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Abstract
Over the past six years the works of Hall, Mangan & Walvin, Roper & Tosh, and Jackson have all illuminated the classed and gendered nature of history. Between 1900 and 1950 whiteness, superiority and solidarity were inseparable characteristics of the male middle classes. Masculinity was shaped by the ideology of empire throughout the English diaspora.
Over the past six years the works of Hall, Mangan & Walvin, Roper & Tosh, and Jackson have all illuminated the classed and gendered nature of history. Between 1900 and 1950 whiteness, superiority and solidarity were inseparable characteristics of the male middle classes. Masculinity was shaped by the ideology of empire throughout the English diaspora.

This essay sets out to contextualize this middle class masculinity in Australia and to examine the shaping of Australian middle class masculinity over this period. The intent is to highlight the changes in representations of men and boys. The annuals used as a source were published especially for Australia. They were one way imperial ideology was circulated and the diaspora was maintained. It must be remembered that the readers of these annuals had dual identity. They were Australian and British.

Publication of these annuals was motivated by a widespread philanthropy directed to the betterment of boys. In Australia as in England, these stories did not circulate through all levels of society. There was a rejection by some boys of these masculinities. Competing masculinities were recognised by the Directors of the Newsboys' Society in Sydney. There would have been little identification or relevance in these stories for working class boys; this served to exclude some working class boys. Price of the annuals would have been a significant determiner of readership. Ethnicity, religion, class and the rural/urban divide would have been factors in the consumption of these annuals. Readership of these annuals was confined to a small group of middle class boys.

Lyons (1992) argues that,

In modern times and in a secular context, silent reading appears as a prerequisite for the critical, individualist ethos of a liberal democratic society. Reading by one's self breaks down communal bonds of conformity or, in McLuhan's terms, it detribalises us.

The readers of these books had an opportunity for individual reading. What they brought to the text and the meaning they negotiated with it were personal and private. They did not share the experience with
others. The opportunity arose for a more private negotiation of at least some part of masculinity. Masculinity could be negotiated inwards, while at the same time but in other settings, it was being negotiated with and accommodated to the public sphere.

Poorer boys read textbooks and readers at school. Their opportunity for privacy and personal introspection was restricted. Access to books, not just the annuals, may have been creating differences between boys. One group of boys developing an individualist ethos, the other group a communal one. These annuals were inheritors of a 19th century didactic tradition. The stories were written in the third person. They appear more like statements of fact than works of fiction, with greater weight lent to the authorial voice. A heavy handed didacticism is apparent in every story.

Young Australia was published by The Pilgrim Press, the publishing company of The Religious Tract Society. By the beginning of the twentieth century religion had been incorporated into imperial ideology, and they were promoters of patriotism. The Australian Boy carried regular features and information for the Boys’ Empire League in the first decade of the twentieth century. The motto of the Boys’ Empire League was, ‘To promote and strengthen a worthy Imperial spirit in British boys all over the world’. The motive for the Boys’ Empire League most probably lay in the general philanthropy directed toward boys.

The content of these annuals is wide-ranging. It is consistent over time, and does not differ greatly between the two annuals. Information and facts were presented in a way which dictated to boys how they could come to know the world. There was suggested not only a clinical and objective way of knowing the world but an emphasis on the usefulness of objects and actions. The boys are cast as active participants in life. The broad genre of boys’ story encompassed the same settings in both the 1905 Young Australia and the 1912 The Australian Boys’ Annual. There were military and war stories, adventure, frontier, chivalric, sports, school stories and westerns. A variety of themes are then explored in each setting.

The 1928 editions of the same annuals changed only slightly in content. There had been a shift from handicrafts to science and technology which had a military application. The aspiring young scientist of a yet to arrive Cold War was being inducted. Factual articles of sporting advice appeared. They were part of a broader instruction on the importance of discipline and of obligation to one’s group. The settings of boys’ stories remained much the same. The long tradition which saw westerns as especially useful in Australia ensured that they continued.

The genre of boys’ story was central. These stories were used as devices to convey masculinity. Central to my argument is masculinity,
the values associated with it and the way in which they changed over time. Manliness, in the tradition of these and similar annuals since the 1850s, had been represented as 'muscular Christianity'. In an effort to induce boys to become practicing Christians, godliness and manliness were combined. At the end of the nineteenth century, athleticism grew out of muscular Christianity and began to replace it. Manliness was expressed through moral behaviour, manly love and sporting ability, rather than by spirituality, godly love and good health.

Dan of Roper's Gully is typical of the 1900 to 1914 boys' stories with a western/frontier setting. Indians are raiding white settlements. Dan, though we are told he is far too young, is sent out with the men and soldiers. Dan and a hunter steal away on a reconnaissance mission and are captured by the Indians. A signifier of manliness was taking action. Dan was defining himself as a man from the beginning of this story. The hunter is killed and Dan finds himself held captive with another young boy.

Dan's horse had been confiscated, and both he and Chris had had to walk. Footsore and weary, it was a with a sense of inexpressible relief that they found the halt at last called. Under such circumstances to keep a brave heart was in no wise (sic) easy; yet Dan did it.

Endurance and courage in the face of impossible adversity were two hallmarks of the frontiersman. The Indians did not guard their captives carefully. Dan's horse, Grey Nell, refused to let the Indian braves ride her. The horse was hobbled and turned loose. Dan saw a chance of escape.

A cloud was in the east, and with one accord the Indians observed it. They feared fire, the greatest prairie dread. For Dan the chance offered.

Dan's knowledge of the environment and the ability to read natural signs made him aware of the danger of fire. He displayed the frontiersman's resourcefulness, ready to take hold of the opportunity presented. The boys mounted the horse and fled.

Dan would have magnanimously put Chris in front – the position of least peril – but Chris was no rider in comparison with himself, and to have done so would have been fatal, probably, to both.

Dan was willing to sacrifice himself to save Chris. He was a good enough horseman to see them back to safety.

All the admirable qualities of the frontiersman are illustrated, 'courage, endurance, individualism, sportsmanship, resourcefulness, a mastery of environmental signs and a knowledge of natural history'. Dan asserted his masculinity by mastering his environment and by using cunning and guile to outsmart the Indians.
Plate VIII: "SNIFFING LIBERTY, SNORTING DEFIANCE, FORWARD SHE WENT."
This lad had won his spurs, and the boy was of little worth who failed to own the fact. Favouritism was out of the question, and Dan was popular with all.

Hero worship was common in these texts. The more important function of hero worship for these stories was that it provided a context for manly love.\textsuperscript{20}

To Chris he was more than ever an object of admiration. Born anew in the stress of a great grief and peril, the bond of mutual confidence and love linked these two for life, and was the greatest result of that hazardous escape.

Here was formed a friendship which inherited a long tradition. Relationships between men were represented as lifelong and characterized by love. There is a lack of unease in the description of intimate and intense emotional relationships between men. But life for men was about to be recontextualized. As was written by W.T. Stead (cited in Richards) at the time of Oscar Wilde’s trial,

> A few more trials like Oscar Wilde’s and we should find the freedom of comradeship now possible to men seriously impaired to the detriment of the race.\textsuperscript{21}

As homosexuality has been constructed, fear of being labelled may have forced many heterosexual men to withdraw from close, emotional friendships. 

*Crooked Straight* was published in 1927.\textsuperscript{22} Rader and Blaine are two prospectors. They are partners. The traditional elements of friendship are present, a hostile setting, a common purpose and a common threat, but the relationship is one of suspicion. Rader was recognised by another miner who spoke to Blaine.

> ‘He double crossed a partner in Idaho or Montana, ... I’m not advising you to call it off, but just watch him ... ’

> I’ve always maintained that an old-timer, with the experience behind him, can hold his own with any crooked youngster in this country; but watch.

This is a business arrangement and not a friendship. The discourse surrounding homosexuality had permeated society. The rupture this created in male friendships is apparent. There was no hint of emotion or intimacy between the two men. A tradition of male friendship had been broken.\textsuperscript{23}

Typical of stories in the inter-war years is the reference to the authority and wisdom of elders.\textsuperscript{24} A generational problem is emerging. The role of the older friend who is mentor and confidante needed to be redefined. Blaine and Rader eventually found gold after months of back-breaking toil. They barely had enough food to return to town to lodge a claim. They argued over the food and eventually agreed to split it 50 - 50. The younger man made his challenge. Rader suggested that
rather than split the profits from the mine they race to town. The winner taking all. Blaine agree to the proposition.

Then we’ll put it in writing. That will be safest. Should either of us fail to make it, it will clear things up. This business of a man coming in without a partner causes people to ask questions. I’ll draw up a writing, Rader;

The relationship was now contractual. There was no willingness to sacrifice all for the sake of one’s partner, nor any sign of affection. They raced to town, Blaine, the older and more experienced winning. The men exchange letters. Blaine concludes his letter ...

I was young once, and I learned my lessons at great cost. Now I’m old; I have experience; and I’m not too harsh in my judgement. Good Luck.

Blaine

The reply came two days later ...

Dear Blaine:

... Yes, I was young and contemptuous of age. ... And because I have learned and am better for it, I stick by my bargain ...

Rader

Blaine carefully folded the letter. There is greater satisfaction in setting a young man on the right trail than in owning a hundred-thousand dollar mine.

There were still codes of behaviour to abide by. Experience was now a thing to be valued, as was a deference to elders. Rader was honourable and stood by the contract. And even if men no longer lived out the older values of friendship and self-sacrifice, in the end, they were paid lip service.

_Crooked Straight_ takes the western of the period between the world wars to an extreme. The elements are essentially intact. The struggle is no longer between man and nature. The setting is only a backdrop. The struggle is of a man who knows the codes of behaviour against a man or men who don’t. By deferring to the judgement of elders and betters, by adhering to codes of behaviour, boys would still be able to cope. The typologies of friendship moved from the affective to the instrumental. In a less mobile world there is greater opportunity for the development of affective friendships between men. The instrumental friendship, based on contracted understanding is the friendship more likely in the commercial world. This instrumental friendship stands in conflict with the ideal of mateship popularised by Henry Lawson. Mateship, though staunchly democratic could be accommodated within the established traditions of friendship. These were the male friendships which lasted until death, forged in times of danger or hardship and tolerant of affection between men. Friendship was
coming to be defined by what boys and men must not do rather than by what they must do. A tension was introduced into the representation of friendship which flowed into the representation of masculinity. Mateship was democratic and included the working class. The contractual friendships of a commercial world would not necessarily do the same.

The next four stories belong to the school setting and have a strong element of athleticism. In Pilberry's Century, from The Australian Boys' Annual, 1912, the theme is of confronting the bully. Pilberry sends a younger boy to fetch a ball. The boy is caned by the Squire for trespassing. Pilberry did not hesitate to defend the younger boy.

Like an avenging spirit he made toward them.

'Look here, you cruel bully! What do you mean by licking young Dodd like that?'

The comradeship and loyalty of the sports field, extended to action off the field. Noblesse oblige compelled him to act in defense of a weaker peer. Pilberry campaigned against the Squire. He was caught on every occasion.

It was after the third caning that he had had for being in the orchard that he was observed by Douglas to chuckle to himself as he sat in the dormitory.

Attempts to revenge his young friend's caning through direct physical action all failed. He devised a plan to take effect at a cricket match. Before it could be put into effect the trickiness of the bowling had to be overcome. Pilberry had to have determination and endurance. Only when he had the support of the school and teachers and could not be stopped did he begin a demolition of the Squire's orchid house.

Pilberry ... made the most of it, slashing with all his strength, and he watched the ball dropping over the Squire's hedge with a grin. The grin changed to a brilliant smile as its arrival was signalled by a crash of glass from the orchid-houses.

It was not by brute strength that revenge could be exacted, it had to combined with the more important elements of guile and trickery.

This had changed by the time The Last Lap was published in 1925. Camel, has a different experience when he confronts the bully, Bulgin. Camel was regarded by the school as an intellectual and represented as such.

His shyness on some subjects was impenetrable. ... he had dreamed that he was winning a long-distance race, ... and never had his long legs performed in public. He hadn't tried them. He knew it would be no good. He shambled too much, he was too floppy for a runner.
Plate IX: "Get up, if you can, old man! There's another lap yet!"
It was impossible to be both an intellectual and an athlete. Time spent reading made boys introspective and stunted physical development. Twice through trickery Camel humiliates Bulgin who keeps plotting his revenge. Other boys in the school do not take sides. Then Camel is tricked into a long-distance race against Bulgin who hopes to humiliate him. In the final lap of the race, Bulgin though well ahead, falls.

‘Camel!’ the onlookers roared, when they saw this disaster.
Bulgin rose and limped on to the grass.
The Camel staggered on.

Camel is exhausted and in pain, he can hardly walk to the finish line. The physical challenge drew the respect of the other pupils

‘Twice’, said Bulgin, ‘you beat me by using your eyes’
‘But I didn’t use them this time,’ the Camel put in.
‘No; this time, old man, you beat me by using your pluck’.

Camel gained respect by beating the bully in a physical challenge. Trickery and guile no longer worked. Pluck, a combination of courage, endurance and daring, was most valued.

Anti-intellectualism finds clear expression in Not Out, Uncle!, published in 1927. If George’s academic performance does not improve he will be taken from the school he likes. His uncle thinks he is spending too much time on sport.

The truth was that George was not specially brainy, and that most of his class were; also he was growing very fast in all directions (he was nearly five feet eight in height, and weighed nearly ten stone)

Intellect and physical ability exclude each other. George has to obey his uncle and remain loyal to his team.

‘Did I hear you say you were going to work!’ repeated Jenkins, sitting down...
‘if you’re picked for the school first, you’ll just have to play’

George’s friend affirms the incompatibility of athleticism and intellect and reminds George of his obligations to his team-mates. For George, obedience to authority comes before loyalty and other values. George fails to win the History prize, as his uncle wanted. He is chosen to play for the school team the day the his uncle returns to speak to the Head. His anger can be expressed on the sporting field. George had submitted to authority. Self-assertion was to be permitted only after obedience to one’s superiors. Loyalty to his team, spurred on his efforts. After winning the match for his team, George is praised by the Head.

Your nephew is not one of the scholarly boys, but he is a worker, and that’s the type of boy that succeeds – inevitably – where brains sometimes fail.
Plate X: 'George clinched the thing by punching another out of the ground.'
George’s victory over his uncle’s threat has a physical expression, though he does not challenge authority.

The last school story has been included because of its violent ending. In *The Mystery of Monk Island* published in 1948, a group of school-boys discover a spy, track him to his hideout and capture him.

‘Come on! Come on, everybody!’ yelled Jerry, and the next instant Neal and Mr Tonkins were piling on to the killer. Even then it was a tough fight, and it was all the three of them could do to secure him ...

But they succeeded at length and he lay swearing horribly, his eyes glaring fiercely in the torchlight.

In these stories there is a movement, across time, toward the solution of problems by resort to physical action and finally violence. In the first, there was an element of trickery, which sanctioned the destruction of the green house. In the second story, trickery failed, and respect could only be gained through a physical deed. In the third, George could win with a display of aggression as long as authority was deferred to, and by expressing this aggression acceptably on the cricket ground. The fourth solution is unashamed violence with no reconciliation between the adversaries.

The authors of these stories had created a problem for themselves. Intellectualism was represented as being undesirable and introspection as ‘suspect’. Yet to reach their audience the boys had to read. To affirm the manliness of the reader, which the act of reading denied, the manliness of the text was strengthened. Violence became stronger and more direct.

The character building aspects of sports are evident. They remain fixed over time. Friendship does not enter into these stories so much as loyalty, pluck and team spirit. Obedience, too, was important. Pilberry and George could only successfully assert themselves after they had accepted authority, and shown they were prepared to put the team first.

Athleticism was certainly preferable to intellectualism. At the turn of the century exercise was valued, reading and introspection were seen as unhealthy. As Kociumbas (1986) says,

> In older boys, tallness came to be seen as a sign of sexual purity, while short sightedness, a hunched back and hands deep in pockets were the mark of the bookworm and masturbator.

The construction of homosexuality would have been good reason for boys to flee their study and seek acceptance on the sporting field. George was tall and growing. Camel was redeemed by the height implied by his long legs. They were a sign that he was not sexually impure.

Athleticism was used to assert superiority. It was not individual
superiority, individualism was permitted among peers but loyalty between them came first. The obligations of loyalty, of noblesse oblige, were to one’s class.\(^{38}\) Asserting superiority through sport extended to a national level. Britain used its superiority at games to assert itself over its colonies. Eventually Australians were to use sport to assert their independence.\(^{39}\) The importance of sport to the Australian reader, and his subsequent investment in it, encompassed class, gender, his particular type of manliness, his sexuality and a patriotism which did not encompass disloyalty to Britain.

There are other settings for boys’ story in these annuals which have not been examined here. There is a great deal of repetition between all the categories of story, the core values associated with manliness being repeated over and over again. Reflections of each can be seen in the stories just visited, the chivalric code, identified by Richards, of ‘bravery, loyalty, courtesy, modesty, purity and honour ... and a sense of noblesse oblige [sic]’,\(^{40}\) the comradeship of the war story and the ‘pluck’ and ‘willingness to give it a go’, of the adventure stories. In concert these values gave the British boy, even in Australia, an unshakeable moral superiority.\(^{41}\)

The masculinities which the Empire offered were grounded in Social Darwinism. The notion that the Aboriginal population was bound to fade in competition with the white races was essential. The colonizing process in Australia had been very masculine, even though women were involved. These masculinities excused the bloody manner of colonization. But social Darwinism brought dangers. It was believed geologically older land was less capable of maintaining a more highly developed race.\(^{42}\) The perception of the Australian landscape was reshaped. Where once explorers had spoken of Australia Felix the emphasis now fell on the harsh and confronting nature of the place. The danger was that the English living in Australia might degenerate. Impetus was added to the pursuit of athleticism. The vigour of the race could be maintained through physical exercise, arresting any degeneration. The intellectual, with ‘stoo ped shoulders and arrested physical development’, had the potential to pollute the race. He had to be excluded. By definition, the physically imperfect and the disabled, not to mention any boy who was not white, found this masculinity unattainable.\(^{43}\)

It is clear that these middle class masculinities do not fit neatly into an Australian context. The specificity of Australian masculinities in the period 1900-1950 has not been established. Further investigation is required of athleticism, friendships, anti-intellectualism and group. There are many masculinities, all varying in relation to other masculinities, each dependent upon its context. Boys are not aware of where masculinity comes from in their own context of time, place and group. These annuals were a prescription for masculinity. They
provided a space for the inward negotiation of masculinity. Their appeal is obvious.

Representations moved from the positive expression of male strength as *noblesse oblige* to defend the weak, to a more violent resolution of conflict. The male friendships represented became restricted in the range of emotions allowed. A strengthening interest in athleticism may have led to anti-intellectualism becoming more closely linked with Australian middle-class masculinities. Athleticism, with its push to maintain racial vigour and achieve a physical perfection, may have led to a greater intolerance of physical and intellectual disability. The origins of all these changes lie with social Darwinism.

For men, just as for women, the meaning of being differs over time and place, and is shaped by political and social forces. As this study has shown, even those men at the centre, the male middle classes which have traditionally recorded history and been responsible for the representation of those at the margins, are subject to these same forces.

**NOTES**


3. K. Boyd, ‘Knowing Your Place: The Tensions of Manliness in Boys’ Story Papers, 1918-39’, in Roper, & Tosh, p. 149. One reader of these story papers, West, “was very aware of the differences in the papers he could buy, and astutely detected a marked difference in the class of the readers papers were meant for”.


9. ibid., p. 19.

10. Springall, op. cit., p. 66.


13. Walvin, op. cit., p. 252
17. Ibid., pp 104-105.
21. cited in Richards, op. cit, p. 92.
26. Ibid., p. 194.
27. Boyd, op. cit., p. 146.
29. Ibid., pp 245-253.
33. 'The Mystery of Monk Island'. The Boy (Melbourne: O.I.C., 1948), p. 129

Though this story is not taken from one of the two annuals it conforms to their type. Most tellingly, the school represented is a private boarding school.
34. Boyd, op. cit., p. 146.
35. Ibid., p. 163.
36. Walvin, op. cit., p. 249.
37. Kociumbas, op. cit., p. 27.
38. Richards, op. cit., p. 113.
40. Richards, op. cit., p. 113.
41. Walvin, op. cit., pp. 242-245.
42. H. Mortimer, 'Will the Anglo-Australian Race Degenerate?' Victorian Review, 1 November 1879.
43. One interviewee from this time period in Penrith said, 'There were seven in the family, two girls and five boys. But he was crippled so I was the oldest boy'. The elder, crippled male was not classified as a male. Qtd. with permission from a forthcoming book by Peter West.