Expressions of War in Australia and the Pacific

Language, Trauma, Memory, and Official Discourse

Edited by
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Languages play a crucial role in war, conflict and peacemaking: in intelligence gathering and evaluation, pre-deployment preparations, operations on the ground, regime-change, and supporting refugees and displaced persons. In the politics of war, languages have a dual impact: a public policy dimension, setting frameworks and expectations; and the lived experience of those 'on the ground', working with and meeting speakers of other languages.

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Cara Penry Williams is an early career researcher with a broad range of interests within and around linguistics, encompassing a primary research focus on sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. Her work on Australian English focuses on language variation and change, the use of pragmatic and discourse features, and folk linguistics and the social meanings of variation. She has also been working on a project which explores with the relationships between language and violence and has recently written on understanding Australian English through contemporary Australian authors (*Asian Englishes*). After teaching extensively at the University of Melbourne and La Trobe University, Penry Williams is Lecturer in English Language at the University of Derby.

Abbreviations

AWM	Australian War Memorial, Canberra
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NLA	National Library of Australia, Canberra
SLNSW	State Library of New South Wales
SMH	*Sydney Morning Herald*

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Re-visioning Australia's Second World War: Race Hatred, Strategic Marginalisation, and the Visual Language of the South West Pacific Campaign

Introduction: Expressions of War in Australia and the Pacific—Language, Trauma, Memory, and Official Discourse

Amanda Laugesen and Catherine Fisher

War had an enormous impact during the twentieth century. Eric Hobsbawm argued in 2002 that the twentieth century was 'the most murderous in recorded history,' a 'century of almost unbroken war' in which over 187 million died in conflicts across the globe.[1] War continues to shape our society, politics, and culture into the twenty-first century. Uncovering the various histories, experiences, and impacts of war on individuals, cultures, and societies remains a continuing necessity. But as eminent historian of war Jay Winter has observed, 'What we know of war is always mediated knowledge and feeling' and the lenses we use to make sense of war are 'furnished by the languages we speak.'[2] We therefore need to pay close attention to the language of those who speak and write about war, and to how our understandings of war are mediated through language.

To examine the way language and communication can be used as prisms for exploring the experiences and impacts of war, we organised a symposium 'Language in Times of War and Conflict' at the Australian National University in late 2017. We specifically sought to bring together

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scholars from a number of different disciplines, including Linguistics, History, Communications, and English Literature, believing that any approach to considering the history of language and conflict must make use of the insights of more than one disciplinary field.

This collection, along with its companion volume, *Communicating, Interpreting and Language in Wartime*, is a product of that symposium. It aims to capture the vibrant interdisciplinary dialogue that the symposium inspired. We hope that this collection offers new approaches, methodologies, and insights to thinking about the study of language in the context of war.

Existing volumes in the Palgrave Studies of Languages at War have covered several conflicts, including the First and Second World Wars and the Bosnian conflict, as well as tracking language issues in the context of NATO operations and war crimes tribunals.[3] Our collection continues the work of the series in developing comparative perspectives across time and space. Importantly, this collection seeks to expand existing scholarship in this area beyond a strongly Anglo-European focus to one that also encompasses Australia and the Pacific region. It also brings together comparative perspectives from across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, with the bulk of the chapters focused on the First and Second World Wars.

Writing About Language and War

The idea of 'language' in the context of war is approached in a variety of ways by different authors through this collection. Why be concerned with language? Recent scholarship has sought to put language(s) into much greater focus within the story of war. This has ranged from work that seeks to foreground the translator and the act of translation in the context of war, to questions of cross-cultural communication, to linguistic analyses of soldiers' writings.

Michael Kelly writes that all conflicts are 'fundamentally conducted in and through language.' He identifies three key dimensions of this: language's function in conveying and negotiating social identities; its function in shaping the way people represent the world to themselves and to each other; and its function in enabling or impeding communication.[4]

This volume is especially concerned with the first two of these three aspects. It seeks to bring together social and cultural history concerns, paying attention to how, why, and in what contexts people used language in particular ways, from personal expressions to official communication.

The cultural history of war has long been attentive to language. Paul Fussell's ground-breaking *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) is the iconic text in this regard. He examined the various tropes that war writing adopted, and powerfully argued the importance of the ironic mode used by those who had experienced war when they wrote about it. The cultural history of war has grown exponentially since the publication of *The Great War and Modern Memory*. This scholarship includes studies of the literature of war (especially the First World War), but with expanded definitions of what might constitute that literature.[5] For example, the work of Santanu Das expands our understanding of the literary and cultural history of the First World War with his study of the Indian experience of the war and demonstrates the importance of using new methodologies and approaches when traditional sources are not always available.[6] Another example is the recent collection by Angela K. Smith and Krista Cowman that seeks to reframe understandings of the First World War through an examination of marginalised voices, including those of women.[7]

One issue that these scholars raise, and which continues to haunt the cultural history of the First World War (and, to an extent, the cultural history of other wars), is the extent to which we can in fact ever come to know what war is like if one has not directly experienced it. The experience of the First World War in particular has been considered to be unknowable and unable to be adequately represented. Das and McLoughlin have recently argued that the war is not indescribable, insofar as many did write about it, but it does perhaps remain, at least at some level, unknowable.[8] Language does perhaps ultimately fail in conveying the true horrors of war, but this does not mean that we cannot try to tease out the complexities of the various ways in which people have spoken about and tried to make sense of the experience of war through writing and other forms of expression and representation.

This collection builds on this rich scholarship in cultural history, especially work that has sought to bring together the social and cultural history

of war by paying attention to the way people have made sense of their experiences of war (and loss) through cultural forms and expressions such as writing, building memorials, or producing art. This collection argues that an analysis of language offers one way into coming closer to understanding the many experiences of individuals and societies in wartime and can give us new insights into understanding war.

Methodologies and Approaches

This collection highlights a number of different and innovative methodologies and approaches to the study of war and language. A number of chapters consider a range of little-used source material, while others seek to use innovative methodologies in order to reconsider traditional source materials. We hope that some of the methodologies and approaches explored in this volume will spark off new ways of thinking about the complexities of language and war.

Cultural histories of war have taken innovative approaches to considering sources in order to explore the experiences of war. For example, the work of Santanu Das (as mentioned previously), in writing about Indian cultural histories of the First World War, uses a range of sources (and develops innovative ways of reading such sources) including photographs, letters, and song.[9] Others have considered material culture as an important way into the culture of war.[10] Diverse source material must be drawn on to make sense of language and war, especially the experiences of individuals.[11] In this collection, source materials employed by our authors range from letters to radio broadcasts to photographs to telegrams.

Visual communication and language can also be seen as important in considering the cultural history of war, and scholars have undertaken innovative work using visual sources. The language of war monuments, for example, has been the concern of several scholars.[12] In their consideration of the language of war monuments, Abousnnouga and Machin argue that discourses can be realised in different genres of communication.[13] Kevin Foster in this collection looks closely at the visual language of Australian official photography in the Second World War. In particular, he examines how such photographs have conveyed or can

convey particular narratives and understanding of war, the enemy, and national identity. They were crucial in providing a visual language that framed and conveyed an understanding of Australia's war in the Pacific theatre, and that framed and reinforced racial understandings of the Japanese enemy.

Another important methodology increasingly being employed in the study of the past is that derived from corpus linguistics.[14] 'Big data' or corpus techniques have only recently begun to be explored as a methodology of history. Chapters 2 and 3 contributed by Cara Penry Williams and John Rice-Whetton, and Véronique Duché, respectively, draw on a corpus analysis of soldiers' writing—in the first example a corpus of letters written by soldiers, and in the second, a corpus of Australian and French soldiers' magazines. Both chapters point to the exciting potential of applying 'big data' techniques to analysing texts, and Penry Williams and Rice-Whetton in particular detail their corpus construction methodology. Such methods can take traditionally well-used sources and glean new insights from them, as well as call attention to the importance of paying close attention to linguistic structures, as well as lexicon and content in our study of the language soldiers use.

While a corpus approach can help to reveal aspects of language change through periods of conflict, and help to reveal trends and suggest questions for further research, such analysis must be supplemented by a social historical approach that places this language in the context of experience and that applies a 'thick description' approach to the way language functioned for and was used by individuals. As Winter recently noted in his study of the word 'glory,' a 'quantitative history of semantics' can only suggest 'questions, not answers.'[15] But the questions that are raised can provide new ways of thinking about, and understanding, how language is impacted by war, and how war is shaped by language.

War and Trauma

The traumatic impact of war is the first of three main themes that run through the collection. The literature on this topic is voluminous.[16] Indeed, Joanna Bourke writes that the 'proliferation of definitions and

approaches to psychological trauma poses difficulties for anyone attempting to illuminate the diverse and shifting ways people in the past negotiated and gave meaning to events as harrowing as war and its disruptive aftermaths.'[17] 'Trauma' has become a term that encompasses many different approaches to understanding the impact of war on individuals. This collection seeks to explore a number of different disciplinary approaches to the impact of wartime trauma.

Trauma has been well studied in the context of the First World War, often through the prism of exploring the way 'shell-shock' was constructed, experienced, and understood. This conflict was incredibly destructive and wrought a significant psychological as well as physical toll on those who served.[18] As Peter Leese and Jason Crouthamel write in a recent volume studying the various aspects of psychological trauma in the First World War, the 'traumatic impact of the First World War is subjective, and its meanings are divided along gender, political, and experiential lines.'[19] They also suggest that there is a continuing need for broader cultural and historical analyses of trauma.[20]

A major theme of this collection is the way trauma and the experience of war can (or cannot) be articulated. Who speaks (or is allowed to speak) about trauma? And how do they speak about it? Some scholars have also enriched perspectives on these important questions by considering the significance of silence in the context of war, trauma, and remembrance.[21]

As mentioned previously, in this collection Penry Williams and Rice-Whetton have taken a corpus-linguistic approach to studying the way First World War soldiers wrote about violence and death in their letters home. They show that the linguistic techniques used by these soldiers demonstrate Michael Roper's argument that writing can be a means of attempting to contain and put boundaries around difficult experience.[22] The authors analyse linguistic strategies such as the use of metaphor, the passive voice, and telegrammatic language to demonstrate how soldiers could find ways to talk about (and avoid speaking directly about) the violence and death that they endured and also sometimes perpetrated. Such linguistic devices removed the writer from their own descriptions of their experiences and actions.

Humour can be considered as another means used by soldiers (and others) of addressing or deflecting the multifarious impacts and traumas

of war. Trench publications from the First World War, now a well-researched source, reveal how soldiers used humour as a coping mechanism during that conflict.[23] As Graham Seal argues, these publications often served to mediate the experiences of war 'as the soldiers wished it to be.'[24] But they also provided a 'communal voice' for soldiers.[25]

Yet an examination of humour as deployed within these publications can still reveal new insights into the culture of soldiers.[26] Humorous and satirical jokes and anecdotes, as well as cartoons, were a common feature of such publications. Such humour and satire helped to vent frustrations and complaints, as well as to provide entertaining reading to soldiers. It also was linked, as Tholas-Disset and Ritzenhoff describe, to 'standing on the edge of the abyss.'[27] Indeed, they assert, humour can be 'one of the most powerful instruments of psychological and political resistance on the battlefield and on the home front.'[28] In her chapter, Duché also draws on corpus-linguistic methodologies to trace the way French and Australian soldiers used humour in depicting their enemies. She reveals the different words used to describe the enemy, and the various connotations attached to the usage of particular terms.

Trauma is approached in a different way in Neil Ramsey's reading of Edmund Blunden's *Undertones of War*. Chapter 5 is an important contribution to an ongoing reassessment of British war literature.[29] Using an approach informed by the theoretical work of Jacques Rancière, Ramsey grapples with the important question of trauma and the incommunicability of war.

How people cope with and learn to live with grief and loss is another concern of many who study war and trauma.[30] Language can offer one way of approaching an understanding of the various experiences of grief and loss. In Chap. 8, John Moremon examines the language that was used in official notifications of death, injury, capture, or missing-in-action status to families of serving Australians during the Second World War. Using a neglected form of communication, the official telegram, Moremon explores how people received, responded to, and coped with the receipt of such communications. He demonstrates that the wording of these notifications had significant consequences.

War and Memory

Like war and trauma, there is an enormous scholarship on war and memory.[31] Jay Winter suggests that 'remembrance' might be the better word for scholars to use as he insists on foregrounding agency when talking about memory and its processes. Remembrance is an active process that is reshaped continually.[32] Winter also asserts that the language of remembrance can be understood as a public, and potentially political, language. A number of scholars' work in this area has shown the multiplicity of ways in which politics can play itself out in the public remembrance and shaping of the memory of war.[33]

'Anzac' in Australia is a shorthand for the way war is understood and remembered in the public sphere. The defeat at Gallipoli quickly became a key moment in Australian history and the mythology of Anzac has had a powerful legacy. Anzac was imagined as a seminal moment of the 'birth of a nation' for a country struggling to define a national identity separate from its identity as an extension of the mother country, Britain. Anzac, as understood as the events at Gallipoli, and the development of Anzac as a more encompassing mythology of Australia's wartime legacy, would continue to function in complex and important ways in Australian public discourse for the next century.[34]

In Chap. 4, Bridget Brooklyn examines the 'language of remembrance' that was crafted by Australian Mary Booth. As Brooklyn ably demonstrates, the process of remembrance undertaken by Booth was a political project. Brooklyn's article reinforces the importance of women in the story of remembrance during and after the First World War. For Booth, a medical doctor by training and a politically conservative feminist, the war offered opportunities to assert herself in the public sphere. Her work in providing amenities for soldiers was important in wartime Sydney, and this continued into the postwar period in Booth's campaigns around helping to commemorate Anzac Day.

Brooklyn's dissection of the public language deployed by Booth in her work demonstrates how a close reading of language can suggest much about the way such figures asserted their politics. Booth could assert her

conservative feminist and British-Australian nationalist agendas through the language of war remembrance and Anzac myth-making. Her invocations of 'home,' for example, both reflected the way in which she desired women to take on a role in the political sphere and intervened in the ongoing reshaping of the uncertain British-Australian nationalism.

Booth's work was part of an interwar effort (begun during the war) to make Anzac central to the memory of the First World War in Australia. The centrality of Anzac to interwar public discourse was evident in the interwar press. While Anzac would be reshaped in numerous ways through the next century—and be reshaped most importantly by participation in other wars—Anzac underwent a resurgence in public culture from the 1980s onwards.[35] Critics today would argue that Anzac has become a secular religion, with Anzac too sacred to be criticised in the public sphere without risk of backlash.[36] Some have also criticised the fact that Anzac is celebrated at the expense of actual veterans: 'Commemorating soldiers is not the same as connecting with them,' argues James Brown, himself a veteran of Afghanistan and Iraq.[37] Further, the language of Anzac, Joan Beaumont argues, continues to be used to mobilise public support for war.[38]

Australians are drawn to Anzac because it links to nationalism, and because it represents universal values such as courage, comradeship, and sacrifice.[39] Indeed, more than ever, Anzac has become a powerful source of emotional and sentimental attachment for many Australians, even those without direct family links to war.[40] Like it or not, Anzac has a powerful hold on the Australian political and cultural imagination.

Rebecca Wheatley's chapter (Chap. 10) examines the Anzac mythology's power and how it shapes consciousness for young people today. She pays close attention to the language used by young people to describe and relate to the powerful public myth of Anzac in a variety of ways: one schoolgirl concludes that Anzac 'represent[s] so many brilliant things,' another honours the memory of a great-great-grandfather who suffered shell-shock, while others struggle to connect at all. In the language they use to describe their connections to values such as 'sacrifice,' 'mateship,' and 'patriotism,' we gain insight into the ongoing reworkings of public remembrance and continuing role of war in shaping Australian national identity.

Language, Propaganda, and Official Communication

The final theme explored in this collection is the idea of language and communication in the context of wartime propaganda. While studies of culture in war have often focused on popular culture, an interest in propaganda and what we might call 'official communication' remains. Considering how institutions and governments communicate ideas about war is of ongoing significance, but we also can extend such study to consider how certain groups might be involved in this (e.g., the involvement of women), or how people might receive and respond to propaganda and other official discourse.

Several chapters in this collection concern themselves with the language of official communication forms. We have already mentioned John Moremon's examination of official notifications of the loss of family members during the Second World War. In that chapter, we see how the authorities struggled to find a way to notify families of the loss of a loved one in a way that could be considered sensitive to their grief, yet the responses to the language used by authorities reveals the considerable work that such language was required to do.

The ongoing legacy of war's traumas has been well documented. As Leigh Straw notes, the 'experiences and consequences of war do not end' with the conclusion of hostilities. The process of 'return' (emotionally and mentally rather than physically) could take years.[41] Australia continues to grapple with how best to support the veterans of conflicts it has participated in. Lisa Ranson and Leanne Glenny in Chap. 9 take our collection through to the present day, examining the ways in which the army currently frames the language surrounding post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and how this is communicated to soldiers and veterans. This chapter adds to a literature concerned with the care and treatment of those who have served.[42] It also demonstrates how official language, used by military publications, can be of crucial importance in conveying attitudes about PTSD, and influencing individuals' own attitude towards themselves and their likelihood to seek help. The right sort of language