ANU School of History Thesis Proposal Review Abstracts

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War! What is it … For?: How Ordinary Homefront Australians Found Meaning in the Second World War

Aaron Marston-Pattison

There was no one in Australian society unaffected by the Second World War. The population was mobilised for a struggle of monumental proportions that would leave over 27,000 Australians dead, and many more wounded. Its ubiquitous effects were inescapable. But what was it for? Rather, what did ordinary Australians at the time believe it was for?

The Second World War is remembered in Australian cultural memory and by many Australian historians as an 'all-in' effort. It is reflected on, almost fondly, as a time when Australian society stood united behind a common effort and a common understanding of what they were working, fighting, and suffering for. In this simplified understanding, the diversity with which wartime Australians actually understood the war's meaning is usually overlooked.

My thesis seeks to understand how 'ordinary people' on the Australian homefront found meaning in the Second World War; how they contextualised it, how they understood it, and how they felt about it.

I tentatively suggest that understandings of the war's meaning were fluid, contested, debated, and often loosely understood. Above all, however, meaning was individually constructed. It was crafted by, and often took a backseat to, the realities of everyday life.

Transportee Travellers: The Convicts who left Australia

Matthew Cunneen

Over 163,000 men, women, and children were forcibly transported to the Australian colonies as convicts from 1788 to 1868. Upon their arrival, all faced the same dilemma: what to make of their circumstances going forward. To understand their responses, a growing scholarship is tracing these convicts from birth to death, showing how they responded to their transportation experience and lived their lives in Australia once free.

By reconstructing the lives of convicts who left Australia, a hitherto largely unexplored phenomenon, my thesis will complicate conventional understandings of transportation as a unidirectional flow. Convict departures took many forms, including permanent, legitimate returns home, migration to other parts of the world, escapes from the colonies, and forms of circular migration between Australia and Britain. Shipping lists, newspaper notices, police gazettes, muster and settler lists, and official correspondence all help reconstruct portraits of these migrants and their travels.

By identifying the origins and common characteristics of convict leavers, I seek to determine why these convicts left, where they went and why, what became of them afterwards, and whether they differed from those who remained in Australia. Interdisciplinary in approach, my thesis will draw on

the methods of demography and migration studies (e.g., life course analysis and population estimation), as well as biography, collective biography, family history, and prosopography. The latter centres on the creation of a database documenting all identifiable convict departures from Australia. My thesis will look to broaden our understanding of convict agency and life outcomes and unsettle notions of the convicts as 'founders' and 'survivors', and of the 'successful' post-sentence life.

Madness, Melancholia, Nostalgia: British Naval Masculinity and Emotion of the French Wars and their Aftermath

Matilda Hatcher

The British Royal Navy of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (1793-1815) was a unique masculine community which curated an ideal type of naval manliness, underpinned by visual, lingual, and symbolic codes of dress and manner, which was valorised in popular culture. As figures of Britain's military strength, these men were also expected to perform a certain emotional style, promoting bravery, coolness and joyous camaraderie. However, the often traumatic realities of war and life at sea constantly challenged this masculine emotional image.

By analysing the emotional codes and standards of British seamen in this period, this thesis adds an emotional dimension to our understanding of naval manliness, as well as contributing to the growing number of gendered approaches to Royal Navy history.

This thesis explores how emotion was used to hone, express, and moderate the community identity of naval manliness, in order to understand how cultural representations and ideals become part of a subjective community identity. This will create a precise and culturally informed analysis of this masculine community, illuminating how collective masculine identity is constructed through subjective interactions with culture.

I argue that there was a substantial difference between the idealised emotional prescriptions of naval manliness and the reality of wartime emotions, and that this created mediations and expressions of emotion which were unique to the naval community.

Indigenous Engagement with Australia's Soldier Settlement Schemes, 1915-1939

Rachel Caines

This thesis investigates the various ways Indigenous veterans and their communities engaged with Soldier Settlement Schemes across Australia during the interwar period: as beneficiaries, applicants, rejected hopefuls, and dispossessed victims. The prevailing narrative of Indigenous engagement with the states' Soldier Settlement Schemes put forward by most historians is one of exclusion; Indigenous veterans were deliberately denied access to these schemes, while the seizure of Country and closure of communities to provide land for the schemes solidified its role as an agent of the settler colonial project. Accounts of Indigenous soldier settlers have been limited by access to archival material and confirmations of Indigeneity, as has any wider testing of the previous assertions of exclusion and discrimination.

Drawing on the most recent data on Indigenous First World War service, archival records, oral histories, and the land itself, this thesis argues that Indigenous Australian engagement with the Soldier Settlement Schemes was more complicated and diverse than previously assumed by

historians. Challenging the homogenised and often (re)colonising narrative of Indigenous soldiers and their interwar experiences, this thesis expands on our understanding of the relationship between Indigenous Australians, the state, and the centrality of place-making and Country in individual and collective experiences of veteranhood and the Soldier Settlement Schemes.

The Expression of Identity Within Colonial-Era Burial Grounds on the Lime Stone Plains

Tim Adams

The concept of an Australian national identity is often troublesome, rife with tropes dominated by racist or colonial-based themes. As a result, social and cultural ideals of Australian identity are frequently notable for being both historically inaccurate and often alienating to some major parts of the Australian community. The ways in which contemporary Australians perceive themselves is shaped by the experiences of our common ancestors; that is, those who lived and died during the colonial era. This thesis engages with the question of how our Indigenous and European ancestors identified themselves within this new colony, by examining colonial-era graves and burial grounds. Through analysis of individual graves, as well as the development of family and community cemeteries in the region, this thesis illustrates that local settlers possessed strong senses of identity at the personal, family and community levels. Through the design and placement of graves, the inclusion of grave art and epitaphs, early settlers reflected their socio-economic status, ethnicity, religion, political ideals, profession, military heritage and extended connections to family. Conversely, careful use of these features were often used to supress undesirable personal history, or to hint at heritage long suppressed.