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“We went and did an Anzac job”: Memory, Myth, and the Anzac Digger in Vietnam

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Australian martial identity is defined by the Anzac legend, and Australian veterans of all wars have struggled to remember their service through the prism of Anzac. For Australia’s Vietnam veterans, this struggle is particularly complex: powerful memories of conflict and division contest the values of Anzac. This oral history shows how Vietnam veterans’ personal memories of war are modified into tropes to create a collective identity of victimhood. Several historians have explored individual tropes that appear in veterans’ memories. This article, based on qualitative interviews with Vietnam veterans, builds on their work and identifies six memory tropes: the volunteer Nasho, the noble and skilful digger, no welcome home, baby killer, banned from the RSL, and belated recognition. Together, these tropes constitute a “cultural script” that retells the story of Anzac in Vietnam. This cultural script is a way for veterans to express their feelings of exclusion from Anzac status in Australia, and a way for them to reclaim this status. However, deconstructing the script shows how unattainable the ideal of Anzac is, requiring an ongoing creation of victimhood to legitimise martyrdom and further perpetuating the hierarchies of Anzac identity.

Australian martial identity is defined by the Anzac legend, which is based on the story of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) in the Gallipoli Campaign of 1915. The deaths of over 8,000 Australian soldiers during the eight-month siege were romanticised by war correspondent C.E.W Bean, who hailed the soldiers’ “reckless valour...enterprise, resourcefulness, fidelity, comradeship and endurance” in a trope that has endured to this day.¹ Themes of martyrdom and betrayal at Gallipoli are fundamental to Australian nationalism, as many consider the battle a “baptism of fire” marking the “birth” of the nation.² Australian servicemen have since been conceptualised as “Anzac diggers”, and the ideals of Anzac were instilled in generations of Australian soldiers, including those who fought in the Vietnam War.³

Australian veterans of all wars have struggled to remember their service through the prism of Anzac, but for Australia’s Vietnam veterans, sixty thousand of whom served in Vietnam, this struggle is particularly complex. The war is often remembered as controversial and divisive, although Australian opposition to the war is routinely overstated; Vietnam was widely supported until 1969, and anti-war sentiment never dominated the broader Australian community. Nonetheless, powerful memories of conflict and division contest the values of Anzac, making it much harder for Australian Vietnam veterans to remember their service through the Australian heroic narrative.

¹ C.E.W. Bean, *Anzac to Amiens* (Canberra, 1946), p.181.

² “Dawn of the Legend: 25 April 1915”, Australian War Memorial, <<https://www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/dawn/>>, accessed 2 February 2017.

³ Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia* (Cambridge, 1999), p.2.

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Consequently, veterans' personal memories reshape certain aspects of the war — creating, erasing and modifying elements to cement their claim to Anzac heritage. These memory modifications frequently reoccur in veterans' narratives, becoming tropes. Several have been explored by historians. Rachel Stevens, for example, challenges the widespread belief of media vilification in a review of prominent Australian wartime newspapers.⁴ Ann Curthoys explores conflicting memories of anti-war protesters and veterans, focusing in particular on veterans' memories of hostility from protesters to veterans.⁵ Jane Ross analysed veterans' homecoming and integration experiences, questioning the notion that Vietnam veterans were more isolated and excluded than Australia's other veterans.⁶ Others have drawn on Vietnam memories to deconstruct broader themes of Anzac. Craig Stockings, for example, contests claims of Anzac-like "fair play" by Vietnam diggers in his "debunking" of Anzac military myths.⁷ Together, the findings of these historians demonstrate an underlying focus on Anzac themes of betrayal and sacrifice in the memory work of veterans of the Vietnam War.

In this article I construct an overarching argument about the relationship of the Anzac mythology and Vietnam veterans' memory of their war. Building on the work described above but developing a fuller argument, I argue that Vietnam veterans claim Anzac identity by expressing a collective victimhood through six specific memory tropes: the volunteer Nasho, the noble and skilful digger, no welcome home, baby killer, banned from the RSL, and belated recognition. These tropes first emerged in the media in the late 1980s and became prominent veterans' narratives in the early 1990s, coinciding with Vietnam commemorations and the Anzac revival.⁸ Over the past two decades, these tropes have become more frequent in veterans' narratives, and their prominence in interviews conducted in 2016 demonstrates how powerful these tropes have become.⁹ Together, these tropes constitute a "cultural script" that retells the story of Anzac in Vietnam. This script is formulaic but non-specific, and often contradicts the historical record. It deflects inquiry by promoting on themes of neglect and rejection: resting on emotion rather than evidence. This script elides the similar experiences of soldiers in Australia's other wars, and it relies on the American narrative of the war in Vietnam: contrasting the "diggers" with the "G.I.s" while at the same time borrowing from American memories and myths. This article argues that the cultural script of the digger in Vietnam is a way for veterans to express their feelings of exclusion from Anzac status in Australia, and a way for them to reclaim this status. However, deconstructing this story shows how unattainable the ideal of Anzac is. It requires an ongoing creation of victimhood to legitimise martyrdom — undermining

⁴ Rachel Stevens, "'Captured by Kindness': Australian Press Representations of the Vietnam War, 1965-1970", *History Australia*, Vol. 3, 2 (2006), pp.45.1-45.17.

⁵ Ann Curthoys, "'Vietnam': Public Memory of an Anti-War Movement", in Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton, eds, *Memory in Twentieth Century Australia* (Melbourne, 1994), pp.113-130.

⁶ Jane Ross, "Veterans in Australia: the Search for Integration", *Vietnam Generation*, Vol. 3, 2 Australia R&R: Representations and Reinterpretations of Australia's War in Vietnam (1991), pp.50-74.

⁷ Craig Stockings, *ANZAC's Dirty Dozen: 12 Myths of Australian Military History* (Sydney, 2012), pp.13, 134.

⁸ See for example: Andre Malan, "Return to Vietnam", *Canberra Times*, 13 May 1990, p.17; Brian V. Tate, "Days of Rage", *Canberra Times*, 26 January 1992, p.15. Oral historians, including Curthoys and Alistair Thomson, also note the emergence of new memories of Vietnam at this time. See: Curthoys, "Vietnam", p.123; Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* (Clayton, 2013), p.252.

⁹ See for example: Glen D. Edwards, *Vietnam, the War Within* (Salisbury, 1992); Bob Buick and Gay McKay, *All Guts and No Glory: The story of a Long Tan Warrior* (Crows Nest, 2000).

the very real problems faced by returning servicemen — further perpetuating the competitive (and destructive) hierarchies of Anzac identity.

The article draws on various historical approaches to war memory. Debates around war memory centre on the processes behind the articulation of memories, with some historians focusing on the role of political and cultural forces over individual experiences, or vice versa.¹⁰ This article draws on theories that focus on the interplay between public and private in remembering, demonstrating that the political and the individual are necessarily always connected.

One such theory is that which historians Alistair Thomson and Graham Dawson refer to as "composure". Thomson argues that memories are "composed" from "cultural resources of language and meaning...to shape and bind (or 'compose') that consciousness into a more fixed and coherent, though inevitably selective and partial state".¹¹ At the same time, we compose memories in ways that are psychologically comfortable: striving, as Dawson notes, "for a version of the self that can be lived with in relative psychic comfort".¹² Each of the tropes discussed in this article were "composed" in this sense, as veterans sought "recognition and affirmation for [their] life stories", gradually producing a cultural script of the Vietnam experience.¹³

While the composure of memory concerns political meaning, at the same time, these tropes also perform a psychological task. Historian Michael Roper emphasises that beneath the cultural influences, social processes and politics of remembering, there is also an individual experience, an "underlay", that is as fundamental to the meaning of the memory as the cultural references that shape the memory over time.¹⁴ As Roper notes, "remembering always entails the working of past experiences into available cultural scripts".¹⁵ The tropes identified in this article are the collective expressions of veterans' individual experiences of pain; composed over time through the process of re-remembering within a specific group, or "particular publics".

Particular publics are the smaller social groups that have the most significance to our lives and so play the largest role in affirming our memories and identities. Within particular publics, stories are repeated to (and often repeated again by) a specific audience, so memory within these groups becomes "transactive" or "communicative".¹⁶ Within particular publics, certain stories become privileged over others because they resonate with the values of group. The particular public that is central to the cultural

¹⁰ See: Anna Green, "Individual Remembering and 'Collective Memory': Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates", *Oral History*, Vol. 32, 2 Memory and Society (Autumn, 2004), pp.35-44; T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson and Michael Roper, "The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration: Contexts, Structures and Dynamics", in T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson and Michael Roper, eds, *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration* (London, 2000), p.9.

¹¹ Alistair Thomson, "Anzac Stories: Using Personal Testimony in War History", *War and Society*, Vol. 25, 2 (2006), p.5.

¹² Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (New York, 1994), p.23.

¹³ Thomson, "Anzac Stories", p.5.

¹⁴ Michael Roper, "Re-remembering the Soldier-Hero: The Psychic and Social Construction of Memory in Personal Narrative", p.185.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.183.

¹⁶ Alistair Thomson, "Anzac Memories Revisited: Trauma, Memory and Oral History", *Oral History Review*, Vol. 42, 1 (2015), p.26. For further exploration of "communicative memory" and "transactive memory" within particular publics, see Alexander Freund, "A Canadian Family Talks About Oma's Life in Nazi Germany: Three-Generational Interviews and Communicative Memory", *Oral History Forum d'histoire orale* 29: Special Issue "Remembering Family, Analyzing Home: Oral History and the Family" (2009), pp.1-26; and Graham Smith, "Beyond Individual/Collective Memory: Women's Transactive Memories of Food, Family and Conflict", *Oral History* 25:2 Conflicts and Continuity (Autumn 2007), pp.77-90.

script of Vietnam is the veteran community in Australia, and this article will show, this community's value of martial masculinity played a significant role in the selection and promotion of specific tropes.¹⁷

This article is based on interviews with twenty-one Australian Vietnam veterans who were recruited for an oral history project about veterans who have returned to Vietnam since the war.¹⁸ All interview subjects served in the Army, and over half were national servicemen. They served between 1966 and 1971. Most served one tour (a year or less) in-country and all but one were in combat. Therefore, this group of veterans is not representative of the population of servicemen in Vietnam.¹⁹ However, these veterans are representative of the dominant voices in Vietnam veteran discourse in Australia, where combat memories of ground troops are heavily promoted and highly valued. Veterans from the 1962-1966 advisory period and those who served in support positions are implicitly discouraged from expressing their experiences, particularly if they encroach upon the memories of combat veterans. These same pressures likely affected the recruitment process of this project, as most participants were recruited through mail-out to various veterans' organisations and through referral with existing contacts.²⁰

The broader project further affected the kinds of testimony collected in the interview process: there has been significant public interest in the veterans who return to Vietnam, and several of the interviewees have been interviewed many times by the media, occasionally resulting in rehearsed responses in the project interviews. However, these rehearsed responses reflected the tropes discussed in this article, demonstrating how veterans rely on tropes to discuss personal experiences and that this script has the approval of the broader veteran community. The project interviews followed a semi-structured method, with a range of questions about returning to Vietnam and their feelings about Australia and the War. Using this semi-structured method, the script-like elements of veterans' responses were highlighted particularly clearly. The interviews discussed in this article therefore represent a specific narrative that is sanctioned by the dominant veteran community in Australia, and echoed in veteran writing on blogs, in articles, and memoirs.

The Volunteer Nasho

The Vietnam digger legend begins with stories of conscription. Popular memory of the Vietnam War in Australia imagines most of the soldiers as unwilling "Nashos" (National Servicemen). However, memories of the moral injustice of forced combat has overshadowed the reality of majority volunteer militaries: roughly a quarter (15,381) of servicemen in Vietnam were drafted.²¹ Furthermore, the memory of many veterans is that the Nashos also volunteered.

¹⁷ For further discussion on the role of gender within particular publics, see Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, p.23; and Penny Summerfield, "Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self in Oral History Interviews", *Cultural and Social History*, Vol. 1, 1 (2004), pp.65-93.

¹⁸ The interview data will be kept in secure storage for a minimum of five years in accordance with University of Melbourne policy for human research ethics. After that time, these archives may be held by the History Department of the University of Melbourne and accessible to researchers.

¹⁹ Of the almost 60,000 servicemen in Vietnam between 1962 and 1972: 69 per cent were Australian Army, 23 per cent RAN, 8 per cent RAAF. Roughly a quarter were conscripted, serving in the Army, and 58 per cent were in support positions. Percentages based on data from the Nominal Roll of Vietnam Veterans, Department of Veterans' Affairs <<http://nominal-rolls.dva.gov.au/vietnamWar>>.

²⁰ Every person who responded to the mail-out was accepted for the project provided they met the criteria of the project: veterans who have returned to Vietnam.

²¹ "The Birthday Ballot — National Service", Australia and the Vietnam War <<http://vietnam-war.commemoration.gov.au/conscription/birthday-ballot.php>>.

Over half of the Nashos I interviewed remembered volunteering, for a variety of reasons. One Nasho, for example, explained that he volunteered to "honour the tradition of my family". What makes this memory a trope is the subsequent insistence that "you didn't have to go. Nobody ever went to Vietnam, there's not one man ever served in Vietnam that was there against his will". Several Regular Army (non-conscript) veterans also promoted this trope, remembering that "most of the Nashos anyway volunteered to go there". This trope is a vehicle for collectivizing veteran identity: flattening out the inequalities in their service and commitment. Addressing the popular memory of a drafted force, veterans remembered that that during training, "they said, 'anyone who doesn't want to go to Vietnam, step out, and we'll talk to you about it' [...] every soldier had the opportunity to say: 'No I don't want to go to Vietnam'". Historians Peter Siminski and Simon Ville confirm that "recruits were able to indicate their preferences", but note that these preferences were secondary to the "major factor" of manpower planning.²² Nonetheless, many veterans remember the recruit's choice as the primary, or even singular, factor: justifying the memory of an all-volunteer force.

Stockings describes the Anzac digger as "ready to volunteer in a good cause [...] He is no conscript, for compulsion is too close to reluctance".²³ Siminski and Ville trace volunteerism in the Anzac legend to the failure of two referenda on conscription during the First World War.²⁴ Historians Martin Crotty and Mark Edele note that "incessant wartime propaganda [...] emphasized the moral virtues of volunteer soldiers and the degeneracy of 'shirkers' and 'slackers' who remained at home".²⁵ The story of forced conscription excludes Vietnam veterans from Australia's "voluntary tradition" and associates them with the anti-war movement. It also implicates Australian veterans in a common story where America failed in Vietnam because of poor discipline and low morale among the unwilling drafted troops.²⁶ Veterans were resentful that their volunteerism was forgotten: "when I hear people saying, 'well you all dragged over', that's not true [...] we were there because we wanted to be there [...] we weren't shanghaied". Their narratives echoed the First World War propaganda, remembering the Vietnam-era anti-conscriptionists as worried mothers and cowardly men. In reaction to the imported American memory of reluctant drafted forces, they reminded me that they, like the Anzacs, "put our hand up, we bloody well did".

However, the injustice of conscription also fits neatly with the Anzac theme of betrayal. Consequently, some veterans contradicted themselves, attempting to incorporate both injustice and volunteerism: "I was a national serviceman, it's not as if I volunteered to go. I *did* volunteer to go to Vietnam, and so did everybody. If people said they didn't volunteer, then they don't remember." To accommodate these conflicting elements, veterans framed the injustice element through a mateship narrative: "You don't train with a whole heap of guys for twelve months, or even six months, and then pull the pin at the last minute. You don't do that." Focusing on loyalty allowed veterans to remember the pressure they felt to serve in Vietnam without presenting themselves as reluctant: "you're a link in a big chain. And if you

²² Simone Ville and Peter Siminski, "A Fair and Equitable Method of Recruitment? Conscription by ballot into the Australian Army during the Vietnam War", *Australian Economic History Review*, Vol. 51, 3 (November 2011), p.289.

²³ Craig Stockings, "Let's have a truce in the battle of the Anzac myth", *The Australian*, 25 April 2012.

²⁴ Ville and Siminski, "A Fair and Equitable Method of Recruitment?", p.281.

²⁵ Martin Crotty and Mark Edele, "Total War and Entitlement", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 59, 1 (2013), p.20.

²⁶ See George Lepre, *Fragging: Why US Soldiers Assaulted Their Officers in Vietnam* (Lubbock, 2011).

say no, you're letting your mates down. So you say yes.” The volunteer Nasho thus reflects the legend of the Anzac digger who “will do his terrible duty by his nation and by his mates”.²⁷ Furthermore, some veterans remember that these circumstances were deliberately contrived by the ADF. One Nasho explained that they were offered a choice “only after they’d had the training, they’d had the bonding, the units were formed, your allegiances were there, you instilled with the idea that if you go off you’re letting them down [...] They didn’t ask you when they’d call you up, before your training with the unit, the bonding”.

The “noble and skilful digger”

The Vietnam War is widely remembered as a “quagmire” in both the US and Australia: a brutal and wasteful mistake.²⁸ Yet Australian veterans remembered that the Australia Task Force (ATF) had numerous military successes as well as a harmonious relationship with local Vietnamese people: arguing that they had effectively pacified “their” Vietnam territory by 1973. This is one of the most dominant tropes of the Anzac script, occurring in over two-thirds of my interviews and increasingly retold in Australian media. As historian Jane Ross notes, the implication of these memories is “that had Australia, as a nation and a military presence, been sufficiently large and committed to waging war all over the south of Vietnam, then the final result would have been quite different. We, it is claimed, would have won.”²⁹ This trope evokes the “Anzac spirit”, in which innate Australian superiority is measured in contrast to the ally rather than enemy. Historian Stephen Garton tracks this comparative practice to Bean, who wrote that the Anzac “fighting spirit [...] lay in the mettle of the men themselves”, whereas the British were depicted as “queer little weaklings”.³⁰ In veterans’ narratives of Vietnam, the failure of the US war machine against a small developing country is logically explained by the inherent lack of “fighting spirit” and “mettle” of the Americans. One veteran said that “if [Americans] had been trained the Australian way, and if they had been trained by Australian commanders, yep, would have been different”. His conjecture neglects that Australia’s initial role in Vietnam was training: the Australian Army Training Team (AATT) arrived in Vietnam in 1962 to train US advisors in jungle warfare. Furthermore, when the Australian commitment escalated in 1966, the ATF’s responsibility was contained to one province. In contrast, the US, South Vietnamese and Many Flags allies were dispersed throughout South Vietnam, contending with far greater geopolitical variances. Yet veterans were generally dismissive of American soldiers in Vietnam, forgetting, as Ross points out, “the great difference between the sheer scale of their efforts and the American commitment, and also the extent to which they relied on the Americans for logistics and operational support”.³¹

For example, veterans’ memories of the 1966 Battle of Long Tan reconstruct the battle as a David and Goliath feat. After Long Tan, the ATF estimated that the 108 troops in D Company, 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (6RAR) had killed approximately 245 National Liberation Forces (NLF). Veterans, however — some who fought at Long Tan, most who did not — remember that D Company killed over 800 NLF troops. One veteran — who did not fight at Long Tan — said: “that was only because of our training. If we were Americans, we’d all be dead.” His interpretation of

²⁷ Stockings, “Let’s have a truce in the battle for the Anzac myth”.

²⁸ David Halberstam, *Vietnam: The Making of a Quagmire* (New York, 1965).

²⁹ Ross, “Veterans in Australia”, p.67.

³⁰ Stephen Garton, “War and Masculinity in Twentieth Century Australia”, *Journal of Australian Studies*, Vol. 22, 56 (1998), p.87.

³¹ Ross, “Veterans in Australia”, p.68.

the battle ignores the significant firepower advantage of D Company over the NLF forces at Long Tan, including US ground and air support. His use of collective pronouns to describe the military success of a battle he was not in suggests that this statement is more about identity than reality, neglecting the details of the battle to reflect the Anzac legend in which, as Stockings points out, "Australians are somehow 'naturally superior' soldiers".³²

Veterans also remembered their role as "liberators" in South Vietnam, focusing on the "Winning Hearts and Minds" (WHAM) policy. WHAM was an American strategy, promoted heavily by President Johnson, but veterans only recalled Australia's WHAM policies. One veteran recalled: "We liberated a place called Dat Do [...] these kids had never even seen the light of day [...] We opened the schools, we put a cordon around the village, and we brought things back to normality. To see kids go back to school again, they looked delighted, they thought the Australians were just wonderful, because they had their normal life again. So we were liberating these little kids." This emphasis on the humanitarian protection of South Vietnam reflects the "deep democratic urges" of the Anzac digger ideal.³³ Veterans elevated their "liberator" role by comparing themselves to the American troops: "to [Americans], [the Vietnamese] were just feral, and they were just, they weren't even human. Whereas we saw them as human beings, and we treated the civilian population with dignity and respect." Although they rarely fought with Americans, Australian veterans recalled American conduct in graphic detail: "Americans, in some instances, cut off their ears or dragged them. It didn't happen with Australians. We were honourable soldiers". Another veteran said, "we weren't like the Americans, who went in there and raped a few Sheilas and shot a few people up, I mean that's just — it just couldn't happen in the Australian Army, 'cause we would just shoot the person [who carried out a war crime]". The first statement suggests that not mutilating enemies constituted "honourable" warfare. The second proposes that Australian soldiers were so honourable that they would have killed each other to uphold the law — appropriating the story of US pilot Hugh Thompson who, as he evacuated survivors from the My Lai massacre, commanded his gunner to shoot US soldiers who continued to kill. My Lai was and remains the most widely known war crime of Vietnam, and so Thompson came to represent those who were brave enough to stand against their fellow soldiers for what was right: the face of honour in Vietnam. By limiting the scope of "war crimes" to known American atrocities and adapting an act of American heroism into an Australian hypothetical, these memories tell a story where it was impossible for Australians to commit war crimes. The digger, after all, "has no desire to kill [...] he has an innate sense of fair play".³⁴

Yet there is evidence of criminal war conduct by the ATF. Many veterans describe forced population displacement and free fire zones in the context of standard operating procedures. "We didn't have a My Lai", one veteran said, "we shot the odd woman we saw in the bush under circumstances which were wartime circumstances". Another described "clearing patrols" where "we'd go into a village and say, 'right, we are going to shift you into this lovely beaut' place you're going to live in'. And you'd take them out of there, take everybody out. Then you'd burn 'em [the huts]. And then you start to hear screaming". These veterans did not seem aware that these methods contravened Australian policy and international law. However, few acknowledged the violence involved in forced civilian relocation, and none explained the justification for free fire zones in areas they claimed were pacified.

³² Stockings, "Let's have a truce in the battle for the Anzac myth".

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Furthermore, veterans frequently described improper burial and corpse desecration. Many explained that while they themselves were not able to bury the dead properly — the Geneva Conventions require a proper and decent burial “where possible” — all the other Australians buried Vietnamese bodies properly, in contrast to the desecration of the Americans.³⁵ A Special Air Service (SAS) veteran remembered: “you’d see pictures of the Americans, with all these piles of bodies. Like bloody white hunters from Africa [...] I don’t know what they did, whether they buried the dead or not. But I know the Australian battalions did.” He then explained that SAS had no time to bury bodies. Another veteran justified an unmarked mass grave: “we needed to bury them as quickly as possible. So it was not in a situation as per the Geneva Convention, that they be buried individually, it would have taken all day.” Other veterans described incidents where bodies were blown up or dragged behind vehicles as anomalies. Yet every veteran insisted that “we had a much stronger respect for our enemy [...] we treated their dead with respect”. The phrase “we buried the dead”, common throughout my interviews, distinguishes the Australians from their American allies and underscores the “noble and skilful digger”.

Veterans felt strongly that the Australian soldiers were “absolutely crucified” by the “horrific footage of war”, characterised as “child killers, rapists, because of the media”. One veteran said: “it was the greatest bloody media war out”. Australian television during the 1960s and early 1970s was dominated by imported programming from the US and UK, and the graphic content of American footage of the war continues to be a key reference point in memories of the first “living-room war”.³⁶ However, historian Daniel C. Hallin found that television media disproportionately covered civilian deaths, atrocities and terrorism by North Vietnamese forces compared to American and South Vietnamese actions.³⁷ While coverage of the war was grisly, Hallin argues that American media favoured the US and allies by minimising their aggression and maintaining a “highly sympathetic” portrayal of soldiers throughout the war.³⁸ Therefore the argument that the media vilified the soldiers with deliberately negative portrayals is not corroborated by the footage itself.

Historian Rachel Stevens unpacked the claim of media vilification in a review of wartime archives from Australian newspapers the *Age* and the *Australian*, and found no evidence of denigrating coverage. She found that both papers “constructed celebratory representations of Australian soldiers” in a deliberate effort to disassociate the Australian soldiers from American conduct.³⁹ Stevens argues that the media effectively constructed two wars: a romanticised Australian war, in which “noble and skilful” diggers help children and win battles against faceless enemies, and an “ineffective and morally abhorrent” American war, which covered the bombings, atrocities, and civilian deaths.⁴⁰ Historian Simon Forrester explains that Australian photographers both self-censored and were restricted by the Department of Defence in order to create “promotional” rather than documentary material, which was “imbued with a typically Australian ethos of mateship and camaraderie” including “heroic” depictions and a humanitarian focus.⁴¹ This wartime media duality reflected the Anzac script at

³⁵ “Rule 115. Disposal of the Dead”, Customary IHL, International Committee of the Red Cross.

³⁶ Michael J. Arlen, *Living-room War* (Syracuse, 1997).

³⁷ Daniel C. Hallin, *The ‘Uncensored’ War: The Media and Vietnam* (Berkeley, 1989), pp.154-155.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.162, 180.

³⁹ Stevens, “Captured by Kindness”, p.45.5.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Simon Forrester, “Australians in Vietnam; photography, art and the war” *Impressions: Australians in Vietnam*, Past Exhibitions, Australian War Memorial, 1999
<https://www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/impressions/aust_vietnam.asp>, accessed 08 February 2017.

Gallipoli, in which Australian conduct is lauded and removed from their allies' conduct. Yet Australian veterans continue to feel deeply wounded because they truly felt misunderstood by the Australian public: "we did help. I saw what we did, we did help civilians, and we held our end up well. But that was never reported, we never got that news back here." The veterans view this injustice as twofold: not only were their good deeds unacknowledged, they were condemned by association with the US military.

No Welcome Home

Popular memory of post-Vietnam Australia remembers "public antipathy" to and "mistreatment" of veterans.⁴² Veterans' memories support this view. One veteran said: "we didn't march, we came back to Sydney under the guise of night, here's your pay, seeya mate". Another recalled: "on return we are smuggled into Fremantle Harbour at midnight, to avoid the protesters [...] there was no welcome home by the public. We were criticised. Verbalised. Humiliated." These claims — of being smuggled in to avoid protesters, of having no welcome home, and of being publicly vilified — are contradicted by archival sources.

Most veterans returned with their battalions by sea to welcoming crowds. Some veterans were flown home; however, this was not to avoid anti-war protesters. In all Australian wars, some soldiers returned apart from their battalions: because of injury, for compassionate reasons, or because their tours did not align with their battalion's rotation. Because Nashos served a shorter tour than Regular Army soldiers, they were disproportionately affected by this misalignment. Veterans who returned by air flew on civilian aircraft, which only left Vietnam during daylight hours, meaning they arrived in Australia at night. I have not found a single wartime source to corroborate the claim that anti-war protesters gathered at airports to heckle returning servicemen, even though both anti-war protests and the return of servicemen were topics widely covered in the press throughout the war.⁴³

The claim that "we didn't march", that there was "no welcome home", is contradicted by the welcome home parades held for fifteen of the sixteen individual battalions throughout the war. Ross argues that this shows that "there was abundant warmth and welcome in the community towards the soldiers [...] From the first march, in June 1966 in Sydney, until the last one, in December 1971 in Townsville, the troops were cheered and clapped by thousands — even hundreds of thousands — of onlookers [...] looking back, the remarkable thing is how little the spirit of public welcome for the soldiers seemed to be affected by the growing anti-war feeling."⁴⁴ This discrepancy between veteran memory and historical record suggests that veterans who remember that there was "no welcome home" are appropriating a memory from American Vietnam veterans. Unlike Australian veterans, American veterans were flown home, and because of the US individual rotation policy for tours of duty, few returned alongside soldiers from their battalion. Also unlike Australians, Americans were not given parades when they returned — although as historian Eric T. Dean Jr notes, "the lavish parades of which [US] veterans of past wars supposedly received are often more

⁴² Graham Seal, *Inventing ANZAC: The Digger and National Mythology* (St. Lucia, 2004), p.154; Janine Hiddlestone, "Voices from the battlefield: personal narratives as an historical tool in studying the place of the Vietnam War in Australian society", *Journal of Australian Studies*, Vol. 26, 73 (2006), p.61.

⁴³ Historian Ann Curthoys also searched for records for these claims. The earliest she found was a 1982 statement by veteran T. Spriggs in John Coe's *Desperate Praise*. Curthoys, "'Vietnam'", p.126.

⁴⁴ Ross, "Veterans in Australia", p.66.

a myth than reality”.⁴⁵ The solitary, isolated return from war became representative of the Vietnam experience in America, transmitted transnationally in the Vietnam film genre.⁴⁶ Thus Australian memories of there being “no welcome home” blurs Australian history, where soldiers were historically welcomed home with marches, with American memory of veterans not being welcomed home.

The lack of evidence supporting these memories suggests that they are metaphors for emotional readjustment difficulties and the lack of psychological support upon repatriation. Like veterans in wars before and since, Vietnam veterans returned to civilian family and friends who had little comprehension of what they had been through. Potentially supportive family members — grandfathers, fathers or uncles who fought in the World Wars or Korea — were restricted by Australian norms of masculinity in which stoicism and endurance are prized: as Alistair Thomson shows, Anzac mythology is highly effective in silencing the expression of emotion.⁴⁷ It is also unfortunately common for soldiers to self-isolate for a period after repatriation to cope with the difficult transition from the military unit to civilian society.⁴⁸ The memory of “here’s ya pay, seeya mate” implies that veterans resented the absence of structural support from the military — which no doubt made their transition more difficult, but was also the experience of veterans in other wars. Significantly, this memory was promoted equally by Nashos and Regular Army veterans, even though the “truths” of the trope — veterans returning by air, at night — only affected some of the Nashos. None of the Nashos described “no welcome home” as being unique to them: they collectivized the memory as an experience of all Vietnam veterans. This trope demonstrates Roper’s theory of the “underlay” of memory: the individual experience of post-war readjustment difficulty is “re-remembered” through the “overlay” of social codes”.⁴⁹ The collective memory of “no welcome home” thus acknowledges and affirms the isolation and pain experienced by individual veterans.

Baby Killer

The final claim of the veteran, that they were “humiliated. Verbalised. Criticised” concerns the anti-war movement. Many veterans remembered that the Australian anti-war movement was “rent-a-crowd”, that “they just needed something to protest” or that they were derivative “copycats” of the American movement. Others argued that the anti-war movement deliberately ignored WHAM actions and were selective regarding atrocities: “if one side is doing it, then that’s reprehensible. But it’s more reprehensible to ignore the fact that the other side is doing it ten times as much.” These characterisations deflect the movement’s claim to the moral high ground and situate the digger as the courageous soldier betrayed by un-Australian protesters. Curthoys and

⁴⁵ Eric T. Dean Jr, “The Myth of the Troubled and Scorned Vietnam Veteran”, *Journal of American Studies*, p. 26, 1 (1992), p.67.

⁴⁶ See, for example, Hal Ashby, *Coming Home* (United Artists, 1978); Michael Cimino, *The Deer Hunter* (Universal Pictures, 1979); Ted Kotcheff, *First Blood* (Orion Pictures, 1982); Randall Wallace, *We Were Soldiers* (Paramount Pictures, 2002).

⁴⁷ Alistair Thomson, “A crisis of masculinity? Australian military manhood in the Great War”, in Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake, eds, *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1995), pp.133-147.

⁴⁸ Sebastian Junger, *Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging* (London, 2016).

⁴⁹ Roper, “Re-Remembering the Soldier Hero”, p.184.

others have argued that these memories reflect feelings of being emasculated by a new young male authority: the anti-war protester.⁵⁰

In the US, stories of the "spat-upon" Vietnam veteran have circulated widely since the 1980s. American Vietnam veteran Jerry Lembcke explored this story and found no reports of anti-war protesters spitting on veterans prior to the 1980s. He concluded that a confluence of visual and emotional memories from the Vietnam era led to a gradual process of social amnesia, pointing to metaphor-laden speeches by President Nixon, altercations between anti-war protesters and law enforcement, and hostility from the pro-war lobby towards anti-war veterans.⁵¹ Lembcke argues that the "spitting" story "displace[s] the anxiety of defeated male warriors into scapegoats".⁵² Elements of the spitting story manifest themselves in Australian veterans' memories, including the claim of being "flown in at night, to avoid the protesters", but as Curthoys notes, there is also no evidence for the spitting story in Australia prior to the 1980s.⁵³ Historian Chris Dixon has explored a parallel Australian myth of paint or blood being thrown over returning soldiers. He locates the origin of the myth to the one-woman protest by Nadine Jensen in 1966, who doused herself in red paint and broke ranks from half a million well-wishers to protest the Welcome Home parade for 1RAR in 1966.⁵⁴ Like Lembcke and Curthoys, Dixon finds no evidence that paint or blood was used regularly by anti-war protesters to shame Vietnam veterans.

Nonetheless, almost every veteran I interviewed remembered some form of abuse from protesters. The paint story was commonly referenced, while the literalised blood story and the spitting story were slightly less common. Most dominant was the memory of the epithet "baby killer". However, I can find no evidence of the term "baby killer" being used by the anti-war movement in archives — not on protesters' placards, or reported in newspapers, or in Australian veterans' accounts prior to the 1980s. It is possible that some veterans were called "baby killers" by anti-war protesters, but is extremely unlikely that something so newsworthy — the widespread abuse of returned servicemen — would go entirely unreported. Furthermore, like the spitting and paint/blood stories, "baby killer" memories use collective pronouns, specific turns of phrase and reference events happening to other people: all indications that this epithet is more metaphorical than historical.

The anti-war protests in both countries highlighted the killing of children in war. When President Johnson visited Australia in 1966, two brothers in Melbourne were arrested for throwing paint at Johnson's car while protesters chanted "Hey, Hey, LBJ, how many kids didja kill today?".⁵⁵ Lembcke argues that this chant "is hard to distinguish from 'Baby killer!'"⁵⁶ However, the fact that these protests targeted politicians, not veterans, is significant. Veterans remembered that protesters were "targeting the wrong people", and believe that "they should have targeted their protest against the government, not against individual diggers". Veterans linked the democratic right to protest to the rights of the South Vietnamese people that they were fighting to protect. They opposed the "disgraceful" methods and direction of the anti-

⁵⁰ Curthoys, "Vietnam", p.118.

⁵¹ Jerry Lembcke, *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory and the Legacy of Vietnam* (New York, 1998), pp.7,8.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.9.

⁵³ Curthoys, "Vietnam", p.128.

⁵⁴ Chris Dixon, "Redeeming the Warrior: Myth-making and Australia's Vietnam Veterans", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 60, 2 (2014), pp.214-228.

⁵⁵ Clive Hamilton, *What Do We Want?: the Story of Protest in Australia* (Canberra, 2016), p.10.

⁵⁶ Lembcke, *The Spitting Image*, p.83.

war movement, not the idea of publicly opposing war itself. The protest of President Johnson alone is insufficient to explain the prominence of the “baby killer” trope.

Veterans’ memories of the “baby killer” epithet suggest that they remember the media fuelling the anti-war movements’ hostility toward soldiers in their coverage of atrocities. One veteran remembered “as far as they were concerned we were killing women and children, so we were baby killers”. An iconic 1969 anti-Vietnam War poster ...*And babies*, set text from a CBS interview with My Lai veteran Paul Meadlo over a photograph of civilians killed during in the massacre. Similarly, Nick Ut’s photograph of Phan Thi Kim Phuc fleeing a napalm strike was broadly disseminated in news media in 1972. Several veterans referenced Ut’s photograph specifically as evidence of media bias against Australians, but by the time this photograph was taken, almost all Australian troops were withdrawn from Vietnam and the protest movement had melted away. Nonetheless, veterans’ memories of the “baby killer” epithet suggest a response to media coverage of war crimes: “we were just baby killers, none of our guys killed fucking babies, we helped them for fucks sake. I was a patrol medic in SAS! That was saving them, that wasn’t killing them.” Yet nowhere in the media archives is the specific term “baby killer” used — at least, not regarding Vietnam.

In Australian and American newspaper archives and digitized book collections, the earliest uses of the term “baby killer” refer to abortion. Throughout the 1970s, the term was used to vilify women’s protest groups and politicians who supported women’s rights in the US and Australia.⁵⁷ Both countries established legal precedents for abortion (1973 and 1969 respectively), and the anti-choice lexicon has remained stable in both countries ever since the 1970s.⁵⁸ The tendency of the movement to link abortion to war crimes and “crimes against humanity” further entrenched the association between abortion, Vietnam and “baby killers”.⁵⁹

Coinciding and engaging with the abortion debate was the rise of Women’s Liberation and the anti-Anzac coalition. Women’s groups, along with peace activists, gay ex-servicemen and indigenous servicemen, challenged the digger legend by protesting on Anzac Day. The overlapping identities of feminism, pacifism and socialism in the anti-Anzac collectives recalled the protests of the First World War and Vietnam, and women’s groups specifically contested the celebration of martial masculinity. Women Against Rape (WAR) groups around the country held non-violent protests on Anzac Day. WAR was widely interpreted as targeting ex-servicemen, with one sub-branch of Vietnam Veterans Association comparing WAR’s protest at the 1981 Canberra Anzac parade to rape.⁶⁰ Protests about sexual violence are reflected in the “baby killer” story, where the epithet is frequently accompanied by the charge “rapist”. As Curthoys notes, this indicates that “this is not a memory concerning protests in the 1960s at all”, because “references to rape in war were minimal in the Vietnam War period itself, being rarely discussed before the advent of Women’s Liberation in 1970”.⁶¹

The imagery of veterans’ “baby killer” stories suggest that memories of women’s liberation, anti-choice and anti-war protests have merged over time. All three

⁵⁷ “Clinic Staffers Suffer Emotional Trauma”, *New York Times*, 20 July 1979; “Responsible Approach to the Abortion Issue”, *Washington Post*, 24 January 1979; “McGovern, long a target”, *New York Times*, 20 October 1980.

⁵⁸ Letters to the Editor, “The Aztecs had nothing on us”, *Canberra Times*, 18 October 1979; Letters to the Editor, “The unborn and rights”, *Canberra Times*, 11 November 1989; “Uproar over biochemist censorship”, *Canberra Times*, 9 November 1990.

⁵⁹ Maurice Adams, “US gears up for ‘the great abortion battle’”, *Canberra Times*, 23 March 1981.

⁶⁰ “Letter to the Editor”, *Canberra Times*, 9 May 1981, p.2.

⁶¹ Curthoys, “Vietnam”, pp.127-8.

movements engaged in contentious debates. All three featured women in the public sphere, challenging gender stereotypes. All three focused on violations of human rights. Finally, all three used graphic images of brutalized bodies to evoke passions. The increased circulation of the term "baby killer" by the anti-choice movement and the visual association of the term with protest movements produced a discourse in which "baby killer" was increasingly associated with Vietnam and the epithet itself was normalized.

"Baby killer" was then explicitly linked to Vietnam veterans in the 1982 box office hit *First Blood*, in which veteran protagonist John Rambo scorns the anti-war movement for "protesting me. Spitting. Calling me baby killer".⁶² The "baby killer" epithet consequently became a trope in veterans' narratives, repeated even by veterans who admitted that they never experienced or witnessed anti-war aggression. One veteran described how he still resents the anti-war movement, referenced the "baby killer" epithet and then added: "I never saw this personally, but of course through the media".

The "baby killer" epithet likely originated in the US. All three protest movements were much more vigorous in the US than in Australia, and the Australian veterans I interviewed strongly rejected Rambo and the entire Vietnam Hollywood genre. Historian Patrick Hagopian argues that for American veterans, the phrase is a shorthand for feelings of alienation and stigma.⁶³ What makes the Australian adoption of this term significant is the comparative nature of Anzac identity. Australian veterans' use of the term insinuates that while they weren't baby killers, the American veterans were. The key reference points that suggested soldiers as "baby killers" — My Lai and Kim Phuc — are both remembered as American atrocities (although the latter was a South Vietnamese action). The epithet "baby killer" is a metaphor for the perceived tarnish of being associated with Americans and their atrocities and so feeling excluded from the Anzac legend. One veteran said:

Vietnam veterans, we had blood thrown over us, we were called baby killers and rapists and murderers. It was just horrendous, you know? And we didn't do any of that...to be accused of that, it's just gut-wrenching on top of what you'd been through mentally. To have a slap in the face like that from your own countrymen was horrendous. It was terrible [...] there was always the dogooders around that would judge you, that had no idea. You could have been in Nui Dat at the Badcoe club as a steward, but did nothing other than serve drinks to officers. But you would have been put against the wall and accused of being a baby-killer, or a rapist, for the fact that you'd been in Vietnam.

Over time, memories developed from metaphors that explained the feelings of unjust exclusion from their Anzac heritage. Just as Dixon argues that stories of paint or blood being thrown on veterans "serve to affirm the status of the veteran as victim, and protester as traitor", "baby killer" serves to underline the martyrdom of the "noble and skilful" digger who has been unfairly remembered as nothing more than an American G.I.⁶⁴

Banned from the RSL

One of the enduring grievances of veterans was their exclusion from the Returned Services League (RSL). One veteran said, "we couldn't get into the RSL, they wouldn't let us into the RSL clubs". This exclusion did occur, although it varied from place to place, with some clubs outright refusing membership, some limiting access and privileges, and others welcoming veterans. RSL membership terms required "that

⁶² Kotcheff, *First Blood*.

⁶³ Patrick Hagopian, *The Vietnam War in American Memory* (Boston, 2009), p.65.

⁶⁴ Dixon, "Redeeming the Warrior", p.227.

the member has served his country in the armed forces in time of war”, so Vietnam veterans were excluded on the grounds that Vietnam was a police action.⁶⁵ In 1973 the RSL national congress expanded membership to those who were serving or who had served in the armed forces, although until the late 1970s these members wore a different badge.⁶⁶ Exclusion from RSLs — first literally, and then by being marked as different — undoubtedly isolated veterans at a time when they most needed support. However, this exclusion from the veteran community is not unique to Vietnam. Garton notes that in World War II, the former incarnation of the RSL, the RSSILA, “was for several years bitterly divided over whether to admit members of the Militia forces to membership, and did not agree to do so until November 1944”.⁶⁷ The militia forces were conscripts, and so considered unworthy of the Anzac heritage that membership into the RSSILA represented. A frequently forgotten tradition of Anzac is the arbitrary definitions of what constitutes a soldier, and what constitutes a war.

Veterans remembered that once they were allowed into the RSLs, they were belittled by older generations. One veteran said, “there was the older veteran who didn’t want to have a drink with you when you were home cause you’re only a kid and you hadn’t been anywhere”. Another remembered his neighbour, the president of a local RSL, inviting him to “come around and join, but I didn’t feel welcome at all. Just felt like, ‘oh you don’t know, you only went for a year, you know nothing’ sort of attitude from the old diggers”. This intergenerational “ribbing” or teasing is a tradition in the veteran community: it allows for hierarchical displays of machismo and authority. Ross points out that “each generation has fought its own war, at roughly 20 year intervals. Each generation has found some problem with acceptance by their elders”.⁶⁸ Korea veterans, for example, remembered similar belittling treatment when they joined RSLs.⁶⁹

This is not to say that Vietnam veterans did not suffer from the rejection and exclusion of the RSLs. The RSL was conceptualised as a select society where one was accepted after undergoing the rite of passage of combat, and many veterans’ fathers would have been members. Because the RSL represented masculine authority and legitimacy, the lack of recognition and acceptance was deeply invalidating. Furthermore, RSLs were spaces where veterans could talk about war and trauma more openly than in the public sphere, where male emotion was socially prohibited. This exclusion contested veterans’ claim to Anzac heritage and denied them access to the key support network for Australian veterans at the time. However, the trope of being “banned from the RSL” implies that this experience was unique to Vietnam, which it was not. By eliding the long history of intergenerational exclusion and ribbing in RSLs, Vietnam veterans establish their exclusion as part of the Anzac narrative of betrayal and martyrdom.

Belated Recognition

In reaction to the US Vietnam Veterans Welcome Home Parade in Chicago, 1986, Australian veterans had their own national “Welcome Home” in Sydney in 1987. The ABC broadcast commentator described the parade as a “much-delayed welcome home from Vietnam”, erasing the wartime welcome home parades.⁷⁰ The march was represented as an acknowledgement of Vietnam veterans as Anzacs: one commentator

⁶⁵ “Membership Move: Motion aimed at boost for RSL”, *Canberra Times*, 13 August 1979.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Crotty and Edele, “Total War and Entitlement”, p.22.

⁶⁸ Ross, “Veterans in Australia”, p.61.

⁶⁹ Jeffrey Grey, “In Every War But One? Myth, History and Vietnam”, in Craig Stockings, ed., *Zombie Myths of Australian Military History* (Sydney, 2010), p.202.

⁷⁰ “Vietnam Veterans Welcome Home Parade”, *ABC News*, Sydney, 4 October 1987.

described the withdrawal from Vietnam as “an awful irony” where “in the cover of a Gallipoli-style deception plan...it was Anzac Cove, all over again”.⁷¹ Veterans remembered the 1987 parade with a mixture of disgruntlement, vindication and satisfaction. One veteran said, “a lot of the public by that stage realised that our welcome home was not what we expected and not what we should have got. Nobody’s saying we should have got brass bands and confetti, but at least, you know, recognized.” Although they were pleased with the event, most maintained that “the Welcome Home parade was twenty years too late”. One veteran added: “I guess over the years they realised that we weren’t actually baby killers at all”.

In response to the positive reception of the 1987 parade, Prime Minister Bob Hawke announced that 18 August 1988 would mark the first “Vietnam Veterans Day” — the anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan. Some veterans interpret this separate day of commemoration as an exclusion from Anzac. One argued that “the fact that we commemorate the Vietnam War on a different day to what we commemorate for Anzac Day is wrong. We’re Australian soldiers, we’re Anzacs, we went and did an Anzac job, we considered ourselves Anzacs, why wouldn’t we stand with the Gallipoli people and the Kokoda people and say ‘here we are, we did the same job’”. Yet Vietnam veterans have marched on Anzac Day since 1967. According to Ross, Australian media, particularly the *Sydney Morning Herald*, “always made special mention of the Vietnam veterans in Anzac marches, culminating in 1972 when they were given the honour of leading the march in Sydney”.⁷² Ross further notes that at the 1987 Welcome Home parade, the *Herald* forgot its own recognition of Anzac participation, writing that “for the first time, Vietnam veterans led the Anzac Day march” and lamenting how “they have always trailed at the end of Army contingents in the Anzac Day parade — as if an afterthought”.⁷³

The trope of belated recognition has led to perpetual social amnesia. Media coverage of Vietnam veterans’ memorials and anniversaries lament the “betrayal” of Australia’s Vietnam veterans and dwell on the “belated welcome” in 1987; the wartime parades and Anzac services are a sidenote if mentioned at all.⁷⁴ Lack of recognition is increasingly entwined with Anzac. At the 1992 dedication of the Vietnam Forces Memorial, Hawke declared the event “put[ting] the Vietnam experience firmly in the Anzac tradition where it should be”.⁷⁵ There has even been a “national apology” to Vietnam veterans by Prime Minister John Howard — promptly forgotten, as four years later, Peter Kavanagh MP called for a “national sorry day to apologise to Vietnam veterans for the disgraceful way they were treated”, noting their “honourable and humanitarian service” and how they were smuggled in at night “to avoid rabid protesters”.⁷⁶ This trope is revived each Vietnam Veterans Day, Anzac Day and Remembrance Day.

Conclusion

Reading the Australian Vietnam experience through the cultural script of Anzac means that some elements are left out. Veterans recalled PTSD and Agent Orange health issues in individual terms, focusing on how their lives and families were affected rather

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Ross, “Veterans in Australia”, p.68.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.71.

⁷⁴ Bruce Davies, “Behind the Front Line”, *Age*, 9 August 2012, p.11.

⁷⁵ Robert Hawke, “Announcement of the Winning Design for Memorial to Australian Vietnam Forces, 3 October 1990”, *Transcripts from the Prime Ministers of Australia* <<http://pmtranscripts.pmc.gov.au/release/transcript-8152>>.

⁷⁶ Peter Kavanagh, MP, “Vietnam veterans: Apology”, *Victorian Parliamentary Debates*, 24 June 2010, p.3060.

than discussing a collective veteran experience. Perhaps because these issues are deeply personal and often ongoing experiences, they cannot be reduced into tropes. No veteran drew on every trope of the script in their interviews with me, but every single veteran remembered parts of the script. A correlation emerged between participation in the veteran community and the extent to which the script was reproduced in individual memories. Leaders in the veteran community reproduced the script almost in entirety, while two veterans who contested the “volunteer Nasho” trope also described themselves as distanced from the veteran community. Another veteran, who is situated in an academic rather than veteran community, contested several tropes: “what they’ve done is, they’ve heard a story [...] I think a lot of this is just repeated stuff that they hear and over a few beers the story grows a bit”. However, the distance of these veterans from the veteran community prevents these alternative memories from being heard. While the collective memory of Vietnam may help some veterans find meaning in their experiences, this homogenising process has the effect of flattening personal experiences and even silencing dissenting individuals. This consequence of invalidating individual memory has occurred before with Anzac memories: historian Alistair Thomson found in his oral history with First World War veterans that although the Gallipoli legend provided meaning and “peace of mind” for some veterans, for others it “displaced or marginalised” their memories.⁷⁷

My purpose is not to challenge the memories of veterans or to disrupt their “peace of mind”. This is how they remember their past. My questions are why certain memories are so dominant and uniform and why they do not reflect the historical record. Historian Alessandro Portelli suggests that oral histories with “errors, inventions and myths lead us through and beyond the facts to their meaning”.⁷⁸ Veterans’ memories demonstrate that they self-identify as diggers yet feel excluded from the Anzac identity. They were raised on a hagiography of the Anzac digger, but were disappointed and displaced by wartime and post-war reality. Consequently, their cultural script restages the Anzac story in Vietnam to make sense of their experience. However, as historian Kate Darian-Smith argues: “memories as individual self-reflection and memory as a political and social force are interdependent and interreferential”.⁷⁹ The cultural script of the digger in Vietnam continues the nationalist story of Anzac, limiting political dissent by framing patriotism and protest as oppositional. Successive Australian governments have exploited this story, drawing on the Anzac legend to galvanise support for military actions. Furthermore, this reframing of Vietnam through the hagiography of Anzac sets up for future generations for the same alienation and disappointment of wartime reality. This has already begun: in my interviews, Vietnam veterans belittled younger veterans, complained they were “mollycoddled”, awarded too many medals for too little service, and dismissed their calls for action on veteran trauma and suicide. The cultural script thus discourages civilians from engaging in discourse on defence issues, encourages a deferential attitude toward the military, and provides for future generations of soldiers the same unrealistic expectations of the Anzac legend.

⁷⁷ Alistair Thomson, “Living with the Legend”, in Alistair Thomson, ed., *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* (Melbourne, 1994), p.247.

⁷⁸ Alessandro Portelli, “The Death of Luigi Trastulli: Memory and the Event”, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (New York, 1991), p.2.

⁷⁹ Kate Darian-Smith, “Remembrance, Romance, and Nation: Memories of Wartime Australia”, in Selma Ledesdorff, Luisa Passerini and Paul Richard Thompson, eds, *Gender and Memory* (Oxford, 1996), p.162.

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AJPH12506	64	3	Steve Wood		steve.wood@unsw.edu.au	The Conservative Human Rights Revolution: European Identity, Transnational Politics, and the Origins of the European Convention.	Book Reviews	PREPARING	Routing Complete	[GEN]Note that book reviews is booked in individually.
AJPH12507	64	3	Neil Pembroke		npemb@unsw.edu.au	Intellectuals and the Decline of Religion: Essays and Reviews.	Book Reviews	PREPARING	Routing Complete	[GEN]Note that book reviews is booked in individually.
AJPH12508	64	3	Evan Smith		evan.smith@flinders.edu.au	Selected Political Writings: The Great Moving Right Show and other Essays.	Book Reviews	PREPARING	Routing Complete	[GEN]Note that book reviews is booked in individually.
AJPH12509	64	3	Kriston Ronnie		kronnie@unsw.edu.au	History: Why it Matters.	Book Reviews	PREPARING	Routing Complete	[GEN]Note that book reviews is booked in individually.
AJPH12510	64	3	Elizabeth Roberts-Pedersen	Andrew Webster	elizabeth.roberts-pedersen@newcastle.edu.au	The Entanglements of Europe: History, Geography, Identity	Original Article	PREPARING	BOOKIN	[GEN]Note that book reviews is booked in individually.
AJPH12511	64	3	Baogang He		baogang.he@deakin.edu.au	Should We Abandon the Term "Authoritarianism" regarding Contemporary China? A Research Note	Research Note	PREPARING	BOOKIN	[GEN]Note that book reviews is booked in individually.
For Book-in	64	3	Mia Martin Hobbs		m.martin@unsw.edu.au	"We went and did an Anzac job": Memory, Myth, and the Anzac Digger in Vietnam	Original Article			