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AUSTRALIA

Anzac in Ashes

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The attack by the left on the Anzac tradition has escalated. As I predicted last year ("Gallipoli: Second Front in the History Wars", Quadrant, June 2009; "The Intellectual Assault on Anzac", Quadrant, July-August, 2009), the centenaries in 2014 of the outbreak of the Great War, and in 2015 of the Gallipoli campaign, will see an intensifying debate about the war as people seek to come to grips with the meaning of the seminal event of the twentieth century. Pushing itself to the centre of this struggle will be the intelligentsia, which historically has depicted these events in simplistic ideological terms and as exercises in futility. The intelligentsia is also infuriated by the Anzac legend, which is a dynamic cultural force over which it has little control, and for which it has very little sympathy, empathy or understanding.



*In my earlier articles I detailed how a number of prominent academics and other members of the intelligentsia were mounting a wide-ranging ideological attack on Gallipoli and Anzac, publishing books and articles, and delivering speeches undermining and ridiculing the tradition, and how its leading members were preparing a collection of critical essays to carry forward their iconoclastic program. This has now appeared (Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds (eds.), *What's Wrong With Anzac?: The Militarisation of Australian History* (WWWA). Sydney: New South Books, 2010). This is an explicitly polemical book, brought out in time to capitalize not only on Anzac Day 2010, but also to play the type of 'spoiling' role with respect to the upcoming centenaries that the four-volume, *A People's History of Australia Since 1788*, played prior to the 1988 Bicentennial.*

That earlier far-left collectivist effort was meant to ensure that Australians had no illusions about the historical depravity of their nation, spelling out its sins in the Introduction to every volume: "This history is critical not celebratory. It rejects myths of national progress and unity. It starts from a recognition that Australian settler society was built on invasion and dispossession [and that] the last two hundred years [was] but a brief, nasty interlude". Consequently, as Mark McKenna recalls smugly in his chapter on how Anzac Day became Australia's de facto national day, public support for the Bicentennial was systematically undermined by the "impact of the new critical histories of the last two decades", which generated "an increasingly polarized debate" as Aboriginal groups declared 1988 a 'Year of Mourning', "feature articles discussed white guilt and national shame", and newspaper editorials deplored the "ideological vacuum at the heart of the Bicentennial". The Hawke government capitulated to the intelligentsia and refused to support the First Fleet re-enactment, in a servile betrayal of a nation that can only happen once a century. Ironically, the intelligentsia's deliberate spoiling of the Bicentennial led to a renewed interest in the Anzac tradition, as Australians embraced it as an alternative foundation for a positive national identity. Consequently, as McKenna concedes, by 1990 "the connection between the failure of the Bicentennial celebrations and the new embrace of Anzac Day was ... abundantly clear" (WWWA, pp.114-9).

This new book now explicitly targets Anzac as the centennials approach, pursuing the same iconoclastic agenda and polemical strategy that was so effective in the 1980s. It also exhibits the same radical and condemnatory tone, with McKenna referring to the need to depict "the centenary of the Gallipoli invasion" atavistically, in terms of "a nineteenth century concept of nationhood" that barbarically demands "the sacrificial blood of its young" (p.134). The tradition is routinely denigrated as a 'myth' and attacked from one end of the book to the other, being condemned, for example, as "White Australia's creation myth" (p.1) and as "the vehicle by which the ideas of Edwardian militarists are preserved and passed on to a new generation" (p.159). It is also a sinister force of social division, with "the cult of Anzac ... creating two classes of citizen ... those who themselves or whose relatives

went to war”, and the rest (p.23). Anzac Day itself is denounced as “an Imperial, masculine, militarist event” (p.3); “a means of inflating national pride” while promoting forgetfulness of the nation’s past crimes (p.133); and as a cynically contrived “counter-narrative” (p.125) designed to distract the nation from “the history of Aboriginal dispossession and cultural annihilation” (p.133). The goal is for Anzac Day to be replaced by National Sorry Day as the focus of public observance.

The relentless iconoclasm of the book is also exemplified by the contributions of Henry Reynolds. In one of his chapters he describes how he took his message to a high school to disabuse a group of senior students of their inappropriate attitudes towards Anzac. It must have been an ironic scene, as the elderly professor confronted the impressionable young faces, given that the Anzac tradition is one of the few cultural forces that nurtures an inter-generational sense of identity in Australia. Unperturbed, Reynolds provided these young people with some “necessarily and inescapably confronting [and] troubling thoughts” (p.28), demolishing the belief associated with the Anzac legend that newly formed nations like Australia may be ‘made’ by successfully confronting the trials of war, and that the inspirational efforts of the Australian troops at Gallipoli and in France established a foundation for the emergence of a sustainable national identity. According to Reynolds, this will not do, and an appropriate identity can only be based on an abstract conception of “our national civil and political traditions of democratic equality and social justice” (p.viii), traditions which are allegedly incompatible with the Anzac tradition.

The book continually contrasts Anzac to the antiwar movement, with which the authors were directly involved and/or strongly identify. This is presented as a mighty cultural force for good that always fought to protect Australia from the allegedly militaristic – and even fascistic - spirit of Anzac. Consequently, the authors insist it is now time “to do justice to Australia’s long antiwar tradition” (p.viii), by according it (and therefore themselves and their comrades) the same level of recognition as the Anzac tradition. This is a objective that the left has been pursuing at the international level for some 20 years, seeking to transform deserters, draft-dodgers, antiwar activists, and conscientious objectors into latter-day heroes, to be revered at least as much as the soldiers who actually faced front-line dangers in war.

To further this aim, Reynolds provides a chapter on antiwar activists in the pre-war period, suggesting that these neglected ‘Cassandras’ possessed an unparalleled prescience and, if listened to, might miraculously have saved Australia from the global catastrophe that nobody else had predicted, and that had quickly come to threaten the new nation at every level of its existence. The subsequent history of the antiwar movement up to the 1990s is then recounted in a chapter credited to Lake and a PhD student. This basically describes some generally marginal antiwar and pacifist organizations (including front organizations for the Communist Party), attacks the RSL, and discusses Alan Seymour’s play *The One Day of the Year* (1961), which acquired a special (and rather undeserved) status in the antiwar canon of the Sixties.

As its emphasis on the ‘heroic’ role of the antiwar movement indicates, the book is notable for its authors’ view of themselves as courageous rebels challenging Australian ‘militarism’. Consequently, the cover blurb depicts them as “Australia’s leading historians” who “dare” to publish “this brave and controversial book”. In fact, they are little more than a pampered coterie, pursuing a politically correct line, and committed to destroying the Anzac tradition, knowing they face no danger in doing so. Their frequently slipshod work is always surrounded by a moralistic and ideological carapace, and critics who try to crack the case to get at the soft arguments within do so at extreme peril to their reputations and careers.

Unlike the small number of souls who confront the dominant radical depiction of Australian history, such academics need not fear being abused, ostracized, marginalized, ridiculed, ignored, victimized, sued, harassed, or sacked for daring to challenge the ubiquitous claims from the domineering left that Australia is a racist, genocidal, militaristic, colonialist, patriarchal, environmentally rapacious, consumerist, capitalist, and imperialist lackey, first of Great Britain and now of America, and that all attempts to commemorate our national achievements must therefore be denounced, suppressed or at least co-opted for politically correct causes.

After all, the authors are all university professors (with one exception), and have been awarded various prizes by their ideological cheer squads in the federal and state labor governments. Indeed, the editors were joint winners of the lucrative and once prestigious Prime Minister’s Prize for Non-Fiction, an award predictably given for yet another book about white men’s racism that is destined to find a home on a few library shelves and then an early resting place in the remainders bin. Such academics have only ever known approval and admiration from their fellow zealots and acolytes on the left who ensure they are provided with ready access to the ABC and other media, and invitations to sympathetic public speaking engagements, conferences, and festivals in order to promote themselves, their attitudes and their publications (including this book), safe in the knowledge they will never be asked difficult questions or be seriously challenged or criticized.

In a word, they exemplify the establishment, the current incarnation of the radical elite that seized control of academic history after the carefully planned and successful assault on Geoffrey Blainey at

the University of Melbourne in 1984, and eventually established an ideological monoculture in history across the country, stifling dissent. They are able now to define what is considered legitimate history, who may be admitted to the debate and who must be excluded, what topics may be addressed, and what findings and opinions are acceptable. Consequently, their 'bravery' is simply a pose, because they face no danger whatsoever in publishing such a predictable polemic, as they well know, and can look forward to receiving the plaudits of their fellow-travelers on the left as they continue their campaign against their country's history into their retirement, dotage, and beyond, leaving only ashes behind.

The authors also demonstrate little or no conception of what physical courage in warfare actually involves, or why it should be recognized and valued on Anzac Day and in other forms of commemoration. While they condemn the violence of war they do so only rhetorically to further their antiwar case, and display little comprehension of what it must take to serve one's country in a war zone, operating under conditions of extreme danger and prolonged stress, keeping one's head under fire, dealing with personal pain and grotesquely wounded mates, enduring months or even years in the trenches and other atrocious conditions, and facing a possible lifetime of illness and disability.

They also seem to have no conception of how wars originate, or of the massive social, political, economic, ideological, and demographic forces that historically have operated at societal, civilizational, and continental levels, and that can sweep countries up into violent processes of change, from which there is no easy escape. None of this is real to them because they operate in a comfortable and ethereal realm of ideologies, narratives, and discourses, which they can endlessly deconstruct for their moralistic and ideological purposes, and where the only problems the world has to deal with are not caused by the colossal paroxysms of modernization that afflicted Germany, Russia, Japan, China, and now Islam, but by wicked liberal democracies that insist on fighting for their own survival, and for values including liberty, democracy, enterprise, courage, pride, honour, and patriotism, all of which are readily denounced as 'reactionary' and 'militaristic'.

They appear to think that the only test that matters in life is what side of the ideological and political debate people line up on. Consequently, in this book they ascribe great courage to the antiwar protesters who marched around in big semi-hysterical packs 40 years ago, but imperiously dismiss the courage of the soldiers who actually faced frontline terrors in Vietnam, on the basis that the latter were brainwashed into participating, and may even have committed war crimes, involving "the systematic abuse and rape of women" (WWWA, p.97).

*It is a measure of the authors' generally mendacious approach and their devotion to the antiwar movement that Lake repeats claims that the well-known practice of protesters spitting on Vietnam veterans in the Sixties is "simply a new myth" of the militarists (p.13). In fact, as Paul Ham documents in *Vietnam: The Australian War (2007)*, antiwar protesters did frequently spit on veterans, and did many other disgusting things as well, including harassing and ostracizing their wives and girlfriends. One veteran describes a large group of protesters who "make a rush for us. They yell at us with obscene language, calling us killers of little Vietnamese children, murderers, and that we should be in jail ... The next thing I know a large gob of spit hits my left cheek"; while a young female protester screamed at a crippled veteran: "Did you fall over chasing after a Vietnamese woman whilst trying to rape her?"; and others carried placards denouncing the veterans as 'Child Killers', etc. Overall, the ordinary veteran was "treated as little more than a common criminal, the target of actual social hatred" (pp.560-4). Lake must know these things happened and yet she repeats the claim that all this is "yet another myth to add to the mountain of soldier worship myths this country groans under" (WWWA, p.14).*

*The prevarication, hyperbole, pretension, and delusion don't end with the authors' self-image. Consider their book's title: *What's Wrong with Anzac?: The Militarisation of Australian History*. Are they serious? Has Australian history somehow been militarised? Do we now live in some twenty-first century version of Wilhelmine Germany, a new Second Reich, on the way to a new Third Reich under the Southern Cross? Have we become mere subjects, denied democratic rights and valued only for our contributions to a vast war machine? Do we have a million professional troops, with some three million trained reservists available for immediate mobilization? Are we now regularly treated to the sight of the Head of State strutting about in a series of ever more gaudy uniforms and capes, chest bedecked with unearned medals, gloved hand carefully poised on the bejeweled pommel of a ceremonial sword, surrounded by scores of aristocrats, generals and admirals, all equally decked out in their martial finery, plumed silver helmets flashing in the sun, carefully keeping at least a pace behind, so as not to transgress the royal prerogative? Are we nurturing a vast and haughty military caste with pretensions to world domination? Are our towns and cities full of arrogant and imperious young junior officers, quick to take offence, their hands always scratching at the carefully cultivated dueling scars on their cheeks? Are we treated to endless, goose-stepping parades of our military might? Do we have masses of conscripts on constant maneuvers under the baleful gaze of fierce drill instructors? Are people rushing to join the Army Reserve because of the status it confers? Have we committed a huge proportion of our vast industrial sector to the production of armaments? Are we building massive railway guns to terrorize cities and 40 tonne howitzers to hurl high explosive shells the weight of a small car onto our enemies' forts? Are we presently building up a colossal naval force of battleships and submarines capable of destroying world trade and transforming the balance of world power? Are we developing*

brutal but infinitely complex military strategies that will enable our vast army to quickly invade, destroy, and subdue our nearest neighbours in a matter of weeks, before we abruptly wheel about to confront our real enemy in a bloody confrontation that will determine the fate of our new Reich? And are we even like fascist Italy, imperial Japan, or Nazi Germany, obsessed with the Fuhrer Principle or our God-Emperor, for whom the entire country must be prepared to die as we embark on conquest and mayhem on a continental scale, seizing vast chunks of Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Pacific?

Such a vision is, of course, absurd, but it is an absurdity that needs to be fully spelt out, because terms like 'militarism' and 'militarisation' have real referents in modern history and shouldn't be thrown around with abandon, as they are throughout this new book, without even a rudimentary discussion of their real meaning or applicability to contemporary Australia. As it is, the study and discussion of history in Australia is already bedeviled by a ubiquitous rhetoric of denunciation, with highly charged terms like 'racism', 'genocide', 'colonialism', and 'sexism' being used promiscuously to depict the country as a veritable monster of rapacity, racism, and violence. In fact, neither Australia nor its history has been militarised in any way whatsoever, and the authors would know this if they have even the most basic knowledge of the history of modern war. Consequently, they use 'militarisation' just like they use their other terms of denunciation - as hyperbole designed to defame their country and to gain attention for their hysterical and self-important pronouncements and dire warnings.

Ideologically, the book offers nothing new, adhering to the standard narrative of the 'revisionist' attitude towards the Anzac tradition, which has been described in *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History* (Peter Dennis, et al (eds.), 2008, pp.41-2). While revisionists are forced to concede that the Anzacs were courageous, they are chiefly depicted as dupes who were dragged into an imperialist war, betrayed by an incompetent British military establishment, and willfully sacrificed in allegedly futile campaigns in Gallipoli and France. Australia's military involvement in the war is viewed as pointless, "and far from proving Australian nationhood, actually demonstrated Australian subservience". As the relevant entry continues, this revisionist narrative is ubiquitous on the left, appealing especially to those – like the authors of the new book - "who came of age during or after the Vietnam era", and share a "suspicion of overseas military entanglements", especially those involving the United States, which has assumed mythic proportions as a force for evil. Although this revisionist depiction of Anzac "has been criticized as grotesque, even ahistorical", it is nevertheless the prevailing wisdom on the left and very influential in the universities, education system, and the media.

Aside from the Sixties, the origins of this contemptuous leftist view of Anzac are easy to identify, beginning with the extreme resentment of the Anzac legend felt by the various Australian communist and socialist groups in the post-1917 era. These groups were clambering over each other in a fratricidal struggle to obtain Moscow's ordination as the true leaders in Australia of the global communist millennium unleashed by the October Revolution. Just as they positioned themselves as antipodean champions of the proletariat, they were suddenly confronted by a genuinely Australian conception of social harmony and mateship based on the war experiences of the Anzacs, which the latter wanted desperately to preserve and which quickly seized the public imagination. In terms of Marxist-Leninism this was incomprehensible and presented a major ideological challenge. As even the communist historian, Stuart McIntyre (*The Reds*, 1998, p.41), has conceded: "at the heart of communism lay a will to power", characterized by "a fundamental intolerance of opposition. Communism was omnivorous, subordinating every aspect of society to the control of the party". Therefore, after various failed attempts to co-opt the Anzac spirit and transform it into a subordinate antipodean component of Marxism-Leninism the left gave up in despair and simply denounced it as a conservative ploy designed to mislead the workers.

The left also adopted Lenin's view that the Great War was an imperialist conflict from which the workers should disengage, and that "true socialists would oppose the war with revolutionary defeatism" (*The Reds*, p.39). The left has consistently adhered to this 'radical pacifism' and it has found extreme expression at various times, notably in the early years of World War II, when the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact was in place and the left was seeking to retard and sabotage the war effort; and during the Vietnam War, when violent attacks on the Anzac tradition was a core strategy of the antiwar movement, with "Anzac services [being] transformed into battlegrounds" (*WWWA*, p.88). Revisionist historians at the time, like the communist Ian Turner, depicted the Anzacs "in terms of their anti-heroic ... loutish behavior", and their whinging, racism, and ill-discipline (pp.18-9).

More recently, the left has also been following the marching orders issued in the early 1990s by Paul Keating, who radically escalated the 'History Wars' in the aftermath of the Bicentennial. As Paul Kelly details in *The March of the Patriots* (2009, Chs.4&11), this involved "campaigns to re-engineer the Constitution, break from Britain, reinterpret Australian history and reshape the Anzac legend". Here Keating sought the approval of intellectuals – something the latter were only too willing to provide if they received influence and advancement in return – and became "the warrior unleashed", launching "a campaign to delegitimise the Liberal party for its [alleged] betrayal of Australia's national interest", and declaring "cultural war against the Liberal party, its founder Menzies, its faith and its current leadership". This involved constructing a view of history based not only on the denunciation of the British heritage of Australia, but also on the promotion of a new Australian identity, based on

republicanism, a new flag, globalization, cosmopolitanism, Aboriginal reconciliation, and, above all, an intense engagement with Asia.

For Keating and his acolytes, this demolition and reconstruction of Australia's national identity was long-overdue. Australian history had unfolded "as the struggle between Labor's pro-independence disposition and the fawning lickspittles of conservatism perpetually genuflecting to Britain", which had however 'betrayed' Australia in the two world wars, firstly in the Great War, and again at Singapore. Consequently, in Keating's revisionist view of history, "Australia's engagement with Asia had begun with the fall of Singapore [where] the failure of the old patriotism gave birth to a new patriotism". To symbolize this Asian orientation he embraced Kokoda as "the place where I believe the depth and soul of the Australian nation was confirmed", and where the 'new patriotism' of the left could be enthroned. This elevation of Kokoda was meant "to break the conservative hold on Australian nationalism" and, to reinforce this point, it was to Kokoda and not Gallipoli that Keating ventured on his first Anzac Day as Prime Minister, declaring that "I have never been to Gallipoli and I will never [go]". Instead, at Kokoda he fell to his knees and kissed the ground in a cringe-worthy and pretentious stunt meant to "mark Kokoda in Australia's collective memory, as perhaps Gettysburg was marked in the American mind by Lincoln", as his speechwriter later conceded. Entranced by his ramshackle ersatz mythology, Keating believed that his visit to Kokoda would come to assume the role in Australian history that Lincoln's Gettysburg address has in American history, a quite incredible conceit.

In launching this grandiose campaign, "Keating was drawing on a rich stream of Australian intellectual life", indeed the dominant leftist stand that underpins this new book. As Kelly explains, "many of Australia's cultural lions and its historians championed" his approach, "with this polemic flowing into film, books, [cinema] and theatre". It quickly "began to rally the Labor spirits", and attracted new recruits, including "sections of the intelligentsia, radio jocks, artists, advertisers, and designers". Most importantly for the present discussion, "the school had a grip on Australian historiography", represented above all by Manning Clark, who had marked the Bicentennial by declaring that "the coming of the British was the occasion for three great evils: the violence against the original inhabitants of the country, the Aboriginals; the violence against the first European Labor force in Australia, the convicts; and the violence done to the land", as Kelly recalls. Nowhere was there room in this grotesquely constrained vision of Australia's history for the generations of endlessly toiling ordinary citizens whose nation-building had been inspired by the Anzac vision of Australia's potential. As Kelly observes, Clark "captured perfectly the growing hostility of historians towards white male British originating authority", which they identified above all else with the Anzac tradition.

Also central to the left's rage against Anzac is its intense hostility towards John Howard and his government, which had defeated their beloved Keating. It is significant that the intelligentsia didn't complain about 'militarism' when Keating attempted to launch his 'new patriotism' by re-locating the seminal moment of Australia's birth in war from Gallipoli to Kokoda. However, under Howard it contemptuously dismissed all such ideas, with Robert Manne, for example, lambasting "something [called] 'the great Australian military tradition'", characterized by "bombast" and "self-regard" ("The War Myth that Made Us", *The Age*, 25/4/2007). Similarly, in a revealing article, McKenna condemned the Howard government for nurturing an allegedly "new form of Australian nationalism ... characterized by the culture of public display: of patriotism and allegiance, of faith and of wealth". Most damning of all, in McKenna's view, is that "Howard has largely succeeded in defining the nation in the image of Australian liberalism: individual freedom, never-ending prosperity and uncritical nationalism. Pride and achievement are his watchwords" ("Patriot Act", *The Australian*, 6/6/2007).

It might appear incredible that an adherence to such values is seen as self-evidently deluded and reactionary. Nevertheless, as such declarations illustrate, the left is relentless in its contempt for qualities like patriotism, honour, pride, faith, freedom, prosperity, nationalism, and achievement. Consequently, because these are closely associated not only with the Anzac tradition but also with Australia's national identity and its people's sense of themselves and what they can achieve, the intelligentsia is fundamentally disconnected from the Australian people, as this book demonstrates. The great - continuing - tragedy is that it nevertheless occupies positions of great power in academia, the media, education unions, bureaucracies, and the schools, and is relentlessly pursuing the revisionist and iconoclastic agenda, designed to discredit every significant component of Australia's national identity.

This new book is obviously meant as a manifesto to empower this cadre as the attack on Anzac intensifies over the next five years. Consequently, as we have seen, the authors position themselves as long-standing and courageous foes of a sinister Australian militarism, and champions of a Keatingesque republican Australia, with Lake recounting in the Introduction her 'heroic' determination to deliver a public lecture in April 2009 denouncing Anzac and promoting the cause. This lecture then appeared (predictably) in the *Age* as the 'Myth of Anzac', and Lake describes at length the support she subsequently received on the *Age* online forum from bloggers like 'Groggo' and 'Troy' (whose views get very considerable attention), regurgitating slogans about 'fighting other peoples' wars'. Others denounced "this yammering about 'mateship'" (p. 7); insisted "we have never

gone to war for freedom or democracy” (p.9); condemned the Anzacs for invading another country; and ridiculed “bogans running around getting drunk at Gallipoli” (p.11), with the present day Turks “ripping them off on tours and selling them drinks” (p.12). The ubiquitous ‘Troy’ says of his great-grandfather, an Anzac who died at 101, that “his actions were mostly driven by primordial instincts, not some collective and god-like ‘Australian’ courage” (p.13); while Lake demonstrates her obsession with militarism (and slender grip on reality) by endorsing the view of ‘Dean’ - that Australia has been plunged into “Orwell’s state sponsored never ending war” (p.23).

Unsurprisingly, this Age forum became a key ‘primary source’ for the authors, not only for Lake but for Joy Damousi, whose own chapter indicates that the majority of bloggers in fact condemned Lake’s attack. Damousi’s piece gives the appearance of being put together very quickly, with little research. Most references are to secondary sources and Damousi acknowledges that the few newspaper references were provided to her by one of the other authors (WWWA, p.173). It is also completely one-sided, so that, for example, “the anti-conscription pamphlet” is opposed to “pro-conscription propaganda” (p.100), with little attention paid to the structure of the argument (such as it is). Above all, huge chunks of it consist merely of excerpts from responses posted on the Age forum, which Damousi uses to make her case.

(Here it must be noted, in connection with both Damousi and Lake, that there are crucial issues concerning the use of such material in an historical argument. As it stands, Damousi and Lake rely massively on random material that seems to have the evidentiary value of a loud argument in a Carlton pub.)

Nevertheless, the overall impression given by Damousi’s selection is that the majority contributing to the forum indicated strong support for the Anzac tradition. Consequently, she does two things: firstly, she condescendingly treats supporters of Anzac as emotional, deluded and misguided; and, secondly, she quotes the critics of Anzac at inordinate length, without any of the condescension or criticism that she directs at the others. For example, she discounts all the postings from people who make reference to ancestors dying or participating in any war, dismissing them as emotional and sentimental outbursts, while promoting the ‘critical analysis’ that she insists she is doing, in the face of the benighted militarists who have nurtured the “historical myth” of Anzac (p.95.).

Not only does Damousi repeatedly treat views expressing pride about an ancestors’ military service as self-evidently deluded, she also follows Lake in strongly resenting their presumption that they have anything notable to contribute to the discussion, condemning those who “introduced themselves by establishing their personal family connection to the Anzac tradition, which implied a special right to speak”; and rejecting those who “base their right to speak on their personal connection to Anzac through family, even if very distant and tenuous” (p.108). Amongst those who she disqualifies in this fashion is John Howard, the alleged leader of contemporary Australian militarism, who “exemplified this approach”, drawing on his family history “to demonstrate his own authentic relationship to the Anzac tradition” (p.102).

For Damousi, “expression of strong emotion is a way to avoid discussion and circumvent debate” (p.96), and is not, for example, a genuine reflection of the grief felt that an ancestor may have lost his life or his health in a war, or of the pride felt by his family at his courage and sacrifice. Indeed, she deplores “the merging of military and family history” (p.97) promoted by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Australian War Memorial, and condemns this as a principle reason for what she sees as the lamentable increase in public interest and support for Anzac. This has illegitimately shaped “a new sense of pride”, and improperly generated a “community of participants who generally use incomplete identifications and adopt a polemical style” (p.103). Apparently, people who explore their family history and take pride in finding ancestors who have military service fall into an emotional state and can be “manipulated by larger political movements” for militaristic purposes (p.101).

This negative attitude towards the study of family history is a very telling characteristic of this book. Quite apart from the absurd claim that family history leads to militaristic attitudes when people find veterans amongst their ancestors, this negativity may be explained by the antipathy of contemporary academic historians towards the traditional methods and absolute respect for historical facts observed, of necessity, by family historians who, unlike postmodern academics, are very aware of the need to ascertain with complete precision the details of their ancestors’ lives if they are successfully to trace their genealogies – there is no room in their work for a relativistic disregard for facts. On the other hand, academic historians like Damousi, Lake, Reynolds and others ascribe to the relativistic view that history is a construction, created to pursue political objectives, in which the actual facts play a instrumental role, and they therefore produce highly impressionistic and tendentious narratives (usually presented as cultural history), which may or may not have any ultimate grounding in actual facts or any connection to what actually happened in the past. Family history serves as a standing rebuke to the ideologically driven history that this coterie specializes in, and so it is resented.

Like the other authors, Damousi has a particular problem with the Vietnam War, which she treats as self-evidently monstrous, while implying that Australian soldiers were involved in systematic war-

crimes that required the vigorous attention of the fearless and phlegmatic antiwar demonstrators in Australia. For example, she offers the pro forma condemnation of “all the forces that conspired to send men to die in Vietnam”, before referring to “the systematic abuse and rape of women” (p.97) carried out by soldiers, and recalling “the late 1960s [when] the feminist critique of rape in war ... provoked angry responses ... from the guardians of the Anzac tradition” (p.100). She also laments “the grandchildren of Vietnam veterans [who] now attend university”, and help “sustain the new wave of commemoration and national identification” (p.97) that is underpinning the alleged militarisation of Australia.

The principal vehicle for this militarisation is the education system, according to Lake in the third of her chapters. Indeed, “during the last ten years a veritable tidal wave of military history has engulfed our nation, generating [a] torrent of curriculum materials sent to primary and secondary schools” by the state, accompanied by a media onslaught, active museums and memorials, and “an unprecedented number of books in the field of war history, often made possible by [government] subsidies” (WWWA, p.135). A sinister industry has emerged, Lake believes, in which “war commemoration and writing history have become conflated, joined in a grand narrative about the seminal role of Australian military engagements and the Anzac spirit in shaping the nation” (p.137). Central to this ominous strategy is the DVA, which has enjoyed “massive funding” to undertake a “vast pedagogical enterprise”, systematically “militarising” Australian history in our schools, so that schoolchildren now think that war-making is “our dominant national tradition ... and assume that a militarised national identity is intrinsically Australian” (p.137). Unfortunately for Lake’s case, this alleged mass propaganda campaign had less than \$6 million in funding in 2007-8, according to her own figures (p.138), or about a dollar per student, an expenditure that amounts to about 0.4 per cent of that to be spent by the Rudd government’s ‘education revolution’ in schools. Her exaggeration in this matter is quite extraordinary.

Nevertheless, Lake insists on using this simplistic state propaganda model, with its vision of a cynical government, led by militaristic masterminds, manipulating the education system to impose “a celebratory national narrative [in order] to defeat the critical force of black armband history” that had exposed Australia’s “history of Aboriginal dispossession and frontier massacres” (p.139). Once again, this claim is problematic. Firstly, Lake sees the process only in this sinister ‘top-down’ fashion and therefore fails to recognize that governments have been responding to a genuine desire amongst the public for an appropriate commemoration of Anzac, not least because the black armband exponents have systematically devastated Australia’s national identity in other fields, as we have seen. Secondly, there is blatant hypocrisy in this simulated outrage, because these historians are only too eager to demand that the state intervene directly in curricula to ensure that their radical causes and obsessions are made central to the education of our children, as we are present witnessing with the proposed national curriculum.

In summary, this book is a slipshod polemic in which the authors condemn Anzac as a sinister militaristic propaganda campaign designed to obscure Australia’s wicked past. They insist that Australia’s national identity should be based not on military campaigns (with which they cannot identify), but on radical pacifism and radical social reforms (with which they do identify). However, they ignore the fact that the values they espouse can’t exist in a vacuum and could not be attained or retained in a hostile world, dominated by any of the authoritarian, autocratic, and totalitarian regimes that made a bid for global domination in the twentieth century. Such regimes had to be resisted and Australia did its part at the cost of hundreds of thousands of casualties - a terrible price that is nevertheless only a fraction of that paid by many other countries in what was a titanic struggle that lasted decades and is still not finished. This point should be so obvious (especially to university professors of history) that one is forced to assume that their fierce animosity to Anzac derives from other, unacknowledged, sources.

Ultimately, they depict popular enthusiasm for Anzac as evidence of ‘militarisation’, not only because they don’t identify with or understand the tradition and want to demean and degrade it, but also because they want to generate horror and alarm about it, as something that doesn’t fit their ideological preconceptions about what the people of Australia should value, admire, inquire into, and engage in pilgrimages over. In their view, nobody should have the values, respect the institutions, or do the things associated with Anzac, and so they clearly intend ruthlessly to pursue their iconoclastic campaign in the years leading up to the centennials, operating like an academic Taliban, doing as much damage as possible to a unique and valuable tradition, and leaving only ashes and ruins behind. Hopefully, unlike the Bicentennial, this time they will meet some resistance.