'What do you think of this Card?' Postcards To and From Australia During The First World War

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Abstract
By 1914, when the Great European War broke out, picture postcards were at the crest of a popular wave which continued throughout the war. They had only been on the market since the Paris Exhibition of 1889 and the divided-back card, providing space for the address and a message, was even more recent, having been legalised in 1902. Not only did the picture postcard allow the sending of a short message - sometimes intimate, often reticent and understated, occasionally inarticulate and almost illegible - but its design and the intention behind its purchase and posting carried signs of other messages for private and/or public decoding and consumption.
THE LAST TRAIN FOR CAMP

A COOEE FROM AUSTRALIA

To an ABSENT FRIEND
I know you'll not forget me
But to keep old memories green
I send a hearty "Cooee"
With this bright Australian scene.
JAMES WIELAND

‘What do you think of this Card?’ Postcards To and From Australia During The First World War

By 1914, when the Great European War broke out, picture postcards were at the crest of a popular wave which continued throughout the war. They had only been on the market since the Paris Exhibition of 1889 and the divided-back card, providing space for the address and a message, was even more recent, having been legalised in 1902. Not only did the picture postcard allow the sending of a short message—sometimes intimate, often reticent and understated, occasionally inarticulate and almost illegible—but its design and the intention behind its purchase and posting carried signs of other messages for private and/or public decoding and consumption. For, in war-time, while the primary purpose behind sending cards was still to make contact with friends, families, or loved-ones—‘I hope this card finds you in the best of health as it leaves me’, wrote many a correspondent, providing that most telling intelligence in war-time!—they were also a convenient means of expanding Allied propaganda, glamourizing and advertising the war, and adding colour to individual lives while providing education and information about the war and the war zones. There was also an aura of excitement and a sense of occasion about sending and receiving cards. ‘What do you think of our flag and golden wattle?’ writes one man, to his friend Joey, on a beautiful silk-embroidered card featuring the Australian flag and a sprig of wattle: ‘say they are nice’.

Among the earliest of the First World War picture postcards circulating in Australia advertised the plight of ‘gallant’/‘poor’/‘little’ Belgium and invariably reduced the causes of the Allied involvement in the war to the need to rescue Belgium from a belligerent Germany. While some cards depicted the devastation of Belgium or spread hatred of the Hun, others invited Australians to ‘Advance’ and dwelt on the sympathetic rallying of all the Allied nations. One such card, designed to entertain as well as obliquely carry this latter message, comprised nine concentric circles radiating out from a black centre—yellow, red, white, blue, white, red, white, blue, red—which represented the...
national colours of Belgium, England, France, and Russia and signified their common endeavour in coming to Belgium’s aid. It was suggested to receivers of this card that ‘a very pretty effect’ could be created by gently rotating the card. They were also urged to stare at the black spot in the centre of the card for half-a-minute and then look at a white ceiling. Serving the Allied propaganda which was fostering the active support of the populace to drive the war machine, these cards were also used to exhort Australians to help ‘Save Little Belgium’, either by enlisting or contributing to the various ‘Belgian Funds’ which had sprung up around the country. A Christmas card circulating in Australia depicted a study of a little boy – Belgium – dressed in black; waiting!

Circulating at the same time, and suggesting how quickly the postcard industry adapted to the change from peace to war, were picture cards, often photographic and of the fold-out variety, of the training camps. Sometimes taken by photographers who had set up around the camps, these cards had mixed intentions. While, on the one hand, fostering morale and giving assurance that the men were receiving a rigorous and thorough training, and signalling the adventure of military life in which the men are seen skirmishing, drilling, shooting, signalling, boxing; on the other hand, they suggested that the men were happy and well cared for by showing them messing, at leisure enjoying the companionship of friends, at church, or by displaying the facilities they have at their disposal. A souvenir card from the Randwick Camp added sentiment to the information included in the card’s four photographs of camp-life by including the sketch of a sprig of wattle. Furthermore, in certain cases, such photographs may have been the first time that some of the men had been photographed, giving these cards an added sense of occasion for sender and receiver alike. They also provided an opportunity for a man to send back home photographs of his particular mates in camp, giving faces and a vicarious introduction to the men referred to in his letters.

Soon after the first overseas contingent of troops departed in November, cards bearing photographs of the march pasts or the transports carrying the men to the war zones became popular. Readily available were photographs or accurate sketches of such carriers as the White Star Line’s Afric, P & O’s Ballarat, the Aberdeen Line’s Themistocles and Demosthenes, or the Union Castle’s Braemar Castle, advertising the co-operation of commerce with the Allied effort, at the same time as carrying reminders of romantic travel. There were shots of the Euripides, Ionian, Ceramic, Nestor, and Warilda, significant names now in households in which, prior to December 1914, they had never been heard; and there were photographs of His Majesty’s Hospital Ships: Britannic, Galeka, and the Donaldson Line’s Letitia.
"What do you think of this card?"
And, of course, reproductions of the Sydney abounded. One, taken at Portsmouth, "after finishing the Emden," shows the vessel being boarded by the King and the Prince of Wales in what for many Australians signified the ultimate accolade.

After the fashion of the cards from Broadmeadows, Seymour and Liverpool, or the rough cards fashioned on board the troopships by hand or on the simple presses, some of the regiments had taken with them, cards depicting camp life at the Australians' Egyptian base at Mena and these soon began to arrive in Australia. Not only offering the folk at home access to the sights/sites of an ancient and exotic land – their tourist dimension – these cards were also recruiting others to join 'Our Famous Boys' in a military adventure. And, if the cards issuing from Australia invariably featured some patriotic or sentimental signifier, those from Egypt consistently included photographs of camels, the pyramids, or the Sphinx. It was not unusual to see all three on the one card, as the presence of the Australians 'In Egypt' was advertised.

Among the most popular cards, depicting largely humorous scenes, were the silhouettes. Modelled on numerous similar series from England, they exploited the humour in such things as being late back to camp, inspecting the guard, emergency rations, letters from home, gambling, detentions, or the ineptitude of the raw recruits at drilling and bayonet practice. And, once again following their British counterparts, G. G. Benson and Tom Cross devoted cartoon series to the men in Egypt and drew their laughs by ridiculing the Arabs and celebrating the rough Australians' treatment of them. These also seem to have been very popular, although the image of the Australian that emerges from the cards, both silhouettes and cartoons, is that of a loud-mouthed bully and drunkard, noted more for his racism and xenophobia than his heroic military attributes. The men did not seem to see it this way. Rather than resiling from their behaviour, their messages on the cards invariably boasted of it and corroborated the subject of the picture. As one man said of a Cross-cartoon, endorsing, rather than contesting its subject, it is 'absolutely original' and authentic. No less than those representations which were soon to follow, of the men as 'Brave Anzacs' or 'Heroes of the Dardanelles', the larrikin was one of the guises in which they were happy to be imaged. So, in one of Benson's cards, a group of drunken Australian soldiers are set above the ditty:

We are young K'nuts from Australia
In Egypt for a brief stay we are.
We'll walk round the sphinx
Have a couple of drinks
Then go back and tell 'em how brave we are.
On the back of a ‘Paul Barbery’ card, depicting a group of soldiers yelling ‘Imshi’, and trying to escape from clamouring shoe-shines, ‘O.M.L.’ writes approvingly:

This is some of us on leave in Cairo, there are hundreds of niggers, wanting to clean our boots[,] sell us walking sticks, postcards, cigarettes, and all sorts of things. Imshi! means clear out, but it is no use telling them to clear, they will stick to us till we have to get rid of them. This place will spoil us, we can go in a restaurant and have a dinner of six or seven courses and a band of music playing all the time, and it is music too, and while you are eating a nigger will clean our boots, leggings, and spurs, and brush our hat, all for ten piastres that’s (sic) two shillings, I think I will bring a nigger back with me when I come home.

The much-disparaged hawkers, selling anything from oranges and cigarettes, to newspapers, books, and shoe-shines, were doing little more than respond to the well-paid Australian troops who were free with their money. On the back of a card, ‘Mafish filuss ... until next Wednesday’, in which an Australian soldier holds out his empty pockets to clamouring hawkers, ‘Dave’, identifying with the digger on the front, tells his mother that this is ‘what happens to [him] very soon after payday’. Repeatedly, the indiscriminate free-spending of the Anzac is humorously celebrated, rather than problematized. ‘This place looks old’, writes one man of a busy market square at Tel-el-Kebir, ‘but enough money has been spent in [it] to build a second “Savoy”’. In other cards it was obvious that the Australians, making little attempt to understand the trading rituals of their hosts, were not slow to mete out a rough punishment for what they saw as an intrusion into their daily round. ‘[T]his is how we are pestered with natives begging’, writes one man, before explaining that ‘all soldiers call out imshi yalla and then give them a kick to help them along’. Elsewhere, an Australian is sketched punching an Arab: ‘this’, explains the young Anzac in his note home, ‘is what we have to do ... to keep the bootblacks away’.9

The Australians behaved as though they owned the place. Of a cartoon depicting an Australian stealing and thrashing a donkey, one man says, ‘this is a regular sight’. Similarly, commenting on the picture on another card of huge Australians dwarfing their donkeys, a trooper boasted, ‘this is the way we ride into ciro (sic)’; while another man off-handedly explained to his wife that, when racing his donkey on Sunday – a regular pastime – the worthless animal had twice collapsed beneath his weight! It was all, as Kenneth put it to his mother, on the back of a cartoon in which two men abscond with a camel and haul its attendant along in their wake: ‘a form of amusement to our troops ... plenty of fun indeed’. One card boasted that the Australians brought the ‘first fun for 40 centuries’ to Egypt. But, as yet another trooper boasted, prescient and complacent at once, the Australians, by ‘allowing the natives to get too familiar’, had ‘undone’ in a few
To my Dear One
Away on duty.

So many thoughts,
So many prayers
I send my boy to-day.
And though I miss him, oh! so much
Far more than I can say
Yet I am proud to let him go
For that great cause of right.
And till he's home my earnest prayers
Shall guard him day and night.

Ezra
What do you think of this card?'

RED CROSS AUSTRALIA DAY

25th April 1915

"OUT YOU GO"
months, the discipline which the British colonisers had taken years to develop and impose. From the perspective of 1915, however, rather than advertising the ugly Australian, these cards were projecting war as a site of adventure in which men could become conquering heroes, while amongst themselves developing a sense of camaraderie and belonging. Folk at home were being told that the experience was new, exciting, and fun.

Writing to his wife, Clive Lynch boasts of 'the pardonable swank of our lads', who are depicted strutting before veiled girls and bootblacks. As I have suggested, however, this man's 'swank' and the 'fun' displayed in card after card invite alternative readings which expose their racist and chauvinist underpinning. This 'fun' was also merely the more acceptable public face of the sinister and crude behaviour of some of the Australians in Egypt, for whom violent assault and theft, rape, arson, and uncontrollable drunkenness were not uncommon and raised questions in some minds about the suitability of the troops for combat action. The accredited correspondent, Charles Bean, was so angered and disappointed by the behaviour of some of the troops in Egypt before the landing that he wrote an open letter to the Australian press exposing the behaviour and advocating the return of the worst offenders to Australia. Such a shadow did it throw over the Australians that, when Bean wrote the first volume of the monumental History of the Australians at War 1914 - 1918, he virtually erased the incidents from his study.

This behaviour by a small group, and the fact that they had been diverted from combat action on the Western Front, led some of the men to ponder their role in the war: was it to be no more than guard duty at Constantinople or involvement in some second-rate action, they wondered. In fact, Benson's first card - the only serious card in the series - touched on this concern. Here, an Anzac warrior in full combat dress thrusts out his fist at the mirage of a German soldier looming over the pyramids and asks: 'Will I ever get a smack at you?' No less than those urgers at home who, having sooled them into joining up, and who were now anxious for them to enter the fray, some among the men were, as Norman Hollis wrote in a message to his brother Ern, 'looking forward to a scrap'. They were eager to prove their manhood in real combat.

Even as these cards from Egypt were filtering back, the folk at home were responding with their own, which, when not honouring 'Our Hero' or 'famous soldier boy', were sentimentally evoking them as the 'Absent One', or praising them as the 'Dear One Away on Duty'. Such cards often included distinctively patriotic symbols - the flag, the sketch of a boomerang, kangaroo, koala, swan, gum leaf, or an emblematic bush (not urban) scene - and, while the verses on many cards were not attributed, sentimental verses by Leuname, in
'What do you think of this card?'

particular, were very popular:

To an ABSENT FRIEND
I know you will not forget me
But to keep old memories green
I send a hearty "Coo-ee"
With this bright Australian scene.

Nor were these cards chosen at random. Coyly hoping that he will 'like this PC', a wife sends her 'dear Love' to her husband on a card bearing the sketch of a boomerang, and then leaves it to Leuname to try to enunciate her pride and longing:

You who have offered life and all
In answer to your country's call,
Our heartfelt gratitude you earn
In safety may soon return.

In another, with her photograph in an inset, a woman admits to missing her husband 'more every day' and longs for him 'by [her] side'. Once again, it is Leuname who says the rest:

Love and best wishes I now send
To you, my hero and my friend.
May peace relax this awful strain,
And send you safe home again.

On a carefully chosen card, 'Dorothy Claydon' writes tentatively to 'Mr Tuckwell'. Having reminded him of picnics they had shared and wished him good luck and hope of a safe return, it is left to Leuname to express what decorum may have dictated she should omit from her message:

I can't find words which will express
Good wishes I would send,
In every sphere I wish success
To you my dearest friend.

Dorothy was doing some preliminary courting. We don't know how Mr Tuckwell responded but 'Bob', having received a similar, but unsigned, card from a lass from Wonthaggi, returned the missive to his parents with an urgent request attached to find out the name of the sender! Having been told by his anonymous correspondent that she was 'working now and looked pretty good on it', he clearly was interested. And she, having lamented that so many 'Wonthaggi boys [have been] killed lately', may have seen Bob as a potential husband in a town where the eligible men were dwindling.

The Wonthaggi girl's card was from the ornate and immensely popular 'Hands Across the Sea' series, the Australian versions of which
A WORTHY SON OF A NOBLE MOTHER

"Australleo"

We are the Gumnut Corps
We're going to the War
(We'll make things hum, by gum!)

Copyright
WHAT WE HAVE
WE HOLD

H.M.S.
'DREADNOUGHT'

S. AFRICA

CANADA

AUSTRALIA

NEW ZEALAND

INDIA
centred a large map of Australia into which were inset patriotic symbols or scenes. In many cases, the Allied flags massed along the Eastern seaboard and the joined hands symbolically united men at war and women at home in the common endeavour of war. Inset into the map on Bob’s card was a sprig of wattle and, at the base of the card, were sketches of a transport ship, a waratah, and a bushman, important symbols, perhaps, for a bush lad on active service overseas. An English card in this series reproduced a different but no less redolent cluster of symbols – a train, roses, a globe, a gentle landscape, and a transport vessel – spread around the border of the card to which the symbolically linked hands and a sentimental quatrain were central. Sent to his mother by a lad on his way home with ‘tons of splosh [money]’ in his pockets it must have been a welcome communication.\textsuperscript{13}

As the cards for Belgium indicated, from the outset, postcards were a valuable source of fund-raising. There were patriotic cards raising funds for such organisations as the Parents and Citizens Association; a ‘Coo-ee’ card sought funds for the Lismore District School; there were cards for Violet Day (14 June); France’s Day (14 July), most of which featured some variation of the dogged poilu opposing German Kultur or, as Lionel Lindsay has it, in a distinctive card, linking arms with a koala; or for War Chest Day (28 September); for Peace Loans, the Soldier’s Club, the Australian Comforts Funds; and the Cigarette Committee of Melbourne, which kept the men supplied with cigarettes, sponsored cards for various occasions. While the Red Cross was everywhere: the popular versifier E. Beaufils Lamb lent his verses to their cause, and Harry Weston’s sketch of the warrior with a blood-soaked bandage around his head – ‘Give Him A Helping Hand’ – was enormously popular and was an important signifier for them. At the other end of the spectrum to this image of the gallant warrior, was another Red Cross card – for Australia Day – in which a burly Anzac, having skewered a fat little Turk on his bayonet, is figured throwing him off the peninsula, which, in case we have not read the card’s racism, is notable for the towers of several mosques in the background of the scene, marking its foreignness and heathen difference. (See p.137) Ugly in its racism and among the more tasteless of the early cards, rivalling the propaganda being directed at the Hun, it was a curious card to have the backing of the Red Cross.

As for satire of Germany and the Kaiser, both of which often went hand-in-hand, it continued unabated from the first British postcards in late August 1914, to a more complex propaganda as the war unfolded. The fold-out, ‘Six Scenes from the Kaiser’s Life’, published in Australia by L. L. Quarrill, humorously traced the decline of the Kaiser from Scene One: ‘Anticipation’, to his ‘Damnation’ in Scene Six; from the confident Kaiser advancing towards Paris and London, to an imprisoned and bewildered Kaiser contemplating a shrunken Germany
in a redrawn map of Europe.\textsuperscript{14}

As might be expected, after the Landing, there were innumerable patriotic cards dedicated to the selfless heroism of ‘the Fallen Hero’; or calling for ‘Australia’ to ‘Advance’; or celebrating ‘Our “Dinkum” Infantry’ (or Light Horse);\textsuperscript{15} while, in one of the rare cards which spoke of the active involvement of women in the war, ‘Our War Nurses’ were hailed. But, for every card which depicted the Australians ‘Forcing the Dardanelles’ and marching across the Peninsular to Constantinople, or celebrated ‘Australia’s Fighting Sons’ or, like ‘Some Boy’,\textsuperscript{16} advertised the confident-looking digger, there were as many which endorsed the Imperial connection, honouring ‘Old England’ or Boedicea; found in ‘Australo’ ‘A Worthy Son of a Noble Mother’; nailed young ‘Australia’s’ flag to ‘Old England’s’ mast, or threatened, ‘What We Have We Hold’, subsuming all endeavour under the sign of the Union Jack, and eliding individual Australian effort. (See pp. 140,141)

By mid-1915, Gallipoli scenes were everywhere; either cameo-sized shots of a selection of scenes, or card-sized photographs or sketches of topical locations. In this way, a Gallipoli Letter Card featuring Soutar’s populist piece of verse, ‘The Toast is “Anzac”, Gentlemen’,\textsuperscript{17} also includes photographs of six key sites. A feature of this card, however, and suggesting the extent to which postcard manufacturers were prepared to negotiate that fine line between providing access to the excitement, even the agony, of combat without revealing the grim reality of torn, dismembered bodies, were two shots, one of which showed the wounded in the field, while the other featured ‘the kits of the dead and wounded’ collected on ‘W’ Beach.\textsuperscript{18} Cards such as these were not only beginning to educate the folk at home about the nature of the Campaign and were giving names and an identity to an unknown Turkish landscape but, at a more sub-liminal level, they also spoke of the appropriation of the landscape by the British, as the Turkish names were effaced and replaced by such markers as Pope’s Hill, Quinn’s Post, Walker’s Ridge, or Shrapnel Gully which spoke of war and conquest and denied the landscape its ancient local names.

In these representations of Gallipoli, the beach at Anzac Cove was the dominant site. It was that place where, as the popularising cards were proclaiming, ‘Australian History Began’ or ‘Australia Became a Nation’, as Australian history was re-written to accommodate the Landing, and its nationalism was measured by feats of arms. But while, in the official propaganda, the men may have been making ‘history’, their personal reaction was often altogether different. To his ‘roving brother David’, one man cautions: ‘stay where you are unless you are in search of adventure’. The sender of the card had just recovered from wounds received in an attack in which all but two of his mates were killed or wounded.\textsuperscript{19}

At the same time, for the men on the peninsula, the only cards
BRAVO ANZACS!

RINGS THE WIDE WORLD WITH THE FAME AND GLORY OF AUSTRALIA'S NAME.

VALIANT SONS OF BRITAIN TRUE OUR GREAT EMPIRE PRAISES YOU!

AND TO HISTORY SHALL GO DOWN NEW ZEALAND'S LOYAL AND BRAVE RENOWN,

ZEAL IN EVERY NOBLE HEART ANSWERING PLAYS A HERO'S PART CLOSER BINDS OUR EMPIRE'S TRACKS

SONS OF BRITAIN — BRAVE ANZACS.
OFF TO THE WAR

Goodbye my little Gum Blossom,
And don’t you fret for me,
We’ll soon be back together
In the Old Gum Tree

Copyright
available were the Field Service Post Cards on which they were permitted to write only the date and their signature, while erasing those phrases not required. 'If anything else is added', they were warned, 'the postcard will be destroyed'.

I am quite well
I have been admitted to hospital
sick and am going well
wounded and hope to be discharged soon.

I am being sent down to the base.
I have received your letter dated . . .
telegram . . .
parcel . . .

Letters follow at first opportunity.
I have received no letter from you lately
for a long while.

Signature only
Date:

Yet, as enigmatic as these cards were, they carried that one vital piece of information which everyone at home wanted to know; that, at the date of posting, the sender was alive. It is also possible to imagine the impact on the receiver of the detail: 'I have received no letter from you ... for a long while'.

These field cards were military issue and cost nothing, but the men also improvised inexpensive, if crude, cards out of cigarette boxes cut to size and often carrying individual decoration. One such card from France was decorated with a piece of ribbon from a German Iron Cross, while Private McDiarmid's card from the Dardanelles to his Nelly - unfortunately we don't know her response! - comprised a hand-written copy of Colonel McCay's enthusiastic summing-up of the March past in front of General Sir Ian Hamilton before the men left Egypt on 29 March 1915. The men also used regimental cards, the production of which for some units seems to have commenced on board ship or in Cairo. Often carrying photographs of the commanding officer or some particular symbol or notable characteristic of the unit; after the Landing, they began to advertise regimental fame achieved 'on Gallipoli'; and, by 1917, they had become personalised. D. V. Owers, of the 53rd Battalion, had his own card; the 14th's card carried an original painting by George Roberts; while the 17th used their's to advertise their 1,000 days of service. Like the custom-made cards on the home front, memorializing the recent dead, or returning thanks for sympathy cards, the regimental cards were to be taken seriously. For, if the regimental cards honoured 'Our Soldier Brother' or were sent 'In Memory of My Pal', the former honoured the regiment in whose
bosom the valiant had died. And this, unlike those cards from Egypt, was no laughing matter.

Purchasers of cards in the ‘Our Boys at the Front’ – series, which included some thirty-five different cards drawing on official photographs which ran the gamut of the war effort in France and Belgium – from the stately general on his charger, to combat shots, photos of ruins, heavy guns and tanks in action, to snaps of the men at leisure, or showing off their new-issue hard hats, or looking eerie in their gas masks – were being told: ‘by buying this card you are GIVING to our Soldiers’. At the same time, these cards and others like them added to images revealing the thrill of combat, while portraying the men as they liked to be seen, either by catching a particular posture or facial expression, or by displaying them in a significant action. As was the case in this series, but more generally, cards were now repeatedly representing the devastation of historic French and Belgian towns. But, if the destruction of the Cloth Hall at Ypres was topical, the new Allied tanks – whether looming out of a snow storm on the Somme, or dominating the sands of Palestine – were no less so and formed an important part of that advertising of the machines of war which, in an age when war was still exciting and the carnage a technological war could wreak was only slowly unfolding, had a fascination and glamour. As the war progressed, then, tanks replaced the big guns (which, in turn, had replaced horse-drawn ambulances or the cavalry) as the subject of cards and provided, as a side-effect of these subjects, an abbreviated social history of the technological innovations being created as a consequence of the war. In a similar way, cards traced the shift from soft hats to gas-masks and steel helmets in 1916.

Gas masks, tanks, and pictures of the convulsed countryside and devastated villages and cities were now compelling signifiers of the exotic landscape of war. And cards carrying these images were readily available behind the lines for, whereas, at the outbreak of war, few local cards had been available in northern France because tourism was not a significant regional industry, it was a different matter by the time the Australians arrived in 1916. Of a different order altogether were the elegant French-made, silk-embroidered cards which were even more popular than the topical silhouette, or novelty moving-part, cards. Beginning as a cottage industry and produced by women behind the lines, production of the ‘silks’ was soon semi-automated as the patterns were embroidered on continuous strips which were sent to factories for cutting and mounting. In the end, with some deterioration in the quality, the production was wholly taken over by the Paris postcard houses and produced in assembly lines. Accommodating all Allied markets, not least the Australians who, like the Americans, had money to spend, the ‘silks’ blatantly exploited sentimental and patriotic themes. Sometimes elegant, they were also often very ornate: anchors
The Girls I left behind me.
crowns, flags, wattle, kangaroos, and various versions of the rising sun, patterns of interlocked Allied flags, or embroidered flowers were common and formed the visual accompaniment, in golds, reds, pinks and greens, to legends which ran the gamut from ‘Right is Might’, to ‘Merry Christmas’; from ‘My Dear Wife/Mother/Sister’, to ‘A Kiss from France’; to regimental names or insignia, and assertions of liberty.

Enormously popular with the men, the cards’ colours, symbols, and sentimental legends often distracted sender and receiver alike, from the harsh reality of war, its destruction and monochrome grey colouring. ‘What do you think of this card?’, enquires a father of his little daughter, as he sent her the first of several silk cards for her collection. Like these, silk cards were invariably sent to someone special or for some particular reason, other than merely making contact. Ern Payne tried to find special silks for his wife’s birthday or Christmas and New Year, and sometimes took the opportunity to enclose a handkerchief or a coin in the pocket which was a feature in some of the cards. If one man purchased a card because he thought it ‘awfully sweet’ and wanted to share it, another, on an ‘Ever True’ card, assured his wife of his constancy, while another wanted it to be a memento of his love: ‘I will never four get (sic) you’, he writes. While yet another, writing to his ‘Dear Lovie’, aware perhaps that this may be his last contact, having just explained that he is going back to the Front, ominously signs his note, ‘Goodbye and goodnight’; and, one, George Burrough sends a card featuring a delicately-worked bouquet (over ‘Australia’) to his special ‘Aunt Bella’.

As May Gibbs was saying, in a whimsical card which was putting to work some of her characters made famous in Snugglepot and Cuddlepie, these ‘old Aunts’ were ‘very anxious’ about the men. (See p. 150) In another, Mrs Kangaroo promises to ‘keep the billy boiling, till you come marching home’ while, in others, Gibbs takes the ultimate step and sends the Nuts off to war; in a ‘Gumnut Corps’! (See p.140). Plucked from their Australian arcadia, the Nuts are, however, to be seen as warriors – their sticks changed to rifles –, and it is with no little relish that they take up arms and plead with their Blossoms not to ‘fret’: ‘We’ll soon be back together/In our old gum tree’ (See p. 145). No less than the children’s authors Ethel Turner and Mary Grant Bruce, or Lionel and Norman Lindsay, May Gibbs was lending her persuasive voice to Australia’s recruiting drives by endorsing this ‘Human’ war. But, like them, not only was she fuelling recruitment; in her portrayal of the active engagement of the Nuts and the passive submission of the Blossoms – those weeping ‘girls’ each Nut seemed to leave behind him – she was also consolidating gender stereotypes hardening during the war. While Mrs Kangaroo and the ‘old Aunt’ Kookaburras tend the hearth and wait, worry and knit (socks?), it is the Nuts who promise to ‘make things hum, by gum!’ and assure the
We'll keep the Billy boiling, dear, till you come marching home.

Your old Aunts are very anxious about you.
Blossoms that they will protect them. (See p. 140)

It was not only May Gibbs who worked these narrow gender stereotypes. Repeatedly, in cards (as in many other representations during the war), while men are shown as active, and are seen in battle dress, handling a rifle, or in some battle posture, women were positioned as defenceless, passively accepting that men will protect them, or quietly urging them into battle and then waiting for their return. But, of course, many women were complicit in these representations and (no less than the mens’ endorsement of their ‘larrkin’ behaviour in Egypt), endorsed the images by their use of the cards. So, a Mother, overseen by the inset of a digger, anxiously waits and prays for deliverance of ‘The Absent One’; while, in a reciprocal card (from The Absent One), the digger, signified by his uniform, hopes that his thoughts will ‘span the miles that sever’: the woman waits, and the man does his duty. (See p. 153) Indeed, the (female) speaking voice in ‘To My Dear One Away on Duty’, not only expresses her longing but also her pride in letting ‘him go/For that Great/Cause of Right’. With her photograph inset at the foot of the card, she is both incentive and reward to the man answering duty’s call. In another, ‘Loving Thoughts of My Dear Soldier’, sent by a woman to her husband in France, ‘relief’ for the ‘grief’ of the female speaker is found in the male’s valour:

Ah! Sweetheart, since you marched away
I know the gloom of grief,
And yet divinist whispers come
Affording me relief,
That he who won my inmost heart
Is playing now a hero’s part.

It is the active male, taking on duty and adventure, who will save the passive woman and protect the (female) nation.

Consolidating war as the solution to international affairs, glamourizing its machines of destruction, advertising the life of the Australian warrior and sending out propaganda against the enemy, and enlisting all in the war effort, as I have suggested, postcards also consolidated, even if obliquely and unconsciously, pervasive gender stereotypes which cast women as submissive, passive and ineffectual, serving both as a lure to recruitment and a prize for those heroes who came back. Angels of the hearth and home, waiting and weeping, women are denied history and nation-building which are ceded to the masculine domain. Moreover, personal as they were, being addressed to an intimate, the cards – in their complete inscription, as picture and message – also spoke of national character and idealised identity, while providing a kind of social history of Australia’s involvement in the war. The postcards, in their commercialisation of innocence, sentimentality
and patriotism, continued the lie of the Great World War; that war was honourable and glorious. 24

NOTES

1. I wish to thank the Australian War Memorial for allowing me access to the resources of their research collection and a grant from the 'Literature and the Colonial Legacy' Programme at the University of Wollongong to enable me to develop this paper.


3. An entire series of cards seems to have been designed to introduce the unenlisted to the procedures once one has entered the barracks.

4. In some variations the wattle was dried and pasted on. Similar cards also advertised European camp sites, when the men travelled to the Western Front. Cards featuring photographs of such things as the men gathering at the 'Cheer-Up Hut' in Adelaide were also popular. The Cheer-Up Hut provided comfort to new recruits and old hands alike for the duration of the war. Appealing to the loyalty of the people, these cards spoke of national endeavour and duty, as well as providing mementoes of a place which had given the men succour.

5. On a card featuring a sketch of the 'Demosthenes', one man indicates with an arrow the location of his cabin for the folks at home.

6. Invariably humorous, these crude cards often carried Christmas or New Year greetings.

7. As soon as the men transferred to England, an almost obligatory purchase was a card which carried a map of England showing the location of the camp in which the sender was training. 'This is where they've landed me!' they said, as an arrow pointed to Lark Hill, or Tidworth, or Heytesbury, etc.

8. When he followed the troops to England, Cross by contrast, found most of his humour in the mens' particular predicaments in camp-life.

9. As another man wrote, explicating a sketch of a young Anzac involuntarily having his boots cleaned while other Egyptian lads squabble for the privilege and the soldier bellows 'Imshi Yalla!': 'This picture shows you wat (sic) happens every time we go into cairo (sic)'.


11. Norman Hollis' card was dated 7. 2. 1915.

12. On a 'Well Done Australia'- card, officially addressed 'To a Brave Australian
The message that I send to you,
Will span the miles that sever,
And tho' I cannot clasp your hand;
In thought we are together.
Soldier', the proud father of one man sends some wattle to his son, 'for luck'.


14. The divider between the message and the address on this card is in the form of a cartoon sketch of a plucked and forlorn-looking eagle hanging head-first down the centre. It is likely that the cards were produced in 1917 or early 1918.

15. These cards were distinguished by having regimental colour patches inscribed in a corner of the card.

16. Commenting on a similar card, Laffin points out the errors in the sketch, noting that the Australian Imperial Force is incorrectly designated an 'Expeditionary' Force, while the hat band is wrongly proportioned. On the back of this card, a man partly disowns the expression on the sketch (which he mistakes for a photo), finding the face 'too cross'. Laffin, *The First World War in Postcards*, p.49. 'Some Boy!' was one of several cards sent to his young daughter (Doris) by a man in the war zones; they included a couple of silks, a moving-part card from the leering behaviour from which he was careful to disassociate himself, and a photograph of the interior of his barracks: 'can you tell which one is me?' he asks her.

17. Widely circulated in Australia after the Landing, the text of Soutar's poem was as follows:

   The toast is 'Anzac', gentlemen,
      As long as life shall last;
   They need no costly monument
      To keep their memory fast.
   To the men who lived, the men who died,
      Then give it three times three!
   The toast is 'Anzac', gentlemen,
      On far Gallipoli.

18. The authorities legislated against reproducing the photographs of dead Allied soldiers on cards because of the possible effect on morale, both at home and abroad. It was, of course, acceptable to use photos of dead German troops. (See, Laffin, *The First World War in Postcards*, p. 3.) Another consideration, when taking account of the subject matter of cards, is commercial; few Australians would have thought their dead a suitable subject for a postcard.

19. In one of the more bizarre conjunctions of written message and picture, a photograph of a shell-burst at Quinn's Post became the vehicle for a cake mix!

20. Proceeds from the sale of cards in the series went towards the Australian Comforts Fund.


22. There are in excess of twenty silk cards among the War Memorial's 'Cpl. E. E. Payne Collection', a comprehensive collection of cards, mainly to and from Ern Payne to his beloved wife, Bella, who, on more than one card, refers to him as 'the one I love more than my life'.

23. In *Snugglepot and Cuddlepie*, the gum nut babies, at first, are wary of humans whom they associate with killing and indiscriminate incarceration.

24. Postcards had no such role in the next world war.