Hartley, John.Potts, Jason. "Demes: Universal-Adversarial Groups ('We' vs. 'They')." *Cultural Science: A Natural History of Stories, Demes, Knowledge and Innovation*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014. 34–76. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781849666053_0007>.

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Demes

Universal-Adversarial Groups ('We' vs. 'They')

'Everything is what it is because it got that way'. How it got that way starts not with the Epic of Gilgamesh but much further back: with our evolving into art-making and storytelling animals.

Brian Boyd 2008

This chapter is about one of our fundamental claims for cultural science: that *culture is a group-forming mechanism*, being the chief means by which humans create what we are calling 'demes' – a term that we explain and illustrate in this chapter. Our approach is to pursue the conceptual issue of externalized-brain group formation by exploring how it works in a specific instance. *How* does culture work as a group-forming mechanism? To answer that question we focus on one important component: storytelling (Boyd 2009; Boyd et al. 2010). It's not the only way that culture makes groups (the role of children in that process is discussed in Chapter 8: 'Waste'), but it does highlight how language takes specific, organized forms, in this case the kind of storytelling that constitutes a polity – political narrative. These forms carry out a vital cultural function, which is to distinguish 'us' ('we'-communities or demes) from 'them' (external, competitive groups) and to render that distinction meaningful.

Stories

Stories are much more powerful than their commonsensical status as fiction, myth, make believe, fairy tale or entertainment may suggest: stories take people willingly to their deaths, in droves. That is, they act as the glue that binds individuals to purposes that only make sense at the level of the deme; purposes that may prove lethal for the individual, who nevertheless follows

those purposes for the sake of the group. Like the Trojan Horse, *some* stories sit in ‘our’ midst, apparently a gift of wonder but in fact concealing a potentially lethal future for the unwary.

Thus, we pursue the question how ‘culture creates the deme’ by following one particular narrative thread: namely the celebration of war as the test of national character or, more exactly, the use of political narrative to establish that idea. Our focus is on storytelling rather than on warfare as such. We take a further step towards empirical specificity by looking at these matters via the marginal but innovative form of ‘digital storytelling’ (Lambert 2006; Meadows and Kidd 2009; Hartley and McWilliam 2009; Lundby 2009; Thumim 2012; Chouliaraki 2012). From that perspective it may be possible to glimpse how apparently wondrous and compelling stories that are told by mainstream storytelling institutions, including historians, educators, the media and the state – stories about our own heroism, character and achievement – may in fact amount to a Trojan Horse in the citadel of culture inside our heads. Our concern is with the use of storytelling for group creation, or what may be called ‘*user-created citizenship*’ (see Chapter 5: ‘Citizens’); not simply for self-expression but for the creation of a ‘we’-group or deme around civic activism of some kind.

Demes

We borrow the term ‘deme’ from ancient Greek (the builders of the Trojan Horse), where a deme was a population group within Attica, upon which Athenian citizenship was based (Hornblower and Spawforth 2005). A deme is also a term in bioscience, where it refers to an interbreeding subpopulation of a given species, in this case *H. sapiens*. The word thus links the political ‘demos’ (and its history) with bio-evolutionary population groups that may found distinct cultures (Liu et al. 2006).

We want to explore the role of stories in *creating human polities*. They do that by organizing groups into symbolic demes or ‘we’-groups (hero; protagonist), distinguished from ‘they’-groups (villain; adversary), inculcating a sense of ‘strong reciprocity’ (Gintis et al. 2001; Bowles and Gintis 2011) or group identity among auditors.

From a long-term perspective, stretching back to the earliest evidence we have of group-forming semiosis (about 12,000 years BCE), we argue that the kind of centralized storytelling machines with which contemporary global culture is most familiar, that is, ‘mainstream’ media based on industrial era command-and-control organizational formats, may in fact constitute a new species of

Trojan Horse. This is because carrying a semiotic form based on local, small-scale demes to global, all-inclusive scale presents serious ambiguities about who ‘we’ are. Digital storytelling is but one example of a contrary move towards a new kind of microproductivity in culture, in this case opening up storytelling institutions to new kinds of deme-formation in the digital era. Such experiments may serve to challenge incumbent stories, which like that Horse invade our civic headspace with adversarial ideas. The ideas raised in this context may take a while to unfold, which is why this chapter is quite long, as it interweaves the themes of storytelling, deme-formation, scale (a recurrent problem – see also Chapter 4: ‘Malvoisine’), and the kind of ‘structural folding’ (Vedres and Stark 2010) that links them all together in strong reciprocal networks (culture).

We argue that digital storytelling offers a challenge (potential innovation) to the very constitution of polities that are based on ‘aggressive parochialism’ or ‘universal adversarialism’ – terms that we explain further later. In order to think through these issues of how the polity is constituted in stories, and how these are competitively communicated within groups, so creating distinct demes, we return more than once to Turkey: from the very earliest (pre-pottery) Neolithic past at Göbekli Tepe, via much more recent (Bronze Age) Troy, to the modern agonistics of World War I at Gallipoli.

The creation of the self

Digital storytelling promotes *self-expression*. The digital storytelling movement is distinguished by the ‘facilitated workshop’ mode of production, or ‘story circle’, not simply by the use of digital media for narration, as in computer and video games, which are a mass-media industry rather than part of the ‘maker’ movement. Digital storytelling is largely organized around the identity, authenticity and experience of the teller. The movement often sets its own work in opposition to the stories told in ‘mainstream’ media. However, storytelling is also *political*, not in the sense of party-politics and a professionalized political process, but in the older civic sense of ‘creating a polity’ or what Benedict Anderson (1991) calls an ‘imagined community’ among those who form its social circle – the audience. Digital storytelling is therefore a kind of ‘natural experiment’ in localized deme-formation using digital media. It reminds us that social groups of larger scale than kin require a mechanism for *constituting themselves as one group* (a deme or demos), and storytelling is one such mechanism. In that sense, the act of self-expression is part of a ‘political’ narrative of group formation. Thus ‘the audience’

comes logically – and historically too, as we hope to show – *before* ‘the citizen’; and storytelling *before* the polity. The political narrative we have in mind here is not devoted to winning votes or deciding the issues of the day, but to answering deeper questions of how we know that we are a ‘we’; what ‘we’ are like; and thence, what kind of self *can* be expressed in stories, and what ‘we’ should do about that.¹

Stories create meaningful identities for a given ‘we’-community by setting the social world into a diegetic story world, rendering social values into character, action and plot. ‘We’ and ‘they’ identities are personified into heroes and adversaries. These are tested in action, and at the end are either confirmed (comedy/marriage) or modified (tragedy/death). Semiotic and social structures are mutually constituted (this being the work of culture), which means that stories are necessarily about society as well as the self. The two bonded together are a ‘polity’ (c.f. Fred Myers 1991: 272 – ‘the meeting is the polity’). A polity is a social group with a semiotic identity, organized for action and survival under conditions of uncertainty or adversity. This ‘we’-community or ‘deme’ may be as small as a family, ‘hunting party’ or ‘danwei’ (单位: ‘work unit’ in Mao’s China), or it may be of societal or global scale. Mediatized or storytelling demes and polities are not coterminous with political governments: institutions of language are not the same as social institutions.

Storytelling can place protagonists and their deme into much smaller units than that of city, province or nation, or much larger ones, right up to species, planet or cosmos. Digital storytelling activities to date seem to be clustered around the small-scale end of this gradient. Broadcast media compete in the middle-to-large scale, typically at the level of the nation, now expanding to global networks. The ‘outer limits’ are explored by sci-fi (*Star Trek*; *Dr Who*), fantasy (*Harry Potter*; *Game of Thrones*), and utopian/dystopian imagination (*Pan’s Labyrinth*; *District 9*). Like stories themselves, groups constituted around ‘new media’ (Hartley et al. 2013) range from one extreme to the other, such that polities or demes can form around many kinds of affiliation other than traditional ethno-territorial co-presence.

Storytelling as an evolved ‘institution of language’

In the field of evolutionary bioscience, ‘costly signalling’ is a hot topic. The theory goes that for the purposes of sexual reproduction, competing males can

¹ ‘Storytelling’ is loosely defined – the term may incorporate elements of ‘show’ as well as ‘tell’ – to include ceremony, dance and song as well as character, plot and action; it is social as well as semiotic, and visual as well as aural/textual.

assure sceptical females of the underlying quality of their genes if they are able to sustain some outward sign – antlers, showy plumage, a Rolex – that clearly costs them dearly in energy and risk, *without possibility of deceit*. Among humans, some evolutionary social scientists think a prime function of language (i.e. an explanation for its evolution) is for monitoring the *honesty of others' utterances*, in order to sustain cooperative groups. This is what brings storytelling (language) and citizenship (large groups of non-kin) together. E. A. Smith (2010: 232) explains the underlying theory thus:

Language facilitates complex coordination and is essential for establishing norms governing production efforts and distribution of collective goods that motivate people to cooperate voluntarily in large groups. Language also significantly lowers the cost of detecting and punishing 'free riders', thus greatly enhancing the scope and power of standard conditional reciprocity. In addition, symbolic communication encourages new forms of collectively beneficial displays and reputation management.

Herbert Gintis also emphasizes the importance of punishment as a mechanism of large-scale group cooperation or 'strong reciprocity' (Gintis et al. 2001; Bowles and Gintis 2011). But language is itself a duplicitous medium. Anything that can be used to tell the truth can also be used to lie (Eco 1976). Humans have to learn how to tell the difference between truth and 'free-riders' in speech as well as in genes (what economists call 'cheap talk'), and have evolved codes in language and 'institutions of language' to automate the process (e.g. story forms, text conventions, genres, registers, jargon; and also institutional 'languages', e.g. the law, sciences, romance, with specialist functions and features). Thus, language-in-use, as a social system and not just as an abstract set of rules, must develop institutions to 'improve the efficiency and accuracy of communication' (Smith 2010: 242).

Costly scars tell honest stories

One such institution is storytelling. Storytelling shifts 'costly signalling' from the individual level to that of the group or deme. Groups that can build mutual knowledge and trust for solving 'collective action problems' (see Chapter 5: 'Citizens') will prosper compared with others. As Eric Beinhocker has argued, storytelling is how humans think, using inductive reasoning:

Stories are vital to us because the primary way we process information is through induction. Induction is essentially reasoning by pattern recognition.

... We like stories because they feed our induction thinking machine, they give us material to find patterns in – stories are a way in which we learn. (Beinhocker 2006: 126–7)

Note that this kind of ‘thinking machine’ is ‘external’ and social, not a feature of ‘the’ brain but of *linked* brains, requiring at least two parties, the teller and the told. Stories and storytelling forms are the means by which humans store, distribute and refresh acquired knowledge – they are a kind of oral/aural library system, promoting social learning in the act of using (which typically includes adapting) the format and its store (Lord 1960; Ong 2012). Selective and competitive pressures would tend to improve the means by which humans determine the trustworthiness of others (non-kin), how they determine causal sequence in phenomena (inductive reasoning; also plot), and how they preserve knowledge across time, distance, generations and even languages (social learning). Such improvements in the efficiency and accuracy of communication, such that communicative duplicity can be detected and punished for the benefit of collective action, explain both the ubiquity and the formalization of storytelling, and its appeal. It is an ‘institution of language’ not an invention of individuals, and even as we tell stories, stories tell us. So much so that we’re reflexively alert to deceit in the stories themselves – we mock the stage villain, stereotypical character or formulaic plot: if we’re going to allow a story to teach or thrill us, it must tell *narrative* truth, usually glossed as truth-to-experience. To the extent that a good story, well told, may reveal the underlying qualities of protagonists (which are personifications of demes) as well as the teller, storytelling itself is a form of costly signalling, and may be evolutionarily advantageous:

We show that honest signaling of underlying quality by providing a benefit to group members can be evolutionarily stable, and may proliferate when rare as long as high-quality individuals are neither too common nor too rare, and the cost of signaling is sufficiently greater for low than for high-quality players. (Gintis et al. 2001)

As Gintis and his colleagues assert, not everyone is ‘high quality’ (some signals are lying); and not every story is trustworthy. To sort the wheat from the chaff, stories carry *within them* signs of ‘honest signalling’, and such signs are competitively advantageous. Among the most important is that of ‘being there’ – the eyewitness or participant who can relate the story from first experience. Since scars are hard-to-fake evidence of honesty, the more scarred they are, mentally or physically, in the effort of bringing you the story, the better. Because

both tellers and the told can attend only to one narrative at a time, individual stories are also mutually competitive, competing for attention (Lanham 2006).

This results in an evolutionary arms race to improve storytelling as a form, to attract attention to specific tales, and to codify tried and trusted formulae. One important test of truth is authenticity, so that 'authenticity' itself is codified into conventional signs and signals. The authenticity of the observing and narrating self is crucial (unless this is a Trickster's tale (Hyde 2008), in which case the story itself, through genre, poetics and meta-discursive signs, will signal that it is to be 'read' differently). Hearers can discern what it cost a teller, and a protagonist, to bring a particular story to their attention, and humans seem well attuned to the difference between glib assertion and hard-won ('costly') authentic experience – an ability that is exploited equally by con artists and literary artists. Thus the arms race continues. Many fictional characters are visibly damaged by the time they achieve the goal of their story – think of Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* or Arnold Schwarzenegger's character in *Terminator 2*. The cost to them of telling it seems to guarantee the honesty of their tale.

This means that all stories are also 'about' *storytelling*, carrying with them signs (or 'metadata') that speak to their believability, which is presumably why so many plots are about defeating duplicity, confronting liars and revealing hidden truths. This is why storytelling is a competitive arms race. Cutting through to attract people's attention is not a simple matter; knowledge of how to do it convincingly is encoded in narrative forms and conventions, and even crazy listeners 'know a hawk from a handsaw' (as the saying goes), so scepticism and inattention are built in. The odds are stacked in favour of those who have kept up, so new entrants, for instance amateurs of the kind that the digital storytelling movement encourages, had better watch out. Their real experience may come across as poor storytelling; while media myths may wear the convincing guise of personal authenticity.

Storytelling as leadership

Monitoring the honesty of others' utterances seems to be a prime function of language, said by some (Dunbar 1998; Bowles and Gintis 2011) to be the driver of its early evolution. Language enabled information about others, and what they were up to, to be spread cheaply. The behavioural evolutionists (e.g. Boyd et al. 2003) include language as one of the prime resources for human evolution. The ability to walk upright (bipedalism), to cook, talk and throw (not simply to wield a tool, which crows can do, but to project lethal force over distance),

set hominins apart from other apes. Gintis argues that the emergence of lethal weapons in particular precipitated the need for group leadership by some means other than force. The reason for this is that following the adoption of projectiles (sticks and stones) for killing prey, anyone in a group could equally kill others. Leaders could therefore not rely on force alone, because 'dominant males' in a gorilla-like harem-hierarchy could be killed by stealth. So, says Gintis, such hierarchies collapsed and leadership had to be based on other qualities, which were carried *in language*:

Thus successful hominid social bands came to value individuals who could command prestige by virtue of their persuasive capacities. Persuasion depends on clear logic, analytical abilities, a high degree of social cognition (knowing how to form coalitions and curry the favor of others), and linguistic facility. For this reason, the social structure of hunter-gatherer life favored progressive encephalization and the evolution of the physical and mental prerequisites of effective linguistic and facial communication. In short, two million years of evolution in the presence of lethal weapons gave rise to the particular qualities of *Homo sapiens*. (Gintis 2012: 7)

Language and group coordination co-evolved, converting species-wide attributes (walking, talking, cooking, throwing) into abstract qualities like leadership, prestige, repute and punishment, as well as care for non-kin, in demic groups of up to 600 individuals, 'a size much larger than typical foraging bands and about the size of many ethno-linguistic units in nonagricultural societies' (Boyd et al. 2003). Coordinated collective action benefitted the whole deme: 'increased cognitive and linguistic ability entailed heightened leadership capacities, which fellow group members were very willing to trade for enhanced mating and provisioning privileges' (Gintis 2012: 8).

Furthermore, these enhancements were not limited to in-group privileges, but extended to much wider social networks:

What is known or can reasonably be inferred about the Late Pleistocene and early Holocene suggests that ancestral humans did not live in small closed groups in which family and self-interest with a long time horizon alone were the cement of society. Rather our ancestors were cosmopolitan, civic-minded, and warlike. They almost certainly benefited from far-flung coinsurance, trading, mating and other social networks, as well as from coalitions and, if successful, warfare with other groups. (Bowles and Gintis 2011: 222)

In our view, these humanizing shifts, from embodied to abstract abilities, from 'brute' force to hegemonic leadership, from kin communication to extensive

social networks, and thus from local to representational or abstract knowledge, are all enhanced and stabilized through *storytelling*, as the institutional form of what Gintis calls ‘persuasive capacities’. Like other natural abilities, such as the ability to cook or to fight, storytelling talent is a randomly distributed capacity in any population, but it is also *concentrated* by, for and among those who ‘command prestige’. Storytelling developed socially as an ‘institution of language’, where abstract and symbolic values (such as prestige, repute and punishment), could be given a local habitation and a name. Gintis’s list of the requisites of leadership – logic, analytical abilities, knowing how to form coalitions and to curry favour – could be attributed to the current boss through the use of flattery. At some point in or following the Late Pleistocene age, a division of labour was established between leaders (politics) and storytellers (poets and priests), where the latter sang the praises of the former. Specialist groups (bards) nurtured, guarded and adapted the skills required to do that (Hartley 2009b). ‘Bardic’ professionalization of storytelling separated ‘persuasive capacities’ from the person of the leader, even as it developed rhetorical and discursive expertise (which in turn could be learned and thereby inherited) to overcome listeners’ scepticism and hostility or indifference. Ever since, storytelling, rhetoric and ‘persuasive capacities’ have been part of the apparatus of state power; but they are detachable, and can be used against the very forces that raised them up in the first place.

Power law distribution

As far as a story’s reach and impact go, storytelling is distributed along a power law curve, from a ‘winner-takes-all’ head to the ‘long tail’ (Anderson 2008). Very few stories catch everyone’s attention; many stories catch a few. Clustered around the head are stories about the *polity* (how our group came to be and why it matters) and stories about *religion* (projecting group identity to the supernatural, which can then return in a more terrifying form to punish deceivers and free-riders). Clustered at this extreme too are high-investment social institutions and corporations, especially the media, schooling and the law, all of which legitimate themselves with foundation stories that seem to coincide with those of the nation, polity or deme. They produce the small number of stories that *everyone* knows or sees (sacred texts; law-forming stories; blockbusters).

At the other extreme of the ‘long tail’, stories tend to be about the *self* (identity in conflict), about *locality* (our place; peasants’ tales), or *migration* (the world; sailors’ tales) (Buonanno 2005). And here too is where we usually find digital storytelling.

This power law distribution is worthy of mention because stories told by global media corporations are not *opposed* to stories told by persons; they are on a *gradient*. In principle, and over time, stories and players can change places. The difference between them is not antagonistic, because different types of story serve different functions for different scales of group. In short, digital storytelling is not *opposed to* mainstream media narrative; it is on a continuum with it. Thus, it is important not to dismiss storytelling emanating from global corporations, even if it seems – like the Trojan Horse – to outcompete local or individual efforts in terms of investment, airtime, popular attention and even authenticity. It is true that commercial media production is competition for digital storytelling, but that doesn't make it an adversary or 'they' identity. The digital storytelling movement can compete, by mastering the trick of authenticity ('costly signalling'), while attending to the requirements of inductive reasoning and social learning, for the solution of a significant collective action problem, among a specific 'we'-group. Where there may be a conflict or tension between the two extremes of storytelling is not in their structure or form, but in the type of 'we'-community or deme that is imagined within the stories themselves; and in the number of 'followers' willing to join that deme.

Communicative competition

Inevitably, even in advocacy or educational work that may reject commercial or marketing values, *self-expression* is not enough to achieve *communication* with others. To create a 'we'-community, digital storytelling needs to be political and competitive, and open to the logics and potentiality of social networks and 'social network markets' (Potts et al. 2008). Digital storytellers need to know enough about the 'costly signalling' game to be able to use their messages for the 'creation of a polity' around their advocacy. This is not necessarily welcome news for activist agencies, because the strong asymmetry between high-investment commercial media and community-based self-expression is exactly why 'alternative' agencies are active in the first place – they want to take mediation 'back' from industry and relocate it in the community. But the very community they invoke is already suffused with the model of commercial media narration, as a kind of *cultural technology* that contemporary citizens carry around in their heads. 'Everyone knows' how stories work because their forms are reiterated countless times in media, and these models are unselfconsciously rehearsed in everyday talk, play and the like. The arrow of time cannot be reversed: '*we*' are *mediated selves*. 'Self-expression' needs to compete with the media of which

it is a differentiated part. The problem remains, whether competing takes the spontaneous form of informal and untutored popular culture practices such as 'selfies' (Nelson 2013), sexting and so on, where a few randomly probable signals may 'go viral' and produce celebrities while most don't, or whether it is attempted via the more elaborately facilitated and edited forms of digital storytelling. Both storytellers and their audiences live within a semiotic environment where stories must compete to gain attention (Lanham 2006). Hence, those who wish to use stories and digital media for self-expression and community advocacy must go beyond the identity and authenticity of the maker, to embrace communication and outreach, also known as marketing (Bentley et al. 2011).

Stories need some distinctive quality, which digital storytelling needs to teach, because although everyone is familiar with a good story, technique has to be learned – in this case through the 'collective action' of a facilitated workshop. In a competitive environment, 'authenticity' is another ploy, so stories have to outsmart scepticism. Digital storytelling pioneer Daniel Meadows argues:

If citizens are to make their own TV on the kitchen table – as it were – then it is imperative that Big Media provides them with forms which can be readily learned, elegant forms which allow for an articulate contribution. We should make good Digital Stories, not bad television. . . . Digital Stories are indeed multimedia sonnets from the people but let's not kid ourselves that they grow on trees. (Meadows et al. 2006: 3)

The 'oracle of girl world'

An example of someone who took self-mediation from the blog-in-the-bedroom to global media presence, very much by using 'elegant forms which allow for an articulate contribution', is Tavi Gevinson. Her own 'story' illustrates how authenticity can be combined with communication to powerful effect. Gevinson commenced with a home-based fashion-fan blog at age 11 (*thestylerookie.com*). She went on to use her own story to develop a voice for girls. At 14, she launched a successful online magazine (*Rookiemag.com*), which she edited after school (still using the domestic bedroom as office and factory floor, marshalling the efforts of more than 50 contributors), including two yearbooks. At 15, she gave a high-rating TEDxTeen Talk,² and at 16 undertook a national US tour that achieved intense levels of participation among her peers. At 17 she went global; for

² 'Still figuring it out' (April 2012), had over half a million views at last count: www.youtube.com/watch?v=6osiBvQ-RRg.

example, speaking at the Sydney Opera House and Melbourne Writer's Festival.³ Small wonder that she was hailed as 'the oracle of girl world' while still a child.⁴

The question her case poses for the digital storytelling movement – for theorists, facilitators and practitioners alike – is this: How come an otherwise anonymous teenager can command global attention in the name of an authentic but critical take on 'girl world', and so help to redefine it, simply by telling her own stories among her own 'demo-graphic'? Tavi Gevinson was not much discussed in the digital storytelling movement. But digital storytelling *as a movement* has much to learn from her ability to combine self-representation with scaled-up digital communication in a good cause. It seems that her success is more than random luck; it attends someone whose talent is authentic, well managed and current, making use of the storytelling institutions and networking technologies to hand, in exactly the same cause – feminism for girls – that many digital storytelling advocacy groups espouse (Şimşek 2012; Vivienne 2013). Here is where copying the mainstream may be seen not as derivative but as part of the process of social learning; a prompt to *innovation*.

Gallipoli – The creation of national character

We turn now from the *communication* element of storytelling to the *political* aspect – the role of storytelling in 'creating the polity'. We argue that this has been a prime function of storytelling since before there were polities; and that it remains an important element of any attempt to create a 'we'-community in the digital era – resulting in a 'digital deme'. As mentioned, the stories that 'constitute the polity' cluster at the head of a long-tail distribution curve of stories circulating in a given society. As a result, they're not the sort of stories that generally crop up in the digital storytelling movement, although as we shall see there are powerful connections between 'polity' and 'personal' that digital storytelling can exploit or be exploited by.

The most important political narrative is the one that constitutes the polity. These stories are common in foundation myths, from Adam and Eve in the Bible's *Genesis* to Romulus and Remus in Virgil's *Aeneid*; from the Trojan War for the Greeks to the Punic Wars for the Romans; from the 'Pilgrim Fathers'

³ Sources: www.drawnandquarterly.com/newsList.php?item=a5230864510be8; <http://ideas.sydneyoperahouse.com/2013/tavi-gevinson-tavis-big-big-world-at-17/> and http://tickets.mwf.com.au/session2_mwf.asp?s=532.

⁴ Michael Schulman (27 July 2012), 'The Oracle of Girl World', *New York Times*: www.nytimes.com/2012/07/29/fashion/tavi-gevinson-the-oracle-of-girl-world.html.

to *The Outlaw Josey Wales* for America. They supply a reason or cause for the origin of humans in general or of a particular city or nation. Interestingly (for our Turkish connection), an early foundation myth for Britain asserts that it was founded by Brutus of Troy, grandson of Aeneas, and that the British nation descends from Trojans. That story was current throughout the medieval period (e.g. in Chaucer and *Gawain and the Green Knight*). It was still accepted by Shakespeare as historical (via *Holinshed's Chronicles*, 1577).⁵

Despite their own ancient and mythological origins, *etiological* (causation) stories are commonplace still, ascribing reason and meaningfulness to events and places that then explain the character of a nation. Even the US Constitution has one such story, a tale that claims 'natural law' from the supposed natural state of humanity, prior to civilization and government, and therefore taking priority over them. Thus did the Founding Fathers establish as natural (rather than political) the right of individuals to overthrow governments. Causation stories are repeated continuously, achieving thereby the status of law (lore), in school, in journalism and in fiction, all the way from Homer and Virgil to the nightly news and movies, making the polity or 'imagined community' anew each day by recreating the story of who 'we' are.

One prominent genre of etiological stories is associated with national day celebrations. These are staged by both media and public authorities, with high production values and showy symbolic content, especially in modern nation-states born out of popular revolutions (France; Russia; China) or settler-based social experiments (the United States; Australia). Settler nations don't have mythical origins, except among their Indigenous populations, who were typically excluded from their modern constitutions. All the more reason, therefore, to provide themselves with modern myths and legends, and to make these the subject of exorbitant display.

In Australia's case the official national day (26 January), commemorates the landing of the fleet that established the British penal colony at Botany Bay in 1788. As a foundation event, it is contested. It's called 'Invasion Day' among indigenous groups.⁶ As a summertime public holiday, it is associated with beach culture rather than constitutional reverence. As the 'Cronulla riots' of 2005 demonstrated, Aussie beach culture can suddenly erupt into political prominence as a stage for conflict about national identity, including racist and

⁵ See *Wikipedia*: Brutus of Troy.

⁶ See for instance: www.australiaday.com.au/studentresources/indigenous.aspx; and: Peter Gebhardt (2013), 'A national day of shame'. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 January. Online: www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/society-and-culture/a-national-day-of-shame-20130123-2d7b3.html.

flag-flaunting versions that seek to exclude migrant cultures (Hartley and Green 2006). It is widely ignored by non-English-speaking communities, among whom it has low salience. Constitutionally, moreover, Australia Day is on the 'wrong' day in January. The 'Commonwealth of Australia' was founded in 1901 by Act of Parliament and Royal Proclamation, after referenda in the six colonies, on 1 January (not 26th).

Small wonder that Australians gain a rather confused and impoverished sense of national origin from Australia Day. In recent years, its significance in this respect is eclipsed by Anzac Day (25 April). Here, a strong sense of a DIY (do-it-yourself) myth of national origin has built up since the 1990s. One popular highlight is the annual 'pilgrimage' to Gallipoli.⁷ The destination is a peninsula in Turkey that was unsuccessfully invaded in April 1915 by French and British Empire forces, including Australians, New Zealanders (Anzacs) and Indians, as well as British troops. They withdrew 8 months later with high casualties on all sides, defeated by Ottoman forces under the command of Mustafa Kemal, later Atatürk, founder of the modern Turkish republic.⁸

Over recent decades this unlikely setting has become the place of origin of Australian and New Zealand national consciousness, and Anzac Day the most important day of national memorialization. Just as it is eclipsing Australia Day, so it also eclipses Armistice Day as a memorialization of national war service. Unlike 11 November, Anzac Day is a public holiday, marked by dawn services at war memorials around the country and at Gallipoli.

More popular now than when veterans still lived, these gatherings attract many thousands of attendees of all ages. The trek to Gallipoli is especially popular among backpackers and other young travellers, for whom it seems to function as a place and rite of passage in their own process of self-realization. In that respect, their motivations may not be altogether different from those of the original Anzacs, if contemporary recruiting strategies are anything to go by. The headline 'offer' in a World War I leaflet issued by the State Recruiting Committee for New South Wales was for a '*Free Tour to Britain and Europe – The Chance of a Lifetime*' (reproduced in Larsson 2009: 36–7). In 1914–15 mass 'tourism' meant joining the Australian Imperial Force and going to war. The bar was not set very high: anyone could 'participate in this unique offer' if they were male, aged between 18 and 45, over 5 feet 2 inches tall (1.5 m), and 'able to expand your chest to 33 inches' (84 cm). The only hint of a downside to 'active

⁷ There was no such thing as an Australian citizen till 1949, only British subjects. Aboriginal people were not citizens until 1967.

⁸ See: www.anzacsite.gov.au.

service abroad' (war was not mentioned; nor enemies; nor a 'cause') was a table of pensions payable in case of death or incapacity.

Was this 'Free Tour. . . Chance of a Lifetime' pitch meant to attract the type of crowds who might today head for Bali? If so, then today's Gallipoli pilgrims may be worthy successors. Anzac Cove attracts a music-festival sized crowd, who camp nearby and gather, many flag-clad, for dawn ceremonies. One recent historian, forgetting that this sort of adventure was what the original Anzacs were signed up for, has criticized the event for resembling a 'Big Day Out' – the annual Australian summertime rock concert.⁹ He complained that 'official presentations [at the 90th anniversary in 2005] included pop music which inspired dancing and couples were seen canoodling near graves'.¹⁰ He dreaded the 'prospect of a memorial service packed with excitable fans instead of mourners' at the upcoming 2015 centenary.

The explanation for today's popular behaviour (and the squeamishness of experts) is *political narrative* – the story, internalized by many (which the original Anzacs could not have shared as they embarked on their Grand Tour), of how a distinctive national consciousness was forged in the crucible of war. The story triumphs despite the facts: that the campaign was a failed sideshow; that more Australians died at the Western Front¹¹; and that nationhood was established in 1901. The narrative (about character) has trumped the realities (military, legal and political),¹² not to mention the enduring cost to 'the human mind and body' (Larsson 2009: 17) that was paid by Anzacs and their families.

Naturally, the Australian news media are eagerly on hand each year, at Gallipoli and elsewhere, disseminating the memorializing story to a wider public and celebrating the purported national character through the apparently self-staged rituals of ordinary people at a widely distributed but simultaneous national corroboree. *The Australian* newspaper plays a prominent role in promoting Anzac Day activities at home and in Turkey. This may be connected with the fact that the proprietor of *The Australian*, Rupert Murdoch, has a family connection with the original events. His father, Keith Murdoch, a young journalist at the time, reported the campaign's failings back to Australian and

⁹ See: www.bigdayout.com.

¹⁰ King, J. (20 April 2013), 'It's Anzac Day – not the Big Day Out'. *Sydney Morning Herald*: www.smh.com.au/national/its-anzac-day--not-the-big-day-out-20130419-2i5a4.html#ixzz2j9lR6hPO

¹¹ The Australian War Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux lists 10,000 Australian dead with no known grave: www.dva.gov.au/commems_oawg/OAWG/war_memorials/overseas_memorials/france/Pages/villers%20bretonneux.aspx.

¹² Former Prime Minister Paul Keating, speaking in 2008, criticized this trend, saying: 'we still go on as though the nation was born again, or even redeemed there: An utter and complete nonsense'. www.abc.net.au/news/2008-10-30/anzac-gallipoli-gatherings-misguided-keating-says/188086.

British government officials after a brief visit, despite the efforts of military censorship (Knightley 1975; Fewster 1982). His account established crucial elements of the enduring legend: specifically, the charge of British incompetence (among the general staff) and Aussie heroism (among the diggers). As a recent story in the UK press put it:

Keith Murdoch's role at Gallipoli is not without controversy, given that the information he smuggled out was mostly second-hand and provided to him by the Daily Telegraph journalist Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, an arch critic of the campaign. When Murdoch's ruse to smuggle Ashmead-Bartlett's report from the theatre of war was betrayed, he sat down in the office of the Australian High Commissioner in London and dictated his recollection of the report's contents into an 8,000-word letter to Australian Prime Minister Andrew Fisher. 'It was an amazing document, a mixture of error, fact, exaggeration, prejudice, and the most sentimental patriotism, which made highly damaging charges against the British general staff . . . many of them untrue,' said the Australian writer Phillip Knightley. 'But the basis of the charges – that the Gallipoli expedition was in danger of disaster – was correct.'¹³

This version of Gallipoli – Murdoch Senior as brave whistleblowing war correspondent circumventing (British) censorship to tell a new *Australian* truth – is an essential part of its meaning. The other major influence on the creation of the legend was another Australian, Charles Bean (Seal 2004). It was he who first claimed – and through his later monumental histories of World War I he established – that 'the consciousness of Australian nationhood was born' on 25 May 1915.¹⁴ Bean was determined to report what he saw, but what he saw was coloured by what he was looking for. He posed his quest as a question:

How did this nation, bred in complete peace, largely undisciplined except for a strongly British tradition and the self-discipline necessary for men who grapple with nature . . . react to what still has to be recognized as *the supreme test for fitness to exist?*¹⁵

The answer was already clear to Bean: 'fitness to exist' was bestowed by '*character*'. He wrote in 1918: 'The big thing in the war for Australia was the *discovery of the character of Australian men*. It was character which rushed the hills at Gallipoli

¹³ Burrell, I. (16 October 2013), 'BBC unveils the star of its First World War anniversary coverage – Rupert Murdoch'. *The Independent* (UK): www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/bbc-unveils-the-star-of-its-first-world-war-anniversary-coverage--rupert-murdoch-8884028.html.

¹⁴ C. E. W. Bean, *The Story of Anzac* (1921), cited in the *Australian Dictionary of National Biography* (1979): <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bean-charles-edwin-5166>; and in the Australian government's official ANZAC website: www.anzacsite.gov.au/landing/beanbio.html.

¹⁵ Bean, as previous note; our emphasis.

and held on there.’¹⁶ Bean went on to found the Australian War Memorial, and is himself remembered as the first Australian War Correspondent at Gallipoli and later on at the Western Front.

But it was not Bean who established the meaning of Gallipoli. That honour went to Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, the *English journalist* who gave the story to Murdoch and first broke it in the British and Australian press.¹⁷ Bean is referring to Ashmead-Bartlett in this passage from his war diary:

The war correspondent is responsible for most of the ideas of battle which the public possesses. . . . I can't write that it occurred if I know that it did not, even if by painting it that way I can rouse the blood and make the pulse beat faster – and undoubtedly these men here deserve that people's pulses shall beat for them. But War Correspondents have so habitually exaggerated the heroism of battles that people don't realise that real actions are heroic.¹⁸

Ashmead-Bartlett, who worked for the London *Daily Telegraph*, was the doyen of the Allied press gallery covering the campaign (Fewster 1982; Knightley 1975: 100–3).¹⁹ As well as scooping the story, he also shot the only movie film taken of action in the campaign. Later in the war he toured the United States, Australia and Britain with his story and movie. It seems that the Anzac legend was created by him, as has long been recognized by historians:

Undoubtedly [the] more important influence that [Ashmead-Bartlett] exerted over the legend is that he probably more than any other person determined how the tale was told. . . . It required gifted observers to pass the story on to the outside world if the landing were to receive the recognition it so richly deserved. . . . The essence of any legend lies as much in the related story as in the events it purports to describe. Ellis Ashmead Bartlett, by his efforts with pen, picture and speech was instrumental in first shaping then institutionalizing a legend which has, and will continue to be passed on for generations. (Fewster 1982: 30)

Australians gathering at Gallipoli have likely never heard of Ashmead-Bartlett, but it is his *story* they come to honour. They won't be the first to feel themselves represented by the story rather than the facts. Even at time, the Anzac soldiers

¹⁶ *In Your Hands, Australians* (London, 1918), cited in the *Australian Dictionary of National Biography* (1979): <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bean-charles-edwin-5166>; our emphasis.

¹⁷ Ashmead-Bartlett's story, as published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 May 1915, is reproduced in full in Seal (2013), 23–30.

¹⁸ Charles Bean, personal records, 'Ashmead Bartlett and a crisis', item 892, 3DRL/6673, Australian War Memorial 38, cited in: www.anzacsite.gov.au/1landing/beanbio.html.

¹⁹ Knightley's account of Ashmead-Bartlett and Murdoch can be accessed at the Anzac site: www.anzacsite.gov.au/1landing/knightley.html.

themselves recognized Ashmead Bartlett's role as their national 'bard' (Hartley 2009b). One soldier was moved to write in the *Anzac Book* (edited by Bean and published in London in 1916)²⁰:

It is fairly certain that future historians will teach that Australia was discovered not by Captain Cook, explorer, but by Mr. Ashmead Bartlett, war correspondent.²¹

Australian national character may have been tested for fitness in 1915, and this may or may not have revealed its authentic character; but no one would have known anything about it without a narrator. It's the story that carried the knowledge, not the deed; and the communicator who 'creates the polity', not the acts of members of the deme, however authentic or courageous.

Granddads – On not having a story . . .

It took me²² decades to realize that I had a personal relationship with Gallipoli, not least because it was known as 'the Dardanelles' in the United Kingdom; associated in the popular imagination less with the Anzacs than with the name of Winston Churchill (First Lord of the Admiralty in 1915), whose bold conjecture it had been, and who therefore took the political blame for its eventual failure. My grandfather was there. Of course he wasn't an Anzac – he fought for the 'other side', as it were, the British. He wasn't the type of 'British' that so upset the likes of Ashmead-Bartlett and Murdoch, that is, an incompetent upper-class officer. He was one of the 'other ranks' (a QMS or Quartermaster Sergeant), although later promoted, eventually to Captain, in the tradition of the Army Service Corps. He must have had some connection with the Anzacs, because he kept a 1916 copy of *The Anzac Book*, which I now have.

Josiah Arthur Barnes came from 'the Borough' – Southwark – where Shakespeare's Globe Theatre was situated (and is again). He worked at Mount Pleasant, the biggest postal sorting office in the Empire. Before the war he'd been in the Post Office Rifles (Territorial Army), and afterwards he returned to the Post Office, eventually to become Secretary of the East Central Sorters Branch of the Union of Postal Workers, which was founded in 1919. He was, and

²⁰ 1st edn, edited by C. E. W. Bean, published by Cassell, London, 1916; 2nd edn, published by Sun Books, Melbourne, 1975; 3rd edn, edited and published by the Australian War Memorial: www.awm.gov.au/shop/item/9781742231341/#.UnGrZiRhNdq

²¹ 'The Raid on London', by 'Private Pat Riot', 9th Battalion. *The Anzac Book*, 143–5.

²² This part is narrated in the first person – John Hartley.

remained, solidly working class, of the aspirational and Co-operative type (he read *Reynold's News* to the end of his life) rather than the activist and Socialist. When I became aware of him, in his seventies, he played lawn bowls (I have the cups he won), still drank his tea out of the saucer not the cup ('to cool it'), blew his nose on a military-looking khaki handkerchief, and had an alarming one-eyed Pekinese called Bottle.

To say he 'fought' may give the wrong impression of this latter-day scion of Brutus of Troy, because he served in the Army Service Corps, which was responsible for transport, food supplies, logistics – and the mail. According to a 1914–18 website:

At peak, the ASC numbered an incredible 10,547 officers and 315,334 men. In addition were tens of thousands of Indian, Egyptian, Chinese and other native labourers, carriers and stores men, under orders of the ASC. Yet this vast, sprawling organisation – so vital to enabling the army to fight – merits just four mentions in the Official History of the war.²³

It seems there is no 'nation-forming' story attached to the coordination of armies; neither the military itself nor its historians remember the contribution of a third of a million of its soldiers. Although armies can't fight without organization, transport, logistics, food and communications (see Figure 3.2), those who provide them are available to take the blame for what goes wrong. My grandfather kept a copy of the *Final Report of the Dardanelles Commission* (1917–19: 81–2), the official government inquiry into the debacle. I found it forgotten on top of a cupboard long after his death. I wondered why he kept it for so long. Would it reveal something about him?

Looking through it, I found a chapter on 'Postal Arrangements'.²⁴ After excoriating the 'negligence or stupidity of some postal clerk' (was this him?), the Commissioners mention that 'there was a good deal of looting of parcels' sent via the Army Service Corps Parcel Transit Service (was this him?). Their *Report* relates various scandalous stories of mails damaged, not delivered, delayed or sent astray (p. 81). Noting, however, that the 'amount of letters is stated to have grown to 1,000,000 a week,' and the number of parcels up to 90,000 a week, they finally conclude that both the Post Office and Army Service Corps Parcel Transit Service bore responsibility for the 'miscarriages', but that 'we are of the opinion

²³ The Long, Long Trail: www.1914-1918.net/asc.htm. No mention is made of whether the 'men' included women.

²⁴ www.nla.gov.au/apps/cdview/?pi=nla.aus-vn2035864-s83-e and www.nla.gov.au/apps/cdview/?pi=nla.aus-vn2035864-s84-e.

that, on the whole, no blame attaches to those who had the organisation and conduct of the service' (p. 82).²⁵

Doubtless there are some amazing stories here, but the heroes who managed to deliver over 30 million items to troops so far from their various homes in Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Egypt and India, not to mention those serving the Turkish army, have remained unsung from that day to this, at least officially, because 'there is no memorial to the Army Service Corps'.²⁶ But in *The Anzac Book* (1916) it is clear that the fighting men felt very differently:

Mails, too, are an anodyne. Their arrival eclipses considerations of life and death – of fighting and the landing of rations. The mail-barge coming in somehow looms larger than a barge of supplies. Mails have been arriving weekly for six months, yet no one is callous to them.²⁷

The writer singles out letters first: 'they put a man at home for an hour'. Next he mentions the local newspaper, sent from home: 'Intimate associations hang about the reading of the local sheet – domestic and parochial associations almost as powerful as are brought by letters' (*Anzac Book*, 22). Finally, there are parcels, objects of an 'intensity of gloating expectation'. Most prized were tobacco and food, but clothes, toiletries, and writing paper were also mentioned.

Of course, not all the parcels got through, and many that did were damaged. A 'digger's alphabet' gives us some idea of what the troops thought of quartermasters – they were shirkers and looters: 'Q is for . . . the Quarter-bloke, dodging the line'; 'R is for . . . the Rum that the Quarter-bloke pinched' (quoted in Seal 2013: 250–1).

In fact, the only memorabilia I have of my grandfather are the 'spoils of war'. He kept – over the fireplace – a set of murderous looking shells (which I now have), allegedly captured from the Turks and 'proving' that the enemy used 'dum-dum' rounds (lead-tipped, designed to flatten on impact). He also sported a collection of 'trench art', including shell-cases converted into cigarette boxes, powder-puff boxes and so on, some with British silver sixpences (the king's head) let into the base, overlaying the German or Turkish script that indicated whence the shells originated. One such is dated 'APR 15' (Figure 3.1). These bizarre objects are all I have of my grandfather; a clutter of memorabilia-without-memories. He died while I was away at the orphanage. My mother wrote and told me to pray for

²⁵ 'Those who had the organisation and conduct of the service' means 'officers'. Effectively, although not explicitly, the *Report* 'closes ranks', as it were; it protects the officer class by putting any blame on (anonymous) 'other ranks'.

²⁶ *The Long, Long Trail*: www.1914-1918.net/asc.htm.

²⁷ 'Glimpses of Anzac', by Hector Dinning, Aust. ASC. *The Anzac Book*, 17–23.

Figure 3.1 Trench art – A cigarette box made of two German shell-cases dated April 1915, with a Turkish fuse as knob; a George V sixpence is let into the base (Photo: J. Hartley).

him – a tricky task, for he was Church of England and a Freemason, my mother was a Catholic convert, and I was at a Protestant orphanage. Would praying for him in the wrong religion be OK? Evidently my mother didn't think it mattered, for she buried him in the same grave as my non-religious father, both of them in the Catholic bit of the vast, windswept municipal cemetery.

I barely knew him as a person. I can't remember much affection on either side. The only present I remember having from him was a parcel that mysteriously but excitingly arrived at the orphanage 1 year when I was about 10. It proved to contain a pair of boxing gloves. Instinctively I read the 'present' as a rebuke. He was encouraging me to make a man of myself (a sure sign that I had already failed in that endeavour). As the only surviving male in the family I was always going to inherit the memorabilia of war – and his masonic apron. I don't like them much but can't chuck them out, so there they stay, souvenirs of an unknown life, transmitted through time without any story attached to them, and almost completely meaningless, certainly to my daughters, who will no doubt have to decide what to do with them one day.

Neither my mother nor grandmother told stories about him after he died. We (my two sisters and I) discovered decades later that he had two sisters. Who knew? What did he do in the war? No one knew, beyond pictures of him on a camel by the Great Pyramid and wearing his officer's uniform so proudly. Was he brave? Did he perform herculean service? Was he on the take? Was his a war of 'negligence and stupidity'? We'll never know, although I don't think so, because he called every house he lived in to the end of his life 'Rafa', referring to

the city of that name in Palestine, where his war took him after the Dardanelles and Egypt. I don't know if he was at the Battle of Rafa in January 1917, which prominently featured the Anzacs and Chauvel's Light Horsemen. It was a difficult battle, plagued by ammunition shortages, so quartermasters certainly played a role, and it marked the entry of the Empire Expeditionary Forces into Palestine, which he called the Holy Land. Maybe that was the time of his life. But none of his family knows, because there's no story.²⁸

I could make all this into a digital story.²⁹ That's its structural place in this chapter, but such an indeterminate tale would go against the grain of the genre. The story would be telling you that there is no story. My grandfather's tale may express something about the British 'national character' (class differentiation; 'a nation of shopkeepers') but not in ways that follow the accepted script (killing; death), which doesn't associate glory with complex systems and logistics, or making sure that bread and letters from home got through (Figure 3.2).

There are many digital stories about Anzacs, and they generally do follow the script. Some are made by school students, doing oral history projects about veterans from their locality. Others are made by veterans themselves, or their widows or descendants. None that I can find has been made by the backpacking pilgrims to Gallipoli's Dawn Service. From my research,³⁰ it does seem that when it comes to digital storytelling about Gallipoli, there is a *pre-scripted story* that

²⁸ Stories *were* told. Here's one, featuring the British (Scottish), the Anzacs, and some 'hot and blasphemous Quartermaster-Sergeants' (here, victims not perpetrators of looting), outside Rafa in 1917: 'The Australian light horseman has the bump of acquisitiveness even better developed than the Lowland infantryman, and having a horse on which he can hang his trophies he can give this penchant greater scope. But when he is going into action – or believes himself to be – he unhesitatingly sacrifices all that will incommode him in the serious business of war. In consequence the ground recently vacated [by the Australian cavalry departing to attack Rafa] appeared at dawn to our astonished eyes covered with a litter of discarded possessions. . . . We were on mobile rations, bully, biscuit, milk and jam. Vegetables and the "wee piece ham" had disappeared. Surely Australians did not live like that. Nor were we disappointed. Foraging parties returned laden with sides of bacon, cheese, bread, Maconochies, sacks of onions and desiccated vegetables, enough to make us quite certain of a full meal on Christmas Day, so long as we did not move in the interval. Nor was this all. Folding benches and tables, matting and bivouac poles, frying pans and canvas buckets, books and tobacco, a watch and even a real live horse were discovered – all the things which stand for wealth among such a primitive tribe as we then were. It is rumoured that hot and blasphemous Australian Quartermaster-Sergeants rode back that evening to retrieve some of their property. Well, they did not find it all. People who like bacon shouldn't leave it lying in deserts in front of hungry Scotchmen.' (From *Highland Light Infantry in the War 1914–1918*, by Officers of the Battalion. Glasgow, 1921: www.gutenberg.org/files/20250/20250-h/20250-h.htm).

²⁹ Here's one that I made earlier: www.youtube.com/watch?v=flxu33F8r2w.

³⁰ See, for instance: <http://museumvictoria.com.au/discoverycentre/websites/making-history/student-uploads/>; www.dpc.vic.gov.au/index.php/veterans/victorian-veterans-virtual-museum/digital-stories-in-our-words; <https://open.abc.net.au/openregions/qlt-tropical-north-93gv1ap/posts/remembering-billy-26wn8wx>; <http://generator.acmi.net.au/gallery/category/conflict-australians-war>; <https://www.raiseaglass.com.au/> (click on 'Your Stories'); www.au.dk/en/about/news/single/artikel/cultural-memory-more-relevant-than-ever/.

EACH ONE DOING HIS BIT
 Drawn by W. OTHO HEWETT

Figure 3.2 'Each one doing his bit'. Drawing by W. Otho Hewett. *The Anzac Book* (1916) p. 167. The item arrowed at the end of the 'long tail' of the line is 'Bread'.

people differentially populate with their own identities, experiences and families. The individual experience may be unique but the template is copied. I can't tell you my granddad's Gallipoli story because it's the other way round; the individual was commonplace but there is no template for this story. On the evidence of Gallipoli stories, it's the copy that wins the day; people want their story to fit in with the meanings that have already been scripted; it's a kind of votary offering to the ancestors. What they actually did or what they thought about it may be of less significance than what their descendants need for them to mean. That certainly seems to be the case for Jason's granddad, as the next section reveals.

The last patriarch

When John told his granddad story, I realized that I had one as well,³¹ although here the story begins in World War II, on the airfields of southeast England,

³¹ This part is narrated in the first person – Jason Potts.

with a volunteer serviceman from New Zealand flying de Havilland Mosquito bombers. Fortunately, Owen Ward Potts arrived towards the end of the war and never saw action. But he did meet a young Welsh lass, and in the compressed time that runs hot through war, they were soon married and she was with child, although probably not in that order. Thus my father was born at the close of the war in the Rhondda valley in Wales. The three of them soon shipped out to the family farm in New Zealand; she a war bride who returned home only once, 40 years later, and my grandfather, who settled into the role of family patriarch, his apparently natural and destined position for the next 52 years.

Apart from a certain fondness for patriotic teaspoons, there was little evidence of Welsh ancestry in the family home in Balfour (in the deep south in New Zealand) where I grew up, nor of war service, nor of any time before that. Duty was done, and life returned to its bucolic rhythms in which a new story was created about the enterprise of a hard-working family of boys on the land. That was the story I was born into – although there was also one daughter: my father's sister Carolyn, who was not destined, through family politics and personal choice, to be part of this rural idyll. She trained in art, became a journalist, moved to the city; just as I was later to leave that same farm, train in economics, become an academic, move to Australia.

A few years ago, 20 years after Owen Potts died, that same Aunt Carolyn – a professional storyteller – decided to write a book on him, which I have only just read. This story, based in archival records and research, has a very different colour from the one I received as a child. There is less derring-do war hero, and a great deal more struggle and luck. But it also presents my grandfather as a very different person from the one I had always imagined. It turned out that he needed to fight extremely hard to *get into* the war, to get posted overseas, specifically in the Royal Air Force. He had a great gift for technical details and organizational leadership; he was the sort of person who may well have sought to escape life in backwater rural New Zealand.

Not so his boys, however, including my father. They were naturalized farmers who couldn't imagine a better place to be, and so the story went down that path with them. The *national* story of the sacrifice of servicemen and the safe return to the hearth to raise good families became *our* story.

But I'm not so sure that this is really what happened. My grandfather was awarded a clutch of medals for his effort, but he never picked them up. They stayed in London. My aunt discovered them in the course of her research (Figure 3.3). Why would he leave them there? On one hand, it's consistent with

Figure 3.3 Left in London – Story Surplus. Long-lost medals of a World War II RAF Officer (Photo: Jason Potts).

the duty and sacrifice story: job done; go home, no fuss. Yet maybe he didn't want to go home, but now, with a young family to look after, he had no choice. So he *lost the life* that those medals represented; it was a kind of 'story surplus' after the war. The medals had no meaning in the new story.

It is also interesting to find how easy it was to remake the story among the children of that newly established deme, and how hard it was to find the real story, or even to want to find it. The story my grandfather created, the one that I was raised in, was consistent with that of a ruling patriarch – a proper paterfamilias. The complex back-story and other possible stories were erased, and instead a 'foundation myth' took root in which 'we' were always from here, always farmers, and always would be. 'They' were those arrayed against the interests of farmers – journalists and academics surely among them.

As the generations have unfolded, it turned out he was the first and last patriarch in our family. The complexity of evolving global produce markets, new technologies and outside opportunities overwhelmed this simple lineage. The family farm is now run by my sister and her young family. A new story is being crafted about the rise of the first *matriarch*, securing the place for her young children.

It seems that families, like nations, need to tell stories *about* themselves to themselves that may bear very little relation to reality. The stories serve a different, deme-building purpose, in the interests of local integration and identity. Small wonder that my grandfather's medals struggle, as he did, to *mean* anything other than what others need them to mean, which may be why he let them go, to mean nothing at all.³²

Original stories seem to require a higher level of narrative investment than digital storytelling typically commands, and in our experience families are not reliable sources of any alternative. On the contrary, the stories that are passed down the generations seem more likely to reproduce national or demic myths with grandparents' faces.

Despite our desire to know what really happened to our own ancestors, and despite the potential of digital technologies to make alternative accounts more widely known, it seems likely that new or revisionist stories will continue to be created at the national and corporate end of the spectrum, by professional storytellers with a critical point of view. What will the new story be? It's a pretty safe bet that it won't include our granddads; but mythic ancestors may figure prominently (as we shall see).

Göbekli Tepe – V. Gordon Childe and revolution

Unbeknownst to the thousands gathering annually at Gallipoli's Lone Pine memorial, there is another lonely hill in Turkey where a much deeper myth of human political origin is beginning to be undermined and reordered. The place is Göbekli Tepe (Potbelly Hill), site of impressive ancient stone monuments that were erected before human settlement and before farming, predating Stonehenge and the Egyptian pyramids by *7,000 years*.

The deeper 'myth' that its discovery challenges is the accepted story of the 'Neolithic Revolution'. That theory was first synthesized by an Australian archaeologist, V. Gordon Childe (1925, 1936). His theory states that human civilization 'dawned' with the invention of farming, which required hunter-gatherers to settle and thus enabled the development of cities. In other words, after a rapid domesticating 'revolution', the economy (agriculture) and politics

³² We return here to the co-authorial 'we'.

(cities) determined culture (civilization).³³ It is a strongly Marxist political narrative, following the base/superstructure model of economic determination (Williams 1973), which is not surprising as Childe was a convinced Marxist, political activist, and lifelong supporter of Stalin.³⁴

Vere Gordon Childe is widely forgotten in his native Australia, except by John Doyle (a.k.a. Rampaging Roy Slaven, half of the Roy and H. G. comedy duo), whose 2013 play *Vere [Faith]* was inspired by playwright Doyle's discovery of his existence.³⁵ But Childe ranks as one of the most important archaeologists of the twentieth century: if not Indiana Jones, then certainly his teacher.³⁶ He was reputed to loathe archaeological digs (he was no Aussie 'digger' in this respect), although he excavated the important site of Skara Brae in the Orkney Islands. His strength was synthesis. He performed for archaeology the 'modern synthesis' that Julian Huxley achieved for the biosciences, at about the same time. He was able to gather piecemeal discoveries and sites across Eurasia into a coherent story: the story of the Neolithic Revolution. As Egyptologist John Romer has put it:

The 'Neolithic Revolution' . . . that most useful phrase, was concocted by the Australian archaeologist Vere Gordon Childe in the 1920s . . . specifically to combat the then current climate of ethnic stereotyping in European archaeology. . . . Not surprisingly, perhaps, given the contemporary climate, Childe's newly invented Neolithic Revolution, a two-word adventure story in itself, soon became part of Western history. (Romer 2012: 32)

The *story* of the Neolithic Revolution (if not the science) has held sway ever since, diffusing ever further into global common sense. For instance, in a 2013–14 exhibition about *Anatolian Civilisation* touring China in 2013–14,³⁷ the Neolithic period (12,000–5,500 BCE) is introduced with a label that reads as shown in Figure 3.4.

Note the chain of causation proffered by this story: hunter-gatherers and nomads settled and became productive because of farming and herding (food

³³ But, for a contrary view, see: www.telegraph.co.uk/science/science-news/5604296/Is-farming-the-root-of-all-evil.html.

³⁴ The *Wikipedia* entry on V. Gordon Childe is a good place to get a flavour of the man, his times, his work and its impact.

³⁵ Story at: www.sydneytheatre.com.au/magazine/posts/2012/september/feature-vere-gordon-childe.aspx.

³⁶ Childe is mentioned as such in one of the Indiana Jones films: http://indianajones.wikia.com/wiki/Vere_Gordon_Childe.

³⁷ Information plaque, *Anatolian Civilizations: From the Neolithic Age to the Ottoman Empire*. Shanghai Museum (2013–14): www.shanghaimuseum.net/en/special/special_readmore.jsp?id=214

新石器时代 (公元前 12000-5500年) NEOLITHIC AGE (12000-5500 BCE)

新石器时代见证了人类由狩猎-采集到生产，从游牧至定居的生活方式的转变。定居生活促进了建筑的建造。人类开始种植谷物、驯养动物、制作陶器。定居生活以及多余的产品推动了社会阶级的形成和专业化，为村庄和城市的出现奠定了基础。在这一时期，生产力的发展取决于宗教部门，形成了“庙宇经济”体系。目前在土耳其发现了近400处新石器时代的遗址。

The Neolithic Age saw the transformation of hunter-gatherer and nomads way of living to a more settled and productive one. A new architectural practice emerged as a result of living in permanent settlements. Food supply was enriched with grain and animals in the process of domestication. Pottery appeared in human history. Localized dwellings and surplus products brought about the emergence of social classes and specialization, and led to foundation of villages and cities. As the production activities developed depending on religious institutions during the period, “temple economy” was formed. The Neolithic Age is represented in Turkey so far with nearly 400 settlements.

Figure 3.4 The ‘Neolithic Revolution’ lives on. Shanghai 2013 (Photo: J. Hartley).

supply ‘enriched with grain and animals in the process of domestication’). This generated ‘localized dwelling’ and surplus, which in turn caused social classes to emerge, thence cities, and finally a ‘temple economy’. The assumed arrow of causation is clear:

Transformation in the mode of production

→ Surplus and Settlement

→ Civilisation and Cities

→ Belief systems (Religion and Culture)

Reversing the arrow of causation

The only problem with this, as the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism (who co-organized the exhibition) ought to have known, given the location of

the counter-evidence, is that the arrow of causation may be *exactly the wrong way round*. Recent archaeological work in Turkey itself has revealed that the first ‘temple architecture’ was produced by nomadic hunter-gatherers, not by settled agriculturalists. To accomplish this feat, they needed to *organize* food and settlement for those engaged in making the singing-and-dancing place. Settlement and farming followed. In short, *culture* – the creation and representation in stone and ceremony of a ‘we’-community or deme – *preceded* both *economy* (farming; herding) and the *polity* (cities).

But Childe’s materialist, or economic-determinist story – that ‘material prosperity . . . brought social and artistic progress in its wake’, as Romer (2012) summarizes it – exerted its own powerful influence on scientific thought.³⁸ The science may be ‘tricked out with fashionable neo-evolutionary economics’, but as Romer points out, ‘the very language of the inquiry’ determines what will be found: the story precedes and determines or *scripts* the evidence, which is largely a work of the imagination, ascribing causal sequence to ‘the relics of the past’. Thus, for many decades there has been no need to argue that economics was primary and culture was dragged along ‘in its wake’ until the discoveries at Göbekli Tepe. Now, it seems, the flow of causation is reversed, because the monument builders themselves were hunter-gatherers, who neither farmed nor settled. It turns out that symbolic ritual, including gathering, dancing, feasting and possibly worship, was staged in massive, elaborate stone-built circles that have no economic or residential function. The tallest monoliths there may resemble ancestors, who may be gathered in a ceremonial (story) circle, perhaps linking the living and the dead.³⁹

Storytelling, not ‘worship’

Storytelling creates the polity: literally. These feats of construction both organized and represented what can be described as the earliest known political narrative. They predated and likely precipitated both farming and settlement. Klaus Schmidt, lead excavator of the Göbekli Tepe site, has concluded:

The evolution of modern humanity involved a fundamental change from small-scale, mobile hunter-gatherer bands to large, permanently co-resident

³⁸ V. I. Vernadsky (1938) cites Childe in his account of the transition from biosphere to noösphere: see next chapter.

³⁹ ‘Pillars at the temple of Göbekli Tepe – 11,600 years old and up to 18 feet tall – may represent priestly dancers at a gathering’. *National Geographic*: <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2011/06/gobekli-tepe/musi-photography>

communities. The factor that allowed the formation of large, permanent communities was the facility to use symbolic culture, a kind of pre-literate capacity for producing and 'reading' symbolic material culture, that enabled communities to formulate their shared identities, and their cosmos. (Schmidt 2010: 253–4)

What Schmidt calls 'shared identity' was *performed* here: in the monuments themselves, in the work needed to make them, and in the attendant ceremonies. Göbekli Tepe was an improbably early site of *mediation*. Schmidt has been reporting this finding in scholarly publications and to the general public for years – via the *Smithsonian Magazine*, and *Archaeology*, for instance, as well as the *National Geographic* – but the ingrained script has proven resistant to change.

Indeed, as soon as it got wind of the discovery, Western journalism immediately turned it into different story: about 'the birth of religion'. For instance, Schmidt is reported in the *Smithsonian Magazine* (2008) as arguing for 'upending' the Childe thesis:

To Schmidt and others, these new findings suggest a novel theory of civilization. Scholars have long believed that only after people learned to farm and live in settled communities did they have the time, organization and resources to construct temples and support complicated social structures. But Schmidt argues it was the other way around: the extensive, coordinated effort to build the monoliths literally laid the groundwork for the development of complex societies.⁴⁰

But the article is headlined 'The World's First Temple?' *Archaeology* didn't bother with the question mark.⁴¹ It's the same story in the *National Geographic*, whose *reporter* was excited by the revision of Childe's theory. Schmidt is quoted: 'Twenty years ago everyone believed civilization was driven by ecological forces. I think what we are learning is that civilization is a product of the human mind'.⁴² But the *magazine* wanted this high-prestige cover story to be about the 'birth of *religion*', headlining Göbekli Tepe 'the world's oldest temple'.

⁴⁰ Curry, A. (November 2008), 'Göbekli Tepe: The World's First Temple? ... Turkey's stunning Göbekli Tepe upends the conventional view of the rise of civilization'. *Smithsonian Magazine*: www.smithsonianmag.com/history/gobekli-tepe-the-worlds-first-temple-83613665/?page=2.

⁴¹ Scham, S. (November 2008), 'The World's First Temple'. *Archaeology* 61(6): <http://archive.archaeology.org/0811/>

⁴² Mann, C. (June 2011), 'The Birth of Religion'. *National Geographic*: <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/print/2011/06/gobekli-tepe/mann-text>.

Klaus Schmidt himself is not so sure about that: ‘we can not say with certitude if concepts of god existed at this time’ (2010: 254). So there is no need to follow the *National Geographic* in its own ‘political narrative’:

We used to think agriculture gave rise to cities and later to writing, art, and religion. Now the world’s oldest temple suggests the urge to worship sparked civilization. (NG, June 2011)

Göbekli Tepe certainly challenges the notion of the Neolithic Revolution, but ‘the urge to worship’ is not needed as a causal mechanism. ‘Worship’, ‘religion’ and ‘temple’ are loaded terms, saying more about now than then, and the excavator himself draws no such conclusion. Occam’s razor should be applied to such interpretations.

Singing the deme – the world’s first mass medium

Thanks to the painstaking work of Klaus Schmidt and his colleagues, stunning monuments of almost unthinkable antiquity – and beauty – have been rediscovered. What these abstract human figures, realistic animal carvings, stone circles and structures *meant* to their makers is not preserved. However, whatever else they were used for, they do appear to have served ‘demic’ purposes – calling together the members of a non-kin (cultural) group of considerable size for construction and ceremony, staging among the stones an all-dancing, all-singing expression of the deme’s identity and its boundaries of place and time (here and now vs. death and the ancestors).

Perhaps the edifice also signalled the power of *this* deme in comparison to others (‘they’ communities). For Göbekli Tepe was not alone, nor even the first such stone structure in the region. The French archaeologist Danielle Stordeur reported news of a site at Jerf el Ahmar in Syria, since inundated by an irrigation dam-lake, in 1999. She wrote:

This type of structure has never been recovered for this period. As a building intended for specific communal activities, it seems to have several points in common with structures found at Hallan Çemi, and it anticipates the early PPNB Anatolian ‘sanctuaries’ of this period, such as Nevali-Çori and Göbekli, some 100 km from Jerf el Ahmar’. (Stordeur 1999: 3)

It seems that the logic of a ‘costly signalling’ competition in communal/ritual buildings and symbolism among pre-pottery Neolithic (PPN) demes in the Fertile Crescent – ‘anything you can do we can do better’ – was well under way

by the time Göbekli was built. That these structures represent a cultural (rather than economic or civic) story doesn't seem to be in doubt. They externalize and perform the identity and knowledge of their demes at an unprecedented level of ambition and complexity. It does seem reasonable to assume that the builders told each other a motivating story as to their intentions when they built it: they were working to a purposeful 'script'. The monument itself may be regarded as a 'media platform' or 'institution of language' – the first ever 'mass medium' if you like – for storytelling on the grand scale.

So our proposition is that Göbekli Tepe is a relic of *political narrative* – a story that called together a deme to common purpose, distinguished it from others nearby, and so constituted the polity that needed to support that giant enterprise by inventing agriculture, husbandry and settlement. We suggest that 'demic diffusion' (Ammerman and Cavalli-Sforza 1984; see Sokal et al. 1991) required a prior moment of *demic concentration* (our term) as the trigger of the 'Neolithic Revolution'.

Stonehenge – not one deme, but two

Something along the lines of a story that brings a deme together to overcome unknown adversaries, uncertainty and death, may explain the findings at Göbekli Tepe. If so, then the form – the 'media platform' – in which that ambitious act of wish-fulfilment was 'published', using charismatic megalithic circles, persisted along with the stories. About 7,000 years after Göbekli Tepe (and unconnected with it), the (currently) much more famous stone circle at Stonehenge may tell a similar story. According to its most recent excavator, Mike Parker Pearson (2012: 342–3), the monument itself, considered with others in the surrounding landscape, represents a 'place of the dead' (cremation, excarnation, burial) in stone, contrasting with monuments located nearby (Durrington Walls and Woodhenge), which signified a 'place of the living' in timber (feasting, residence). As for the 'place of the dead' itself, Parker Pearson believes that the bluestone megaliths, which were brought from the Preseli hills in far-off Wales, represent ancestors, who were also, significantly, among the first farmers in Britain (2012: 288):

The link between Preseli and Stonehenge . . . involved a powerful polity within the Nevern valley [West Wales], a people whose earliest Neolithic ancestors had brought the tradition of megalith construction to this part of Britain. Perhaps they had celebrated their power and their ancestry by erecting one or more stone circles with monoliths taken from a range of nearby quarries.

The quarries have been located, but not the bluestones taken from them. Parker Pearson concludes that, 'later, for one reason or another, the momentous decision was taken to dismantle these circles and move them over 180 miles to Stonehenge' (288). Once there, these bluestones stood for 500 years (3,000–2,500 BCE) before being repositioned when the much larger and locally sourced sarsen stones were first erected. The sequence of events and placement of stones suggest to Parker Pearson that Stonehenge as we now see it was built not only to venerate the ancestors (in the form of the bluestone monoliths) but also to perform a strictly political ceremony, where the plan of the sarsens – including the familiar circle with lintels and the internal horseshoe arrangement of trilithons – 'copied' timber enclosures and 'D-shaped meeting houses' (Parker Pearson 2012: 334), such that:

The stones with Welsh origins were now contained within arrangements of stones brought mostly from the Marlborough Downs [20 miles N. of Stonehenge]. This raises the possibility that Stonehenge's identity, as expressed through the stones' origins, represented a union of two groups with geographically diverse ancestries – the people of the bluestones and the people of the sarsens. (2012: 338)

In our terminology, then, Stonehenge is a 'mass medium' that broadcasts to all and sundry – perhaps even to the whole island of Britain – that *two* demes have united:

Stonehenge can be understood as a monument of unification, integrating the cosmological aspects of earth, sun and moon into a single entity which also united the ancestors of the people of Britain in the form of Welsh bluestones and English sarsens. (Parker Pearson 2012: 342)

It took strong stuff – the alignment of sun, moon, season and place, plus the communal effort required to quarry, shape, lug and erect 20-foot (6.7 m) megaliths, and the separation of landscapes into those that served the living and the dead, respectively – to carry a political narrative about *demic concentration* (unity of knowledge).

This symbolic expression of identity was certainly cultural but, equally clearly, what is meant by 'culture' cannot be confined to inherited custom or reduced to mere ornament, the leisure pursuit of the affluent. This was culture as cutting-edge innovation, uniting many branches of knowledge as well as people, and stretching the entire society's capabilities. In addition to artistic talent and communicative purpose, it required the most up-to-date knowledge of science, technology, and cosmology of the day. It tested the limits of the group's practical

powers of coordination, logistics and labour, and their relations with other groups, from Wales to Wessex. We don't know what went on in and around the Stonehenge-Durrington Walls complex, but it's not a wild guess to suggest that it included storytelling by voice, music and dance as well as through stone and timber. The landscape's use for gathering, feasting and processing in the presence of ancestors, both recent and remote (for which there is evidence), suggests that 'culture' was the prime achievement of a powerful and wealthy polity. The story 'written' in the stones may be that of two demes uniting as one, a story of *scaling up culture*. We don't know the details, but the scale of Stonehenge itself tells us how important it was as a signal – Parker Pearson says its spectacular scale 'puts it in a league of its own, beyond anything else in Britain at that time' (2012: 340).

But it wasn't to last. Stonehenge was among the last of the megalithic monuments (only Silbury Hill is later), constructed in a time when the transformation from Neolithic to Copper/Bronze Age was already under way. It marked the end of a certain 'regime', not its beginning, such that – not for the last time – 'the greatest monumental spectacles preceded the regime's demise' (Parker Pearson 2012: 344–5). New technologies (copper; bronze) and new cultural practices (Beaker people) were diffused; new forms of land division were established (shifting from open grazing to field farming); and new sources of wealth were opened up (arable soils in eastern Britain). The 'Big Men' who presided over the local deme began to be buried in personal graves (round barrows). Culture and wealth were still displayed – Parker Pearson remarks on the 'sheer scale of Bronze Age bling' (p. 350), but it took the form of 'personal adornment and family burial monuments' (p. 352), a costly signalling practice that combined reverence for the dead with a very pointed message to the living:

These people wanted to show off their wealth. Burying this amount of gold-work with a dead relative was an extraordinarily ostentatious thing to do; the people who arranged these funerals were able to show that they were so rich that they could easily spare large quantities of gold. (p. 350)

'Demic concentration' was valued still, but change occurred in how it was narrated in monuments and story. Politics were scaled up further into states and kingdoms, spurred by new weapons technologies and the ability of elite families to monopolize them (Gintis 2012). But now the political narrative was not about the group or what it knew as a whole. Individualistic personalization of political unity characterized Bronze and Iron Age *stories*. These have survived more or less unchanged in form and function over millennia, with successive political leaders using the same words for the same purposes.

Evolution creates the narrative – Gilgamesh, Ashurbanipal, Isaiah and George W. Bush

The oldest recorded story in the world is *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, originating in the Fertile Crescent not far from where Göbekli Tepe stands. King Gilgamesh may have existed, around 2,600 BCE, about 7,000 years after Göbekli Tepe, contemporaneously with Stonehenge's first stage. A celebrated version of this story is preserved at the British Museum on the so-called Flood Tablet, from the library of Assyrian king Ashurbanipal at Nineveh (Iraq), seventh century BCE (nearly 9,000 years after Göbekli Tepe). Its decipherment in the decade following Darwin's *Origin of Species* caused a sensation (MacGregor 2011), because on one of his adventures Gilgamesh is told the story of a flood in terms that bear an uncanny resemblance to the biblical (Noah's) flood story, thereby challenging the latter's divine provenance even as it confirmed its historical plausibility. It re-projected the story of human civilization back from the supernatural to the political: it wasn't divine intervention that caused the Flood; it was a traveller's tale.

As a political narrative the *Epic of Gilgamesh* still resonates, for its plot remains familiar, even in the news media. Christopher Booker (2004) has identified seven basic plots that are structural transformations of ancient tales, continuing in contemporary stories, in literature and on screen. They are: Overcoming the Monster; Rags to Riches; The Quest; Voyage and Return; Rebirth; Comedy; Tragedy. Booker includes *Gilgamesh* among stories with the most basic plot, 'overcoming the monster', along with the story of Perseus (the Gorgon), Theseus (the Minotaur), Beowulf (Grendel), Little Red Riding Hood (the wolf); and, more recently, Dracula, H. G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*, *The Seven Samurai*/*Magnificent Seven*, *Jaws*, *Alien*, *Dr No* and *Star Wars – A New Hope*.

Applying this model to political communication, we can readily see the basic plots reiterated on the nightly news. A telling example was George W. Bush's 'Mission Accomplished' speech, delivered aboard USS *Abraham Lincoln* on 1 May 2003, immediately after the initial open combat phase of the Iraq invasion. Instantly controversial, as victory in the so-called War on Terror was far from 'accomplished', the speech was also notable for the biblical rhetoric that Bush invoked to celebrate how US forces had 'overcome the monster' unleashed at 9/11. The President concluded:

All of you – all in this generation of our military – have taken up the highest calling of history. You are defending your country, and protecting the innocent

from harm. And wherever you go, you carry a message of hope – a message that is ancient, and ever new. In the words of the prophet Isaiah: ‘To the captives, Come out! and to those in darkness, Be free!’.⁴³

Using the full resources of the modern ‘warfare state’ (Edgerton 2006; Sparrow 2011), and in the face of monstrous unseen adversaries, Bush invoked an ancient story to *reconstitute* the post-9/11 polity.

Gotcha?⁴⁴ – The big guns of storytelling . . . Fall silent?

We should consider whether such continuity over the *longue durée* has something to do with the cultural-evolutionary adaptation of humans. It may explain one of the mechanisms by which ‘*Homo narans*’ (Fisher 1984) maintains large, complex demes of non-kin in cooperative, albeit competitive, polities. Here again, Mark Pagel (2012, 2012b) is instructive.⁴⁵ Like the archaeologists Klaus Schmidt and Danielle Stordeur, he too sees culture as primary. Culture is the ‘survival vehicle’ for the survival of human groups or demes. As such, culture is characterized not so much by aesthetics as by allegiance of individuals to their deme. Pagel argues:

The fact that cultural allegiance is most vividly expressed not in ethical behaviour but aggressive parochialism suggests it has been instrumental in protecting human beings throughout their evolution. (Pagel 2012b)

Culture is the group-making mechanism that humans evolved for survival *in groups*. Göbekli Tepe is one of the earliest surviving representations of that mechanism; ‘polities’ are culture’s abstracted and formalized continuing form. When it comes to telling stories, Pagel’s notion of ‘aggressive parochialism’ is all too familiar in media studies as the ‘universal-adversarial’ stance in journalism. The ‘we’-group is taken to be *universal*: it includes everyone in the deme; and all

⁴³ Text at: www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/05/01/iraq/main551946.shtml. Isaiah’s Jewish ‘captives’ were held by the Assyrian king Sennacherib. The next king of Assyria but one was Ashurbanipal, so the link to Gilgamesh is not far-fetched: Gilgamesh’s story and Ashurbanipal’s deme were Isaiah’s ‘Bad Neighbours’ (Chapter 4: Malvoisine).

⁴⁴ See *Wikipedia*: The Sun (Gotcha).

⁴⁵ See also a useful review of Pagel 2012a here: www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/wired-for-culture-the-natural-history-of-human-cooperation-by-mark-pagel-7573966.html.

knowledge is available to it. ‘They’-groups are taken to be *adversarial*: enemy, threat, deviant, dissident or deranged (see also Greene 2013).⁴⁶

Hartley (1992a, 1992b) found that ‘universal-adversarialism’ is a chief characteristic of modern journalism. ‘We’ (say, Americans, following imperial habits), represent all humans; ‘they’ (others; the othered) are out to get us. There is, it follows, no better way to express who ‘we’ are than in what Charles Bean called ‘the supreme test for fitness to exist’: *warfare*. This structural characteristic of stories about cultural identity permeates many types of discourse across many domains of life. It is not confined to actual wars or international politics, but crops up wherever what Thorstein Veblen once called ‘invidious comparison’ is called for. In short, we’re not just ‘wired for culture’, as Pagel puts it, but our stories are ‘wired’ for universal-adversarialism. Among others, news stories follow that formula.

Storytelling can be characterized as a carrier of information codes. Stories are designed for imitation, copying, sharing and emulation. They are a distribution mechanism for *how* to think (inductive reasoning; pattern recognition) and *what* to think. They store lessons, allowing social learning to cross generational, language and geospatial boundaries, reproducing the sequence of inductive logic that teaches a deme not only what to fear but what to do about it: how to outwit duplicitous adversaries, how to test unknown characters for truthfulness, how to signal prowess to enemies and lovers, how to behave courageously, and so on. Culture is the ‘survival vehicle’ for groups (demes); stories are the survival vehicle for culture. Stories like *The Epic of Gilgamesh* reflect archetypally on personal fear of death. The plot brings a realization of death’s inevitability for the hero, but hope for reproduction through family, followers and ‘our’ strong city. Individuals may die, but their actions benefit the group, which thereby survives. So it was too with ‘Mission Accomplished’. President Bush said: ‘Those we lost were last seen on duty. Their final act on this earth was to fight a great evil, and bring liberty to others.’ The dead made us free; so the story goes.

Culture and stories are mechanisms for transmitting cooperation and social learning (Thomas and Seely Brown 2011), and for developing externalized forms of shared knowledge (e.g. language, customs, institutions, technologies, tools etc.) that help to promote the survival of the group across time and place, even against the interests of individuals within the group, who die for unrelated genes, as it were. Cooperation overcomes ‘selfish’ genes (Dawkins 1976) by casting

⁴⁶ Note that the name given to many pre-modern nations, for example, Noongar (Western Australia) is simply their word for ‘human being’ (universal we). Conversely, many languages use pejorative terms for outsiders (adversarial they). Thus, all non-ancient Greeks were ‘barbarians’. The Hebrew for ‘opposite, adversary, accuser’ is ‘*satan*’. The name ‘Wales’ is derived from the Norman-French word for ‘foreigner’ (they), whereas Welsh speakers name themselves the Cymry (‘compatriots’) (we).

members of the same tribe or deme as ‘honorary relatives’ (Pagel 2012), who look out for other members of the group, even though no genes are shared between them, and who, through acts of ‘costly signalling’, seek to impress strangers, even though they’ll never meet them (Miller 2009; Gintis and Bowles 2011).

This is how cooperative trustworthiness is *tested*, allowing onlookers to judge what a given claim has cost the speaker; hard-won experience scoring higher than braggadocio, and it explains why *truth*, *trust*, *troth* and *truce* have the same etymological roots (Hartley 1992b: 48). In this sense, all storytelling is political, constituting the ‘we’-community, seeking to create polities of trust, to expound the costs of cooperation for characters and deliver its symbolic rewards (Boyd 2009). Culture demands high levels of altruism towards the group and high levels of trust for insiders. Concomitantly, it instils distrust for outsiders or strangers. In contemporary news media, universal-adversarial journalism creates a ‘they’ identity, not only for direct enemies (monsters) but also for Tricksters (Hyde 2008), who may be masquerading as ‘honorary relatives’ to gain advantage of our deme’s knowledge systems and information codes – to steal our semiotic cattle. On the other hand, we love stories where *our* Trickster steals *their* cattle! (Hartley 2012: ch. 9) Evolved mechanisms to counteract knowledge-theft may include *different languages* (the ‘tower of Babel’), an early form of intellectual property protection, perhaps; and secret, arcane, cabbalistic or hermeneutic knowledge, including secret men’s and women’s business among indigenous demes. Modern nation-state genres of we/they exclusionary tactics include the differentiation of ‘our’ publicity from ‘their’ propaganda (Hartley 2006).

Scaling up

Storytelling seems to be universal among humans, but stories themselves have evolved only within specific ‘we’-communities, often quite small or tribal demes. It is only in the past century or so that communications media, economic development and social network markets have expanded sufficiently to reach global scale. With global media networks comes the possibility that the differentiation of ‘we’ from ‘they’ – friends, family and lovers from strangers and enemies – may not be so easy any more, as stories themselves become literally universal across our far-flung species. Movies, music and publishing all aspire to global audiences and readerships; stories do well that appeal across previously impermeable demographic boundaries (e.g. J. K. Rowling). ‘We’ identities become much more abstract and distributed across complex networks.

How has storytelling kept pace with these changes? The most important change is that informal ‘polities’ can now be self-created, using the long-tail

characteristics of large-scale social networks, where like-minded affinity or identity groups gather from among otherwise heterogeneous populations and communities of interest co-create their own political narrative, inaugurating an era of user-created citizenship.

When ‘we’ become ‘they’

With the emergence of global communication networks with billions of users, the universal-adversarial formula now gets in the way. How can trust for ‘we’ but fear of ‘they’ identities be shared across the community when that group begins to approximate to humanity as a whole? In mainstream politics, narratives are emerging where humanity is both ‘we’ and ‘they’ at once – stories about climate change and environmental sustainability, for instance, or those about ‘man’s inhumanity to man’ in war, displacement and refugee migration. Humanity at large is seen as the causal agent of those problems, and thus ‘our’ own adversary. We have literally become our own worst enemies. The monster our heroes must overcome is – ourselves. Human culture and technology seem to have evolved rather faster than human storytelling formats, so the universal-adversarial pattern no longer fits the facts. Demes are no longer ‘tribal’ or even nation-states. With contemporary digital media, we live in a semiosphere that is manifestly global and local at once. ‘Our’ deme may be organized around quite different rules of association among strangers than the ones that govern national citizenship.

Young Australasians camping out on the hills surrounding Anzac Cove are associating themselves with a political narrative of national origins, but they are also members of many other networks, complexly interconnected and of global extent, intensely meaningful for those involved but not necessarily shared by the people in the next tent, such that the distinction between ‘we’ and ‘they’ is as meaningless as a distinction between Australasian and Turkish graves on the peninsula, or between heroes and postmen.⁴⁷

However, there seem to be no digital stories about this form of consciousness; only dutiful prayers to the ancestors, following a script written generations ago by war correspondents. So maybe digital storytelling isn’t as radical and progressive as its commitment to self-expression for the ordinary person seems to suggest. Perhaps it needs to copy more forward-facing models; Tavi Gevinson, perhaps.

⁴⁷ See Atatürk’s words about this when he visited Gallipoli in 1934 as President of Turkey: www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/ataturk.asp.

Digital storytelling activists need to be open to opportunities. Trying to avoid the pitfalls of mainstream and commercial media does not exempt any 'alternative' from the need to use scaled-up communicative systems. 'We' need new ways to organize, distribute and communicate new senses of virtual 'we' communities that are not founded on universal-adversarialism.

'The legacy of my father'

The 'big guns' are preparing, as we write, for the 2015 centenary of Gallipoli. Mainstream media are gearing up for World War I centenary. The BBC – largest public service broadcaster in the world – is also *deming up* with Rupert Murdoch, its most adversarial commercial competitor, in an alliance of opposites. That there is no love lost between these titans of storytelling is well known. However, the 'star' of 'one of the most important programmes' in the BBC's coverage of the centenary of World War I has been announced: Rupert Murdoch himself, who is being interviewed for a BBC film that will 'tell the tragedy of Gallipoli'. *The Independent* had the story:

In an hour-long interview with the BBC, conducted at the New York headquarters of his global business News Corp, the media mogul has talked of his pride in his late father's actions and how they inspired him to begin a career in newspapers. . . . He said he was anxious to keep the memory of his father's achievements alive. 'I have always kept in mind very much the, if you like, legacy of my father and the influence he had on me and I have his picture prominently on the wall of my study at home. We do feel – I feel – that's a family obligation'.⁴⁸

What was his father's legacy? According to this story, 'Keith Arthur Murdoch was a young Australian war correspondent who changed the direction of the war by exposing the 1915 Gallipoli campaign as a disaster'. The BBC's filmmaker, Denys Blakeway, told *The Independent* that 'the 60-minute film, due to be screened on BBC2 in 2015, "will hinge on Rupert Murdoch's father's action"'. Clearly, the narrative die is already cast. Rupert Murdoch's father 'changed the direction of the war', and *Gallipoli* (2015) will 'hinge' on his action. The BBC media release dutifully recycles this 'fact' as an axiom.

⁴⁸ This and related quotations from here: www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/bbc-unveils-the-star-of-its-first-world-war-anniversary-coverage--rupert-murdoch-8884028.html.

Murdoch himself already has form in this respect. He bankrolled Peter Weir's 1981 movie *Gallipoli* (starring Mel Gibson).⁴⁹ That film, to Weir's later 'regret', falsified the event for purposes of national (Australian) pride:

The charge at The Nek on August 7, 1915, which provides the film's climax, did take place but an Australian, rather than a British officer, ordered the final charge. The film gives the opposite impression, something Peter Weir has said he regrets. 'The implication was that we were Pom bashing' he told David Stratton . . .⁵⁰

Thus, through the heroics of Rupert Murdoch's father, Australians 'overcame the monster' – not the Turks but the 'Colonial Power' – and founded a nation based on white egalitarian mateship. The 'Minister for Veterans Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on the Centenary of ANZAC', speaking on behalf of the Australian government and people at the Dawn Service at Gallipoli in 2013, gave official credence to the legend:

Although it was so dreadful, it has become central to our nation's story. A hallmark in defining our nationhood and what we see as important in terms of mateship, service, sacrifice, courage and commitment.⁵¹

Australian mateship being what it is, Anzac Day is now sponsored by VB beer. Their 'Raise a Glass' campaign is fronted by retired army general Peter Cosgrove (future Governor General of Australia), who says: 'Wherever you are, whatever you're drinking, raise a glass to those who serve'. VB will even arrange for General Cosgrove, AC, MC, to phone you with a wake-up call for the Dawn Service, over whose centenary he will preside as head of state in 2015.⁵² This seems to be the political narrative that has already been marshalled to 'inspire a new generation to understand what happened', as the Director General of the BBC put it at the launch of the broadcaster's plans for the World War I centenary coverage.⁵³

⁴⁹ See: www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/ReadingRoom/film/dbase/2002/gallipoli2.htm, with details of Murdoch's funding (through Associated R&R).

⁵⁰ Paul Byrnes, at: <http://aso.gov.au/titles/features/gallipoli/notes/>.

⁵¹ Warren Snowdon speaking on 25 April 2013: www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/anzac-day/gallipoli-calamity-defined-a-nation-warren-snowdon-told-dawn-service-at-anzac-cove/story-e6frgdaf-1226629387147#sthash.fhqqgofS.dpuf.

⁵² <https://www.raiseaglass.com.au/>. And see: Pete Mitcham, aka Prof Pilsner (25 April 2013), 'Raise a glass – of scepticism', *Brewsnews*: www.brewsnews.com.au/2013/04/raise-a-glass-of-scepticism/. Wake-up call: www.victoriabitter.com.au/2013/04/this-anzac-day-theres-no-excuse/.

⁵³ www.radiotimes.com/news/2013-10-16/bbc-to-create-digital-cenotaph-for-ww1-anniversary-with-biggest-ever-broadcasting-season.

Digital stories to constitute a new polity

Finally we should return to digital storytelling. Can it do better than this? The *form* of digital storytelling has been well established, and its *purpose*, to open up the storytelling capabilities of digital media to everyone, remains laudable. But the *contents* of vernacular, unrehearsed stories unwittingly reproduce the political narrative that ‘constitutes the polity’ by mythologizing ‘our’ origins – unless conscious effort is made by digital storytelling activists and agencies to try something new. If a ‘new generation’ needs to be inspired to ‘understand what happened’, would it not be better to develop an alternative approach, based on the example of people from that generation, such as Tavi Gevinson, rather than relying on big-gun war correspondents and mythmakers like the Murdochs, Weir, Bean, Ashmead-Bartlett, Cosgrove and Carlton United Brewery – even the BBC. If we truly want to honour our granddads, and find new ways to constitute the globally networked polity, where foe-creation is self-destruction, we must find room for stories that do not go ‘over the top’, but, rather, we must understand how the very concept of ‘we’ is as much of a threat to ordinary people’s understanding, well-being and peace as any monster. As a Greek user called ‘eleni b’, on the photo-sharing site Pinterest, wisely noted (albeit, quoting literary evolutionist Jonathan Gottschall 2012):

The metaphor behind the Trojan Horse: The audience accepts the story because, for a human, a good story always seems like a gift. But the story is actually just a delivery system for the teller’s agenda. A story is a trick for sneaking a message into the fortified citadel of the human mind.⁵⁴

As the citizens of another legendary city in Turkey discovered, it’s always wise to beware of Greeks bearing gifts. Is there a Trojan Horse in the citadel of stories? The potential is there for digital media and social networks to democratize storytelling without universalizing adversarial ‘aggressive parochialism’; and non-professional people may learn to tell a wider range of stories than the few that dominate national politics, the movies, journalism and education. The hope is that ‘user-created citizenship’ will *revise* not *reproduce* our understanding of ‘who we are as a people’ (as British PM David Cameron said about World War I commemorations).⁵⁵ But the indications are not altogether

⁵⁴ See: www.pinterest.com/pin/254383078925276152/ and: www.fastcocreate.com/1680581/why-storytelling-is-the-ultimate-weapon.

⁵⁵ Quoted here: www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/jeremy-paxman-blasts-david-cameron-over-wwi-centenary-comments-8866630.html.

positive. Digital storytelling in the context of Gallipoli seems to have been captured by institutional agencies that use it to disseminate existing meanings, while the generative journalistic story goes unchallenged, even when aspects are known to be not true. Digital storytelling faces powerful competition from the pros,⁵⁶ so it needs to develop sharper self-consciousness about the importance of storytelling as a whole, and a sophisticated understanding of the generative role that narrative plays in constituting who 'we' are. Given that digital media and social networks have already made what constitutes 'our' deme more risky, complex, open, uncertain and multivalent than ever before, it is urgent for progressive innovations like the digital storytelling movement – and cultural theory – to catch up. We need a model for universal (i.e. global in scale and digitally networked) but non-adversarial storytelling (i.e. stories that don't indulge in foe-creation for self-expression). Can it be done? Let's give it a try!

⁵⁶ As well as allowing Keith Murdoch pride of place in the Gallipoli story, the BBC planned to do exactly what digital storytelling is good at: 'we will tell well-known stories from fresh perspectives and original stories so far untold'. (Adrian Van Klaveren, controller for the BBC's World War One Centenary): www.mirror.co.uk/tv/tv-news/rupert-murdoch-joins-bbc-digital-2459368.