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'Narratives Across Space and Time: Transmissions and Adaptations'

This is the rousing title-theme for the 15th Congress of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research, one to be held in Athens, Greece from June 21-27, 2009. [Readers will recall that this international society/ academy had met in Melbourne in 2001 for a special Southern Hemisphere Conference.]

The forthcoming Congress for the summer of 2009 is being organized under the auspices of the Hellenic Folklore Research Centre, within the Academy of Athens, the HFRC itself housing a remarkable and archive rich collection of unpublished material on all aspects of folk life, in the form of texts, music, photographs, films and video and material objects.

The appropriate sub-topics/ fields of clustering of papers are:

- The History and Future of Folk Narrative Research
- Mythologies, Ecology and Environmental Representations
- Migrant and Diaspora Communities: Adaptation and Memory
- Social Structures and Collective Identities
- Story and Storytellers

Folk Narrative in the Modern Media.

For more information: <http://www.isfnr-athens2009.gr/>

The Momentous Survival and Evolution of the Australian Values Originating in the Colonial Era

Kathryn Teare Ada Lambert

Numbers of historians and more popular writers have created perceptions of the origins of so many current Australian values and attitudes, often either attributing them to the pioneering era as by Russel Ward in the 1950s, or to the convict period as Emily Maguire set out to do in 2005. Both researchers acknowledged that the core values were primarily egalitarianism, defiance of authority and the practice of mateship (Maguire, p. 142). There is much evidence to suggest that the significant endurance of Australia's values throughout history is, as Maguire acknowledged, a legacy driven by the colonial era. While she deemed egalitarianism as the foundation for the love of sport (p. 143), our national historical context implies that it is also the driver of mateship, defiance and the distrust of authority.

Egalitarianism could be noted as a driving force for many Australian values prominent throughout our history as a nation. Australians commonly dislike individuals who deem others to be inferior to them, an attitude that can be traced back to the colonial era when convicts, mostly originating from the working class and a few from the middle or upper classes, were considered subordinate to all lawful individuals (p. 142). The resentment of inequality continued throughout the bush and gold rush eras when shearers, diggers and bushrangers joined forces against anyone who treated them unequally—this resulting in mateship, defiance of the law and a general distrust manifested towards authority (Colling, p. 11). Egalitarianism is presently shown in the style of the hundreds of war memorials that are scattered around Australia; the names of those who served in the war are written in alphabetical order instead of order of rank and no rank is given. Anyone who was sent to war is listed on a memorial, whether they returned to Australia or not (Inglis, p. 138). Australians as a whole refuse to acknowledge that anyone is superior to any individual. We are all classed as equal in the workplace or for any opportunity offered and this belief has united Australians throughout our history as we fought for egalitarianism, colloquially termed as a 'fair go' (Maguire, p. 143).

Mateship is a significant Australian concept that stems from the Australian belief of egalitarianism, a deeply embedded legacy of the convicts. In 1788 the first convict settlers arrived in Australia, isolated from their family networks and unified in a struggle against both authority and the harsh environment (Colling, p. 6). Early concepts of mateship were rudimentary, however, due to the need for survival in the face of terror and maltreatment; and the bond was more broken than kept (Moore, p. 225). The unreliability of convict mateship led to the suppression of inner emotions, in order to avoid weakness and mistreatment, a code of mateship still present today (Colling, p. 6).

Bush mateship then became prominent in following years and began to evolve to new levels; qualities of reliance and allegiance meant that mates remained close through hardships, even to the extent that self sacrifice was typical in order to save the life of another (Moore, p. 228). Mateship was strengthened in the 1850s as gold diggers were bound together to create a forceful union against unjust authority, as observed in the Eureka Stockade in 1854 (Colling, p. 11). In 1855, unionism evolved, created by the strong bonds of fraternity developed in opposing the domination and mistreatment by unreasonable employers (Moore, p. 226). The world wars were undeniably the most momentous events where Australian men displayed the qualities of mateship that are still present today (Barber, p. 60). The now present fraternity of Australian men and women in society has such a great expansion that a mate can be a complete stranger as long as there is a mutual objective (Edgar, p. 300).

Defiance has become a unifying element of mateship, originating from the colonial era. Disobedience of the government or even of a private master was displayed frequently by convicts, they often uniting a group; anyone who resisted the law was a mate (Colling, p. 6). Common forms of protest included damaging master's businesses, escapism, mocking one's employers, and halting work due to the lack of medical care, inadequate provisions, and unhygienic conditions (Maguire, p. 144). In the 1850s, numerous conflicts between miners and authorities escalated, with significant discontent developing over unfairness of the goldfields licensing system and police corruption; and, in 1854, 1000 miners united at Eureka on the outskirts of Ballarat and unfolded the Southern Cross flag in protest (See the 'Culture and Recreation Portal', 2007). This event led to the development of the earliest trade unions who, with the power of a united force, demanded and won reasonable wages and allowed Australia to become the first country with the 8 hour working day (Smith, 2000). In this same pattern, nurses began to defy authority in 1975 when 4,000 of them stormed the Victorian Parliament because of issues of low staffing and pay (Ross, 2006). These issues continue to be raised by nurses today as well as teachers, who in April

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2008 rallied outside Education Minister Bronwyn Pike's electorate office in pursuit of better wages and working conditions (Tomazin, 2008).

Defiance against authority is particularly evident in the history/ record of our ballads. People recited the stories of defiance to draw strength from in relation to their own experiences of hardship; if infrequently used songs, poems or tales fade from regular use, modern texts are produced as a replacement, these originating from current situations (Seal, p. 22). Much earlier, Francis MacNamara, a convict poet, wrote numerous poems as records of the brutality and harshness of convict life; Ned Kelly quoted Moreton Bay in his Jerilderie Letter and Dan Kelly sang about Frank to inspire his gang at the siege in Glenrowan (Hodge et al., p. 338). Banjo Patterson famously wrote *Waltzing Matilda* about a swagman shearer who defied authority in the period of tension between the government and shearers, and this is presently an unofficial anthem in Australia. Several ballads about Jack Donohoe, the Irish convict turned bushranger, including *Bold Jack Donohoe* were sung as anthems of defiance during the shearer's strike of 1891 (Culture and Recreation Portal, 2008).

Both Henry Lawson and Banjo Patterson gave mass appeal to the folklore of bush ballads in the publication of *Old Bush Songs*, even now a significant inspiration to present Australian country and folk music (Culture and Recreational Portal, 2008). Present defiance examples include John Williamson's *Rip Rip Woodchip* (1989), an obvious opposition to logging old growth forests, while *Midnight Oil's The Beds Are Burning* (1988) is about defiance towards current beliefs about land rights (Honan 2007).

Evidently protesting against conformity has become a formidable Australian attitude, it originating largely from a distrust of authority. The recurring use of brute force by police has persisted over the last 200 years, this possibly fuelling the deeply embedded distrust that many Australians have towards anyone with power. The use of force began in penal colonies which operated as repressive environments featuring suppression, violence and cases of excessive cruelty (DEWHA, p. 81). The fear and distrust of police 'authority' continued into the gold rush era as diggers begrudged and were wary of police for using excessive violence in fee collection. Conflicts increased as diggers opposed the injustice of the goldfield licensing system and police corruption (Culture and Recreation Portal, 2007).

In following years the Kelly gang became a famous example of extreme police distrust as noted in Ned Kelly's *Jerilderie Letter*; he believed that his family were victims of police persecution (State Library of Victoria, 2006). This distrust continues in the present as police brutality is still a common use of law enforcement, just

police brutality as a first line of defence against lawbreakers (McDonald, 1989). For the Police commonly view themselves as law enforcers, principally operating as delinquent arresters and letting the courts rule on punishment (McDonald 1989).

Even though there has been a gradual evolution of the Australian identity since the colonial era, several attitudes and particular parts of the convict folk life and ethic are still evident in the Australian character. Egalitarianism, beginning in the colonial era when the stigma of convict life was shameful, persists today through the behaviour of any Australian who demands equality in all aspects of life. Mateship, arising from the struggles of isolated convicts who united against authority is conveyed today through the loyalty of social equality and of a shared/ mutual goal. Defiance against authority and the convict-associated ballads, alike live on in numerous union protests and Australian music. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on Australia Day 2008 acknowledged the fundamental qualities of the Australian identity that have allowed the Australian culture to survive through any adversary:

We have prevailed because of the enduring set of values that have shaped us as a country; values of independence, values of freedom, of resilience, enterprise and hard work. At the same time, values of looking out for one another, of mateship and compassion and the value of a fair go for all – that great Australian value. These values remain the bedrock of our nation – they have forged our past and they will fortify our future (*The Age*, 2008).

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