

Waltzing Matilda: Reading the Myths

Diannah Johnston

ABSTRACT: This paper discusses: the ‘myths’ surrounding the words for and the production of *Waltzing Matilda*; ideas from the late Russel Ward about the tune; these being perpetuated by coinage/ bank-note images, the Australian Stockman’s Hall of Fame, etc. Essentially the process of ‘elevation’ of the piece contains a sequence of steps obliterating a truer history of the *Waltzing Matilda* tune, and of its seminal place in the evolution of Australian culture.

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Only after a culture has grown to maturity is there any question as to the ‘truth’ embodied in its myths (Danesi and Perron, *Analysing Cultures*, 1999, p. 248).

Most of our national myths constructed in the 1890s produced a masculinised character and identity of/ for Australianness. This paper seeks to decode the myths surrounding *Waltzing Matilda* in order to demonstrate how Christina Macpherson’s fate is to a degree symbolic of a larger silencing of women in Australia’s cultural history. Texts containing mythic material may be analysed to show how codes/ their messages are transformed, produced and shared to promulgate national culture and identity. An unravelling/ deconstruction of the mythology surrounding *Waltzing Matilda* reveals how a masculinised reality is privileged/ foregrounded and a feminised reality is (largely) suppressed within the specific contexts.

This essay will examine how masculine bush myths pervade Australian culture and how women are obscured in/ erased from them by examining the evidence in specific historical events and texts. Roland Barthes claimed myth to be a ‘type of speech chosen by history’ and that, for myth to evolve, it ‘can only have an historical foundation’ (*Mythologies* (1993), p. 110). As an example of the influence historical discourse has upon mythology this chapter will examine texts published by the seminal Australian historian, Professor Russel Ward. Published in 1958, *The Australian Legend* by Ward is considered a classical historical reference—the new Oxford University Press edition is the eighteenth reprint (Stephens, 2003, online). Ward’s definition there of the (bush)

Australian character is relevant to current debates around national identity. Evidence will be examined to show how Ward's 'gendered characterisation' of an Australian identity is emphasised in various texts that contribute to the mythologising of *Waltzing Matilda*.

Interpretative communities—comprising of historians, authors, publishers, public servants, commentators and government officials—will (tend to) reproduce and distribute the culturally shared codes that lead to a masculinised mythology. Feminist historians have demonstrated that, in early twentieth-century Australia women colluded with their own oppression as formulated within nationalism (Dixson, 1999, p. 61). In fact, women actually continue to collude in and promote masculinised myths into the twenty first century. A historical, semiotic, cultural and diachronic analysis can trace representational codes of Australianness in many primary sources including such evidence as that in letters. Such codes are also present in texts such as: secondary sources, cultural affairs books, biographical dictionaries, government web-sites, newspaper articles, paper and coin currency. This analysis will show engendered myths utilize representational codes of Australianness in texts to promote an ideology of masculine Australianness.

In the twentieth-century, historians, folklorists and some publishers of the literary canon promoted an iconic description of the Australian national character that largely excluded women. This stance was nowhere more effectively established than in the *Bulletin*. The primary point of contestation for these groups was the colonising imperial power of the British Empire. An ethic of 'egalitarian class solidarity' and the male code of solidarity/ bonding known as 'mateship' attributed to the status of an icon of Australianness (Turner, 1994, p. 11). The ethic of gender solidarity explicitly excluded women. Australia's national culture has been primarily constructed by 'authorised narratives' written by historians (Elder, 2007, p. 7). Historians were partly responsible for coding nationalism as masculine when depicting an Australian culture as one different from the British. The feminist historian, Miriam Dixson, found historians traditionally had a cultural contempt for women and did not see women as a significant/ an authentic historical subject (1976, pp. 188-189).

The Australian historian, Ward, along with the discourse propagated earlier in the *Bulletin*, stressed the myth by identifying pastoral workers as Australia's 'cultural heroes'. It should be noted that Ward's thesis on the development of the Australian self-image reflected a tradition in the 1950s when the role of women was a lesser one. Ward described the iconic, 'typical Australian' thus:

[He] is a practical man, rough and ready in his manners and quick to decry any appearance of affectation in others. He is a great improviser,

ever willing 'to have a go'... he normally feels no impulse to work hard without good cause. He swears hard and consistently, gambles heavily and often, and drinks deeply on occasion... he is usually taciturn rather than talkative... [He is] sceptical about the value of religion and of intellectual and cultural pursuits... he is a great 'knocker' of eminent people unless, as in the case of his sporting heroes, they are distinguished by physical prowess. He is a fiercely independent person who hates officiousness and authority... He will stick to his mates through thick and thin... He tends to be a rolling stone (Ward, 1958, pp. 1-2).

The legendary values identified by Ward are explicitly male and did not encompass the identity of an entire nation, but have contributed immensely to understanding gender relations in Australia. Ward's characteristics exemplify the ideal Australian, a universal masculinised ideal: the masculine pronoun and masculine assumptions cannot be reconstructed by adding the feminine (Turner, cited in Kuna, 1994, p. 9). For example, in the last line the masculine pronoun 'he' cannot be substituted for 'she', to read, she 'tends to be a rolling stone' as women are often implicated by children and family (Ward, 1958, p. 2 and Docker, 1993, p. 17). Women are denied inclusion in the national cultural discursive field. The trope, characterised in Ward's description of the typical Australian, centralised the bush male as a representational code for Australianness. Australianness equals the masculinised subject; women are positioned as 'other'. The code, the valorised form of masculinity, describes an Anglo Australian, heterosexual man who values egalitarianism, mateship, and fairness, even as it rejects domestic responsibilities.

Ward's celebrated national construction mimics the ideology espoused in the *Bulletin*, one defining woman in relation to man. The *Bulletin* constructs a binary opposition, in woman as 'clingy', too domestic and too pious, and so it elevated the bushman in nomadic freedom as Bohemian and a cultural hero. Those campaigning for women's rights in the 1890s reflected an inherited Victorian image of woman as mother and moral guardian for to their feminist ideal—domestic man. The domestic man is constructed as Christian, civilized, family-orientated and practising temperance. This feminist ideal and contrast to man is in binary opposition to the *Bulletin's* masculinist ideal and Ward's 'typical Australian'. The *Bulletin's* depiction of women shifts from glorifying domestic woman to silencing her, as this nationalistic myth acts as an effective manipulator of Australian historical culture. Ward constructs a history that marginalises women by signifying woman as 'other'.

Ward supported theories that Paterson had doctored up an old bush song in the case of *Waltzing Matilda*, but he did so in a way that aligns

with his silencing and ‘othering’ of the women in his references to various historical texts. In the forward to Harry Pearce’s *On the Origins of Waltzing Matilda*, Ward said, ‘Almost certainly... Paterson wrote it and a host of anonymous and some other people had *some* part in the song’s story’ (1971, p. 5). In this multiplicity of sources, Ward acknowledged Paterson. Yet Macpherson is not mentioned. Nor is Marie Cowan. Neither is Josephine Pene, who, as Pearce argued, may well have been responsible for the tune. Pene was depicted as ‘no lady’ because she played the piano at the North Gregory Hotel and was Robert Macpherson’s de-facto wife and mother of his children (Radic, 1996, p. 41). The names of Pene, Cowan and Macpherson are omitted as Ward reinterprets Pearce’s research to demonstrate a mutable text. Cultural commentators have noted that Ward’s typical Australian ethos reflects a specific way of viewing national identity and these constructions transform rather than reflect history (Turner, 1986, p. 107). Ward’s reflections of Australianness—in their totality—(must seem to) propagate a bush ethos—one where the absence of woman is concealed by plural masculinised self-image.

In order to establish the patriarchal problem with *Waltzing Matilda*, it is important to appreciate how a masculinist mythology surrounding *Waltzing Matilda* is constructed through emphasising and reproducing codes as articulated by Ward. Earlier, Paterson and his friend and fellow Australian Club member, James Inglis, as part of an interpretative community, had shared such ‘representational’ codes. Paterson and Inglis shared the Macpherson-Paterson version of *Waltzing Matilda* and so they legitimised the production of myths. Paterson approved the commercialising changes that Inglis authorised in order to promote Billy Tea and the swagman—the representational ‘code’ of the white Australian bush male—as a national icon and one using *Waltzing Matilda*. The icon signifies a masculinist interpretation of Australian nationalism and it was produced to create a commercial expression of nationalism.

In recent times, Barthes sees all myths to function so as ‘to make dominant cultural and historical values, attitudes and beliefs appear entirely ‘normal’, ‘natural’, self-evident and timeless’ (Chandler, 2002, p. 145). Hence, Australians as culture consumers, necessarily adopt the code of the white Australian bush man as national icon, as an image of being Australian and so they adopt the myth of *Waltzing Matilda* as a narrative about belonging to nation. The working of the masculinised bush myth, as signified in *Waltzing Matilda*, is to valorise the swagman as a typical working Australian and, consequently, delete what does not contribute or conform to the selective history or mythology of the national culture—and to representations of ‘real’ women. Because *Waltzing Matilda* is viewed as a symbol of Australianness by the State,

national and international community, it is an important site to examine celebratory accounts of nation to reveal how women are silenced and omitted from national discourses.

Newspapers such as the earlier *Argus* are key sites for the cultural construction of nationalism reporting what, for example, the visiting English music academic, Dr Thomas Wood, considered to be authentic examples of Australian culture. An *Argus* article in 1931 contributes to the early silencing of Macpherson's position of collaborator through inaccurately attributing Paterson's sister as the composer of *Waltzing Matilda*.¹ The article describes a lecture presented by Wood in Melbourne 'on the development of music' (*Argus*, 1931, p. 9). The *Argus* reported Wood saying, *Waltzing Matilda* 'was written on a moment's inspiration by 'Banjo' Paterson, his sister composing the music (1931, p. 9). The misplaced possessive pronoun 'his' [sister] should have referred to Robert Macpherson, the squatter, not Paterson. This error in syntax enables the text to read Paterson's sister composed the music to *Waltzing Matilda*.² There is no evidence the *Argus* or Wood corrected the error. The error may not have been intentional on Wood's part, yet mistakenly attributing to Paterson's sister Macpherson's composing of *Waltzing Matilda* in the collaboration contributed to silencing. Positioned on the margins, women become invisible and are easily erased.

As can be shown, Macpherson collaborated and colluded with Paterson when she notated *Waltzing Matilda* for him to pass on to Inglis to promote Billy Tea and emphasise masculinist ideals. Macpherson is an example of how women collude with the space of national culture, but there is little other choice. Another example lies in Macpherson's failure to send the letters she wrote in response to the *Argus* newspaper article. However, Macpherson had struggled to articulate a response to her own exclusion in attempting multiple drafts of the definitive letter. Traditionally, women wrote letters to express their emotions, hopes and fears, and letters have proved a realistic description of the era in which they were written (James, 1992, p. ix). The epistolary form normally allows time for reflection, choice of apt wording and an accepted medium to attempt a discourse in subverting patriarchal limitations. It is interesting that Macpherson kept but did not send the letters. Macpherson told her story in the moment, but did not register it within the culture that *Waltzing Matilda* was a collaboration.

She does not comment on men in the public domain. The fact that Macpherson wrote at least two draft letters and re-wrote segments of these letters several times is significant. It shows that clarifying details

¹ A transcript of the *Argus* article can be found in the Appendix.

² In the travel narrative *Cobbers* Thomas Wood repeats the error committed in the *Argus* article, the mistake in syntax that implies Paterson's sister composed the music to *Waltzing Matilda* (Wood, 1934, p. 9).

relevant to the *Waltzing Matilda* story was important to her. The contents of the letters show Macpherson's intention was to inform Wood on 'how' *Waltzing Matilda* was written, to correct authorial accreditation and defend her position as collaborator of *Waltzing Matilda*. In both drafts Macpherson clearly signals the purpose of the letter is to address the version of events in the article in the *Argus*—for example, the draft letter opens formally referencing the newspaper's name and date. Macpherson's tone is painstakingly polite as she delicately addresses her concerns about Wood's version of the origins of *Waltzing Matilda* and the error in attributing the music to Paterson's sister.

Macpherson does not articulate a masculine discourse in the public domain. Her minimal comment is to advise Wood his version of events is incorrect in the informal, private site of her letters. For example, there is no evidence that Macpherson wrote or sent letters to the *Argus*. Deferentially, Macpherson addresses Wood as Dr Wood and Sir, from a very formal/ subordinate position. The choice of modal auxiliary verbs renders the letters submissive, 'I thought it might interest you' and 'I might add' (Macpherson, n.d., online A). In these letters Macpherson uses 'might' to talk about a possibility and to ask for permission in a formal style. This passive, circumlocutory voice is in contrast to the active, direct tone that Macpherson uses to describe events. For example, 'After Mr Patterson [sic] returned to Sydney he wrote and asked me to send him the tune' (Macpherson, n.d., online A).

It is significant that Macpherson writes about Paterson's forthright request on four occasions, twice in each letter. For example, 'I am not a musician, but I managed to do it' and 'I am no musician, but did my best: and, later, on he told me he had sent it on to a musical friend' (Macpherson, n.d., online B; and Macpherson, n.d., online A). Macpherson is conscious she is writing to a musical expert as the *Argus* outlined Wood's professional credentials, 'a Master of Arts and Doctor of Music... who is one of the most distinguished of English composers' (*Argus*, 1931, p. 9). Macpherson signals her amateur status as a musician, yet emphasises her endeavours to notate the music to *Waltzing Matilda* and informs her reader that she was successful; 'I managed to do it' three times (Macpherson, n.d., online B; and Macpherson, n.d., online A). In the later draft, Macpherson devalues her skill at notating music and edited the sentence to read 'I did my best' (Macpherson, n.d., online A). However, Macpherson clearly that signals *Waltzing Matilda* was her musical composition.

Macpherson prefaces both letters by suggesting that Wood may be interested 'to hear how 'Banjo' Patterson [sic] came to write it' (Macpherson, n.d., online A; and Macpherson, n.d., online B). Macpherson confirms Paterson's status as author of the text; however, she is offering to explicate in what manner, the means by which the song

was written, attempting to articulate a position for her contribution. Following the formal conventions of the era, Macpherson refers to Paterson as 'Mr Patterson', [sic] except for the first line where she refers to him by his pen name 'Banjo' (Macpherson, n.d., online A; and Macpherson, n.d., B).

Macpherson refers to herself by the first person pronoun, 'I' and she is self-conscious of her position of a woman, and but an amateur musician. Macpherson's tone is complaisant towards Wood saying, 'I hope I have not bored you with this' (Macpherson, n.d., online A). By such means Macpherson undermines the value of the contents of her letter in which she describes how *Waltzing Matilda* was a collaboration. She goes on to paint a picture of the plight of the itinerant worker, highlighting the isolation of Western Queensland. Her explanations of the geographical and social lifestyle of the swagman are insightful, aimed at informing an English music academic who would/ might well be unfamiliar with outback colonial Australia. Today, the contents of this letter are considered historical data by the National Library of Australia, as Macpherson narrates the events and describes the socio-graphic climate that are linked to *Waltzing Matilda* (Macpherson, n.d., online A).

Macpherson closes the letter with the formal and candid, 'Yours sincerely, (Miss) C. R. Macpherson' (Macpherson, n.d., online A). Note that the earlier draft letter is without a parting salutation and name. The last line of the draft copies are of significance because on two pages the last line is, 'By the way I do not think Mr P's Sister had anything to do with it' and on the corresponding page again, 'By the way I do not think that Mr Paterson's sister came into it at. ...', – and the sentence is left unfinished half way down the page (Macpherson, n.d., B). Macpherson writes these sentences so that they appear as an afterthought, 'by the way' introducing the negative statement with 'I do not think' being less assertive, and so it lessens the impact of her addressing the facts of Wood's false attributions (Macpherson, n.d., B). As the evidence of the letters suggest, Macpherson could not continue the discourse after she had addressed the issue of Wood's erroneous attribution of the musical composition of *Waltzing Matilda*.

The sheer act of articulating her position to the masculine/ authority discursive field literally renders her speechless. This subjugated text is an attempt by Macpherson to enter the patriarchal world of dialogue and so to engage in a discourse with her 'silencer', he being, in effect, the reproducer of myth. Both sentences are omitted from the final draft. Arguably, her collusion in her own silencing is inevitable, as there is no semiotic/ dialoguing space for a woman's articulation.

Miriam Dixson long ago described Australian women as 'doormats of the Western World' and she had blamed myth making for this sorry condition (*loc.cit.*, 1976. p. 5). Macpherson's collusion with the

masculinised re-producers of myth, Paterson, Wood, and the publishers of the *Argus* and Allan & Co publishers ensured she was publically ignored for her role in *Waltzing Matilda*. Richard Magoffin supposed of the situation that ‘Clearly, Christina did not want to make a fuss’ (1995, p. 30). The folklorist and eminent *Waltzing Matilda* ‘expert’, R. Magoffin, affirms Macpherson’s position outside the discursive field. It is believed Macpherson did not send the letter and thus was complicit in the masculinised version of the myth.

The Letter Was Not Posted

All the evidence suggests Macpherson’s letter was not posted.³ There is no evidence that Macpherson received or shared (with Paterson or others) the intellectual property rights to the *Waltzing Matilda* music and lyrics to which she (with Paterson) was entitled.⁴ Macpherson was aware of the song’s growing popularity and possibly the financial incentives that entailed.⁵ Macpherson’s niece, Islay McIntosh, wrote in a letter in 1968 that Macpherson never received any payment for the song and that the family should have realised Macpherson could have been entitled to some of the profits from the song (Magoffin 1973, p. 65). Macpherson informed Wood, ‘It was included in the Students Song Book’ (Macpherson, n.d., online A). The University of Sydney’s song book had a wide circulation and was responsible for spreading the song. Macpherson had colluded in composing, transmitting and shaping a national discourse, even while she contested the happenings and suffered financially and lacked public recognition because of it (Dixson 1999, p. 58). Macpherson, and to a certain extent her family’s collusion, were again, contributing factors to her not receiving reimbursement or public acknowledgement for her artistic endeavours. Macpherson was complicit in keeping silent as to her role as co-creator of *Waltzing Matilda* and in so creating a national mythology—one that excludes a feminised reality. Cixous reminds us that patriarchal power is predicated upon the destruction of the feminine (Moi 1985, pp. 104-105). Hence, Macpherson was effectively silenced through masculinisation, commercialization and collusion and so Paterson’s position was/ is privileged to reflect the masculinised ideal.

³ Professor Graham Seal (of Curtin University) examined the papers of Wood in the United Kingdom and in an email to me, dated the 20 May 2009, said he found no indication that Wood received Macpherson’s letter or that he replied. The Curator of Music at the National Library of Australia, Robyn Holmes said in an email dated 14 April 2009, she suspected the letter was never sent because there has never been any correction of authorship. [See Bibliography.]

⁴ Wood registered multiple arrangements of *Waltzing Matilda* and his copyrights would not have expired in England (Magoffin, 2004, p. 185). It is unclear if the copyright registered by Wood’s publishers, Oxford University Press, is still extant.

⁵ Thomas Wood’s estate was sworn for probate at 118,866 pounds (Ward 2006, online).

Paterson was signified as a 'real' hero in his lifetime and has become a cultural embodiment of the nationalist codes in contemporary culture. His first book, published in 1895 (the same year *Waltzing Matilda* was written and composed), *The Man from Snowy River and Other Verses*, sold out within a week (McPhee, 2004, p. 3). Such popularity had not occurred in Australia before and he became a celebrity. The *Bulletin* and other agents for re-presenting myths including Paterson himself immortalised Paterson as the Australian legend because he idealised the bushman - Ward's 'typical Australian'. A tribute to Paterson, published in 1941, in the *Bulletin*, foresees his longevity within a sign system, 'As long as there's a Southern Cross 'The Banjo' will not die' (McPhee, 2004, p. 31). Paterson has been linked by many including the late Dr Clement Semmler, Magoffin and the contemporary songwriter, John Williamson, to the nascence of the Labor movement and to the time's political debates.

An Icon from the Bush

The myth, the bush *man* as a cultural icon, is still with us today, literally on our currency. The Reserve Bank of Australia honours Paterson, deservedly so, as part of the panthea. However, it is of interest to see how the bank depicts Paterson on the current blue ten dollar bill, it being framed with coded images perpetuating the myth of the bush man as hero. An extract from the poem, *The Man from Snowy River*, in Paterson's hand writing, is micro printed around his portrait with the words 'TEN DOLLARS' repeated each stanza (Reserve Bank of Australia, 2009, online). Paterson's image is of a young man, a part of the establishment, and juxtaposed with the recognisable image of the horseman, Jack Riley, the idealised nomadic bush man. Under the large digit ten is the *Waltzing Matilda* logo 'taken from the 1903 publication of Marie Cowan's arrangement' of the song (Reserve Bank of Australia, 2009, online). This perpetuates the myth that *Waltzing Matilda* is a solo product of the masculine icon, Paterson. The images on the ten dollar bill convey meaning by linking Paterson, a part of the establishment, with the nomadic bush man and so with masculinist representations of Australian culture.

More on Imagery

The *Waltzing Matilda* story is one permeated with/ redolent of women, yet women are absent in the commemorative one dollar coin issued by the Royal Australian Mint. To celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of *Waltzing Matilda*, in 1995, the mint issued a coin with an award-winning design of a swagman on one side, re-producing the code of the white bush man as signifying Australianness. On the other side of

the coin is the image of the Queen. The Australian Government says, ‘This is a coin that honours an important part of our cultural history with remarkable sensitivity and character’ (2004, p. 5). The State centralises the image and the code of the white bush man as an accepted and valorised depiction of Australian character and history. The Royal Australian Mint publishes a text entitled ‘The Legend’ that accompanies the coin. It describes Paterson’s visit to Dagworth, ‘where Paterson put the words to a Scottish folk song played on the Autoharp by his host’ (Australian Government 2004, online).

Macpherson remains anonymous in the honours commemorating the historic event which was, in fact, a collaboration. The text does not acknowledge Macpherson by name. It signifies Paterson as ‘the legend’ and Macpherson insensitively as his gender-neutral host. The Royal Australian Mint acknowledges the National Library of Australia for photographs used in its publication and it appears to have ignored the NLA’s comprehensive display of Macpherson’s contribution to *Waltzing Matilda*.

The Royal Mint and the Promulgation of Australian Folklore

The Royal Australian Mint is a prime site for the narration of national stories as are The Reserve Bank of Australia and Government-funded museums. At the beginning of the twenty first century the \$3.3 million *Waltzing Matilda* Centre opened in Winton, Queensland, a testament to the interpretive and scholarly communities’ commitment to ensure centrality of the song in Australian culture (West, 2001, p. 127). This essay has traced some of the codes surrounding *Waltzing Matilda*, as reproduced by scholarly and significant institutions of the country, to show how cultural representations construct a specifically masculine national gendered character and so to impose a like meaning on the birth of this nation.

Waltzing Matilda was written in the 1890s when the typical Australian was identified as the ‘bush man’. Any examination of evidence in detailed historical events and texts produced by Ward more recently—or, from the time, in the words of Anthony Wood, newspapers, music publishers, some at least of Australia’s folklorists and the State of Queensland show how the masculinist ideal has been and continues to be encoded and reinforced within the myths pertaining to *Waltzing Matilda*.

A close reading of Macpherson’s surviving letters can show/ shows how women collude with the myth makers to produce a nationalist code that excludes women. Women have been erased because the interpretive communities, the generators of culture, ‘interpret’ history and reproduce myths in order to produce values and meaning that, alike, support a dominant patriarchal ideology. This essay not only confirms that

historians have appeared blind as to women's presence and action, but it also affirms that Australian national culture continues to excise/ exclude women from their rightful—and authenticated—part in the production of cultural discourse.

Appendix

'Music in Australia', *The Argus*, 27 March 1931, p. 9, Melbourne
<<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4395352>> [accessed 7 May 2009].

Transcription by Diannah Johnston.

MUSIC IN AUSTRALIA DR WOOD IMPRESSIONS

Australia's Traditional Songs

Are there any more Australian songs? Dr Thomas Wood asked in the course of an interview in which he had many pertinent things to say in approval and in criticism of musical students as he found them in Australia during his travel for the last year in the eastern States. Dr Wood, who is a Master of Arts and doctor of music of Exeter College, Oxford and who is one of the most distinguished of English composers, arrived in Australia early last year to conduct examinations for the Associated Board of the Royal College of Music in Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales and South Australia. After travelling extensively in these States for his own pleasure and interest, Dr Wood will leave next week for Western Australia, where he has been asked to judge at the music festival in Perth, in May. He is at present delivering a series of lectures in Melbourne on the development of music, 'My trade is writing music,' he said, 'but I like writing English even more and at the present time I am engaged in a log of my travels in Australia and other parts of the Empire'.

Dr Wood's question about Australian songs arose from his reference to the value of community singing or 'sing songs' (a title which he prefers) as they are called in England. He regards this as one of the best means of building a foundation of taste and discrimination for the future. Community singing as he counts it is not an occasion for the indiscriminate conducting, nor an occasion for the interpolation of pointless stories among songs which have little musical value and less meaning. Speaking of the work which is done in this way in the English

schools, the scholars, he said, learned to sing their own songs properly, the folk songs, hunting songs, sea chanties and so on which were as much their heritage as the story of Robin Hood or Nelson. Whenever I have talked here with people in authority, Dr Wood said, 'I have urged that the children in the school should be taught the traditional songs of their own country and of Great Britain. There is, for example, 'Waltzing Matilda', the origin of which I set to earth in Winton, North Queensland. When it was written on a moment's inspiration by 'Banjo' Paterson, his sister composing the music equally spontaneously. It is the only totally characteristic Australian song I have come across.' There is, of course 'On the Road to Gundagai' . . .

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Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary

We have received the first edition of this work, and will review it in some detail in *Australian Folklore* no 25.

In the meantime we observe that there has been a steady/ perhaps surprising growth in its size; thus the Third edition, in 1997, was of xvi, 1616 pages, the 4th in 2004, a little larger, but this edition is xvi, and 1712 pages.

We will offer some comments on this expansion, and the possible place of this reference work in Australian society.

JSR