

# ‘The First Casualty When War Comes is Truth’:

Neglected Atrocity in First  
World War Australian Memory

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‘The first casualty when war comes is truth’<sup>1</sup>

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It is assumed, at least in the West, that the glorification of war is a thing of the past. Even more widely accepted is the perception that modern veneration honours the dead without bias or prejudice. In fact, the rich tapestry of the ANZAC legend glorifies war and readily rejects its associated horrors, projecting constructions of heroism and virtue onto national memory. Exploring the popular perception that inhumane war practices are inherently non-Western, this paper assesses the persisting silence on the grotesque experiences of soldiers in war. An examination of the nature and use of chemical warfare in World War One (WWI) and historiographical analysis of Australian scholarship on WWI will form the foundation of case evidence. Additionally, the psychological analysis of ‘joyful killing’ will be discussed as a potential framework through which modern commemoration can expose past embellishments.

Bruce Scates’ *Return to Gallipoli* considers death and the ‘narrowed’ nature of ANZAC war commemoration. He argues that commemorative services perform a conservative political purpose,

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<sup>1</sup> Attributed to Senator Hiram Johnson in 1917, this quote originates from Samuel Johnson in 1758. See Suzy Platt (ed.), *Respectfully Quoted: a Dictionary of Quotations Requested from the Congressional Research service* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1989), 360.

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where personal mourning is displaced with sentiments of patriotism and sacrifice.<sup>2</sup> Pronouncing WWI the 'great imaginative event' of the century, Peter Hoffenberg argues that Australians have sought to comprehend the catastrophe of war through references to landscape.<sup>3</sup> Certainly, the WWI cemeteries on the Western Front strongly support this venture. Central Powers' war cemeteries were consistently designed with darker grave markers. The white Commonwealth gravestones, intended as symbols of peace and purity, contrast sharply against the simple black iron crosses on German graves.<sup>4</sup> The two largest German WWI cemeteries in France, Maissemy and Neuville-Saint-Vaast, along with Fort-de-Malmaison in northern France follow the uniform design of iron or dark stone crosses.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, several of the Austro-Hungarian war cemeteries in Poland, such as Sieklówka and Staszkówka, also use large black iron crosses as grave markers.

When studied in isolation, the intentions of the German and Commonwealth memorial designers are not immediately clear. However, viewed through the lens of the German affirmation of tragic death and misery, they can be juxtaposed with patriotic Australian appraisals of the virtuous soldier.<sup>6</sup> Lending themselves towards shrines of national worship, the ANZAC war cemeteries were designed to influence public opinions. The material traditions of Allied war commemoration, epitomised by the Tyne Cot Cemetery in Belgium, reiterate a sanitised and tranquil depiction of death.<sup>7</sup>

Comparing the design of the Commonwealth and German WWI graves illuminates distinct attempts to deal with the calamity of wartime death. Complementing Scates, Omer Bartov's study on wartime genocide recognises that these narrowed approaches can be understood as two contradictory portrayals of war. The first represents war as a noble heroic experience, while the second describes war as a framework that justifies human savagery and destruction.<sup>8</sup> In representations that accentuate the noble hero ideal, unsavoury wartime events are commonly attributed to the opposing side. In the circumstance of Germany's position as the 'historical villain' and the shame associated with the Nazi past, Germany has sought self-categorisation that correlates with broader international narratives. To evade culpability for past injustices and avoid negative positioning in history, Germans often identify as Europeans rather than Germans.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Japan's failure to deal critically with its aggressive and expansionist history has resulted in a narrowed vision of the past. In Japan, banned coverage of the atomic bombs, the existence of a

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2 Bruce Scates, *Return to Gallipoli: Walking the Battlefields of the Great War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 185, 200.

3 Peter H. Hoffenberg, 'Landscape, Memory and the Australian Experience, 1915-18,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 36, no. 1 (2001), 111-131.

4 This design is attributed to the 'Iron Cross' dating from the Wars of Liberation, still recognised as Germany's highest military decoration. See Donald Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross: The Search for Tradition in the West German Armed Forces*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 4.

5 'The War Graves Photographic Project,' Commonwealth War Graves Commission, accessed January 18, 2015, <http://www.twgpp.org/index.php>.

6 George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 84-86.

7 Australians on the Western Front, 'Tyne Cot Cemetery: Zonnebeke, Belgium,' Department of Veterans Affairs, accessed January 18, 2015, <http://www.WWIwesternfront.gov.au/zonnebeke/visiting-tyne-cot.php>

8 Omer Bartov, *Mirrors of Destruction: War, Genocide and Modern Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2002), 2.

9 James Liu and Denis Hilton, 'How the past weighs on the present: social representations of history and their role in identity politics,' *British Journal of Social Psychology* 44, no. 4, (2005), 537-556, 545-546.

'war crimes trial view of history,' purges of university historians, and censorship reflect a national attempt to deny the highly publicised war crimes trials in Tokyo.<sup>10</sup>

As witnessed in Japanese and German commemorations, military success is a defining feature of national character. The Australian Government's extensive official histories and current expenditure on the WWI centenary demonstrate the influence of popular war narratives on national identity.<sup>11</sup> However, despite the perception that national history is holistic and objective, national narratives are censored constructions of memories. Recognising brutal or abusive crimes raises concerns over historical accountability. As a result, these events are often excluded to avoid jeopardising a virtuous mythology. For Australians, recognising soldiers' role as killers comes close to undermining the heroic 'digger' ideals of sacrifice and courage.

Mateship, loyalty, physical courage, self-sacrifice, irreverence of authority...It was a legend of idealized Australian masculinity—the quintessential male—with all the necessary warrior attribute attached. The Anzac was no crazed Rambo-like killer, but when pressed into war he could kill.<sup>12</sup>

As the first major international conflict for a fledgling British Dominion, WWI looms particularly large in Australia's national memory. Continuing debate over the inability to recognise the tactical shortcomings and ultimate failure of the Gallipoli campaign highlight the sensitivity of issues relating to military exploits.<sup>13</sup> To discuss participation in atrocities and human rights abuses would be highly contentious. For example, mustard gas is remembered for its difficulty in detection and effectiveness in trench warfare despite its use violating the 1899 and 1907 Hague Declarations.<sup>14</sup> As a result, the chemical was again prohibited in 1925 with the Geneva Protocol.<sup>15</sup> Historiography surrounding the use of mustard gas in WWI, however, criticises Germany for its use of the chemical while seemingly overlooking its use by Commonwealth forces.<sup>16</sup>

Allied sources attribute the first use of mustard gas to the Germans on 12 July 1917.<sup>17</sup> Yet there is strong evidence that suggests its earlier use by Allied powers. A British memoir by Sir Charles Lovatt Evans records Allied interest in chemical weapons in 1916 at the Royal Army Medical College. Specifically, Evans records that British military scientists 'studied arsine, phosgene,

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10 Sebastian Conrad, 'Entangled Memories: Versions of the Past in Germany and Japan, 1945-2001,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 38, no. 1, (2003), 85-99.

11 James Brown, *Anzac's Long Shadow: The Cost of Our National Obsession*, (Collingwood, Victoria: Redback, 2014), 19-21.

12 Craig Stockings, 'There is an idea that the Australian is a born soldier...', in *Zombie Myths of Australian Military History: The 10 Myths That Will Not Die*, Craig Stockings ed., (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2010), 93-115.

13 Tim Travers, *Gallipoli*, (Gloucestershire: Tempus Publishing, 2001), 31-32; Robin Prior, *Gallipoli: The End of the Myth*, (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2009), 250-252.

14 *The Medical Department of the United States in the World War, Volume XIV: Medical Aspects of Gas Warfare* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1926), Great War Primary Documents Archive.

15 United Nations Office for Disarmament, 'Chemical Weapons,' United Nations, 2011, accessed May 2014, <http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Chemical/>; Thomas Graham and Damien J. LaVera, *Cornerstones of Security: Arms Control Treaties in the New Era* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2005), 7-9.

16 See Robert Maynard, 'Mustard Gas' in *Chemical Warfare Agents: Toxicology and Treatment*, ed. Timothy Marrs, Robert Maynard, and Frederick Sidell (John Wiley & Sons, 2007), 375-409, 375; Eric Taylor, *Lethal Mists: An Introduction to the Natural and Military Sciences of Chemical, Biological Warfare and Terrorism*, (New York: Nova Publishers, 2001), 8; Leah Litman, 'A Question of Chemistry: Controlling the Spread and Use of Chemical Weapons,' *Harvard International Review* 27, no. 3 (2005), 32.

17 *Ibid.*

hydrocyanic acid and mustard gas.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, other sources report that the French army used tear gas during the Belgium campaign in 1914.<sup>19</sup> This dual historical record that venerates the Allies and associates atrocity with opposing forces is the result of a socio-political motivation that Western forces used to deal with the calamity of war. It highlights the importance of the historical record in questioning long-standing assumptions and depictions of war.

Attempts to present the Australian Government and Allied forces as solely victims of poisonous gas crimes perpetrated by German forces are not justified. As is often omitted, the Australian Government was responsible for war crimes through the use of poisonous gas, as witnessed on September 1918 when the Australian artillery fired mustard gas shells at Germany's Hindenberg line.<sup>20</sup> Barrages with phosgene, chlorine and mustard gas were all employed to equal effect by the British and Australian forces in both World Wars.<sup>21</sup> Other examples of wartime atrocities are noted in the high levels of rape and property crime that characterised the front line for allied and enemy forces, as seen in the 1915 Field General Court Martial (FGCM) accusations in France.<sup>22</sup> Not surprisingly, however, Britain and France used allegations of violent sexual offences by the German Army as a compelling recruitment campaign for Allied military.<sup>23</sup>

Bruce Scates asks how historians, who are 'well aware of the waste, immorality and futility of the Great War...respond to the sanctification of its memory.'<sup>24</sup> Conventionally, WWI historiography has embraced a framework of exclusion regarding issues of genocide and crimes against humanity. Categories of 'us' and 'them' detract from the methods employed in war and instead focus on the first person war experience.<sup>25</sup> Attention to the crimes of opposing sides is used to juxtapose the venerated Australian hero ideal, and characterises attempts to deal with the challenges of violence and abuse within national history. Whilst acknowledging the range of different ways Australian commemoration distorts the history of WWI, the glorification of the ANZAC legend and its associated 'silences' play an increasingly fundamental role in public memory.

The first subject of attention in almost every scholarly publication on the ANZAC legend is Charles Bean. His written histories have done much to shape an Australian national identity centred on valour, resourcefulness, fidelity, comradeship and larrikinism.<sup>26</sup> Whether seeking to discredit or support Bean's constructions, academic and social spheres have revolved around two extremes of opinion in the last decade. Firstly, there is the honorific construction of the virtuous Australian

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18 Charles Lovett Evans, 'Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society,' (London: The Royal Society, 1970) in *Chemical Warfare Agents: Toxicology and Treatment*, 375-409, 375.

19 Maynard, 'Mustard Gas,' 7.

20 Shirley Freeman, *The Gillis Report*, Peace Research Institute, 1985, v, in *Australian Field Trials with Mustard Gas: 1942-1945*, ed. R. G. Gillis, (Canberra: Peace Research Centre, 1985).

21 Corey J. Hilmas, Jeffery K. Smart, and Benjamin A. Hill, 'History of Chemical Warfare,' in *Medical Aspects of Chemical Warfare*, ed. Shirley D. Tuorinsky, (Texas: US Army Medical Department Center and School, 2008), 12-21.

22 Craig Gibson, *Behind the Front: British Soldiers and French Civilians, 1914-1918*, (Online: Cambridge University Press, 2014), Notre Dame Ebrary, 284-5, 302-303.

23 Susan R. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France During the First World War*, (United States: University of North Carolina Press Books, 1999), 50.

24 Bruce Scates, 'The first casualty of war: A reply to McKenna's and Ward's 'Gallipoli pilgrimage and sentimental nationalism,' *Australian Historical Studies* 38, no. 130, (2007), 313.

25 Neville Meaney, 'Britishness and Australian Identity: the Problem of Nationalism in Australian History and Historiography,' *Australian Historical Studies* 32, no. 116, (2001), 76.

26 Charles Bean, *ANZAC to Amiens* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1946), AWM digitized records, 181.

legend. Secondly, undertaken with varying degrees of vigour, is the critique of a falsified historic misinterpretation.

Beginning with Alan Seymour's play *The One Day of the Year* in 1960, criticism of primitive and militaristic values has come to dominate bookshop shelves.<sup>27</sup> The recent publication *What's Wrong with Anzac?*, by noted Australian historians Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, exemplifies the movement towards challenging reified commemoration.<sup>28</sup> Yet despite ever-growing scholarship challenging the ANZAC legend, the gulf between myth and reality continues with astonishing strength. The evidence for this is witnessed in the expanse and continued construction of memorials, increased pilgrimages to Gallipoli, and government supported programs with the National War Memorial, such as memorial boxes, digitised publications, family history outreach, temporary exhibitions and tours like *Remember me: the lost diggers of Vignacourt*.<sup>29</sup> In the 2012-2013 budget alone, the Federal Government committed \$84.5 million to WWI commemoration, with \$27 million devoted to refurbishing the Australian War Memorial's First World War Gallery in the lead up to the centenary of WWI and the Gallipoli landing.<sup>30</sup>

Heroic constructions of the ANZAC digger were continually reiterated throughout the war and persist in the public memory. According to the *Defence Act 1903* (Cth), desertion or cowardice was punishable by the death penalty.<sup>31</sup> On 3 May 1915, the *Argus* recorded the loss of life in Gallipoli as a 'stirring story of duty manfully performed and undying fame won by courageous self sacrifice.'<sup>32</sup> Recruitment posters, propaganda and other public media released during WWI highlight the Australian government's persistence in reifying its military history.<sup>33</sup> Ironically, critics and 'anti-digger' opinions only stir strong patriotic defences. Critical wartime histories have consistently been met with sentimental public responses. Christina Spittel suggests that this failure to critique the actuality of death and killing is bound up in the 'battleground' of contending sides.<sup>34</sup> In other words, it is the competitive and aggressive contentions asserted about WWI commemoration and heroism that have justified defensive and passionate rebuttals.

Within critical attempts to identify faults of nationalistic influences, recent academic discussion has emerged around experiences of military and civilian victims. The struggle to talk about grotesque experiences of war, particularly with the overshadowing of war heroes, caused many victims to internalise their traumatic experience.<sup>35</sup> According to Joy Damousi, 'soldierly silence

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27 Christina Spittel, 'The One Day of the Year that All That: Anzac between History and Memory,' *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 58, no. 1, (2012), 123.

28 Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *What's Wrong with Anzac?: The Militarisation of Australian History*, (Sydney: University of New South Wales, 2010).

29 Michael Hall, 'ANZAC Day and Secular Pilgrimage,' *Tourism Recreation Research* 27, no. 2, (2002), 87, 90; *Australian War Memorial Annual Report 2012-2013*, Australian War Memorial, 2013, 32-38, 43, accessed May, 2014, <http://www.awm.gov.au/sites/default/files/AnnualReport2013.pdf>.

30 *Commemorating the Centenary of Anzac*, Budget Overview, Australian Government, July 2013, accessed May, 2014, [http://www.budget.gov.au/2012-13/content/overview/html/overview\\_32.htm](http://www.budget.gov.au/2012-13/content/overview/html/overview_32.htm).

31 *Desertion and the death penalty*, Australian War Memorial, 2013, accessed May, 2014, <https://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/desertion/>.

32 'Monday, May 3, 1915,' *Argus*, 3 May 1915, 8, accessed July 2014, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article1514168>.

33 Charles Bean, *The Anzac Book*, (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2010).

34 Spittel, 'The One Day of the Year that All That: Anzac between History and Memory,' 124.

35 Joy Damousi, *Living with the Aftermath: Trauma, Nostalgia and Grief in Post-War Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 99.

shrouded men in a protective shield' where social conventions and language stifled guilt and trauma.<sup>36</sup> Correspondence from the front was sanitised and letters to loved ones from the trenches were often filled with sarcasm and comforting words.<sup>37</sup> One letter from a soldier surviving the battle at ANZAC Cove records 'I've got lovely blistered heels,' while another declared 'it is not at all too bad.'<sup>38</sup> Language provided a way for these victims to cope with their wartime experiences and repeatedly disguised personal trauma to loved ones. By contributing to Bean's depiction of Australian soldiers as brave larrikins, they did their patriotic duty by showing themselves as without complaint or long-lasting traumatic stress.

Furthermore, the importance of WWI as a 'baptism of fire' resulted in the construction and solidification of the 'ANZAC digger' as the defining characteristic of Australian identity.<sup>39</sup> Unlike other military venerations, the ANZAC myth asserts that the ideal soldier is an ordinary bush-rugged citizen who possesses innate qualities of heroism.<sup>40</sup> By favouring individuals of British origin, the ideal asserted that any citizen is capable of heroism rather than a predetermined unique few. As James Brown's *Anzac's Long Shadow* argues, this inclusive ideal and tradition are projected onto the modern military experience.<sup>41</sup> It is important to identify that until the *Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948* the term 'citizen' legally referred to an exclusive racial and gendered group belonging to the British Commonwealth. As well as citizenship being denied to Aboriginal people, the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*, the *Naturalisation Act 1903* and the White Australia Policy significantly curtailed non-European migration until 1972.<sup>42</sup> Despite later changes in government policy and claims that the myth has been reinterpreted to include women and various ethnicities, these Acts have had a longstanding influence on national war commemoration and iconology.<sup>43</sup>

Yet, dismissing its contemporary military significance and undermining ordinary heroism, Mervyn Bendle describes the 'digger' ideal as a 'cancer.'<sup>44</sup> Impacting on contemporary gender ideals, the ANZAC mythology has constructed a masculine epitome that has a limited capacity for expression and social support. In particular, victories in modern conflicts are defined by an absence of violence rather than performances of it. Not able to fulfil the sacrificial virtues and violence accomplished by ANZAC predecessors, modern military servicemen feel inadequate and ashamed.<sup>45</sup> Some

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36 *Ibid.*, 100.

37 Edgar Jones, 'The Psychology of Killing: The Combat Experience of British Soldiers during the First World War,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 41, no. 2, (2006), 234.

38 Bert Smythe, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, AIF. Letter from the Anzac in June 1915. Cited in Smythe Family History, 'Herbert Andrew Smythe: 1889-1917,' Australian War Memorial, 2011, accessed May, 2014, <http://www.smythe.id.au/letters>; Jonathan King, *The Western Front Diaries*, (Sydney: Simon and Schuster, 2008), 2.

39 Bryan Dwyer, 'Place and Masculinity in the Anzac Legend,' *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*, (1998), 226.

40 Tony Vonthoff, 'Military Heroism: An Australian Perspective,' *Australian Defence Force Journal*, no. 169, (2005), 33; Bruce Scates, 'The first casualty of war: A reply to McKenna's and Ward's 'Gallipoli pilgrimage and sentimental nationalism,' 312-321.

41 James Brown, *Anzac's Long Shadow: The Cost of Our National Obsession*, (Victoria: Redback, 2014).

42 *Immigration to Australia During the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2014, 1-7, accessed January 27, 2015, <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/statistics/federation/>.

43 Hoffenberg, 'Landscape, Memory and the Australian Experience, 1915-18,' 121.

44 Mervyn F. Bendle, 'The Military Historians' War on the Anzac Legend,' *Quadrant Online*, 29 March, 2014, accessed on May, 2014, <http://quadrant.org.au/magazine/2014/04/military-historians-war-anzac-legend/>.

45 Brown, *Anzacs Long Shadow*, 4-5.

scholars argue that the soldiers the myth sought to venerate occupied a non-gendered category that marginalised their place in cultural society.<sup>46</sup>

Emmanuel Sivan, Jay Winter and Bruce Scates describe war and commemoration as contingent, malleable and dynamic.<sup>47</sup> Notwithstanding its potential to be expressed in a variety of ways, commemoration tends to favour one memory over others. By focusing on singular memories, individuals or events, organisers often neglect other, less-palatable histories and experiences. For example, fascism and repressive regimes exist outside of national memory. As Saul Friedlander observed of Germany, ‘the Nazi past is too massive to be forgotten and too repellent to be integrated in the “normal” narrative of memory.’<sup>48</sup> Friedlander’s comprehensive analysis of Nazism and the Holocaust offers historians the warning that biased commemoration is not restricted to authoritarian regimes and that failing to recognise this is to the scholar’s own detriment. Winter and Sivan’s concept of ‘two histories,’ which reflects the two conflicting responses to Bean’s characterisation of ANZAC soldiers, is consistent with Friedlander’s warnings of biased commemoration in the Australian public memory of WWI.<sup>49</sup>

Tony Vonthoff contentiously claims in his article ‘Military Heroism: An Australian Perspective,’ that the accounts of the Gallipoli landing are ‘entirely complementary and all-inclusive.’<sup>50</sup> Vonthoff’s assertion that sources from the Gallipoli Campaign, such as Ellis Ashmead Bartlett’s account of the landing, were not influenced by racial, social or political prejudice is not an uncommon belief. Similar perspectives are evident in recent attention to Indigenous Australians and nurses in war. Over the last twenty years, increased scholarly, political and social attention to these two groups is used as justification to argue that an increased equality in representation has been achieved.<sup>51</sup> Erecting a boundary between the terms ‘women’ and ‘home front,’ the Australian Commonwealth Government declared that ‘no one doubts the women will play a key role in the defence of our nation.’<sup>52</sup> A noticeable rise in written and visual material after the Second World War reflects a growing interest to include women in Australia’s military narrative.<sup>53</sup> Despite these attempts to expand the wartime history’s gendered and racialised horizons, Australia’s public memory of WWI is still influenced by silences and neglected histories as children, civilians, peace activists, deserters and other racial groups remain overlooked. By prescribing a particular role

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46 See Sally Johnson, ‘Theorising Language and Masculinity: A Feminist Perspective,’ in *Language and Masculinity*, ed. U.H. Meinhof and S. Johnson, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 12; Hoffenberg, ‘Landscape, Memory and the Australian Experience, 1915-18,’ 111.

47 Winter and Sivan, ‘Setting the framework,’ 61; Bruce Scates, *A New Australia: Citizenship, Radicalism and the First Republic*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 8.

48 Saul Friedlander, ‘Some German Struggles with Memory,’ 1986, cited in Dirk A. Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 222.

49 Winter and Sivan, ‘Setting the framework,’ 9.

50 Vonthoff, ‘Military Heroism: An Australian Perspective,’ 34.

51 Kirsty Harris, ‘Girls in Grey: Surveying Australian Military Nurses in World War I,’ *History Compass* 11, no. 1, (2012), 14.

52 Commonwealth of Australia, *Servicemen’s Memorial Dedicated*, Department of Veterans Affairs, Press release 42/99, March 27, 1999, quoted in Colonel Anthony McWatters, ‘Australian Women and War,’ *Australian Defence Force Journal* 166, (2005): 45.

53 See Angharad Fletcher, ‘Sisters Behind the Wire: Reappraising Australian Military Nursing and Internment in the Pacific during World War II,’ *Med History* 44, no. 4, (2012), 422; Christina Twomey, ‘Problems in Paradise: Gender, Race and Historical ‘Truth’ in Paradise Road,’ *Journal of Interdisciplinary Gender Studies* 10, no. 1, (2006), 30-52; Jan Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1991); Rupert Goodman, *Our War Nurses*, (Queensland, Bowen Hills: Boolarong Publications, 1998); Peter Rees, *The Other Anzac*, (Allen and Unwin, 2008); Tom Keneally, *The Daughters of Mers*, (Vintage Australia: 2013).

for non-citizens and women, the construction of the ANZAC archetype continues to be applied specifically to the white male citizen.

Reshaping the context and perception of the legend to enable greater gender and racial inclusion is not as simple as shifting academic and social discourse. As Australian military historian Mervyn Bendle argues, concepts of silence, oppression and the 'imbalance' of historical memory are deeply rooted in identity.<sup>54</sup> To recognise the neglect within the ANZAC legend is to admit regret and inadequacy. As George Orwell surmises, Australian veneration of the ANZAC past rejects 'a nightmare happening in a void' and 'the dark emptiness (that) lies at the core of the Anzac Legend.'<sup>55</sup>

This neglect is certainly not isolated to modern commemoration and can be seen as a feature of the war and interwar period. A tendency to prioritise public sacrifice over private grief can be observed in contemporary newspaper clippings, testimonies and the social groupings of the period. Bruce Scates' analysis illuminates the role government, persons and organisations played in creating the 'unknowns.'<sup>56</sup> 'Missing in action,' 'vanished without a trace,' and 'killed in action' surround written records of casualties. Personal letters often assumed heroic intentions sparing family and friends the gruesome reality of their experience. Supporting this priority is the formation of the 'war widow' who were consistently demanded to remember the absence of their husbands through ordinary silence and stoicism.<sup>57</sup>

In the same way as ANZAC mythology has oppressed expression and failed to reveal trauma, modern histories have pulled a curtain over the terror and atrocity of war. Repeatedly omitted photographic sources in Allied collections highlight a sanitised veneration of war.<sup>58</sup> *The Horror of It: Camera Records of War's Gruesome Glories*, edited by Fredrick Barber in 1932, is a little known Allied publication of wartime brutality. Featuring an assortment of ninety-one original WWI photographs, the collection was drawn from archives in the United States, France, Great Britain and Germany. Affirming the horrors of violent conflict, the collection upholds an anti-war sentiment that does not glorify the allied 'sacrifices' commonly associated with WWI commemoration. Additionally, Ernst Fredrich's *War Against War* in 1924, Otto Dix's anti-war etchings of the *Der Krieg* cycle and Goya's *Disasters of War* are graphic examinations of wartime brutality that adopt a similar pacifist mentality that objects to military conflict.<sup>59</sup> A photographer and conscientious objector during the Great War, Ernst Fredrich clearly isolates the heightened capacity of visual accounts to expose the neglected atrocity of killing; 'at last the mask has been torn away from this 'Field of Honour,' from this lie of an 'heroic death.'<sup>60</sup> The infamous Australian war correspondent Charles Bean described the place of visual sources as 'sacred records...to see for ever the plain, simple truth.'<sup>61</sup> Despite the capacity of photography to reveal suppressed realities, the horrors of

54 Mervyn F. Bendle, 'The Assault on Anzac,' *Quadrant Online*, last modified July 1, 2009, accessed May 10, 2014, <http://quadrant.org.au/magazine/2009/07-08/the-assault-on-anzac/>.

55 George Orwell, *Inside the Whale* (South Australia: The University of Adelaide, 1940), Bendle, 'The Assault on Anzac.'

56 Scates, *Return to Gallipoli*, 52.

57 Damousi, *Living with the Aftermath: Trauma, Nostalgia and Grief in Post-War Australia*, 5.

58 Frederick A. Barber, *The Horror of It: Camera records of war's gruesome glories*, (New York: Association Press, 1932), Peace Movement Collection.

59 Claire Bowen, 'War Pictures for Peace: Ernest Friedrich's War Against War,' *Arts of War and Peace* 1, no. 2 (2013), 58.

60 Ernst Fredrich, *War Against War*, (Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 2014), 22. See also Ashley Ekins, *Gallipoli*, (Exisle Publishing, 2013), 274-278.

61 Charles Bean, 'Australia's Records,' *Western Argus*, December 18, 1917, 36, accessed January 31, 2015, <https://www.trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/34180418>.

WWI are certainly not limited to visual accounts. Written sources often published long after the war reiterated its violence. As featured in the Australian War Memorial’s *ANZAC Voices* exhibition, John Laws’ descriptive quote ‘my tunic is rotten with other men’s blood, and partly splattered with a dead man’s brains,’ clearly summarises the traumatic component of war.<sup>62</sup> It is an experience that James Brown argues ‘we have Disneyfied,’ in an attempt to accentuate national pride.<sup>63</sup>

For the modern Australian, the reality of war is confronting and often unimaginable. Witnessing violent death and the associated experience of incessantly fearing for one’s life is a detached reality which many are unable to comprehend. In particular, the calculated violence, intimidation and undefined moral dilemmas associated with killing are discomfiting and consistently rejected in peaceful periods. To cope with the violence and brutality of WWI, Australian historiography has frequently avoided discussing weapons that foster feelings of terror. Often described as the most prevailing form of emotion in battle, war itself is a phenomenon that depends on the rampant spread of fear.<sup>64</sup> In the available primary evidence, fear is noticeable in the reactions to chemical and aircraft warfare. For example, the Zeppelin and light-armed aircraft were implemented as weapons of terror that enabled a new capacity to target civilians.<sup>65</sup> Other weapons, such the machine-gun, also emerged as superior weapons for their accuracy and elimination of human contact. Additionally, the sniper rifle was responsible for heavy casualties, creating a feeling of helplessness and insecurity for both soldiers and civilians.<sup>66</sup> Amidst these technological developments, chemical warfare at the time had a particularly devastating effect.

Chemical warfare emerged on a large scale during WWI. Designed to ‘stop a man,’ mustard gas specifically intended to maim and wound rather than kill.<sup>67</sup> Excruciating burns, respiratory destruction and slow death made victims describe mustard gas with vivid imagery, such as ‘a killing frost,’ a ‘creeping cloud of death’ and as something that made them feel as though they were ‘slowly, drowning.’<sup>68</sup> Even experienced medical professionals struggled with the prolonged suffering. One doctor remarked on the ‘poor things burnt and blisters, with blind eyes... all sticky and stuck together, and always fighting for breath, with voices a mere whisper, saying that their throats are closing and they know they will choke.’<sup>69</sup> As the war spread throughout Europe, the anxiety created by the use of mustard gas and other chemical weapons consumed the public imagination, spreading rapidly through military and civilian spheres. Despite the need for further scholarly analysis on the use of chemical warfare by Allied forces in WWI, previous efforts to associate chemical weapons with enemy warfare attempted to connect realistic modern understandings of war and the romanticized memories of the past.

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62 Letter from Lieutenant John Raws, 23<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, addressed to Mr Norman Bayles on the 4<sup>th</sup> August 1916. See John Raws, ‘In France: To Mr. Norman Bayles, M.L.A.’ 4 August, 1916, letter. Private Record 2DRL/0481, Australian War Memorial, 2014, <http://www.awm.gov.au/sites/default/files/2DRL0481.pdf>.

63 Brown, *Anzac’s Long Shadow*, 4.

64 Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, (London: Basic Books, 1999), 50, 61-2; Jones, ‘The Psychology of Killing: The Combat Experience of British Soldiers during the First World War,’ 244.

65 Karen S. Garvin, *It Came Last Night: The Zeppelin as a Weapon of Terror in the First World War*, (Mid Atlantic Conference, University of Maryland College, 2010), 2.

66 George Raudzens, ‘The Measurement of Technological Determinism in Military History,’ *The Journal of Military History* 54, (1990), 420.

67 Robert Maynard, ‘Opinions of Chemical Warfare’ in *Chemical Warfare Agents: Toxicology and Treatment*, ed. Timothy Marrs, Robert Maynard, and Frederick Sidell, (John Wiley & Sons, 2007), 375-409; 7.

68 George Browne, *An American Soldier in World War One*, ed. David Snead, (United States: Nebraska Press, 2006), 75; Harold Saunders, ‘Trenches at Vimy Ridge,’ in *On the Front Line: True World War 1 Stories*, ed. C.B. Purdom, (London: Constable, 2009), 73; Martin Gilbert, *The First World War: A Complete History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 1970), 145.

69 *Ibid.*, 383.

Attempts to expose a more realistic understanding of war have fuelled defensive and patriotic sentiments. Historians, soldiers and others aware of the deeply ingrained values and history fostering the ANZAC identity are faced with the challenge of establishing a new approach to the war that will offer a way to overcome the shortcomings of Australian commemoration. Bringing innate moral dilemmas into the debate in *The Psychology of Killing*, Edgar Jones highlights that the horror of death can be witnessed most powerfully through the traumatic experience of killing.<sup>70</sup> In any other context killing is associated with inhumane and psychotic motivations. Notably, discussions and collections that address death and the act of killing in WWI are limited. However, because of the gravity that the concept of ‘humanity’ plays in the definition of human, this aspect of war offers a new and arguably less provocative medium for Australian historians to explore the atrocity and horror of WWI.

As a crime punishable by imprisonment for life or for twenty-five years, ‘murder’ or the ‘attempt to kill’ is a taboo in Australian modern civil society.<sup>71</sup> By extension, a joy of killing is not morally acceptable or reasonable, regardless of the conditions or context of the emotion. Niall Ferguson’s psychological analysis argues that killing in war is often associated with an intense feeling of pleasure.<sup>72</sup> Attempts to cope with expressions of pleasure arising from WWI veterans are inferred in the terminology used to identify these individuals. Specifically, ‘psychiatric,’ ‘shell-shocked’ or ‘traumatised’ are the words associated with combatants who expressed a desire or excitement for overt aggressive responses.<sup>73</sup>

Within the vast collection of sources on WWI, much of the soldiers’ testimony includes expressions of feelings of ‘joyful slaughter.’ Henry de Man recounts, ‘I saw bodies or parts of bodies go up in the air, and heard the desperate yelling of the wounded or runaways. I had to confess to myself that it was one of the happiest moments of my life.’<sup>74</sup> Another soldier recorded that at ‘the awful carnage that was going on around me, I burst out laughing.’<sup>75</sup> These vivid accounts have the capacity to shatter the illusion of virtuous sacrifice and national duty attributed to WWI soldiers. Modern responses to the concept of ‘murder’ in war that justify killing through self-defence, associative duties and philosophical ethics do not stand up to scrutiny.<sup>76</sup> Whilst hand-to-hand combat became increasingly uncommon, there are many instances of soldiers choosing to kill prisoners of war, civilians and indigenous populations in cold blood.<sup>77</sup> Australian historians Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds state that war is the exemption that demands ‘respect, admiration and decoration...to

70 Jones, ‘The Psychology of Killing: The Combat Experience of British Soldiers during the First World War,’ 229-246.

71 AUSTLII, *Crimes Act 1900*, Australian Commonwealth Government, 2014, part 3, section 18, accessed January 10, 2015, [http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol\\_act/ca190082/s18.html](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/ca190082/s18.html).

72 Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, (London: Basic Books, 1998), 358.

73 It is important to recognise that there is a clear distinction between actual violence and posturing. Ritualised aggression, mock battle and posturing all exhibit restraint and are frequently accepted in social society. But actual violence that maintains an intention to kill instils shock, horror and revulsion in most people. In reality, there are ‘only a few psychopaths that want to slice people open.’ See Dave Grossman ‘On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society,’ (Open Road Media: 2014), 2.

74 Henry de Man, *The Remaking of a Mind: A Soldier's Thoughts on War and Reconstruction* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Son, 1919), 198-99.

75 George Brame, ‘On the Belgian Coast,’ in *On the Front Line: True World War 1 Stories*, ed. C.B. Purdom, (London: Constable, 2009), 164.

76 See Seth Lazar, ‘Associative Duties and the Ethics of Killing in War,’ *Journal of Practical Ethics* 2, no. 2, (2014), 58-68; Helen Frowe, *Defensive Killing*, (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2014), 124-161; Jeff McMahan, *Killing in War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

77 Margaret M. DeGuzman, ‘Crimes Against Humanity,’ *Research Handbook on International Criminal Law*, no. 2010-9, (2011), 1.

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those who could do it without flinching or even with dark, triumphant elation.<sup>78</sup> This observation challenges the moral virtues and victim ideology associated with 'a nation "baptised" in blood.'<sup>79</sup> By connecting two contradictory portrayals of war, it becomes evident that greater attention to the experiences of joyful slaughter provides a framework to comprehend the calamity of war.

Leo Frankowski stated that 'cultures all develop blind spots, things that they don't even think about because they know the truth about them.'<sup>80</sup> For Australians the commemoration of WWI extends beyond neglect and silence into rejection. The glorification and construction of the ANZAC legend has resulted in a patriotic identity that romanticises war and dissociates its brutal reality. In attempts to illuminate the extent of this forgotten and rejected history, chemical warfare and the concept of 'joy killings' offer ways to connect the calamity of WWI to modern Australia. Emerging outside the boundaries of traditional historical fields, this analysis is a framework that can be used to overcome neglected memory. Conclusively, the sanitised depiction of death and neglected atrocity in WWI memory demands reform on the glorified commemoration that has so far defined Australian national remembrance.

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78 Lake and Reynolds, *What's Wrong with Anzac?: The Militarisation of Australian History*, 160.

79 Stockings, 'There is an idea that the Australian is a born soldier...' in *Zombie Myths of Australian Military History: The 10 Myths That Will Not Die*, 94.

80 Leo Frankowski cited in Dave Grossman 'On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society,' xviii.

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