The story of the story of Anzac

PART I

Of Myths and Nations

"Great are the myths... Great the risen and fallen nations."

_Leaves of Grass, Walt Whitman_
In a well-known dialogue in Plato’s *Phaedros* (VI, §228A) Sokrates and Phædros are walking outside the walls of Athens, by chance discussing the archaeology of a particular myth in which Boreas, the north wind, is said to have carried off a young girl, Oreithyia. Phædros asks his companion about the origins and meaning of the story. I want to quote Sokrates’ response at length, because in it he compasses many of the attitudes toward myth that I want to look at throughout this thesis:

_Phædros:_ Tell me Sokrates, do you believe this mythic tale (*mythogomnon*) to be true?

_Sokrates:_ If I disbelieved, as the wise do, I should not be so very far wrong. Then I might offer a rational explanation, to the effect that a gust of the north wind pushed Oreithyia off the rocks in the neighbourhood as she was playing with Pharmakeia; and that having died in this manner she was said to have been carried off by Boreas.

As for myself, Phædros, I think such explanations on the whole very nice; yet they are the inventions of a clever, laborious, and not altogether enviable person — for no other reason than because after this they must explain the forms of the centaurs, then that of the Chimæra, and then a host of such beings press upon them: gorgons, pegasos, and countless other strange, inconceivable creatures. If anyone disbelieves in these, and with a rustic sort of wisdom undertakes to explain each in accordance with probability, they will need an abundance of leisure.

I, at least, have not time for such things — and the reason, my friend, is this: I am not yet able, as the Delphic motto has it, to know myself. So it seems to me ridiculous that when someone does not know that, they should trouble themselves over matters of no concern. And so I leave those things alone, accepting what other people believe about them; and, as I was saying just now, I investigate not these things, but myself — to know whether I am a monster more complicated and furious than Typhon, or a gentler and simpler creature, enjoying a blessed and quiet lot by nature.
Sokrates’ long answer to Phaedros’ question, “Do you believe this myth to be true?” is remarkable for many reasons. To begin with, as a piece of rhetoric it is poetry in motion, skilfully balancing opposing ideas of Rhetoricians and Sophists, and carefully respecting skeptical reason and religion alike. Also, it demonstrates how Greek society at the time questioned its own beliefs and structures. Sokrates suggests that it would “not be very wrong” to disbelieve the myth, as wise people do, yet he cautions against those who, with a “rustic sort of wisdom” (ἅγροικὸς τινὶ σοφίᾳ), would attempt to explain the story in terms of natural phenomena or forgotten history. It is easy enough for Allegorists or Euhemerists to make a story out of the north wind blowing a young girl off a cliff to her death on the rocks below, but such a theory then requires that the same methodology successfully explain all other such stories. And there’s the eternal rub.

Most importantly, Sokrates’ discourse illustrates how myths can function in many ways at once, and may be interpreted by different people to have different meanings: personal, political, social, sexual, historical, and so on. Moreover, as Sokrates states, the most valuable lesson from myth is in the application of the Delphic principle, ‘Know oneself’ (or as Sokrates would have it, ‘Listen to oneself’). The lesson is not simply to explain or to interpret the individual myth, but to understand oneself through the myth; not to control the myth from without, but to become part of it from within.

Over the ages, this passage from the Phaedrus has been alternately praised then attacked, cited with approval then rebuke. In recent times, for example, Ernst Cassirer quotes the passage to illustrate the central role of language in any discussion of myth, but suggests that Plato (and Cassirer himself?) sneers at Sokrates’ whimsical interpretations (Language and Myth, 2). Robert Graves accuses Sokrates of ignorance saying he “had no understanding of myths,” and claims the philosopher misses the point of the whole story (Greek Myths, §48.4). But other writers have been eager
to employ Sokrates' arguments. At the outset, then, I want to suggest it will be profitable to apply Sokrates' principle to Australia's relationship with the Anzac myth: not to recover the historical facts behind the mythic story (*mythologemen*), but to examine how the myth operates, and how it enables the nation to 'know itself'.

*In considering the story of Anzac as a foundation myth for the Australian nation, it is necessary first to examine the terms of the statement: what are the possible meanings compassed by the words ‘myth’ and ‘nation’? Infinite, comes the answer, and never the same from reader to reader, nor age to age. But some canvassing of terms is required, if only to find some common ground. Each of the two words has a long history, signifying different things in different periods and different languages. ‘Nation’ has undergone a radical re-evaluation in recent centuries, its core meaning evolving and mutating substantially — this will be a focus in the second part of this chapter. But likewise, the idea of ‘myth’ is changing, emerging from the confines of hyper-rational thought to a less stable, altogether more subversive potential.*

In his essay ‘When is art?’ Nelson Goodman demonstrates how the ontological impasse of the question ‘what is art?’ can be avoided by approaching the problem a different way. The trouble lies in asking the wrong question, suggests Goodman, for “a thing may function as a work of art at some times and not at others.” According to Goodman then, the real question is not ‘What objects are works of art?’ but ‘When is an object a work of art?’ (*When is art?*, 57, 66).

Gérard Genette takes Goodman’s formula and applies it to poetics, where the corresponding question ‘What is literature?’ is already a familiar script.18 Genette juxtaposes the two interrogatives What and When to

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18 G. Genette, *Fiction and Diction*, 1–29. Genette acknowledges that such a question cannot ignore the ghost of Sartre’s ‘Qu’est que c’est la littérature?’. In English, too, there is Eagleton’s chapter ‘What is literature’ which opens his *Literary Theory: an introduction*. 
propose a binary typology of poetics: on the one hand essentialist (and ‘closed’), on the other conditionalist (and ‘open’). The essentialist model is the traditional poetics, concerned with classifications of known objects operating in a closed, stratified system. But Genette is anxious to avoid traditional, received taxonomies. In particular he notes that most theories, being dazzled by the object of their specific interest, become blinded to other possibilities and deviations:

The mistake made by every poetics from Aristotle’s day to ours has doubtless been to hypostasize the sector of the literary art to which its own criterion applied, and with respect to which it was conceived. (*Fiction and Diction*, 20)

Genette is doubtless aware that his statement invites the question which sector he may himself be unconsciously hypostasizing. However, he goes on to champion the need for a pluralist theory that can accommodate a broader aesthetic canvas than most essentialist theories:

Taken literally in its claim to universality, none of these poetics is valid; but each of them is valid in its own domain, and at all events each can be credited with having brought to light and prominence one of the multiple criteria of literariness. (*Fiction and Diction*, 20)

And as for literature and poetics, so too for myth: no one theory or rule can adequately explain or define ‘myth’; it becomes mired in exceptions, variations and anomalies such as to dilute any claims to be paramount or universal. Nevertheless, each theory (to varying degrees) can be useful in ‘bringing to light and prominence one of the multiple criteria’ of what comes under the single term ‘myth’. G.S. Kirk makes a start in this direction in *The Nature of Greek Myths*, strongly asserting, in the manner of Genette, that “there can be no single, comprehensive theory of myth.” He suggests that the question should not be “What is Myth” (abstract, capitalized), but rather “What is a myth?” (indefinite, uncapitalized). So therefore, in this chapter we will not be asking “Is Anzac a myth,” nor yet
defining myth *per se.* Rather, we shall concern ourselves with other interrogatives, such as *When and How is Anzac myth, and especially, What sort of myth(s) is Anzac?* This reorienting highlights the fact that individual myths do not relate as siblings or isotopes of a discrete group, but as cousins, several steps removed from each other through language, culture, form, and so on.

Such questioning about myth is not new. As the example from *Phaedros* shows, in ancient Greek society the nature and value of ‘myths’ was already debated and questioned. In his seminal book on the subject *Did the Greeks Believe in their Myths?,* Paul Veyne comments how myth was a subject of serious reflexion in verbal and written discourse, and the Greeks still had not tired of it 600 years after the Sophists and the Greek ‘enlightenment’. Two and a half thousand years later Veyne is still asking, albeit rhetorically, “Is myth true or false?” (51). The question we will ask here is not so much whether modern Australian society ‘believes in its myths’, but whether it believes in myth at all. The point that I shall make frequently is that it is a vain project to attempt to parcel up myths from an exterior, objective position. My purpose will be to allow the many ideas and theories of myth to rub against the images of Anzac and leave their impressions. For the fact that the discussion will be largely ‘Eurocentric’, focussing on classical Greek and Latin texts and theories, rather than being universalist and pan-cultural, this thesis make no apology. I am not attempting to create an exhaustive theory for all humanity, but to show how various mythic narratives and models have affected and influenced the reception of the Anzac story into Australian culture; and this culture, notwithstanding the rich heritage of Aboriginal myths and those of non-European immigrants, looks almost exclusively to a mix of Greco-Roman and Judao-Christian traditions for its mythopoeic inspiration. Certainly this is exclusively the muse for those writers who have been central to the mythopoeisis of Anzac, including of course, Charles Bean.
In the beginning, then, is the word. In its many forms, compounds and translations, 'myth' is surrounded by such clouds of witness to its various incarnations that confusion must inevitably arise whenever anybody uses it. The myth that one theorist limits to a pre-literate society is not necessarily the same myth that another identifies in post-Enlightenment culture. We might consider an analogy with the word water. Everyone knows what water is: but it can be a lake or a stream, ice or snow, cloud, rain or ocean; water can be a life-giving liquor to the parched, or a flood of destruction and death. In similar fashion then, myth can be a narrative or a concept, a social function or a national ritual. It can be a falsehood or it can be immanent truth. What are the links between the various objects and the word itself? Let us examine.

At the heart of Nietzsche's maxim that we can only think within the 'prison-house of language' is the following paradox of language and epistemology: How can we think about a concept without a word to signify that concept? To put it another way: What comes first; the word or the concept? The easy answer is that they arrive together — and that is what neologisms are all about; new ideas, new phenomena. And so, a little philological inquiry can help us track the development (or decline) of an idea, and show how it changes over time. This is the first move in our interrogative formula 'when is myth': to ask when the word first occurred, and to look at different moments in its history.

In considering how various eras have addressed the notion of myth, it is crucial to historicize the word itself. The English word 'myth' comes directly from the Ancient Greek μῦθος — mūthos or mythos, depending on transliteration. This is the lexeme that has spawned antecedents in all those linguistic communities that affect some literary heritage to classical antiquity (or that have borrowed directly from one of these languages). And just as myth — or mythē, μῦθος, μηφ — is today so impossible to limit or define, mūthos was hardly less a word of many turns in Ancient Greek.
As Jean-Pierre Vernant explains, “the Greek word μυθοὶ means formulated speech,” and further, “μυθοι can equally well be called θεόi λογοί, sacred speeches” (‘Reason of myth’, 204). But within the compass of the appellation ‘Ancient Greek’, we are considering almost one thousand years of linguistic history, and the most cursory inquiry shows that nothing can be considered stable in any language over such a period. With μυθος, the kernel of the problem is not phonetic or morphological change, but rather semantic mutation of a relatively constant lexeme. To illustrate: μυθος occurs throughout the Ηλίαδ, where it appears to be a particular genre of public discourse; a “speech act indicating authority.”

Like its companion terms λόγος and ἔπος (also later to take on new signification as ‘epic’), μυθος in the Ηλίαδ is usually translated into modern English as ‘speech’, ‘word’, ‘saying’. But the language of the Ηλίαδ represents Ancient Greek in the eighth century B.C.E., at the very dawn of its literate history. Vernant therefore draws attention to the remarkable changes in the ‘mental universe of the Greeks’ between the eighth and fourth centuries, evidenced in poetry, art, politics, and especially in the work of the Ionian School of philosophy. These changes profoundly altered that society’s systems of ontology and epistemology, ultimately resulting in “an opposition between μυθος and λόγος, henceforth seen as separate and contrasting terms” (204). Marcel Detienne suggests this radical shift is apparent already within a life-span of Homer, in Hesiodic poetry, where μυθος comes to signify ‘tale’, ‘fiction’, ‘lie’ (Creation of Mythology, 47–51), and Mircea Eliade affirms this shift from the sixth century:

from the time of Xenophanes (c. 565–470), the Greeks steadily continued to empty μύθος of all religious and metaphysical value. Contrasted both with λόγος and, later, with ἡστορία, μύθος came in the end to denote ‘what cannot really exist’. (Eliade, Myth and Reality, 1–2)

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For Aristotle, writing in the fourth century B.C.E., μῦθος has become one of a taxonomy of technical terms in literary criticism. He defines μῦθος as “the arrangement of the incidents” — that is, the plot (Poetics, §1450a). Finally, at the end of the Hellenic era, we see Plutarch stating it his duty to “purify myth (μῦθος) by making it submit it to reason (λόγος) (Theseus, i: 1–2). This is of course all well-known territory. If some critics dispute the precise details of the semantic shifts, it is only over the manner and timing of the metamorphoses, not to deny the changes in fact occurred. In any case, it is not necessary to stipulate exactly where, when or in whose (extant) writings this opposition first developed, but to be mindful of the fissure between earlier and subsequent uses of each word.

With the rise and dominance of Roman culture, Greek was gradually supplanted by Latin as the lingua franca of literate Europe. Latin terms and names replaced their Greek counterparts in the language of scholarship and philosophy. The cognate term for the Greek μῦθος became in Latin fabula, and its meaning was firmly in the mode employed by the rationalists, as something opposed to λόγος. Cicero defines fabula in De inventione as “that which is neither true nor palpable,” and elsewhere he uses the term to discuss the creation stories of Ouranos, Kronos and Zeus. In the fourth century C.E. Augustine makes the cognate connexion between

20 It is this definition (and its matrix of classifications) which in the twentieth century inspired Northrop Frye’s designation of myth as a literary mode (Anatomy of Criticism).

21 "Fabula est in qua nec versae nec veri similis res continentur." Cicero goes on to define historia as an account of 'actual occurrences', and argumentum as a fictitious narrative, which 'might nevertheless have occurred'. Cicero, De inventione, i: §19; 27.

22 De natura deorum, ii: §63–4. Cicero prefers an allegorical reading to explain away these 'uncouth' fabulae and their literal accounts of castration of the father by the son: “These impious tales are merely the picturesque disguise of a sophisticated scientific theory. Those who invented them felt that the high, ethereal and fiery nature of the Sky-God [Ouranos] should have no use for those parts of the body which require intercourse with another to beget a child."
the terms clear, saying "fabula is what the Greeks called μῦθος." Macrobius, writing at the same time as Augustine in a Commentary on Cicero's own Dream of Scipio, seeks to dissect fables, casting out the difficult, fabulous elements, and keeping only the content and language that is 'seemly'. But whereas Cicero had been prepared to concede a possible allegorical value in fables, Macrobius agrees with Plato that most fābula are unfit material for the consideration of philosophers.

In a meta-commentary on Macrobius' Scipio, written during the theological and philosophical renaissance in twelfth century Europe, William of Conches returns to the classical aesthetics and values of Horace and Cicero, but re-interprets them with a Christian aetiology. William discusses texts such as the castration of Ouranos according to a 'fruit of the earth' theme, and sees parallels between Bacchanalian rituals and the eucharistic feast. "This is the truth of this sort of fable," he says: Hāius fabule bī: est veritas. William sees fabula as an "integumentum," a 'covering' of the inner truth that may be expressed by fabulistic narratives. He suggests that fables have structures of meaning, but that the true, hidden meaning in such stories is only open to the wise. The logic of this is plain: to maintain a hierarchy based on knowledge as power. But there is a more urgent need too, to keep the dangerous truths of such stories within the safe-keeping of the Church. Abelard put it this way in De doctrina christiana (II: §VI, 7): "As Augustine testifies, 'the hidden meanings are covered lest they be debased.'" But the mere fact that William is sophisticated and sincere enough to recognize and acknowledge common themes and structures between Greek myths and the more fabulous stories of the Christian Bible, is evidence of the maturing outlook of medieval Christian exegesis. Peter Dronke argues that for William of Conches, "fabula can be a way of concealing truth, but it can also be a way of apprehending truth" (Fabula, 55).

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23 Augustine, De civitate dei (VI: 5). "A fabulis enim mythico [genus theologio] dictum est, quoniam μῦθος Graece fabula dicitur."
And so it is at this stage in the history of critical thought, in the later Middle Ages when the Christian Church is at its most confident and when western scholars are beginning to rediscover the Greek philosophers in their own right rather than through the veil of the Roman expositors, that 'myth' could again claim its special nature of linking truth with fiction, the rational with the irrational. It is not necessarily surprising to see this in the work of a Christian theologian. We need only consider the opening to the Gospel according to John to see that the Christian *logos* is far more complex than a mere philosophical antonym for *muthos*: it seeks to unify both. Nevertheless, a philosophical position like that of William of Conches is the exception rather than the rule in the western European tradition, where the prevailing trend is not one of reconciling opposites, but of ideas and theories in combat. Looking retrospectively from the late twentieth century, Veyne identifies an "eternal struggle between superstition and reason, dating from the earliest times to the days of Voltaire and Renan." Certainly by the time of the Enlightenment, rational philosophy has become characterized by the overwhelming valorization of Reason. Kant's works amply demonstrate this, as does the English name for the period: the Age of Reason. It is curious then, that in the following generations, a new word enters the English language: 'myth'.

* 'Mythology' is an old word, in constant use in English. But as a single, basic lexeme, without prefixes or suffixes, 'myth' has existed in English only since the early nineteenth century. The *Oxford English Dictionary* attests the compound form 'mythology' since the fourteen hundreds, meaning 'the exposition or interpretation of fables'. Other derived forms such as mythologize, mythologist and mythological appear regularly from the sixteen hundreds. In 1781 we find mythology used to denote the 'body of myths' of a culture (*cf.* Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*), and about the

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24 *John* 1: 1. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." The Greek original has 'logos'; the Latin Vulgate has 'verbum'.

same time the use of 'mythos' as a borrowing from Latin where we would previously have expected fable. The first recorded use of 'myth' itself occurs in the *Westminster Review* in 1830, with the following decade onwards evidencing a cloudburst of usages. An alternative orthography 'mythe', championed on etymological grounds, attracted little support.\(^{25}\)

The Continent paralleled the English experience. In German, *mythus, mythus* and *mythe* became equally excepted variants in the nineteenth century. In French, *mythologie* had been in use since the fourteenth century, and *mythe* itself is first attested in 1818, with increasing instances in the following decades.\(^{26}\) Clearly, the rise of this word signifies not just a change in frequency of use, but a change in *usage*, a change in understanding of the subject.

This new usage is also denotative of a substantial epistemological shift, manifested in the growing analytical focus both within the academy and among extra-mural scholars.\(^{27}\) Not surprisingly, in their studies on the novel subject of 'myth', a number of scholars turned to Sokrates, and the discourse with Phædros on the nature of *mythoeigomena*. George Grote, in his influential *History of Greece* (1846–56), quotes the passage to yoke the authority of Sokrates to his own belief in the "uselessness of digging for a supposed basis of truth" in the myths of the Greeks. Grote allows no room for Euhemerist kite-flying. He sees the mythic fables as remote and unconnected to the glories of rational Greek culture, and would dismiss the accounts of monsters, gods, incest and parricide as "a past which was never present" — and hence, for the historian, not relevant for consideration.

\(^{25}\) On the history of the word 'myth' see the *Oxford English Dictionary* generally, and Raymond Williams, *Keywords*.


\(^{27}\) Cf. Hayden White's *Metahistory*, where he charts the changes in nineteenth-century European historiography.
Max Müller on the other hand, a philologist at Oxford University, uses Sokrates for completely different purposes. He begins his ground-breaking study ‘Comparative Mythology’ (1856) with an extended quotation of the passage from the Phaedros, adding a gloss to the effect that Sokrates’ arguments completely undermine those rationalists who would explain mytholegomena as simply metaphorical or allegorical narratives. However, Müller’s tactic is mainly to disagree with Grote’s claim that there is no reason, logic or worth at all in the myths in question.

Müller was a Sanskrit scholar, working in the field of comparative philology — that is, establishing the relationships between ancient and modern languages, and mapping these in a historical evolution of the Indo-European family of languages. In the mid-nineteenth century comparative philology was concerned mostly with etymology and phonetics, such as proving Grimm’s Law of consonantal change and tracing the various Vowel Shifts. But scholars also observed important structural differences between ancient and modern languages. These differences centred on the lack of abstract terms in proto Indo-European languages (principally Sanskrit), and the need to employ metaphor for concepts that lacked specific lexemes.

In the subsequent theory of ‘comparative mythology’, the mystery of the Greek myths thus becomes clear. According to Müller, the Aryan myths (which survive in Greek literature) were originally phrases and simple clauses explaining abstract concepts. And so he suggests that, “Where we speak of the sun following the dawn, the ancient poets could only speak and think of the sun loving and embracing the dawn” (‘Comparative Mythology’, 82). Borrowing an arresting metaphor from medical science, Müller described mythology as a “disease of language” — as language became more sophisticated, the residual linguistic structures mutated into mythic narratives:

Whenever any word that was at first used metaphorically, is used without a clear conception of the steps that led from its original to its metaphorical
meaning, there is a danger of mythology; whenever those steps are forgotten and artificial steps put in their places, we have mythology, or if I may say so, we have diseased language. (*Lecture*, 375)

But the ‘disease’ met stern resistance. Many of Müller’s etymological hypotheses were far too speculative and overly reductive. Daphne (dawn) Phæbos Apollo (sun), Selene (moon) and Endymion (sunset) were rampant protagonists in his readings, and every Greek fable appeared to be a telling of the ‘Solar myth’. This is an example of what might be termed the ‘comparativist fallacy’: stand back far enough and everything looks related, everything looks the same. Needless to say, as a universal theory of mythic origins comparative mythology ran true to Genette’s formula, and soon imploded amid a hail of mockery and parody.28

Plato may have been amused to see Sokrates’ discourse used in this fashion; Sokrates himself would presumably have rejected the narrowness of Müller’s theory. Nevertheless, Müller’s work retains some important legacies: firstly, as perhaps the earliest comprehensive ‘theory’ of myth in the modern era, but mainly for drawing the nexus between language and thought, and in understanding myth as a ‘type of speech’. For Müller, then:

Mythology is inevitable; it is natural, it is an inherent necessity of language, if we recognize language as the outward form of thought; it is in fact the dark shadow which language casts on thought and which will never vanish as long as speech and thought do not fully coincide. (*Philosophy of mythology*, 353)

In statements like these, free of the excesses of his over-developed etymological hypotheses, Müller comes closer to a plausible theory of

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28 Müller’s greatest handicap was the support received from less-gifted disciples. Lacking Müller’s philological training, G.W. Cox prosecuted comparative mythology by analogy, concluding that all myths concern the sun. Such hypotheses were lampooned in ‘The Oxford solar myth’ by Rev. R.F. Littledale (“dedicated, without permission, to the Rev. G.W. Cox, M.A.”), which parodies Müller’s analyses by making the theorist himself the subject of a solar myth. Appended in Müller, *Comparative Mythology*, xxxi-xlvi.
myth and language than his many detractors would allow. It is fascinating to see how, a century later, Michel de Certeau sees similar links between myth and language: “Myth exists because, through history, language is confronted with its origins” (Writing of History, 47).

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the philological school of comparative mythology was displaced by the newer science of ethnology, particularly as practised by the English School of Anthropology of E.B. Tylor, and especially Andrew Lang. In his many books and articles it was Lang who was most instrumental in demolishing Müller’s etymological gambits. The ethnologists in fact had greater claim to the qualifier ‘comparative’, since their work compassed far more than Indo-European myth literature, extending to accounts of religious and ritual observance in ‘primitive’ cultures world-wide. A little bit of Iroquois, mixed with a dash of Bushmen, leavened with a heady tonic of Aranda, all made for an explosion in primary material, and opened up all sorts of theoretical tangents.

The single most important signifier in all the work of the late nineteenth-century ethnologists is the designation of their subjects as ‘savages,’ and the rationalization of myth as the product of the savage thought of lower races. Lang employs the term assiduously, going so far as to define ‘the savage’ — needless to say, in total opposition to himself (Myth, Ritual and Religion, 1: 34). For Lang and his contemporaries ancient Greek culture is of course the quintessence of civilization, the cradle of all that is beautiful and good in contemporary society. So when Lang is forced to observe that in places “the mythology of the civilized races agrees with the actual practical belief of savages,” he explains it by asserting that, “the irrational element in Greek myth [is] derived (whether

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29 The entry for ‘Mythology’ in the ninth edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica (vol. XVII, 1884) is written by Lang, who organizes his essay primarily as an attack on Müller’s then still influential theories. In the article Lang defines mythology specifically as “legends of cosmogony.”
by inheritance or borrowing) from an ascertained condition of savage fancy" (*Myth, Ritual and Religion*, 1: 83). The possibility that mythopoeisis continues in the thought of the 'civilized races' is totally anathema; in the eyes of Lang, Tylor, Robertson-Smith et al., the rational mind of a civilized Greek, let alone a post-Enlightenment European, was too sophisticated to practise mythic thinking. This position is not just patronizing, intellectual snobbery, however. It is motivated as much by cultural and racial chauvinism. As Edward Said observes, at the turn of the twentieth century the field of comparative literature was “epistemologically organized as a sort of hierarchy, with Europe and its Latin Christian literature at its centre and top” (*Culture and Imperialism*, 52).

This can be seen in sharp relief in James Frazer's monumental, twelve volume *The Golden Bough* (1890–1915), a book which captured the intellectual Zeitgeist and became far and away the most influential account of its mind. In *The Golden Bough*, Frazer offered the 'dying god' as a universal image, a monomyth for all humanity — the king is dead, long live the king. The king of the wood gains his crown by killing his predecessor, only to in turn lose his laurels (and life) to another ambitious fugitive. Frazer argued the case for vegetation rituals as a protean source of literary and cultural inspiration. At the heart of his theory was the cycle of seasons: “the melancholy gloom and decay of Autumn” yielding to “the freshness, the brightness, and the verdure of Spring” — life, death, and rebirth. This pagan structure proved marvellously popular. *The Golden Bough* sold countless copies in single and multi-volumed editions, and the trace of its influence can be read throughout much of western literature of the early twentieth century.

Frazer's declared aim was “to explain the remarkable rule which regulated the succession to the priesthood of Diana at Aricia.” He traced

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30 James Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 'Demeter and Persephone'. NB: Because of the plethora of editions of Frazer (and abridgements), I cite the chapter name rather than the number.
his muse through Turner’s painting of *The Golden Bough* to Vergil’s *Aeneid* and early Greek mythography. Then he opened his canvas to comparative ethnology and found echoes of his hypothesis in British fire festivals, Aztec eucharistic feasts, and central Australian initiation rites. Frazer proceeds to fall headlong into the comparativist fallacy. His thesis about the golden bough becomes so speculative as to seem whimsical, and his trawl through world vegetative rites exemplifies the inherent hubris of universalism. As John Milbank says (‘Stories of sacrifice’, 24), Frazer’s project ultimately reduces to “a kind of neo-pagan scientific theurgy.” Yet the insistence on the centrality of vegetation ur-myths in human consciousness retains some relevance. Even if the seasons vary in form according to degrees of latitude from the equator, the season cycle is constant and immanent. It reinforces similar patterns of day and night, the menstrual cycle, the waxing and waning of the moon. Life is born out of death, the Phoenix rises from the ashes of its predecessor. Inevitably, these structures of the natural world have informed or have been displaced into the imagination of the social world (we shall see below how this metaphor grafts onto the birth of nations). The schema of regeneration is repeated, inverted, metaphorized, allegorized; in other words, mythologized.

With the scope of his enormous range of comparative data, Frazer was quite capable of identifying similarities between Christian and savage religion. He delicately points out that, “the Christian and heathen festivals of the divine death and resurrection [are] solemnized at the same season and in the same places” — the winter solstice and the vernal equinox — and suggests that the coincidences are “too numerous to be accidental” (‘Oriental religions in the West’). But Frazer will not countenance any notion that civilized culture is the province of anything other than western European society:

The revival of Roman law, of the Aristotelian philosophy, of ancient art and literature at the close of the Middle Ages, marked the return of Europe to native ideals of life and conduct, to saner, manlier views of the world.
The long halt in the march of civilisation was over. The tide of Oriental invasion had turned at last. It is ebbing still. ('Oriental religions in the West')

We can discern then in Frazer the same sort of cultural imperialism which Said analyzes so subtly in Orientalism. The benign veneer of British disinterest in Frazer's scholarship reveals a belly soiled with xenophobia; an anxiety of Europeans to prove to themselves that they have left behind the practices of the savage, the primitive, the oriental. Vernant notes in the work of Frazer and his colleagues a determination to establish a `veritable gulf' between two types of mentality, European and savage ('The reason of myth', 228). So while the great scholar is mobilizing examples from the four corners of the globe, he is at the same time carefully anchoring his thesis to received cultural genealogy: namely, that England is the undisputed inheritor of classical culture and letters, and as such the most advanced society on earth. What Frazer suppresses in this genealogy is the possibility of `savage' tendencies obtaining still in modern British society:

If any of my readers set out with the notion that all races of men think and act much in the same way as educated Englishmen, the evidence of superstitious belief and custom collected in this work should suffice to disabuse him of so erroneous a prepossession. ('Succession to the soul')

Whether or not one concurs with this statement, it appears to undermine much of the comparative analysis that Frazer has amassed to support his thesis. It betrays a comparativist anxiety: All people are human, but some people are more human than others. It is the same sort of hierarchy which posited the concept of the Noble Savage, and motivated racial policies in twentieth-century South Africa and Australia. As Laurence Coupe says (Myth, 23–4), "though Frazer's ostensible interest is mythographic not mythopoetic, his very condescension towards the evidence he mobilizes betrays the myth at work: derived from the Enlightenment, it is the story of progress via rationality." Here is Plutarch again, disguised but still at work purifying myth by submitting it to reason. The vital point
of this is that Frazer’s system is essentially static; it merely describes a gulf of difference, but offers no program for the ascent of ‘primitive cultures’. In the same manner, while Lucien Lévy-Bruhl opposed Frazer as being unsympathetic to primitive thinking, his own notion of ‘mystical participation’, which valorized the anti-rational, non-positivist mentality of the ‘primitive mind’, ultimately only increases the perceived separation between modern and pre-literate societies.

The final volume of Frazer’s monumental work was published in 1915, at the very moment when ‘educated Englishmen’, and with them Germans, French, Austrians, Russians, Italians and of course Australians, were proving just how uncivilized they could be. Is it a coincidence that this greatest barbarity is possible at a time when Europeans had convinced themselves of their total superiority — in terms of intellect, art, science, culture — to other races? Or is it because they had so blinded themselves to their own baser proclivities, that they would not, could not, see the evidence in themselves of those things they so despised in ‘savages’ and ‘lower races’? This phenomenon, the barbarity of civilization, is the type of paradox naturally associated with myth.

The belief in the superiority of European culture was, at the time, to all intents universal amongst its constituents. It was the logical consequence of cultural policies that assumed the truth of the Enlightenment; man had conquered superstition through the understanding and application of Reason. It is this complacency about the trajectory of philosophical thought that drives one of Nietzsche’s early works, The Birth of Tragedy (1872).

Myth had become credible only by means of scholarship, through intermediary abstractions:

Man today, stripped of myth, stands famished among all his pasts and must dig frantically for roots...What does our great historical hunger signify if

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31 The Birth of Tragedy was Nietzsche’s first book, written under the influence of Wagner’s acmeist cultural philosophy. Nietzsche later disowned parts of the book, and appended “An attempt at self-criticism” to the text to expiate some of its deficiencies.
Nietzsche saw the relentless march of Socratic rationalism as leading to the “extermination of myth.” Yet when he states that “only a horizon defined by myths completes and defines a whole cultural movement” (§23), the influence of Wagner is clear — as indeed are the cultural consequences of this ideological trajectory that were later manifested in Germany under Nazism. Nietzsche was certainly prescient of the wedge being driven between reason and myth, and right to criticize it. But his cry that “the age of Socratic man is over” (§20) is simply polemical. His corrective swings the pendulum from one side to the other, but fails to find a balanced medium.

Notwithstanding Nietzsche’s argument, the civilized structures of western democracies remained a veritable reification of the logos. Among philosophers of myth and mythology the Manichean opposition between Myth and Reason continued unabated. Jewett and Lawrence call it the “myth of mythlessness” (American Mounmyth, 250). Coupe sees it promoting a belief that, “humanity has successfully transcended the need for mythical forms of thought” (Myth, 13). We can see it in dramatic relief in the words of Wilhelm Nestle in 1940, who states categorically and unequivocally that Myth and Reason are antithetical:

Mythos and Logos — by these we describe the two poles between which human spiritual life swings. Mythical imagining and logical thought are opposites. (From Mythos to Logos, 1)

The very title of Nestle’s book expresses the ideological narrative of evolutionary progression with a logic that will bear no dissent. It was this prevailing attitude at the beginning of the twentieth century which enabled the Great War to become the horror it so quickly developed into. It is impossible still to understand the atrocity of the slaughter, just as at the time it was incomprehensible to those involved — and so it was able
to continue. And it was among this philosophical structure that Charles Bean grew up, and which influenced the development of his social and moral ideas; which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

As the twentieth century grew older there were new knowledges, new methodologies, and these looked at myth in different ways. For example, myth features in both Freud’s and Jung’s psychology.\(^\text{32}\) It is especially significant in the work of Northrop Frye, whose theory combines psychological terms such as ‘displacement’ and ‘archetype’ with Aristotelian poetics. Frye’s thesis in *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) that “myth is displaced into literature” influenced a whole generation of literary critics. Much of this is dismissed by John Vickers as the bad old ‘arm-chair anthropology’, which he ascribes to Frazer, Freud, Jung, Harrison and their descendants: Raglan, Graves, Frye, Eliade.\(^\text{33}\) Vickers prefers the work of Durkheim, Boas, and especially Bronislaw Malinowski, who on the basis of much fieldwork, developed the theory of myth as a ‘function’ of society (*Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, 1922). All these — Myth Ritual, Functionalism, Frazer and Malinowski — will be considered in more detail in the following chapter in analyzing how these various theories of myth translate into the Anzac paradigm.

Perhaps the most persuasive reassessment of the place of myth in society in the twentieth century came from structuralism, as exemplified by the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes. Lévi-Strauss combined the methodology of empirical fieldwork with the epistemology of structural linguistics (*Structural Anthropology*, 1958). Myths exist as a

\(^{32}\) Not all of Freud’s ideas were revolutionary. Gannath Obeyesekere criticizes Freud’s “preposterous idea that natives think like children,” suggesting that it emerges not from the logic of psychoanalytical theory, but from Freud’s European inheritance of the prelogical savage. (Obeyesekere, *Apotheosis of Captain Cook*, 16).

means for societies to reconcile contradictions, to account for the irrational. They deal with fundamental issues of human existence — birth, death, marriage, food, and so on. Lévi-Strauss allows a greater degree of sophistication to non-European thinking, arguing contrary to Lévy-Bruhl, that ‘savage thought’ operates not via mere affectivity, but through real understanding (Savage Mind, 268). (At the same time however, Lévi-Strauss’ objects of study remained non-European societies, and his inquiry persistently suggests an ‘Us–Them’ mode.)

The mythopoeic agent in Lévi-Strauss’ system is not a poet or priest, not linguistic mutation nor lost history; rather it is society itself that generates myths out of a need to explain its own paradoxes and contradictions. Fears and anxieties are displaced into myths, where at the level of the unconscious a society can resolve issues that it cannot deal with on the rational plane. This is especially so with traumatic issues such as grief, or potentially divisive issues such as cultural identity.

Lévi-Strauss makes narrative both oblique and central to his theory of myth. Instead of trying to identify the true, authoritative version of a myth from multiple and conflicting versions, Lévi-Strauss insists that a myth consists of all its variants: “Structural analysis eliminates the problem of the quest for the true version, or the earliest version” (“Structural study of myth”, 92). If a myth has meaning, he says, it is to be found not in its isolated elements, but in the combination of all those elements. Repetition is important then, its function being “to make the structure of the myth apparent” (105). By including all variants of a given myth, he discounts the value of an individual telling, of a narrative. But by focusing on story — rather than ritual, function, or language on its own — he makes ‘narrative’ itself the carrier of myths: “[A myth’s] substance does not lie in its style, its original music, its syntax, but in the story it tells” (86).

Narrative in this sense is very different from the narrow, literary concept that was being dissected at the same time by Frye and the neo-Aristoteleans. It is closer to Roland Barthes’ use of narrative in Mythologies
(1957), because of the links through structural linguistics. Barthes’ ephemeral essays in *Mythologies* are too idiosyncratic and sporadic to constitute a general theory of myth; likewise his casual ironic tone is symptomatic of the newspaper genre of the original pieces. But in the essay titled ‘Myth today’ appended to the book publication of the articles, Barthes does sketch out some radical thoughts on myth and contemporary society.

Barthes’ starting proposition is that “myth is a type of speech” (‘Myth today’, 109). This is consistent with etymology, he says, and we have seen earlier this is so. As a type of speech then, myth can be analyzed in grammatical terms as morphology, syntax or mood; it can be read as dialogue, narrative or imperative. Specifically, Barthes states that “myth is depoliticized speech” (142). Myth is *depoliticized* because it empties itself of historical reality, it is reduced to a simplicity of essences. (This is similar to Auerbach’s observation in *Mimesis* that the actual course of history runs contradictorily and confusedly, but ‘legend’ simplifies its material into an ordered narrative.)

We can extend this idea to say that myth is not *apolitical*, because myth is riddled with politics. On the other hand, it is *depolitical* in that its politics have been synthetically evacuated and smoothed over. This adage makes immanent the mythic imperative in a comment by John Howard: “I have golden rule on Anzac Day — I never talk about anything that has any kind of party political [association]” (3LO Radio, 25th Apr. 1999). Howard is not being apolitical (which would mean saying nothing at all), but he is being depolitical (and very disingenuous) in pretending there are no politics in Anzac, and that he makes no political capital from it. This is where Howard shows himself far more astute a politician than, say, Paul Keating. Leading up to and during the ‘Australia Remembers’ campaign for the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II, Keating sought to politicize Australia’s military history, with numerous speeches about the military defense of its shores and the ‘betrayal’ of Australia by the
Churchill and the British. He brought to attention the terrible ordeal of Sandakan, he knelt and kissed the ground at Kokoda. The attempt to reconfigure these narratives had little impact on the national mythology — because it was too overtly a politicized *mythos*. In contrast, Howard’s positioning of himself *within* the traditional Anzac *mythos* has been far more successful — because he works with the flow of the myth, not against it. Inevitably then, for Barthes myth is “on the Right.” It about the status quo and bourgeois ideology. There are myths on the Left, but these are “artificial” and “clumsy” says Barthes — and the Keating example appears to bear this out.

Aside from the arcane and technocratic regimen of semiology that drives his most dense work, Barthes’ work on ‘myth today’ continues to be compelling. The analyses of French culture in *Mythologies* demonstrate that images, rituals and commodities in modern culture are capable of bearing the same mythographic load as ancient stories and rites. His work gives the lie to the attitude that whatever mythic elements persist in ‘modern’ societies are either distilled into literature, petrified in archaic religious or social ceremonies, or re-fabricated in new-age synthetic spiritualism. It also demolishes the idea that myths always and only concern the relations of ‘gods and men’ or explain the ‘origins of things’ (Eliade, *Myth and Reality*). Barthes’s studies are the first to consider myth in a purely secular fashion, as part of a modern, secular society. How to recognize this, and how to find the language to analyze it? Barthes’ method is via semiotics and semiology; another is through the composite formulation ‘myth model’ suggested by Gannath Obeyesekere, who coined the term to advance his argument that myths do indeed remain very much part of contemporary, western civilization.

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34 Many of Keating’s speeches are reproduced in *Advancing Australia*. See also David Day’s volumes on Australia’s World War II history.
Obeyesekere defines a 'myth model' as a paradigmatic myth which serves as a model for mythmaking: "an underlying set of ideas (or cluster of mythemes) employed in a variety of narrative forms" (Apotheosis, 10). The motivation for this term is to show that mythopoiesis is "equally prolific" in modern societies. Interestingly, Max Müller had said much the same thing: "there is mythology now as there was in the time of Homer, only we do not perceive it, because we ourselves live in the very shadow of it" (Philosophy of mythology', 353). Müller's argument concerns words, and the mythopoetic qualities of language; Obeyesekere is talking about the social imagining of sophisticated cultures. The conclusion is nevertheless similar: some form of myth persists in modern, 'civilized' societies. Obeyesekere suggests that a 'myth model' is the form of a myth articulated in narrative genres according to the ideologies and technologies apposite to the society at the time. As historical conditions change, the form of the myth model is modulated through prevailing genres; though the narratives remain 'isomorphic' with previous manifestations. This trajectory of isomorphic reinvention of mythemes obtains an obvious link with the notion that a myth is the sum of all its tellings. We can also see parallels between Obeyesekere's 'models' and Lévi-Strauss's argument that mythical thought makes use of "the remains and debris of events, fossilized evidence of the history of an individual or a society" (Savage Mind, 22).

In admitting such connexions Obeyesekere deliberately invokes the structural linguistics that informs Lévi-Strauss's theories. He claims that myth models operate not just at the level of deep structure — "Myth models can, and often do, appear as surface structures; they exist on the

35 Here Obeyesekere seems almost to be paraphrasing Barthes' notion that people use myths according to their needs, and so mythical objects can be 'left dormant' for periods, but also reappear (Myth today', 144).

36 It is in this passage that Lévi-Strauss enunciates his notion of mythical thought as bricolage.
level of content" (11). This is both a convenient and a dangerous move. Convenient because it maps easily into the tripartite narratological structures (fabula/story/text) advanced by theorists such as Bal and Genette; and dangerous because it brings to bear on the idea of myth models the suspicions of the whole post-structuralist critique of Lévi-Strauss (particularly Derrida and Ricœur). Yet while Lévi-Strauss’s structural anthropology always already betrays its logocentrism in its quest for the origins of myths, myth models look not to origins, but to traces, and the texts of those traces. There is no need, and no attempt, to recover the implicit mythic deep structure; there is rather an engagement with the manifold and differing manifestations of identifiable isomorphic ‘models’ at the surface level of text.

For example, in a colloquy debate with Algirdas-Julien Greimas, Paul Ricoeur questions the logic whereby structuralist narratology stipulates that the deep structure fabula is transformed into a surface structure text. Ricoeur suggests than rather than being a one-way, linear progression (as implied in transformative grammar), the relationship between deep and surface structures is a dialectic, in which each reflects the other. Ricoeur even suggests that “the deep structure reflects the surface and not the contrary,” by which he implicitly subverting the idea of levels altogether (Greimas & Ricoeur, ‘On narrativity’, 552–4). Greimas responds by reiterating the importance of structural levels in narrative (an abstract deep, and a concrete surface), and identifying the surface level of text as an ‘anthropomorphemic level’ where language makes changes to the deep structure. Individuals are the ones who fabricate discourse, says Greimas, and they do so by “using narrative structures that already exist” (‘On narrativity’, 555).

This is essentially a debate between semiotics and phenomenology, but we can see that Obeyesekere’s myth models neatly side-steps the problem by doing both these things. To the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes of these theories, a third axis is added, that of chronology. By
The story of the story of Anzac

historicizing the process of transformation, myth models demonstrate firstly how modern societies fabricate narratives by re-ordering the fabulas of pre-existing myths (Greimas), but also how over time this very process causes the fabula to be seen in different ways through the lens of their new surface manifestations, thus establishing a dialectic (Ricoeur). Narrative transformation remains a useful concept then; particularly in a theory like Mieke Bal's (Narratology), which illustrates the role of ideology in the articulation of the fabula into the text. We shall see how this applies to Anzac in the following chapter.

Obeyesekere introduces the idea of myth models in *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook*: *European mythmaking in the Pacific*. When this book appeared in 1992 it immediately became a *cause célèbre* in anthropology. It is first and foremost an attack on traditional accounts that the Hawaiians considered Cook an actual embodiment of their ‘god’ Lono. Specifically, the book engages with the anthropologist Marshall Sahlins, the foremost champion of this position. As such it is but one more hypothesis in a series which wrestles interpretations, and scholarly reputations, over Cook’s long dead body.37 According to Obeyesekere:

The reception that Cook received when he landed on Kealakekua Bay on Sunday 17th January 1779, has been interpreted by every biographer and historian of Cook as one accorded to a god. (*Apotheosis*, 49)

It is not disputed that Captain Cook’s two week visit to Hawai‘i coincided with the great thanksgiving festival of Lono. Nor that Cook was called ‘Lono’ by the local population, and feasted in the manner of a great chief. Yet when he returned to the island a few days later (for repairs to the *Resolution*), Cook was murdered on the beach. After this, the debates begin.

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37 For a brief account, see Greg Dening, ‘Something of a Cook’s tour’, in *Readings/Writings*, 120–32. With characteristic candour and wit Dening observes that, “Blood sport among high-rolling academics has all the ‘Deep Play’ of a Balinese cockfight... and becomes a publishing event” (130).
Obeyesekere is a Sri Lankan anthropologist working in America, and his critique comes out of a new moment in post-colonial anthropology. He summarizes his arresting thesis thus: “The myth of Cook as the god Lono is fundamentally based on the Western idea of the redoubtable European who is a god to savage peoples” (177). Obeyesekere identifies Columbus and especially Cortez as others who exemplify this paradigm of apotheosis. Three basic tenets emerge from Obeyesekere’s argument:

- Europeans believe themselves to be rational people, who do not believe in mythological stories.
- Europeans believe ‘savages’ to be irrational people, who do believe in mythological stories.
- Europeans believe that savages, encountering something they do not understand, explain it through mythopoeic imagining: Cook is the god Lono.

Obeyesekere is clearly following to logical extension the theories of the nineteenth-century ethnologists, that savages employ mythical thought to explain anything they cannot fully comprehend. His argument is that Europeans, by contrast, have convinced themselves they do not believe in mythology, and consequently do not recognize when they practise it themselves. In this case, the Europeans want to believe that the savages consider them to be gods, and interpret events to satisfy this belief. Obeyesekere argues, however, that it is the Europeans who are fooled by Cook’s apparent deification, not the Hawaiians. It is the Europeans who are dumbfounded when the natives want to kill their ‘god’, not the Hawaiians, who, knowing Cook to be a man, consciously murder him.

Part of the rituals attending the festival of Lono involves the killing of the god, followed by the consequent reign of Ku. It is not surprising therefore when Marshall Sahlins, in comparative mode, draws parallels with Frazer’s ‘dying god’ motif: “Two years running Cook made his advent during the Makahiki New Year festival of Lono, in the classic Frazerian mode of the dying god” (Historical Metaphors, 34). Similarities
can likewise be seen between the events of January/February 1799 and the Passion of Christ, as Cook’s epiphany is awaited, then celebrated by the populace; followed by his ritual murder execution. Sahlin’s reply in painstaking detail to Obeyeskere’s book with his *How Natives Think: about Captain Cook, for example* (1995), complaining, amongst other things, that the Hawaiian people themselves had become hijacked to the debate, and alleging that in Obeyeskere’s book they “appear on the stage as dupes of European ideology.”

The argument now becomes one of perspective: Who is telling the story, and to whom? This is a classic debate in narratology, to which Mieke Bal has given the term ‘focalization’. Bal takes up Obeyeskere’s ideas herself in *Double Exposures* (1996), a book about cultural narratives. She sees in the concept of myth models a way of identifying “underlying combinations of ideas deployed in a variety of narrative forms” (4). She also highlights the role of narrative in the production of myth models. The absolute relevance of this to the generation of the Anzac myth can be seen in the following comments by Robert Jewett and John Lawrence on the construction of an American national mythology:

> The historical experience of a nation provides metaphors and stories which assume mythic proportions in literature and art, so that the resultant myth exercises a reciprocal pressure on succeeding generations. It shapes the sense of reality and is itself reshaped by subsequent experience. Thus a national mythology may come to exercise the same unconscious appeal as the archetypal myths of which they are variants. (*American Monomyth*, 7)

38 The traditional interpretation of Cook becoming the god Lono bears an uncanny resemblance to the classical rationalism of Euhemerus, who argued in his *Hieroglyphica: Sacred History* — literally, ‘sacred re-writings’ — that Zeus was in fact a Kretan (human) by birth, who went east and was declared a god.


The main advantage of Obeyesekere’s approach is that it moves the question of ‘myth’ from one of ontology and epistemology (for example, how natives think), to one of narratology: that is, how we tell stories. It is easy to see how mythemes can be inserted into narratives, and thus how myth models can exist, disguised, in larger narrative forms such as fiction, history, biography, or even speeches. And it is this unacknowledged existence which gives myth models their mythic power. The next chapter will consider the many ways that Anzac achieves this; how it can become myth in the eyes of any beholder.
ANZAC is many kinds of myth at once. The combination of Gallipoli and Anzac Day simultaneously traces the paradigms of a dozen separate myth theories: ritual, functional, structural, regeneration, symbolic, rite of passage, quest, sacrificial, and so on. But unlike many myths, and although debates continue as to the details, the landing at Gallipoli is also documented as a 'historical event'. Eyewitness accounts exist from all sides (concurring and conflicting), and the battles' traces are attested in numerous museological collections of artefacts. There are Official Histories and personal memoirs by participants, even newsreel footage of the campaign. Yet at this moment, as the last survivors die and the event passes from spoken memory into written history, the mythic possibilities of Anzac are advancing ever more steadily; what used to be called 'legend' is inexorably becoming 'myth'.

The myth of Anzac is a myth for all seasons. Its multiple motifs and narratives appeal across the whole spectrum of society. Its very plasticity enables it to satisfy the tenets of any number of contradictory agendas and beliefs. At the same time, the sanctity of death that is at the heart of the myth constitutes a potent defence to almost any criticism. I want now to examine a number of elements of the Anzac myth in relation to various theories of myth, in order to illustrate how closely Anzac reproduces aspects of these several theories. It should be stressed that I am not attempting to harness the example of Anzac to prove any particular hypothesis, nor to evaluate or juxtapose competing ideas. I simply aim to demonstrate how Anzac's polysemic identities can satisfy the prejudices and preconditions of a whole variety of theoretical positions.
Ritual

The close relationship of myth and ritual has given rise to two hypotheses, namely: Which comes first? (that is, does one engender the other); and Can they can occur independently? (that is, can a myth exist without a rite, or vice versa). Frazer's *The Golden Bough* shows how interlinked the two ideas are, with his theme of the repeating ritual of regicide at Nemi which constitutes the myth of the golden bough. Frazer is usually considered together with Jane Harrison and her colleagues Gilbert Murray and F.M. Cornford, forming a group which became known as the 'Cambridge School' of Myth Ritualists (Segal, *The Myth and Ritual Theory*). Harrison's exhaustive studies of Greek religion led to the theory that myths are simply the verbal correlates of ritual, and that ritual is the starting point for myth, not the other way around (Harrison, *Themis*).

The principal had first been articulated by the biblical scholar Robertson Smith who argued that "myths are derived from rituals, not rituals from myths" (*Lectures*, 1894). Smith's maxim can be tested by applying it to the example of the Eucharistic Feast. As the centrepiece of the Christian mass the Eucharist ritually commemorates the Last Supper of Jesus with his disciples, and its liturgy spells out the "new covenant" for the radical new religion. The eucharistic feast climaxes in the eating of the body of Christ and drinking of his blood. This ritual cannibalism is a spectacular mix of symbolism and metaphor, and a powerful tool in the theological machinery of the Church. But does this ritual precede the myth of Jesus's apotheosis and ascension, or does it proceed from a need to ritualize and formalize a means of remembrance? Yes and no. The essential factor is that the eucharist is an appropriation and sophisticated adaption of a prior rite, the Jewish Passover feast or *seder* described in Book XII of *Exodus*. The seder is in turn itself a ritual that may or may not pre-date the 'mythical' event that it commemorates, the plague that 'passes over' the Hebrews but kills all the first-born of Egypt. What
biblical examples in particular illustrate is that narrative scripts repeat, and rituals evolve, and that these happen simultaneously and co-dependently.

The same repetition and interrelation applies to Greek myths and rituals. Harrison's work focusses on myth, rite, narrative, and the paradox of which comes first. It is a question of the primacy of thought, word or deed. For Harrison it is unequivocally the deed, the ritual, that is the origin. The theory works well with the immediate source material, but is deflated by myths from cultures where no related ritual at all (let alone prior) is apparent. Ultimately, the anteriority of myth versus ritual is a specious argument; the real point is recognizing the symbiotic relationship, for the most powerful and suggestive myths are those supported by rituals which reify the message. Consider again the Christian Eucharist, or the terrible, majestic splendour that was Nürnberg under the Nazis, and the potent combination of myth and ritual is self-evident. Leaving aside the question of primacy, the theoretical legacy of the Cambridge School can be summed up in Edmund Leach's dictum that, "myth implies ritual, ritual implies myth, they are one and the same" (Political Systems, 63, n.1). Here again the chiasmatic rhetoric of myth is forcefully expressed.

With Anzac, the rite and the narrative enjoy a robust synergy. The great annual ritual of the Anzac myth is Anzac Day. In terms of primacy and the myth/ritualist theory, it is a foriiri the case that here the ritual postdates the myth — Anzac simply did not exist before 25th April 1915. It logically cannot be said then, that the ritual has generated the myth. Nevertheless, the question of aetiology becomes more problematic when we consider Anzac Day from a structural perspective, as an example of a national commemorative parade. As a ritual form, parades of military pride and national glory exist in every society's cultural memory. Empire Day had been concocted to celebrate such footnotes of British history, and the dominions' vicarious attachment to them. As a people brought up

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41 See in particular Léa Riefenstahl's Triumph des Willens, a documentary of the 1934 Nürnberg rally and all its iheatric ritual.
on Empire pomp and circumstance, Australians were ardently waiting for an event to provide the domestic correlative for their own such ritual. It can thus be argued that the model for Anzac Day is a pre-existing rite simply waiting for a relevant event-narrative to be attached to it. The fact that Anzac Day celebrations contribute to the growth of the Anzac myth is axiomatic. It gives credence to Raglan’s reformulation of the myth/ritual thesis, in his proposition that a myth is simply “a narrative associated with a rite” (‘Myth and ritual’, 122). In other words, the Anzac myth provides the narrative cloak for a latent, already existing commemorative rite to take shape within. Such a hypothesis goes some way to explaining the apparently ‘spontaneous’ response to the first Anzac Day in 1916. As Richard Ely notes, “The first celebration of the Day was not so much invented, as almost effortlessly discovered” (‘First Anzac Day’, 58). The first celebrants had little trouble finding just what to do and say, argues Ely, for there were any number of established customs and models to copy and emulate.

A more political reading of how the myth and ritual came to prominence is suggested by Eric Andrews. He notes that the first anniversary of the landing provided a wonderful public relations opportunity to the war parties in Australia and Britain: “Typical of this PR mentality,” writes Andrews, “was the sedulous creation of the Anzac myth in both England and Australia for political and military purposes” (Anzac Illusion, 84). Andrews singles out the hawkish Billy Hughes who was in London at the time, as benefitting most from the organized anniversary. The London celebration was a triumph for Hughes. The King and Kitchener attended a service at Westminster Abbey, the Australian troops (but not New Zealanders) marched all around town, and the press gave it wide coverage. The main purpose for holding a large celebration sprang from a propaganda incentive to fuel a recruiting drive; nothing better than trumpeting the glory of heroic soldiers to encourage more volunteers. In this sense the parade is the germ of the ‘sedulous’ campaign to create the
myth, in order to generate the reinforcements. This first commemoration of Anzac Day thus becomes nothing more than “an astute and cynical propaganda exercise” (Chariton, 66). Back in Australia, organizers took their cue from the excitement of the London celebrations: when the crowds turned out in their tens of thousands, the recruiting officers were there to greet them, helping maintain strong enlistments until the end of May 1916 (Official History, xi: 871).

Since the first anniversary, Anzac Day has evolved into a more regularized and formulaic event. It is practised in towns and cities throughout Australia, and more and more at various battle sites around the world where Australians have fought and died, especially at Anzac Cove itself. In 1919 the influenza epidemic disrupted what would have been the first peace-time celebration. For the next few years the anniversary fell on a week-day, and working men could not march. It was not until 1925 that returned men were free to march at their leisure on a Saturday, and the success of this march, coupled with intense lobbying from the RSL, ensured that Anzac Day became a public holiday throughout the country. Since then the veterans have marched every year except 1942, when issues of national security kept crowds off the streets.

The growth in recent years of Gallipoli as a site of pilgrimage has mirrored the increase in attention given to Anzac Day itself. In the 1960s people became disenchanted with the rowdiness of old men vomiting in the streets after too many toasts to mateship and the Anzac spirit. In the 1970s the disillusionment with Vietnam made any militaristic display unfashionable. The 80s eighties saw protests about the rape of women in wartime, and the realization of the absence of Aborigines in a supposedly national occasion. But since the 1990s there has been no protest, no disillusionment — this substantive change in the perception and reception of Anzac will be addressed in detail in my Concluding chapter.
I want to turn now to the various elements that constitute the ritual process of Anzac Day. The structure of the Day is in fact composed from a whole series of individual rituals. Variation exists across the country, but the main formal elements are the Dawn Service, Wreath Laying, March, and Assembly; there also may be the rum issue, breakfast, pub session and two-up game. Philip Kitley and Lee Sackett both draw on anthropologists Arnold van Gennep and Viktor Turner to describe how aspects of Anzac Day reproduce classic rites of separation and mourning. Sackett, following Turner, notes that pilgrimage borrows from ritual, but that likewise, ritual involves the elements and structures of pilgrimage ('Marching into the past', 20). At a physical level this involves the various sites on Anzac Day: cenotaph or memorial, main street march, RSL club, hotel. At a metaphysical level, it offers the participants access to the transformative experience of the war. As Lawrence Hatab observes, through ritual identification the performer becomes the hero of the mythic narrative (Myth and Philosophy, 32).

Parallel to this is the incredible growth in Gallipoli itself as a site of pilgrimage — from a couple of quizzical tourists noted by Ken Inglis in 1965, to the fifteen thousand fervent witnesses accompanying Prime Minister Howard in 2000. Among the backpacker generation there is almost an unwritten law that, as Muslims must visit Mecca once in their lifetime, Australians should make the pilgrimage to Gallipoli. Inglis notes that since the late 1980s it has been common to refer to Gallipoli as a “sacred site” (Sacred Places, 441–2). It is telling that this phrase, often dismissed as some sort of Aboriginal fabrication, has now been appropriated by the nation to satisfy the need for spiritual narrative.

42 Kitley, ‘Anzac Day ritual’; Sackett, ‘Marching into the past’.

43 In an Anzac/Gallipoli supplement published in the Weekend Australian (21/22 Apr. 2001), Ian Kelly suggests that, “Gallipoli is now de rigeur among backpackers.”
Another important aspect of the Anzac Day ritual is the intoning and reinforcing of the creed and myth. Take these examples from speeches on Anzac by John Howard:

19/4/99 they followed in a great Australian military tradition
25/4/99 the greatest contribution to the freedom and way of life that we will take with us into the new century has been made by those who have fought for this country
11/4/00 of all the traditions and all of the things that we hold dear as Australians, none is held more dearly than the Anzac tradition
25/4/00 daring and determination in the face of overwhelming odds

In these speeches Howard tells stories of Simpson and the donkey, he talks of the special character of the Australians that enabled them to fight on 'in the face of overwhelming odds'. Especially he talks of tradition. He is careful to avoid a belligerent posture or warlike tone, but he does dwell on military glory and achievement. The repetition of these messages in the context of the Anzac Day ritual, in concert with Bean's rubrics, serves to inculcate a set of narratives which are sacred and sacrosanct, and can never be denied or even debated. The official rituals and speeches only ever allow publicly sanctioned expressions of sacrifice and patriotism, and have always silenced alternative memories (Thomson, 'Passing shots', 203–4). As in most Anzac commemoration, the notion of an opponent is absent in Howard’s scenario. There is dark night, there are overwhelming odds — but no readily identifiable enemy. This makes the whole narrative structure self-reflexive. The only enemy is doubt: doubt in oneself, and doubt in the message. To give in, to be defeated by doubt, is thus to disbelieve the message.

44 Howard’s speeches are written by a circle of speechwriters he engages, and there are quotations from Bean in speeches prepared by different speechwriters. The speeches are Howard’s however — as Don Watson said of Keating’s speeches: “whoever is the author of a speech, the giver of it is the owner” (Keating, Advancing Australia, xvi).
Rites de passage

The phrase ‘rite of passage’ is frequently employed to describe the experience of Gallipoli and the War for its participants, as well as for the nation as a whole. Just as it was an initiation for the young soldiers, coinciding for many with their ‘entry into manhood’, so it is seen to mark the maturity of the adolescent nation; the soldiers vicariously undergo the initiation for the nation as a whole. In all accounts the rhetoric of ‘coming of age’ is pervasive and inescapable. As Bean notes of the country in 1914 (VI: 1095): “Australia had never seen the trial that, despite civilized progress, all humanity still recognizes — the test of a great war.” Bean’s statement has the danger of reducing the war to some sort of examination (presumably invigilated by a select panel of European powers). But for those who required and yearned for such assurances, Gallipoli provided the opportunity — to pass the test, to make the passage into adult nationhood.

‘Rites of passage’ sounds uncannily like some line from The Tempest; there is something in its easy trochees that lends it the poetry and gravity of centuries of ancestral use. The phrase was in fact coined by Arnold van Gennep, in his 1907 book on the anthropology of life’s transitions, Les Rites de Passage. Van Gennep describes how important events in human beings’ social experience are governed by certain identifiable and comparable ‘rites of passage’. His tripartite taxonomy consists of rites of séparation (e.g., funerals), marge (e.g., puberty, pregnancy, initiations), and agglégation (e.g., weddings). “Changes of condition do not occur without disturbing the life of society,” says van Gennep, “and it is the function of rites of passage to reduce their harmful effects” (13). By this he acknowledges that in the face of unknown experiences, it is essential to have a stable, known structure to hold on to. And as comparativists were eager to observe, ritual processes the world over often have much in common.

Leach stipulates that the general characteristic of rites of marginality is that “the initiate is kept physically apart from ordinary people” (Culture and Communication, 77). Van Gennep names this condition liminality (from
the Latin *limen*, threshold), and calls the other states pre-liminal and post-liminal. In the liminal state the initiate is ‘contaminated with holiness’. The liminal zone itself is the ‘field of ritual activity’, a sacred area outside, or beside, the material world of the every day — immediately evocative of the ‘No-man’s-land’ between the trench lines in the Great War. This idea of liminal space also raises the question of geographical location in the function of Gallipoli as a rite of passage; not the historical poetics of the Dardanelles, which will be addressed in later chapters, but rather the importance of Gallipoli as a locus remote from Australia. This distance and separation help frame Gallipoli as a ‘liminal zone’ in van Gennep’s schema.

Rites of transition may have a three-part structure involving all three of the rites identified by van Gennep: firstly separation, then the rites of initiation, followed by aggregation, a welcoming back into society. It is easy to see how war provides the basic frame for such activity: there is a rough correlation between the three rites and the process of soldiers taking leave, fighting in another place, and returning as heroes. Consider how Leach describes the reintegration of initiates in ‘savage’ societies:

> the special costume worn during the ‘marginal state’ is removed...sacrifices are repeated, food restrictions removed, shaven heads grow their hair again, etc. (*Culture and Communication*, 78)

With this list of removing special costumes, lifting food restrictions, growing of hair, Leach might well be describing the process of demobilization. One of the great benefits of victory is the opportunity to celebrate the return of soldiers, a process which both honours their achievements, but also, by signalling an end to combat, helps to reincorporate them back into normal society. The Vietnam experience is a painful reminder of
what can go wrong when the rites of aggregation are not performed.\(^{45}\) Proper aggregation also failed those soldiers who had been prisoners of the Japanese in World War II; these men lived in a terrible silence about their experience, unable to share their memories with relatives or the wider community. The economic exigency of trade with Japan swamped the emotion, pride, and ritual needs of a traumatized minority. In Australia following the Great War, there was mixed success in the public performance of this necessary rite. Returned serviceman were recognized by society, and granted some special status for their ordeals. But there was also resentment against Hughes's government, and complaints that the compensation granted was insufficient (Clark, *A History of Australia*, VI: 140–2). This is to be seen in the disquiet generated by the Old Guard, and depicted with disturbing perceptivity by D.H. Lawrence in *Kangaroo*.

The rituals of *rite de passage* persist in civilized societies in various diluted and corrupted forms: religious confirmation and adult baptism; bastardization practices in the armed forces and secret societies; sentimentalized images such as granting the 'key-to-the-door'. Cultic groups and societies typically enforce rituals of an orotund and baroque nature upon their initiates. And so although 'civilized' cultures no longer practise concrete ceremonies of initiation — for example, knocking out teeth, mutilation — they retain the image of initiation as a metaphorized or stylized process, together with concomitant ritual practices.\(^{46}\) Here perhaps is where the insistence by Lévy-Bruhl, Cassirer and others on a distinction

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\(^{45}\) For many returning Vietnam veterans, the lack of acknowledgement by society for their service left them in the 'liminal state', still operating under the rules appropriate to the rite of marginality — where violence is championed, and life is not sacred. Whatever else one may think of the film *Kambo*, it is a vivid statement of this condition. The soldier continues to behave as the initiate 'contaminated by holiness': wearing the uniform of the altered state, and performing the actions, *i.e.*, killing. It is a simplistic rendering, but powerful.

\(^{46}\) It is pertinent to note that whereas male circumcision at puberty was commonly an essential element of the *rite de passage* into adulthood, in Jewish culture infant male circumcision becomes a mark of external cultural, rather than merely internal social identity.
between primitive and civilized thought has some credence: the ‘savage’ subject does not distinguish between the symbol and the symbolized, seeing the two rather in a synecdochic relationship, whereas the ‘civilized’ subject objectifies and distances the material from the symbol via metaphor and allegory. Nevertheless, this presumes much that cannot be proved about the putative ‘savage mind’. It also assumes cultures to be homogeneous, and rather too neatly divides societies and modes of conception into exclusive oppositions, when in fact they are complimentary: that is, new ways of thinking and imagining do not so much replace previous modes, as add a further one. Societies do not change by simply substituting one form for another, but they combine forms and become more complex. In any case, the apparent difference does not discount the persistence of mythic grammar in the cultural narratives of modern societies; it simply evidences a variant syntax.

Much of the work carried out by Western ethnologists, anthropologists and sociologists in the early modern period looked to Australian Aborigines for source data, and this is true particularly in accounts of initiation. The work done by field researchers was eagerly taken up by the armchair specialists and slotted into their paradigms. In the middle of the twentieth century indigenous Australian practices were still yielding much material for theorists such as Lévi-Strauss and writers like Joseph Campbell. The initiation rites of young males from groups as geographically diverse as the Aranda, Murinj, Unmatjera, Wonghi and others provided easily identifiable rituals with clearly delineated roles for the participants. Moreover, the rites centred on practices which seemed in stark contrast to modern western social and cultural behaviour: adolescent rather than infant circumcision, knocking out of mature teeth, strict separation of sexes, enforced taboos, belief in magic, and so on. As we saw earlier, so much of the critical and theoretical writing of this period is constructed in terms of calming the anxieties of civilized peoples that they have left such ‘primitive’ behaviour and belief well behind them. If traces of savage
practices remain, they are explained merely as nostalgic metaphors of earlier eras.

But the example of the ‘rite of initiation’ seems only to confirm what Obeyesekere says about myth models preserving mythic structures in modern societies. The whole process of the Great War, and of Gallipoli in particular, was appropriated by the Australian people as a rite of induction for the nation into the world community. As Marilyn Lake observes, there is sometimes confusion over which life-cycle metaphor to use — birth or maturity — but there is always a sense of crossing a threshold (‘Mission impossible’, 310). From the very beginning of the Australian involvement newspapers spoke in such phrases as ‘BAPTISM OF FIRE’. As Geoffrey Blainey puts it, “the landing at Gallipoli was seen as a glorious entry onto the world stage. The nation...had come of age” (Shorter History, 155). Later, noting that Australia became one of the original forty-two members of the League of Nations, Blainey repeats this script, stating “The war had made Australia a nation” (160). Is this merely a figure of social experience, or a metaphor for transformative experience?

The great irony of this narrative is that the initiation is entirely in the eye of the beholder. Imperial rhetoric pedalled in Despatches and censored newspaper reports during the war celebrated the achievements of the infant nation. Such encouragement was perfectly appropriate to the requirements of war-time propaganda and Allied morale, even if it happened not nearly as often nor as fulsomely as Bean and others would have liked. But inflationary sentiments counted for less when the uniforms and mess-kits were packed away. Politically, financially, and culturally, the nation remained largely infant, strongly bonded to the British Empire in a subordinate filial relationship. This was made apparent at the

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47 Humphrey McQueen appropriates one of these metaphors to his contrary view that, “Gallipoli proved to be a still-birth” (Gallipoli to Peter, 5).

48 Cf. Andrews, Anzac Illusion; and Williams, ANZACS, the Media and the Great War.
Versailles Peace Conference where, notwithstanding Australia's independent membership of the League of Nations and Billy Hughes's indignant representations, the necessity for Australia's presence was questioned. There was no flourishing of any new-found national spirit or identity in the 1920s as there had been in art and literature in the 1890s. The Great Depression proved again how financially dependent the country was on British capital. In 1939, a generation after Gallipoli, Prime Minister Robert Menzies demonstrated precisely the measure of Australian independence with his nationally broadcast statement that because Britain was at war with Germany, Australia was also at war. The greatest piece of wartime propaganda, Bean's *Anzac Book*, has the British Union flag proudly emblazoned on its cover. This is the paradox: the saga of Gallipoli emphasizes the bonds with Britain. The Anzacs fought at the behest of Britain, they fought for King and Empire. Without other models and narratives, this ersatz initiation keeps Australia an 'always forever' adolescent nation. Subsequent attempts to re-read Gallipoli as a nascent site of Republicanism protest too much the anti-British outbursts of the few, compared to the Imperial sympathies of the many. Any who doubt this need only read Bean's assessment of the campaign, published years after the war:

> Neither among the troops nor among the people was there a moment's doubt as to their attitude towards the British Government and people. It was one of loyal partnership in an enterprise, and of complete trust. (II: 910)

As the years go by, however, the anti-British inflexions of the tale seem to grow. Recent examples of this recent trend are Gammage's *The Broken Years*, Williamson and Weir's *Gallipoli*, and the TV mini-series *Anzacs*. Gammage's perspective is best captured in his caustic comment that as hundreds of Anzacs were being slaughtered at The Nek, the British could be seen at Suvla "making tea" (*Broken Years*, 75). The same event provides the vehicle for harnessing the bitterest anti-British feelings in the film *Gallipoli*. Much is made in the film's climax of the stubborn and
superior Col. Robinson, who with clipped accent and monocle, orders the Australians at The Nek to proceed with a doomed attack, despite the appalling losses. This character is deliberately constructed so as to be interpreted as a British officer — an attitude confirmed by the book of the film, which captions a still of the scene as follows: "Frank (Mel Gibson) hands the written decision of the British Command to Major Barton (Bill Hunter), which will affect the fate of the entire regiment" (Gallipoli, 153; emphasis added). Few who see the film realize that Col. Robinson represents the historical figure of Col. Jack Antill, an Australian officer from Picton, N.S.W. (see Official History, 617–8). Weir and Williamson would no doubt rationalize their decision as simply artistic licence to personalize a more general sentiment. But even if there were pockets of anti-British feeling among the A.I.F. at the time, the film is false in its revisionist agenda of rewriting the Anzac narrative solely in these terms. The same can be said for Les Murray’s The Boys who Stole the Funeral (§4), where Kevin Forbutt learns his father’s theory about the Anzacs: “Killing Turks and Germans, but fighting England: that is the secret of the First AIF, you know.”

Perhaps the seminal text of this trajectory is Seymour’s The One Day of the Year, in which the young Hughie identifies the real enemy in the Gallipoli narrative:

the British, Dad, the bloody Poms. THEY pushed those men up those cliffs, that April morning, knowing, KNOWING it was suicide. (Act II, Scene 3)

Like Weir and Williamson’s faux British officer, Hughie’s image of ‘Poms’ prodding the Anzacs ‘up those cliffs’ is a wilful misprision of the historical record. But it serves the purpose to re-align the protagonists in the Anzac narrative, and redefine the experience.
We can see how this re-reading of the Anzac myth works in narrative terms, through Greimas' theory of *Actants*. In his semiotic framework of narrative hermeneutics, Greimas posits a matrix of six 'actants' in binary pairs: Subject/Object, Sender/Receiver, Helper/Opponent. This reductive yet flexible model overcomes the dictatorship of character in narrative: any given actant can be manifested in discourse by several characters (or 'actors'), just as a single actor may constitute a syncretism of several actants. This system is necessarily generalizing, and importantly, actants may be abstract concepts as much as human characters.

At first instance a reading of Gallipoli sees Australia as the Subject, Turkey as the Opponent, and Britain as the Helper. The Sender of the narrative may be termed duty, and the Object honour; the Receiver in this case is the nation. But if we consider the Object of the narrative structure to be Independence, then some reversals occur: Britain becomes the Opponent, and Turkey is transformed into the Helper which enables the Australian nation to achieve its object. This interpretation helps explain how Britain can be portrayed as the foe, while Turkey is an honourable partner in events. In an article discussing the role of war memorials in the Australia and the United States, Michael Rowlands makes a similar point:

What is claimed by the nation in the act of remembrance is that it has sacrificed its youth for a cause and the enemy who actually killed their young was merely its instrument. In a 'fort/da' Freudian sense, what has been done by enemies as an external and humiliating defeat to the nation is symbolically inverted and claimed instead to be an expiatory sacrifice by the nation necessary for its own survival and renewal. ('Memory, sacrifice and the nation', 12)

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49 Greimas, *Structural Semantics*, 202ff. This is essentially a reworking of a similar taxonomy of seven 'Spheres of Action' proposed by Propp in *Morphology of the Folk tale* (1928).

50 See especially Greimas' essay 'Actants, actors, and figures' in *On Meaning*, 106–120. This grammatical model is quite different from, say, E.M. Forster's division between 'round' and 'flat' characters (*Aspects of the Novel*, 46–54).
Tests like *Gallipoli* demonstrate a shift in the reading of Anzac from a simple initiation to something more complex and politically determined. Jewett and Lawrence argue that whereas the classical monomyth was based on rites of initiation, the American monomyth derives from tales of redemption (*American Monomyth*, xx). The great 'Frontier Myth' that drove the American imagination in the nineteenth century has clear corollaries to Van Gennep’s *limen* and the crossing of a threshold. The frontier myth provided a distraction to America’s pathology of seeing itself through Europe’s eyes. But the rite of initiation and associated ideas are the story of an immature protagonist. The greater narratives of American self-identity develop from the Pilgrims of the Mayflower, the Civil War, and the emerging role of the United States in world politics throughout the twentieth century. These myth models generated an entirely new myth, that of America as the saviour of the world, who sacrifices its innocence for responsibility and independence.

The early reading of Gallipoli professes a rite of initiation into the company of nations; but the secondary, anti-British reading is more akin to a rite of redemption. The etymology of ‘redeem’ is revealing here. It comes via the French *rédimer* from the Latin root *emer*, to buy — and hence means literally to ‘buy back’. So if the *rites de marge* ‘buy’ one’s initiation and hence maturity, the rite of redemption ‘buys back’ one’s independence, and frees one of debt. The cost for initiation is merely participation; the cost for redemption is sacrifice.

In the Christian ethos the concept of redemption is personified in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, who ‘buys back’ the sins of the world through his self-sacrificial death. This ‘new covenant’ of Christianity is of course a reconfiguring of a covenant made between God and Moses, whereby God promises to deliver his people into the land of milk and honey, and they offer the price of their sons: “All the firstborn of the sons thou shalt

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51 The continuing fascination in Australia between edge and centre is driven by similar anxieties. See Tacey, *Edge of the Sacred*. 
The New English Bible makes the notion of a transaction even more transparent: "You shall buy back all the first-born of your sons." In the Seymour–Gammage–Williamson tradition then, Australia redeems its independence by the sacrifice of its first born sons to the god of the British Empire. In narrative terms, the Helper has become the Opponent.

Ritual observance gives universal importance to the première occasion or experience (van Gennep, *Rites*, 175 f.). The first war that colonial troops fought in as Australians was the Boer War; for although the contingents that departed for the Transvaal in 1899 and 1900 went as representatives of the individual colonies, Federation actually occurred during the course of the war. As a war correspondent in South Africa, Andrew 'Banjo' Paterson appealed to the new nation in 1901 to see its sacrificial participation in the Boer War as sufficient initiation to the 'sisterhood' of nations. Paterson concluded his 'Song of the Federation' with a chorus of Nations watching the Dead March of Australians already lost to war:

And the Nations, as the grim procession ended,  
Whispered, "Child! But ye have seen the price we pay,  
From War may we ever defended,  
Kneel ye down, new-made Sister — Let us Pray!"  

But Australia was not satisfied with the scale of its sacrifice, nor did it consider the price too large to pay to win the perceived glory.

Gallipoli was totally different to South Africa; firstly in scale, but also in political consequence. Even though the magnitude of the loss at Gallipoli represents only a small percentage of Australia's overall casualties in the Great War — something like 8,000 deaths from a total of 60,000 —

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52 The importance of this covenant is underscored by its double telling in the Pentateuch, in both the Deuteronomist and Elohist streams (*Exodus*, XIII: 13; XXXIV: 20).

53 'Song of the Australians in action', *Song of the Pen*, II: 2.
it commands most of the attention. Obviously the importance of Gallipoli derives largely from its being the first occasion of engagement. As such, it is possible that wherever and however this had occurred, that battle would then have become the nation's iconographic moment. But perhaps not. The historical poetics of the surroundings provided a uniquely epic backdrop to the action. Moreover, by dint of the battle plan Australia was attacking not in concert with the British army (who landed some miles south at Cape Helles), but by itself (New Zealand is frequently, and conveniently forgotten). Unlike the skirmishes in South Africa, or the gargantuan battles on the Western Front, this battle was Australia's alone.

Another consideration is more complex, that the invasion of Turkey in many ways represents a reversal of the invasion of Australia in 1788; which becomes more apparent when we consider the structural implications of the Anzac myth.

**Structuralism**

The most important legacy of Lévi-Strauss's study of myth is the observation that myths are characterized by a binary structure of opposing values or ideas, and thus that myths act to reconcile contradictions in society. The Anzac myth is laden with such contradictions; pre-eminently concerning death and life, but also innocence and experience, aggression and compassion, and country and city. I want to examine a couple of these dyads, beginning with the opposition of country and city.

Raymond Williams has described the history and means by which the pastoral and the urban have been simplified and crudely placed in opposition to each other (*The Country and the City*). The dichotomy was well established in Australia by the time of the Great War as the rivalry between the City and Bush — with a capital 'B' as Henry Lawson insisted. These two opposing ideas had their the representative characters, the larrikin and the bushman, but it was the bushman who most captured the
national imagination, because of the rhetoric of difference attached to the figure. The Australian bush was a unique landscape, very different from the Old Country, and its endemic product, the bushman, was unique too. The extent to which this figure had any basis in reality is open to question, but the image was powerfully depicted in literature and the press, especially the 

Bulletin. In the years either side of Federation the bushman was already a semi-mythologized figure with a Janus identity; on one side the comic, sentimental character of Paterson's ballads, on the other the political activist fighting exploitation by Capital and Imperialism. The most obvious contradiction in the bushman as a representative Australian is that the image emerges from a period when Australia was perhaps the most urbanized, or at least the most suburbanized, country in the world.\(^\text{54}\)

From the time of the war onwards however, and especially in the 1920s, the image of Bushman was appropriated into the new legend of the Digger. At a social level this was acted out across the nation in RSL clubs and various secret societies. At a cultural level it was mirrored in the pages of the 

Bulletin, which from the beginning of the war shed its radical politics for a ranting jingoism. The appropriation is seen clearly in the pages of the 

Official History, where Bean takes the individualism of the bushman, but not his unionism, and turns him into the great Australian soldier (discussed further in Chapter Four). As part of all these processes, the Bushman's radical nationalism was transformed into a conservative patriotism (Serle, 'Digger tradition', 156). Ultimately the digger has become an apolitical figure, retaining the bushman's rhetoric of difference, but lacking his radicalism. As Barthes says, myth is constituted by "a loss of the historical quality of things" ('Myth today', 142). The depoliticized bushman is become the mythologized digger. The bushman remains as a hazy, romanticized image, a heroic individual in an unhistorical

\(^\text{54}\) There is any amount of critical literature on the City and the Bush in Australian cultural identity, and the legitimacy or otherwise of the Bushman; cf., Ward, The 

Australian Legend; White, Inventing Australia; Carroll (ed), Intruders in the Bush.
landscape: “Abroad we have the Anzacs, at home we have Clancy. What could be simpler?” (Lohrey, ‘Gallipoli’, 30). This recalls Barthes’ comment that myth “could not care less about contradictions so long as it establishes a euphoric security” (Mythologies, 70).

One of the clearest examples of the Anzac myth expressing contradictions is the march on Anzac Day. Via its twin purposes of honouring the survivors and commemorating of the dead, the march works through a series of binary oppositions such as presence/absence, military/civilian, victory/defeat, and of course, life/death. The march is perhaps unique among such parades in that soldiers march in civilian clothes, and according to unit but not rank. Importantly, there are no arms, no tanks or rockets. This is not a military display, nor is it simply a pageant.55 As John Forbes observes in his poem ‘Anzac Day’ (Damaged Glamour): “The March is proof we got one thing right, / informal struggling & more cheerful than not.”

This informality is first indicator of the tension between the military and civilian signifiers that play across the meaning of Anzac. It is central to the ability of the myth simultaneously to speak in different ways to different groups. This dichotomy also indexes the paradox whereby the military defeat of Gallipoli is reinterpreted as a spiritual victory, because of its role in galvanizing national consciousness.

The marchers themselves, as survivors, symbolize the defeat of war. But the paradox is, as Binyon’s ‘Ode’ intimates, that those that are left do “grow old” — and hence the ranks grow thinner. The catharsis of marching thus brings its own creeping anxieties, that ‘presence’ will inevitably yield to ‘absence’. In crude terms, the reality is that without another major war the march must eventually die of natural causes. But this problem has

55 Despite the eschewing of pageantry, there are links to be drawn between Anzac Day marches and the Sydney Mardi Gras, at the level of both ritual and social communities. The subliminal commonalities between the two are subverted in Fiesta Carrera’s Channel Knowledge (Sydney: Fontanelle, 2001), in which a Gallipoli veteran pays a young male prostitute for sex on Anzac Day. See Emma Tom, ‘Getting it straight’.
been assuaged by descendants keen to keep the tradition alive, and by an
RSL hierarchy recognizing what is best for the long term survival of the
Day. In 1983 the RSL therefore relaxed its opposition to non-service
personnel marching. And so now the children and grandchildren march,
with their ancestors’ medals glowing with pride anew. It is no longer
simply “the old digger’s day,” as Alan Seymour’s Alf describes it. All this
moves the focus from a congregation of initiates to the wider national
community. It has changed the perception of the Day, and facilitated the
vicarious induction of the myth by following generations.

The problem that the RSL now faces is that the march is being seen
less as an event for “returned” personnel, and more as a national day,
indeed as a replacement for Australia Day. But this is contrary to the
purpose of the march, as defined by its organizers:

The purpose of the Anzac Day march is to enable Returned Services men
and women to re-form the ranks of their wartime units, and march to the
Shrine of Remembrance as a mark of respect for their fallen comrades, and
in so doing, revive the comradeship of their wartime service.57

These words make it plain that the march is not for the nation as a whole,
but specifically for returned men and women. The use of “returned” is
highly charged in this context. It creates a hierarchy between those who
can and can’t march, excluding civilians and armed forces personnel who
have not served overseas.58 (At the same time it reinforces the notion that

56 In 1983 the RSL allowed descendants of Great War veterans to march in their
ancestors’ place in their units. It is expected that the same privileges will soon be
granted to descendants of Second World War returned veterans.

57 Regulations and definitions differ slightly from state to state; this is the wording
given by the Victorian RSL.

58 The use of the adjective ‘returned’ to describe war veterans is unique to Australia,
New Zealand and Canada, but it was first used and is most prevalent in Australia,
where the earliest citation is 1902, referring to Boer War veterans (OED, ‘returned’,
2.b.; Australian National Dictionary, 530).
Australia's military conflicts have all been overseas. Yet as the wider population take a greater interest in Anzac matters, the march is coming under greater pressure to satisfy contradictory requirements from other stakeholders. Despite the RSL's defence of the rights of returned servicemen and women, it seems likely that as the proportion of bonafide diggers diminishes, the resonances of the Day will continue to broaden.

As well as highlighting the ability of myth to contain simultaneous contradictions, structuralism emphasizes the function of repetition and inversion in mythic narratives. Given that the most important event in the modern history of Australia is the invasion by the colonizing British in 1788, we should look at possible comparisons with the Allied invasion of Turkey in 1915. The parallels are immediately apparent in the epithet "The fatal shore," which works equally well as the title of both Robert Hughes's account of the European settlement of Australia, and of Chris Master's *Four Corners* 1990 television documentary on the 75th Anniversary of the Gallipoli landing. This is no coincidence, for the second event is in many ways an inversion of the first, as the table below suggests:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1788</th>
<th>1915</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe → Antipodes</td>
<td>Australia → Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unwilling Convicts</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame</td>
<td>Glory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defenders (Aboriginals) decimated</td>
<td>Defenders (Turks) make new nation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1788 is logically the ultimate source for Australian nationhood, but because it is bound with the narratives of convictism and genocide, it remains too problematic a signifier. The fact that so many of the topoi of settlement/invasion are displaced into 1915 therefore gives added momentum to the mythopoeic qualities of Gallipoli. And because these topoi are largely inverted in the repetition, the anxieties of Australian origins can be transferred into the Anzac myth, but remain disguised and unthreatening in terms of their domestic implications.
Violence and sacrifice

"All myths must have their roots in real acts of violence against real victims," says René Girard (The Scapegoat, 25). At first instance this seems a gross generalization, yet Girard’s thesis stands up well to scrutiny. The notion that myths centre on violence and order, has its own links both to Freud’s argument that human culture is rooted in violence, and to Lévi-Strauss’s notion of myth existing to establish or maintain order in society.

In Violence and the Sacred Girard argues that violence irrupts when one person desires to copy another, but lacks the resources or status. This mimetic desire results in ‘impure’ violence, which in turn demands propitiation through ‘pure’ violence. Unlike Frazer, Girard contends the choice of victim is arbitrary: hence the sacrifice of the ‘scapegoat’, a random victim killed for no reason other than the need to atone for the initial crime. Girard posits the following typical schema: a stranger is invited to a (ritual) feast, which ends with his lynching. The assassinated stranger then undergoes apotheosis and becomes a god. The ancient Hebrew myth is of course the predictive narrative model for the crucifixion of Christ. There are obvious homologies to the Õedipus story; but we can see that James Cook fits equally well into this script.

Girard’s arguments about violence in society have their most relevant application to easily delimited subjects: isolated acts in small, defined communities. In the infinite ‘real world’ it is often harder to contain the motivations behind actions, especially when they have multiple subjects and objects. At this level of detail Richard Kearney criticizes Girard for reducing myth to “a purely ideological function of dissimulation and domination” (‘Myths and scapegoats’, 13). Nevertheless, his focus on real violence as the origin of mythical narrative is a constant reminder of the mythopoeic role of death and sacrifice in the founding narratives of most societies.
In his essay *Donner la mort*, Jacques Derrida considers the idea of death as a process of ‘giving’. Taking his cue from Kierkegaard’s discussion of the story of Abraham and Isaac (*Fear and Trembling*, III), Derrida suggests that sacrifice constitutes a ‘gift of death’. Examining the role of the father, Abraham, in particular, Derrida stresses that this ‘giving’ generates an ethics of duty and responsibility. In keeping secret from his son the identity of the sacrifice for the burnt offering, “Abraham betrays ethics” (*Donner la mort*, 59). Derrida also makes the obvious point that death is only a sacrifice when the victim is loved by the one who ‘gives death’ (64). We do not sacrifice what we hate, only what we value. This brings about a paradox in ethical responsibility:

Abraham must assume absolute responsibility for sacrificing his son by sacrificing ethics, but in order for there to be a sacrifice, the ethical must retain all its value; the love for his son must remain intact. (66)

These principles of duty and responsibility are at the heart of the two devastating couplets by Kipling and Hope on why fathers send their sons to be slaughtered in battle. They exemplify the archetypal dilemma faced in wartime, and the dubious solution forced by duty or honour; whether to a god or to one’s country.

Derrida notes how the sacrifice in the Akedah occurs on Mount Moriah, a disputed place in Jerusalem claimed by all three monotheisms, a place where fighting is endemic and ongoing. And thus, says Derrida, “Isaac’s sacrifice continues every day” (70). We can see then how violence is there at the origin of a myth, and how it continues to drive day-to-day identity of competing societies. The violence that generates a myth does not dissolve into narrative, it remains latent and threatening. This is something that must be remembered in the Anzac myth: it is a myth born in violence and death, in the betrayal of sons by fathers, and in the overthrowing of ethical and moral responsibility.
The word

Greimas stresses that words themselves have histories and tell stories: "Lexemes are notorious for often appearing as condensations concealing complex discursive and narrative structures" (On Meaning, 148). We saw earlier how Max Müller attempted to show that the Greek myths were a product of linguistic mutation, and that their origins lay in narrativized descriptions of natural phenomena. The lexical focus of Müller's analyses is inseparable from his main purpose of tracing Greek myths to proto-Aryan word roots, but the specifics of the process can apply also to myths outside this narrow canon. It is common, for instance, for myths to attach special significance to names and words, mostly neologisms. A word without apparent history is untainted by any association other than the one ascribed in the myth. Greimas and Müller are both interested in words and meaning, though from very different theoretical and critical positions. Yet they both illustrate how a single lexeme, a minimal unit of vocabulary, can contain a whole narrative.

The word "Anzac" is of course firstly an acronym; indeed, it is acknowledged as the first acronym to enter the English language as a permanent word. But as we have seen, it quickly gained wide usage, and now enjoys almost mystical value. Newspaper editorials on early anniversaries of the Landing extolled the power of the word:

A new dictionary will need to be compiled after the Great War. For new words are among the things that have been born of this war. And the greatest of them all is Anzac. It is a small word, but it means much. It means the birth of a nation. (Sydney Morning Herald, 26th Apr., 1922)

Late in 1915, the Manchester Guardian suggested that the new federal capital Canberra should be renamed Anzac, because of its 'Homeric ring'. The idea gained some following, and was hopefully restated in the Sydney

59 See G.W. Turner, The English Language in Australian and New Zealand. The word 'acronym' itself is not recorded by the OED until 1943, chiefly as an Americanism.
Truth (28th May 1916, 8): “There is every indication that the Federal City will be re-named Anzac.” To protect ‘Anzac’ from abuse and unscrupulous opportunism, the unsanctioned use of the word was quickly proscribed by Act of Parliament. But true to the qualities of myth, the word is rich in paradoxes and contradictions. For example, a number of early uses attest to the ‘deathless’ quality of Anzac:

- There’s an immortal name. The deathless name of ‘Anzac’.
- The deathless name of ‘Anzac’ that thrills from pole to pole.

The Orwellian doublespeak at work in the combination ‘deathless Anzac’ is blatant and almost too awful — would the parents of a ‘dead’ Anzac utter this phrase, one wonders? And yet conjuring this paradox is not only easy and inevitable, it is necessary to the process of transforming a mere event into something more lasting. Another side of the word’s polyvalent character, and one that shows powerfully how a mythic idea can (must) contain contradictory signification, is in its wholly ‘profane’ employment in the popular ‘Anzac biscuits’. In recent times it has been appropriated by the sporting hierarchy to add special significance to football games played on or near the 25th April each year. Such bathetic use is characteristic of the simultaneous paradoxes that myths contain within themselves; a sacred, spiritual idea; a marketing tool; a biscuit.

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60 “No person shall...without the authority of the Governor-General or of a Minister of the State...assume or use in connexion with any trade, business, calling, or profession the word ‘Anzac’ or any word resembling the word ‘Anzac’. Man. War Precautions, 1916. A second Act followed after War: “Protection of the word ‘Anzac’ (1922).”


62 Lloyd George’s combination “the glorious dead” is a far more felicitous phrase, though still obviously an attempt to recover something positive from the millions of deaths.

Symbolism

In *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, first published in the early 1920s, Ernst Cassirer develops his analysis of ‘mythical consciousness’ by contrasting it with the empirical or scientific consciousness of modern man. In Cassirer’s epistemology myth is the worldview of primitive societies, and cannot co-exist with the Weltanschauung of modernity. Modern cultures are able to objectify and distinguish reality from representation, he argues. But just because they can, does not mean they do: and so Cassirer’s system is defeated by a simple syllogistic fallacy.

Following the advent and legacy of the Nazis, Cassirer was forced to admit as much. In *The Myth of the State* he acknowledged that even in advanced societies, people are susceptible to mythic suggestion. Symbols can be harnessed by the state and put to service in mythic applications for political purposes. Having stared hard at German society in the 1930s and 40s, Cassirer now says, “In myths, the nation’s past is dramatized in such a way as to make the future apparent.” And as Henry Tudor argues, this phenomenon is not restricted to fascist or communist polities, because nowhere do people act in an exclusively rational manner (*Political Myth*, 30). Hence Cassirer’s realization that the modes of thought he had sought to separate and oppose, in fact overlap. The rational and the irrational persist together, and civilized societies are subordinated to symbolic forms.

At first instance, Anzac is a myth largely devoid of fetishized symbols. There is no one particular image or sacred, talismanic object that acts as a universal symbol for the myth; certainly not in manner of a crucifix, a swastika or hammer and sickle, or a Confederate flag. It seems more a myth of ideas, than things. But there are many little symbols that combine to make Anzac a rich sea of iconographic imagery. There are collections of artefacts in places like the Australian War Museum, and in display cases in RSL clubs. There are the domestic shrines in people’s houses, of personal effects, medals, photographs, diaries, and so on. The plethora of
war memorials in Australia commands attention as a collectivized symbol of the nation's engagement with war and death.

'Simpson and the donkey' is perhaps the best known early example of propagandizing the Anzac myth by symbolism. The story was told in pamphlets and newspapers throughout 1915. Simpson gets a run in Bean's first volume (I: 553–4), and became a staple from the war when the story was anthologized in school readers. Every schoolchild grew up knowing the legend of 'the man with the donkey'. Man and beast have twice been memorialized in bronze. No matter that the story was something of a furphy, a conflation of a number of narratives, and that Private John Simpson Kirkpatrick was not the ideal soldier hero in real life that he became in legend. He wasn't even Australian; but an Englishman who deserted from the British Merchant Navy in 1910, and laid low in Australia before enlisting under his middle name (see Cochrane, Simpson and the Donkey). The story works in a number of ways, not least being the convenient parallels to the humble donkey and foal of Palm Sunday gospel fame, generated by the coincidental spatial poetics of the Middle East locale. The symbolism of self-sacrifice was an essential iconographic tool in the propaganda war, and a timely counter to some of the more unsavoury, aggressive images that had emerged from the training sojourn in Egypt.

**Functionalism**

The theory of myth as a 'function' of society was developed by Malinowski based on his field researchers in the Pacific in the early years of the twentieth century. He concluded that myths codify beliefs, that they replicate and validate social structure. Myths flourish at times of change and upheaval, for it is the function of myth to reinforce social cohesion and be a catalyst for unity, by presenting the traditional order in a codified
form that is agreeable and accessible from generation to generation. From a functionalist perspective then, myths are inherently reactionary.

Malinowski demands that the activities of a society are driven by the needs of that society. From what we have seen about Australia’s need for justification and recognition on the world stage, this is entirely consistent with the nation’s desire to participate in the war, and to celebrate this with annual rituals. We can see this played in the extraordinary efforts put into constructing the 4000-odd war memorials that dot the national landscape. Ken Inglis suggests that people were ‘moved’ to erect monuments to the men from their locality by “the conviction that memorials were ritually necessary” (Sacred Places, 108). Although he doesn’t discuss it in theoretical terms, Inglis here essentially states a functionalist position on the motivation to construct the memorials; from the simple township obelisk, to the monolithic capital monuments like Sydney’s Anzac Memorial and Melbourne’s Shrine of Remembrance.

It is not necessary here to canvas the full role of ‘holy days’ and ‘red-letter’ days in the annual calendars of societies. They fulfil a variety of functions — from acknowledging astral movements, to offering thanks for harvests, to commemorating national events; and not the least being providing rest days for workers. But we can analyze Anzac and Anzac Day in terms of the functions of its constituent parts, to see what these show about the society that annually performs the rituals.

A particularly notorious aspect of Anzac Day is the afternoon ‘booze up’ (there really is no other description) which traditionally followed the services and the March. Drinking has retreated in prominence in the parades of recent years, but it remains a quintessential feature of Anzac narratives. The booze-up is a major focus of Seymour’s play, and the drunkenness of revelling diggers is a key criticism of the ‘Anzac spirit’ of the period. Kitley specifically analyzes this aspect of the myth, questioning if it is possible to reconcile the ‘rowdiness’ with the funereal solemnity of the rest of the Day (‘Anzac Day ritual, 65). Kitley rejects the notion that
the drinking is equivalent to an Irish wake, but rather seeks an explanation in Viktor Turner's sociological framework: "Emotionally, nothing satisfies as much as extravagant or temporarily permitted illicit behaviour" (Turner, *Ritual Process*, 165). This is certainly part of the drunkenness, but there is also a degree of ritual catharsis in the intoxication brought on by excessive alcohol. Like the citizens of Anderson's imagined communities, the diggers drink both to remember and forget.

Turner's ideas of paradox and absurdity as necessary relief from stifling regularity find strong parallels in Bakhtin's discussion of medieval carnival (or in English, 'misrule'). When Bakhtin says carnival is "consecrated by tradition," and marks "the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions" (*Rabelais*, 5, 10), he could easily be describing that aspect of Anzac Day where old diggers drink in the streets, officers and ranks together, and where games of Two-up are carried on in public places. Indeed, Seymour's Hughie describes the afternoon drinking as "The wake and then the... binge. Carnival after Lent."

For Bakhtin the importance of carnival is that the contrary behaviour is licensed only as a temporary suspension of normal rule and order. But is it a sophisticated social valve to maintain order at other times, or is there some lasting subversion in carnival? It is important to remember that Bakhtin's discussion of carnival is part of his study of parody in the work of Rabelais; carnival is a milieu in which official authority and social values are inverted, distorted and parodied. But the 'sacred' is not parodied, so much as elided or bypassed. This is the same as the rowdiness of the afternoon booze-up; laws against gambling and public drunkenness are flouted, and parody may play its part — with jokes mocking stuffy British or the strange customs of enemies/foreigners — but Anzac itself is never to be parodied or mocked. Such behaviour would no doubt be
labelled ‘un-Australian’ by vigilant parties.\(^6^4\) Today of course the booze-up no longer occurs, due largely to the age of the veterans, and Anzac Day has become more of a ‘family’ day characterized only by sanctity and reverence — this is discussed in more detail in the final chapter. It is worth remembering that one hundred years ago, the soldiers returned from the Boer War were so drunk that many could not even stand to participate in the victory march for the relief of Mafeking (Clark, V: 175). The question remains, then, whether if another war ‘swelled the ranks’ of veterans, would these younger Anzacs find reason and meaning in the public booze-up once more? Quite possibly.

Apart from Anzac Day itself, the topos of ‘rejection of authority’ is also found in the ‘larrikin spirit’ which is often considered a central component of the A.I.F.’s self-identity (Inglis, ‘Anzac tradition’). Whether or not one subscribes to this view, it is difficult to establish if this attitude is peculiar to Anzac, or if it is simply a manifestation of those characteristics that Russell Ward identified as the ‘Australian legend’. “According to the myth,” wrote Ward, “the typical Australian is...a fiercely independent person who hates officiousness and authority, especially when these qualities are embodied in military officers and policemen” (Australian Legend, 1–2). Ward is far more concerned with the convict, the gold-digger, the bushman, and the radical nationalist of the 1890s, than he is with the Anzac digger. This brings us back to the idea that Bean’s Anzac — and Bean’s is the most influential model — is simply a direct translation from an earlier mould.

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Modern Australia has always been a secular country. There never has been a close relationship between the state and organized religion. Even though Christianity has for the most part been the religion of a large

\(^6^4\) This sanctity in the iconography of Anzac is well-illustrated by a character in Randolph Stow’s The Merry-go-round in the Sea (112), who labels the notion of burning Remembrance Day poppies “a blasphemous idea, anti-Anzac.”
proportion of the population, it has always been so wracked by schismatic rivalry between the denominations that it has never provided any social or political unity. Today Christianity competes with Islam, but more so with plain agnosticism (although it has become a platitude to say that the only unifying religion in the country is sport). Functionalism makes clear that, aside from any spiritual meaning, one of the most important functions of religion is its engendering of a sense of community, and the maintaining of ritual and tradition. Gaetano Mosca has suggested that, at the cusp of the twentieth century, nationalism was replacing religion as the “chief moral and intellectual cohesion” in western society. Lloyd Warner has argued that annual commemorative services exist principally to integrate the communities in which they are staged (The Living and the Dead, 248). Similarly, Rowlands says that, “acts of memorializing emphasize continuity and repetition” (Memory, sacrifice and the nation’, 8). It seems relevant then to ask whether the apparent increase in community unanimity about Anzac is somehow linked the demise and indeed absence of other ritualized community practice.

In his article on Anzac Day, Kitley identifies amongst Anzac diggers a sense of what Viktor Turner in The Ritual Process calls “communitas” — a special relationship between individuals within distinctive groups. As the members of the population lose the communitas that historically they enjoyed as acquiescent participants in church congregations, so they need to replace this sense of group belonging and identity. The Nation is too large and amorphous a form for communitas, and this is where Anzac can provide a fulfilling substitute: attendance at Anzac Day parades vicariously delivers to the participants the necessary ‘dose’ of communitas. In the (frequent) words of John Howard, Anzac is “a spirit which draws Australians together in time of need” (Speeches, 11th Nov. 1997, 8th Dec. 1997, and 23rd Jan. 1998). It contains “values that unite us all as

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65 Gaetano Mosca, Elementi di Scienza Politica (1896); quoted in Paul James, Nation Formation, 86–7.
Australians" (25th Apr. 1999). The function of Anzac is thus obvious, to unify the population — as the Prime Minister so astutely observes.

There are further theories of myth that can be extrapolated to demonstrate how Anzac is apposite to their paradigms and idiosyncrasies. The all-encompassing 'Quest Myth' of Frye and his school suggests many parallels. The Anzac digger can be studied as an exemplar of the 'Myth of the Hero', particularly in relation to Raglan's twenty-two categories of heredom (Herm, 138). The promiscuous application of Anzac to all these theories is not to prove the relevance or truth in the theories themselves; but to show how Anzac fulfils the qualities of being a myth to the satisfaction of any conceivable reader, and the requirements of any number of theories. As Lévi-Strauss says, "Mythical thought is imprisoned in the events and experiences which it never tires of ordering and re-ordering in its search to find them a meaning" (Savage Mind, 22). In the following chapter I will examine this process in terms of Anzac and myths of the Nation.
CHAPTER THREE

Australia Phoenix

In 1917 HENRY Handel Richardson published *Australia Felix*, the first volume of her trilogy *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*. Richardson's title was borrowed from Thomas Mitchell's congenial epithet for the broad region south of the River Murray that would later become Victoria — 'felix' suggesting both happy and fertile. But as the 'Proem' to the book makes immediately apparent, the title's allusion is part of a rhetoric of irony and inversion that informs the whole trilogy. With its focus on death and despair the Proem presents a critique of the myth of enlightened settlement, an antithetical challenge to providential narratives of the gold-rush and pastoral development (Ackland, *HHR*, 60–1). It also invokes what might be called the national topos of 'death by landscape'; an image that stalks the Australian imagination from Leichhardt and Voss to Azaria Chamberlain, from *Picnic at Hanging Rock* to *Death of a River Guide*.

In the very first paragraph of *Australia Felix* a miner is 'buried alive' in a shaft in the Gravel Pits at Ballarat:

The digger fell forward on his face, his ribs jammed across his pick, his arms pinned to his sides, nose and mouth pressed into the sticky mud as into a mask; and over his defenceless body, with a roar that burst his ear-drums, broke stupendous masses of earth.

This scene presents the double vision of a puny human at the mercy of the elemental soil and clay, and of the defiled earth exacting revenge for its rape and exploitation by the miner. At a structural level this passage introduces the themes of death and burial which will frame Richardson's novel, together with the image of exile which motivates both plot and
characters (Mead, 'Death and home-work'). But I want to suggest a further reading, again surrounding the discourses of nation and the sacrifice of the male subject, but a long way from goldfields of colonial Ballarat.

Rereading the paragraph against the historical moment of publication in 1917, Richardson’s narrative becomes an uncanny mimetic prophecy of the trenches of the Great War. A ‘digger’ is interred in the mud amid a roaring hail of vomiting earth. Here is a gripping and accurate description of a soldier being hit by artillery, of being buried in the mire under Wilfred Owen’s “shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells.” When the later, transposed meaning of ‘digger’ is considered, the picture is complete. Whether or not Richardson intended this transference of image and situation is open to debate. The passage was almost certainly written well before the advent of the Great War, and in any case, official censorship at the time ensured that the full horror of the trenches did not pervade the public imagination. But the striking parallels between miner and soldier demonstrate how easily images and stories of one time and place can be applied to another. Coincidence is a powerful instrument not just in the engendering of new stories, but in the revivifying of old ones. It is so with fiction, and it is so with myth.

By visiting various sites of national imagery Richardson’s novel generates some expectation about its engagement with the ‘narrative of nation’. But as Philip Mead says (133), The Fortunes of Richard Mahony does not simply symbolize or metaphorize the birth of the nation. Rather — and this goes against the grain of so much contemporary cultural imagining — the novel suggests there is no possible reconciliation between subject and nation. It seems, however, that few heed Richardson’s predication, especially when it comes to Gallipoli and Anzac, where the two are fused into an inseparable one. In the chapter that follows, I will argue that the stories of Australian nationhood which coalesce in the signifier ‘Gallipoli’ are a perfect example of Obeyesekere’s myth model in action: the myths adopt and reproduce narratives from various sources and
situations to express the desires and concerns apposite to the society at the time.

Earlier I considered the philological relations of the word ‘myth’: its etymology, its appearance in European languages in the early nineteenth century and subsequent increase in use, and the many varied and contradictory meanings that the word continues to generate. A similar and yet different story obtains to the word ‘nation’. Like myth, it has come to particular prominence over the past two centuries. But it has a longer history of usage in modern languages, and although the various meanings that attach to nation are less obviously contrary, the specific semantics of the word fuel a hotter debate.

The etymology of nation can be traced to its Latin stem *nati-* ‘born’, the past participle of *nasci*, to be born. From this fecund root develops a host of words associated with origins, breeding, and community: nascent, native, natal, nature. James Sneed suggests that *natio* has in Latin “an almost eugenic connotation” (‘European pedigrees/African contagions’, 233). ‘Nation’ is attested in English consistently from the early fourteenth century, but over time the word evolves from a narrowly racial to a more abstract, political concept. Following these traces through a language is a revealing study not just in philology but in socio-political history. For as a society changes over time, so it chooses different words to describe itself, or causes words to mutate into new meanings appropriate to the structures and institutions of the day. Derrida picks up on this relation between the nation and epistemological and ontological frameworks in his observation that the nation always has a ‘philosophical form’ (‘Ontotheology’, 10). Further, he states that, “the concept and the word ‘nation’

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66 “In early examples the racial idea is usually stronger than the political; in recent use the notion of political unity and independence is more prominent” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed., “nation” I.1a). No particular dates are given for this mutation of meaning, but the citations show the change clearly apparent by the seventeenth century.
are philosophical, and could not have been constituted, historically, outside a philosophical-type milieu and a discourse marked by a certain history of the philosophical as such.” Thus the historical semantics of the nation are linked to changes in philosophical forms.

Nation has a long ancestry in English, yet its predominant modern meaning is relatively new. The current primary definition in the *Oxford English Dictionary* displays a catch-all proximity that clearly indicates a word still very much in a state of flux:

**nation.** I.1.a. An extensive aggregate of persons, so closely associated with each other by common descent, language, or history, as to form a distinct race or people, usually organized as a separate political state and occupying a definite territory.

This definition is by turns inclusive and pluralist, yet clumsy and ambiguous. “Extensive aggregate of persons” is an awkward phrase, and the range of choices in “descent, language, or history” and “race or people” offers an excess of variation that attenuates the value of the definition. Moreover, being the mongrel language that it is, English has a range of words of diverse origins to cover all the ideas contained in the crucible ‘nation’; *nación* people, folk, race, state, land, country. With its Latin provenance *nātio* becomes a pan-linguistic root, and hence takes a role in most Indo-European languages. And through the consequence of colonialism and agency of pidginization this European root has now infiltrated languages the world over, although it by no means maintains the same semantic connotations in each of its host languages.

Most recent theorists writing on the subject ‘nations and nationalism’ concur that the contemporary nation is a relatively modern phenomenon,

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67 Raymond Williams notes that, “realm, kingdom, and country remained more popular [than nation] until the 18th century” (*Keywords*, 178). Other appellations for the entity of the state include empire, republic, commonwealth, union, etc.

68 See for example Hobsbawm’s discussion of the word’s development in Spanish: *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, Chapter 1.
which gained momentum in the nineteenth century and blossomed fully in the twentieth. In 1882 Ernest Renan can say with confidence that, "Nations are a new feature in history." A century later Eric Hobsbawm still writes on the nation as a "novelty," and Tom Nairn declares nationalism to be the "pathology of modern developmental history." In the 1980s Benedict Anderson sees the idea of the nation as quintessentially contemporary: "Nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time." This growth of nationalism is grounded in any number of historical developments: the industrial revolution, advances in literacy, decolonization, universal suffrage, and so on. In some of these cases it is difficult to say whether nationalism is the cause or effect; but it is palpably the case that over the past hundred and fifty years 'nation-ness' and national identity have been paramount issues worldwide. The Great War affords some of the clearest examples of this. Apart from the issue of reparations, the Treaty of Versailles is characterized particularly by the political foundation and re-formation of numerous states (many of which already considered themselves 'nations'). "If there was a moment when the nineteenth-century 'principle of nationality' triumphed it was at the end of World War I," says Hobsbawm (131).

The correlative in this for Anzac and nationhood in Australia is that the historical event of Gallipoli is co-eval with a unique and particular moment in the international development of the concept of the nation. This is crucial in understanding what sort of myth models were active in the national imagination in the decades surrounding Federation and Gallipoli. Moreover, as I discuss in Chapter Four, these developments in the concept of the nation were paralleled in Australia from the 1880s onwards by emerging ideas about race and social evolution. All these influences go to shape the what we can call the 'Gallipoli Nation', making it very much a creature of its time.

69 Renan, 'What is a nation?', 9; Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism since 1780, Chapter 1; Nairn, The Break-up of Britain, 369; Anderson, Imagined Communities, 3.
There have been many hypotheses on the whys and wherefores of this rise in nations and nationalism. Political and historical models have mapped and traced the changes, offering insights and explanations on the differences between nation and state, between race and nation. But in recent years it has been the cultural theories that have garnered the most attention, most notably that of Benedict Anderson.

Anderson’s thesis of the nation as an ‘imagined community’ is well-known and needs little explanation here; though it will be useful to retrace some of the background to his argument. Anderson maintains that the morphology of the modern nation has been brought about by ‘three fundamental cultural conceptions’ which descended from antiquity, but began to disintegrate from the time of the renaissance onwards (36). The first and most important of these was the development of print-capitalism, which helped lift the veil on literacy and broke down the power-mystique of script-languages. The second was the evaporation of the divine right of kings and the accordant centripetal power of an accountable monarch. The third was the metamorphosis in temporal understanding, which encouraged the idea of linear time, of progress, ‘driving a harsh wedge between cosmology and history’. The first two of these are unremarkable; they are well-established phenomena and Anderson applies them practically and profitably to his thesis. The third point on the changing apprehension of time is more adventurous, and more problematic — we shall return to this below.

The extraordinary influence of Anderson’s formulation is no doubt due in part to its felicitous verbal style. The phrase ‘imagined community’ has proven immensely seductive over the past twenty or so years, but its ease of currency hides many of the more disturbing aspects it assumes. The first problem is what appears to be an implied homogeneity. How can a body as necessarily large and diverse as a nation — even the most monolingual, monocultural nation — be imagined as a single community? Anderson offers a number of reasons why and how this is so, beginning
with language. He considers the waning of script-languages belonging to exclusive power élitess, and the corresponding rise of vernacular languages and indigenous literatures. The climax of Anderson’s focus on language is his dictum that ‘nations are conceived in language, not in blood’ (145). Language is always a burning issue for ethnic groups struggling for recognition or self-determination. Looking at the origins of national consciousness he traces developments in printing, the role of colonial *lingua francas*, of creolization, and especially the ‘philological–lexicological revolution’ of the late nineteenth century. In the aftermath of Sedan and the Franco–Prussian War, the issue of French and German in Alsace–Lorraine transfixed writers like Renan. Unified Italy was forced by necessity to create a national language by privileging the Tuscan dialect above others. Serbs and Croats spoke the same language but used different alphabets. And through it all multi-lingual Switzerland baffled all the theorists.

But in Australia there was no struggle for language dominance, because there were no borders. Countless Aboriginal languages fell into silence, but English-speaking ‘Australians’ were deaf to both their music and their deaths. There was rampant xenophobia, however, and language policy was harnessed as a prophylactic against foreign contamination. The first law passed by the new Federal government in 1901 was the codification of the White Australia Policy. This Act enshrined an immigration policy that was overtly racist not just in practice but in name. It functioned by the application of a farcical principle, but it gave immigration officials a mechanism by which they could reject anyone at all, and thus keep Australia white, British, and even anti-communist.\(^7\)

\(^7\) Anyone entering the country could be required to pass a dictation test of fifty words in a European language. The perverse twist was that the language was chosen not by the applicant, but by the immigration officer. One of the most infamous uses of the Act was the attempt to stop the Czech radical Egon Kisch entering the country in November 1934. Kisch, a linguist, was given a test in Scots Gaelic, which he failed; but the decision was later overturned on appeal because Gaelic was not considered a real language under the terms of the Act (Clark, VI: 463 ff.).
The use of language in such a political fashion is testament to its national importance. But in reality it was Blood, the martial underbelly to Anderson's phrase, that quickened Australian nationalism more. At a Federation banquet during the Premiers' conference in Melbourne in 1890 Henry Parkes drew a colourful metaphor for the assembled guests to see the links between Britain and the Australasian colonies: "A crimson thread of kinship runs through us all," said Parkes. The original crimson thread was a red strand twined into the ropes of the Royal Navy, but it was the haematic dimension of the metaphor that caught the imagination. Blood was something dear to everyone, and British blood was what kept Australia united. The importance of blood to the national imagining runs on two levels. There are the blood lines of racial strength and purity; and there is the blood of sacrifice and martyrdom. Lawson foresaw 'blood on the wattle', and its purifying effect. Lawrence captured something similar in Somers' unsettling comment in Kangaroo:

"It always seems to me," said Somers, "that somebody will have to water Australia with their blood before it's a real man's country. The soil, the very plants seem to be waiting for it." (85)

This familiar passage has generated much comment, and invites criticism from a number of quarters; not least in relation to indigenous genocide. But whatever Lawrence wanted to say about Australia, he was right to draw a link between blood, masculinity, vegetal health and the nation. These, we must remind ourselves, are the major topoi of Frazer's thesis.

In further highlighting the role of language in imagining the nation Anderson suggests that national anthems and songs afford opportunities for community afflux: "Singing the Marseillaise, Waltzing Matilda, and Indonesia Raya provide occasions for unisonality, for the echoed physical realization of the imagined community" (145). The Anzac myth provides its own example of unisonance in the intoning of the verses from Binyon's ode For the Fallen. It happens each year at the Dawn Service; it happens everyday at 6 p.m. in the Leagues Clubs, as gamblers and
machines together fall silent in a moment of supreme bathos. Even here though, blood has insinuated its way into the linguistic unisonance, and the sanctity of that spilt blood generally stifles dissent. It was not always so. Thomson charts the lives of peripheral and radical veterans in his *Anzac Memories*. Seymour's *One Day of the Year* exposed division and provoked debate. But today Anzac maintains a univocal message. The positive reception of commemorative speeches by the Prime Minister and Governor-General over the past few years suggests the unisonance of the Anzac rubric is likely to persist unchallenged. The yearly increasing crowds at Anzac Day confirm this. Gone are the pacifist protesters of the 1960s and 70s. Gone the members of the Anti-Anzac Day Collective from the 1980s, who dared intrude the issue of rape into the legend (Howe, ‘Anzac mythology’). Taking their place are swelling crowds of onlookers, and a growing cohort of descendants of returned servicemen and women who march each year in place of dead ancestors. Anzac Day delivers a vicarious identity to these new participants, not so much of heroism, but of belonging to a sacred group. Here the unified ‘imagined community’ becomes fully flesh.

The problem of homogeneity of identity remains however. The validity of Anzac as representative of the entire nation can be questioned at any number of points, but perhaps the most important is the issue of gender, for Anzac is defiantly and exclusively a masculine myth, where male is a monad and female is not just absent, but not even a consideration. Marilyn Lake examines the ‘discursive coup d’état’ whereby the Anzac myth appropriates the metaphor of procreation for its sacred sons. She concludes that although women might breed a population, giving birth to babies, it seems that only men can “give birth to the political entity, the imperishable community, of the nation” (‘Mission impossible’,

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71 Similar unisonance attends the singing of *Waltzing Matilda*. Even the ejaculations at international sporting events have developed their own codified anthems. It is not about emotion or duty, but about community.
Lake underpins her argument with detailed historical analysis of the gender divide in terms of political economy of the period, but the theoretical point is familiar enough: patriarchy rules in every way. This point is also made forcibly throughout Grimshaw's *Creating a Nation*, which details compelling examples of how the modernist nation is inscribed within a masculinist discourse, which not only valorizes male actors in history and ignores females, but usurps the role of mother/creator to those male heroes.

The most popular form of the 1441 known Great War memorials in Australia were statues of the 'digger' (13%) and obelisks (20%) (*Inglis, Sacred Places* 160–1). In these monuments the female image is entirely absent: the one represents a male figure of itself; the other presents an obviously phallic form. Inglis' argument that psychoanalytical interpretations of monumental forms is not relevant because “the name of Sigmund Freud was little known in the Australia of the 1920s” (161) is wilful misprision. The obelisk is not an exclusively phallic signifier — it also acts as a metaphor for the erect, living soldier in denial of the prostrate corpse — but the connexion with penile form is undeniable. Female forms number only 13 out of 1441 of these memorials, less than 1%, and in many of these the female is Britannia, bearing sword and shield. The original idea for the Anzac Memorial in Sydney of a naked woman on a crucifix, representing Peace, was rejected by public indignation. A similar sort of female figure by Leslie Bowles was planned for the Hall of Memory at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, only to be replaced by a massive sculpture of an over-sized serviceman.

Even the bitter reprobation in the verses by Owen, Kipling, Sitwell, Hope and others, only deal with the father/son relationship. The mother is a silent witness to the paradigms of sacrifice and symbolic regeneration. One of the very few examples where mother and father are given equal representation is 'Die Eltern' ('The Parents'), a stone memorial by the German woman sculptor Kathe Kollwitz in the Roggevelde German war
cemetery at Vladslo, Belgium, depicting two parents grieving over the body of their dead son (Winter, *Sites of Memory*, 108-113). Other monuments which dominate the imagining of the nation are typically statesmen, explorers, or heroic soldiers on horseback.

This tension evidences the distinction often made by feminist critics between a 'minotaur state' and a 'motherly state', or between a warfare or welfare state. Australia presents a Janus face to this dichotomy. Australians look back at an honourable legacy of being a reactive rather than proactive participant in the wars of the twentieth century. Yet as Sol Encel observed thirty years ago there persists an code of militarism in Australian life, whose influence is all the more insidious because of the pretence that it doesn't exist ('Study of militarism'). Australians are proud of their military heritage, and only too glad to add to it. Witness the public adulation, encouraged by government, given to the Interfet Force sent to East Timor in 1999, the 'heroes of Timor'. This was as much about basking in the glow of military exploit as it was expunging a sense of guilt for twenty-five years of neglect of the Timorese. Continuing in this self-congratulatory mode in 2000, the leader of the Interfet force, Lieutenant-General Peter Cosgrove, was made 'Australian of the Year'.

Wars thus offer the chance for a centripetal concentration of nationalistic imagining. It is surprising therefore, as Gopal Balakrishnan observes, that the relationship of war to the pathos of national identity is only 'fitfully addressed' by Anderson, who is no doubt discomfited by its implications ('National imagination', 66). Balakrishnan sees Anderson's suggestion that nations are conceived in language not in blood as a 'hopeful formulation' that is too optimistic. Anderson's perspective on war is curiously one-dimensional. He states that:

> the great wars of this century are extraordinary not so much in the unprecedented scale on which they permitted people to kill, as in the colossal numbers persuaded to lay down their lives. (144)
The reasoning, he suggests, is that ‘dying for one’s country assumes a moral grandeur’ above any sacrifice to a mere organization. But there is a strong whiff of Fussell’s ‘high diction’ in Anderson’s use of the sentimental phrase ‘laying down one’s life’. More terrible is indeed the reverse, that nationalism or patriotism enabled so many men to overthrow their normal moral code and kill, all in the name of their country. In the epilogue to *The Cost of War: Australians return*, Stephen Garton asks, “Why has the nation come to be entwined with death?” Garton observes that in celebrating the ‘Anzac values’ or mateship, courage, initiative, and so on, we exclude others of equal worth. “What of the virtues of tolerance, amelioration, and harmony?” he muses wistfully (257). But such traits and values only attempt to save lives, they do not achieve nations — at least not in the model that Australians aspired to in 1915. In the end Garton is forced to concede that sacrifice and the collective embrace of death has a more seductive appeal. Balakrishnan concludes:

> Without the possibility of sacrifice it is doubtful whether the nation evokes the affective peaks of collective belonging that Anderson attributes to the national imagination. (66)

Nationalism is thus like to a seed that requires incubation, and that heat is provided not in the temperance of peace but in the crucible of war.

Looking at the legacy of military history that underpins the national ideologies of so many nations, Michael Howard asks, “Could a nation really be born without a war?” (*Causes of Wars*, 27). In Australia Henry Parkes had hoped so. At his famous speech at Tenterfield in November 1889, Parkes suggested it was time the six colonies in Australia come together to form one nation (‘Speeches’). After all, he said, Australia now had as many inhabitants as did the United States when they had become an independent nation, and what they had achieved, Australia could too. Parkes spurred his audience to consider that ‘surely what the Americans had done by war, the Australians could bring about by peace’. The eventual answer to Parkes’ rhetoric would be both Ye and No. Politically,
Australia would become a nation in 1901, through a peaceful and very democratic process. But imaginatively and spiritually, the nation waited to be consummated by the great narrative of sacrifice.\footnote{1\label{fn:1} It might seem perverse to suggest this, but possibly the main reason that Australians fail to remember Edmund Barton as the first Prime Minister of the country is that he did not fight a war for Australia. Unlike Hughes and Curtin, there is no narrative of martial struggle and sacrifice to attach to Barton.}

Discussing Mabo and Gallipoli as sites of national identity, Stephen Muecke concludes that, “Death is at the heart of the formation of the nation” (‘Australia, for example’, 14); “States can be set up as political entities, but they only become nations through the magical or spiritual agency of death.” Muecke is writing in the critical discourse of cultural analysis, where we might expect such connexions and pronouncements. It is all the more arresting however to see similar claims in the editorial of the Sydney Morning Herald of 26th April 1922:

The Gallipoli campaign has been described as “the most glorious failure in military history.” But was it a failure to Australia? It made us a nation. Was the price worth paying? Are nations like individuals? If the nation is to be born, if the nation is to live, someone must die for it.

Journalistic rhetoric may have been more exuberant then than it is today, but this is still a dramatic statement. It is almost shocking to see it put so directly: \textit{if the nation is to live, someone must die for it}.\footnote{2\label{fn:2} A similar phrase, “They gave Sons, Husbands and Lovers that the Race might Live,” was to have accompanied the central sculpture ‘The sacrifice’ in Sydney’s Anzac Memorial, but the Trustees could not agree on the wording and it was omitted altogether (Inghis, \textit{Sacred places}, 312).} The logic of this argument is precisely what we find in Frazer’s theories of succession and regeneration. The indeterminate ‘someone’ who must die for the nation recalls Girard’s random scapegoat. Life is born out of death. This is a myth model in discursive action. The whole key to understanding why Gallipoli became such an instant and powerful image of nationhood is recognizing that all the pieces had already been put in place — except the
great narrative of sacrifice. Gallipoli provided the requisite epic narrative to lend a mythic dimension to Australia’s nationhood.

* We have seen that the decades surrounding the turn of the century constituted a period *ne plus ultra* when political and social conditions fostered the idea of the nation-state. And by consequence, it also produced narratives of nation forming. These narratives necessarily infected the Australian mood; the idea of the nation was pre-eminent, and Australia was caught up in this world phenomenon as much as any other country. As in the ‘domino theory’, the influence of such narratives cannot be discounted as a catalyst in the imagining and forming of further nations. Obeyesekere stresses that “political and social conditions may either foster a particular myth model, rendering it dominant, or help in the invention of a new myth model based on older ones no longer apposite to the times.” The sort of nation Australia imagined itself to be, or to want to be, was very much influenced by the ‘myth model’ of the nation-state that was prevalent and fashionable in the modern period.

But what were the myths that accompanied this burgeoning narrative of nationhood, and what sort of nations were coming into being? Hobsbawm calls the period 1918–1950 the ‘apogee of nationalism’. He suggests, though, that the principle of the nation-state which prevailed at Versailles was not simply a natural progression for liberal, bourgeois democracies, but rather a deliberate strategy of the Allies to encourage the masses in national self-identity, and to discourage socialist revolution such as had occurred in Russia, and which threatened much of Europe (131). In any case, this ‘new’ model which inspired so many peoples owed as much to age-old myths as it did to new political forms.

Yet even if the Great War appears to have been the catalyst for the formation of so many new nations, this simple equation does not tell the whole story. Decolonization had begun in the Americas a century before; the Ottoman Empire had been disintegrating in Europe and Asia Minor
for more than fifty years; the Boer War had tested the frailty of European administration in Africa. Both the idea and the reality of nationalism was well-established before 1914. So while the Great War provided the political mechanism for destroying old states and creating new ones, it did not of itself provide the motivation in the first place. Indeed the Great War is increasingly being seen less as a discrete, unique phenomenon, but as part of much larger cycles and movements. The world wars of the first half of the twentieth century are now perceived by many as thirty or forty years of continuous conflict (Hobsbawm, Age of Extremes: 22). And just as the warfare of 1914–18 becomes part of a longer, larger narrative, so too the nation-building that historically has been seen as a direct consequence of that particular conflict, can properly be placed on a larger scale of time and events. Such a proposition then makes us ask whether the formation of nations circa 1918 is part of a larger story than simply the Great War. It questions whether events in themselves, however cataclysmic, can alone be the leaven for nationhood. It raises the possibility that if events are sufficiently similar to pre-existing paradigms of nation-forming, this can suggest the myth model of nationhood.

The whole notion of history as shaped by single events has come under attack from the French Annales school of history. Lucien Febvre characterizes events as simply the ‘visible crust of history’ — that is, prominent, but superficial. Reflecting on his own experience of growing up in the memory of the Great War and the subsequent warfare of the 1940s, Jacques le Goff attacks the ‘illusions’ and ‘facilities’ of event history (histoire événementielle), suggesting that even on the world scale, wars do not create a significant ‘break’ in the course of history. He further argues that the construction ‘avant/après la guerre’ is a false epistemology. And then there is Fernand Braudel and his famous book on the Mediterranean in the age of Philippe II, where he sketches a theoretical apparatus for a new historical discourse that eschews the ‘feats of princes’ as merely the waves
on the surface, when the real subject should be the deep currents of the
the powerful tides.\(^74\)

As well as subverting the dominant role of events in history, Braudel
questioned the understanding of time. Advocating the principle of ‘\textit{la}
\textit{longue durée},’ Braudel proposed a distinction between Individual time,
Social time, and Geographical time. It is only when we get beyond the
event history of individual time that we can begin to see things according
to ‘\textit{la longue durée},’ to think in the social time of institutions, or the geo-
ographical time of ecology. Employing these different epistemologies of
time enabled Braudel to link (or suppress) disparate events and actors in
the grand narrative of his subject, the Mediterranean world in the latter
sixteenth century.\(^75\)

Taking up Braudel’s challenge, Paul Griffiths has written recently on
the the need to reconsider and ‘reconfigure’ Australian history in terms
of \textit{la longue durée}, or what he calls ‘deep time’. For Griffiths, the emergence
of deep time gives an entirely new dimension to current debates in
Australia; not just about issues such as environment and population, but
also cultural identity and colonization.\(^76\) In terms of nationhood, the
lessons of \textit{la longue durée} are compelling. Nations do not come into being
in the scale of the short term of individual time. Any given ‘event’,

\(^74\) \textit{Febvre}, \textit{Combats pour l’Histoire}, 62; \textit{Le Goff}, ‘L’appétit de l’histoire’, 176; Braudel, \textit{La}
\textit{Méditerranée}, 13–14. For an overview see Carrard, \textit{Poetics of the New History}, chapter II.

Metaphors abound in the discourses of the \textit{Annalistes}. We can suggest a further one,
among linguistic lines, that the methodology of event history (or the typically English
‘regnal history’) is akin to interpreting a sentence by its punctuation, without its syntax
or morphology.

\(^75\) Anderson makes the observation that Braudel’s 1200 page history never mentions
the massacre of St Bartholomew’s Day (the event that Renan says all French citizens
‘must have forgotten to remember’) — and yet it occurred at the very midpoint
of the period Braudel narrates (\textit{Imagined Communities}, 205).

\(^76\) Griffiths, ‘Traveling in deep time: \textit{la longue durée in Australian history’}. Among other
matters Griffiths considers the ecological and cultural practices of Aborigines, and asks
“Have settler Australians yet earned the right to travel in deep time in their own
country?”
however significant, is only ever part of a larger cycle or series. Similarly then, nation-ness can be said to be an idea and a reality that came to prominence in the late nineteenth century, and had its apogee in the turmoil of the Forty Years War. But the conditions that engendered nationalism begin well before this, and the paradigms stretch back to antiquity. Moreover, it is clear that at a metaphorical level, the rhetoric of nationalism and nationhood is to be found in symbols and narratives that have no specific origins, but exist in many forms and recur in many ages; that is to say, in myths.

If, however, the Great War (or the Forty Years War) cannot be said to be the essential catalyst of nationhood, it nevertheless provides the quintessential topos in the narratives of nationhood: death and sacrifice. "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori," wrote Horace (Odes, III, ii: 13), and even if Wilfred Owen did not believe him, many millions did. As one of those who watched the factory of death around him, and would eventually die ‘for his country’, Owen refused to swallow the traditional rhetoric of nationhood and sacrifice. His bitter rewriting of the Akedah (‘Parable’) takes the original message of trust and promise and turns it into one of betrayal and murder: “But Abraham slew his son, and half the seed of Europe, one by one.” Apart from the savage inversion of the sacrificial covenant, the deeper irony is in the intertextual reference to the original Elohist text. For the purpose of the story is not just that the Lord spares Isaac’s life, but that because Abraham ‘does not withhold his only son’, he is rewarded with a nation: his descendants (or ‘seed’) will be “as numerous as the stars in the sky and the grains of sand on the sea-shore” (Genesis, 22: 1–18). This is surely one of the greatest poetic realizations of the idea of Nation, the imagining of a fertile and enduring future. Ancient

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77 In The Broken Years Gammage quotes a letter from Cpl. E.S. Worrall (16th Dec. 1915): “...we will be very lucky if we ever reach the Beach and boats, but at school I learnt this motto: 'Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori,' and I feel composed, and if possible, happy.”
Israel’s nationhood is of course very much bound in ideas of race and lineage rather than the political and civil sovereignty of classical, modern nationalism. But as Ilana Padres argues, even if the biblical ‘nation’ of Israel does not conform to the paradigms identified by Anderson, Gellner et al., it still provides a potent model of nationhood and national identity for all those peoples with a cultural heritage of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. The ‘birth’ of a nation can therefore follow an established narrativized sequence (as Padres shows with deliberately chosen metaphors):

The nation, according to this tradition, was conceived in the days of Abraham; was miraculously born with the Exodus, the parting of the Red Sea; then spent a long period of childhood and restless adolescence in the wilderness, and finally approached adulthood with the conquest of Canaan. ('Biography of ancient Israel', 25)

The key points in this sequence are once again sacrifice and war. Significantly, the nation’s adulthood is finally achieved through conquest.

As we saw in the Introductory, the sacrifice of the first-born son is a recurring motif in the Jewish and Christian bibles: Isaac; the first-born of Egypt; Jesus. The King of Egypt orders all male Hebrew babies to be thrown into the Nile; King Herod schemes to capture the infant Jesus. Repetition is one of the most important tropes in these texts. The Torah frequently tells the same story twice in different redactions, just as the four gospels give multiple accounts of the same scenes from the life of Jesus. Moreover, just as the lists of the ancestors and their ages mark the passing of time, the unreality of their supernatural life-spans injects considerable tension into the (putative) historical chronology. Apocalyptic imagery in both bibles adds stress at the other end of the time axis, the future. The theme of prophecy that binds the two texts is another element in this overall temporal slippage. Narrative time thus continually returns upon itself. The whole book is riddled with analepses and prolepses, looking forwards and backwards, and while the main effect concerns focalization and the role of the narrator(s), it also stretches
narrative time and condenses historical time.\textsuperscript{78} Consider the following observation of Auerbach's:

If an occurrence like the sacrifice of Isaac is interpreted as prefiguring the sacrifice of Christ, so that in the former the latter is as it were announced and promised and the latter 'fulfills'...the former, then a connexion is established between the two events which are linked neither causally nor temporally. (\textit{Mimesis}, 64)

Auerbach describes this as an example of a 'simultaneity' of time. Elsewhere in the Exodus story we see a condensation of narrative time, what Robert Alter calls an 'illusion of simultaneity' (\textit{Art of Biblical Poetry}, 54). It is comparable to the 'messianic time' that Walter Benjamin describes in his 'Theses on the philosophy of history' (XVIII), which places the past and future together in an instantaneous present. But Benjamin identifies another mode of temporality, which he styles a 'progression through homogenous, empty time' (XIII). It is this new ontology of reckoning time that Anderson sees in the development of nationalism, a moment when simultaneity is marked "not by prefiguring and fulfilment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar" (24). Such shifts in ontology are then distilled into the two literary forms which ushered in the era of nationalism; namely, the novel and newspaper, epitomized respectively by realism, and by calendrical measurement. Said questions Anderson's "mistakenly linear periodizations" (\textit{Culture and Imperialism}, 280), but such a model remains appealing to many, historiographers and literary historians alike. Anderson thus agrees with Auerbach that the biblical notion of simultaneity is "wholly alien to our own." It is only alien to a positivist conception of time, however — time as a linear progression, time as the march of civilization. But in the \textit{longue durée}, in deep time,

\textsuperscript{78} This is an example of the classic temporal structuration identified by Gunther Müller, the opposition between the elapsed 'real' time and the time taken by the text to relate the narrative ('Erzählzeit und erzählte Zeit'). Repetition increases this tension exponentially, and places further pressure upon the notion of linear progression in narrative time.
the paradoxes of past and future are easily reconcilable. Indeed, in mythic chronology, time can go forward or backward, or be flattened altogether in simultaneity. Repetition, at this level, thus becomes the key to reconfiguring our understanding of the events in individual time. In a realist temporality, repetition can be fortuitous or irrelevant; it is simply coincidence. But in a mythic temporality, repetition signifies inevitability, it carries the authority of destiny.

This collapsing of time is a key element in what might be called a ‘chronotope of nationhood’. Bakhtin gives the name chronotope to the “intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships” that are expressed in literature (‘Forms of time and the chronotope’, 84). In the literary artistic chronotope, writes Bakhtin:

> Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, and becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. (84)

Because of the interrelation of ‘literature’ and historiography, we can extend the chronotope’s domain to historical poetics, where time and space are of the utmost importance. I say ‘a’ chronotope because just as there are multiple narratives of nationhood, so there are multiple chronotopes. And as Bakhtin says, chronotopes can co-exist or contradict each other, they may replace or oppose one another (252).

In regard to Australia’s nationhood we find a distinct chronotope comprising a chronology of simultaneity, and a locus of elsewhere. The place (topos/locus) of this narrative is ‘somewhere else’, it is distant, in another place. In Australia’s case, Gallipoli is over the seas, in Europe. We saw the importance of spatial liminality in the rites de marge, where an initiate is taken away from their family or out of society, and returned once the requisite rites have been performed. Liminality has an important function.

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79 Bakhtin’s Russian word хронотоп is a simple compound combining the Greek words for time and space: χρόνος and τόπος.
in narrative as well. It is typical in romance genres for transformative action to take place in some separate place at some remove from the everyday. Notable examples are the forest of Broseliande in Arthurian romance, and the forests in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* and *Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Dickens conveniently uses America and Australia in similar ways. Europe fulfils the function for much Australian literature, although the desert increasingly provides a fitting liminality, as in *Voss*. It is a familiar topos, too, in epic literature, where the action is set away from the homeland of the hero/es. For example: *Beowulf* narrates the exploits of its hero in a land across the water from his home; the *Chanson de Roland* tells of a battle over the Spanish border in the Pyrenees; the medieval Russian *Lay of Igor’s Campaign* narrates the catastrophe that befalls Prince Igor far away over the steppes; the *Iliad* is set over the sea. But as well as an abstract value of Otherness, the place of nationhood for Australia has a specific valency in its European locus, and its proximity to the ‘cradle of civilization’. Equally important is that the action is played out on a European stage in front of an Old World audience, who witness the initiation of the debutante nation.

The temporal dimension in this chronotope of nationhood involves a chronological perspective that dismisses calendrical time, and collapses the past, present and future into a simultaneous ‘Now’, what Benjamin calls *Jetzeit* (‘Theses’, XIV). It shows that the Gallipoli Nation is shot through with the same sort of mythic imagining that Auerbach saw in the biblical conception of time:

The here and now is no longer merely a link in an earthly chain of events, it is *simultaneously* something which has always been, and will be fulfilled in the future. (*Mimesis*, 64)

Barthes sees myth having the same effect on history: “Myth deprives the object of which it speaks of all History” (‘Myth today’, 151). Barthes calls
this the ‘miraculous evaporation of history’, where the object’s origin can only be found in Eternity.

We can call this process a ‘pleating of history’. When a skirt is folded into pleats a number of things are achieved. Firstly, parts that are originally separate come together; this is the collapsing of distance, as past and future meet together in the present. Secondly, parts that were once visible are placed out of sight, hidden within the pleats; here is the forgetting of unwanted history, and wilful blindness to future consequences. Lastly, the pleats create an impression of structure and order. Here is how we transform the ‘pile of wreckage’ that is witnessed by Benjamin’s Angel of history, into a narrative of destiny and fulfillment. The wreckage is simply swept under the carpet, or in this metaphor, hidden in the pleats.

It is clear that the temporality of the chronotope being proposed here is exactly contradictory to that form of linear time which Anderson maintains is the midwife to modern nationalism, which historicizes the nation and locates it firmly in time and space. Where Anderson sees nationhood as rooted in a thoroughly modern temporality, this other model disrupts linearity and rejects historicism. Logically then, the narrative of Australia’s nationhood is contrary to that of the nations that figure in Anderson’s thesis — in other words, Australia is a different kind of nation.

Every nation is unique of course, but for the purposes of these theoretical arguments Australia appears to stand apart. For example, at the time of Federation, Australia had fought no foreign wars and knew only one language. It was ethnically singular in its Britishness. As an island continent, there have never been common borders to dispute. More importantly, the whole nation only came into existence after the shifts in cultural conception that drive Anderson’s thesis. Its polity was fabricated without a feudal hangover, its constitution was blended from the two most sophisticated democracies in the world. Australia was and is an always-already modern nation. Unlike so many of the would-be nations
described by Anderson and other theorists, white Australia had no historical matter out of which to imagine a new future. Australia’s history could be measured in decades, not in centuries. Its heritage was tallied not in dynasties, but across a mere brace of generations. Les Murray tersely captures this anxiety in ‘A brief history’: “We are the Australians. Our history is short” (Subhuman Redneck Poems). For Murray, a reactionary republican, “A short history gets you imperial scorn.” This nation craved an ancestral past, not a modern future. What Australia lacked was some cultural and historical baggage to call its own. It was not embarrassed by a medieval history, but in desperate need of one. There is no need to escape from a synchronous relation with the past; rather, this is exactly the type of temporal imagining the nation was searching for. It was a way of claiming an ancestral heritage without having to inflate the meagre and dubious details of the country’s ‘short history’. Gallipoli gave Australia access to an immediate tradition of martial pride and heroic sacrifice.

At the same time, in its structural inversion of so many of the discourses of the British invasion of the Australian continent (discussed in the previous chapter), Gallipoli achieves further historical depth and resonance for the nation. The are indeed many ways in which the narratives of Anzac repeat and return upon themselves. For example, we saw how in Richardson’s Australia Felix the quintessential Anzac image of the “digger” finds more in common with his goldfield ancestor than mere etymology. Yet while the etymological link between the two is widely accepted, there is a further relationship in the evocative term “returned.” We saw in the previous chapter how this term has developed a particular currency in Australia. The word had been used as early as 1852, however, in the form “a returned digger,” to describe an ex-goldminer. It is quite possible that the existence of the phrase “returned digger” encouraged the war-time transference of digger onto Anzac. For the adjective “returned”

was already being used to describe repatriated soldiers in April 1916, before the first attested use of “digger” meaning an Anzac. It is another example of how Anzac assembles a sense of mythic depth.

The myth model embedded in the narrative of the Gallipoli Nation is not that of modern Poland or Serbia, or other nations with long histories of heroic struggle against the suppression of their identity. Nor is it the model of Argentina or Mexico, of wresting independence in a war against a colonial overlord. The federation of the colonies was different too from the unification of Italy or Germany in the nineteenth century, for there was not quite the sense of deep, cultural destiny in the Australian scenario. In fact it was closer in some ways to the fascist models that emerged as a consequence of the Great War: one that attempted to resurrect national pride by invoking a simultaneity of time and reaching back to the imperial glory of Rome; another that did the same by imagining the present as a constant for one thousand years of German Reich into the future. The Gallipoli Nation is a people trying to invent for themselves that very past, stretching back into almost-forgotten history; and through a similar collapsing of time, to imagine the same infinite future.

This is one of the more powerful aspects of mythic symbolism that Cassirer identifies: “Only symbolic expression can yield the possibility of prospect and retrospect, because it is only by symbols that distinctions are not merely made, but fixed in consciousness” (Language and Myth, 38). The ability to act prospectively and retrospectively becomes central to a nation’s desire to write its future, and rewrite its past. And so, with the example of Nazi Germany looming large, Cassirer says that, “In the myths, the nation’s past is dramatized in such a way as to make its future destiny apparent” (Myth of the State).

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81 The Australian National Dictionary cites the first recorded use of “digger” meaning an Anzac soldier as 12th Aug. 1916 (digger, 2). The word’s origins are often disputed, and a New Zealand provenance cannot be discounted.
The merest glance at Australian culture reveals a pathological fascination with the question of its national identity. We can see this fascination on display in nationalist sporting fervour; in politics (the Republic ‘debate’ of 1999); in the ‘cultural cringe’ (which used to drive intellectuals from Australia’s shores, but now simply turns to those same expatriates as cultural authorities), and of course, in John Howard’s eulogy for Ted Matthews. It is played out in any number of monographs, from Russel Ward’s *The Australian Legend* or Donald Horne’s *The Lucky Country*, to the current crop of essays, books and collections on the subject. It all seems to confirm Tom Nairn’s proposition that nations have ‘ids’ (*The Break-up of Britain*, 153–67). For Australia, the identity crisis reaches a peak in its desire for comparison with other nations, or simply for recognition as a peer. And the two most international activities in recent history are those which excite Australians most — war and sport.

In his account of the A.I.F., Bean spends much time in his early volumes comparing the Anzacs with the standard of the British soldier. In the last volume however, he looks to parallels between the Australians and the Americans. He finds similarities in everything from their uniforms to their officers, but especially in their spirit and attitude to discipline (VI: 259–62, 333, 943, 953). Unlike the Australians though, the Americans had no need to ‘prove’ their nationhood to themselves or anyone. America won its independence in two wars against the most powerful nation on earth. It already had its own epic narratives of military history. What is more, its soil was stained with the blood not just of foreign enemies, but its own people. The Civil War put the United States in the company of nations like France, Britain, Germany and Spain, even imperial Rome, all of whom had matured their self-identity with fratricidal strife and war.

The American colonists had also fought wars and signed treaties with the indigenous American Indians. These battles provided the Americans with questionable heroes like Custer, but also noble opponents such as Sitting Bull and Black Kettle. White Americans could almost kid them-
selves that they had fought with the indigenous Indians on honest terms, and made an honourable peace. White Australians mostly ignored the skirmishes and battles with the indigenous population that continued throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. As Les Murray put it for the white folks, with his customary pith: “Deep down we scorn the Aborigines for not having provided us with the romantic vision of a remembered war.” Today, calls grow ever louder for recognition of Australia’s domestic military history. But 100 years ago, despite Banjo Paterson’s attempts at patriotic versifying at Federation, Australia could only look with envy on other nations’ military glory and yearn for its own.

The period between Federation and Gallipoli is possibly the ‘whitest’ period in the whole history of Australia. The indigenous population had been reduced from an estimated 250,000 in 1788 to as low as 60,000; the Kanakas had been expelled in 1906. The migration of southern and eastern Europeans that grew in the 1920s and 30s and soared in the post-war years, had not yet begun to introduce new cultures and languages to the continent. There were many non-British citizens of course, but not in any great proportion or concentration — except perhaps the Chinese, who knew to keep their heads down. The press screamed racial fear and abuse at every opportunity. In 1903 the radical *Bulletin*, its masthead forthrightly proclaiming ‘Australia for the White Man’, could even assert that Australia was ‘more British than the British’. As a matter of course, if not expediency, politicians were united in the idea of White Australia.

Throughout this period, as all commentators agree, Australia was at least “97% British.” How then could such xenophobia be generated by such a small minority, or by the putative (though much publicized) threats of invasion from the north? The white population had displaced the

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83 According to the *Bulletin*, by 1903 the Australian had become “as much a full-blown white British subject as the Britisher himself,” arguing that a Londoner could quite as easily be a ‘Pole or Jew’ (*Bulletin* 10 Jan. 1903).
original inhabitants of the land. But they still felt insecure, frightened of a puny minority within and a disinterested bogeyman without. It doesn’t seem unreasonable to suggest that there existed at a subliminal level a transference of the plight of the Aboriginal population. Perhaps even a sense of guilt or responsibility. But this manifested itself in the form of fear and hatred of an absent enemy. And so white supremacy was the Zeitgeist throughout the nation. It was the creed of clergymen and poets, it was the daily bread of statesmen and of workers, and of soldiers.

The racial policies of the past may seem a soft target for attack by changed contemporary values. It is simply chasing after the wind to chastise individuals or even a whole society for creating and supporting the White Australia Policy. In the same way, Australia cannot be singled out as a rogue example, considering the racial policies of other western democracies at the time. But these issue needs to be raised: not to set up a straw argument, but to examine the type of nation that produced the Anzacs. The Anzac legend is a product of White Australia, of a 97% British Australia, and so are its rhetoric and rubrics. Much of its dynamic and momentum is bound in the mores and cultural values of its time.

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One of the strongest narrative scripts emerging from Bean’s history is that the Australian nation and its character were revealed and made manifest for the first time at Gallipoli. Writing immediately after the Armistice in 1918 Bean considered that, “the big thing in the war for Australia was the discovery of the character of Australian men” (In Your Hands, Australians). Like a natural and wonderful epiphany the nation appeared to itself and the world in 1915. As John Howard tells it, Ted

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84 Cf., Henry Reynolds, This Whispering in our Hearts.

85 In his last ever public comment before the Australian people, during the second Conscription debate of 1917, Alfred Deakin appealed for a Yes vote on his record as a patriot and nationalist: “Fellow Countrymen — I have lived and worked to help you keep Australia white and free” (19th Dec. 1917).
Matthews and his comrades “carved out an identity for an entire nation” (‘Speeches’, 16/12/97). Who gave Australia its identity: the convicts? the settlers, or the blacks, who fought each other for land? the militant shearsers or the first ‘diggers’ on the goldfields? the swaggie, or the drover’s wife? No — it was that happy few, it was Ted Matthews and his band of brothers. By such logic the entire history of Australian nationhood before Gallipoli is relegated. It becomes not merely a palimpsest, but a tabula rasa.

Here is the real key to Gallipoli. More than anything else the Anzac myth constructs a means of repressing the secrets of Australia’s genesis. By wrenching the origin of the nation into the twentieth century, the invasion and colonization are hidden from view. The Aboriginal population is conveniently forgotten. The convict stain is wiped clean. In this narrative there is no past, no chrysalis hiding unpalatable truths of a history that never was. The Australian nation is an image bursting forth as if from nowhere, ready to fly upon the world stage. It wants to believe that the nation is a natural rather than constructed form, and that the Australian nation emerged already fully formed with a unique character and identity. Such a construction adumbrates Barthes’ dictum that “what the world supplies to myth is a historical reality...and what myth gives in return is a natural image of this reality” (‘Myth today’, 142).

But every theory of nationalism and nationhood argues the contrary — that nations are the end product of an already established nationalism. As Hobsbawm observes, “The ‘nation’ as conceived by nationalism, can be recognized prospectively; the real ‘nation’ can only be recognized a posteriori” (Nations and Nationalism since 1780, 9). In other words, nationalist patriots can imagine a future nation, the fruit of their labours, but such an entity can only be perceived after the fact. Ernest Gellner maintains that a nation does not come into being by itself, or from out of a vacuum, but is the result of a pre-existing nationalism. For him, as for Hobsbawm, Anderson and others, the idea of the nation as a natural phenomenon or
inherent political condition is a myth: “But we must not accept the myth,”
Gellner cries (Nations and Nationalism, 49). On the other hand ‘national-
ism’, irrespective of whether it is a ‘natural condition’, is very much a real
force: “Nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and
turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates
pre-existing cultures: *that* is a reality.”

Where then is the origin of the ‘Australian nation’? Is it to be found
in Edmund Barton’s Federation slogan, “A nation for a continent, and a
continent for a nation.” Did it begin with Parkes’ speech at Tenterfield?
In the shearing sheds, or at Eureka? Was independence already nascent
in the bruised pride of transported convicts? And was the nationalist
impulse in fact already spent by the end of the 1890s, such that Federat-
ion occurred on nationalism’s expiring momentum (McMinn, Nationalism
and Federation)? It is impossible to single out any individual or event or
movement, for nations have no clearly identifiable births (Anderson, 205).
But wherever the origins are sought, the nationalism that created the
Commonwealth existed well before Federation, and the nation that
people suddenly see clearly in 1915 is new only in their sight.

According to Howard’s script, following Bean, “Australian nation-
hood itself [was] forged that April morning on the battleground of a
foreign shore through the sacrifice and struggle of our diggers.” The
Official History helps fashion this revelatory moment of national character
through its narration of the transformative experience of the War. The
great questions were, ‘How would the adolescent nation perform in the
“supreme test” of a war?’ and ‘Could the Empire trust its “raw, untried
colonials”?’ It is worth pausing to note that when Bean sat down in 1919
to write his history, he had spent just sixteen of his forty years in his
‘native’ Australia. Having left in 1889 he missed the entire Federation
debate, and could not witness first hand any changes in the national
imagination and psyche that came as a consequence of Federation. For
him then, perhaps more than others, the war brought a chance to take the
measure of the new nation. As so Bean specifically states that, "Even the 1st Australian Division entered its first battle not knowing what manner of men Australians were" (VI: 1094). We then read that the Anzacs 'were not found wanting', etc., etc.; and by their doings 'the Australian nation came to know itself', etc. etc. This narrative rhetoric establishes a logic whereby the Anzacs' experience alone reifies the national consciousness.

Humphrey McQueen (Gallipoli to Petrov, 4) argues that the birth of Australian national consciousness needs to distinguished from three other elements of nationalism, namely:

- the achievement of national unity in some constitutional sense
- the achievement of national identity as a focus for public loyalty
- the development and recognition of a national character

As we have seen, each of these existed before Gallipoli, yet each has become subsumed within the totalizing symbolism of one master narrative: Anzac. It is important therefore to note a slippage between Bean's rubric and Howard's restatement. Bean was careful to say that what was born on 25th April 1915 was the "consciousness of Australian nationhood." For Howard, Gallipoli has become the forge of nationhood itself. And really, despite Bean's semantic nicety, this is the message of the Official History.

In concluding these arguments about nationhood I want to look at the familiar myth of the Phœnix, for in many ways it provides a metaphor for the 'birth' of the Australian nation in the deaths of the Anzacs at Gallipoli.86 The first literary trace of the phœnix is in Herodotos (Bk II: §73), who mentions a sacred bird with red and golden plumage, that flies from Arabia to Egypt once every five hundred years bearing the body of

86 Gerster makes a passing reference to the notion of Australia Phœnix in Big-noting (14).
its father embalmed in a ball of myrrh. Pliny (Naturalis historie, Bk X: §2) describes how there is only ever one phœnix at a time, which is born out the corpse of its father. The most familiar form of the legend however, in the Physiologia, tells of a bird from India that subsists on air for five hundred years, then flies to Heliopolis and is burned to ashes on the altar in the temple of the sun. The following day a new phœnix ‘rises from the ashes’, and when after three days its wings are fully grown, the new bird flies away again.

All the elements of the phœnix myth suggest it is a yet another manifestation of the solar myth that so fascinated Max Müller and the comparative mythologists: the appearance in Heliopolis (the ‘city of the sun’); the ‘red and golden plumage’ of dawn, daylight and dusk; and not least, the cycle of rebirth and regeneration. Note also that the stories generally include a period of ‘night’, when the bird lies dead on the altar/pyre. The image of the phœnix is commonly invoked as a salve in times of disaster: whatever misery and suffering has occurred, there is always hope for the future. Its simple message of optimism is grounded in the notion that death can be replaced, as it were, with new life. The fact that the bird is only ever male evokes no objections.

The phœnix thus provides an image from the animate world of the vegetal cycle found in Frazer. Life out of death, day becomes night, Spring follows Winter. The key to the Frazerian cycle is the dialectic between originality and repetition. Each year is new, but each season the same as the last year’s. Each new king of the wood is another individual, but they all suffer the same fate. The myth of the phoenix highlights this dichotomy. The bird is unique and singular, hence its notoriety; it is the ultimate expression of individuality. But it is also a mere factory model, a constant reproduction of its former itself. This oxymoron can be seen in Australia’s pathology of identity. Only by being different can one be noticed, but only by being the same can one be included. Although the Anzac Nation purports to celebrate a distinctive character and identity,
it betrays the fact that nationhood has been achieved as per the old way, war and sacrifice—the nation is not so different after all.

Gallipoli did not make Australia a nation, but it gave the nation of Australia a narrative of nationhood, a narrative that Australians believed gave them equal accreditation within the company of other nations. This is the paradox—always wanting to be different, the nation ended up simply copying an age-old mould. What other models might Australia have aspired to? Manning Clark held fast to a romanticized view of Australia as a truly new society, where democratic liberties would triumph over privilege and capital. But with the coming of the Great War, and Australia’s desperate eagerness to participate, he concluded that the ideals of Australia had been ‘cast to the winds’ (V: 426). The nation was like to all the rest and would cleave to the old dead tree, never the young tree green. The narratives of the world are numberless, says Barthes—but we all tell the same stories. In the words of Horace (Satires, 1, i: 69), “Mutato nomine de te fabula narratur”: Change the name and the story is told about you. With Gallipoli, Australia could at last tell the story it had waited for, never stopping to notice that it was only the subject’s name that was different.