

An analysis and reflection on the connections between the ANZAC legend and notions of Australian identity, as expressed in popular culture of the 20th and 21st centuries

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The ANZAC legend, as expressed in popular culture, has maintained its relevance to the Australian national identity owing to its versatility to reflect the changing of national values of the 20th and 21st century. Popular cultures' continued evocation of ANZAC legend has assisted in informing ideals of national identity. The historical imagery of the ANZAC legend has enabled political applications to create an imagined community. Cultural artefacts in popular culture illustrate the breadth of the ANZAC legend and its appeal to an increasingly diverse community.

Popular culture is not a post-industrial phenomenon; however, the plethora of cultural artefacts produced by industrialised societies generates increased opportunities for applications of primary sources for historical inquiry (Parker 2011). Popular culture is defined as the culture consumed in day-to-day life (Harrington & Bielby eds 2001). Parker (2011) states that popular — in contrast to 'high' — culture is inherently egalitarian, requiring little cultural capital to consume. However, popular culture is not politically neutral, reflecting existing power structures, and autonomy achieved through consumption choices is marginal (Freccero 1999). Popular culture transcends economic and social divisions and consequently is an ideal mechanism for the creation and reinforcement of national identity (Lipsitz 1990). The allegorical nature of popular culture allows a broad sweep of often dissonant narratives to coexist within an imagined communities nationally recognised values (Freccero 1999; Brummett 2011).

The ANZAC legend immortalises the national identity, representing a metaphorical coming-of-age narrative for the recently federated Australia (Blair 2001). McQuilton (cited in Macleod ed 2004) asserts that while the Gallipoli campaign is of parochial importance to Australian popular culture, it stoked a nation-building myth owing to its status as Australia's first outing as an independent military unit recasting Australia's autonomous identity. In a pre-public radio or television-broadcast era, selected war historians and official war correspondents were able to create a galvanised and indelible imprint on Australia's collective memory of the ANZACs embodying 'reckless valour', resourcefulness and comradeship. Here, historical fact dissolved into myth (Stephens & Siewert 2003). Moreover, the dichotomy between the undisciplined larrikin and the gallant, duty-bound soldier speaks to the fluidity of collective memory (Donoghue & Tranter 2015). In 1920, the Australian government took legislative action to ensure commercial pursuits did not dilute the ANZAC mythology (Hawkins 2015). Hence, the ANZAC legend is a multifaceted interplay of subjective private experiences and collective public memory, driven from politicians, educators and institutions, in concert with personal connections, whether familial or imagined (Scates et al 2012; Macleod ed 2004). The malleability of the ANZAC legend, with parameters based on specific

virtues rather than lineage, allows it to maintain relevancy in a modern society (Donoghue & Tranter 2015).

Contemporary debates of the ANZAC legend centre on historical accuracy and its ability to enfranchise the community with which it endeavours to connect when viewed through the lens of modern-day morality (Clark 2016). The ANZAC legend creates historical blind spots when conflated with empirical history, rather than viewed as a subjective national memory. Indeed, the ANZAC legend was initially politicised, as a short-term rhetorical device, to incite national pride (Clark & Ashton eds 2013; Williams 1999). Also, contradictory elements of the egalitarian citizen soldier fostering values of mateship and camaraderie and the popular anti-authoritarian characteristic were likely born out of genuine grievances regarding officer advancements in relation to class over merit (Blair 2001). The ‘digger’ narrative effectively ignored individual personalities and wartime realities; instead, it highlighted general qualities of the amiable larrikin, such as resourcefulness and endurance. This ‘digger’ narrative weaves a hegemonic khaki thread through the nation’s collective memory and continues to resist revisionist historical scrutiny (Blair 2001; Donoghue & Tranter 2015). Dixon (2014) asserts that the national memory of war involves a selective amnesia. Applying this selective amnesia to individual private memories effectively decreases the dissonance it creates within the public mythology (Thomson 1990). Possibly the most indefensible facet of the ANZAC legend is the exclusively white, masculinised construct that ignores the Indigenous, feminine and multicultural aspects of Australian national identity that require acknowledgment to meaningfully respond to modern times (Tranter & Donoghue). Thus, while the ANZAC legend has endured it has not done so without criticism.

NO. OF CIRCULAR	SUBJECT	VOLUME OF GAZETTE	MONTH	YEAR	NO.	PAGE
373	AMENDED REGULATIONS (62, 71, 88) AND ADDITIONAL REGULATIONS (166). In reference to the amended and additional Regulations, a copy of which is issued with this number, teachers are to understand that the provisions of the notification published on page 20 of the <i>Education Office Gazette</i> for January last still apply.	18	March	1916	3	105
1157	QUARTER MONEY. Referring to the notice in the <i>Education Office Gazette</i> for January, 1916, page 12, Head Teachers are requested to be good enough to enter the Petty Cash Allowances in the Salary Abstract form in the "Yearly Rate" column, fill in the period, and enter the amount due separately in the column headed "Allowances for Heat and Cleaning."	18	March	1916	3	105
1158	ANZAC DAY: SCHOOL COMMEMORATION. It is the desire of the Minister that, in all schools under the Department, teachers 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. Material for such addresses may be obtained, amongst other sources, from the April number of the School Paper. As the anniversary of Anzac Day (25th April) falls this year on Easter Tuesday, which has been proclaimed a public holiday throughout the State in lieu of St. George's Day, the commemoration as above should be held on Thursday, the 29th April, immediately before the Easter vacation. The Minister further directs that at those schools which are provided with Union Jacks, the flags should be flown on Anzac Day itself, and teachers who may be absent from home on that day are requested to make the necessary arrangements with their Committees, or otherwise, for this being done.	18	April	1916	4	117
1159	APPEAL FOR VOLUNTARY NATIONAL SERVICE. The Recruiting Committee of the Queensland War Council request that all members of the Public Service who are unable to take up arms in the defence of the Empire will register their names for service in other spheres of usefulness. Officers and teachers under the Department of Public Instruction who are willing to devote some of their leisure time to national service are urged to fill in registration forms, specifying the particular class of work which they are willing to undertake. Printed forms may be obtained from the Honorary Registration Secretary, Queensland Recruiting Committee, 202 Elizabeth Street, Brisbane.	18	April	1916	4	118
1160						

Figure 1 Excerpt from book of circulars including instructions about the school commemoration of ANZAC Day and the appeal for voluntary National Service, April 1916
Source: Queensland State Archives (1910-1919)

The first ANZAC Day of 1916 was both solemn and triumphalist, bolstered by sacrifice and the need to create meaning out of immense loss (Crotty & Melrose 2007; Ely 1985). Popular culture is inordinately reflected by youth consumption (Freccero 1999). Figure 1 details the instructions given to address school children in Queensland on the first ANZAC Day, 'dwelling upon . . . their sacrifices; loyal devotion to duty; our grief at the great loss' (cited in Queensland State Archives 1916). Lake (2010) asserts the 'nationalist mythology' perpetuated in school curriculums romanticises a militarised historical narrative that largely ignores or silences critical historical inquiry. The subsequent entry appealing for national service highlights the use of ANZAC-legend rhetoric to cast the volunteer fighter as oppositional to the 'shirker' (Beaumont 2014). By intertwining these qualities with nationally attended commemorative services, the importance of the ANZAC legend was solidified in popular culture (Blair 2001).



Figure 2 Yininmadyemi: thou didst let fall
Source: Peter F Williams (2015)

As truths of Australian Indigenous history enter the popular consciousness, a cultural anxiety has arisen around the need to reconcile our national history with our national identity (Clark 2016). Attempts to expand the 'white' narrative of ANZAC has included playing a didgeridoo from the parapet of the centennial ANZAC Day dawn service (Beaumont 2015) and the installation of the public artwork of Indigenous artist Tony Albert, erected to memorialise the service and sacrifice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who served in defence of Australia (fig.2). This artwork intersects Indigenous symbolism with traditional ANZAC imagery (Oakley 2015). Ambiguity in the interpretation of memorials increases flexibility of the ascribed meanings that may not be consistent with earlier constructed narratives. (Elias 2009).



Figure 3 Essendon ANZAC Day game 2013 MCG Melbourne
 Source: LJ Gervasoni (2013)

The traits of mateship and egalitarianism contained within the ANZAC legend have been conveyed smoothly to sport (Donoghue & Tranter 2015). Projected national image of Australia as a sporting nation made for the easy transition of a 1995 AFL football game between Collingwood and Essendon (fig.3) into a tradition supported by consistently sold-out crowds (Pacella 2011). Football transferred the symbolism of ANZAC Day to an easily accessible artefact of popular culture, obliging the growing interest among generations who had not served in a war (Clark & Ashton eds 2013). Consequently, the ANZAC legend grew less political and more celebratory, on what was originally a day of mourning (Murray 2009). Similarly, the commodification process of popular culture allows diverse individuals the ability to purchase their place within the national identity (Pacella 2011). These tangible representations of the ANZAC legend speak to the legend's resilience (Seal, 2011).

Australia has invested significant political and social value into the ANZAC legend for a vehicle of expression of national identity. The ANZAC legend is increasingly malleable to maintain the social cohesion of national identity. The ANZAC legend can be deployed in a range of moods from sombre to celebratory in the interest of motivating popular participation. Consequently, the ANZAC legend has maintained its relevance to the Australian national identity.

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