate booklets of the journal were produced for the various grades according to the level of understanding of the readers. The booklet for the most senior students presented the entire Gallipoli campaign, from the training camp at Mena to the

⁵¹ Treloar, *Australian Chivalry*, 7.

⁵² Treloar, *Australian Chivalry*, Preface.

⁵³ ‘Anzac Day in Queensland State Schools’, Queensland Department of Education, <https://education.qld.gov.au/about-us/history/history-topics/anzac-day>, accessed 18/11/2022.

⁵⁴ ‘Anzac Day 1916—*Queensland School Journal*’, Queensland Museum Network, <https://blog.qm.qld.gov.au/2016/04/21/anzac-day-1916-queensland-school-journal/>, accessed 18/11/2022.

withdrawal. The narrative in the journal is heroic, highlighting the bravery⁵⁵, skill and sacrifice of the Anzacs. British military and naval leaders are quoted praising the Anzacs' gallantry.

New South Wales schools did not wait until Anzac Day 1916. The first commemoration of Gallipoli took place just one month after the landing, on 24 May 1915, Queen Victoria's birthday, otherwise known as Empire Day. The Minister for Public Instruction had ordered that: 'the keynote of the day's celebration should be self sacrifice, a procession was formed, with three Red Cross Nurses, in uniform, kindly provided by Mrs. Manning'.⁵⁶ Schools throughout New South Wales sang the anthems and held recitals where school cadets were the central element of interpretative tableaux, symbolising the moral vindication of the allied cause. Children were urged to make sacrifices to contribute to welfare funds for the Belgian people, particularly orphans.

⁵⁵ 'Anzac Day 1916—*Queensland School Journal*'.

⁵⁶ 'Carlingford High School Empire Day 1915', New South Wales State School House Museum, https://www.google.com/search?q=The+Minister+for+Public+Instruction+had+ordered+that%3A+%E2%80%98the+keynote+of+the+day%E2%80%99s+celebration+should+be+self+sacrifice%2C+a+procession+was+formed%2C+with+three+Red+Cross+Nurses%2C+in+uniform%2C+kindly+provided+by+Mrs.+Manning%E2%80%99&rlz=1C1RXQR_en-GBAU963AU963&oq=The+Minister+for+Public+Instruction+had+ordered+that%3A+%E2%80%98the+keynote+of+the+day%E2%80%99s+celebration+should+be+self+sacrifice%2C+a+procession+was+formed%2C+with+three+Red+Cross+Nurses%2C+in+uniform%2C+kindly+provided+by+Mrs.+Manning%E2%80%99&aqs=chrome..69i57j15&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8, accessed 30/12/2022



Figure 7.3. Anzac commemorative medal struck by the Victorian Department of Education, 1916.

To celebrate Anzac Day 1916 the Victorian Department of Education struck a commemorative medal to celebrate the landing at Gallipoli for distribution to schoolchildren (see Figure 7.3).⁵⁷ One hundred and seventy-five thousand medallions were made, but this proved insufficient to meet demand. The medallion was also distributed to the public on Anzac Button Day for one shilling.

A local newspaper describes an immersive Anzac Day at the Willaura School in 1916:

During the first hour of the afternoon patriotic songs were sung, maps of Gallipoli drawn, and talks about Anzac took place between teachers and scholars, about half a dozen essays od Anzac Day were written during the week and read during the afternoon, the prize for the best being won by Alex London. At 3p.m. the children and parents gathered round the flagpole. Kipling's Recessional and 'Oh God our help in ages past' were sung and addresses given ... All present saluted the flag and repeated the

⁵⁷ Museums of Victoria, Anzac Day Medallion, Department of Education, Victoria, April 1916, Item number NU 49472.

*usual declaration. The dominant note of the whole proceedings was one of gladness in sorrow and the hope of ultimate victory. Unfortunately, the Education Department's medals did not come to hand.*⁵⁸

⁵⁸ *The Willaura Farmer*, 27 April 1916, 2.

Cover of Anzac Day 1916 edition of the Queensland School Magazine



7.3 The Game

Another Clifton old boy, the historian, poet, and writer Henry Newbolt, was the author of the popular imperial romance, 'Vitai Lampada'. Newbolt's poem develops a metaphor in which a young soldier's death in a hopeless battle in defence of Empire is linked to his formative acts of courage as a schoolboy cricketer. The poem is known colloquially as 'Play up, play up, and play the game'.

Bill Gammage noted in *The Broken Years* that the Australians construed the fight at Gallipoli as a game, using sporting language to describe battle. Australians had been familiar with the culture of sport and games, particularly team games, from quite early in colonial times. Initially of course the sport and games culture were translated directly from Britain, as Lionel Frost observes:

[British sporting values] ... were expressed in colonial schools, and in cricket, football, and other sporting clubs. Cheap food, which increased disposable incomes further, the Saturday half-holiday for a substantial part of the workforce, the abundance of parkland and open space in most towns, and a mild climate encouraged the playing and watching of outdoor sports. Sports in Australia were enjoyed by all classes, and by 1914 a sporting culture had emerged that was central to Australian life.⁵⁹

By the late 19th century, the Australian culture of sport already had a very substantial history. Richard Cashman argues that some of the Australian interest in sport has its origin in the British cult of games.⁶⁰ But the legacy of the English corporate schools still influenced Australian sporting culture in elite Arnoldian schools, although some of the preconditions were exceptional to Australia and provided a much more socially broad base for the games cult at the time because Australians enjoyed more leisure time for the working class, higher

⁵⁹ Lionel Frost, 'Richard Cashman's Paradise of Sport: A Reflective Essay, *Sporting Traditions* 34, no. 1, 4, <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/INFORMIT.376919133617590>, accessed 20/11/22

⁶⁰ Richard Cashman, *Paradise of Sport: A History of Australian Sport* (Petersham, NSW: Walla Walla Press, 2010).

incomes and better diets. This English legacy added to the thrill of defeating the mother country at her own game (cricket), making sport both Australian and popular, as Martin Crotty highlights:

*The rise of sport in Australia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the result of ... the importation of the emerging English sporting tradition ... Perhaps nowhere was this growth in the passion for athleticism more noticeable than in the elite corporate boys' schools ... [T]he increasing importance and popularity of public-school sport in Australia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was intimately bound up with changes in the Victorian ideal of 'manliness', and how games became a crucial element in the construction of a chivalric, patriotic, physical and militarist ideal.*⁶¹

Then there is, of course, the role of sport in government and Catholic schools in pre-war Australia. Again, in echoing a democratised or popularised interpretation of the Arnoldian ethic, Australian government schools and their curricula generally favoured organised sport and followed a form of the cult of gaming. This reinforced the Australian interest and identification with sports as a metaphor for life and part of the educational experience. For example, in New South Wales in 1889,

The Public [Government] Schools Amateur Athletic Association (PSAAA) was formed to develop a coherent structure and systems that could provide worthwhile sporting opportunities for young people in [state] schools. Former President of the PSAAA Ernest Clark described the purpose of his organisation as establishing a sporting system that would ... 'promote physical fitness, develop qualities of courage, determination, unselfishness,

⁶¹ Martin Crotty, 'Manly and Moral: The Making of Middle-Class Men in the Australian Public School', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 17, no. 2–3 (2000), 10–30, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523360008714125>, accessed 20/11/2022.

*constructiveness and of teaching the values of team spirit, self-sacrifice and loyalty’.*⁶²

The language of ‘the Game’ used by the Anzacs as identified by Gammage, including acknowledging the Turks for ‘Playing the Game’⁶³ and describing the anxiety before the attack on Lone Pine as ‘pre-match nerves’⁶⁴, has a resonance with sport in school as well as the wider sporting spirit of Australians. School sport was very much a part of the wider sporting interest in Federation Australia, with team sports and games as well as drill a part of the government and Catholic education curriculum and an indispensable aspect of GPS schooling. Gammage quotes an AIF member who was an English immigrant, and significantly, educated at Rugby School: ‘the right type of Australian is a real firm fellow and can’t be beaten anywhere’⁶⁵, and that the Australians have a superior intellect to the British soldiers.

Schooling influenced the way in which the Anzacs saw themselves. The level of literacy they acquired and the curriculum they were taught predisposed them to patriotism, self-sacrifice, pride in achievement and loyalty to fellows. The course of the war also intensified the schooling experience for those at school during the war. School sport and drill as well as cadets prepared people for the mindset required to heroise the Anzacs and in some cases aspire to be one themselves.

7.5 Conclusion

The evidence from the design and impact of Board’s ‘new syllabus’ and Dennis’s *The Sentimental Bloke* supports a view that the digger mythology and the Anzac legend were fashioned as much from the literary, folk, and historical traditions of ancient and medieval Britain and the Classics as they were from civics and morals, and the discipline of the Australian schoolroom rather than the lifestyle of the bush. By the time of federation, most

⁶² ‘Where it All Began’, New South Wales Department of Education School Sporting Unit, <https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/sport/history>, accessed 20/11/2022.

⁶³ Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years* (Melbourne: University of Melbourne Publishing, 2010), 106.

⁶⁴ Gammage, *The Broken Years*, 106.

⁶⁵ Gammage, *The Broken Years*, 98.

Australian schoolchildren were being taught these subjects, which included tales of the pioneers and explorers, and of places that were not of their direct experience, like the bush-wool track, the stockyard, or the mining lease, but which became familiar to them through education and reading.

While Australians were intensely proud of Australian folk idioms and settings, the meaning systems they used for discourse about national and individual destiny and heroism relied heavily on British mythology and legend for validation. The digger embodies Australianness and yet in the adjacent plates of *Australian Chivalry* Treloar and Bean compare him to and describe him as an updated version of the Paladins of the *Song of Roland*, the knights of the roundtable and Shakespeare's Henry V—the Anzac is chivalry upside down. The common man as noble.

Both as a direct source of knowledge and as an introduction to literate culture, Australian education was one of a number of critical elements contributing to the formation of the Anzac legend. The education system might also help to explain the ready reception and embrace of the legend: that is, why the Australian public were so receptive to the Anzac legend in the heroic forms in which it was promulgated by Bean, Treloar, Ashmead-Bartlett and those historians and commentators who have followed them.

Conclusion

This thesis has argued that the education reforms of the 1880's and the first decade of the twentieth century across the Australian states helped develop a predominantly egalitarian, voluntarist and meritocratic ethos which was a significant pre-war contributor to the formation of the Anzac legend. This thesis also argues that the civic and educational aspirations of Australians post war compounded the creation of the legend by encouraging young Australians – predominantly through the schooling system – to be proud of their national achievements. The pinnacle of these achievements was international and imperial recognition of Australians' performance on the battlefield, powerfully expressed through the promulgation of the Anzac narrative.

The Anzac legend is central to the idea of national character based on the mythic qualities of the Australian soldier in the First World War. From Charles Bean onward, this legend has traditionally been seen as deriving from the virtuous qualities of the bushman: mateship, fair dealing, innovation, and a belief in leadership grounded in merit, egalitarianism and endurance.

The mythic importance of the 1st AIF's landing at Gallipoli and the wider Anzac legend transformed the key images of the Australian identity and sense of purpose. The symbols and values of the campaign became representations of the efforts of the Anzacs and were far more important than the campaigns themselves. The Anzac legend became a signifier and a test of character for Australians.

This thesis has presented a case that the beliefs that led one of the most urbanised societies in the world to adopt a national mystique based on a mythical outback proletariat can be found in Australian folklore and literature, civic liberalism, and British civilisation. A major component in the translation of these values and ideas was the Australian school system, which was reformed in the decades leading up to the Great War.

The problematic and sometimes contradictory relationship between national culture and imperial loyalty has its roots in the Australian education system. The legendary larrikinism and disrespect of the Anzacs for the pomposities of the British; the culture of innovation, practicality and initiative attributed to the Anzacs; and the belief in solidarity and mateship—

all have their origins in Australia's pre-war pedagogy and school curriculum, as much if not more than the mustering yard or the shearing shed.

The definitive basis of the characteristics of the AIF can be found in the merger of the folkloric culture of both the British Empire and emerging cultural and civic nationalism apparent in Australian pre-war literature and journalism. This was only possible as a popular and almost universal characteristic because of the introduction of 'free, compulsory and comprehensive' education based on liberal values. The Board syllabus, which became the template for an Australian curriculum, was the basis of the education received by many if not most Anzacs.

The Anzac legend thrived over time and despite having waned from time to time, it has been revitalised partly because the politics and culture of *The Official History* and memorialisation continue to be based around three distinct historical tropes. Anzac is a legend in triptych—there is an element in the narrative for every version of Australian national self-belief.

Each of the narrative theatres of the legend brings unique life to the legend of the Anzacs. Gallipoli, a story of stoicism and heroic failure. The Light Horse in the Middle East rode with romantic daring and delivered stunning successes. Finally, on the Western Front, the Anzacs, a unified army under Australian command, stage a breath-taking series of victories in the lead-up to the Armistice.

The action of each of these narratives is not as important for the values of the legend as the framework of sacrifice, romance, and worldly professionalism in each of the tropes of Anzac.

The Anzac narrative transformed many aspects of the national character, while providing a vehicle for the continuity of others. The 'concentric plan of English history' placed Australia within the framework of the long history of the British Empire and to the exclusion of Australia's Aboriginal history. The status of women was diminished, and White Australia reinforced.

The Anzac legend has over time obscured the war's blood lust, catastrophic tactical blunders, and the terrible loss and debilitating psychological and physical injuries suffered by

Australian soldiers. Others have sought to use the legend to obscure the resilience of the Anzacs and their families at home and devalue or refute the nobility of the motives for fighting in the first place.

A fusion of the martial myths and legends of Empire with the popular idioms and customs of Australia was enabled by what was learned in the classrooms of Australian suburbs and towns and through the reading made possible by a basic education. Hearing ‘the call’ was a response to the cultural and ideological challenge of nationhood and citizenship. The evolution of the role of the Anzacs from Gallipoli to the Armistice gave Bean and his colleagues, and the Anzacs themselves, a very large canvas on which to paint a legendary picture.

More research is needed to evaluate the impact of differences between the states relating to the implementation of the Board syllabus and the relative effectiveness of Board’s reforms in practice beyond New South Wales and Victoria. A closer evaluation of diaries and private correspondence reflecting the subjective effect of education on the mindsets of individual Anzacs when in the field, would also have rich potential for further research. Bean claimed that he witnessed the exceptional prowess and character of the AIF and attributed this largely to the influence of the bush life on male volunteers. The transmission of the bush as a symbol of Australian uniqueness and strength was a key element in the curriculum materials of Australian schools. As has been shown already, later in his analysis, Bean gave some weight to schooling and education as a basis of Anzac exceptionalism. But the building blocks of the Anzac legend are not limited to Bean and the bush. Other key observers who had a role in the creation of the legend had significant aspects of their perceptions and beliefs prefigured by Australian schooling.

For example, the florid observations of Ellis-Bartlett are based on the ideas of Greater Britain; the classical and literary observations of Mansfield are key to placing the Anzacs in the pantheon of British military heroes. Of course, Treloar’s incorporation of chivalric legends as an explanation for the exceptional performance of the AIF is central to Australian memorialism, yet it is also central to contemporary propaganda. All these works were nourished and informed by elements of the nineteenth century Australian curriculum.

The concept and ideals of ‘Greater Britain’ were embedded in Australian education. The place of British culture in the classical world was a routine component of Australian school children’s classroom learning and reading, as were the myths and legends of chivalry and romance, the tales of survival in the bush, and perseverance by the pioneers. All these components played a crucial role in the development of the Anzac narrative and the creation of the Anzac legend. Moreover, they were all transmitted culturally through the education system of the Australian colonies then states.

Again, the vital issue in understanding the construction of the legend is one of perspective. Ellis-Bartlett wanted to introduce new British heroes following a Kiplingesque notion of superior Englishness across the disparate empire. Like many Englishmen of his class, Ellis-Bartlett was inclined to believe that England was losing its vigour, while traditional English qualities of initiative and steadfastness were being better cultivated in the settler colonies like Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

Bean extended his pre-war observations of bush Australians to heroize the character of his countrymen. Bean, although an Anglophile educated in England, was intensely proud of his Australian heritage and regarded military performance – like most men of affairs at the time – as the ultimate test of personal and national character. Mansfield’s homoerotic description of the Anzacs was possibly based on his own predilection, but also on the induction policies of the initial Anzac recruitment and dietary and lifestyle differences. Such factors partly explain the probability that the typical Anzac was bigger and stronger than the typical ‘Tommy’ or ‘Turk’, but Mansfield’s poetic tribute to the Anzac character is primarily concerned with purpose and honour.

When he reflected on the membership of the AIF and its reputation, Bean explained that this was a precept he held “very dear”. Like Bean, Ashmead-Bartlett, Mansfield and Treloar believed that they were faithfully recording the details of Australian participation in the First World War. And yet like Bean, they were all personally and emotionally entangled in the Legend that they were creating.

This thesis recognises the extensive historiography that has focused on the processes by which the Anzac legend evolved over a century or more to become a central pillar of Australian national identity. It’s primary focus and intention, however, has been to add greater depth and complexity when explaining the historical origins of the Anzac legend. In

doing so, it has argued that greater emphasis needs be placed on understanding the role of Australian education and literate culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Finally, I return to contemplate the uniquely Australian role of an official witness and participant-observer historian of war in shaping public memory. Bean's record (including the Australian War Memorial) celebrated defeat at Gallipoli and the seemingly pointless loss of life on the Western Front not merely because Australians believed the ultimate cause was just. Unlike European nations, Canada and the United States, the blooding of the Great War occurred at a time when the federal Commonwealth was still in its infancy, aspiring to substantive nationhood, a nationhood based on a single language, a single race and a single notion of gender and domesticity. Against all reasonable expectations, this originally monocultural vision has proved remarkably adaptable. Australians have continued to reinvent the Anzac legend to serve their changing needs—to redefine the 'real' Australia as well as the 'imagined' one.

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