Imagining the World from the Classroom: Cultural Difference, Empire and Nationalism in Victorian Primary Schools in the 1930s and 1950s

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I, Vicki Macknight, declare that this thesis comprises only my original work, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used. This thesis does not exceed 30,000 words in length, exclusive of footnotes and bibliography.
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Introduction

I knew almost nothing of the European war; felt nothing, anyway, until the piles of toys and teeth and hair in some French movie forced me to acknowledge evil however briefly.

We weren’t very good about evil in the 1950s. It didn’t seem relevant.

Dad served in New Guinea repairing planes. He didn’t talk about the war. On ANZAC day he dug his garden. He wouldn’t buy a Japanese car until 1972 when the Mazda engine won him over.

He looked relieved when the man I married was neither Asian nor Jewish.¹

In this excerpt of her poem, Australian historian Marian Quartly is telling a story about the quiet racism of her father, a man brought up over the years when White Australia was at its peak, who had experienced the Pacific War first hand. In telling this story in the way she does Quartly is highlighting her own very different subject position. As a woman brought up in the increasingly culturally pluralistic postwar decades she is able to both sympathise with and critique her father’s position. There are two key elements that she implies created their different approach to culture. During her upbringing, she claims, evil was disassociated from culture; evil indeed was a concept so far removed from

understandings of humanness that it did not even ‘seem relevant’. How was the disassociation achieved in that decade, after such a war? Quartly gives a role to technological modernization in eroding racism: her father was willing to buy a Japanese car when he felt they had reached such a level of sophistication that it would be foolish not to, but he still would not want his daughter mixed up with its designer.

This was published as part of a larger autobiographical article in which Quartly attempted to analyse her dawning adolescence in 1950s Adelaide. Quartly follows Esther Faye in arguing that this was a time when educators were attempting to provide adolescents with a type of moral armour that would ensure they, and the rest of Australia, would be protected from the dangers of the world.² In this thesis I take up the themes that provide a contrast between Quartly and her father, linking them specifically to the educators Faye points to. What did they teach Australian primary school children about their national identity, about cultural difference, about moral behaviour?

I answer this question by comparing primary school programs in the Australian state of Victoria in the 1930s and 1950s. Specifically I look at what was taught in the social studies subjects; history, geography and civics. I also investigate how these lessons were reflected and reoriented in reading resources. In doing this I hope to highlight the ways educators envisaged their world to be at that time and for the future, and suggest how this affected the attitudes and behaviours of children.

In comparing these decades I argue that the differences we find represent a chapter in the ongoing dialogue between the Enlightenment attempt to identify the natural laws that govern the human world, and the repudiation of the idea that such laws exist.³ Despite their apparent opposition, elements of both positions were present in each decade as Australians simultaneously attempted to formulate objective scientific theories about

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³ Philosopher and historian of ideas, Isaiah Berlin, argues that European derived cultures have been moving between these two positions since their emergence in the late eighteenth century. The first is generally represented by the physical and biological sciences and were also filtered into the attempt by sociologists and anthropologists to study society as if it too were a natural regular system. The second he finds present in forms of art and literature, and argues for their continuing profound, but often overlooked, influence on religion and politics, as well as society more generally. See, Isaiah Berlin, *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas* (New York: Viking, 1980).
the world, and as others reminded them of our subjectivity, our irrationality, and our irreducible humanness. I argue, however, that in looking at primary school we are able to see the encroachment of the scientific Enlightenment upon the questions of human life and difference.

The terms of the struggle important to this thesis concern two movements occurring simultaneously across the first half of the twentieth century. In one scientists and philosophers tussled over the human mind. Over these decades psychology was established as a largely scientific discipline, and explanations of human behaviour were codified into various types of law. The second movement queried the nature of cultural difference, and reached conclusions that moved between the political and social realms. In the interwar years international politics, represented particularly by the League of Nations, was premised on the idea that culture created intrinsic differences in the world’s people. Groups of people – nationalities – might be equal, but they were incommensurable and should be politically represented as such.4 World War Two, a war of ultra-nationalism, partially spawned by the doctrine of cultural incommensurability, also led to that doctrine’s destruction. Henceforth, international politics were informed by theories of unilinear cultural development. Culture was less important than intrinsic humanness, and indeed held people back from achieving the full potentialities of their humanness. Modernization theory, the idea that all cultures must pass through certain economic and social stages before reaching the modernity represented by nations such as the United States, was particularly influential. It was conceived as a process to allow poor countries to ‘catch up’ to the rich, a homogenizing process whereby ‘traditional society’ – economically and politically simple, superstitious, static – would give way to modern society – industrial, secular and politically centralized. The ‘traditional’/‘modern’ dichotomy enabled theorists to ignore the massive differences between the societies of their project and to unify them within a single category they called ‘underdeveloped’.5

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4 In practice this was only applied to European people, not non-white colonial subjects. Race and religion continued to be used to place peoples in hierarchies of relative value, and the ‘mixing’ of cultures, of physical and cultural miscegenation, continued to be feared across the whole range of European colonies – South Africa is a particularly notable case.

In the Australian context, under consideration here, these two movements, understandings of psychology and culture, came into play, and were fundamental to what primary school children were taught about their social world and to how they were taught to live in the world as adults. Educationalists adopted the understandings provided by scientific psychology, and used then to design schools as mechanisms through which, it was hoped, children would pass in an orderly manner to reach a standardized adulthood. By itself the scientific capture of psychology was not enough to alter the content or the form of social lessons. But under specific international and domestic conditions it came into effect. It was only in the 1950s, in the context of increasingly independent, non-imperial Australian politics, that it could be fully expressed in primary schools.

The historical context of the middle years of the twentieth century is often explained in terms of a simple narrative of an Australia caught up in the economics and culture of Britain and her Empire who, after 1945, looked to the United States for defence and, to some degree, to her own society for a non-derivative culture. To understand this increased nation-state nationalism, we need to place this discussion in its international context. Across this period Australian borrowed psychological and pedagogical models from American and British educationalists, and hence I am telling a history that might find resonance with those who were a part of the Anglo-American experience. And, since in the 1950s Europe was retreating from various parts of the globe, we might find that the nationalistic structures we can identify in this account are familiar to other states formed by Europe’s late empires.

This model of Australia’s increasing nationalism, while expressing elements of truth, is an oversimplification. It encourages us to ignore the complexity of the relationship between Australia and Britain: in both decades Britain and its Empire were simultaneously celebrated and denigrated. In the 1930s, the most important ties were

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6 Stuart Macintyre situates this in terms of Australian collective memory, arguing that Australians today believe that, prior to 1945, ‘we had no history of our own because imperial distain induced cultural amnesia. Our culture was derivative, our imagination stultified by an unthinking admiration for everything English.’ Macintyre uses this memory as a backdrop for his recovery of the important and popular scholarly work of Australian historian Ernest Scott. Likewise, I argue that this memory is an insufficient description of the forms of Australian identity in the 1930s. See, Stuart Macintyre, A History for a Nation: Ernest Scott and the Making of Australian History (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994), p. 2.
economic, made necessary by the shocks of the Great Depression.\textsuperscript{7} These ties could also be coercive, as the belt-tightening monetary dictates of Sir Otto Niemeyer from the Bank of England indicated.\textsuperscript{8} But this did not mean that Australia had no power or desire to act alone. As Leonie Foster has argued in \textit{High Hopes: The Men and Motives of the Australian Round Table}, ‘Australia did not always blindly follow the imperial leader. And when she did follow, it was because it suited her own special interests.’\textsuperscript{9} When looking at Australia’s relationship with Britain we need to remember that Australia was a part of the non-Imperial international context, even in the interwar years.\textsuperscript{10} Australia, for example, was an independent member of the League of Nations, a relationship we need to look at more carefully than scholars have done in the past. As novelist Frank Moorhouse reminds us, the League is ‘a memory lost to us’, a bitter reminder of our inability to abolish war.\textsuperscript{11}

Nor does this narrative of increasing Australian cultural independence serve to help us recover the multiple attitudes and affinities that complicated 1950s Australia, a time when many of the older loyalties continued to hold sway. It is often described as a time of transition, between Britain and America, between political subordination and independence, but the scale and the important elements of this transition are debated.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{10} Stephen Alomes, for example, describes the 1940s as ‘essentially … one of transition between British and American influences’. This argument is premised on his assumption of that Australia previously had no significant interactions with any nation other than Britain. Thus, he can claim that in Australian foreign policy ‘the same polarities of blind anglophilia and simplistic isolationism found in economics predominated’. This does not reflect the complex national and international vision that we find in primary schools. Stephen Alomes, \textit{A Nation at Last? The Changing Character of Australian Nationalism 1880-1988} (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1988), p. 139.
\textsuperscript{12} For example, Noel McLachlan argues that by the 1950s Australia had ‘haphazardly embraced our New World destiny’ in the Pacific, pointing to a significant, if confused, sense of national independence. Noel McLachlan, \textit{Waiting for the Revolution: A History of Australian Nationalism} (Melbourne: Penguin, 1989), p. 268. W. G. McMinn, by contrast, suggests that no real change occurred, and that by “‘looking to America” the Australian people … were not really change their attitude to the Empire’. W. G. McMinn, \textit{Nationalism and Federation in Australia} (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 272. Alomes
This is because, given the mechanisms of social conservation (such as the power of tradition, the incremental replacement of generations and of thought-communities), the two decades have much in common. Instead of seeing this as a movement upward from subordinate status on the periphery of Empire to a proud sense of the young strong nation, we need to think of it as a move sideways: from national pride in an Australia intimately bound up with the Empire (what we might call the Imperial-national complex) to nationalism based more narrowly upon the nation-state. Sideways, because British linkages were certainly not rejected in the 1950s; rather, the political gaze was redirected toward the narrower ground of middle-class Australian values.

In this thesis, then, I compare the ways in which primary school children were taught to think about their social world, its history and its present, and about how they should best act within it. This concerned Imperial and national identity, spatial and temporal global relationships, and expected moral and civic behaviours. And as attitudes about these issues changed, and new models of psychology were applied to schools, so too did ways of teaching. This linkage between psychology, education and nationalism has not been previously investigated. Their changing relationship can be explained quite simply: as internationalism (of the Empire and of the League) became less important than nationalism, the need to enable children to see beyond Australian shores diminished, and was replaced with techniques to teach children about their relation to other Australians. It was a change from a pedagogy that stressed imagination and emotional connections, to one that stressed reality and economic interconnections. History lost its importance, the globe largely disappeared, and accepted fantasy worlds shrank. This was governed by a new curriculum structure, through which children were guided along a new path towards social knowing and through different processes of maturation.

We have long been aware that in regard to our childhood years what we learn and how we learn to think, are inescapable, and constitute the building blocks for all later thinking and learning. Simple structures of knowledge are built upon to create our more complex forms – the same alphabet and many of the same word combinations are used to write increasingly complex stories. Even when we consciously attempt to re-educate suggests that the appearance of stasis that McNinn highlights disguised the ‘changing reality’, a disguise made up of clinging onto traditional images such as royalty. Stephen Alomes, A Nation at Last?, p. 151.
ourselves, to forget these lessons, we borrow from this first framework. My choice to study primary school is a result of this awareness.

But paradoxically, though we use these building blocks everyday, we tend not to consciously remember the specifics of what we were taught. We read, we write, we do arithmetic, but we do not reflect on the lessons about the nature of the social world we were being prepared for. This was illustrated to me as I considered incorporating an oral history component in this project. Asking people educated in the relevant era netted me stories about games, the school bully, and tricks played on the teacher, material they thought would be of particular interest to me as a New Zealander, an outsider. Never did I hear about what was learnt between times, even when I specifically asked. It is my contention that just like reading and writing, the thinking skills, the basic temporal and spatial concepts, and beliefs about how to apply this knowledge are embedded in people’s psyches so that they are even often unable to be recalled as once separate skills or ideas.

Methodologically, the invisibility of these thinking frameworks has forced me to rely on textual sources, primarily curricula documents and the reading resources used by school children. Readers might feel that I have written a history without people, certainly without the children in whom I purportedly am interested. They are there, but as shadows without their own voice. It is for this methodological reason, too, that I focus on the 1930s and the 1950s, effectively ignoring the 1940s. It may seem odd to readers that I have thus skipped the Second World War, a defining moment in Australian history. But since Victorian curricula were revised only in 1934 and 1952, curricula that most profoundly structure the changes I am talking about, the historical narrative was best told by comparing curricula, and hence these decades. I look only at the State School system since it is here, not in the intentionally separate Catholic schools, that we can most clearly see the socializing aims of the growing nation. In regard to the adoption of new psychological theory and the development of pedagogical techniques, Catholic schools, to use R. J. W. Selleck’s words, ‘followed doubtfully and at a distance’.13

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In writing this thesis I hope to contribute to two fields, beyond the political and social history of Australia. One is memory studies, a field that attempts to study how people understand and use the past in their everyday life to provide themselves with individual and collective identities. Methodologically it is a very difficult discipline. How can we access meaningful collective memories when most are shifting and unconscious? Some scholars, including Americans Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen and Australians Paula Hamilton and Paul Ashton, seek to resolve this by the detailed interviewing of a large sample, and their work is particularly effective in looking at the contemporary social uses of the past. But people’s understandings of the past must be investigated with reference to what they know about that past and how they are able to think about it. It is not just the explicit content that is important here, but also the underlying structures of knowledge that make specific forms of memory possible. Thus, in describing the content of primary school history lessons in the Victoria of the 1930s and 1950s, this thesis makes a direct contribution to memory studies.

Readers should also be aware of the defining early work in the field, particularly that of Maurice Halbwachs, if they are to grasp more completely how this thesis relates to memory studies. In 1941 Maurice Halbwachs published his Le Cadres Sociaux de la Memoire (On Collective Memory), a mixture of psychology, philosophy, sociology and history. In this book Halbwachs argued that memory is always social; collective and individual memories are created through social interactions, and, less obviously, social frameworks act to fit memories to the present era. Language is the most basic and stable of these frameworks, a collective tool by which we are able to find meaning in, and connections between, objects, images, and notions. All this is rational by any standards, and certainly makes sense in our post linguistic-turn academic world.

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But the first chapter of the book might surprise readers, as it surprised me. In this chapter, ‘Dreams and Memory Images,’ Halbwachs argues that dreams are not memory. It is the lack of tools, like language, that give a coherent social form and subject/object gap to mental images, that, he argues, mean that dreams cannot be memory. They do not exist in social form, so we cannot assess their social legitimacy. By drawing a ‘social’ line between dreams and memory, Halbwachs has left room in memory for another form of dreaming – daydreaming, those worlds of imagination that we are able to create for ourselves using the tools our social lives have provided. In other words, for Halbwachs, as for many in the interwar world, there was no logical reason not to regard imagination as collective social memory.

The concept of ‘imagination’ is important here, and requires some discussion. In recent historical scholarship there has been a rediscovery of the role of imagination in national identity. This began, of course, with Benedict Anderson’s theorization of the nation as an ‘imagined community’ in 1983. In his argument nations are not ‘real’ but are based upon a belief in various shared values. Two important points should be highlighted: imagination is a tool for constructing personal and political relationality; and states use imagination, explicitly or implicitly, to embed these relationships in the minds of their citizens. This is a re-discovery: educators in the 1930s were well aware of the political significance of imagination in teaching children to be Imperial Australians. The intentional use of imagination was lost in the 1950s, to be filled with different, less explicitly imaginative, claims for personal and political connectivity. Of course, I do not mean to suggest that national identity ceased to be constructed socially in the 1950s, that it ceased to be an ‘imagination’, but rather that the realist epistemology on which primary school learning was based, obscured its unreal, imaginative nature. Imagination has since been used by historians to explain the relationship between Australia and Britain, which continued to exert a strong pull on people’s national loyalties even as the political and

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18 This was particularly influential partly because it was touted near the beginning of the ‘linguistic turn’ in the social sciences - the recognition that language and image are profoundly implicated in how we are able to see and understand the world around us. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).
legislative bonds were broken. This thesis seeks to add explanatory depth to this idea by locating the sources and describing the forms of imagination at primary schools.

I take up the question of the use, and subsequent decline, of this awareness in primary schools. This was significant in two forms – the ways imagination was used to create connections between children and the spatial and temporal structures of curriculum, and the ways it was used to create ‘good’ Australian citizens through reading resources.

The second field I hope to contribute to is that of educational history. Few histories of Australian education have looked critically at the role schools have played in socializing children. The most monumental works in the field, Vision and Realisation, edited by L. J. Blake, and Alan Barcan’s History of Australian Education, provide a narrative of the systemic growth and centralization of the education system, rather than a discussion of taught content. Historians of education have also written on educational theory, tracing its development, with relation to key thinkers, with regard to the systems of other countries and in the context of actual Australian schools. In all these works, however, the actual curricula that result are of less importance than pedagogical theory itself.

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19 It is in this sense that W. G. McMinn discussed the limited impact of the Statute of Westminster, ratified by Australia in 1942. Of the 1950s he claims that ‘most [Australians] would have opted for the status quo where the relations between Australia and the mother country were concerned. But this status quo was, as is so often the case, itself imaginary: the relationship had been changing ever since … the 1820s’. McMinn, Nationalism and Federation, p. 291. Likewise, John Murphy argued that 1950s economic and social life was profoundly imaginative, and that this imagination was largely formed through Prime Minister John Menzies’s articulation of Australia as a land of the values of the middle class, the ‘forgotten people’. John Murphy, Imagining the Fifties: Private Sentiment and Political Culture in Menzies' Australia (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press and Pluto, 2000), p. 7. In this argument he owes a debt to Judith Brett, Robert Menzies' Forgotten People (Chippendale [N.S.W.]: Macmillan Australia, 1992).


Critique of content, however, has occurred often in works smaller in scale and scope. In one set scholars have taken up the question of the role of schooling to impel Australians into geographically distant wars. Bob Bessant, for example, has argued that Australians embraced the Great War partially because of the scale of Imperial jingoism in schools in the years immediately preceding it. After the full scale of the wastage of war was revealed, though, educationalists were more careful. Andrew Spaull has looked at the more cautious relationship between Australian schools and the Second World War, but does not look in any detail at years surrounding 1939-1945. In her history PhD thesis Deborah Hull investigated the development of the meanings of Anzac Day, arguing that these meanings were most clearly articulated in primary schools. This allowed her to highlight a key paradox of Anzac Day’s meaning in the interwar years: the simultaneous celebration of the glory and sacrifice of the soldiers and the denigration of all wars as futile. Valuable as all these works are, they divorce conceptual or temporal detail from the larger picture I hope to display. Ann-Louise Shapiro has provided a good example of work that successfully links the details of school learning to broad questions of national identity. She argues for the need to look at the continuity of the structure of school textbooks to understand the consistencies of collective nationalism in twentieth century France.

The other critical set of Australian educational histories investigate the role of schools in perpetuating Australian racism. The insistence that politics impacted upon

25 Andrew Spaull, Australian Education in the Second World War (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1982)
pedagogy in ways that taught children to be racist will come as no surprise to those who have followed the recent ‘history wars’ concerning the treatment of Aboriginal history and culture in schools, and the ‘European discovery’ narratives that treatment allowed. 29 But this is part of an older educational pattern, one that long underwrote Australia’s ‘White Australia’ policy. It has been suggested that the policy was only deconstructed as Australian ways of conceiving cultural and racial difference were challenged by intellectuals. 30 This had more effect on immigration policy than on Aboriginal rights. Australian racism has been more complex and more destructive with regard to the original non-white inhabitants of the land. Perceptions of cultural difference and its relationship with Australian politics reveal the ways schools used Aboriginal history to advance the Australian nationalist project in the 1950s while continuing to marginalize Aboriginal people themselves.

In fact, some of the work that best illuminates the relationship of imagination and identity has been undertaken in fields removed from educational history, most notably literary theory. Kathryn Castle, in Britannia’s Children, has perceptively explored the role of children’s books in creating racial stereotypes of Britain’s colonial subject 31. In Australia Through the Looking Glass, Brenda Niall has shown that Australian children’s books were key in providing Australian children with a sense of Australia’s link to Britain. 32 In a slightly different vein June Factor, author of Captain Cook Chased a Chook, has looked at children’s own folklore and games, to study the world children themselves built from their imaginations. 33 Still others have looked at organizations outside the school, particularly the Boy Scouts, which have played a role in socializing

29 See, for example, Stuart MacIntyre and Anna Clark, The History Wars (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003); Ray Land, ed., Invasion and After: A Case Study in Curriculum Politics (Queensland 4111: Queensland Study Centre, Griffith University, 1994).
33 June Factor, Captain Cook Chased a Chook: Children’s Folklore in Australia (Melbourne: Penguin, 1988).
children in ways that closely intersect with state aims.\textsuperscript{34} All these non-institutional histories provide valuable insights, but cannot tell the full story without taking into account the more formal educational systems that they bolstered.

This thesis, then, is about belonging to Australia and to the world. It is about imperialism, nationalism and the quality of goodness told through the lens of primary school students in 1930’s and 1950’s Victoria. I begin by exploring in Chapter One how the joint change in psychology and politics forced profound change to the basic framework of primary school curriculum. Children’s relationship to information was reconceived, and so too were the curricular structures necessary for this new epistemology. Spatial and temporal relations between Australia, Britain and the world were thus destabilized. But we need a much finer lens, and a more subtle understanding of the mechanisms of imaginative national belonging, if we are to describe this changing relationship. I take up this question in Chapter Two by looking at the reading resources given to children, from which they learnt complex lessons about aspects of being Australian. In Chapter Three I examine the impact of nationalism – Imperial and nation-state – in defining the child’s responsibilities. I argue that the project of nation-state nationalism that I describe, forced a change from moral to civic duty, a profound change to expectations about how and for whom children should act.

Chapter 1 – Imagination and Reality: Curriculum Structure, 1934 and 1952

‘... there is no way of understanding political identities and destinies without letting fantasy into the frame. More, that fantasy - far from being the antagonist of public, social being – plays a central, constitutive role in the modern world of states and nations...’

In this chapter I am going to talk about changing definitions of the child as a human and, more importantly for our purposes, as a learner across the middle decades of the twentieth century. In doing this I want to make clear the relationship between psychology and pedagogy, to show that the scientific capture of definitions of human thought and learning directed a change in teaching techniques and in curriculum content. Specifically, I argue that in Australia between the 1930s and the 1950s the faith in the power of the imagination to create socially useful knowledge was lost in the 1950s. ‘Experience’ became the new watchword in Victorian primary schools, the means through which children would learn ‘true’, and hence useful, things about their social world. This, as well as more obviously political factors, had profound consequences for the forms of nationalism and morality children were taught.

In saying this, I do not want to imply that either decade’s epistemological model was necessarily better than the other. Rather, both were relevant and useful, nay essential, to their respective politico-social and philosophical context. Imagination allowed the creation in children of knowledge that could transcend distance. This was essential if a sense of Australian membership in a far off and far-flung Empire was to be assured. Children could believe in their racial heritage, in a home across the sea. Imagination was also called into service for the League of Nations. It supposedly could make cultural distance and difference less threatening, and, it was hoped, make ‘friends’ out of the ‘children of other lands’. Imagination, in other words, could disable what Geoffrey

Blainey has termed the ‘tyranny of distance’.\textsuperscript{36}

For 1950s Australians, by contrast, these earlier imaginative imperial connections were irrelevant. Appropriate instead was a psychology and pedagogy based upon ‘experience’. Knowledge was firmly tied to the present, in the sense of both time and place. The actual structures of the social world became the locus of children’s required emotional thought. The Australians with whom they had day-to-day contact, both directly and through their joint membership of economic and social structures, were their allies and friends. The nations of the world lay in parallel, each with their own social and economic structures. By these means the 1950’s primary school curriculum articulated a powerful new form of nation-state loyalty.

In this chapter I will discuss the changing beliefs and techniques that enabled the teaching of these two distinct worldviews. I locate this change first with reference to general social understandings of who the child was, and then more specifically locate this within the psychology on which Victorian teachers based their technique. To do this I look at the textbooks recommended for the compulsory educational psychology course at Melbourne University, the highest status teacher training course over this period, with close ties to the Melbourne Teacher Training College.\textsuperscript{37}

I then look at the social studies curriculum of Victorian Primary schools of 1934 and 1952. After 1920 no changes were made until 1934, after which eighteen years elapsed before the next revision. After 1952 no substantive changes to content or structure were made until the late 1970s. I discuss the structure and the content of the 1934 and 1952 curricula, paying particular attention to the epistemological and pedagogical assumptions that underlay them. I outline the factors that made these curricula, those contrasting epistemological structures, both practical and appropriate in the two very different decades. In this chapter I intend to lay the groundwork for a discussion in Chapter Two of a more complex nationalism that is revealed in children’s literacy resources, and in Chapter Three for the moral and civic behaviours implicated.


\textsuperscript{37}Don Garden, \textit{The Melbourne Teacher Training Colleges: From Training Institution to Melbourne State College 1870-1982} (Melbourne: Heinemann Educational Australia, 1982), p. 84.
According to Lloyd de Mause, who edited one of the first academic books to focus primarily on children’s history, *The History of Childhood: The Evolution of Parent-Child Relationships as a Factor in History*, one mode of child rearing replaced another in the mid-twentieth century. He categorises the initial period, from the early nineteenth century, as the ‘socialization mode’, in which the child’s will was to be trained, ‘guiding it into proper paths, teaching it to conform, socializing it.’ This was displaced by the ‘helping mode’, which ‘involves the proposition that the child knows better than the parent what it needs at each stage of its life,’ creating no need to ‘discipline or form “habits”’. What de Mause is discussing here is a process that can be divided into several related aspects, all of which contributed to this mid-century transition: changes in psychology, in the role of religion and science in understanding humanity, and changes in the family.

Nikolas Rose has persuasively made the link between psychology and our definitions of humanity, particularly our own subjectivity. He argues that modern governance operates through ‘theoretical knowledge that renders the soul thinkable in terms of a psychology, an intelligence, a personality…’ Childhood, to him, is one of the most important domains in which this occurs, with schools establishing certain models of normal and ideal humanity that children are instructed and taught how to meet. More and more over the twentieth century definitions of humanity have been informed by psychology.

Psychology, as we understand the term, is a relatively young discipline, having split from philosophy in the middle of the nineteenth century. A straightforward narrative can be told of the development of psychological knowledge, within the increasingly sophisticated attempts to explain human behaviour ‘scientifically’. A key step on this path was the publication in 1913 of a series of lectures by John Broadus Watson. In these he argued that ‘psychology must discard all reference to consciousness’. Psychology must now be defined as the science of behaviour and ‘never use the terms consciousness, mental states, mind, content, introspectively verifiable, imagery and the like …. It can all

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40 Ibid., pp. 121-122.
be done in terms of stimulus and response.  

Behaviourism, as his theory came to be called, was basic to psychology until the late 1950s, when psychologists such as Edward Chace Tolman and Clark Leonard Hull further refined its concepts and methods. However, debate continued through the 1920s and 30s over whether behaviour was in any way governed by thought or whether all signs of cognition were really just a response to environment. The potential political consequences of the answer were clear to some in the 1930s, including politically active psychologists in the United States who insisted that the discipline must consider the ‘individual in the social context’. Otherwise, they argued, psychology would fail to improve democracy, or indeed to reflect real human life.

After World War Two psychology grew massively, fragmenting into occupational groups and theoretical schools. Applied psychology in particular boomed. The role of society in influencing behaviour was increasingly recognized and attempts made to direct and control it. This owed much to the work of Burrhus Frederick Skinner, who argued in the 1940s and 1950 that all thought and all behaviour were simply learnt.

In Australia the growth of psychology as a professional discipline was slow, and it was only really institutionalized after the Second World War. There was very little debate of the sort that occurred in the United States, because the institutional context was too small. Psychology in education fared best in the 1930s under the auspices of the Australia Council for Educational Research (ACER) which supported psychology at universities and undertook various empirical studies of schooling. After World War Two education psychology services expanded beyond ACER, through the proliferation of University courses and professional positions, all unified in the attempt to check juvenile delinquency and treat emotionally disturbed children. In Victoria this was represented by the establishment of the Psychology Branch of the Education Department, encouraged

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46 Ibid., p. 89-93.
by the then Director of Education John Seitz, who was also responsible for the establishment of the Curriculum and Research Branch. Psychology was an important part of the post-war expansion and centralization of Australian education.

The impact of two psychologists, working outside the narrative of scientific psychology’s development, cannot be ignored. Sigmund Freud worked at the level of the individual, exploring the relationship between the instinctive, conscious and unconscious minds. According to him social conditioning came originally from beyond the individual, from parents and teachers most often, but their moral lessons then become a part of how the individual could frame and restrict their behaviour. This made up the super-ego. Particularly through the 1920s and 1930s Freudian psychoanalysis came under experimental investigation in education, at least by those who were already proponents. Across Europe, and in a modified form in the United States, attempts were made to establish schools that would avoid the social\sexual repressions that Freud believed children often experienced as they grew. Most of these schools faced practical difficulties that forced their closure by the early 1930s. In Australia the unavailability of formal training meant that Freudian psychoanalysis could only be applied in a partial and eclectic fashion. But these ideas continued to lay the basis of explanations of non-rational behaviour.

Jean Piaget, generally considered the most important child psychologist ever, described himself not as simply a child psychologist but as a ‘genetic epistemologist’. By this term he meant that he studied the child in order to find ‘the solutions to general problems, such as those of the mechanisms of intelligence, perception etc…’ and to examine ‘the formation of knowledge itself, that is to say of the cognitive relations between subject and object…’ Central to his theory was the belief that rationality was

an evolutionary process, increasing as organisms sought to restore a sense of equilibrium with their environment; to understand the world while it, and their awareness of it, changed. From this understanding he developed a four-stage model of child development, in which the logical manipulation of concepts was the ultimate stage. Children would first have to develop their ability to translate objects into symbols, which they would accomplish by age seven, and then to learn how to manipulate concrete objects in logical ways.\textsuperscript{51} In terms of the mathematics teaching to which it has most often been applied, a child would learn that a quarter represents a cake cut into four, later that two quarters of that actual cake would make half a cake, and by age twelve would be able to add quarter to quarter without referring to cakes at all.

As Valerie Walkerdine has pointed out, this theory has had a major impact on how we define rationality. Because Piaget assumed that rationality was an evolution to a world of universal structures, he could argue that observing the development of actual children would give him an understanding of the development of ‘normal’ children. Their mastery of reason was the mastery of ‘normal’ reason. Thus, he came to a conclusion about the nature of rationality that ignored the social context in which the ‘normal’ was constructed.\textsuperscript{52} As we shall see later, this same problem was built into the 1952 curriculum, based as it was on adaptations of Piaget’s developmental series.

These ideas found a ready lay audience, one that had been awakened by wider changes to family structures. According to Michael Gilding, in \textit{The Making and Breaking of the Australian Family}, during the 1950s parents believed themselves to be in a ‘new era’ of childrearing. They felt more dependent on expert knowledge, including psychology, in order to foster their children’s capabilities in full. As family sizes shrank and the family became an increasingly private sphere, parents sought more intimate relationships with their children. This had been a process, he argues, that began during the interwar years, but was expressed during that time in preparing children for adulthood through ‘instruction and simulation’.\textsuperscript{53} By the 1950s the nuclear family had become normative, indeed reached its probable numerical climax. At the core of this social

formation were the nurturing ties between parents and children, or more accurately mothers and children. Our collective memory of the 1950s, both in its nostalgic and critical modes, focuses on this mother-child relationship – the housewife and mother of the happy and stable, or confining, family.\textsuperscript{54} Certainly both the nostalgia of social conservatives and the critical gaze of feminists have been instrumental in supplying us with this memory. But so too were the curricula I will discuss: in laying down the assumption that the nuclear family was natural and normal, they exaggerated the numerical presence and stability of this formation.

Alongside the changed family lay a decline in the importance of religious thought for defining the nature of the child. This was aligned with the increasingly scientific explanations of humanity provided by psychology and other life sciences. At first sight this might seem to be contradicted by the fact that church membership and Sunday school enrolments peaked postwar, but this seems to have had as much to do with social mores as with faith. Janet McCalman argues that prevalent in Australian religious and secular culture of the 1930s, was the belief that the naturally savage child had to be remade as a Christian through the regulation of their thought and behaviour. Children had to be redeemed from ‘the fall’. As a result ‘the learning of goodness and the finding of faith pervaded every part of growing up’.\textsuperscript{55}

By contrast, David Hilliard argues, the 1950’s church took on the voice of public morality, allowing the family to step back, to become ‘a barrier against alien and radical influences and a secure basis for conservative political values’.\textsuperscript{56} The family took on the job of socializing the child for individual and private life, and the church that of collective life. This divide was based on the familiar, and at that stage un-critiqued, dichotomy of public and private life. The child was presumed to be naturally good at

\textsuperscript{54} According to John Murphy and Judith Smart, ‘in contemporary political discourse and in the popular imagination, [the 1950s] is seen as emblematic of an Australia that was either static, complacent and monocultural, or, for conservatives, an Australia that was prosperous, unified and satisfyingly middle class. … For feminists, since the late 1960s it was a period characterised by the stultifying dominance of the nuclear family…’ John Murphy and Judith Smart, “Introduction”, in The Forgotten Fifties: aspects of Australian society and culture in the 1950s, eds. John Murphy and Judith Smart (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1997), p. 1.


heart, and only needed to be directed towards right public behaviour.

The school of course lay in between, one of the first axes between private and public life, between family and nation, that children came into contact with. Educators took this role seriously, attempting to ensure that they were interested in and well informed about movements in child psychology. Thus, the years between the 1930s and the end of the 1950s clearly reveal the institution of the ‘helping mode’ in schools.

Psychology was key to both curriculum revisions under consideration here. The plan to revise the curriculum in the 1930s was introduced to teachers with an eleven-point list of the principles that it would be based upon, many of which were psychological. Children would learn best, it was recognized, if schooling was enjoyable. Enjoyment would be ensured through allowing children to play, to express themselves orally, and to let their interest and imagination drive their work. They ‘delight in speech and dramatic action, and in creating a miniature world from their own imagination. These activities are not aimless but are the processes by which the child will grow’. These ideas were taken directly from George Browne’s 1932 The Case for Curriculum Revision, who in turn had taken them largely from an English Education Board publication The Primary School. Browne, very likely the author of an article in a 1932 edition of the Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid, a qualified teacher with a Masters degree in Arts, then vice-principal of the Melbourne Teacher Training College College, was a key figure in the revision itself. His beliefs about the psychological basis of education represented in the Gazette were based on theory from the United States as well as England, both of which he had recently visited.

Likewise, the 1952 revision was based upon psychological principles, although less formally outlined than previously. In the booklet The Course of Study for Primary Schools was a four-point breakdown of the ‘Principles Underlying the Course’. The child was described as ‘a developing personality, adapting himself to people and situations’; therefore topics should ‘be related to the age, the interests, the environment, and the

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experiences of the child’. ‘Activity and experience’ would enable the best learning.59

A deeper understanding of these aims, and how they were to be fulfilled, requires that we know what Victorian educators knew about psychology. This is revealed by the educational psychology textbooks recommended to Melbourne University trainee teachers in their compulsory educational psychology course.60

As so often in the diffusion of knowledge, psychological theory developed faster than it could be applied. As a result the 1934 curriculum was largely aligned with much older theories. This is not just a case of old educationalists being unable to learn new theories, but is due more profoundly to the relevance the older theories continued to have for meeting the perceived needs of society. Neither was there a straightforward progression from one orthodox theory to another. Rather, apparently contradictory theories overlay each other, because each could provide acceptable answers to questions the others did not address. In this case, the line of contention was the degree to which science could speak to questions of human consciousness and about how learning progressed.

As a result, regardless of the international psychological opinions Browne wrote about, otherwise arcane works were used in educational psychology courses, and indeed profoundly impacted upon the design of the 1934 curriculum. The key text was Stephen Colvin’s 1912 The Learning Process recommended to trainees from 1919 to 1937. Colvin was not a particularly famous or influential psychologist; indeed he was not even a psychologist by training, but a philosopher.61 He defined learning, like psychologists after him, as an adjustment to the environment. But unlike later psychologists, he believed that psychologists must study the consciousness and the emotions that mediated these reactions. In his view people had to adjust not to a world of ‘brute fact, but to a world of meaning, present yet remote, real but also ideal’.62 An important role in adjusting to this intangible world would be played by imagination, defined as a collection

59 Victoria Education Department “Introduction”, Course of Study for Primary Schools, Social Studies, (Victoria Education Department: Melbourne, 1954), p. 3.
60 Information on the essentials of what was taught and the textbooks required are from University of Melbourne, Melbourne University calendar, (Melbourne: William Fairfax and Co.), 1912-1960.
of symbolic ‘mind-stuff’ representing concrete situations. These would allow ‘symbolic motor adjustments’ to be made, ways in which the situation could be redefined in ‘more ideal terms to suit a more ideal reaction’. In other words, imagination was a way of thinking through the ‘world of meaning’ that existed within reality in order to best respond to it. The ability to defer response until imagination and emotion identified meaning enabled people to better understand and live in the intangible world. This was an essential part of ‘the highest form of learning’.

Imagination, Colvin argued, should not be caught up in questions of truth. Imagination could inform the child about things in a way that factual knowledge could not. Unlike others, whose ‘numbers are yearly growing less’, Colvin was ‘not convinced … myth… does not more exactly correspond to ultimate reality than the mechanical universe’. Imagination was also necessary for rational thought. It would allow children to go beyond perceiving the world of meaning and improve their ability to think about (adjust to) that world. ‘Visual concrete’ images were essential if children were to understand and remember literature, history, geography and nature study because it would help them create the necessary associations between their various pieces of knowledge. Moreover, he argued that the only difference between rational and irrational thought was that rational thought aimed towards a conscious end point. Both relied on an ability to move cognitively between the specific and the general, concrete and abstract, again an activity of imagination. Combined then, imagination was vital if a child was to learn what they needed to.

But even by the 1930s most orthodox international psychologists adhered to the behaviourist model, in which the human was seen as an organism whose behaviour was a simple response to an environmental stimulus. Trainee teachers, even while still using Colvin’s work, were also taught the behaviourist perspective in works such as Peter Sandiford’s 1929 *Educational Psychology*. No wonder, then, that the margins of the Melbourne University library’s copy of Colvin’s work are dotted with indignant

63 Ibid., p. 103.
64 Ibid., p. 14.
65 Ibid., p. 121.
66 Ibid., pp. 302-304.
exclamations, such as ‘rot’ and ‘bunkum’. 67

To Sandiford, who became Professor of Educational Research at the University of Toronto, psychology should have nothing to do with consciousness, since ‘it is neither a definable nor a useable concept so far as science is concerned’. 68 It should instead be left to ‘the metaphysicians who revel in introspective orgies of this nature’, 69 a group in which he would presumably have placed Colvin. Since the impact of imagination could not be assessed, it could not be studied, and thus could not be refined as a useful educational tool.

But this left a gap; obviously people, children included, did not always respond immediately or sensibly to environmental stimuli. For children, particularly, fantasy was important, embodied on a daily basis in play. To this gap Freudian theory spoke loudly. In his theory the stimulus\response model was interrupted by society. The ideal response for an individual organism would not necessarily meet social expectations, and hence would have to be dealt with in other ways, most famously by repressing the inappropriate desire. Hence, a dominant idea in the 1940s and 1950s was that a child had three basic urges: for activity, for sex, and for attention or approval. 70 Some imagination was considered good for children; it would allow them to live out these urges in their minds. Stories, for example, should be told to children occasionally because ‘they secure a harmless discharge for feelings that would cause conflict in the real world’. 71 Imagination would secure emotional equilibrium; it would not enlarge cognitive understanding.

Educational psychologists influenced by Piaget believed that as a child grew and developed towards adulthood their interests would naturally change. This was to be pedagogy’s ultimate tool in the 1950s. If these interests were properly channelled, a child’s social development would proceed naturally, and they would become the ideal adult. Crucially, imagination was the sign that development was not proceeding normally, that their home or school life was essentially unsatisfying. By the mid-1940s, this was a

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67 Ibid., pp. 122 and 119.
69 Ibid., p. 237.
popular enough understanding to be expressed in Benjamin Spock’s *Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*. He advised that ‘if a child is living largely in his imagination and not adjusting well with other children, especially by age 4, a psychiatrist should be able to find out what he is lacking’.  

To these psychologists, it was only experience of an ever-widening social sphere that would channel the child through to adulthood. School should be an ‘idealized model or epitome of the world’, at which children would experience the best moral behaviours, behaviours that might be lacking at home.  

Esther Faye has persuasively argued that the 1950s produced a definition of adolescents as subjects who had to be ‘loved scientifically’ in the school system in order to grow into successful Australian citizens. Schools were the representatives of the scientific and state capture of Australian children, based on a psychology whereby social development had to be achieved to a safety-net level if children were not to become delinquents. I argue that pre-adolescent children were also part of this project. Moreover, I suggest that the capture of the child within this scientifically legitimized technocratic project, meant that by the 1950s the discourse to be taught in schools could be only narrowly defined – in terms of reality, material necessity, and the rational mind – terms appropriate to the modern nation-state. No longer was imagination necessary to cross distance, because Australia had found a space alone, one that needed to be defended by all its citizens.

Psychology was not the only place where science was advancing over these decades; so too were the technologies of visual education. Given the awareness 1930’s educators had of the need to teach children of intangible forms of connectivity, it should come as no surprise that they were also keenly interested in the potential of new visual technologies. An investigation of their pedagogical power was carried out in 1930, concluding that the new technologies had high value as a supplement to good classroom lessons. This finding would have led to a much-expanded role for visual education – a State Bureau to collect and circulate slides, films and other visual material – but for the

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73 Hughes, *Learning and Teaching: An Introduction to Psychology and Education*, p. 176.

financial strains of the Depression. Teachers’ continued interest, however, led to the inception of a summer course in visual education at Melbourne University from 1938. The statewide distribution of films was institutionalized from 1945, and a Visual Education Department established in 1947. The growth of this department, ‘slow, but sure’ is attributed to the ‘enthusiasm, tenacity, ability and leadership’ of a chief officer E. J. Perry, against the resistance of an education industry, still interested in visual education’s possibilities, but for whom extra visual cues were less necessary than previously. The knowledge children were expected to have had contracted into a narrower spatial and temporal range.

In 1932 it was announced to teachers that ‘each subject of the elementary school curriculum will be examined in view of the possibility of improving both the subject content and the methods of presentation’. According to Martin Hansen, then Minister of Public Instruction, fearful of the social unrest of the depressed industrial world, the school should be ‘the dominant influence in the child’s life’. All subjects were revised together in the hope of achieving a coherent and unified curriculum. History, geography and civics were first taught in Grade 3, since before that age children were thought unready for formal lessons on society.

Concern over the impact of social change likewise drove the 1952 revision, but then each subject was revised separately. In the words of Chief Inspector of Primary Schools (1950-1956) Ernest Pederick, this was in pragmatic repudiation of the ‘catastrophic total revision of the entire course of study’ of the 1930s. The subjects dealing with social life were the first to receive this treatment, but instead of history, geography and civics being taught separately, they were integrated as ‘social studies’. This course would be taught to children in the Infant, First and Second Grades, albeit a

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social studies intended to provide an awareness and understanding of their own social lives, rather than more formal conceptual knowledge. ‘Of course, the little child cannot understand such terms as civics, economics, history or geography… it is then from the field of social-living experiences that the topics for our year’s program are selected.’79

While this was certainly an attempt to give children a base from which they would find social studies subjects easier later on, it also represents the expansion of the state’s control of the child’s socialization. That this was perceived as an element in social control is made clear by the statement that ‘the social aspect of child training must receive far more attention.’80 This would now begin at the very start of the child’s educational life.

Responsibility for the curriculum of Grades 7 and 8 was handed over to the Melbourne University Department of Education in the 1950s. They would thenceforth plan curriculum to be in line with the Intermediate Examination that children sat after Grade 10. David McCallum has argued that over the first half of the twentieth century there was an attempt to make secondary schools sites of equal opportunity for all social classes. Access was granted under an expanded and centralized system for testing intelligence and achievement.81 The shifting responsibility for Grades 7 and 8 represented the further institutionalization of this trend. Under this new system, the measurement of ability was centralized under the gaze of the key arbiter of valued knowledge and ability: the University. This further cemented the association between formal knowledge and social value. Knowledge might seem a sensible basis on which to determine potential for later vocational and class placement, but, given that not only are the types of knowledge, but the very valuing of knowledge, are themselves functions of

79 Victoria Education Department, “Primary Schools: Social Studies: Revised Course for Primary Schools,” Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid, 24 Jan 1952, p. 16.
80 Ibid. Italics my own.
class, this only reinforced existing social structures and hierarchies. By formalising the progression through schooling social and economic structures were further cemented.

‘History should be a pageant rather than a philosophy’ – this was the premise underlying the history course established under the 1934 revision of Victorian primary school curriculum. Implicitly this meant that ‘historical truth’ would not be a central aim. Formal conceptual models were displaced by processions of larger than life events and characters. It was the overall shape of the past that children were taught that was considered important. That history, and to a lesser extent geography, could and should be used to teach moral lessons was not hidden. As explained in an article published in the Education Gazette, regardless of a belief in standards of historical truth, the curriculum was based on the hope that ‘in both history and geography an outstanding aim is the development of world friendship’, an admirable hope for our persistently troubled human world. This was problematic under an overall curriculum structure that taught history as development. Under this rubric the ‘spirit of modern times’ was essentially ‘the broad principles of human progress’. Australian and British Empire development, the transference of ‘ideal character’ via race, the equality and difference of national characters, and the importance for peace of scientific and artistic ‘benefactors of mankind’ were the themes. All these models of progress were mixed uncomfortably with a pluralistic model of cultural difference. Imagination was the pedagogical tool with which this contradiction was resolved.

Imagination provided children with a way to operate beyond these developmental series. In the case of the racial narrative of Australian and British Empire

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82 Pierre Bourdieu, influential social theorist, argues that class should be defined with reference to a person’s access to three types of capital – economic, cultural and social. A class hierarchy, in his view, runs from those who have all three (usually those who have been born in the dominant class), through those who have one or two but not all (teachers for example might have cultural capital but not economic capital) and those who have none (usually those from the working class). Unequal ability to gain cultural capital is related to their unequal desire for it. Bourdieu, Pierre, Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste, translated by Richard Nice. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984) pp. 114-123.

83 PROV, VPRS 10064\P0 Victorian Education Department - Research Files, Curriculum and Research Branch, Unit 115, “Social Studies 1933 Revision, p. 1.

84 “Notes on the Curriculum: Social Studies (History, Geography, Civics)”, in Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid, 27 November 1933, p. 549.

development, imagination enabled children to make an emotional connection across oceans and across time. Undeniably this was racially exclusive. But imagination was a tool also co-opted by educators who supported the League of Nation’s cause. Here it operated to create sympathy and empathy that, in the longer term, might have undermined the larger hierarchical structures it was located within.

Imagination was used to teach children about difference and sameness caused by ‘race’, a term synonymous with culture and nation. The ‘myths, legends and stories of world history’ that were the content of Grade 3 and 4 would ‘reveal strikingly the differences in national character’ of the world’s people.\(^{86}\)

This is part of the conception of racial difference that historian of ideas, Isaiah Berlin, argued has structured Western thought since the Enlightenment. According to Berlin, Western thought has drawn upon a conception of culture articulated most clearly by Johann Gottfried von Herder. Herder, categorized as a counter-Enlightenment thinker, conceived every culture as unique and every person within that culture as belonging to it in essential ways. According to Berlin, three core ideas underpin this. They are populism (‘the belief in the value of belonging to a group’), expressionism (that all forms of human self-expression are culturally located), and, most significantly for us, pluralism (‘the belief not merely in the multiplicity, but in the incommensurability, of the values of different cultures and society, and in addition, in the incompatibility of equally valid ideals, together with the implied revolutionary corollary that the classical notions of an ideal man and of an ideal society are intrinsically incoherent and meaningless’).\(^{87}\) In other words, Berlin was arguing that culture would make people different in essential ways. Respect for cultural difference, and racism based upon cultural hierarchies, are two sides of the same idea – pluralism – the idea that cultures are fundamentally different, that cultures cannot and should not mix.

Berlin points out that this was not necessarily political; Herder ‘supposed that different cultures could and should flourish fruitfully side-by-side, like so many peaceful

\(^{86}\) Victorian Department of Public Instruction, “Notes on the Curriculum: Social Studies (History, Geography, Civics)”, *Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid*, 27 November 1933, p. 548.

flowers in the great human garden’.\(^88\) It was this model of cultural difference that informed the post-1918 attempt to create self-determining ethnic democracies in Europe, and which was the idea underlying the League of Nation’s notion of international relations. This attempt led to some of the twentieth-century’s nightmares, since for states that took their political legitimacy from the supposed cultural sameness of their peoples, ‘the presence of other ethnic groups could not but seem a reproach, threat or challenge’.\(^89\)

This conception of fundamental cultural difference also necessitated a specific epistemology, one clear to educators. If children were to think outside of their own culture and into those others, they would have to be imaginative and empathetic, they would have to witness the expressions of their culture: to hear their stories and myths, to see their unique material culture. Only this would enable them to understand the significance and value of the cultures, of the world’s peoples. And only this understanding would ensure that war could be outlawed.

The exclusive side of this conception of cultural difference, the exceptionalism of the ‘Anglo-Celtic race’, was also part of Victorian primary education. The lessons on cultural difference were followed in Grades 5, 6 and 7 by the ‘social development’ of Britain and, eventually, her Empire. This connected modern Australia to Britain, because by sharing a past, they also shared the ‘racial’ traits that had made Britain’s territorial spread possible. It was taught through ‘vivid description’ of ‘colorful incidents’. Reading resources used in this era informed children of the essential similarity between British people now and people then. ‘The English of the middle ages, it is plain, were in many ways, very much like the English of today, who are still honest traders, keen sportsmen and lovers of freedom.’\(^90\) Children were taught more specifically that they were like children of the exploratory stage of British history: both would enjoy sailors’ stories of adventure on the seas, and desire to emulate them.\(^91\) Imagination was used to teach children about their own race, their British racial identity.

Australian history was always taught with reference to the developing British

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Empire, and again imagination was a vital tool. However, imagination was seen to be problematic in teaching Australian history because only certain aspects contained the requisite ‘colour’. Teachers believed that ‘Australian history is apt to become tiring and unattractive unless: a) it is closely correlated with geography and b) uninteresting details are deleted’. Correlation with Britain also would make it more interesting. In Grade 5, when Australia was first taught in the history course, children saw the southern continent make its ‘appearance’ on the maps of European explorers. At the same time in geography they were learning ‘how from a blank ocean the explorers built up the map bit by bit’ and ‘how the various inland explorers dissipated the darkness of the interior and found what the continent was like’. This goes beyond the ‘terra nullius’ version of the Australian land, to imply that Australia, in fact, did not exist before European discovery. This was consistent with the belief that only by relating Australian history to picturesque stories, would it become interesting and relevant to Australian children.

Race and discovery were not the only causal connections claimed to link Australia and Britain. Grade 7 children learnt the history of nineteenth-century Australia, a narrative focusing on the individual settlements throughout Australia, and their eventual self-government and Federation, and hence that British and Australian political trajectories had been aligned. Simultaneously they were taught that existing political and social structures had been imported. In Grade 7 they were taught about nineteenth-century reform movements – of prisons, factories, slavery and parliament - that were then correlated with civics classes on the structures of Australian government. This would be brought together in Grade 8 when children undertook a project ‘Landmarks in the Story of Parliament’ from the Saxons to the Australian present. This was illustrated for, and indeed embodied by, students in the pageants suggested to help teach Australian history. Australian history, as heroic teleology towards Commonwealth belonging was represented, for example, in ‘The Making of Australia’. This play moved through a cast

92 PROV, VPRS 10064/P0 Victorian Education Department, Research Files, Curriculum and Research Branch, Unit 115, “Social Studies 1933 Revision”, p. 1.
93 Victorian Department of Public Instruction, “Social Studies: Geography (Grades IV. and V.)” in Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid, 22 November 1933, p. 472.
94 Victorian Department of Public Instruction, “Social Studies: History (Grades VII. and VIII.)” in Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid, 22 November 1933, pp. 469-470.
of characters meant to represent the influential groups in Australia’s post-settlement history. Starting with an Aboriginal Australian ‘sitting dejectedly in front of a mia-mia’, celebratory verses were recited by the representatives of discoverers, explorers, settlers, nation builders, and Federation.96

This is no surprise. At this time Australians were largely the progeny of relatively recent Anglo-Celtic migration; Australia was years away from signing for their political equality in the Statue of Westminster. As Ernest Scott wrote in A Short History of Australia in 1920, one of the core books in the pre-1945 Australian history canon, ‘how thoroughly British the population of Australia has always been, how trifling the foreign admixture, is a great fact in the history and in the psychology of the country which has been inadequately appreciated’.97 Educators, who explicitly used imagination as a tool to help children believe in their Britishness, did appreciate it. But for Australian children Britain was far distant, a concept as much as a land, a dream place but one to which they were emotionally connected.

Imagination was also used to teach a certain model of global space. In Grade 6 of the 1934 geography course, children were taken on an imaginative travelogue that took in the main countries of Britain’s Empire. This started with a ‘tour through England in the spring or summer’, moving from London north through Scotland to Ireland and Wales, across Canada to New Zealand, past the ‘important ports and harbours of Australia’, and to South Africa and India.98 It was expected that teaching this journey would ‘probably take the form of an interesting description of the countries concerned’, but it was also hoped that children would gain an understanding of the ‘people and their modes of life’ and the geographical conditions which affected them. The journey was based on actual shipping networks around the Empire, so that it would give children a basis from which to learn about Imperial trade networks. In the same topic children were to construct maps of Australia’s trade networks with ‘various parts of the Empire’. Australia was not in the center of this account; rather it was discussed in terms of its ‘ports and harbours’, the

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98 Victorian Department of Public Instruction, “Social Studies: Geography (Grades IV. and V.)” in Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid, 22 November 1933, p. 473.
ways in which it was physically linked to a wider world. It was a journey that was supposed to be occurring as children studied it: imaginatively they were only once removed from it, physically not temporally. The actual reconstruction of this journey was possible, and might be experienced by these children later in life. This imaginative spatial map, it was hoped, would give children a global, or at least Imperial, perspective, one that de-centered Australia itself.

Global relationships were also embodied in pageants, imaginative structures into which children could physically enter. In a typical example of Empire Pageantry, ‘The Commonwealth of Nations’, Britannia called on the children of the Empire to bring her the produce of their various countries. Australia, a girl dressed in white and wearing wattle in her hair, brought wool, wheat, and fruit. The other Imperial nations, ordered by their geographical locations, and represented by children meant to symbolize their various constituent racial parts, likewise happily laid their offerings at Britannia’s feet. All then recited a celebratory verse of Empire, stressing its economic and racial might that had ‘made her feared and sought and loved and sung through centuries’. Essentially this pageant was the embodiment of the actual trade relations between Imperial center and periphery, in which all nations were equal under Britannia.

The seemingly contradictory message of global friendship was likewise embodied in pageants, replicas of those of Empire. In pageants for League of Nations Day and Christmas, the nations of the world were personified as children and became instant friends, with help of ‘Goodwill the Magician’, a ‘higher being’ like Britannia. Part of the public face of Empire had always to ‘civilize’ via culture and science, and this idea too was used to create an implicit parallel with the League of Nations. So the message that international friendship was an obligation of humanity was reinforced by League of Nations Day pageants featuring such characters as ‘the Spirit of Mankind’, who dismissed the warriors of the world as men who had helped only their own nations as compared to scientists, ‘men who have added to the sum of human happiness’.

In all these cases, then, pageants were used to posit the existence of structures

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within which people were imaged as working for the greatest good of that collectivity. Imagination was being stimulated via the embodiment of concepts, in such a way that children could identify themselves not only with Australia but also with the other children, and other lands, portrayed on the same plane and with the same relationship with a certain higher being – Britannia, Goodwill the Magician, or the Spirit of Mankind.

This highlights the apparent contradiction in what I have been describing. Could a radicalized version of the Australian past and present also be in concert with world friendship? Was imagination enough to teach children to value implicit cultural difference within a framework of unilinear racial and political development? This is a question I will explore in more depth in Chapter Three. For now suffice it to say that no contradiction was evident at the time, when the Empire was still considered by many as a paternalistic institution, and paternalism still meant a relationship of help for ‘primitive’ people who could be best governed by whites whose power was legitimized by their religious ‘goodness’. Aboriginal people at this time were publicly challenging this benevolent image, notably over the celebration of the sesquicentennial in 1938, of which the Aborigines Progressive Association pointed out that the celebrated white settlement meant the loss of Aboriginal life, freedom and land. Children, however, were taught simply that the British Empire was taught as standing for ‘freedom and justice’ and for the problematic ‘self-government’ of the colonies. And for the many Australians who felt doubtful about the efficacy of the League of Nations to unify the world, the British Empire had already proved its worth. It had created opportunities for colonial representatives to gather years before the League of Nation existed. Thus, the potential significance of the League of Nation’s model of fundamental cultural difference was lost to an Australia caught up in the British Empire.

104 Whitcombe’s Vivid History Reader, *The Expansion of the British Empire, Grade seven*, (Melbourne: Whitcombe and Tombs), 1945, p. 87.
World Wars, by their nature, leave the world very different; the experience of the second was a crucial element in the break-down of British Imperial hegemony and the racial suppositions that legitimized it. After the 1942 Japanese capture of the British naval base at Singapore many Australians lost faith in the defensive power of Britain. This experience was made more traumatic for Australians, according to David Day, because of what he labels the ‘colonial mentality’. He argues that Australians assumed British naval protection from Japan, failing to ensure an adequate defence force of their own, both because of cost and because Australian nationalism was so caught up in the Imperial relationship.\(^{107}\) While the United States partially took up the defensive promise, a void remained, one of confidence and identity that in the postwar world of nation-states had to be filled by Australia itself. As Stuart Ward has described it, the 1950s was a time of ‘the erosion of a wider sense of British community, and the erection of new conceptual boundaries between the various national communities that had once formed part of the greater Imperial whole’.\(^{108}\) Though the ‘White Australia’ policy remained, the legitimacy of racial divisions had been shaken by a combination of factors – Nazi policy, Europe’s war torn-state, the perceived need for Australia to ‘populate or perish’ – all of which led to the booming immigration of European people, and accompanying demographic and social transformations. These changes, and others, necessitated a shift in the ways Australian national identity could be articulated. The collective cultural shift was articulated around the post-war economic boom. Discursively, as well as actually, Australians united around the need to build up their nation’s economic strength, to become a fully modern industrial state and a global economic and political power. At the domestic level new nationalism, as Richard White has argued, centered no longer around discourses of British racial identity or heritage, but on the vaguely defined but more material Australian ‘way of life’.\(^{109}\)

This discursive shift was reflected in primary school curricula. Education in the


1950s had three intersecting goals: to turn the organic child into a rational, sociable Australian adult; to teach them the necessity of their involvement in the project of Australian national, and particularly economic, development; and to ensure that catastrophe, wars and teenage delinquency, were avoided. The educational project of the 1950s was coherent Australia, as politics, pedagogy and psychology were brought together in the cause of the Australian ‘way of life’. These goals overlapped at one point: material reality to be taught through its connections to the child’s experience.

Experience was the cornerstone of the 1952 curricular edifice, built as it was upon a social-developmental, stimulus-response psychology and development nationalism. Topics were related to the ‘age, interests, environment, and the experiences of the child … activity and experience are of great importance’. Moreover, the course was structured so that it would remain relevant to the normative child’s expanding experience and interest. Thus, the course started off in the home, and moved ever outwards.

Beginners – The Home
Grade 1 – The Family and its Helpers
Grade 2 – How the Community Lives and Works
Grade 3 – Beyond the Neighborhood
Grade 4 – The World about Me
Grade 5 – Our own Land
Grade 6 – Lands of Our Fathers

This course was profoundly normalizing. The world of each child was assumed to be roughly the same, claiming that each should live in a nuclear family with siblings, pets and friends, to go shopping with their mother and driving with their father. Familial relationships were set up so that of children in the beginners’ grade teachers were told: ‘mother is still the most important person in his life… he is eager to talk of mother, father, new baby brother, his pets or a birthday party.’ And later, as part of an example lesson, the teacher is supposed to have asked ‘Who bought these new things?’, to which the class responded ‘Mummy’, and to ‘But where did the money come from?’

110 Victoria Education Department, Course of Study for Primary Schools: Social Studies (Melbourne: Victoria Education Department, 1954), p. 3.
111 Ibid. p. 4.
‘Daddy’. This was reinforced in the reading resources given to children in the 1950s. The Grade 1 reader was a series of pieces about children’s family, their pets, toys and games. In the Grade 2 reader ‘Holidays’, the children go on family expeditions into the community, to the beach, the circus, the park, and so on. Moreover, the child’s interest in these topics was assumed to be a natural corollary of their psychological development. A child who did not show the requisite interest in the primary school course could be labelled, even at that young age, as socially problematic.

After Grade 6, history and geography were split, history focusing on Europe, geography on continuing the outward expansion into the wider world, and social studies detailing the relationship between humans and their material lives.

Grade 7 – History – Ancient civilizations OR the making of Europe  
– Geography – The home district, Victoria and the world  
– Social Studies – The local and world environment OR Satisfaction of Man’s primary needs

Grade 8 – History – British history in outline OR Expansion of Europe and the Development of the middle-class OR Europe in the middle ages and today  
– Geography – Regional studies of the New World  
– Social Studies – Man the primary producer OR Man the Mechanic and Merchant (sic)

Crucial to the whole course was the ‘Australian way of life’, defined for children as ‘traditionally British, a common language, a love of freedom, individuality, enlightenment, culture – basically a Christian way of life’. In stating such a thing educators were not simply describing Australians, but were also creating an ideal for children to grow towards and migrants to be assimilated to fit. This future would not be Communist, but free, liberal and Christian. But for these to be accepted by children as relevant goals, they had to believe that they, and other Australians, did live this life. This required a pedagogy based on experience.

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112 Victorian Education Department, “Social Studies: Revised Course for Primary Schools”, *Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid*, 24 January 1952, p. 17.
115 Ibid, p. 99
The key term in the 1952 course was interdependence, a relationship children were to learn to recognize as inhering between ‘individuals, communities and nations’.\(^{116}\) So, for example, in the Grade 5 course ‘Australians All’, the nation would be summed up with the questions ‘what does our own neighbourhood give (sell) to people in other parts of Australia? What do other parts of Australia give us? What does the city give to the country - the country to the city?’ This would unite Australians despite the fact that ‘some live in the tropics, some in the mountains, some in the desert’.\(^{117}\) The child’s experience of one part, the neighbourhood, and one aspect, economic products, would provide an understanding and loyalty to the whole. Within this structure, global economic relationships were largely ignored, since they would undermine the message of interdependent self-sufficiency locked inside the nation-state. Australia’s continuing economic relationship with Britain was realigned, no longer dependent, but interdependent. In brackets it was stated that ‘Some stress should be laid on Britain’s [industrial] effort to-day, and on Australia’s part in supplying her with raw materials’.\(^{118}\)

This type of parallel structural relationship, combined with the emphasis on national economic need, was also used to make the migration of European immigrants appear wholly positive. ‘Now Australia is seeking to build up her national strength in order to develop her resources to the full. Consequently she is welcoming new-comers from lands that formed part of our western civilization. These people in their turn are glad of the chance to make homes in a new land of opportunity and hope. Once again we find the need of one for another’.\(^{119}\) European migrants, in other words, would, because of their shared ‘civilization’, labour for the good of themselves and Australia.

According to modernization theory each nation would go through certain stages towards the shared goal of modernity. These nations, just like the postwar child, were expected neither to have free will nor to want it. It is, of course, no coincidence that these two projects, individual and national development, occurred together, nor that they were both premised on unilinear developmental series. Both were informed by the same modes

\(^{116}\) Victoria Education Department, *Course of Study for Primary Schools: Social Studies* (Melbourne: Victoria Education Department, 1954), p. 3.

\(^{117}\) “Social Studies: Revised Course for Primary Schools, Grade V”, in *Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid*, 22 April 1952, p. 96.

\(^{118}\) “Social Studies: Revised Course for Primary Schools, Grade VI”, in *Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid*, 22 April 1952, p. 99.

\(^{119}\) Ibid, p. 100.
of thought, and both required the same model citizen. Educational psychology promised to produce a citizen ‘naturally’ and the nation-state promised that this adult would naturally fit into the economic and social structures of that state.

Under this new rubric of experience, the past, that ‘foreign country’ that children could have no experience of, had to be taught differently. In ‘social studies’ no balance between subjects was necessary, and history was subordinated to experiential human geography. Children would be more clearly situated in space than in time: ‘although necessary links with the past and possible links with the future are to be established, the principal emphasis is on the contemporary scene’. The past that was taught had a very clear purpose – to inculcate an identity based on their actual lives in Australia and as Australians. History was used to explain the present, not, as previously, to help define it. Thus it was hoped that this new course would ‘arouse in him (sic) an appreciation of his own community and its traditions’, but not an appreciation of the past per se.

The past was used to teach an appreciation of the Australian community through a teleology of technological sophistication. The first time children were introduced to the past, in Grade 4’s ‘The World about Me’, schools, clothes, food and homes were used as the experiential hook into the past. People in the past, it was taught, also experienced these as part of their material reality, but lesser versions of them. The point of the historical aspect of the course was that ‘people in olden days found out many things, and we benefit from their discoveries’. Given that model of time, it was only natural and fair that contemporary people should work towards material developments that would be of benefit to the future.

This model of the past was also used to teach children about the relationship between Britain and Australia. In a Grade 6 course named ‘Lands of our Fathers’, Australian demographic structure provided an experiential hook. Children were taken on an imaginative travelogue to teach them about the migration of people from Europe to the New World, including Australia. This journey started and ended in Australia, and

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120 Victoria Education Department, *Course of Study for Primary Schools: Social Studies* (Melbourne: Victoria Education Department, 1954), p. 3.
121 Ibid. p. 3. Italics my own.
122 Victorian Education Department, “Social Studies: Revised Course for Primary Schools, grade IV”, in *Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid*, 25 March 1952, p. 65.
included leaps across time as part of its argumentative strategy. Unlike previously, this journey was not imaginative, but explanatory; it was not created to be recreated, but to explain and differentiate. A brief history of discovery, settlement and the subsequent development of New World nations was given and since their geographic separateness was an integral structural part of these lessons, their separate historical trajectories were clear. Britain and Australia had developed in parallel, because the ‘British people’, like Australians, were ‘themselves greatly influenced by great migratory movements in times gone by’. While British tradition had been imported to Australia, this was no longer a relationship of dependence. This was couched in language that the socially developing child would have been expected to understand; ‘our ties with the Land of our Fathers are not quite so strong as they were in days gone by, for we are now grown up’. This further legitimized the idea that migrants were natural and necessary if nations were to make economic progress.

Australia was spatially and socially the centre of this travelogue, a reconfiguration made possible by the recognition that Australia had a history separate from Europe. In the Grade 5 course, ‘Our Own Land’, children were taught about ‘the Australia our Ancestors Found’. This was an already existent place, and one in which Aborigines were the ‘original inhabitants’, a ‘land of oddities.’ The early European inland explorers would then be touched on, not as a topic in exploration and discovery, but as a ‘means of introducing build and climate’ of the continent. Australia, in this new curriculum structure, stood physically alone in the present.

The contrast I have been drawing is quite simple. In the 1930s the curriculum was structured as a set of developmental series. Imagination operated within this structure to create emotional linkages across time, space and cultural boundaries. In the 1950s structure became all-important. Not only was the curriculum itself structured to mirror the expected development of children, but at each of those stages they were taught of the normality of the familial, community and national structures they would now be aware of.

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123 Victorian Education Department, “Social Studies: Revised Course for Primary Schools, Grade VI, in Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid, 22 April 1952, p. 99.
124 Victorian Education Department, “Social Studies: Revised Course for Primary Schools, Grade V”, in Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid, 22 April 1952, p. 94.
inhabiting. They were provided with no operator through which to discuss or explain difference.

This had profound implications, some of which need to be made explicit. After the 1950s, with the effort to excise imagination from the primary school curriculum from political identity scholars forgot to be aware of the role fantasy played in nationalism. Of course, the ‘reality’ of the 1950s was also a type of fantasy, in that it was a selective assortment of aspects of reality to which the child was tied with certain concepts. But the belief that this was real, and that fantasy should not play a role in how people understood the world, left children’s fantasy lives a space underutilized by education. This space was made entirely open to films, books, comics and so on, to a process that we now call ‘cultural colonialism’. The recognition of these media, but not that they had been effectively invited in by the new psychology, surely contributed to the social panics around the impact of the United States on permissive juvenile culture.

We must recognize that children in both eras were being taught to be nationalistic. According to the Collins English Dictionary a nation is ‘a community of people with a territory, economic life, language etc. in common’. Under this definition the national\imperial complex with which Australian children of the 1930s were taught to identify could be called a nation. But given that a state is ‘a body of people politically organized under one government within a definite territory’ it is only in the 1950s that children were taught to identify with a nation that was also a state. Before that children were taught that Australia’s territory was indefinite, vast and Imperial. To argue that the 1950s simply represents a dawning of a nationalist age in Australia would be to crucially misunderstand the nature of imperialism, and the possibilities it held for group identification. It is not that the 1950s was simply a more nationalist age, but that the perception of the nation itself had contracted into the political borders of the state, a form of nationalism with which we are more familiar.

To misunderstand this has several consequences. First, if we ignore pre-World War Two nationalism, we are unable to see the ways in which it provided precedents, to be adopted and repudiated, in the following decades. I will expand on the complexity of the

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125 Indeed this is the definition given in all the main English Language Dictionaries, except interestingly, the Oxford English Dictionary.
relationship between them, as taught to primary school children, in the next chapter. Second, if we listen only to the historians who supported Australian independence from Britain, and most do, we fail to see the many positive elements that membership of a larger entity provided, notably the more global perspective and the liberal humanist Christian cultural ideal. I will discuss this further in Chapter Three.
Chapter 2 – The Ambiguity of Imperial National Identity: Literary Style as a Lesson in Belonging

‘If there is a break [after 1942], it has nothing to do with our having “seen through” Britain at last or with our replacing one dependency with another, but with a new way of seeing Australia itself, and ourselves and one another... through eyes that had experienced the business of seeing only here, in the light as it falls in this place only; through what life had revealed to us, and would continue to reveal to us, only here. The freedom this offered was that we could now, without losing ourselves, make whatever relationships we pleased with the rest of the world...’

So far I have outlined broad changes to the teaching and learning that had resulted intentionally from applying changed theoretical psychology to primary school curriculum to meet new political needs. In this chapter I am going to move into more complex territory, into the senses of identity and belonging that inhered in less purposive parts of schooling. What does it mean to describe 1950s nationalism as ‘transitional’ in the case of primary schools, institutions deeply committed to (re)producing political identities? What did this nationalism look like? How completely did it excise Britain, her Empire, and the world from its purview?

To answer these questions I compare the literary resources given to children in the 1930s and 1950s. Literary resources, texts that were to help children learn to read and to appreciate ‘good’ writing, are less obviously ideological than are curricula. However, the selection of writings was based on beliefs about their aesthetic value, on the usefulness of their content, and on the pleasure that children were expected to gain from them. In other words, they were selected on their cultural and social value, and with reference to beliefs about the child’s interests and learning processes. Like curricula, literacy resources have power to create and reinforce certain models of the social, cultural and epistemological world.

Literary resources are important for this project for a deeper reason also. Because

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we are dealing here with history, with actual peopled contexts, we need to be aware that change and continuity, paradigm shifts and social conservation can and do occur together. Not all Australians wanted to loosen ties with the British Empire; for many, especially those of English origin, these ties continued to be key to their identities. Simultaneously many, if not most, Australians were keen to see Australia become politically and culturally independent of Britain and her Empire to some degree. These attitudes were not mutually exclusive, partly because people can happily exist in a state of ambiguity. This state is revealed by literary resources, because they were not seen as a politicized domain of schooling.

More importantly, however, these two states of being – of being an Imperial Australian and being an Australian of a fully independent nation-state – were compatible. They were, and had long been, connected within the worlds of meaning, as a whole imagined community, despite the occasionally divergent interests of the two entities. So, while in the grand narrative of Australian history we can talk about the 1950s as the period when Australians started to move away from the British Empire, we are talking about a move from one established part of a whole imagined community to emphasize another part of the same. These continuities are made clearer by this exercise here in comparison.

In the previous chapter I discussed one way in which the move from a British Imperial to a more Australian identity was accomplished. In this chapter I will discuss another way; the ‘style’ of literary resources, but here the contrast between the two decades is less clear, the continuities more obvious. In this chapter I will be telling a story of the complexity and ambiguity of nationalism, as forms of imaging and reality, emotion and knowledge gradually changed. I argue that there is a shift in content and style of reading resources from the 1930s to the 1950s. In the 1930s, educators used fantasy and fact to make the international real, especially the linkages between Australia and the British Empire. In the 1950s, educators used fantasy to make domestic structures – social and economic structures, and royalty
and the past – real. I also briefly discuss the role of fantasy to provide ‘instinctual relief’ to aid the normal development of children. I focus particularly on the connections made to the land and natural environment, and with the people and social world. These include the metaphors used to explain concepts such as the ‘Empire’, ‘the Queen’ and her 1954 visit to Australia, ‘home’ and travel. It also includes the specific forms of stories, their certain characters and settings. Caught up in all of this were the specific pieces of knowledge that children were intended to acquire about the history, geography and economy of the nation. Because knowledge is always related to power, the factual content of literary resources take on a very definite political aspect.

This chapter is informed by two literacy resources given to children across the period. The School Paper was published monthly in three sets – one for Grades 3 and 4, another for Grades 5 and 6, and one for Grades 7 and 8. In their 16 size A5 pages they contained a mixture of stories, poems, plays, songs and pictures. Many issues followed themes, often relating to the month of publication: significant days, the season and so on. Many, particularly in the 1950s, contained columns built on month by month. The Victorian Department responsible for Education published them, and had done so since 1896. Their content generally followed the curriculum. They provided lessons (including dictation), were sources of information for projects and handwork, and were used as general reading resources.

Over the two decades, the content of the Papers changed in ways that were in line with the changing attitudes and aims of the men employed to edit them. The Department of Public Instruction\Education, an institution aware of its ultimate responsibility to society, employed certain men in approval of their knowledge and opinions. A brief look at these men will highlight the interdependence of individuals, institutions and society in directing social attitudinal change.

Overall control of the content of the School Papers was in the hands of the Editor
of Department Publications, a member of the Publications Office of the Department of Public Instruction/Education. This office comprised five staff members until 1945, when the number was increased to six. Editors tended to have been trained as teachers, and often also held a university Arts degree, either at Bachelor or Master’s level. It was not an especially high status position, with one editor – John Ramsden Lyall – resigning to become district inspector for the schools of the Mildura region in 1940, a post several rungs from the top of even the inspectorial ladder. The post seems to have appealed to men who had a particular interest in literature and writing. Of the three men who held this post between 1925 and 1966 two, namely George Wallace and (William) Lloyd Williams, were amateur poets themselves, and published their own work within the Paper. These men embody a movement away from writings that relied on already published, often canonical, works, to those written in Australia specifically for an audience of Australian children.

The men’s actual aesthetic and social opinions varied, however, and this had an impact on the types of writing they selected for publication. George Wallace, editor from 1925 until 1934, has been described as having great personal charm, commanding scholarship, ‘wide reading, flair for languages, and … powers of lucid, and where needed, of pungent expression’. He was a man deeply interested in the children he selected writings for, and was very much a man of his time: a supporter of monarchy, the Empire, the white-led racial hierarchy. Some selected quotations from his ‘Replies’ illustrate this. In a poem entitled ‘Pioneers’ Wallace wrote ‘Monarchs who claimed their loyalty these too have passed long since but viewless forms would smile to see a likeness in the Prince’. According to Wallace, Australia was settled by loyal British subjects, and that loyalty was in no way threatened in modern Australia – Prince Edward would be a good king and one who had Australian approval. He believed Aboriginal Australians were made happier by white colonization, a process that saved them from ‘famine, fear, insecurity, and superstition’. But he was also a nationalist, describing

Australians as suffering from ‘incurable modesty’ about their country – ‘it’s astonishing how little Australians know of Australia’.\textsuperscript{131} Judging from the number of letters sent to him he was popular among children.

His replacement, John Ramsden Lyall, had worked as sub-editor under Wallace since 1927, and during his years as editor was largely ‘carrying on and expanding’ Wallace’s work.\textsuperscript{132} In his implementation of the new curriculum, however, he is revealed as a keen proponent of internationalism. Under his editorship the myths, stories and facts about ‘children in other lands’ became a major feature of the paper. These are mixed with writings of ‘worth’ from the high-culture English language canon (especially Shakespeare and Dickens, and living notables like Kipling and Masefield), and from English language writings for children (Carroll, Barrie, and so on).

(William) Lloyd Williams took over from Lyall in 1940, so that by the time of the 1952 course revision he was a well-established and experienced editor. He was held in high regard by the Education Department, repeatedly receiving special mentions in their Annual Reports.\textsuperscript{133} He was dedicated to the post, occupying it until his retirement in 1966. A large part of his success in this role can be attributed to his interest in local affairs, and his willingness to represent these within the paper. He was a keen local historian and a scoutmaster, as well as a creditable poet. He was popular with local authors due to his pleasure in publishing their works instead of ‘established material that could be found in books’.\textsuperscript{134} The publication of local authors in the School Paper was part of a wider program to teach children about their own country, a country that they were taught that they belonged to physically and ought to be proud of.

The promotion of nationalism was an explicit intention running under this project in the 1950s. Books by Australian authors were celebrated annually in ‘Australian Literature

\textsuperscript{131} George Wallace, “Reply to Letters”, The School Paper, March 1934, Grades 7 and 8, p. 30
\textsuperscript{132} Anonymous, “Retirement of Mr. J. R. Lyall”, Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid, 24 March 1964, p. 328.
\textsuperscript{133} Over the years relevant to us, for example, the Report stated: ‘The publications branch deserves special mention. … The editor serves on several departmental committees and gives valued service in publicising departmental activities’. P. P. Inchbold, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1951-52 (Melbourne: Government Printer), 1953, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{134} Anonymous, “Retirement of the Editor – Mr. W. L. Williams” Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid 24 March 1966, pp. 103-105.
Week’, held each May in commemoration of Australian poet Henry Lawson’s birthday. The organizers intended the event to establish Australian writings in a new set of literature separate from non-Australian publications, and to encourage child readership. Moreover, through the long-standing association of written culture with high culture that we see in the continuing publication of Shakespeare for schools, Australian culture would gain a degree of legitimacy in children’s eyes through seeing it represented in print. In Williams the Department had an editor in keeping with the spirit of the era, willing and able to use his own aesthetic judgment to publish material written and set in Australia rather than those, as previously, of the wider (often Imperial) world.

I also look at the *Victorian Readers*, a series of eight books, one for each grade, published between 1928 and 1930 as a literacy resource. The content of the *Victorian Readers* was selected with an eye to its literary merit, informativeness, and interestingness. They were meant to help children ‘gain a knowledge of their rich heritage, and to acquire a well-founded pride of race’.

They began to be revised over the 1950s to become ‘in line with up to date productions’ used elsewhere in Australia and overseas. But, despite the recognition that they were no longer suitable, their replacement was a slow process. Readers for infants were replaced first in 1951, while the more senior grades had to wait through the financial woes and disorganization of the Education Department before the final in this series was published in 1964, 13 years after the first.

The revised readers followed the same psychological basis as the curriculum; that is, they moved outwards from the family to community, supposedly in line with the developing interests of the child.

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136 PROV, VPRS 892/P1 – Education Department, Special Case Files, unit 15 doc 1207 – School Readers, 1947-1969, item “Memo from Standing Committee for Revision of Curriculum of Primary Schools”.
137 PROV, VA 892/P1 – Education Department, Special Case Files, unit 15, SC 1207 – “School Readers, 1947-1969”.
138 The *Victorian Readers* seem to have had a significant impact on their audience. They were reissued in 1986 by the Victorian Education Department, and used in adult education classes. A book was issued to
Continuities exist in the resources used in the two decades and this cannot be surprising to us. Only twenty years separate them, albeit twenty years during which world-changing events occurred – the 1930s economic Depression and eventual recovery, World War Two, the 1950s economic boom and, for Australia, dramatically increased migration. The common periodisation using World War Two as a separator, as in the formulation ‘post-1945’, wildly overstates the difference between the two eras. Change is governed by events, but is also constrained by the more gradual replacement of one generation, with a worldview to some degree shared by another. Change is also moderated by the socially conservative impact of tradition. The governance of Australia in the 1950s provides a perfect example. Robert Menzies, with his deep mental and emotional connection to the British and the British Empire, was a man of his time – the time of his upbringing and socialization, though now criticized for his conservative politics, though still revered by conservatives. Thus, historical arguments based around Australia’s post-war change in orientation away from Britain and towards the United States can only ever speak of elements in political, economic and social life. They are based around a temporal break rather than the gradual changes in population, and necessarily fail to illuminate the incremental changes in perspective of generations.

There are also more pragmatic factors to consider in the question of change and continuity at primary schools. In both decades the financial situation of schools and many parents was far from ideal. In the 1930s many parents were struggling against the world economic depression, and for the worst-affected even keeping a child in school and out of the workforce represented a major financial burden. By the 1950s class sizes were large, school buildings often inadequate. Many parents had difficulty finding money to purchase textbooks for their children, and there are multiple letters throughout both decades, and even into the 1960s, to the department responsible for education requesting that textbooks and other resources remain the same so that they could be passed from help in these lessons – Barry Dowling, *Discussion Notes on the Victorian Readers, Grade 1 to Grade 8*, (Melbourne: Council of Adult Education, 1994).

139 Judith Brett, in her sensitive psychological reading of Robert Menzie’s personality, argues, moreover, that his attachment had been created through imagination. ‘His first association with Britain was through books, creating an imagined relationship so strong that it could transform the weatherboard house in the small Mallee country town in which he spent his childhood into a “cottage in the wheat lands”.’ Judith Brett, *Robert Menzies’ Forgotten People* (Chippendale [N.S.W.]: Macmillan Australia, 1992), p. 134.
An awareness of the financial strain put on parents had some retarding effect on the degree of change that curriculum officials felt suitable to both decades. Textbooks continued to be considered vital adjuncts to the learning process, not by curriculum designers, but by teachers and parents. In the 1950s it was stated that textbooks should be seldom be used, that they would be replaced instead by a school reference library. But Whitcombe and Tombs continued to publish new editions of the series produced specifically for the 1934 curriculum and letters continued to complain of textbook costs.

The continuity this reveals in how social studies courses were actually taught, reminds us of another issue that cannot now be quantitatively assessed: teachers’ ability to teach in the ways curriculum design required. Speaking of Queensland, Peter Meadmore argues that teachers’ own level of education and the quality of the teacher training they received had a critical impact on their ability, as opposed to their willingness, to implement new curricula. He reminds us that teachers of differing ages and levels of experience occupy the system at any given time, and that their knowledge and habits played a crucial role in what they were willing and able to teach. As Leonard John Prior, lecturer at the Melbourne Teachers’ College between 1937 and 1947, argued, ‘Freedom has not been exercised by all teachers and too often there has been a slavish adherence to one group of textbooks. … Proper courses in social studies, that is, courses marked by a high degree of integration or correlation, have rarely emerged from the revision, and therefore, we should admit that to-day we are still teaching history, not social studies’. Before going into more detail about the content of our sources, we have to look briefly at two theorists who laid the foundation for the study of texts as political, as objects that create attitudes and power relationships. They are Raymond Williams and Hayden White. Raymond Williams, a Marxist theorist of literature, argued in *Marxism and Literature* that language is one of the first sites through which social change

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140 PROV, VPRS 892/p1, Education Department – special case files, unit 10, file 1199 – “Textbooks 1935-1968”
emerges. To him language is an active entity; one that defines and constructs what is ‘real’ in the social world. In his model, semi-articulated ‘structures of feeling’ result from real economic and political change, and gradually become embedded in writings. It is only when change has language attached that people are able to understand, articulate and discuss that change. Language change is embedded in a wider context of cultural expression that Williams refers to as ‘style’. ‘Style’ encompasses the various cultural forms, written, performed, built and so on, by which social change is articulated: ‘what really changes is something quite general, over a wide range, and the description that often fits the change best is the literary term ‘style’. It is a general change, rather than a set of deliberate choices … what we are defining is a particular quality of social experience and relationship, historically distinct from other particular qualities, which gives the sense of a generation or a period.’

‘Style’ then is a feeling we get as modern observers about what makes one era different from another. This feeling is not something wishy-washy, but an active embodiment of understandings and emotional responses transmitted to the viewer or reader. As such, the various formal elements, in this case linguistic, that make it up, should be identified, studied, and discussed in terms of the ways in which they distribute power.

Hayden White went further in arguing for the historically-specific, political nature of texts. In his 1973 *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe*, he argued that historical writing can be analyzed in terms of structure and poetic language, and that these create implicit political/ideological arguments not just about events, but about the nature of the social world and its potentialities for the future. He argues that histories are works of art, prefigured by the choices, not necessarily conscious, a historian makes about the poetic language used. Histories should not be assessed in terms of ‘truth’. Instead, ‘the only grounds for preferring one over another are moral or aesthetic ones’.

Despite many scholars having criticized White for his attack on ‘historical truth’, his work has been very influential. These two theorists have been important in informing my methodological approach, particularly in their insistence that texts are political and are a representative part of the wider political culture.

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Long before theorists supplied us with ways to deconstruct the power relations of texts, it was obvious that literature was part of the building of national sentiment. In Australia, writers like Charles Harpur were writing in a nationalist vein in the mid-nineteenth century. The most iconic and popular nationalist writers were probably ‘Banjo’ Patterson and Henry Lawson working in the 1890s. There has been continued academic debate over the degree to which their writing represented reality. 145 But that their construction of the Australian person and experience was widely influential is demonstrated by the success of their Australian publishing house Angus and Robertson. 146 Since then multiple authors have been implicated in the creation of nationalism through their constructions of ‘typical’ Australian people, experiences and settings. Examples are multiple: Christina Stead, Patrick White, Peter Carey, Murray Bail and many more.

But, of course, writings intended for children also play a role in identity formation, one that is often disguised by fantasy. Fantasy writing, a blanket term that covers writing that contains non-human characters, un-earthly settings, or non-possible events, has long been a major genre for children. Although its non-reality might lull us into assuming that it is also non-ideological, it creates knowledge and powerful emotional responses in readers, which make them perhaps more important than more overtly political genres. 147 We merely have to reflect on the fact that London’s Paddington station continues to have stalls selling memorabilia of the bear to whom it gave its name;
or to reflect on the scale of tourism to the Lakes District setting of Beatrix Potter’s stories to realize that fantasy characters do impact people’s emotional, cognitive and actual lives. In the Australian context, likewise, it has been argued that Mary Gibbs ‘gumnut babies’ provided a lens through which Australians were better able to see their nation’s flora.  

According to Heather Scutter, during the first half of the twentieth century writing for children tended to be a low paid, low status occupation. It was undertaken mainly by women, who were forced, if they were to make any money, to write a lot of books and aim them at as wide an audience as possible. As a result they were not age specific, and their settings and characters tended to be stereotypical and idealized. Holden in his book *The Golden Age* argues that, in fact, this made possible the zenith for fantasy illustration in the 1930s. Authors/artists were able to publish glossy and popular books that were enjoyed by people of various ages. 

Gradually authors gained an increased awareness of children’s needs, and attempted to address child readers more directly. By the 1940s and 1950s it had become easier for Australian authors to be published, a fact that encouraged writing for children. These offerings were generally of a higher standard than previously, with more realistically drawn child characters and more obviously Australian settings. But, according to Holden, the quality of fantasy writing had declined. It had become a problematic genre in a world that many adults viewed with suspicion and fear. In the words of fantasy illustrator Ida Rentoul Outhwaite ‘the fairies fled, appalled at the atom bomb’. 

The literacy resources we look at here did not flee from the fairies. In both decades, although more so in the 1950s, there are multiple examples of what might be called ‘generic fantasy’ – stories and plays about elves and fairies, about kings and queens. That these were a dominant feature of fantasy writing in both decades is not surprising, pointing as it does to the continued existence of a shared ‘white’ Commonwealth world of cultural imagination, as of language. Even today children hear

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about Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty, stories that were probably European folk tales and that have come to us from European authors, but which place us firmly in the English-speaking, or at least Western, world.

Their increase in the 1950s may come as a surprise, given what I have already said about the increasing emphasis on experience and reality in pedagogy in this decade. But both trends are tied to the same psychological model. Freudian and stimulus\response psychology had taught that fantasy could supply satisfaction for children’s instinctive urges, allowing children to live them out in socially harmless ways. As a result, in the 1950’s stories, children could often speak to their fantasy counterparts, or were otherwise made complicit in their unreality, giving them a modicum of power over their own fantasy lives and ensuring they did not fully lose sight of ‘real life’. Kings and queens were the most popular theme, one treated with increasing humour. In the 1930s royalty was imaged as serious, powerful, and good. By the 1950s royalty most consistently appeared in plays in which the young prince or princess challenges the stereotypes of fairytale royalty, though by their conclusions, the status quo was largely unchanged. ‘The Princess who Wanted Black Hair’ had adventures as a brunette, but decided to keep her golden hair after all; in ‘The Comfortable Cushion’ a boy and girl accidentally glued a baron to a chair, but soon we find out he is the dastardly thief of the queen’s jewels, at which point everything is resolved.151 Children who entered into the fantasy world of these stories, then, were implicated in the exercise of power, surely appealing to them, but were reassured that this power was limited and that the structures they knew and lived amongst would not change in their essentials.

But how was the actual royal status quo conceived? In the 1930s the British Empire was a global entity made up of real connections, notably embodied by members of the royal family. Each Empire Day the School Paper published a message from the King, invariably emphasizing his affection and pride in the Empire or Commonwealth. Sourced as these were from the heart of Empire and reaching outwards to various colonial societies, they acted to bring the Empire together. They implied the King was concerned about the world’s problems, particularly the people in the Empire. But the

British Empire, with India and its African territories was not racially unified, and its non-white subject peoples were drawn into a very different political program. The British Empire over the 1930s was widely criticised, particularly by the anti-colonialist United States, for their treatment of non-white peoples. These divisions were not part of primary school lessons on the Empire or its role in the world, however. The question of who the British people were was sidestepped, as the body and the words of the King linked the various nations of the Empire\Commonwealth to Britain and to each other. ‘May the future bring peace and understanding throughout the world, prosperity and happiness to the British people….’\textsuperscript{152} The \textit{Paper} published a biography of King George on his death, in which he was described as a ‘true ambassador’ of the empire. ‘Millions of those who

\textsuperscript{152} Anonymous, “The King’s Message”, \textit{The School Paper}, May 1936, Grades 7 and 8, p. 50.
“Our New King as an Indian Brave”. King Edward the eighth embodied the links between the possessions of the British Empire, links based on respect and sympathy for cultural difference.

would never have been able to make the trip to England to see their king felt that they really knew him. King Edward, likewise, was claimed to embody this link: we see him in the costume of Canadian Indians, a sign of his ability to cross cultural boundaries to tie the British Empire together.

Queen Elizabeth, by contrast, in the era of decolonisation was used less as direct embodiment of Empire, and more as a symbol of social and familial stability. Fantasy was used to create the belief that emotional connection to royalty was a natural structure of the world, experienced by all manner of natural phenomena, and thus expected from all normal children.

Fantasy pieces of this kind were particularly common in 1954, the year of Queen Elizabeth’s visit to Australia. The excitement children were expected to feel was naturalized in explicit statements, such as the Governor General’s message to all grades that they were, or should be, ‘looking forward to the visit’ of ‘the Queen, your own Queen, the Queen of Australia’. All Australians were painted as sharing this excitement for the special event, the first visit to Australia by a reigning monarch. There were stories and poems about the thrill of the Queen’s parades, of parents and grandparents expectant during the 1954 visit and with vivid memories of earlier royal visits. In one story an Aboriginal girl was so eager to meet the Queen she risked her own life to give her a painted emu egg. But it was not just claimed natural that all Australian people would be excited about the tour: Australian flora and fauna, a gust of wind, and an aeroplane all shared it. Even stars and abstract concepts were included. In ‘To Hail the Queen’, the stars help a boy and girl to convince Time to move more quickly so that the parade would start sooner. Moreover, nature seemed to have an

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161 Kylie Tennant, “To Hail the Queen”, *The School Paper*, February 1954, Grades 7 and 8, p. 4.
obsession with electing
“Melbourne Greets Our Royal Visitors”. The city wears its transformative finery, and its families prepare for Queen Elizabeth’s 1954 visit. 
*The School Paper*, Grades 5 and 6, May 1934, cover.
royals for themselves. The city of Melbourne, too, was dressed up and ready for Queen Elizabeth, as shown by the School Paper cover. In short, children were being taught that royalty was an entirely natural and real structure, and that devotion to it was normal and natural also, especially within the Australian physical setting.

The 1954 royal tour was the first time a reigning monarch had visited Australia. Tour events were phenomenally well attended by an estimated 6-7 million people. Jane Connors has suggested that this was due to the sense of unity that the Queen seemed to embody. Royalty, she argues, was seen at that time as apolitical and pre-political. It was linked to other powerful shared ideas of the era – family, racial exclusivity and national defense. Moreover, it was reinforced by the most politically powerful bodies of the time – church, media and parliament. In part this was also a reaction to the sensed loss of political connections to Britain, a void that was not yet (and, given many Australians continuing anti-republicanism, is still not) adequately filled. But it was also due to what Queen Elizabeth herself meant to Australians, embodying concepts fundamental to Australian culture. According to Aron Paul, Queen Elizabeth was symbolized as a return to stability and tradition. A young mother, she embodied the gendered tradition of the stable nuclear family. This was even more significant because of the abdication of King Edward, a man who had long been associated with modernity, with individuality and desire taking scandalous precedence over duty and tradition.

But it is also argued that there was something odd in the way the tour was celebrated. Peter Spearritt, for example, has described the tour as containing a ‘strange mixture of obedience to the throne and nationalistic fervor’. The mixture only appears strange in retrospect, from which vantage point we consider the nation-state nationalism as the norm. Spearritt is describing an element of the transitional nature of the 1950s, life

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between Imperial and nation-state nationalisms. The nature of this transition is highlighted by the metaphors through which the Empire/Commonwealth were explained to children. Metaphors, linguistic structures by which one thing is made into another, show the thematic continuity we might expect, with change visible in emphasis, not type.

In the 1930s metaphors constructed Australia as a part of Empire, connected not only to Britain, but also to the other colonies. The family was a dominant metaphor. In the 1930s Britain was described as ‘the motherland’, while the people in other Commonwealth countries were ‘brother folks’.166 Empire was often likened to a tree. The Empire grew ‘as trees grow while others sleep’ children were told, and while they need be aware of the ‘conscious human factor too’, this was part of a ‘purpose greater than their own’.167 This tree did not just stretch over global space, but also through time, helping construct Australian history as part of the much larger teleology of English/Imperial time. The coronation ceremony for a new king of the Empire was ‘living history, reaching back to the very roots of humanity’.168 A tree is beneficent and natural, and, in the mindset of that era’s Christian majority, one of God’s creations. Its growth is natural, as is its ceasing to grow. It took in all Imperial nations, not just Britain and Australia. In all these ways it was an ideal metaphor for the Empire of the 1930s. And if a tree was not quite solid enough, children could also appeal to the metaphor of the Empire as a building, so that ‘none can hurt our Empire\and none her pillars shake’.169

The family was also a common and powerful metaphor in the 1950s, but now it was the relationship with Britain itself, not Empire, that was the focus. Britain was the ‘small, wise mother’ of Australia.170 Attachment to Britain was essential to life, described as a small but strong heart: ‘the heart that beats to keep alive the greatest giant on earth was only small’.171 The metaphor of the family was used in cases where challenges to the

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national attachment to Britain were discussed. For example, in ‘our British family’ children were taught that ‘the people in other lands may not understand why we do not forget all about our mother now that we rule ourselves’, surely an unthinkable possibility to the seven and eight year old children to whom it was directed.\(^\text{172}\) By the 1950s the tree was no longer used as an Imperial metaphor in the *School Paper*, presumably because a tree is too solid and static an entity to allow its constituent parts sufficient independence in that increasingly nation-statist decade. Plant metaphors were still in evidence however.

In one story, when Dick planted his empire garden, rose in the center represented England and a large wattle tree nearby represented Australia. This was a garden subject to odd meteorological effects: observing the garden one child remarked on ‘how the other plants nod towards [the central rose] when the wind blows’.\(^\text{173}\) In all these metaphors 1950s Australia was being given some latitude in behavior, but was ‘naturally’ connected to Britain, and would respond as such, especially whenever trouble was afoot.

Novelist Murray Bail describes the Australian ‘national landscape’ thus: it ‘is an interior landscape, fitted out with blue sky and the obligatory tremendous gum tree, perhaps some merinos chewing on the bleached out grass in the foreground… Every country has its own landscape which deposits itself in layers on the consciousness of its citizens, thereby canceling the exclusive claims made by all other national landscapes’.\(^\text{174}\) Writing in 1998, Bail was arguing that even the Merino sheep constitute part of an exclusive, defining Australian landscape. The sheep have been transformed into an Australian citizen, a symbol of independent Australia, in which history is hidden. I argue that this process, the depositing of a generic landscape, one with exotic and indigenous components, was occurring over this period. English creatures and the broader needs of the agricultural socio-economy did physically transform the Australian landscape. By the 1950s the creatures themselves were being transfigured as Australian, and the generic landscape we imagine today was being constructed.

Plants, animals and landscape long operated as symbols of place, and a love and loyalty to that place, within the confines of Imperial membership. This relationship was acknowledged and transmitted to children in the 1930s. For example, one Empire Day

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issue included a series of poems under the title ‘Homes of Empire’. This was a collection of poems from the Empire’s colonies and dominions in which the majority of authors used unique local flora, fauna and landscape as the key to belonging and loving their peripheral Imperial place. The combination of imperial and national symbols, then, had a precedent established within the Imperial\national complex.

But the Australian landscape was also written about as a separate and unique space, a non-imperial place. It was not necessarily described positively, but with love and irrevocable locatedness. In the 1930s the School Paper published various stories, many by popular nationalist poets such as Henry Lawson and Banjo Patterson, focusing around the dangers of the Australian bush. These were one side of a dichotomy, of which the peaceful garden of England was the other, exemplified by Kipling’s poem ‘Old England is a Garden’, and in the Australian poet Henry Kendall’s poem ‘Leichhardt’ in which the lost German explorer is said to wish to be buried in a peaceful, settled English valley. Raymond Williams argues that in the English literary tradition the ‘city’ has been used to symbolize civilization, noise and worldliness, mobility and the future, and the ‘country’ innocence, isolation and loss, backwardness and the past. But in this case it is a two-step dichotomy laid on the Australian landscape, one in which the wild Australian country is divorced from the domesticated English country, which in turn is divorced from the modern civilized city. The British city and its culture could not pass between these two fundamentally different domains. British culture could not be relevant to Australian rural experience, and thus the use of landscape to express Australianness was an Australian nationalist prerogative. For example, criticism was levelled at European artists’ inability to see Australia as it really was, and to paint it correctly. Australian artists, with an understanding of their land born of love, were the successful painters, the purveyors of high culture. The English remained ignorant of Australian landscape and

\[176\] For example, Henry Lawson, “Andy’s Gone with Cattle”, The School Paper, February 1938, Grades 7 and 8, p. 6; and A. B. Patterson, “In the Drovers Days”, The School Paper, April 1936, Grades 7 and 8, p. 44.
‘even made bad jokes at their dinner tables’. In thinking this way an Australian landscape, a space for an Australian ‘high culture’ was opened up for Australian children.

But by the 1950s the country\city: Australian\Britain dichotomy no longer operated in quite the same way. Instead there was an effort to create firm associations between the Australian landscape and British political symbols, and hence the political identities of Australia and Britain. A particularly clear example can be seen on the February 1954 cover for Grades 5 and 6, showing a Crown with the letters ER II surrounded by Australian birds, animals and flowers. The two landscapes were also linked, with English animals often present with Australian animals in visual imagery. English plants likewise connected the two in a relationship of love and loyalty, as in one poem, ‘The English Rose’: ‘The roses sang for England as they touched the Australian sky\ The song they will sing for England as the Queen rides by’. Australia’s relationship to English Royalty was claimed to alter the Australian perception of their landscape. For example, in the story ‘The Queen’s Train’, the landscape a girl had previously found boring was made special to her by the knowledge that the Queen had seen it. The landscape was transfigured by Britain, being constructed anew as a partially British place, validated in Australian eyes by British approval and interest.

Landscape bears a more complex relationship to nationalism, however, if we also look at the knowledge\power relationship that was expressed by the concern over naming. The ignorance of Australians about their own land was noted in the 1930s, and was a particular concern of Williams, editor of the School Paper until 1934. However, he was not concerned about their knowledge of the Australian natural landscape, but of nomenclature that represented ‘civilization’, its ‘white’ history. In his ‘Some Know-Your-Own-Australia Riddles’, children were exhorted to learn the names of Victorian streets, towns, and regions, particularly those names associated with famous early Europeans.

In comparison, by the 1950s children were being encouraged to learn the names of wildlife, particularly through a certain genre of stories. In these children stay with their

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179 Stephanie Taylor, “When Art came to Australia”, The School Paper, July 1934, Grades 7 and 8, p. 103.  
“ER II.” The crown, representative of the British Queen’s authority and nobility bounded as an Australian place by the surrounding Australian flora and fauna, topped by a stockman in salute. Here we see clearly the 1950s attempt to naturalize links with Britain within the Australian space itself.

aunts and uncles for a holiday away from the city, over which time they explore and are taught the names of the plants and animals they see. These stories imposed a stable, familial, domestic structure upon the Australian rural interior. Within this new, safe interior children in the stories have fun, and are active participants in the landscape. In this way the previous ‘England as garden\Australia as wild’ dichotomy was destabilized. Australia itself was domesticated, was subject to white control. Australian rural experience could be seen in British terms.

This was reinforced by the publication of supposed Aboriginal origin myths, rewritten by modern white Australian authors. The existence and appearance of aspects of the Australian landscape, usually flora and fauna, were explained, such as the waratah being the body of a beautiful Aboriginal girl grieving for her love. In these stories Aboriginal people lived only in the past, a temporal plane separate from that of readers. This was intentional. According to the curriculum Aboriginal people were to be treated ‘in their natural habitat instead of as they are today’, an extremely damaging example of selective social blindness. Renato Rosaldo would claim this as an example of ‘imperialist nostalgia’, a position from which the agents of cultural change regret the effects of what they have deliberately set in motion. He argues that by this technique complicity in the forms of domination involved in colonialism are concealed. The inclusion of these myths suggested that Aboriginal people believed these explanations literally, further stressing their existence in a more ‘simple’ space than these children whose education focused so firmly on reality. But beyond their considerable racist function, they did allow children to recognize the venerability of the Australian landscape, a landscape that had existed before European settlement, and thus was essentially independent of Europe. The landscape could then belong more fully to white Australians.

The difference between the constructions of the Australian landscape is significant. In the 1930s Australia was

185 Victorian Education Department, “Primary Schools: Social Studies: Revised Course for Primary Schools, Grade V”, Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid, 22 April 1952, p. 94.
being constructed as a unique space, seen most clearly by the Australian born, brought into the framework of the British Empire through a history of European exploration and naming. This was displaced by the 1950s by a constructed landscape with its own history, domesticated by naming and made like Britain through the overlaying of symbols of physical sameness.

This contrast, from Imperial Australian to British Australia is further illuminated by the role ‘the sea’ played in primary school resources. Frank Broeze has argued that historians have largely overlooked the importance of the sea in Australian history, vastly over-emphasizing ‘the bush’.\(^{187}\) He contends that ‘by the 1930s the sea … provided the very symbols of Australian identity’, and that as a symbol it only became more important.\(^{188}\) This is not borne out in the resources I studied. In the 1930s the sea was most often used as a symbol and site for adventure, usually but not exclusively, the adventures of colonists and other agents of imperialism. In the 1930s it was the inhospitable interior of the continent, the experience of agricultural settlers, that provided the narrative of foundational hardship. By the 1950s when the sea was used, it was as a symbol of the past, a past that was essentially migratory. Crossing the sea, or struggling against the sea as early settlers, was a foundational part of the origin myth for ‘white’ Australia. In several plays about ‘real’ early settlers, it is the sea, not the bush as previously, that effected hardship. For example, in ‘A Box of Matches’, a storm at sea makes a family wait for supplies, the lack of matches being the most problematic.\(^{189}\)

That material hardship was central to both these presentations of the past is no surprise; rather it is a manifestation of an underlying theme. Economic life was a focus too in the 1930s, but by the 1950s it had taken on the status of a creed. The ‘new’ project of Australia towards self-sufficiency and industrial might was given primacy. That industrial development was linked to a sense of national independence cannot be in any doubt: ‘The surest sign a nation is ‘growing up’ is not the number of years that pass over it, but the variety and quality of essential goods that that country learns to make for

\(^{188}\) Ibid., p. 239.
\(^{189}\) Fitzmaurice Hill, “The Box of Matches”, *The School Paper*, August and September 1954, Grades 7 and 8, p. 121 and 140.
It was a national obligation to the early settlers and to the Queen, to take Australia’s opportunity to develop in more appropriate and efficient ways than the nations of the ‘Old World’. Farming, taught in Grades 5 and 6 in the context of other nationalist topics – ‘Our Land Australia’ and ‘Lands of our Father’ – was elided with domestic concerns. Industrialization, by contrast, taught in the increasingly worldly Grades 7 and 8, was elided with patriotism for Australia’s international place. The origins of farming were traced back to Britain. Industry was a new, and self-directed Australian aim.

Industry was key to legitimizing migration in the School Papers. This was expressed clearly in the curriculum: ‘Now Australia is seeking to build up her national strength. Consequently she is welcoming new-comers…’. The message was they were welcome as factory workers. The School Paper backed up this theme. In one story, ‘Dad’s Job at Kwinana’, written in the guise of autobiography, an English family migrates to Western Australia so their father can work at the Kwinana oil refinery. This was printed directly after the ‘National Development’ column for that month on oil refining. This is the only migration account in which the migrant has a first-person voice, and hence personal identity. It is clear that English migrants were being presented as the public face of migration for a wary public. This was not necessarily an advantage for migrants from Britain, who, Sara Wills has argued, were given very little ‘help in the way of settlement or assimilation’ because they were assumed to be essentially like Australians by dint of their shared ‘heritage’.

In other examples of migration narratives, non-English ‘new Australians’ received advice and assistance from ‘old Australian’ children on how best to assimilate.

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192 Victorian Education Department, “Primary Schools: Revised Course for Primary Schools: Grade VI”, Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid, 22 April 1952, p. 100.
194 It was in just the same way that the ‘millionth migrant’, Barbara Porritt, was selected, a young, physically attractive English woman with a working class husband. For an extended discussion of this issue see, John Murphy, Imagining the Fifties: Private Sentiment and Political Culture in Menzies’ Australia (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press and Pluto, 2000), pp. 150-151.
Their economic lives were discussed only in terms of their need for material or financial help. So, for example, in the story ‘Baggy Breeches’, a girl invites a lonely Dutch boy home for lunch, where her parents offer his family money and give him a pair of Australian-style shorts so that he will fit in at school.196

The possibilities of assimilation, of movement between ‘old’ and ‘new’ Australianness, were implicitly limited within the School Paper through the concept of ‘home’. This meant the place to which one naturally belonged, as a result of birth, race and language. In the story ‘Canary Bird’, a child sends her pet bird to the Canary Islands, because of its species’ origins. The story ends with the telling statement, ‘yes, one is better off at home’.197 In another story a cockatoo is set free from captivity, but is only happy and at home when it is with other cockatoos and when it relearns its ‘own’ language, when it is ‘home’.198 ‘Home’ was made doubly powerful as a concept that naturalized and spatially located racial/cultural exclusivity, because of the concurrent emphasis at this time on home and the family. As discussed in Chapter One, children were taught from the first day of school that the home was the core of their social identities. ‘Home’, then, was jointly being associated with family and with nation, and both were further tied together by the relational concept of interdependence.

‘Home’ in the 1930s had meant something quite different – it was a metaphor used to stress the continuing emotional connection that Australians would have to England, connections fostered by their shared heritage and the power of their imaginations. In the poem ‘Home’ by Veronica Mason, we see this clearly. ‘Now I’m a small Australian \ I love my own dear land…\ But I still never do forget\That island great and old…\ To me it seems an isle of dreams\ Far, far in distant foam;\ But I belong to it, you see\ And it belongs to mine and me\ So I shall call it home.199 Home’ was an emotional place, an imaginative place, not reliant on real structural ties of economy or society.

This contrast is made clearer if we look at the treatment of ‘travel’ in the two

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decades. In the 1930s, travel beyond territorial boundaries was celebrated. It was associated with the obligations of the Imperial project. This is neatly summarized in the lines ‘And come I may, but go I must, and, if men ask me why, \ You may put the blame on the stars and the sun and the white road and the sky’.\footnote{Gerald Gould, “Wander-thirst”, \textit{The School Paper}, November 1938, Grades 7 and 8, p. 151, italics my own.} This conception of travel was common currency amongst colonial people, as illustrated by the publication in \textit{School Paper} of ‘The Ships of Yule’, a poem by a Canadian author, whose ‘heart was on the sea’.\footnote{Bliss Carmen, “The Ships of Yule”, \textit{The School Paper}, February 1938, Grades 5 and 6, p. 2.} In the 1950s travel was treated with more ambivalence. In ‘A Lucky Adventure’, for example, a kookaburra‘ like many people who go off on adventures’ later ‘wished he hadn’t’. Eventually the story ended happily when he settled down in a new place.\footnote{Alison Hay, “A Lucky Adventure”, \textit{The School Paper}, May 1953, Grades 5 and 6, pp. 53-55.} Destination was seen as being better than travel, a stable domestic time when ‘strawberry shortcake will welcome you back’.\footnote{Joyce C. Froggatt, “The Return”, \textit{The School Paper}, May 1956, Grades 3 and 4, p. 53.} Once in Australia it was expected that a person would stay, would belong.

In all, what these concepts – home, travel, migrants and assimilation – reveal is a tightening of Australian borders: territorial, of social structures, and of political sentiment. As I have suggested in Chapter One, the 1952 curriculum was structured so that children were placed firmly in the center of several gradually widening social systems: the family, the community, the nation. Or, to put it another way, bounded systems were being placed around the child. The family, the first system children were taught to be aware of belonging to, and that with the smallest radius, was to have a prime place in the child’s loyalty. The importance of the familial system was also visible in 1950’s political sentiment, an increasingly private affair. John Murphy has argued that the political culture of Menzies’ Australia was based on the link between citizenship and domesticity. ‘Happiness and identity’, he suggests, were ‘increasingly sought through private commitments…’\footnote{John Murphy, \textit{Imagining the Fifties}, p. 1.} Home was the site where the middle-class values of domestic stability, thrift, privacy and the material ‘way of life’ coagulated. But ‘home’ also meant community and nation, no longer a distant place of nostalgia, but a bounded and perceivable circle of loyalty and identity. This strong and bounded home was a site of
safety from the advancing global threats of the atomic age. With the help of primary school education, curriculum and literary resources, a new type of civic belonging was being instituted, one in which national belonging was centered firstly on the home and secondarily on the tightened borders of the Australian ‘homeland’. I will discuss this at greater length in the next chapter.

More broadly what I have been discussing in this chapter is how the meanings of Australian belonging were reconfigured at Victorian primary schools across these two decades. What we have seen is, although complex, quite clear. Across the themes I have been discussing a unified message was transmitted to children: of royalty, empire, landscape, economics, assimilation, and home. By the 1950s Australia was redrawn as a nation with significant territorial boundaries marked by the ocean, mastery of which was key to (white) beginnings. At the same time knowledge of a non-white past, and a non-white geographical interior, was a sign of the white Australian mastery of a continent that had nothing to do with their European heritage. That this heritage was of lesser importance was premised on Australian material, particularly industrial, success. Adequate material comfort, the ‘Australian Way of Life’, was what postwar Australians were promised, a certain form of belonging that provided immigrants with a clear path to assimilation. Most importantly, Australian relationships with the world had been shrunk to fit its territorial boundaries more neatly. The British Empire meant only Britain, and the ‘real’ relationship claimed was ‘interdependent’ not dependent. Concurrently, symbols of the relationship – the Queen, flora and fauna – had been invited in, been made integral to the social and physical structures of Australia.
‘Schooling is fundamentally a moral, not a technical, enterprise’.\(^{205}\)

In the last two chapters I have discussed two aspects of the system of epistemology and knowledge within Victorian primary school curricula. I have argued that the changes we can detect from the 1930s and the 1950s created and directed two quite different models of identity and belonging for Australian children, and a quite different conception of what Australia meant. In the following chapter I will move beyond the question of identity, to discuss one implication of the change – what each formulation meant for the child’s social and moral responsibilities in the world.

I bring together here the previous discussion of concomitant changes in child psychology, curriculum, and Australian politics that so fundamentally changed the possible forms of identity for children. What implications did this have upon how children were expected to behave? Here we move beyond what children learnt about history and geography, and into civics. At the same time we move beyond Australia and the British Empire to look at how children were being taught to think about the world and its people. This is tied up with radical changes to the models of cultural difference/sameness with which children were to understand the world’s people. What were primary school children being taught about goodness, about nationalism, imperialism and human connectedness? Why were these lessons, these new models of thought and behaviour, so important?

I argue that the interwar attempt to mould children into peace-loving citizens of the world had a fundamental impact on those same children’s understanding of their moral and civic duties, to their communities and to the world, in day-to-day life and for the future. The pedagogy of imagination had a distinct role: it took the pursuit of empathetic

social knowledge seriously. As such, it was a vital tool in the attempt to teach children to feel affection and respect foreign cultures, a vital tool to create world peace through international friendship.

After World War Two the belief that friendship could bring peace seemed naïve, a good idea but patently insufficient when weighed against the world’s inequalities of wealth and power. This, and the effort to educate Australian children to be more fully Australian, ushered a new moral, or more accurately, civic code into primary schools. The civic code was reinforced by the new pedagogy, focused as it was on ‘reality’ and material life.

Teaching citizenship was considered in both decades to be the essential job of primary schools. Martin Hansen, Director of Education from 1928 until his death in 1932, and a major driver of curriculum revision, described the role of the school as being ‘to adequately equip [successive generations] for the work of adapting and improving the institutions of civilization’. This was translated into the primary school curriculum in eight underlying ‘Principles’, six of which concern moral and civic behaviours. These included effective citizenship, use of leisure, good behaviour at home, good manners, aesthetic appreciation, and the ‘recognition of moral and spiritual values’. Likewise, social studies in the 1952 revision would ‘play an important role in the education of the child for citizenship, which is one of the primary aims of the school’. The perceived need to teach children to be good was not lost. What changed was the group to which children should owe their allegiance – a duty to human civilization was replaced by one of effective citizenship within the nation.

In the interwar years, and reaching a peak in the precarious 1930s, world peace was considered a real, if challenging, possibility. The League of Nations was based on the idea that diplomacy could avert violent international confrontations. This was written into Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points. In his vision, the nations of the world would be self-

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208 Victorian Education Department, *Course of Study for Primary Schools: Social Studies, 1954* (Melbourne: Govt. Printer, 1953).
determining, equal members of an openly diplomatic, and freely trading world. Unfortunately, as Carolyn Rasmussen points out, while this conviction had a strong moral standing in Australia, it was of little practical use.\textsuperscript{209} Education became the locus of hope.

Since diplomacy is based on the ability of people to compromise, to see both sides of questions of personal or national importance, the League was based on a belief that people are capable of rational, moral thought that would override selfish impulses. It was obvious that this did not necessarily come naturally to people and that it could easily be perverted, as it had been by the jingoism leading up to the Great War. But education was considered a powerful tool against the nationalist impulse. Children were shown two possible trajectories for the governance of the world – war or diplomacy. Education, it was thought, could teach rational thought and emotional internationalism, both of which could override coercive jingoism.

This put the League in direct opposition to the capitalist nation-state, an entity designed to work for its own wealth and security. This conflict was lessened in Australia, because it was a member of the British Empire, a body constructed partially on the premise that it worked for the good of all its globally-diffuse members. Although in its paternalism and its universalizing humanism, this ideal reads as narrow and patronizing now, it was firmly held, and long embodied by the Empire’s agents, to at least some degree.\textsuperscript{210} This aspect was emphasized over the interwar years, as a way to retain the empire's legitimacy in an increasingly complex political world. Close association with League concepts was one way to do this. Children, in the 1930s, were taught, for example, that ‘never in the whole history of mankind, has one nation succeeded in doing for the backward people what Britain has done for the races in India’\textsuperscript{211} Thus it was enough for Australia to ‘to work in close cooperation with the other nations of the British

\textsuperscript{209} Carolyn Anne Rasmussen, “Defending the Bad against the Worse: The Peace Movement in Australia in the 1930s - Its Origins, Structure and Development” (PhD, University of Melbourne, 1984).
\textsuperscript{210} Kathryn Tidrick argues that to understand the British Empire and its agents we have to see that there were ‘two opposing but eternally co-existing currents of British Imperial thought: the desire to be powerful, and the desire to be good’. Kathryn Tidrick, \textit{Empire and the English Character} (London: I. B. Tavris and Co., 1990), p. 198.
“How Shall the World Be Governed?” a question posed in remembrance of war’s futility to which viewers were only given the option of affirming the lower image - global diplomacy.

*The School Paper*, Grades 7 and 8, November 1935, cover.
Empire to secure through the League peace and liberty for all’.  

This rhetoric was part of an older narrative of British humanitarianism that had been legislated out of the Australian polity, according to Patricia Grimshaw, at the time of Federation in 1901. In the Constitution that established the formal legal and political mechanisms of the semi-independent Australia, Aboriginal people were given no official human rights protection. This was a legislative blow to the promise of the civilizing mission, the doctrine that suggested Aboriginal people should be entitled to hold an equal place in white society.  

But this rhetoric continued to operate to legitimize programs for the assimilation of ‘half-caste’ children by their forced removal from their parents and absorption into white society. Some white women challenged this policy, but apart from the forms of the legal bases of denial, little was done for decades to improve Aboriginal lives and rights. However, this was effectively disguised for many Australian people by the continuing narrative of the British Empire’s civilizing mission, and, in the interwar years, by the absorption of this narrative into the League of Nation’s notion that cultures are different but equal.

Part of the changing power relations of this complex world concerned Australia, and the signs it gave of moving politically away from British control and towards more independent nationalism under which the British had respect for Australian needs. But Britain remained economically essential, and the Empire continued to frame Australian nationalism. As a result there was a concern to emphasize that Australian membership in the League did not reflect an increased Australian nationalist sentiment. According to the Melbourne branch of the League of Nation’s Union in 1933, independent Australian membership in the League was not ‘a flattering display of growing national self-

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212 Ibid. p. 17
215 The 1934 curriculum had this to say about Australian membership of the Commonwealth: “Originally the British Empire was like a long table with Great Britain sitting at the head. It should be made clear to the class that the Statute of Westminster in 1931 has converted this situation into a “round table,” with Great Britain one of the consultants at the table. Three events should, if possible, be discussed and explained: - The Balfour Report (1926); the Statute of Westminster (1931); the Ottawa Conference (1932). Victorian Department of Public Instruction, “Social Studies: History, Geography, and Civics,” *Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid*, 22 November 1933, p. 476.
consciousness’ but instead was necessary for continuing imperial cooperation. Overall, continuing imperial relations constituted no obstacle to the goal that ‘in both history and geography an outstanding aim is the development of world friendship’.  

World peace was part of a new historical narrative, one in which the Great War, the ‘war to end all wars’, created the conditions for future peace. Judge Alfred Foster, President of the Victorian Branch of the League of Nation’s Union, could explain to children that it was after that war that ‘a new idea came into the world’: that of the need for, and the possibility of, peace forever after. This new idea was framed in religious terms, with the first Armistice Day described ‘as though God gave benediction to the wounded soul of the world’. Humanity, it was implied, was learning to be morally and spiritually better, or ought to be.

The cause of peace was also framed by ways of thinking about Empire. The British Empire had enabled the world to shrink, and this, with the aid of new communication and transportation technologies, was increasingly making world friendship possible. This was a natural development, one beneficial to all. The lesson that this was a contemporary and continuing, though occasionally resisted, struggle was contained in the column provided for Grades 7 and 8 throughout the 1930s entitled ‘News from Near and Far’. Its format was a world map with arrows linking very brief boxed news to the country in which it had occurred. These new items usually consisted of notes on improvements in transport, communication and science in general; though foreign political events related to war and the maintenance of peace were also noted. From this children were to gain an interest in the contemporary international world, particularly its increasing connectedness.

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220 See, for example, Anonymous, “News from Far and Near”, *The School Paper*, on the second to last page of each issue for Grades 7 and 8 from 1935.
“News from Near and Far”, the column designed to spark Grade 7 and 8 students’ interest in world events during the second half of the 1930s.
This example from The School Paper, Grades 7 and 8, October 1938, p. 112.
But peace and the British Empire were also aligned through the liberal humanism they both claimed as their basis. The possibility of peace as presented to children was premised on the idea of a common humanity, a ‘brotherhood of man’, that may not be displayed by adults, but existed in the world’s children. ‘Boys and girls are much the same the world over’ read the caption of a cover showing a German family poring over a book together. 221 This message could exist side by side with nationalist messages. ‘Though they [the world’s children] are different to us in many ways, are they not akin to us?’ asked an Anzac Day article, a day now more commonly associated with pride in the unique attributes of the antipodean soldier. 222

In the quest to educate primary school children about the essential sameness of the world’s people, the content of the School Papers for Grades 3 and 4 was almost exclusively given over to ‘people in other lands’, a term that neatly avoided associating those people with powerful racial hierarchies structuring many other discussions of the ‘other’ at this time. Each issue would have a picture, usually a photo, of a foreign person or scene. These would show objects related to the stereotypes of that national group: national costume, a national pastime, a characteristic style of building. Next there would be an article about life in that country, usually told through the lens of a child, covering questions of food, clothing, housing and religion. The people in these articles were always presented as being perfectly content with their lifestyles, their needs happily met by their societies. Following that would be a story from the country’s folklore, usually one with an appropriate moral message, but sometimes an origin myth. Next there would be the ‘Billy Bear’ column by Dick Ovenden, a series of captioned illustrations of the peregrinations of a koala around the county in question, looking at the houses and products that marked the place as different from others. Finally there would be a song from the area.

Often, in addition, there would be a poem, stressing the author’s love of the country. In some years there were suggestions of things to make that were somehow associated with the country. Most of the world’s countries were covered at some point, while ‘Billy Bear’ was in the area – Asia-Pacific and the America’s in 1936, the countries

221 Cover Illustration, The School Paper, August 1938, Grades 5 and 6, p. 112.
“Story Hour.” More than a woman reading to children; a picture of the expressive and imaginative teaching of culture, an experience being claimed common to all the world’s children in the 1930s.

*The School Paper*, Grades 5 and 6, August 1938, cover.
in line from south-east Asia to north Africa in 1937, Europe in 1938. This format, this basic message, was the same for white, Asian, black, settler and indigenous.

To understand the significance of this we have to perceive the model of sameness and difference upon which it was based. The claim being made was that people were not all the same, they had unique cultures and those cultures would not mix. But racial difference was insignificant compared to the sameness of humanity, a sameness illustrated by children’s friendship across cultural boundaries. If human friendship was possible across irreducible cultural boundaries, then so too was world peace. It was this model upon which the League of Nations was based, and likewise, the British Empire, as shown by the School Paper illustration on the following page. However, given colonial power politics, it did not universalize the sentiment in practice. Nor was it roundly or effectively applied in Australia whose immigration was racially limited and Aboriginal rights barely more than a dream.

By the 1950s the belief that humanity was perfectible was more problematic. World War Two had shattered the teleology of world peace and the Holocaust revealed the nadir of human capabilities. The League, despite its best educational and diplomatic efforts, had failed. The loss of faith that this engendered in the wider political world is indicated by the goals of the United Nations, a body concentrating more on practical measures to avert war, than on reiterating its moral repugnance. It seemed obvious that war could not always be avoided by diplomacy, especially in the face of incompatible politico-economic ideologies, each promising to improve the lives of the world’s needy people. An inescapable feature of the 1950s was the Cold War, a permanent tension of intensely felt global divisions, that erupted into open conflict in Korea (1950-1953) and Malaya (1956).

This had significant ramifications for the vision of the world of past, present and future that primary school children were taught. War was still regarded as a bad thing, indeed now potentially world destroying, as superpowers lined up their nuclear arsenals. But the wars already fought were legitimised, and the men who had been lost or wounded considered heroes. Anzac Day increasingly took on a more pronounced nationalistic tone. The two world wars had been fought to ‘keep our present way of life’ and in the process had created a myth about what that way of life entailed based on the attributes of the
“Some Children of the Empire.”
Australian children’s Imperial brothers and sisters, pictured here, as always in the 1930s, in the ‘traditional’ clothing and pursuits of their culture.
This example from The School Paper, Grades 7 and 8, May 1936, p. 51.
soldiers – the Digger tradition, which though presented to children in the earlier decade had then been subordinated to the need for peace.\textsuperscript{223}

Moreover, some Australian soldiers were away at war over this time, a fact that had to be shown in an acceptable light. Children were taught that war as a concept was still one of humanity's moral problems, but there was no certainty that moral action or attitudes could solve it. In a play published for Anzac Day entitled ‘Talk in the Schoolground’, several children were explaining the meaning of Anzac Day to a ‘New Australian’ boy. At the close of the play June appealed to the teacher: ‘Do you think, Mr Saunders, that if everyone thought hard about it all and prayed, too, that we could put an end to war?’ To which he replied, ‘I don’t know, June. But I know that it is well worth trying.’\textsuperscript{224} At the same time, there was an attempt to domesticate the current wars. On the cover for the September 1954 issue for Grades 3 and 4 is a photo of puppies sitting in a jet engine beside a group of soldiers, ‘The Mascots of the no. 77 squadron in Korea’, a claim for the benevolence of war towards innocent life.\textsuperscript{225}

Instead of the moral paths to peace, children were taught the much more practical premise that underlay the United Nations. Children were reminded by the covers for the School Paper each September, United Nations Month, that it was the primary duty of the United Nations to improve the world through effecting material changes. The cover for Grades 3 and 4 in 1953, for example, showed Bolivian children doing school work outside and promises that the ‘United Nations is helping to build schools’. For Grades 5 and 6 we see a photo of a miserable and ill-clad Indian woman sitting next to pots of rice plants captioned: ‘India needs more rice. The United Nations undertakes such tasks’; and for Grades 7 and 8 we see a little girl being fitted with a new dress by a United Nations staff member.\textsuperscript{226} That these tasks are aligned to the prevention of war, albeit in a roundabout way, is made clear by the caption of the cover for the September 1954 issue for Grades 5 and 6, stating ‘The United Nations does far more than try to prevent war. It

\textsuperscript{223} Victorian Education Department, "Primary Schools: Social Studies: Revised Course for Primary Schools: Grade V," Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid 22 April 1952, p. 94.
\textsuperscript{225} Cover Illustration, The School Paper, September 1954, Grades 3 and 4, p. 128.
\textsuperscript{226} Cover Illustration, The School Paper, 1953, grades 3 and 4, p. 128; Grades 5 and 6; p. 128; Grades 7 and 8, p. 128.
“Mascots of No. 77 Squadron in Korea;” an image making soldiers benevolent and war homely and domestic.

tries to educate backward people and give to those in need.’

Wars might happen but the important task, and one essential to its long-term prevention, was the material improvement of life for those at risk of falling for the promises of Communism. The United Nations project was also in line with modernization theory, by which ‘Third World’ nations would be ‘modernized’ through the injection of western technology and capital.

United Nations messages were among the few times that the ‘other’, particularly the non-European ‘other’, was mentioned in the 1950s. When they were, this took several forms. One type, which I have discussed in Chapter Two, were assimilatory narratives, in which ‘New Australian’ children are having trouble being accepted at school, until they are taken under the wing of an Old Australian child, and given help to blend in. A second were stories, written specifically for the School Paper, in which part of the entertainment comes from playing on stereotypes about the nations from which protagonists come. So, for example, in the play ‘The Magic Picture’, which includes a stout woman called ‘Moo-Kow’, a Chinese couple face a crisis in love when they see a picture containing their dead relatives, and each assumes that this indicates that their spouse actually loves that relative more than they love their spouse. It turns out to be a mirror, something they have been too poor and uneducated to acquire previously. Occasionally non-Australians ‘visit’ Australia, such as in the play ‘Olympic Visitors’, in which a rude and inconsiderate group, including an American cowboy, a haughty English woman, a Chinese man with poor English, and others come to stay with an Australian family.

Genres that claimed factual status were also used to teach children about foreign people outside of Australia. Sometimes autobiographical stories were published, written by ‘whites’ who had lived there. These tended to focus on adventures with the exotic animals of the locale and generally followed a white\'non-white, civilized\'primitive theme.

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“A United Nations Effort” to inject resources and technology in order to modernize the world’s people. Notice the woman’s thin body, scared eyes, and submissive posture, suggesting her own culture’s material and social deficiencies.

*The School Paper*, grades 5 and 6, October 1953, cover.
model. Some stories in the form of paraphrased myths were included, and these served to imply that the two groups, Australians and the ‘other’, occupy different temporal zones. This temporal zone contrast highlighted the lack of material goods. An example of this is the story ‘The Mountain Village’, a fictionalized account of the European ‘discovery’ of the people of highland New Guinea. ‘The stone age people waited for their first contact with the twentieth century’; the scientific term being used to connote a lack of technology and of mental acuity in the supposedly lesser evolved.

Finally, there were the columns of ‘Trottie the Television Imp’ intended, like the stories about his predecessor ‘Billy Bear’, for Grades 3 and 4. Trottie, however, unlike Billy, did not travel through space only but also sometimes through time, according to themes that transcended geographical proximity. In this way people were connected to a place in the hierarchy of development, a term that replaced ‘civilization’. So, for example, in the Papers for Grades 3 and 4 in 1954, he toured the different homes of the world, moving from the Aboriginal mia-mia, through homes of grass and mud in Asia and Africa, to end up at a modern sky-scraper in New York. In 1953 and 1958 he cruised through the schools and clothes of the European past and the non-Western present, neatly eliding the two forms of ‘primitiveness’ built into modernization theory.

These various presentations were based on a changed model of difference and sameness than that operative in the 1930s curriculum. By the 1950s it was considered that no universal humanity yet existed, because life was so profoundly dependent on material wealth and power, access to which was associated with geographical location and hence ‘race’. But once culture was effectively replaced with modernity, humanity would be equal. This reflection held the seeds for legitimation of inequality in international power. ‘People live in different climates and have different ways of life’, children were told. The achievement of the modern ‘way of life’ was being lauded in Australia as the means by which they would take their place on the international stage. Failure to achieve this ‘way of life’ would be a failure to achieve international status. Those nations that did

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233 Victorian Education Department, "Primary Schools: Social Studies: Revised Course for Primary Schools, Grades iii and iv," *Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid* 25 March 1952, p. 65.
not, or could not, embrace the modern way of life would therefore exclude themselves from this international equality.

This was, I argue, an ‘objective’ embrace of a new and insidious form of racism. The non-Western or even non-Anglo other was shown as a person with material deficiencies, maybe equal in theory to his paler counterparts, but not in practice, because they did not have enough – they were not modern. Material wealth had become an active determinant both of the quality of life and the equality of lives.

These two models of cultural sameness and difference had very significant implications for the expected behaviours of the child. In the 1930s, when all people were claimed to be essentially the same, children had a moral duty to embrace the potentialities of this sameness. By keeping ‘peace in their hearts and minds all year’\(^{234}\) and by believing, through their imaginations, the foreign child to be a friend, world peace would eventuate. By contrast, in the 1950s children had no specific duty to the materially different foreigner, because responsibility for material wealth was in the hands of a group that could effect change – the United Nations. This might in the long run stop war, but the child had no control either way. Instead they were exhorted to view going to war as a civic duty. Thus, they should remember the bravery of those who served, show respect to disabled servicemen they met, and resolve that they would themselves ‘be worthy citizens of their country’.\(^{235}\)

But this framework of responsibility did not only change in response to the continuation of war and the impact of modernization theory on the perception of the non-western person, but also to fulfill the needs of Australian nationalist identifications. By definition, a concerted effort towards nation-state nationalism, the shrinking of responsibility into the state’s territorial boundaries, required that the behaviour of its citizens be clearly focused upon the needs of that state and no other. This would increase the likelihood of that state’s actual success, as well as strengthening connectedness and loyalties. It required that morals, aiming towards what is ethically right, must be displaced by civics, aiming towards what is right for that state and the communities that make it up.


In the 1930s the danger of national goals to international ones had been clear, and statements were made to justify nationalism as legitimate in a world striving for non-partisanship and peace. By the 1950s no contradiction between international and national loyalty was evident, and schools were to aim to ‘give [children] a healthy pride in Australia and the Australian way of life’. Schools were to teach civic belonging.

This becomes clear if we look at how teaching methods, based equally on the belief that co-operation was essential in classrooms, used this idea to teach different behaviours. Co-operation as a teaching method was used in both decades, but with significantly different political goals. In the 1930s co-operation fell on the axis between interest and imagination. ‘The interest of the pupils will be awakened and maintained if teachers seek their co-operation’ in investigating topics, topics about peace and friendship in the Empire and the world. Co-operation was a pedagogical tool to assist the teaching of moral internationalism. By the 1950s, co-operation was a technique to allow children to practise the mechanisms of national belonging. ‘Group work by the pupils and sharing of knowledge obtained will help to build-up the attitude of team work so necessary in a democracy’.

The themes of moral or civic duty to the imperial\national or nation-state were illustrated and reinforced in discussions of economics. From 1924 the Melbourne ‘Made in Australia’ Council, published a monthly ‘Made in Australia’ supplement to the School Paper for Grades 7 and 8. These four page booklets discussed various Australian manufactured products, such as felt hats, molded articles in synthetic resin, and electricity, in the hope that this would give children an understanding of manufacturing processes, a desire to work in industry, and a greater pride in, and tendency to buy, Australian products. In quite regular issues of the supplement, these aims were stated

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236 Victorian Education Department, “Primary Schools: Social Studies: Revised Course for Primary Schools: Grade V”, Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid, 22 April 1952, p. 94. Italics my own.

237 Victorian Department of Public Instruction, “Notes on the Curriculum: Social Studies (history, geography and civics)”, Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid, 27 November 1933, p. 549. In the 1930s discussions of method emphasize the need to stimulate the child’s imagination, and it is this, not group work, that is contrasted with rote style learning – ‘Children between the ages of seven and eleven delight in speech and dramatic action, and in creating a miniature world from their own imagination’; “When children engage in projects close to their interests and imaginative ideas, they do so with a high seriousness of purpose that is wholly admirable.’ Victoria Public Instruction Department, "School Management and Method: Curriculum Revision," Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid 23 June 1932, p. 153. This is, by definition, individual work; aimed at helping the children understand the non-visible, or non-accessible worlds of morality and of the foreign ‘other’.
more explicitly, and it is here that we can most clearly see the different models of ideal Australian belonging.  

In the December 1935 issue entitled ‘The Cultivation of Australian Sentiment’, children were instructed to ‘strive for the happiness and prosperity of our own folks. If all men did the same, all would be right with the world.’ This was not nationalist per se, since the ‘feeling of Australian unity … is not incompatible with world unity’. Nor was it simply materialistic since people who worked in manufacturing supplied not only physical needs but also satisfaction of ‘the craving for wisdom and beauty and truth and the highest spiritual enjoyment’. This statement might have invited mirth from workers on the factory floor of a synthetic resin factory. However, this was an idea basic to the model of essential human sameness and internationalism. Only if material comfort was subordinated to rational and moral spirituality could it be hoped that everyone would be happy. And only if everyone were happy would world peace be possible. Children were being taught to work for and to hope for this global utopia.

By contrast, in 1953 ‘The Australian Nation’ was published as part of the new emphasis on Australia Day. In this readers were asked to imagine a conversation between contemporary children and Governor Phillip, in which he is inquiring whether his nation-building aims of developing Australia as a New World better than the Old had yet been realized. The key question that children were meant to ponder was whether all Australians had the requisite material comforts, to which the children in the article replied in the negative. The lesson was that everyone must be ‘unselfish and hardworking’ so that everyone could enjoy the fruits of prosperity. Only then would the aims of the first

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238 From their inception until his retirement in 1934 the Made in Australia Supplements were written by George Gilbert Wallace, editor of the School Paper. He attempted to get them published as a book, to be entitled “How Things are Made in Australia: Simple Studies of Secondary Industries”. No objections were made by the Department of Public Instruction, but there is no record of their having reached publication. PROV, VPRS 892/p1, Education Department – special case files, Unit 3, Document 1137 – “Correspondence Relating to Gilbert Wallace, ed. School Publications, Education Department, December 1931 – 1934”.


nation builders be achieved. In buying Australian-made products, children would ‘buy the work of all these people’, and in doing so support Australian economic and social structures. Australia, not the world, was the target for civic behaviour, and that behaviour was practical and material, not spiritual.

The moral and civic learning I have been discussing so far was that embedded in history and geography lessons and literacy resources. But civics was a set of lessons in itself. Civics teaching went beyond theory, based in both decades on ways for children to practise the civic behaviours that were preached. Accordingly in the 1930s the ‘ideals of good citizenship would be best inculcated by actual participation in activities of civic value’; and in the 1950s ‘social studies must offer to pupils opportunities for practising the arts of living in a community’.

There were several means through which children were to be taught to embody the lessons of civics. The first directly concerns the epistemology and curricular structures of the course I discussed in Chapter One. It will be recalled that pageantry was a major functional part of the 1934 curriculum. These had an obvious civic value in that Imperial and League structures towards which children were responsible were made apparent. In pageants children would also embody and see the Empire and the League’s authority personified. In Freudian theory, the super-ego is the part of the unconscious mind stamped with moral and social lessons from authority figures, which then guide human behaviour. Parents and teachers were the authority figures most often physically present to children, but through authoritative pageantry, figures and concepts beyond their own lives were also made real. The unconscious mind and the imagination were being used to teach children about the non-tangible world, and how to behave within it.

By contrast, in the 1950s it was the increasingly reality-based, socially-widening structure of the curriculum itself that was intended as the functional moral framework. At each level of curriculum children were to become aware, through their own experience,
of the features of the widened community. Awareness would create loyalty through the recognition that children themselves were in various ways dependent upon that level of society and economy. Imagination was unnecessary because all this was ‘real’, and only toward the real were children behaviourally beholden.

Ideas of what was ‘good’ behaviour were also embodied in the commemorative events in which all Australians, including children, were involved. These were of two broad types, those with international and those with national meanings. It is the participatory nature of these events that make them socially significant. As Alistair Thomson explains in regard to Anzac Day: ‘the rituals of commemoration … facilitate intense involvement in collective practices that are intended to be stirring and inclusive, and are thus potent occasions for identification with ideas about war and national belonging’.  

Commemorations with an international perspective (Empire, Goodwill and Remembrance Days) were subordinated after 1945 to those with a national focus (Australia, Anzac and Coral Sea Commemoration Day). According to Stewart Firth and Jeanette Hoorn, Empire Day lost much of its popularity after 1945, being seen as a day that stood for an Australia of political and social conservatives. Simultaneously, Anzac Day became increasingly popular because it was able to embrace multiple conceptions of Australian identity and shared nationalism.

In primary schools the official expectations of how these days were to be celebrated remained largely the same across the two decades, although this gives little indication of how they were actually regarded or marked in practice. Empire day, it was hoped, would help to teach children the duties of Imperial citizenship. It was not intended as a public holiday for children. In both decades they were to spend the morning on subjects related to the British Empire, and the afternoon in a ceremony of speeches, songs, and flag salutations. Which flag is not mentioned: presumably the Union Jack, though it could equally well have been the Australian flag since children were being taught that they stood for much the same thing. By 1955, in addition, the national anthem was to be sung, ‘God Save the Queen’, also Britain’s national anthem. Here was an

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indication that in theory Australian national identity had become much more important, though in practice it was a sense that was still officially caught up with the Empire.\textsuperscript{248}

Australia Day was not a feature of school life in the 1930s. In the 1950s, since children were enjoying their summer holidays on the appointed day, it was to be marked by a succession of lessons on the founding and settlement of Australia during the first week back.\textsuperscript{249} Pioneer Day was commemorated in both decades with ‘special lessons’ and ‘songs, recitations and plays’, but was more important in the 1930s, when ‘leading citizens’ were to be invited into classes to talk about ‘the foundation and growth of Victoria and on the courage and sacrifice of the pioneers’.\textsuperscript{250} In the 1950s Australia Day partially absorbed these meanings under its nationalist umbrella. From then Australian nationalism and the story of white discovery and settlement were intimately tied together, and Aboriginal attempts to uncouple them only began to be effective in the 1980s.

Anzac Day in both decades was to be marked by a ceremony held at school, with a ceremony broadcast on the radio for country schools, while some metropolitan children were chosen to attend Melbourne’s public remembrance service. In these ways it was being practically demonstrated to children that Anzac Day was a day of importance to their whole community and nation, although by 1955 the role of the broadcast seems to have been more a question of convenience than of national continuity. Instructions indicated that ‘all schools desiring a pattern for their local ceremony merely have to assemble at their flagpole’.\textsuperscript{251} The content of the ceremonies remained largely the same, but with two key differences. In 1935 world peace was fundamental – ‘while emphasis should be laid on the great principles of duty and sacrifice as exemplified so magnificently on that historic occasion, equal stress should be laid on the benefits of peace and the need of cultivating among the nations a love of peace’.\textsuperscript{252} This was

\textsuperscript{249}Victorian Education Department, “Australia Day, Observance in Schools”, \textit{Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid} 15 December 1955, p. 392.
\textsuperscript{250}Victorian Department of Public Instruction, “Pioneers Day”, \textit{Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid}, 15 October 1935, p. 270.
\textsuperscript{251}Victorian Education Department, “Anzac Day”, \textit{Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid}, 22 February 1955, p. 58.
\textsuperscript{252}Victorian Department of Public Instruction, “Anzac Day”, \textit{Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid}, 28 March 1935, p. 60.
reinforced by the national ‘two minutes’ silence’ of Armistice Day, a day of grieving for
the war’s worldwide dead and to commemorate the signing of the Armistice, the point
from which, it was taught, international peace had become a possible goal.

By the 1950s only the duty and sacrifice of Australian soldiers remained
important. Armistice Day was renamed Remembrance Day to absorb grieving for the
death of World War Two, and was no longer tied to the eleventh of November but to the
closest Friday. On that day it was marked in classrooms only by a ‘suitable program for
the last 15 minutes (maximum) of the afternoon period’.

Each decade too, had commemorative days unique to it, which again underline the
movement from international to national commemoration. From 1934 until 1939
Goodwill Day was held, on which wireless messages of friendship were received from
children in Wales. From 1935 League of Nation’s Day consisted of a day of class lessons
on League of Nation’s topics. School children had been involved in League of Nation’s
Union events earlier than this. In 1933, for example, the Victorian Union held a display
of exhibits for children on the history and importance of the League, featuring stalls and
dances by members of the Swiss, Greek, German, Scandinavian, Russian and Chinese
communities of Melbourne.

By contrast the 1950s saw the inauguration of the Coral Sea Battle
Commemoration: ‘a thanksgiving for the deliverance of Australia from a serious threat
and the recognition of the comradeship, past and future, of Americans and
Australians’. The United Nations got a week in October for a series of themed lessons,
talks, and displays. Suggestions for how it might be celebrated were all focused on ties to
material reality: to invite ‘New Australians’ to give talks, to display maps of member
countries and their contributions to Australian daily life, and to send scrapbooks about the
Australian ‘way of life’ overseas.

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255 Victorian Education Department, “Coral Sea Battle Commemoration”, *Education Gazette and Teachers’ Aid*, April 1955

A more subtle mechanism of civic schooling via participation was also at work: the encouragement of membership in clubs, a social formation profoundly important in the 1930s that lost impetus in the 1950s. Children’s involvement in voluntary clubs dates back to the turn of the twentieth century with Baden-Powell’s boy scout movement, an organization that Michael Rosenthal argues was seen as a solution to fears that the Empire would be lost to Britain as a result of physical and moral degeneracy.\(^{257}\) British and Imperial children’s participation in clubs had long been associated with international politics.

In the 1930s there was no doubt in educators’ minds about the value of membership in clubs such as scouts. The central idea behind civics in the 1934 course, according to George Browne, key figure in the revision, was that civics ‘must, above all, be a practical and live subject’,\(^{258}\) best inculcated by involvement in bodies designed in parallel with those that would ideally structure the world of the future. During the 1930s the *School Paper* urged children to join the various bodies that had been set up for the protection of Australian flora and fauna – the League of Kindness, the League of Youth, the Gould League of Bird Lovers, all names alluding to the League of Nations. That these were felt to have a wider civic significance is made clear by statements made in the 1935 editions encouraging children to join the Gould League. Grades 3 and 4 were told that by joining at that age they would ‘be better members when they join the League of Youth in grade V’, and children in Grades 7 and 8 were told membership would ‘help you take your proper place among people as you grow up and also make you a more valuable citizen’.\(^{259}\)

This rested on a specific form of citizenship. Civics meant membership because, it was believed, only through collective effort was change to be accomplished. In his ‘Reply to Letters’ column for 1934, the editor encouraged children to join organisations like the League of Youth, the Young Farmers, and the Red Cross, describing them as...


‘regiments for young nation makers’. This carried over to the international level. Membership was used to link children to British systems, and to the wider imperial world to which Australia belonged. Australian primary schools used the British school ‘house system’, through which ‘ideals of loyalty and service to a cause are easily inculcated’, causes which were ultimately meant to strengthen not only the nation, but also the Empire. This harks back to a tradition established in the British Public Schools, and spread throughout the Empire’s settler colonies, whereby team sports were vital to teach the values of fair play and teamwork. In the story ‘Jack at School’, a boy is chastised for having partisan sentiment for his class ‘team’, rather than thinking about the school as a whole. He is told he ought to have pride in the largest body he belongs to, a lesson he takes to heart, and that children, aware of their global friends, were also meant to take to heart.

In the 1950s we can see a distinct move away from this model of membership as citizenship. The wider applicability of this change should not be exaggerated. As David Maunder argues, the popularity of groups such as the boy scouts and girl guides has remained reasonably stable from their establishment in Australia during the Great War up until the 1980s. But primary schools no longer supported these groups by teaching children of their wider civic value. Rather, recommendations to join were based on arguments about their value for individual self-improvement. In ‘Are you a Boy Scout?’ children were encouraged to join in order to learn outdoor skills, self-reliance, and a knowledge of Australian flora, fauna and geography. The Gould League of Bird Lovers, the only ‘League’ still in existence by the 1950s, still ran competitions in the School Papers, but never were pupils explicitly persuaded to join. Instead they were encouraged towards activities that would directly benefit Australia. For example, in ‘Count your Koalas’, ‘all boys and girls who have sharp eyes and can count’ were asked to help take a census of Victorian koala numbers to assist the restocking program. There

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is no suggestion that they might wish to do this collectively, or that they might collate their results in the classroom. Likewise, in ‘The Olympic Games’, children were asked to be friendly and helpful to the foreign visitors to Melbourne, just as Finnish children were at the last Games and as English boy scouts were trained to be. The rationale behind this request was that if the visitors ‘think highly of the boys and girls of this country, then they will think highly of Australia itself.’

Thus, not only were children by the 1950s being taught in theory to be more civic than moral, more national than international. They were also physically to live out these lessons, practice that would, it was considered, ‘best’ fit them for their future lives in the new Australia that was being built.

On the flip side of the coin of civic responsibility are the expectations or rights that a citizen is taught they should receive for compliance, and it is here that we find further proof for the argument I have been making. Janet McCalman, in Struggletown: Public and Private Life in Richmond 1900-1965, a book based largely on oral history, found that expectations of what the Australian state would provide showed a marked difference from the interwar to the postwar years, at least for working-class Melburnians. The move away from the focus on the international world and from the collective moral responsibility of the wider society, displaced blame for social problems on to the individual. People were at fault for not adequately adjusting themselves to the structures of economic and social interdependence.

‘The critical difference between Bill [born in the 1940s] and his parents’ generation is that he blames himself, not society and not “destiny”, for his personal failure. Jean Fowler, when young [in the 1930s], hated the people behind the social system that condemned her family to poverty and powerlessness and she saw it as destiny that “we were never meant to have money”. Bill, growing up a generation later amidst the post-war boom, assumes it was a deficiency of character that kept him at the bottom of the heap.’

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This serves to remind us also that there are people involved here, not just ideas. Once we remember this, it should come as no surprise that such a drastic move away from the moral underpinnings of Australian belonging in the curriculum would be greeted with some degree of public outrage. In this case it did not occur until 1957, by which time the new course of study had been taught for five years, long enough for one primary school class to have nearly completed each grade. The backlash came first from the Special Education Sub-committee of the State School’s Committee Association of Victoria (SSCAV). By letter and deputation to the then Victorian Minister of Education and Member of Parliament for Malvern, John S. Bloomfield, they requested a White Paper to investigate and report on the organization and content of state education. ‘The changes that are going on about us are not merely quantitative – they are qualitative and they are having an impact right throughout society. … In terms of education these changes have tremendous implications – implications that touch on such questions as technical education, teaching methods, teaching aims, the adequacy of curriculum, and even the problem of teaching good citizenship in the modern world’. A range of groups from throughout Victoria supported the SSCAV’s request. Letters to the Minister were written by eleven school committees from regional Victoria, from Bendigo High School Men’s Auxiliary, the Wimmera Regional Committee, and from the Victorian Federation of Mothers’ Clubs, all concerned with citizenship issues.

The concerns of the SSCAV were manifold, but the general sense that the educational system was failing to meet the new social needs was widely shared. Lindsay Smith, in an attempt to make the minister cognizant of the scale of support for the White Paper, described the response of the delegates at the SSCAV conference held the previous year: ‘some idea of the amount of support it obtained is to be gathered by the fact that it was not only carried unanimously, but had the delegates on their feet cheering. It is the only resolution out of many at that conference that evoked such a response.’ The SSCAV planned to print and distribute 10,000 copies at a ‘conservative estimate’.

268 PROV, VA 892/P1 – Education Department – special case files, Unit 115, SC 1401 – Correspondence re: report on Education 1957/58. Submission from State Schools Committee Association of Victoria to J. S. Bloomfield, 17 May 1957. Italics my own.
269 Ibid.
and believed it would be ‘the most discussed document ever produced by the Victorian government’. 270

The SSCAV were also concerned about problems in vocational education, and in this were backed up by various professional and training organizations: the Institution of Engineers, Science and Technology Careers’ Bureau, the Victorian Dairy Farmers Association and the Technical Colleges’ Professional Staff Council of Victoria, all of whom wrote letters in support of the White Paper. This concern was a response to the 1950s conviction in the need for national economic strength, and the corollary that it was a civic duty of Australian youth to contribute. But the SSCAV was also concerned about the deeper problems they perceived in schooling. ‘We do definitely quarrel with the point of view that would seek to restrict the discussion of education to the short term measures that can be taken within a given financial framework, and leaves the long term problems undisclosed and virtually closed to discussion…’ 271

Bloomfield seems not to have understood that the SSCAV was asking for such a comprehensive investigation of education, failing to see that the point of the White Paper would be to answer questions that were not purely material. Writing to the SSCAV he stated ‘...your association was determined to have a White Paper at all costs, but was not sure what the Paper was to be about, whereas I felt that the proper approach would be to say that the public should be informed on certain matters, and then to examine the best way to inform the public.’ This was a technique best suited to the administrative and material problems immediately evident, not to an underlying sense of confusion and misdirection. He also seems not to have understood that this was considered a state political issue, not just an educational question, attempting to pass the matter over to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), a request refused by its president John Medley, who could see that a ‘very specific request for a governmental White Paper would not and could not be met by any report by the council’. 272

270 PROV, VA 892:P1 – Education Department – special case files, Unit 115, SC 1401 – Correspondence re: report on Education 1957/58. L. Smith to J. S. Bloomfield, 28 May 1957
Various groups tried to make Bloomfield aware of the importance of having a White Paper, not least ACER’s director W. C. Radford, who believed that ‘parents need their thinking lifted above the bricks and mortar level to see the policy and planning as a whole, and [that] they have never been more prepared for such a lift…’ Various groups, including the Victorian Federation of Mothers’ Clubs, the National Council of Women and the Victorian Teachers’ Union, also tried to broaden the social significance of the inquiry by attempting to get representation on the Committee appointed by Bloomfield to draw up the terms of reference for a later report. Bloomfield refused these request, and, in a private correspondence to Vernon Christie, member of the Legislative Assembly, he explained that ‘my own feeling is that the question of representatives on the above advisory committee has got completely out of hand, as it is a small official body that I have appointed to assist me…’

By December 1958 the inquiry’s terms of reference had been drawn up. The report would contain five main sections, as follows: A) a brief history of education in Victoria; B) a discussion of the current situation; C) problems, including the question of the necessary ‘scope and diversity of education to meet the demands of social and technological changes …[and] an increasing demand for informed and critical citizenship’; D) material problems; and E) conclusions and recommendations.

But Bloomfield’s conception of the project still seemed out of step with those of the requesters. Letters continued to be written to the Ministry and to the Victorian Premier, and the issue was discussed twice in parliament. Newspapers ran stories, criticizing the Minister for not taking submissions to the department or taking the report seriously. Throughout we can sense Bloomfield’s baffled irritation. As he told parliament, ‘it has been said that I have been arrogant and obstinate, and that I have refused to listen to recommendations from all quarters…’ By June 1960 the report was completed, and a copy given to schools. Unsurprisingly it was met with criticism,
including one report written by S. S. Dunn and submitted to the SSCCAV, the body that had first requested it. Dunn complained that the report did not accomplish what it set out to do, that the committee had been too specialist, that it failed to discuss curriculum or principles of curriculum development.²⁷⁸ In short, it was the administrative educationalists’ document that the minister had envisaged, rather than education’s answer to how social change should be managed while still providing adequate citizenship training. And here the matter officially rested.

What all this shows us is that those people in the population who were interested in education had noticed, and were concerned by, these changes in the moral and civic bases of belonging. These adults had learnt to live under the very different model of social responsibility of the 1930s, giving them a specific position from which to assess the new curriculum. They may not have supported the earlier model, and nor were they able to isolate or articulate specifically what their concern was. But nevertheless they had grasped as those involved in the day to day running of the educational system could not, that there were fundamental dissatisfactions in the community with the narrowing of the scope of education: its diminished morality, its material civics.

What I have explored in this chapter is the complex way in which psychology, pedagogy, and international and domestic politics intersected to produce a radical change to the forms of moral and civic behaviour expected of children. The impact this had on the adult behaviours and ways of thinking of those children can be debated. What is certainly clear is the intention behind the 1950s curriculum: to reflect the profoundly changed political and social expectations that came with the new nationalism. As parents and other interested parties tried claim a voice to direct the education of their children the question of appropriate forms of citizenship training was raised. This change was a necessary step in the course of Australian nationalism. The model of the world’s people as equal but essentially different had given way to a determination of difference upon material life and rational nationalism. By connecting this to non-transcendent pedagogy and to an increasingly civic nation-state, educators produced a primary school curriculum that made no plea for international responsibility. To quote Marian Quartly:

²⁷⁸ Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS 892- Education Department Special Case Files, p1, Unit 115, Document 1401 – “Report on Education, 1957-64”.
‘We weren’t very good about evil
in the 1950s.
It didn’t seem relevant’.
Conclusion

In drawing this discussion to a close I would like to return to the reflections that opened each chapter. These were Jacqueline Rose on the centrality of fantasy to political life; David Malouf on the nature of 1950’s Australian nationalism as a new ability to see and articulate Australian life; and Noblit and Dempsey on the moral basis of schooling. A deepened and contextually specific synthesis of these three ideas is what, overall, I hope to have achieved in this thesis.

The first theme highlights the role of imagination in history, politics and education. Imagination as a concept used in historical scholarship goes back, as I have discussed, to Maurice Halbwachs who positioned imagination as one of the social frameworks active in collective memory. Benedict Anderson, working forty years later, expanded this to argue that imagination did not just operate in nationalism through collective memory, but also through creating imagined linkages between people on the basis of various social, cultural and religious values. I have argued that educators in the 1930s were well aware of the role of imagination in creating nationalism. Imagination was a useful political tool in the context of the interwar years, but to make sense it also required a certain understanding of how the child would learn. This was based on a model of psychology that took as much from philosophy as from science, that recognized thought and imagination as processes beyond responses to the environment. Educators were able to use it to build imagined bonds between Australian children and the British Empire. More than that, they used the empathy that imagination could install for the cause of peace, by attempting to create friendship with ‘children of other lands’.

This understanding of imagination was lost to the 1950s, caught up as it was in a psychology that linked human behaviour solely to environmental stimuli – to the real and the experienced. It is for this reason that Anderson’s thesis could come as a surprise to 1980’s scholarship. The use of behaviourist psychology in primary schools fitted neatly with the needs of the Australian nationalist project, the move away from the British

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Empire and into a new space within its own territorial borders. Imagination was unnecessary to this goal; it was perceived as apolitical and was excised from curriculum.

But imagination continued to be appealed to in the stories and poems that children read, texts that were to embed a belief in Australian social structures as actual and real. It is for this reason that literary resources, assumed to be non-ideological, take on such an interesting and important face. Australian people were tied together, made interdependent by appeals to experience from which children were to extrapolate the existence of larger social and economic structures. Children were being taught to ‘know’ about Australia through locally written stories and articles about experiences of the land. At the same time metaphors and stories of emotional connection to the Queen were used to naturalize the presence of Britain in the Australian context. Imagination continued to be a political tool used in primary schools, but because it was not thought of as a pedagogical, knowledge giving, its significance was obscured.

Imaginative space was thenceforth unregulated by the state. It was rather given over to the arts of the capitalist, modernizing nation—literature, radio, television, film and so on. It is at least partially for this reason that the threat of Americanization, enculturation by a powerful entertainment industry that knew how to manipulate imaginative space, loomed so large in the 1950s and 1960s. Cultural colonization is a telling term because it speaks of a technique that it shares in common with physical colonization—grabbing and subsequently linking space, though using imagination not physical coercion.

The clarity with which Australian space could be seen and articulated in the 1950s owed a debt to the new reality-based epistemology that was evident in primary schools. In content 1950’s Australian nationalism took much from earlier days, but was refocused around new ideas and linkages. It was territorially bounded, linked to Britain but not the Empire/Commonwealth or the world, and supported the cause of modernization through stress on industry and a certain ‘way of life’.

It is around the final point, that schooling should teach morality not knowledge, that this thesis becomes partially a narrative of decline. History, as Hayden White has pointed out, is an art form that can only ultimately be judged in terms of aesthetics and
morality, not truth.\textsuperscript{281} It is on these grounds that it is relevant to assess the changing moral lessons embedded in primary schools in the two decades. The peaceful, global vision of the 1930s was undoubtedly flawed, tied up at best with British Imperial paternalism and prescriptive universalizing liberal humanism, and at worst with overtly and covertly violent racial hierarchies. But it was a genuine attempt towards world peace, that most admirable wishful hope. And it was based on a model of cultural difference, a conception of people as ultimately cultural beings, equal but fundamentally different, from which a true respect for otherness could have grown. This was possible under 1930’s pedagogy with its emphasis on imagination, an essential basis for empathy.

But 1950’s primary schools could not continue to teach this vision of cultural difference. Modernization lay at the heart of the new nationalism, the means by which Australia could stand independent in the globe. But modernization was based on the assumption that everybody was essentially the same, apart from the retarding effects of the cultures that were keeping them poor. Difference, otherness, was a problem to be fixed with money and technology, but not by children, regardless of how moral they were. Children were to focus on the economic needs and social structures of their own land, or rather of their own lives because this interconnected them to all those other lives that shared their land. Meanwhile, bodies like the United Nations would attempt to universalize ideas of individualistic equality modeled in documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In both decades that I have investigated, primary schooling was being used both to prepare children for an expected future world and to direct them towards the construction of a future utopia. It is this second goal that leads me to adjudge the relative merits of each decade’s pedagogy as I do. It is the boldness of the 1930’s vision, that all people were fundamentally equal, the acceptance that different cultures are, and should remain, different, that gave it such potential to improve the human world. By contrast, the effort to make all cultures the same through the injection of money and technology and western institutions, to efface cultural difference, seems profoundly disrespectful of humanity itself. Now, as we continue to see the violence that springs from the

conjunction of wealth differentials and cultural difference, and lacking a way to articulate cultural equality regardless of money, this seems a loss indeed.
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