

“Waltzing Matilda”: Early Evidence of Racism in Australian Society?

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Australia, an immigrant nation, has an unfortunate history of racism and ethnic oppression. It is generally believed that the origins of anti-“Germanic” sentiment in Australia can be traced back to the First World War. However, an analysis of early Australian literature, specifically “Waltzing Matilda” by Andrew Barton “Banjo” Paterson, may in fact paint a different picture. “Waltzing Matilda” is strewn with “Germanic” references as though Paterson had a different purpose in mind when writing the poem. This purpose may have been to demonstrate the social conditions around him: the anti-Germanic tendencies already present in Anglo-Australian society.

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Racism in Australia dates back to the earliest Western settlement of the continent. The earliest accounts declared Australia *terra nullius*, a nod to the early settlers’ stance that Aboriginal Australians were not considered people. More recently, there have been problems in Australia with racism directed towards Muslims and people of Arabic decent. Australian racism is not only ironic but also hypocritical because Australia is made up of immigrant families with various ethnic backgrounds, all of whom traveled from far and wide to seek a better life in Australia. Speak to any migrant family in Australia and one is bound to hear stories of suffering various forms of racism and oppression, either directly or by someone they know. Despite this, even to this day people of “Germanic” decent have been targeted in this manner, like many other ethnic groups. At no point in history was this worse than during the two world wars. It is often argued that the origins of this racism directed towards Germanic people can be traced back to the First World War and the pro-British sentiment that ran through the Anglo-Australian population at the time. The question is, however, are these the true origins? Can these racist sentiments be traced back to Germany and Britain’s declaration of war, or do the roots run deeper and further? “Waltzing Matilda,” the iconic depiction of early

Australian settlement, a “bush ballad” written by Andrew Barton “Banjo” Paterson (arguably Australia’s most famous and respected poet and author), perhaps provides some indication that 1914 was not the origin but rather a peak in a long history of hatred and discrimination. Were the images depicted in Paterson’s famous poem representations of the racist tendencies he saw in the society around him?

This article reassesses “Waltzing Matilda” from a new perspective, one of social commentary against racism. It provides a perspective on the feelings and thoughts in Australia at the time. Furthermore, it provides a glimpse of where the views of Australians towards people of Germanic descent and their place in settler society during the latter part of the nineteenth century came from. This analysis serves to shed new light on the origins of anti-Germanic feelings in Australia and to demonstrate that these feelings did not begin in the First World War. This retrospective is intended to help address the current issues of racism in Australia and help Australians better understand their own past. This is done by first providing a background on anti-Germanic sentiment in Australian history and current views of the poem “Waltzing Matilda.” This is followed by an analysis of the poem with the relevant historical and cultural aspects and realities of the last 150 years in mind.

Australia’s anti-Germanic sentiments

The term “Germanic” is used in this article because, although people of German origin did and do indeed suffer discrimination and racism in Australia, a number of other nationalities were also “corralled” into the same category. Other groups also bearing the brunt of such attacks included people of Austrian, Swiss, Scandinavian, Liechtensteiner, Luxembourger, and Dutch descent, among others. Involvement in and immigration to Australia by (non-English) people of Germanic origin and these other nationalities has a long history. It dates back to the earliest times of Australian settlement, a time when not only explorers and adventures ventured into the wide unknown land, but also regular settlers, farmers, and so on, all seeking new homes in Australia (Veit-Brause). Captain Arthur Phillip, who arrived with the first fleet in 1788, was half German. By the outbreak of the First World War, South Australia—one of the primary locations for “Germanic” settlement—had a strong community with Germanic origins. Areas like the Barossa Valley and Hahndorf still show ties to the population’s Germanic origins even today. The Germanic population in Australia was relatively large

historically, with settlers arriving in the 1830s and spreading to all regions of Australia. In fact, in the nineteenth century, German was the most widely spoken foreign language in Australia. This, coupled with positive views of the Germanic work ethic and industriousness, as well as the need for skills that German speakers brought in abundance, such as farming and winemaking, resulted in considerable migration. Many researchers and historians feel that before the First World War people of German descent enjoyed a generally good relationship with the predominantly Anglo-Australian communities (Lehmann; Stock 250). Such views are then often accompanied with the idea that this relationship changed with the outbreak of the First World War.

Veit-Brause (202) noted that German-Australian relations can be dated back to the latter half of the nineteenth century. At that time, the governments of New South Wales and Victoria were quite keen to invite German representatives to visit, entertaining them in the hopes of opening trade routes with the industrious country. Thus the question arises whether all the anti-Germanic sentiment simply appeared overnight with the outbreak of war, or if there had been signs of this tendency before. Veit-Brause (201) pointed out that during the latter half of the nineteenth century German colonial policy was in conflict with British policy. This would no doubt have created feelings of distrust and uneasiness among some sections of the predominantly British-descended Australian population. Furthermore, three major exhibitions in Australia in the latter half of the nineteenth century, to which Germany was invited, would have stirred up feelings of trade competitiveness among the pro-British elements in Australia. This, coupled with patriotic feelings among the British-Australian populace, may have created more anti-Germanic feelings. This supposition is supported by the unwillingness in some social circles to integrate Germanic settlers (Lehmann 24) and the 1905 Registration of Teachers and Schools Act. This act stipulated that schools that had once taught classes in German were forced to limit classes to after hours. This happened long before the outbreak of the First World War, and so it cannot be said that this was for national security purposes. Similarly, the 1905 act has also been seen as having been used to limit German cultural expression (Selleck 7). The act placed special obligations on schools and teachers to obtain registration in order to hold classes. Many German Lutheran schools were unable to acquire registration. These early feelings may have been contributing factors to what followed: the racism and hatred directed toward people with Germanic ancestry during the First World War. The atrocities enacted upon the Germanic population in Australia during the First World War are matters of public record, even

if little to nothing has been done to right the wrongs of former generations in Australia.

The outbreak of the war in 1914 saw Australia immediately pledge its support to “Britain’s war,” with the now-famous words of Australian Prime Minister Andrew Fisher, who offered to contribute all to “the last man and the last shilling.” This showed the Australian government’s inclinations from the outset. With the creation of the Australian Imperial Force to help the British, Australians flocked to volunteer to fight Austria-Hungary and Germany in a war that was not their own. At the same time, in 1914 the passage of the War Precautions Act 1914 allowed those imprisoned in the newly-established internment camps to be held without trial (Anon., “The Enemy at Home”).

The sinking of the *Lusitania* brought with it mass acts of anti-Germanic racism in Australia. Innocent Australians that just happened to have Germanic names or ancestries started being accused of being disloyal and treasonous. Even Australians with names that simply sounded Germanic were subjected to ridicule and abuse. Calls for internment, incarceration, or deportation began to arise (Selleck 4). Public sentiment at the time expressed the society’s racist tendencies, with calls to Anglicize Germanic names. Furthermore, any such person of Germanic origin was required to prove their loyalty (Anon., “no title a”; Anon., “no title b”).

People of Germanic (or perceived Germanic) ancestry and with Germanic-sounding names were subject to inspection, arrest, and/or “supervision” by authorities. Lutheran schools were closed in South Australia because Lutheranism was associated with Germanic people. In Victoria, children attending Lutheran schools were attacked and churches were burned down. The year 1915 also saw the creation of racist clubs around Australia, clubs such as the All-British League and the Anti-German League. These organizations took it upon themselves to demand the dismissal of any person of Germanic origins in positions of power or authority. “Germanic music” was banned, and names of foods that sounded too Germanic were changed. Towns throughout Australia with Germanic-sounding names were renamed to sound more British. Birdwood in South Australia is one such example. Birdwood’s original name was Blumberg—a name that to this day has still not been restored.

By 1916 the racism had progressed to a point where, as noted by Stock (254), it was ordered that English alone was to be used on the telephone. People with Germanic names, even if they had been born in Australia and were third-generation Australian or more, were losing their jobs, and being dismissed from clubs. The voting rights of people that were deemed to be descendants of “enemies” were suspended. In 1916

Australia’s Prime Minister Billy Hughes began a campaign of harassment, rumormongering, and persecution. The same year he set up the largest internment camp in Liverpool, New South Wales (Anon., “The Enemy at Home”). Atrocities in these “internment” camps are well reported in historical sources. Abuse, assaults, starvation, torture, and so on were not unheard of in many camps throughout Australia. Some of these camps have been compared to Nazi concentration camps. Anti-Germanic actions in Australia were so rampant that they even spread to surrounding countries. The Australian military would regularly arrest businessmen, traders, and sailors throughout Southeast Asia (Anon., “The Enemy at Home”). These “criminals” would then be transported to Australia and imprisoned in internment camps. All of this was despite the fact that the victims of these atrocities had never committed any act against the country that imprisoned them. To this day no recompense or even an apology has been made to the victims of these crimes.

These horrific acts and this racism did not end with the First World War. Austro-Hungarian citizens, Australians of Austrian ancestry, or those with British citizenship with Austrian ancestry received further insult to their injury following the end of the war. Mass deportations occurred within Australia following the war. These people were not deported to their home countries (or in the case of Austrian Australians allowed to remain in Australia); instead they were “repatriated” to Germany (Anon., “The Enemy at Home”). No regard was given to the fact that Austria is not Germany; to Australians they were all the same: the very definition of racism. This racism even extended to the Hungarian and Slavic Austrian internees, those with places of birth in the newly formed State of the Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs (later Yugoslavia) or Hungary. In Australia’s eyes, the “enemies” of Australia were one and the same, and the most tenuous links to the Germanic world were sufficient to warrant sending them to Germany.

These acts took place despite the fact that Australia declared war on the “German countries”, not the other way around. Australia declared war on Germany on August 4th, 1914, just one day after the British did. This act seemed reminiscent of a country expecting or welcoming war, as if they had finally found a reason to go to war against the Germanic people. On August 12th, Australia declared war on Austria-Hungary despite having even less justification than for the act of war directed against Germany. This declaration was never officially reciprocated; Austria-Hungary never declared war on Australia despite Australia’s involvement in the war in Europe. Moreover, during the First World War there was no direct conflict between Austro-Hungarian forces and Australian forces. Both played

a role in the Battle for Gaza, but not in a direct manner. Despite this, to this day the only people forbidden to march in ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) Day parades are descendants of “Germanic” soldiers; even people from other countries that were once directly at war with Australia are now permitted to march in ceremonies marking the ANZAC traditions. This therefore shows the enduring anti-Germanic tendencies in Australian society and culture.

Background to “Waltzing Matilda”

“Waltzing Matilda” belongs to a category of artistic expression known as “bush ballads.” These are poetic or musical expressions of folk stories or tales that depict life in the Australian outback (the bush), particularly during the colonial period. The themes are quintessentially Australian and include topics such as drought, floods, frontier life, or dealings with the Aboriginal Australians. They include numerous examples of local slang and idiomatic expressions. Often this literature contains political undertones or ideas of friendship and comradeship. They have become an important part of Australian society and culture, with the songs and poems being taught to children in school, used in sporting matches, and widely known by the majority of Australians.

Andrew “Banjo” Paterson is considered by many to be Australia’s greatest poet. He was also a journalist and author. Raised in New South Wales, he was the Australian-born son of an Australian mother and a Scottish immigrant father. Growing up on farms gave him an intimate knowledge of outback life. He also attended Sydney Grammar School and was thus also familiar with urban life. Eventually he became a war correspondent during the Second Boer War and during the Boxer Rebellion. He also served in the First World War as an ambulance driver in France. As an active member of the community wherever he lived, he would have become intimately familiar with society and culture around him.

Paterson wrote “Waltzing Matilda” in 1895 while staying at Dagworth Station (a cattle ranch) in Central West Queensland. This period in Australian history was one of hardship and turmoil. Australia, despite having been explored by the Dutch, French, Portuguese, and Spanish/Austrians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was settled by the British in the late eighteenth century. Initially Australia was intended as a penal colony, but this changed over time. The long travel time meant that resources from the motherland were scarce. The wild Australian outback was harsh and unforgiving, and so life for those that decided to live there

was also difficult. "Waltzing Matilda" describes a situation with a traveling worker (a "swagman") that decides to make camp by a coolabah tree (a type of eucalyptus) to make a cup of tea ("billy"). At this time, the swagman comes upon a sheep (a "jumbuck") that he decides capture and eat. When the owner, a wealthy landowner (a "squatter") discovers what the swagman has done, he calls three police officers ("troopers"). The swagman commits suicide by drowning himself in the local watering hole (a "billabong") rather than go to jail. His ghost then haunts the site.

Oh! there once was a swagman camped in the Billabong,
Under the shade of a Coolabah tree;
And he sang as he looked at his old billy boiling,
"Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me."

(Chorus)

Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda, my darling,
Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me?
Waltzing Matilda and leading a water-bag—
Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me?

Down came a jumbuck to drink at the water-hole,
Up jumped the swagman and grabbed him in glee;
And he sang as he put him away in his tucker-bag,
"You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me!"

(Chorus)

Down came the Squatter a-riding his thorough-bred;
Down came Policemen—one, two, and three.
"Whose is the jumbuck you've got in the tucker-bag?
You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me."

(Chorus)

But the swagman, he up and he jumped in the water-hole,
Drowning himself by the Coolabah tree;
And his ghost may be heard as it sings in the Billabong,
"Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me?"

Although the poem itself can be considered entertaining on the surface, it is the meaning behind the words that creates so much debate among historians and scholars. In 1903, the poem was published as sheet music and then in 1926 was recorded as a song. The song has since been performed by numerous Australian musicians and has become a symbol of Australian national pride and friendship. The modern role that "Waltzing Matilda"

plays in Australian life is very much that of patriotism and nationalism (West 127). It is played at sports matches, is used by the military, and to many it is more respected than the Australian national anthem. Perhaps because of this, there have been numerous attempts to have the Australian national anthem changed to “Waltzing Matilda” (Humphries and Lamont 1). However, there has been considerable debate as to the exact meaning behind “Waltzing Matilda,” and also Paterson’s intent for the poem. There is no single agreed-upon understanding of the poem. Peter Forrest suggests that the poem was a way for Paterson to flirt with his love interest Christina MacPherson. Other researchers (Anon., “The Australian Bush”) have stated that “Waltzing Matilda” is an introspective of Australian rural life, as was standard with bush ballads. It was a representation of what it was to be Australian: a battler, a wandering swagman.

Radic (39) suggests that the poem can be interpreted as

a powerful adjunct of the ANZAC legend, both as a precursor and a carrier of the same myth—the innocent male victim, at one with nature in Australia-the-beautiful, the independent man brought low by brutish authority defied.

This concept of the rejection of authority in “Waltzing Matilda” is similarly supported by a number of scholars. That said, there is, however, one generally agreed-upon origin of “Waltzing Matilda” for many contemporary scholars. This concept is that the poem is based on real-life events and a real person, Samuel Hoffmeister (O’Keeffe, *Waltzing Matilda*).

This concept is that “Waltzing Matilda” is a politicized account of an event that occurred in the final decade of the nineteenth century, during the shearers’ strike in Queensland. The Australian shearers’ strikes of 1891 were one of the first industrial disputes in Australian history. Conditions were poor in the sheep shearing sheds during the late nineteenth century. As the wool industry grew, so too did the wool industry union. At one point the union workers decided that union workers could not work with non-union workers. As a result, landowners began to replace union workers with cheaper alternatives, including low-cost Chinese labor. This outraged the unionists, who began to strike, which eventually led to violence and deaths. Two major outcomes arose from these strikes: the formation of the Australian Labor Party and the formation of the Immigration Restriction Act (the “White Australia Policy”).

During the strike, the military was called in to help quell the protestors. At the same time, however, a German-born unionist, Samuel Hoffmeister (nicknamed “Frenchy”), was reported to have committed suicide following a police chase. These events followed Hoffmeister’s participation in a raid on Dagworth Station (O’Keeffe, “The Shooting” 66) on September

2nd, 1894. A shearing shed was set alight and subsequently burned down by the protestors. This was a rather common occurrence during the shearers' strikes, so what made this event special? Following Hoffmeister's death, an investigation into his demise reported that it was a result of suicide (Anon., “The Death of Samuel Hoffmeister” 6). However, a number of witness testimonies were found to contradict this fact, and it has been suggested these may have been disregarded as part of a cover-up. This concept was later reinforced with the investigations in 2010 by Trevor Monti. This research indicated that Hoffmeister's death seemed to have more in common with a “gangland assassination” than with suicide (Anon., “Waltzing Matilda”). If this is in fact the case, then it presents interesting support for this article's arguments.

“Waltzing Matilda”: Indications of early racism and Paterson's social commentary

Rural life in Australia, especially in the latter half of the nineteenth century, was in no way an easy life. The hardships of the decades leading up to the end of the nineteenth century put extra strain on the already hard life in Australia. The terrible drought, trade and financial difficulties, and political tension around the globe all had impacts on life in Australia and especially rural life. The shearers' strikes in 1891 and 1894 were the culmination of years of simmering tension and hardships. Hoffmeister's involvement in the shearers' strikes is documented, and his role in Paterson's poem provides possible evidence for indications of early racism.

The events that transpired at Dagworth Station (the burning of the shed) can be seen as evidence of early anti-Germanic tendencies. As stated above, shed burning was a somewhat common occurrence during the period. The strikes saw numerous issues with attacks and attempts to prevent non-union workers from doing unionists' jobs. One such example occurred on August 26th. It was perhaps the most significant event in the shearers' strikes of 1894, the burning of the steamer *Rodney* (O'Keeffe, “The Shooting”). The steamer *Rodney* was attacked by three hundred to four hundred unionists when it was attempting to carry non-union workers to the wool sheds (ibid. 66). Bottles and stones were thrown; the steamer was boarded, doused in kerosene, and set alight (ibid. 65). There were a number of arrests, and the police protecting the steamer were armed, but no one lost their life. As such, the burning of the Dagworth wool shed alone, even at this point in Australia's history, was not an explanation of or justification for murder. Moreover, there is no definitive evidence that

Hoffmeister even committed the act or, if he did, that he was alone; this was mere speculation. Therefore, the question remains: what made this particular case special? Why was Hoffmeister the only one to die (or be killed)? One possible explanation could be his ethnicity.

Paterson's terminology also provides clues. The swagman's pack: why did Paterson decide to use the term "Matilda?" It was undoubtedly not a common term in Australia at the time. Could the answer lie in the origins of the word? The word "Matilda" originates in "Germanic"-speaking parts of the world. The term stems from the Middle High German word *mabthilda* 'mighty in battle.' During the 'Thirty Years' War, its meaning was applied to women accompanying soldiers into war. Later still it began to be applied to blankets or coats soldiers would use to keep warm at night; these were often carried on a soldier's back, like a swag (Pearce 22). Similarly, Paterson's use of the term "waltzing" was a curious choice. Again the term finds its origins in Germanic tradition and lands. It is derived from the phrase *auf der Waltz* or *auf der Waltz sein*, which is literally 'on the waltz' or 'waltzing' (Pearce 23). In many Germanic-speaking countries, young men, as part of their obligations in a craftsman apprenticeship, would undertake an experience-gaining journey for several years called *Wanderjahre* 'wandering years'. A person on this journey would be said to be *auf der Waltz*, plying their trade and gaining experience. The concept was that a man would travel the world seeking experience in his craft. The origin of the practice can be found in the medieval period. It was part of the lifestyles of the journeyman brotherhoods (*Schächte*). These journeymen were required to wear special uniforms (*Kluft*) and they would use a travel book (*Wanderbuch*) to record their journeys (Anon., "Funny Looking Hobos"). This was a necessary part of many craftsmen's lives because it was a required part of the process of becoming a master craftsman (*Spiegel*). Therefore, it would not be a stretch if Hoffmeister was in fact a journeyman (*Geselle* or *Wandergeselle*) on his global apprenticeship (*auf der Waltz*). As such, the use of the term "waltzing" could easily have been Paterson's attempt to demonstrate this, to make his readers aware of the links to Hoffmeister, and to educate them about the tragedy of his life and the injuries he suffered for being German. Further evidence of this can be seen through reference to the works of Henry Lawson (*Selected Stories*). There were numerous other terms used during this period of Australian history to denote a journeyman or wanderer, such as "humping your drum," "humping bluey," "jabbing trotters," "tea and sugar burgling," and so on. Moreover, there is one additional term Paterson could have chosen, one that would have given a true sense of the Australian bush, nationalism, and all that is quintessentially Australian, "being on the wal-

laby" (Lawson, *Selected Stories*). (A wallaby is an Australian marsupial, reminiscent of a small kangaroo). If this term also existed, why then did Paterson choose a word with a clear German origin? The answer is to demonstrate the link to Hoffmeister. This then creates more issues with the tale of suicide and violence from the perspective of Hoffmeister. In all historical literary accounts of journeymen (or swagmen), the journeyman was always depicted in romantic terms (peaceful, helpful, etc.). Works by Lawson (*Out Back*), John Shaw Neilson ("The Sundowner"), and Michael Massey Robinson are all evidence of this. The one exception to this notion is a work by Barbara Baynton, "The Chosen Vessel," which depicts journeymen as rapists and murderers. It should, however, be pointed out that Baynton apparently emphasized her English roots, and so the tension between England and Germany at the time no doubt would have influenced her writing. Therefore, could Hoffmeister have been Baynton's exception, or are Monti's findings further justified? In either case, there is clear evidence of Paterson's deliberate selection of terms in "Waltzing Matilda," and the terms' links to Hoffmeister. Given this, "Waltzing Matilda" can be interpreted as a social commentary on racism in society. Paterson, well known for his innuendo and social commentary, could have been using his work to inform his readers of the anti-Germanic sentiments around him, particularly among Australia's authorities, politicians, and government. This link can be discovered in the swagman's final acts and the authorities' role in his death.

It is known from Paterson's own works that he did not feel Australia had any obligations to defend Britain; moreover, he regularly expressed anti-imperialist feelings in his works. "El Mahdi to the Australian Troops," written in 1885, is one such example. Similarly, numerous works written about the Boer War, where Paterson was a war correspondent, can be seen as expressing anti-British sentiments, just like "Australia for Australians," a rejected work by Paterson. Likewise, in his 1886 poem "The Bushfire," Paterson was vocal in his opposition to British views on Ireland.

In light of this, Paterson's views on authority, the government, and the British imperialists, and the terminology he used paint a very interesting and vivid portrait of his views. The "jumbuck," for example, has been argued as being representative of Paterson's anti-British sentiments (Magoffin, *Fair Dinkum Matilda* 72). An example can again be seen in his poem "The Bushfire":

There's Welshman's Gully, Scotchman's Hill,
And Paddymelon Flat:
And all these places are renowned
For making jumbucks fat. (Paterson, "The Bushfire")

Here the term “jumbuck” has been seen as representative of the British imperialists and their use of Welsh, Scottish, and Irish labor to meet their own selfish needs. A similar allegory can be found in the use of the terms “squatter” and “troopers,” which Paterson often used to denote authority, perhaps specifically that of the British and pro-British (Magoffin, *Fair Dinkum Matilda*). As such, perhaps “Waltzing Matilda” could be interpreted as Paterson’s attempt to demonstrate the pro-British and anti-Germanic tendencies in Australia at the time, particularly among the government and politicians. Therefore, the carefully selected terms used in the line “Whose is that jumbuck you’ve got in your tucker bag?,” sometimes “Who’s the jolly jumbuck you’ve got in your tucker bag?” may have been done so for a reason. Could “Who is the ... jumbuck” be a deliberate usage to imply the influence of the British on Germanic life? Perhaps it could be viewed as Paterson’s anticipation of Australia’s involvement in the upcoming war.

Paterson also volunteered to join the First World War conflict in Europe very early on as a correspondent. Was this because of his firm belief that it was Australia’s duty to defend Mother Britain? Given his writings, it seems this was not the case. “Waltzing Matilda” was distributed to Australian soldiers in the First World War (West 127). Was this a means of self-promotion by Paterson or perhaps rather as a means to try to enlighten the Australian troops? Perhaps it served not only to stir the nationalist feelings within them but to help them think of what exactly they were fighting for: Britain, not Australia. Perhaps it was Paterson’s way of trying to show the troops the true motives behind Australia’s involvement in the war. The political nature of Paterson’s works is well known (Anon., “Waltzing Matilda”). Paterson may have hoped to show the Australian troops who the victims of British imperialism were, through the use of allegory and poetic allusion. Perhaps he hoped to demonstrate that the people they were fighting, the German people, were the true victims of British authoritarianism. Although it is generally reported that the ANZAC troops’ sentiments towards the poem were that of pride and nationalism, one cannot be certain this was Paterson’s sole intent. Paterson’s own interpretation of the components and meaning of his poem may have gone deeper than the feelings of the general population towards the song.

The final line of the poem “You’ll come a-waltzing Matilda with me” has been argued by some as being mystical or mysterious (West 129). It seems, at first glance, that it was the swagman’s final attempt at spite directed towards his would be arresters, but what if this can be interpreted in another manner? Paterson would have been well aware of the political tensions between Australia and Europe, between Great Britain and the

increasingly powerful Germany. Could this final line have been an attempt to indicate Paterson's own feelings towards the political situation between Germany and Britain, a warning of sorts? Perhaps it was a warning that if anyone tangled with the imperialists they would be "a-waltzing" to their grave, one way or another.

Paterson's personal life

The final possibilities are found in Paterson's personal life. First, Paterson's relationship with Henry Lawson is well known. Lawson was the son of the Norwegian immigrant Niels Hertzberg Larsen. Henry Lawson's father Niels decided on the day of Henry's birth to anglicize their surname to Lawson (Rutherford 13). To this day the question remains why he did this. Why did Niels Hertzberg Larsen wait until his son was born to change his name? Was he a victim of anti-Germanic sentiments from certain elements of Australian society? If so, he may have made this choice in order to help ensure his son the best possible chances in life and prevent him from being a target of similar attacks. Possible evidence of these experiences can be seen in Lawson's works. "The Drover's Wife" depicts the Australian outback as a dreary and grim place, very different from Paterson's depictions:

Bush all round—bush with no horizon, for the country is flat. No ranges in the distance. The bush consists of stunted, rotten native apple-trees. No undergrowth. Nothing to relieve the eye save the darker green of a few she-oaks which are sighing above the narrow, almost waterless creek. Nineteen miles to the nearest sign of civilization—a shanty on the main road. (Lawson, *The Drover's Wife*)

These could be manifestations of Lawson's less-than-perfect childhood, and thus also his views of life in rural Australia. If this is the case, then Paterson's relationship with Lawson may have resulted in Lawson recounting tales of his father's or his own experiences with the social tendencies and the racism they experienced.

Moreover, it has been argued (Magoffin, *Fair Dinkum Matilda*) that Paterson was more than just a mere commentator on the shearers' strikes. His visit to the site of Dagworth Station shortly after the events described has been held up as being proof of his involvement in the dispute. There is evidence to support the idea that Paterson was in fact acting as a mediator between the parties in an attempt to find a peaceful and mutually beneficial end to the situation (Magoffin, *The Matilda Myth*). Perhaps, however, it goes deeper than this. Could Paterson's visit and subsequent epic poem

about the event and Hoffmeister be evidence of a personal relationship? Perhaps Paterson knew Hoffmeister, and “Waltzing Matilda” is not just a historical commentary, but also a memorial to his friend and an attempt to reveal the crimes of those involved in his death (the crimes of murder and racism). The very select terminology Paterson used in his poem, the motifs, and the characters, coupled with indications from his other works, “The Bushfire” and “El Mahdi to the Australian Troops,” are possible evidence of this fact. Paterson was personally affected by these events, and as such perhaps his depiction of them was his homage to a friend and a social commentary on the racism around him.

It should be pointed out that, without being able to talk with Paterson directly, some points are simply impossible to prove beyond doubt. Nevertheless, taking all the probabilities into account, the evidence would seem to support this article’s conclusions that this is a feasible interpretation—and clearly one that not everyone will agree with. One final point is that this research is absolutely not accusing Paterson himself of being anti-Germanic, but rather suggesting that he was aware of these tendencies on the increase in the society around him.

Conclusion

Racism in Australia has been a problem since the very beginnings of British settlement; this is an unfortunate reality that persists to this day. It is often thought that anti-Germanic sentiment in Australia was the result of Austria-Hungary and Germany’s roles in the two world wars. There seems to be ample evidence that this is not the case. Anti-Germanic sentiments existed long before the events of the two world wars. Paterson, a writer well known for his political and social commentary, seems to have clearly used “Waltzing Matilda” to portray more than just the “Aussie” spirit. The terminology used by Paterson, his intimations, the Germanic references, and the unmistakable ties to Hoffmeister all seem to point to Paterson’s attempts to outline the elements of anti-Germanic tendencies in Australian society.

Tensions between Britain and the “Germanic”-speaking countries were high during the latter half of the nineteenth century. As a British colony, Australia had a large Anglo population with close ties to the motherland; this had an impact on relations between Anglo-Australians and non-Anglo-Australians. This was often manifested in the form of racism and discrimination, especially against those of Germanic ancestry. Paterson not only saw this, but, given his strong opposition to English imperialism, no

doubt he wanted to express the injustices he saw around him, and perhaps his work could be seen as a portent of things to come.

"Waltzing Matilda," a pivotal work in Australian history, demonstrates early signs of Australia's actions towards the Germanic people. Perhaps with this knowledge, the discrimination that still exists to this day may be rectified. Perhaps people with Germanic ancestry in Australia will obtain both closure and acceptance into Australian life more freely.¹

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»Waltzing Matilda«: zgodnji dokaz rasizma v avstralski družbi?

Ključne besede: avstralska književnost / etnična diskriminacija / rasizem / kolonializem / Nemci / odnos do Nemcev / antigermanstvo / Paterson, Banjo

Avstralija je že vse od časa prvih naselbin dežela migrantov. Ljudje so se tja preselili z vsega sveta, da bi si ustvarili novo življenje. Kljub temu pa je nesrečna stvarnost Avstralije povezana z rasizmom, ki je bil v njej prisoten skozi vso zgodovino in je tam zasidran še danes. Predmet rasističnih teženj v Avstraliji so bili ljudje različnih narodnosti, zadnje čase pa so te težnje usmerjene proti ljudem muslimanske vere in arabskega porekla. Vse do danes so bili in so še diskriminaciji izpostavljeni tudi ljudje germanskega porekla. Zdi se, da so antigermanske težnje vzklicale med prvo svetovno vojno ter znova dosegle višek med drugo svetovno vojno. Za antigermansko diskriminacijo v Avstraliji kot tako so posledično pogosto okrivljene žrtve diskriminacije, v tem primeru ljudje germanskega porekla. Številni Avstralci so krivdo za svetovni vojni pripisovali njim, četudi je šlo za tretje generacije germanskih priseljencev, rojene v Avstraliji. Kljub temu obstajajo dokazi, ki podpirajo stališče, da je bila ta diskriminacija v resnici verjetno prisotna že pred obema svetovnjima vojnoma.

V zgodnji avstralski literaturi najdemo dokaze v obliki podob in jezika, ki nakazujejo antigermanske težnje v širši avstralski družbi 19. stoletja. Ena izmed ikon avstralske kulture in literature je pesem »Waltzing Matilda« avtorja Andrewa Bartona »Banja« Patersona. Ta pesem opisuje tavajočega delavca, ki pride navzkriž z zakonom in ki ga »esteblišment« zatira, zato na koncu stori samomor, da bi se izognil nečemu, kar bi lahko opisali kot nepravična kazen. Paterson v pesmi

uporablja zelo specifične izraze, ki jih takratno ljudstvo večinoma ni uporabljalo, in terminologijo z jasnimi germanskimi podtoni, za katero se zdi, da je orisala sliko tistega, kar je pesnik videl v družbi okrog sebe. Te prizore in izrazje lahko razlagamo kot Patersonov poskus, da bi orisal antigermanske težnje, ki jih je takrat opazil v avstralski družbi. Cilj razprave je predstaviti novo interpretacijo pesmi »Waltzing Matilda« in hkrati pokazati, da so bile antigermanske težnje v delu avstralske družbe prisotne že dolgo pred prvo svetovno vojno. Nastala je v upanju, da bo osvestila bralce o antigermanskih težnjah v avstralski zgodovini in s tem tudi naslovila težave, povezane z rasizmom v Avstraliji.