Hardy did make anti-Semitic comments and jokes but he also had close Jewish friends. They were upset by the jokes, but did not doubt the sincerity of his friendship. Countering the comments of Easdown, Armstrong shows that Hardy’s achievements were just as significant as his shortcomings. His support of the Gurindji, involvement in the anti-Vietnam War protests and partnership with Fred Hollows in fighting eye disease amongst the poor are just three of many progressive causes in which Hardy’s contribution was most commendable.

There is the occasional blooper: ‘One needed to be wary of reading as “fact” certain aspects of Hardy’s autobiographical fiction’ (xvii). Indeed! The sources of some very interesting quotations on page thirty are not supplied. Finally, it is understandable that the author relied upon newspaper reports of the proceedings in the committal hearing, but the Supreme Court is a court of record and this account should have been used in the discussion of the trial itself.

Armstrong’s book is a detailed, balanced, sensitive and fluently written reflection on the power of an idea. Over time this idea became a novel, a court case and major political controversy, a television series, and ultimately a part of Australia’s social, political, legal and literary heritage. The author has extended the boundaries of our knowledge of Hardy and his novel whilst acknowledging that these can never be broken completely: ‘It is unlikely that any one person, including the author himself, was aware of every link in the chain of events that brought the novel into being’ (p. 72). In its conception and execution, this novel was a massive collaborative undertaking which was all the more impressive given the prevailing personal and political tensions. The qualities of this book are as great as the debates and arguments it will ignite.

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The story of Australian soldiers in the Great War has always enjoyed popular appeal. Two of the key texts underpinning this popularity, C. E. W. Bean’s multi-volume Official History and Bill Gammage’s The Broken Years, continue to mould popular attitudes to this subject. Any wide-ranging study of private records of Australians in this war, then, offers a good opportunity to re-assess both Bean and Gammage’s
modes of framing and explaining Australian soldiers’ experiences. Greg Kerr’s *Private Wars*, however, offers little significantly different, despite presenting a commendable range of private records and photographs from both institutional and private holdings. *Private Wars*, does, however, raise again some of the seminal questions of the relationship between popular and academic history that continue to pervade this field.

*Private Wars* is a book concerned as much with image as with text, and Kerr relies heavily on humanising the war experience as the key motif of these two elements. Each chapter provides a basic narrative of events, interspersed with observations of Kerr’s subjects, and is followed by a series of associated photographs, these accompanied by text almost as extensive as the narrative. The separation of text and image tends to create two books, where fewer photographs more immediately linked with the narrative and its personal stories may have been more effective. Letters, diaries and photographs, Kerr suggests, convey ‘a spark of emotion, an immediacy or a totality that cannot be measured for authenticity except by the experience of combat itself’ (p. 3). Photographs ‘are seen not to lie’, despite the subjectivity of the cameraman (p. 16). The effect of these assumptions is to receive these accounts somewhat uncritically into the canons of popular Australian war history, such that they become something of a social supplement to the popular story. While the material is new, the story and its implications remain conventional.

Kerr is aware of the popular and academic audiences that this material can attract, and tries, rather unsuccessfully, to have a foot in each camp. While academics have questioned those very public beliefs that sustain the myths of Anzac, popular historians have tended to embrace the same as a way of acknowledging those who bequeathed a national legacy. Though Kerr hopes in *Private Wars* to ‘have trod some new ground among the heavily ploughed fields of Australian military history’ (p. 3), he is much more comfortable writing within the established liturgy of the Anzacs, to the extent that he re-asserts more traditional explanations for enlistment, against those being ‘revised, dismantled and reassembled by minds bordered by the logic of 20-20 hindsight’ (p. 9). Kerr does recognise that a mythology exists about the Anzacs. Much of the content of letters and diaries, he tells us, ‘runs contrary to the stuff of myth’ (p. 1), and this mythology ‘has been popularly and, in some cases, erroneously accepted as being true to the diggers of World War I’ (p. 3). Yet Kerr barely explores the nature of these myths, nor even identifies their characteristics. Rather, he offers examples of a particular ‘Anzac way’, drawing an Anzac lineage through to contemporary Australian society (pp. 8-9). The examples are not new, nor his approach unique, predicated as it seems to be on asserting ‘Australia’s Anzac heritage’ (p. 246).

Kerr does offer a moderated line to some extent, however, suggesting that ‘it is debatable whether [Australians] were any tougher, more skilful or braver than the New Zealanders or the Scots, or whether they were imbued with any more singularly
distinguishing features than the British’ (p. 163). Yet this stands in the shadow of more conventional claims that ‘they were elevated by an extraordinary hour [at Gallipoli], and proved their mettle in the crucible of fire that it seems each young nation must brave’ (p. 9). Kerr also happily fuels the antagonism between Australia and Britain, particularly relating to the ‘self-important British Officer’, and bungling high command. More significantly, in a description of the Australian as letter writer, Kerr conflates all types of Australian soldiers into one who ‘made a rough kind of poet’ (pp. 14-15). This kind of approach diminishes the opportunities to reveal the diversity of responses to the war, as evidenced by personal records, and propagates the mythologies to which Kerr refers, but is loathe to interrogate.

As an opportunity to gauge the state of popular and academic histories of Australian soldiers in the Great War, Private Wars at times evinces some moderation of popular notions, but is too concerned not to be critical of the myths that sustain them. As a result these myths remain largely anonymous in detail, as Kerr makes gestures towards a critical analysis. Private Wars, one suspects, will leave the two camps no less antagonistic or suspicious of one another, though it perhaps represents some thawing of relations in a field difficult to negotiate.

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The Australia Gallery, at the Melbourne Museum, Carlton Gardens, Carlton. Open 10am- 6pm daily except Christmas Day and Good Friday. Admission $15 adult; $11 concession; child $8; and family $35.

The Australia Gallery, which opened on 20 October 2000 as part of Stage One of the Melbourne Museum development, seeks to recount the experience of indigenous and non-indigenous people in Melbourne and Victoria since European settlement. This kind of representation of history in Australian museums is a relatively new phenomenon. Until fairly recently, museums have largely concentrated on either natural history or science and technology, ignoring the histories of ordinary Australians. Hence, the incorporation of a permanent Australian history gallery into the new museum development is an important innovation.

This review focuses on two exhibitions: ‘Windows on Victoria’ and ‘Melbourne– Stories from a City’. The second of these is a traditional exhibition, displaying objects, including a collection of coins and medals, in glass cases captioned