

KEVIN PATRICK

The Forgotten Few: The Portrayal of Aerial Combat in Australian Fiction

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, there appeared a comparatively new genre of Australian war novel which sought to give readers some insight about the unique dangers of aerial combat and the intense pressures faced by Australian aircrews that fought in World War II and the Korean War. Yet few, if any, of these novels have ever been admitted into the canon of great Australian war literature.¹

A key reason for such exclusion, it will be argued, was that the mechanised nature of air warfare, coupled with the class-conscious hierarchy of the air force itself, placed these novels in direct opposition to the enduring appeal of the ANZAC 'legend', which was underpinned by the image of the egalitarian Australian soldier—the archetypal 'digger'.

Another equally telling reason for their diminished artistic status is that many of these novels emanated from the ranks of 'popular' paperbacks, which were routinely shunned by contemporary critics and remain almost continually overlooked by present-day scholars.

However, as this article will demonstrate, such critical disdain fails to acknowledge how systemic changes to Australia's post-war publishing landscape made it possible for a new generation of Australian war novelist, such as William R. Bennett, to reach a truly mass audience, for whom tales of aerial combat were not so much a celebration of an outmoded martial ideal of the Australian soldier, but an exciting harbinger of the technological age in which they lived.

Central to any study of Australian war literature is the notion of the ANZAC ‘legend’, as both a political and historical construct and as a thematic ideal which has underscored many Australian war novels published since the end of World War I.²

The earliest and most influential articulation of the ANZAC legend can be found in *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*. C.E.W. Bean’s six-volume account of the 1st AIF (Australian Imperial Force) and its military actions at Gallipoli and along the Western Front was considered remarkable not only for its breadth of coverage, but its often intimate level of detail. A contemporary newspaper review remarked that its “comprehensiveness of narrative” made it unique, while noting how “the adventures of little parties of private soldiers are told if they throw light on the campaigns”.⁴

This was typical of Bean’s willingness to push the ordinary Australian soldier to the forefront of historical events. More significantly, however, Bean argued that the “strongest bond” amongst Australian servicemen was “between a man and his mate”, a quality that “became recognisable as parts of the national character”.⁵ Not only did the act of war throw the traits of a uniquely Australian character into sharp relief, but it would be on the shores of Gallipoli, on 25 April 1915, where, according to Bean, “the consciousness of Australian nationhood was born”.⁶ By entwining the notion of mateship with a national pride forged by war, Bean laid down the basic tenets of the ANZAC legend that would colour a great deal of Australian war literature to come.

Butler expands on Bean’s observations about the Australian character by tracing the historical lineage of the word ‘digger’, the nickname given to Australian soldiers during World War I, to the pastoral pioneers of 19th century Australia. More significantly, Butler mounts an explicitly political argument endorsing the ANZAC legend by nominating ‘Diggerism’ as a new form of “social order”, one free of “political rancour”, which could guide Australia through the uncertainties of the post-war world.⁷ The rejection of “party politics” was evident in the rhetoric of veterans groups like the RSSILA,⁸ which sought to “recreate the wartime spirit of fellowship” in peacetime Australia.⁹ However, as political and economic crises wracked Australian society during the 1920s and 1930s, these aspirations frequently degenerated into extremism of the sort typified by paramilitary groups like the New Guard.¹⁰

If, as Bean argues, the ordeal of war was essential to the formation of Australia’s national identity, then it is not surprising that the Australian experience of war should serve as the inspiration for Australian authors and their work. World War

It proved to be an unusually fertile field for Australian literature, spawning over 400 works of fiction.¹¹ David Walker stresses that not only were many of these written by veterans keen “to record at first hand the deeds of those who had done the fighting”, but that some of them, such as Lawson Glassop’s *We Were the Rats* (1944) and Eric Lambert’s *The Twenty Thousand Thieves* (1952), became bestsellers and outsold the official Australian histories of both world wars.¹² Many of these novels evoked the popular image of the anti-authoritarian Australian fighting man, by evoking “real or fancied links...with the diggers of the First World War and the distant rigours of pioneering life”.¹³

Beneath this superficial bravado, however, lay a shared sense of alienation amongst Australian servicemen, as depicted in Lambert’s *The Veterans* (1954), who were disgusted by the hedonistic and corrupt atmosphere of wartime Australian society. Yet as Robin Gerster points out, the acerbic and disillusioned tone of these novels was partly attributable to authors’ catering to the “more ‘sophisticated’ tastes and tolerances” of post-war Australian audiences.¹⁴

Rick Hosking argues that the creative possibilities of the documentary-styled war novel, written by ex-servicemen attempting “to create fiction out of their memories”, had been exhausted by the late 1950s.¹⁵ Instead, Hosking nominates George Turner’s *Young Man of Talent* (1959) as one of the few Australian war novels to extend the creative parameters of the genre by suggesting that, far from being a positive, transformative experience, war hastens the “emotional and ... physical collapse of those who fought them”.¹⁶

If the critical literature devoted to Australian war novels seems inordinately concerned with the experience of the Australian soldier, it is only because the same is overwhelmingly true of the novels themselves. Despite the substantial contribution made by the RAAF to Australia’s war effort during 1939-45, few post-war novels reflected the experience of Australian airmen. Unlike the British, for whom the experience of aerial combat was “an everyday reality”, Gerster argues that, aside from the Japanese bombing raids to the country’s remote northern coastline, “Australians had less occasion to be impressed, either positively or adversely, by air warfare”.¹⁷

The national observance of ANZAC Day since 25 April 1916 meant that a generation of Australians had been raised to respect, if not worship, the image of the ANZAC ‘digger’. This meant that, for the men who enlisted with the 2nd AIF mobilised in 1939, there was “no need to invent a new group persona for the Australian foot soldier ... it was ready and waiting, full-blown”.¹⁸

The RAAF, by contrast, struggled to invoke a stirring wartime narrative that resonated with Australians. Although its forerunner, the Australian Flying Corps, served with distinction during 1914-18, its exploits were never extolled in the same manner as the soldiers who fought at Lone Pine, Fromelles or Amiens. Contemporary RAAF propaganda inadvertently drew attention to the rawness of its history by referring to its recruits as “a new and amazing breed of men,” only to concede in the same sentence that “most of them are little more than boys”.¹⁹

This didn't dissuade some Australian writers from attempting to recast the RAAF pilot in the image of the physically imposing digger:

The Australian Flight Lieutenant ... magnetized every pilot's attention. A brushed shock of corn-coloured hair topped six feet of athletically-proportioned sinew and muscle. His broad shoulders tapered down to slim hips. The width of his chest, too, was impressive and deep-built, like the chest of an underwater swimmer.²⁰

Even if they weren't cast from the same mould as an Olympic athlete, Australians always stood out, even amongst the anonymous ranks of RAF Bomber Command: ‘Sometimes they wore khaki felt hats. No aircrew components of any other nations had these ... Their uniform was a purplish blue; all others wore a blue-grey ... the fact that they wore a different uniform seemed to underline an Australian independence. They were not the most disciplined of men, but they were efficient’.²¹

Yet there would be little place for the ‘rugged individualism’ of the Australian soldier in the modern air force, where aircrews were “more than just [individuals] flying in an aeroplane. They were a crew fighting in it as a corporate unit”.²²

Those who did openly rebel against air force bureaucracy were swiftly punished. The hedonistic hero of Geoffrey Dutton's absurdist war novel, *Andy*,²³ having spent the first third of the book in “the boob” for stealing aviation fuel for his clapped-out motor car, is subsequently transferred to a remote Advanced Flying School in Tasmania, thousands of miles away from where he wants to be, at the frontline in New Guinea.

The hierarchical structure of the RAAF, and the demographic composition of its personnel, sometimes stood in stark contrast to the supposedly egalitarian traditions of the 1st AIF. Sir John Monash, the Australian Commander-in-Chief, noted that “there was ... no officer caste, no social distinction in the whole force ... In not a few instances, men of humble origin ... rose, during the war, from privates to commanders of battalions”.²⁴ Although Serle argues that all armies are

“anything but a democratic institution,” he points to Monash’s “unusual” custom of involving large conferences of officers in planning attacks as a sign that the 1st AIF “was far more democratic than most”.²⁵

Such egalitarianism was not so readily apparent in fictional treatments of air force life. Squadron Leader Lou McKinnon, the arrogant commanding officer in *Island Victory*, is likened to “those upper-class Englishmen who do not boast about the virtues of their race and class, assuming what lesser men would assert,” whose “contempt for the RAAF’s indispensable ‘wingless wonders’ was notorious ... [even though] he was hardly conscious of his prejudice”.²⁶ The Australian officers’ ranks are frequently shown to be drawn from the upper–middle classes. Squadron Leader Gordon McCulloch is described as “a former Sydney stockbroker”, while Flight Lieutenant Philip Masters lectured in modern English literature at university.²⁷

The same was written of Australians serving in the RAF, characterised as young men “who had known the benefits of a well-equipped home, a comprehensive education and an ordered social existence,” while stringent health and medical standards “weeded out the majority of applicants who had been deprived of these advantages”.²⁸ The observance of class distinction might partly explain why such Australian authors as Geoff Taylor, Olaf Ruhén and Ray Hollis, all of whom flew with RAF Bomber Command, found favour with British publishers. Not only did their novels depict events experienced by the British public, thereby ensuring their commercial appeal, but their evocation of air force hierarchy, in its own way, positively reaffirmed Britain’s own sense of social order.

If the Australian airman depicted in war novels was markedly different from the popular image of the ‘digger’, so were his weapons of war. The combat prowess of fighter pilots was defined by their aircraft. Therefore, considerable attention was given to the aircraft themselves:

In the Tempest’s specially designed high-speed wings, completely enclosed and out of sight, four 20-mm. Hispano Mk.V cannons lay at rest. Specially designed, too, those guns ... His right thumb found the firing button and gouged the Tempest’s four slumbering Hispano cannons into back-lashing wakefulness ... 20-mm shells were gulped, spewed from flame-lashed muzzles.²⁹

While such technically detailed passages were no doubt meant to bolster the claims of realism made on behalf of these books by their publishers, they also reflected the almost fetishistic appeal such technology held for the pilots

themselves: 'Vincent was admiring his Gee-Set. The grey metal box ... looked more like a toy than a weapon of war ... But still the flyers, hardly more than boys and all just boys at heart, fingered and admired their latest toys with gay anticipation'.³⁰ The thrill of flight is central to many of these novels. As much as he might hate the air force, Andy's love of flying is plainly evident when he expounds upon the beauty of his CAC Wirraway trainer to his priggish colleague, Ian Almond:

Look at those kites with their serious noses sniffing the evening air, more patient than any horse, stronger than any lion, gayer than any kitten. The aeroplane is entirely yours, what personality you have, it will express ... If you are feeling rorty and passionate, mad to fornicate with the clouds and brush the belly of the earth, then you can loop it and roll it and fly it so low that the prop cuts the grass.³¹

Yet it is the very mechanical quality of aerial combat, where men are made subservient to machines which, Gerster argues, places it at odds with the ANZAC legend that "still believed that 'real' combat was conducted with the feet squarely planted on terra firma, man facing man".³² But as one RAAF officer observes of his colleague in *Island Victory*, "[this] was a machine war in a machine age ... Poor Childers with his rifle-and-bayonet war was an anachronism".³³

Critics such as Gerster, however, fail to acknowledge the intrinsic glamour that combat aircraft held for both author and reader alike. Almost without exception, humans were noticeably absent from the covers which adorned these air warfare novels, supplanted instead by dramatic images of aircraft in action, particularly on paperback novels like William R. Bennett's *Target Turin*³⁴ and *Spitfire Attack*.³⁵ As Toni Johnson-Woods observes, pulp fiction covers such as these "conformed to the 'ten-foot' rule; they had to be visible from ten feet away and thus relied on garish colours and high-octane moments."³⁶ Appearing as they did during the late 1950s and early 1960s, these air combat 'pulp', with their focus on high-speed dogfights and aeronautical technology, both anticipated and reflected the emerging technological vocabulary of the dawning 'space race' between the United States and the Soviet Union.

The punishing physical and psychological effects of combat were a recurring theme in these novels. The Australian crew of an RAF flying boat, exhausted to the point of collapse, are sent on a dangerous mission with disastrous results in *Mediterranean Black*.³⁷ In *The Hollow Square*, Sergeant-pilot Truett faces court martial on the charge of 'lacking moral fibre', after refusing to fly any further

missions.³⁸ Brandt Mitford, the chief protagonist in *The Squadron Leader*, is on the verge of ‘cracking up’ after amassing 150 combat missions in Korea.³⁹

Death, too, was ever present in these novels, striking in random, almost absurd, circumstances. An observer, perched on the wing of a P-40 Kittyhawk, is killed during a collision with an incoming P-38 Lightning on a crowded island landing strip.⁴⁰ A wireless operator dumping ammunition from the escape hatch of a bomber is dragged to his death when an ammunition belt gets snagged on his inflatable vest.⁴¹

If World War II inspired a new generation of Australian authors, then the Korean War proved to be comparatively arid ground for Australian literature. Yet the fact that Bryan Haven’s Korean War novel, *Jet Fury*, was published in Great Britain by the ‘pulp paperback’ imprint, Digit House,⁴² as distinct from a ‘reputable’ book publisher, may partly explain why it has been overlooked by literary critics until now. Nonetheless, it can be legitimately discussed as an example of Australian air warfare literature, not only for its subject matter, but for the fact that its author served with the RAAF during World War II, and allegedly saw action in the Korean War, as well.⁴³

Jet Fury is a curious amalgam of Cold War spy thriller and Korean air war adventure. The first half of the novel focuses on John ‘Slash’ Sewell, an RAAF veteran hired by aerospace engineer Arthur Lewin as the test pilot for his new prototype aircraft, the Lancer jet fighter. While thwarting the efforts of Soviet spies to sabotage the project, Sewell falls in love with Lewin’s daughter, Dorothy. Recalled to active duty for the Korean War, Sewell leads a Lancer-equipped RAAF squadron into action against enemy MiG-15 fighters. Upon learning that Dorothy is leaving him for one of her father’s junior employees, Sewell seeks “release from his problems via the bottle”⁴⁴ and recklessly throws himself into combat, with fatal consequences.

Jet Fury is an unabashedly jingoistic and xenophobic work, where Sewell and his Australian pilots not only have the measure of their opponents, but are also shown to be stoic and mature, in contrast with their USAF comrades. Sewell slaps a drunken American pilot who is openly grieving for his “buddy”, shot down over the Yalu River. An American officer takes Sewell to task, saying that Sewell reminds him of the English pilots he’d flown with during World War II, who’d “just ask for a cup of tea or a pint of beer and carry on” after losing one of their friends. “Slash tried to explain about Anglo-Saxon restraint”, writes Haven, “but gave it up in the end”.⁴⁵ Far removed from the brawling, rugged and uncouth Australian soldier that dominate the works of Glassop and Lambert, Haven instead portrays Sewell as an

Antipodean version of an emotionally reserved British air force officer—in many respects, the very antithesis of the Australian fighting man.

Despite its Australian author and British publisher, *Jet Fury* nonetheless epitomised what Norman Bartlett acerbically referred to as “the glossies”—American-styled “paper-bound books with varnished art-board covers in primary colours”.⁴⁶ (Bartlett no doubt sought to distinguish ‘the glossies’ from his own air warfare novel, *Island Victory*, which was published a reputable company, Angus & Robertson, and issued in hardback, with a dust wrapper, thereby confirming its status as a ‘real’ book.) *Jet Fury*, and other paperback novels of similar ilk, according to Bartlett, did little more than serve up “the same sort of thrills that more pretentious readers find in *The Naked and the Dead* [and] *From Here to Eternity*.”⁴⁷

Bartlett’s disdain for paperback books extends to their readers, whom he casually dismisses as “lowbrows”.⁴⁸ This low opinion was shared by one Australian pulp writer, who said readers “bought paperbacks like they were at the butchers, weighing up their pound of sausages, it didn’t matter what they bought, as long as they had a pound”.⁴⁹ Yet the democratic paperback publishing model, which put affordable reading into the hands of “millions of normally unliturgical Australians”⁵⁰, throws up an intriguing question about the audience reception of ‘pulp’ novels. If the elitist, class-conscious air force pilots of such novels as *Jet Fury* stood in stark opposition to the stridently egalitarian image of the Australian soldier, what appeal could they possibly hold for their working-class readership? The reason may well be that, nearly twenty years after the end of World War II, the mythic appeal of the tough Australian soldier had lost some of its lustre. Whereas the ‘digger’, clutching his obsolete Lee-Enfield rifle and sporting a World War I-era tin helmet, seemed hopelessly out of date, the fighter pilot seemed poised on the cusp of tomorrow—a prototype astronaut whose aircraft would eventually pave the way for sound barrier-breaking jets, satellites and space capsules. If the ‘digger’ was emblematic of Australia’s working-class past, then the airman was the symbol of an aspirational, technological future.

Rick Hosking reinforces the historical schism between Australian ‘literature’ and ‘popular fiction’ by drawing distinctions between *novelists* like T.A.G. Hungerford and *writers* (to use Hosking’s own terms) like J.E. Macdonnell, whose voluminous output of sea warfare paperbacks embodied what Hosking claims was both the “reading public’s and publishers’ [commercial] notion of the war novel.”⁵¹ While these qualitative distinctions between literary and popular fiction have typified most academic treatments of Australian ‘pulp fiction’, Johnson-Woods observes

that the post-war paperback industry represented “the richest period in Australian literary history, [as] thousands of titles were produced, millions of copies were sold and dozens of authors found gainful employment”⁵²

In his critical survey of Australian war literature, J.T. Laird singles out A.H. Martin’s *The Tall Man* (1958) as the “only significant work to emerge from the Korean War”, but dismisses William Bennett’s *MiG Meat* on the grounds that Bennett “wrote about the war at the ‘popular fiction’ level”.⁵³ Laird’s curt assessment not only typifies academia’s reluctance to critically assess ‘popular’ Australian fiction, but overlooks one of the few Australian authors who wrote extensively about the Australian experience of aerial combat in World War II and the Korean War.

William Robert Bennett was nothing if not qualified to write about his subject. He enlisted with the RAAF in August 1941 and flew Spitfires with 453 Squadron RAAF (Dern, Scotland). Shot down over The Hague in 1944 and captured as a prisoner of war, Bennett was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) in 1945. Posted to 77 Squadron RAAF in Korea as Deputy Commanding Officer, Bennett flew over 200 combat missions and was awarded the DFC and Bar, along with the United States Air Medal and DFC. Bennett wrote a novel based on his air force experiences and submitted it to Horwitz Publications, whose editors, sensing promise in Bennett’s “rough and unprofessional” manuscript, brought it up to publishable standard. Coached by Horwitz’s editors on the “fine points of the writer’s trade”, Bennett eventually retired from the RAAF and devoted himself to full-time writing.⁵⁴

Bennett’s Korean War novels frequently depicted the RAAF’s British-built Meteor jets being overwhelmed by the enemy’s numerically and technologically superior MiG-15 jets. This lopsided aerial contest was confirmed by Squadron Leader Ron Guthrie who, rather tellingly, likened 77 Squadron’s difficulties to those faced by Australian soldiers at Gallipoli: “We were ill equipped to do the job that needed to be done ... we coped as best we could with what we had, [but we were] always ... on the defensive from the word go”⁵⁵

Bennett’s novels, like all ‘genre’ fiction, are essentially formulaic. Some revolved around the struggle of an ‘outsider’ trying to fit in with a tightly-knit combat unit, such as *Edge of Hell*, where Max Blair, an older instructor posted to Korea, tries to impose his will on the younger, more capable pilot, Jack Colter.⁵⁶ Others, like *MiG Meat*, dealt with the rivalry between two officers, Steve Dane and Tony Randall, competing for the love of the same woman.⁵⁷ Typically, these conflicts were resolved after the protagonists had either undergone a shared ordeal or, in

some instances, when one of them was 'sacrificed' in combat. Regardless of their individual variations of plot or setting, Bennett's novels, like most 'pulp' war stories of that era, according to Arne Axelsson, adhered to a "traditionally realistic framework", which eschewed the need for "technical experimentation and artistic sophistication."⁵⁸

Yet for all their overripe prose and clichéd situations, Bennett's Korean War novels "took the reader convincingly into the pilot's seat", conveying the frenetic confusion of air-to-air jet combat.⁵⁹ Occasionally, Bennett would stray from generic conventions, as with *The Red Parallel*, where he made the struggle of a North Korean air force officer defecting to South Korea aboard his MiG-15 a focal point of the book.⁶⁰ Such sympathetic portrayals of Asian combatants are rarities in Australian war literature.

From 1961 onwards, Bennett exclusively wrote World War II stories, which suggests that his Korean War stories failed to attract sufficient sales to justify their continuation. Yet the commercial 'failure' of these novels arguably has as much to do with Australians' disinterest in the Korean War itself, as it does with any creative shortcomings on Bennett's part. Gavan McCormack argues that the 'Cold War' which spawned the Korean conflict was "experienced in a more diffuse and generalised way" within Australian society which, in turn, regarded the Korean War "almost as a sideshow".⁶¹ Even the official military history of Australia's involvement in the Korean War concedes that the "comparatively small [Australian] units" were taking part in a war that "Australians everywhere freely acknowledge was an American show".⁶²

Bennett's fortunes as a writer were tied to the dramatic changes sweeping Australia's publishing industry. In 1960, the Australian government lifted its 20-year ban on imported printed matter from the United States (originally imposed as a wartime austerity measure), resulting in a surge of imported paperback books that drove many indigenous publishers out of business. Horwitz Publications, however, abandoned its cheap 'booklet' format and employed new letterpress printing technologies to produce a range of paperback books, sporting full-colour covers which compared favourably with their glossy American rivals. Horwitz implemented an editorial policy of establishing new categories of "sensational fiction", written by a team of "versatile authors", which allowed the company to respond swiftly to changing public tastes.⁶³

Horwitz's revitalised publishing programme coincided with a surge of public interest in war novels, the distance of time since the end of World War II now making it "an acceptable topic for writers and readers".⁶⁴ Horwitz Publications

scored considerable success in this market with J.E. Macdonnell, a former journalist and ex-Royal Australian Navy gunnery officer, whose book, *Stand by to Ram*, was the first of nearly 200 paperbacks he would pen for the company during 1957-1989. Horwitz built up Macdonnell as a 'brand name' author, whose book covers proclaimed him to be "Australia's leading novelist of the Navy"⁶⁵ and, by 1961, boasting "over 1,890,000 copies sold".⁶⁶

Horwitz Publications no doubt hoped to duplicate this success by commissioning Ivan Southall, whom they approached on the strength of his biography of the famed RAAF flier, Keith 'Bluey' Truscott,⁶⁷ to write air combat novels during 1959-60. Southall, who'd served with RAF Coastal Command in World War II, would draw upon his wartime experiences in this new series of books featuring a flying boat pilot, Walter Pym. However, Southall was informed by his editor that the series hadn't sold well and that war stories were declining in popularity.⁶⁸ This explanation, however, doesn't tally with Horwitz Publications' successful launch of their new *Commando/War* paperback series in 1960, which spanned nearly 50 titles over ten years.⁶⁹

No doubt Horwitz Publications hoped they would have better luck in establishing Bennett as their 'air force' novelist. The decision to launch Bennett with four Korean War novels may have been a deliberate ploy to differentiate their new author in a marketplace already crowded with World War II novels. Given that Bennett's subsequent books were all set during World War II, it was clear the company's promotional strategy was unsuccessful.⁷⁰

When Compton Mackenzie compared the "glorious young men" of the 1st AIF at Gallipoli to such heroes of Greek legend as "Ajax ... Hector or Achilles",⁷¹ he invoked an ancient image of manhood that lay beneath the khaki-clad exterior of the ANZAC legend. It was a folkloric figure well-suited to the Australia of 1915, which could still recall the national struggle to 'tame' a harsh, unyielding continent. The ANZAC legend was still powerful enough to galvanise the nation during World War II, but the mechanised conflict of 1939-45 nearly made the rugged Aussie digger obsolete. Nor would the 'limited' wars that followed it (beginning with the Korean 'police action' of 1950-53) ever allow the ANZAC legend to be invoked so easily. The Australian combat pilot was, however, more attuned to the tempo of the modern world. Encased in a deadly flying machine, high above the Earth, he was the perfect warrior for the industrial age, a fusion of flesh and steel, poised to travel faster than the speed of sound. Tempting as it might be to cast him as a modern-day Icarus, the fighter pilot was not the stuff of ancient legend, but the 'fact' of futuristic fantasy. William Bennett understood this, even on a

subconscious level, when he described the jet fighter as “something right from the pages of a science fiction magazine”.⁷² If the Australian experience of aerial combat has not been celebrated in the same manner as the infantry ‘legend’ of ANZAC, this does not mean that it somehow fell short when measured against it. Rather, air warfare needed a new vocabulary, a new means of expression, one which could not be found in the ‘nation-building’ prose of the 19th century that revered the pioneer bushman, nor in the ‘literary’ novel that elevated the everyman soldier, but in the crude vibrancy of pulp fiction. These stories spoke to a new, mass audience, who briefly spurned the egalitarian ANZAC in favour of the airman, whose exploits were better suited to the visceral, disposable fantasies of flight written by Australian pilots themselves—the forgotten few.

Notes

1. For instance, when Penguin Books Australia published the ‘Australian War Classics’ series during 1991-1993, only one of the twelve titles issued – Don Charlwood’s bomber command memoir, *No Moon Tonight* – dealt with aerial combat.
2. Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC): Acronym given to Australian and New Zealand contingents stationed in Cairo in 1915. Attributed to Lt. A.T. White, a superintending clerk with the English Army Service Corps, ‘ANZAC’ was an administrative term coined for the convenience of supply clerks for use in official correspondence and telegrams. See: C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*. Volume 1: *The Story of Anzac* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1921), pp.124-125.
3. *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914 – 1918* was, in fact, a twelve-volume series. C.E.W. Bean wrote the first six volumes which dealt with the Australian campaigns in Gallipoli and France, while the subsequent six volumes were written by other authors who dealt with specific subjects, such as the Australian Flying Corps (Vol.8) and the Royal Australian Navy (Vol.9).
4. David Winter, *Making the Legend: The War Writings of C.E.W. Bean* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1992), p.16.
5. Bean, 7.
6. Quoted in: K.S. Inglis, ‘The ANZAC Tradition’, *Meanjin Quarterly*, 24:1 (1965), pp.25-44 (p.29).
7. A.G. Butler, *The Digger: A Study in Democracy* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1945), pp.50-51.
8. Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA) was formed on 6 June 1916 and subsequently renamed the Returned and Services League of Australia (RSL).
9. Inglis, 41.
10. Geoffrey Serle, ‘The Digger Tradition and Australian Nationalism’, *Meanjin Quarterly*, 24:2 (1965), pp.149-158 (p.157).

11. Rick Hosking, 'The Usable Past: Australian War Fiction of the 1950s', *Australian Literary Studies*, 12.2 (1985), pp.234 – 247 (p.234).
12. David Walker, 'The Getting of Manhood'. *Australian Popular Culture*. Eds. Peter Spearitt and David Walker (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1979), pp.121-144 (p.121,123).
13. *Ibid*, 124.
14. Robin Gerster, *Big-Noting: The Heroic Theme in Australian War Writing* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1987), p.180.
15. Hosking, 234.
16. *Ibid*, 246.
17. Gerster, 206.
18. Graham Seal, *Inventing Anzac: The Digger and National Mythology* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2004), p.147.
19. RAAF Directorate of Public Relations, *These Eagles: Story of the RAAF at War* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1942), 'Foreword'.
20. W.R. Bennett, *Fighter Pilot* (Sydney: Horwitz International, 1964), p.41.
21. Olaf Ruhen, *The Broken Wing* (Dee Why West: Tempo Books, 1973), p.46.
22. Geoff Taylor, *The Hollow Square* (London: Peter Davies, 1958), p.6.
23. Geoffrey Dutton, *Andy* (London: Collins, 1968).
24. Quoted in Inglis, 33.
25. Serle, 153-154.
26. Norman Bartlett , *Island Victory* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1955), p.12.
27. *Ibid*, 3, 46-47.
28. Ruhen, 106.
29. W.R. Bennett, *Skybolt* (Sydney: Horwitz International, 1966), pp.19-20.
30. Ray Ollis , *101 Nights* (London: Cassell & Company, 1957), p.64.
31. Dutton, 47.
32. Gerster, 206.
33. Bartlett, 84.
34. W.R. Bennett, *Spitfire Attack!* (Sydney: Horwitz Publications, 1963).
35. W.R. Bennett, *Target Turin* (Sydney: Horwitz Publications, 1962).

36. Toni Johnson-Woods, ' "Pulp" Fiction Industry in Australia 1949-1959', *Antipodes*, 20:1 (2006), pp.63-67 (p.66).
37. Ivan Southall, *Mediterranean Black*, 2nd ed. (Sydney: Horwitz Publications, 1963).
38. Taylor, *ibid.*
39. William R. Bennett, *Squadron Leader* (Sydney: Horwitz Publications, 1960).
40. Bartlett, 102.
41. Bennett, 1962, 39-40.
42. Steve Holland, *The Mushroom Jungle: A History of Postwar Paperback Publishing* (Wiltshire: Zeon Books), pp.175-176.
43. Steve Holland, 'Bryan Haven (1922-1994)', *Paperbacks, Pulps and Comics*, Vol.3 (1995), pp.101-105.
44. Bryan Haven, *Jet Fury* (London: Digit Books, 1959), p.149.
45. *Ibid*, 109.
46. Norman Bartlett, 'Culture and Comics', *Meanjin*, 13:1 (Autumn 1954), pp.5-18 (p.8).
47. *Ibid*, 6.
48. *Ibid*, 5.
49. C.J. McKenzie, cited in Johnson-Woods, 67.
50. John Hetherington, 'This is the House that Paperbacks Built', *The Age* (13 April 1963), p.22.
51. Hosking, 244.
52. Johnson-Woods, 63.
53. J.T. Laird, 'War Literature', *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature*, 2nd ed. Eds. W.H. Wilde, J. Hooton and B. Andrews. (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994) pp.785-796 (p.794).
54. Hetherington, 22.
55. Mike Hayes, *Angry Skies: Recollections of Australian Combat Fliers* (Sydney: ABC Books, 2003), p.169.
56. William R. Bennett, *Edge of Hell* (Sydney: Horwitz Publications, 1960).
57. William R. Bennett, *MiG-Meat* (Sydney: Horwitz Publications, 1960).
58. Arne Axelsson, *Restrained Response: American Novels of the Cold War and Korea, 1945-1962* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1990), pp. xvii, xviii.
59. Doug Hurst, *The Forgotten Few: 77 RAAF Squadron in Korea* (Crow's Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2008), p.199.

60. W. R. Bennett, *The Red Parallel* (Sydney: Horwitz Publications, 1960).
61. Gavan McCormack, *Cold War, Hot War: An Australian Perspective on the Korean War* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1983), p.164.
62. Norman Bartlett, *With the Australians in Korea*, 3rd Ed. (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1960), 'Editorial Note'.
63. Anthony May, 'Case-Study: Horwitz', *Paper Empires: A History of the Book in Australia 1946-2000*, Eds. C. Munro and R. Sheahan-Bright. (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2006). pp.50 – 52 (p.52).
64. Toni Johnson-Woods, *Pulp: A Collector's Book of Australian Pulp Fiction Covers* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2006), p.61.
65. J.E. Macdonnell, *The First Lieutenant* (Sydney: Horwitz Publications, 1962).
66. J.E. Macdonnell, *The Rocky* (Sydney: Horwitz Publications, 1961).
67. Ivan Southall, *Bluey Truscott* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1958).
68. Stephany Evans Steggall, *The Loved and the Lost: The Life of Ivan Southall* (South Melbourne: Lothian Books, 2006), p.143.
69. Graeme Flanagan, *The Australian Vintage Paperback Guide* (Brooklyn: Gryphon Books, 1994), p.39.
70. Horwitz Publications did re-release three of Bennett's Korean War novels (*Edge of Hell*, *The Squadron Leader* and *The Red Parallel*) in 1963. These were followed by European editions of *MiG Meat*, (France, 1960), *Red Parallel* (Sweden, 1966) and *Edge of Hell* (Denmark, 1969), which suggests these works continued to find new readers at home and abroad after their initial publication in 1960.
71. Serle, 152.
72. W.R. Bennett, *Flak Alley* (North Sydney: Scripts, 1967), p.9.

KEVIN PATRICK gained first-class Honours for his dissertation on comic books, cultural anxiety and Australian society at Monash University, Victoria, Australia (2009). He has written for numerous aviation magazines, including *Flightpath* and *Aircraft & Aerospace Asia-Pacific*, and wrote the children's book, *Airborne Australia* (2008).