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TREADING ON SACRED GROUND? CONFRONTING THE ANZAC MYTH IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Michael Kilmister | James Bennett | Margot Ford | Jennifer Debenham, University of Newcastle

Corresponding author: Michael Kilmister, School of Humanities and Social Science, University of Newcastle, Callaghan NSW 2308, Australia. Email: michael.kilmister@newcastle.edu.au

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Abstract

The Anzac legend, with its firm grip on popular abstractions of Australian history, nationhood, and identity, incites trepidation in the university History teacher like few other topics. Casting a critical eye over the Anzac metanarrative can also be disquieting for students unfamiliar with scholarly History and method because their conceptions of identity, both individual and national, are disrupted. In the tertiary classroom, popular understandings collide not only with scholarship but also with professional and ethical requirements. In a generic History course, which includes many teacher education students, our trepidation to teach Anzac is highlighted. We argue that many young people belong to a state-sanctioned conceptualisation of Anzac. This highly nationalistic interpretation is partly reinforced in schools, by certain sections of the media as well as other corporate and political interests. Prompted by the centenary of Anzac, the article suggests that an appreciation of students' existing knowledge and conceptions of the subject become the starting point for engaging with such a contentious topic. This is especially important because the Anzac legend is an evolving, malleable myth that means different things to different people. The article argues that eliciting students' views on Anzac as an entry point enables tertiary teachers to craft strategies to overcome the resilience of the myth.

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1 | INTRODUCTION

Anzac is presently sacred ground upon which critics dare to tread. Scott McIntyre, a sports journalist with Australian public broadcaster SBS, was sacked for tweeting “highly inappropriate” remarks about grim aspects of Australian military history on the one hundred year remembrance of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps' (ANZAC) landing at the Gallipoli Peninsula in 1915 (Dwyer, 2015, April 29). On the other hand,

Any healthy society needs to be honest about itself which means being honest about its past and for nations, as for individuals, the temptation to embroider the past and to neglect dark corners and inconvenient truths is strong (Brawley & Gascoigne, 2010, p. 37).

For many Australians, April 25 is a day to commemorate not only the nation's fallen during the Gallipoli campaign but also to celebrate the alleged birth of national consciousness. In a sign of the parochialism with which the nation approached the centenary, the labels “Anzac Centenary” and “Anzac 100” symbolised official commemorative events (Daley, 2014, December 29). Australia has been described as “without doubt the most aggressive of the centenary commemorators” (Sheedy & Offner, 2014). The national enthusiasm for the centenary project is representative of the load Anzac carries: it is the source of Australian secular values; the nation's favourite origination story; and a muse for family and hobby historians (Holbrook, 2014b). Since 1915, Anzac has also proven an effective patriotic rallying point, continuing to serve as a clarion call for politicians and others with an interest in marshalling national sentiment. Several historians and commentators have countered that this version of Anzac is distorted, unbalanced, exclusionary, unjustly militarised, and mythic (Brown, 2014; Holbrook, 2014b). This critical historical scholarship must compete with the likes of fiction writers, journalists, politicians, public museums, and interest groups like the Returned and Services League for the public's historical imagination. As First World War studies continue to be enriched by ground-breaking scholarship, the gap between the historiography and the popular Anzac narrative will widen still further (Jones, 2013).

From a hegemonic viewpoint, Anzac is internalised as common sense knowledge. It has become a deeply embedded and unquestioned collection of what critical theorist Nancy Fraser (1997) calls “self-evident descriptions of social reality” (p.153). A report delivered to the Australian government by The National Commission on the Commemoration of the Anzac Centenary (2011) corroborates this observation. The Commission observed, “there is a perception that there is as much information as anyone could want about Gallipoli already available—but despite this actual knowledge is poor” (p. 75). Christina Twomey (2013) pinpoints that an undercurrent working against awakening historical awareness is an “interest in the ‘traumatic’ impact of war experiences” (p. 87) that “might even provide ballast for a nationalist interpolation of Anzac [making] it more difficult to engage in critical dialogue” (p. 107). With Anzac 100 enthraling the nation, it is the professional obligation of historians to challenge these cultural and political forces so we might encourage people to question the popularly accepted script.

Although there is discussion about the scholarship of teaching History at tertiary level in Australia (Clark, 2009; Keirle & Morgan, 2011), there is little about teaching Anzac. For students, Anzac is an enticing entry point into Australian history, but this interest does not necessarily translate into willingness to disentangle history from myth. As Anna Clark (2008)

observes in her study of the secondary History classroom, “[i]f the Anzac story does indeed get students interested in Australia's past then we need it more than ever—but that identification mustn't be at the expense of learning history in all of its complexity” (p. 51). Although educational resources have broadened in scope (Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2013) and the serious cost of the conflict on the home front is increasingly coming into view for general audiences (Scates, Wheatley, & James, 2015), these narratives are still met with some discomfort and even opposition (Bennett, 2014; Scates, 2015). Theoretical and philosophical concerns also remain, namely, the modern-day social and political purposes of Anzac—overlooked by many Australians (McKenna, 2006b).

The authors teach into a broad first year course on Australian history attended predominantly by preservice teacher education students with smaller numbers of History students, where funding and time constraints necessitate the Anzac topic be addressed in a single lecture and tutorial. For the vast majority of the students, this will be the only History course they take at university; therefore, teaching sophisticated ideas against resilient mythology to students who have a limited background in History presents unique challenges. We describe our own experiences of encouraging undergraduate students to discuss and explore the Anzac topic openly. This is a preliminary analysis, with the authors recognising the need for further research into teaching History “conscripts” at university. At a time when debates over Australia's central unifying mythology have sharpened, we feel our task takes on an uncommon urgency.

Drawing on reflections of teaching undergraduate History, this article tracks the travails and pitfalls of Anzac in the tertiary classroom and the reasons why, above all others, the topic of Anzac creates such discord and dissonance. First, we examine the uneasy relationship historians have with tertiary students in discussing the Anzac myth. Second, we trouble the construction of the Anzac myth. Employing anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski's concept of social charter to examine the role of myth construction in the production of the metanarrative of Anzac, we suggest concepts such as the “Anzac spirit” are loaded terms for university students. Historians who apply themselves to a critical analysis of Anzac report that their scholarship has evoked passions and angst (Crotty, 2009; Damousi, 2010; Lake, 2010), and the university classroom mirrors these experiences. Third, we discuss how the Anzac myth became increasingly politicised in the mid-2000s when iconic Anzac imagery became the centrepiece of teaching Australian values in all Australian schools. Finally, we discuss ways our pedagogy shifted to take account of the dissonance and strong reactions of students when introduced to a problematisation of the Anzac imaginary. Overcoming the resilience of Anzac requires diverse ways of engaging students' historical imagination.

We argue young peoples' views and their emotional attachment to Anzac can be incorporated meaningfully into the tertiary classroom by employing reflective and inclusive teaching strategies that take account of students' background knowledge. Through eliciting and respecting their viewpoints, it is possible for historians to craft meaningful learning experiences that disrupt the Anzac mythology without didactic pedagogy.

2 | THE UNEASY POSITION OF HISTORIANS IN THE ANZAC DEBATE

It can be a daunting experience to encourage university students to acquire critical distance from Anzac. Scrutinising the Anzac metanarrative may also unsettle students'

notions of individual and national identity (Crotty, 2009). Emotional overinvestment in the Anzac story may provoke the belief that asking critical questions of it is tantamount to betraying Australia's soldiers and their families, both past and present. Yet critical analysis—ideally in combination with historical empathy—is essential if students are to grasp the complexity of the First World War experience (Davison, 2012).

For most people, formal history is remote from their experiences, interests, and relationship to personal and family identity; the one notable exception, Anna Clark (2016) muses, is Anzac. The role of connectedness and its centrality to historical consciousness presents the historian with both a peculiar challenge as well as an opportunity for engagement. The capacity of academic history to evoke passions is heightened on Anzac Day when, Clark (2016) observes, “[t]here's a crashing convergence ... of collective and personal memory, of public debate and deeply individual emotions” (pp. 93–94). The disjunction between formal history produced in the academy and popular history in its varied forms practised by “everyman” historians in the wider community (Clark, 2016) further multiplies the scale and complexity of the problem for the tertiary educator. As we have discovered for ourselves, the ways in which this plays out in the classroom depends largely on how educators tread on this “fraught territory” (Crotty, 2009).

Tensions in the university classroom are partly the outcome of academic historians' diminishing authority on Anzac. This is part of a much larger phenomenon where expertise no longer holds sway—replaced by the greater worth of individual opinion (Jasanoff, 2003; Pfister & Horvath, 2014). Independent academic Mervyn Bendle (2014), writing in the conservative journal *Quadrant*, accuses historians in the academy of embarking on an “elitist project explicitly dedicated to destroying the popular view of these [Anzac] traditions” (p. 7). Polemical views are not limited to niche journals with small readerships: the Rupert Murdoch-owned press has seized on this tension in editorials and opinion columns (Cochrane, 2015). Of further note are the journalists who produce narrative tomes on historical subjects that reach wide audiences, including prolific contributors Les Carlyon, Peter Fitzsimons, and Jonathan King. The rise of these so-called “storians” over the last two decades has contributed to the crowding out of academic history (Holbrook, 2014a; Stanley, 2013). For Jenny Macleod (2007), popular military histories have added prominently to the rejuvenation of Anzac, along with its emotional trappings.

Another threat to historians' position is growing acknowledgment that formal written history constitutes only one means of understanding the past (Ashton & Hamilton, 2009). Although contemporary historians point out the “distinctions between ‘history’ and ‘heritage’ and between ‘disciplinary history’ and ‘collective memory’” (Barton, 2009, p. 277), these finer points are lost amidst Australia's insatiable hunger for Anzac. Recently, television dramatisations of uneven quality and documentary films have staked a large claim to authority (Bennett, 2015; Stanley, 2015). Public and privately funded commemorative and educative initiatives are also rising in prominence. Recent expenditure figures for the Anzac centenary estimate the Australian Government and corporate partners will spend more than half a billion dollars over the 2014–2018 period to commemorate the participation of Australians in the war (Budget 2015, 2016, April 14). On a per-head basis, Australia is spending “at least 75 times more on commemorative activities per dead soldier than France” (Fathi, 2016, April 14). Alongside this explosion in funding, commercialised Anzac centenary phenomena such as “Camp Gallipoli” have sought to exploit public remembrance

for profit (Vedelago & Houston, 2016). Academic history must compete for visibility against this surging tide of conspicuous and generously funded commemorative activities.

There is a “darker side” to the public's current resonance with Anzac. Adherents to Anzac believe that they share a common set of beliefs, values, and national sentiments that constitute a “collective memory” (Halbwachs, 1992). Increasingly, the strength and nature of these strong nationalistic and emotional ties create a tradition of reverence that effectively shuts down or stalls a pathway to critical thinking. Insightful thought needs space to flourish when it comes to Anzac because this is an elastic myth. It is so amorphous that it has not ceased performing potent political and social functions since invention in 1915.

3 | DEVELOPMENT OF THE ANZAC MYTH

Myths are troubling to the historical enterprise because they present, in the words of Rebecca Collins (2003), a “distorted version of some historical event whose particular slant on that event is designed to serve some present purpose” (p. 343). It is the degree to which they are given the ability to sanitise and gloss over aspects of “lived experience” that can allow them to become dangerous and spellbinding (Seal, 2004). In this respect, they become incompatible with academic history: a discipline that exercises rigour and analysis based on a critical reading of the available evidence.

Myth as a social charter effectively works as a template for social cohesion and unity, privileging certain attitudes and behaviours. Developed by Bronislaw Malinowski in the 1920s and advanced by Claude Levi-Strauss, the concept of myth has both political and historical functions (Malinowski, 1948).¹ In the case of Anzac, it promotes an idealised image of the nation and effectively binds us to a one-dimensional narrative of the First World War. Both sacred and profane, the Anzac myth simultaneously glosses over the misbehaviour of the diggers at Cairo or Gallipoli or on the Western Front while providing a site where the “tradition of reverence” keeps us beholden in sombre attitude. “In a settler nation that is conspicuously short of mythologies,” remarks Holbrook (2014b), “the Anzac legend is uniquely powerful” (p. 206).

Symbolism, including blood and sacrifice in conflict and the autochthonic-like emergence of soldiers from trenches dug into the inhospitable terrain of Gallipoli, is a key element in the creation of the Anzac myth. Anzac's symbolic elements provide a rationalisation for the emblematic birthing of the nation (Lake, 1992). Secondary myths such as Simpson and his donkey also play a significant role in conceptualising the birthing of the nation (Cochrane, 2013). Patriotic voices enhanced this dialogue across 1914–1918. On the home front, teachers were normalising ideas of patriotism and sacrifice (Triolo, 2010, 2012) whereas on the war front, journalist Charles Bean was penning enthusiastic reports of diggers' extraordinary feats. In later years, he was instrumental in establishing the ritual commemoration of Anzac Day (Thomson, 2013). His correspondence prompted emotional responses from an Australian audience geographically removed from the resting places of war dead and led to the construction of countless memorials that are an integral feature of most country towns and suburban landscapes (Inglis, 2008; Jalland, 2006). These memorials provide a tangible connection to the sacrifices made by soldiers and their families. Numerous public statuary now honour all who served in the First World War (Inglis & Phillips, 1991).² Anthropologist Barry Morris claims the memorials “serve a didactic function as a source of patriotic instruction, community pride and public gratification” (Morris, 2012, p. 349).

4 | POLITICISING THE ANZAC MYTH IN EDUCATION

Politicians have been at pains to identify publicly with the popularity of the image of Simpson and his donkey as the symbolism of an Australian heroic act and to emphasise their affinity in egalitarian terms (Seal, 2011), promoting the idea that Australians are mates fighting together for a fair and equitable nation. The belief that no other country can achieve this form of equality in quite the same way keys into the alleged distinctiveness popularly associated with the first Anzacs at Gallipoli. For the Labor and Liberal parties, associating with this image is central to maintaining narratives of social cohesion to counteract the experience of rising individualism, neo-liberal economics, and declining equality that has occurred under their watch since the 1980s (Kelly, 2001). Ultimately, this political exploitation of Anzac as a unifying narrative only serves to make it more potent (Clendinnen, 2006).

Education policy has been the handmaiden to the politicisation of Anzac, particularly since 2005 when Anzac iconography was thrust into the spotlight with the image of Simpson and his donkey used as a blue faded backdrop to a government-endorsed education poster containing nine Australian values as part of the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools (Ford, 2009). According to Brendan Nelson, the then Liberal Government Education Minister, “Simpson and his donkey represent everything that we should strive to be as a nation” (Baker, 2013; Green & Leung, 2005).³ Every school was required to display the poster in a prominent place and to explicitly teach Australian values (Ford, 2009), thus connecting Anzac to a broader imagining of national loyalty and citizenship. However, there was backlash from teachers uncomfortable with the poster design, and there was passive resistance from some schools to the use of Anzac imagery (Cochrane, 2014). Interpreted as exclusively white, the symbolism reflected a particular idea of Australian masculinity. It ignored any notion of Australian cultural pluralism and failed to include recognition of Indigenous Australian experiences (Ailwood et al., 2011). Despite vocal and sustained critique, Brendan Nelson stood firm claiming “[u]nder no circumstances” would he remove the image (Green & Leung, 2005). The durability of the Simpson and his donkey parable, seemingly impervious to criticism, binds students to values seen as common to Australia.

Echoing the perspective of Brendan Nelson, the Liberal Government's educational agenda more recently appeared to be reorienting schools and the national History curriculum towards an uncritical reading of Australia's military past. The current national curriculum commissioned by the Rudd Government in 2008 and slowly rolled out since 2013 is the outcome of rigorous consultation with hundreds of relevant experts and professionals (Zarmati, 2014). In a sign that the historical content taught in classrooms is the most controversial aspect of school curricula (Hood, 2014), an audit of the History curriculum was on the Coalition's agenda before the 2013 federal election. In the lead-up to Anzac Day 2013 then Shadow Education Minister, Christopher Pyne, indicated that Anzac was taught improperly in schools (Kenny & Tovey, 2013). Upon assuming office in January 2014, the Coalition Government immediately commissioned a review of the national curriculum (Pyne, 2014, January 10). The review was headed by Kenneth Wiltshire and the conservative educational commentator, Kevin Donnelly (as cited in Bongiorno, 2013), who has said of History that it is about helping young people to “affirm that sense of us being uniquely Australian and celebrating the heroic ethos.”

Whilst the Review of the Australian Curriculum makes no specific reference to the teaching of Anzac, it more broadly suggests the History curriculum is “failing to properly acknowledge and include reference to Australia's Judeo-Christian heritage and the debt owed to Western civilisation” (Australian Government Department of Education, 2014, p. 176). This recommendation echoes former Prime Minister John Howard's stated desire for a “structured narrative” history that acts as an “objective record of achievement” (Ker, 2007). This suggestion is of course trenchantly ahistorical: the complexity of human affairs ensures that there can never be only a singular narrative. The Review went on to endorse the 19th century-notion that “emphasis should be upon imparting [emphasis added] historical knowledge ... instead of expecting children to be historiographers” (Taylor, 2014). Anna Clark's (2008) study of the teaching and learning of History in Australian high schools reveals that students “see the Anzac story as rich and vivid” (p. 44), but like her, we also “wonder whether [students'] belief in Anzac [is] more like a form of national spiritualism than historical understanding” (pp. 45–46).

5 | CONFRONTING THE ANZAC MYTH IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Historians need to escape what Adrian Jones (2011) has called “the thrall of didacticism” (p. 175). The traditional mode of History teaching—teacher historians as authoritative instructors who impart knowledge to passive students (Elton, 1967) clearly has limitations. More recently, some Australian historians have focused on examining a variety of pedagogical strategies and assessment methods (Clark, 2009; Keirle & Morgan, 2011) in the tertiary context, which are more inclusive of students' literacy needs. In 2012, the Federal regulatory body, the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency, set out a distinct set of tertiary teaching and learning standards (Brawley et al., 2013), that have also brought into sharper relief the need to increase the quality of teaching and learning across all discipline areas. Teaching problematic concepts such as Anzac therefore brings a distinct set of challenges.

As educators, we need to encourage students to explore the deeper, occluded terrains of Anzac. These could include the labour movement (Bollard, 2013); the service and sacrifice of Indigenous and ethnic minorities (Scarlett, 2012); other national perspectives on the Gallipoli campaign (Ilhan, 2014); and the connections and contexts that situated Australians in a global conflict (Ariotti & Bennett, forthcoming 2017). Approaches, methodologies, and sources used in the teaching of Anzac in the tertiary classroom have necessarily broadened over time to accommodate significant influences that have acted on the discipline at a metalevel. This process can be traced back to the tumultuous 1960s when social and cultural history in particular assisted in the reframing of a “new military history” (Burke, 2006) as a much broader analysis of war and society. This has had the effect of decentering the traditional emphasis on strategy, operations, and leadership by embracing the frequently ignored perspectives of ordinary people and voices on the margins. The home front has continued to magnify in significance so that it is now difficult to conceive of an effective general history of Australia and the First World War that does not accord prominence to events at home in understanding the war's impact (Beaumont, 2013, 2014). Given the ethical dimensions at stake, students are not limited to understanding Anzac's historical context and the accompanying evidence but can also learn how it has been subjected to deliberate myth-making, changing interpretations, and exploitation.

The experience of teaching on the Anzac tradition has led us to feel pressured to depict a sanctioned and sometimes sterile version of the past (Brawley & Gascoigne, 2010). Tertiary educators might reasonably fear that they will find themselves out in the cold and looking like “cultural warriors peddling rival versions of the truth” (McKenna, 2006a, p. 98). Our teaching experience suggests some undergraduate students—notably those who did not study senior History in Year 11 and 12—have been disturbed by the new military history approach and our use of it to “open-up” the accepted Anzac script. Our critical engagement with Anzac mythology has elicited a variety of responses. On the one hand, these responses have been positive, but on the other, they have produced contemptuous looks, some heated exchanges, walk-outs, and have been linked to disparaging or overly-critical student feedback on teaching. For students with familial military links, unversed in tertiary History, their Anzac lineage combined with an over-investment in popular understandings appears to become an authoritative platform from which they can rebuff academic scholarship. The attempts to challenge the Anzac myth in one first year generic Australian history course became so confronting for teaching staff that the removal of Anzac content was contemplated. Michael McKernan (2014) recently set out to reassure uneasy scholars working in the field, stating that historians will be standing “on steady ground even in the outpouring of emotion that will be unleashed” (p. 235) over the centenary if they continue to operate professionally and ethically. Yet students' connectedness with Anzac means dispassionate teaching might create roadblocks to critical understanding.

We suggest that confronting students with unpalatable histories of wartime atrocities and social injustice is not the only way to encourage students to see Anzac differently (Crotty, 2009; Elder, 2007). The History educator needs to consider broader contexts and cultures alongside their own scholarly conceptions of the subject matter. With notions of nationhood, identity, family lineage, and understandings of war and history refracted through the prism of Anzac, contextual factors guide the approach taken to teaching. Context-aware teaching, with attentiveness to students' cultural capital and their prior knowledge of the topic, is a salient characteristic of good pedagogical practice (Booth, 2003; Salvatori, 2002). Promotion of tolerance and respect for sensitivities is compatible with historical thinking (Nye et al., 2011). As Anna Clark (2004) observes, “progressive pedagogies are conflated with increasingly critical and inclusive readings of the past” (p. 534). Opportunities for students to reflect aloud on their standpoint and relationship with Anzac, with the support of evidence, is one possible pedagogical strategy.

The authors have sought to do this in a large first-year History service course for a mixed cohort of preservice teacher education students as well as those in the first year of a History major, delivered at a satellite regional university campus. The course attracted up to 300 students in the period 2010–2016 and 800–900 cross-campus enrolments in the same period. This service course provides the basic framework of Australian history within which students place studies of other aspects of society. Students from the Primary and Early Childhood Teacher Education programs, who take the course as a compulsory part of their degrees, overwhelmingly make up the largest cohort in the course. Their status as non-historians presents its own set of challenges that is outside the scope of this paper and requires a deeper interrogation of responses to History teaching. As a demographic, the students are predominantly in the 18- to 25-year-old age group. Over 2014–2015, the course grappled with a reduction in funding resulting in fewer face-to-face hours to address Anzac

mythology. These are by no means problems unique to our institution (Keirle & Morgan, 2011), but it has meant that more teaching and learning must take place as group work in the context of large class sizes.

Many tertiary students present with a pronounced negative feeling towards Australian history perhaps resulting from perceptions that it is not relevant to vocational outcomes and their experience of being taught by “out of field” teachers in high school (Clark, 2008; Weldon, 2016). This is compounded by research that demonstrates when it comes to “ethically charged issues” like Anzac, non-History majors generally respond “less enthusiastically” in comparison with students majoring in History (Brawley & Gascoigne, 2010, p. 48). To transform those attitudes and to model successful teaching and learning is a demanding task. It is one that requires an innovative, imaginative, and reflective teaching practice to identify existing knowledge, learning problems, and skills deficits so that appropriate solutions are able to be identified and implemented in the context of available resources.

Anecdotally, Anzac has prompted pedagogical innovations at both regional and metropolitan Australian universities (personal communication, June 8 & 15, 2016). At one university, for example, students in a first year undergraduate History tutorial prepare by analysing a series of 1915 Australian propaganda posters including Norman Lindsay's, “The Trumpet Calls.” This material is compared to scholarly secondary sources to answer probing questions such as, “[d]o you think the significance which Australians attribute to Gallipoli and [the way they] view Anzac Day in general is justified?” Typically, the more innovative teaching and learning is being done in upper-level courses where there is greater scope to experiment with pedagogy and where the students are committed historians. For instance, one upper-level course at a regional New South Wales university, which explores Australians and the First World War over one semester, emphasises archival research and arranges study tours each year to Gallipoli or the Western Front so students have the opportunity to translate academic knowledge of war into authentic, kinaesthetic learning experiences.

In the case of the introductory first year course taught to a mixed cohort at the authors' university, there is only space to schedule 1 week to discuss how Anzac is a social and political construction. We too aim to introduce authentic learning by grounding Anzac as a real-world problem and highlighting to students that there are a multitude of ways in which to view the topic. We are mindful of the need to motivate the student cohort to reflect on his or her own Anzac experiences meaningfully in a condensed timeframe during one 2-hr lecture and a 1-hr tutorial. To achieve an access point for critical discussion in 2015–2016, we used a more interactive format in the lecture period. We asked students in the Anzac lecture to ponder the question, “what comes to mind when you hear the phrase Anzac and the First World War?” At the beginning of the lecture, students broke into small groups within the lecture theatre and, after a few minutes of discussion, provided verbal responses. This approach had the benefit of eliciting students' viewpoints, which were robust and diverse. This challenged the assumed homogeneity of the dominant Anzac narrative thus demonstrating to students that Anzac is not a singular narrative and derives from constructed knowledge.

These energetic discussions in breakout groups were reinforced by the accompanying tutorial. The lecture had the effect of introducing and opening up the problematic knowledge;

the tutorials furthered this discussion. Students were required to analyse extracts from the writings of Charles Bean (1929/1941) and Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett (1915) against more scholarly and objective accounts of the Gallipoli campaign. This was in a bid to further challenge students' thinking about the Anzac legend. In the tutorial, we asked students to consider “[w]hat image of Australian soldiers did Ashmead-Bartlett and Bean create in their accounts?” The subsequent dialogue treated historical study as a conversation. The aim for students was to not only understand Anzac as a social construction but also the fact that historians and other actors—including themselves—have significant agency to recast the past to fit a particular agenda or viewpoint. If students can make this conceptual leap, then they will begin to understand how the jingoistic, militaristic, and nation-building version of Anzac has taken on such mythic proportions that it silences other perspectives on the First World War.

By the session's end, there was a sense that some students had begun to conceptualise that history can be viewed through multiple lenses. Instructors observed that by the end of the course, students appreciated Australian history is highly contested and that an understanding of different perspectives opens up new avenues of inquiry. In *Truth: A History and Guide for the Perplexed*, historian Felipe Fernández-Armesto (2001) poetically describes this process:

I tried to adopt multiple perspectives, seeing the past from multiple points of view closer to the events. For history is like a nymph glimpsed bathing between leaves: the more you shift perspective the more is revealed. If you want to see her whole you have to dodge and slip between many different viewpoints (p. 228).

For Fernández-Armesto, embracing different perspectives brings people closer to objectivity. By opening up discussion, it is possible to create a learning environment where students are prepared to question the entrenched traditions of Anzac and begin to grapple with the complexity of related debates. There is now potential to interrogate the experiences and views of students as we move through the 4-year commemoration of the First World War in a bid to understand those pedagogical approaches that are the most effective and that further challenge students' ideas about Anzac.

6 | CONCLUSION

In Australia today, there is no myth that looms larger than Anzac. While conservative commentators in the media, Anzac enthusiasts, corporate bodies, the Liberal and Labor political parties, and others with vested interests are trying to steer thinking in specific directions and to discredit critical historiography using arguments tinged with emotion and patriotism, historians need to continue their business of demolishing myths through the careful sifting of evidence. We agree with Martin Crotty (2009) that teachers and writers “have a moral, as well as a professional, responsibility” (p. 17) to educate people about Anzac. Although we need to respect that each student is on a learning journey, as educators, we have the opportunity to invite critical investment in the material to coexist with students' emotional moments. In agreement with Anna Clark (2008), we believe the classroom, and in particular, those History classrooms at university provide opportunities to challenge, remap, and renegotiate Anzac knowledge so occluded narratives of the First World War can come into view. Given the cherished place the popular Anzac narrative occupies in collective memory, historians will do well to tread carefully.

In this article, we have drawn on personal experiences to make the case for academic historians to approach the job of deconstructing Anzac with care, patience, and a reflexive awareness of the knowledge students bring with them into the university classroom. We do not think the reflective and conversational approach we have outlined here—with its emphasis on group discussions—is a “one size fits all” solution. As Adele Nye et al. (2011) advise, “[i]t is important that educators reflect on engagement, transformation and progression, and the environment in which they best occur” (p. 771). The centenary of the First World War provides a unique opportunity to review History courses, and to reflect on pedagogical techniques that have the capacity to give rise to a deeper and more holistic engagement with Australia's monolithic originary myth.

ENDNOTES

1 Malinowski (1884–1942) first coined the term “social charter” in relation to myth construction.

2 There is an important distinction between Australian and New Zealand war memorials. Whereas New Zealand's commemorate the dead, Australian statuary commemorates those who served. The Australian approach can be read as a way of dishonouring those who did not serve, reflecting the nation's fault line over the conscription plebiscites of 1916–1917.

3 While not questioning Simpson's bravery and tenacity as a stretcher-bearer on the Gallipoli peninsula, a 2013 federal government inquiry nevertheless found a very tenuous link between his legendary heroism and the truth.

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