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“Lemnos: This Little Piece of Earth”<sup>1</sup>

Moments of Peace away from Battle 1915/16:

Australia’s War-Time Experience of an Aegean Arcadia

“Even rumours of war fail to penetrate this Aegean elisium [Elysium]” (Monash 23.9.1915, in: Niall and Thompson, eds., 158). Lemnos: Island of war or icon of peace? This article will focus on various representations created by Australians like General John Monash who stayed on the island of Lemnos during the Gallipoli campaign 1915/1916.

The military story of Australia’s relation to Lemnos has been told by eye-witnesses, historians, and novelists. However, most writing does not give attention to Lemnos as a space of cultural contacts or subject of reflection. Historians are interested in the question of how peace, within times of war, is represented in intercultural contexts, across international borders, and during different historical periods. Interdisciplinary research is not limited to the experience of war on the battlefield. It also focuses on peaceful places and interim periods of peace – locations and time periods beyond the trenches (Gibson and Mollan 3-4).<sup>2</sup> Scholarship has recently pointed to “a lack of sufficient engagement with issues of [social] representation” of peace (6). The critique is part of a discussion about the question of how representations of “peace and conflict have intersected in recent years” (4). Meanwhile, this has led to the establishment of an important field of research which examines “the notion of *cultures of peace*” in times of war (4). I will follow this discussion: This essay explores the function and perception of Lemnos as a time capsule –

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<sup>1</sup> This title is a quote taken from Cpl. Ivor Alexander Williams, *Diary of My Trip Abroad 1915-19*, 3.1.1916. The author of this essay gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Professor Jan E. Bender (Portland, Oregon) who commented upon an earlier version of the article.

<sup>2</sup> I will refer to Gibson and Mollan’s definition of peace “which simply involves the absence of direct violence”; labelled as “negative peace”.

a place beyond the battlefields of Gallipoli which provided a space of recovery and contemplation within World War I.

The island of Lemnos was the main transit harbour for the Gallipoli landings of the Allied Forces during the Dardanelles Campaign. An expanded view at “the impact of war on the iconography and organization of cultural space” in close proximity to battlefields such as Gallipoli deserves consideration, according to a group of interdisciplinary researchers (Baraban et al. 13). Moreover, the story of Greek-Australian encounters in the twentieth century cannot be written without referring to the island of Lemnos as an area for transcultural contacts (Percopo 100). During the Dardanelles Campaign, nearly 60,000 soldiers of the ANZAC Mediterranean Expeditionary Force passed through the military waters close to the harbour at Lemnos (Sweet 2013). Although the majority of the Australians stayed on board their transit ships, many were allowed to visit the island (Lemnos Gallipoli Commemorative Committee). These visitors from overseas entered an ancient space of intercultural contact. For a short period of time, Lemnos developed into a meeting place where Greek Orthodox islanders and their Turkish neighbours came together with a young generation of Australian men and women. Wartime Lemnos provided flexible approaches to foreign perceptions of an Aegean island – recorded in diaries and photographs left behind by many Australians who neither would have had the wealth nor the opportunity to travel in times of peace at the turn of the last century.

## **Introduction**

This article focuses on the island of Lemnos as a subject of metaphorical interpretation. It also draws attention to a group of Australians who discovered an island of tranquillity during times of war: Australia’s military personnel who took part in the Gallipoli campaign had different social and educational backgrounds. These men and women created a kaleidoscope of impressions which may verify the hypothesis that the experience of war does not always turn into images of violence. In other words, wartime narrative and

wartime photography is not necessarily limited to images of destruction, death or suffering. Soldiers, nurses or war artists always did take up pen or camera to document what they saw. Also the touristic places beyond the battlefields were of interest to Australian military personnel. A large number of photographic albums and diaries recorded their deployments in Egypt or France during World War I. But in the exemplary case of Lemnos it is the moment of peace away from battle which makes its documentation special. In this context, the following question begs to be answered: Did the Australian wartime experience on the ancient island of Lemnos reflect any traditional perceptions of a timeless Arcadia or Elysium? My essay will show that the perception of peace in times of war was an aesthetic experience already discernible in the classical reading of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and his doctrine of the *transcendental aesthetic* (Kant 65-73). I will argue that the *sensibility* to see Lemnos as it was, beautiful, even though it was not unaffected by war's ugly side, is a parameter for the appreciation of human life.

However, such theoretical approach must take the contemporary philosophical debate about the nature of aesthetic experience into account (Carroll). American philosopher and art critic Noël Carroll, for example, identifies "aesthetic experience as a matter of valuing", and by doing so emphasizes the emotional context of "a certain state of mind" as an important factor which determines the character of the aesthetic experience (165). The experience of war has an impact on the human state of mind as it is a traumatic event which causes physical and emotional pain. "Alongside physical suffering there was the inevitable problem of psychological trauma", the Dutch medical historian Leo van Bergen has written (205). He points to the fact that "numbness" which he diagnoses as a typical psychological war injury "could tip over into inhumanity and a complete lack of respect for human life" (215). This psychological injury (= *wound*) had already been paraphrased by Sophocles in his adaptation of the story of *Philoctetes* (409 B.C.) on Lemnos (Sophocles, *Philoctetes*). Historian Rhona Justice-Malloy argues that Sophocles' play *Philoctetes* is more accessible to modern performers

and spectators when we understand David B. Morris' cultural concept of "tragic pain" (Morris 244-266) as "a mediation on human pain and suffering" (Justice-Malloy 2). Justice-Malloy understands Sophocles as "an acute observer of the psychology of soldiers" (1) who, in the character of *Philoctetes*, described the warrior's psychic pain, "once [in the aftermath of WW I] known as shellshock, today known as combat Post Traumatic Stress Disorder" (2). Many of the Australian soldiers, especially those who stayed at the Australian Field Hospital were *in this certain state of mind* when they were transported to Lemnos. The convalescents had not expected to find nearly untouched villages, archaic landscape and lifestyle at places located so close to actions of war. This collective experience created the first 'popular' image of a Greek island in Australia. For most Australians the encounter with an ancient island culture during wartime was an ambivalent experience as they were confronted with sharp contrasts of events, symbols and metaphors: war and peace, ugliness and beauty, barbarism and humanity, darkness and light. These clashes between myth and reality, past and present, imagination and perception induced war correspondents, ordinary servicemen and women to reflect on the simple meaning of life. Their records reflect the encounter of "art and healing that lies at the heart of the [Philoctetes'] legend", according to Patricia Novillo-Corvalán (129) who does research work on the interface between art and medicine:

The story of Philoctetes reflects on the relationship between illness, storytelling, and healing, thus offering an ancient myth that shares the major concerns of the rising genre of narrative medicine. (130)

In 1915, diaries, letters and photographs reflected the healing effects of a space of recovery.

### **Between Myth and Reality: Lemnos – A Space of Sacred Time<sup>3</sup>**

From the beginning, the myth of the Greek hero Philoctetes and his imposed exile on the island of Lemnos inspired writers and visual artists to adapt the ancient legend.<sup>4</sup> Sophocles refers to it in his play when he tells the story of the wounded Philoctetes who was abandoned at the shore of “sea-washed Lemnos” (Sophocles, *Philoctetes*, Line 1). Philoctetes was a well-known warrior in the Trojan War and, according to Greek mythology, he was the son of King Poias in Thessaly. He owned Heracles’ bow and poisoned arrows (Homer, *Odyssee 3*, 190). The legend says that the Greeks left him stranded on Lemnos with a terrible wound which he had received before. The juxtaposition of myth and reality has a significant impact on the perception of the Aegean island, even nowadays: the Australian author Thomas Keneally refers to the ambivalent character of the island when he describes the visit of his novel’s protagonists to this refuge: “They could see Lemnos – by now reduced from myth to the level of any other dreary island” (130). Keneally draws on myth and reality to guide the view of the visitor when he approaches Lemnos and its culture. The events of World War I brought visitors from Australia to Lemnos who soon added their own imaginations.

Lemnos’ reputation as a mythological place suggests perceptions of the Aegean island which go beyond simple description. Norman Austin’s brilliant analysis of Sophocles’ *Philoctetes* offers an illuminating approach that enables us to reflect on Lemnos as a metaphorical site which contains the ambivalence of life – by referring to elements of myth and reality. Philoctetes’ ten years on the island were a time of pain, uncertainty and darkness – in a “divine timetable” (Austin 12). According to Austin’s translation of Sophocles’ play, accident and chance had no place in the cosmology

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<sup>3</sup> I refer to Norman Austin’s (10) interpretation of Philoctetes’ legendary stay on Lemnos which he translates as “living in sacred time”.

<sup>4</sup> It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss adaptations of *Philoctetes* in the context of literature and art. For problems of translation: Austin (7-16).

of the ancient thinker: "Philoctetes on Lemnos was living in sacred time" (10). His stay was imposed by a divine will.

Greece's mythological Troy and First World War's Gallipoli can be linked by interpretation: On Lemnos, ancient and modern age warriors had a rest between battles. Did the Australians perceive "the conjunction of human time and sacred time" (Austin 10) as part of the Lemnian legend? Certainly, the majority of the Australians did not know much at first about the island in the North Aegean Sea. They were soldiers and tourists at the same time. Those without school education shaped by classical lessons soon learned that Lemnos' history, culture, and demography reflected changing periods of Greek and Ottoman influence. Greeks and Turks had to live together on the island for a long time with changing rules. Not until 1912, after a long period of Ottoman rule over the island, did Lemnos become part of Greece. Did the Australian visitor notice that the Greek and Turkish populations of Lemnos had established a fragile social microcosm with resentments lingering on both sides? From the outside, Australia's view focussed on the political and military development in the hemisphere during World War I. The government of Greece had offered Lemnos as a navy base to the Allies to facilitate their military operations in the Dardanelles. The British Mediterranean Expeditionary Force had been charged with preparing the harbour at Moudros as a military support base for Gallipoli. Here, with the help of the islanders, the Australians established a recovery camp, a medical centre and a war cemetery.

In 1915, Lemnos was a place of refuge and one of the Aegean islands where Australian soldiers were taken after they had been wounded or had failed on the battlefields of Gallipoli.<sup>5</sup> Soldiers came for recovery or retraining. Nurses cared for the wounded, but many died of their injuries. This gave the Australian experience of Lemnos also an emotional dimension which had an influence on the later perception of the island and of the region: "There are three islands here', soldiers said, 'Lemnos, Imbros and Chaos'" (Rankin 63).

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<sup>5</sup> Writer Luke Slattery estimates that "some 4000 Diggers returned to convalesces on Lemnos and, oftentimes, to die".

Especially the paramedics complained about the destitute and dreary conditions of their work on Lemnos during the Gallipoli campaign. Thousands of wounded and sick Allies had been brought to the field (and ship) hospitals on Lemnos where British, Canadian and Australian paramedics cared for them. The nurses of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian General Hospital faced severe problems, especially at the beginning of the campaign<sup>6</sup>: They coped with short supply of food and housing, "The weather is terrible, bitterly cold, with a high wind and rain. We are nearly frozen, [...]. Last night five tents blew down, one ward tent and four Sister's tents" (Donnell 58). The Australians on Lemnos produced a large collection of testimonials preserved in the *Australian War Memorial* in Canberra. Diary notes and photographs were part of the documentation illustrating the difficult supply situation on the island where depots, hospitals and rest camps were needed to support the land campaign of the Allies. However, this documentation also shows another aspect of their stay on Lemnos: the cultural experience in the encounter between the people of Lemnos and the Australians.

Why did the Australian experience on Lemnos create such an amazing record? One reason certainly was the desire to communicate emotions in a suitable form. Words communicate feelings in a different way than pictures (Butler 69-70). Moreover, people cope with joy, sadness or the antagonism of their situation differently. The state of mind has a significant impact on their expression.<sup>7</sup> French philosopher Roland Barthes (1915-1980) revealed his "uneasiness" to be "torn between two languages, one expressive, the other critical" when describing the antagonism of life (Barthes 8). The distinct use of these *languages* as well as the focus on particular features has a significant impact on the aesthetic perception of life – especially in times of war. The Australian art

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<sup>6</sup> For more information see webpage: The "3<sup>rd</sup> Australian General Hospital, Lemnos Island, Greece", 1915.

<sup>7</sup> It may be a well-known historical fact that Sofia Tolstoy (1844-1919), the wife of the Russian writer, herself a talented author and photographer, had a clearly defined position with regard to this issue. She made use of her diary or camera in distinct ways. "If something saddened her she wrote a note into her diary. However, if she was happy then she used to take pictures" (Slátto 14).

historian Ann Elias finds that “describing the beauty of natural surroundings enabled soldiers to invoke feelings they could not otherwise articulate” (Elias 2007:4). The Australian Brigadier General John Monash (1865-1931) wrote a letter from Lemnos to his walking club in Melbourne: He accentuated the contrast between “the sudden transference from an environment of strife & clamour & the wreckage of war, to this peaceful island with its rolling landscapes” (Monash 23.9.1915). The perception of nature is important in the context of modern war and visual culture. Ann Elias has published widely on the symbolism of flowers as “they mediate the complexity of human emotions and relationships” (Elias 2008: 247). She emphasizes the “juxtaposition of beauty and violence” in the general context of peace and war (2008:243).

For many people who experienced silence as *the* essential aspect of peace, photography was a suitable way to have this important detail enter their mind and imagination (Arnheim). Philosopher Roland Barthes has underlined the importance of one astonishing aspect in his reflections on the medium of photography: “Absolute subjectivity is achieved only in a state, an effort, of silence” (55). In his triangle of operator, spectrum and spectator, it is the spectator who shuts his eyes “to allow the detail to rise of its own accord into affective consciousness” (55; and: 9-10). Barthes reminds us that photography has something to do with music (55). Although he does not specifically refer to the soldier as *operator* in the “formation of the image”, we can assume that the silence on Lemnos affected the resident soldiers’ visual perception. This calming experience, in particular, contrasted sharply with the excessive noise of Gallipoli or any other place at war. The sound of silence certainly had a curing effect on the soldier who, as a photographer, and according to Roland Barthes’ scheme, can be defined as the “subject observing ...” the space of peace (10).

Finally, historians have argued the “importance of the tourist model” (White 69) in the use of the soldier’s camera (Ritchie 96-97; Cochrane XV-XIX). According to the Australian historian Peter Cochrane who published on photography during World War I, “a

photograph was a tangible way of taking possession of places that soldiers visited – a classic tourist thing to do” (XVI). Soldiers left touristic pictures as “fragment[s] of an imperilled life” (XVI). A wide range of photographs illustrates the soldier’s way of life during the Gallipoli campaign.<sup>8</sup> The Australian journalist Luke Slattery, however, writes that “Lemnos” and the “incidental, though for Greek-Australian relations important, aspect of the 1915 photographic record [...] gets only a cursory mention” in the mainstream literature of Gallipoli (Slattery). This is astonishing, as Australia’s encounter with Lemnos’ culture is documented in impressive records.

### **The Soldier’s Narrative**

Lemnos was a place beyond the battlefield. In the years 1915/16, however, life on the island was drawn into close proximity of war. Most islanders on Lemnos did witness preparations for war. They also carefully observed the strangers on the island. Yet, the atmospheric picture was best described by John Monash in his letter from Lemnos: He characterized Lemnos as an “Aegean elisium” (Monash 23.9.1915). Others summarized what the description of a sunset at Lemnos reveals: the ambivalent beauty of an island which was chosen as a military base for the attack on the Dardanelles in 1915.

Beautiful as the sun-sets were in Egypt, they were nothing compared to those at Lemnos. As you watched, the whole sky and surrounding country was veiled in a deep rose colo[u]r, and the rugged mountains became quite soft, looking as they were veiled in tulle. As you gazed, the colo[u]r charged, tinting all objects to a pale mauve, shading to a deep violet. (Anonym, *Australian War Memorial, Nurses’ Narratives*)<sup>9</sup>

Readers will recognize this account as a picturesque description of a peaceful spot in the Aegean Sea. The unknown author was one of the many Australian Army nurses who served on the island.

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<sup>8</sup> For example: A photograph taken by Signaller James P. Campbell: “Evening, Lemnos,” May 1915, *NLA (National Library of Australia)*, nla.pic-an23217956.

<sup>9</sup> Nurses’ Narratives compiled by Matron A.M. Kellett; this quote is taken from the webpage “Through These Lines: Lemnos Island” (Chapter: “Descriptions”).

Corporal Ivor Alexander Williams was evacuated to Lemnos at the end of 1915. Williams was impressed by the ancient way of life on Lemnos. In his diary, he writes that he “will try and give you an idea of this little piece of earth” (I. Williams, 3.1.1916). He describes his first visit to a Greek village:

In the afternoon we went to a native village inhabited by Greeks. It is a very quaint little place. All one could buy was chocolates, figs, tea and oranges. The people are most courteous to us. (I. Williams, 22.12.1915)

William’s account reflects interest in the picturesque fieldstone architecture – maybe because it raised archaic images in his imagination: “These were quaint places built in the valley between two hills. A lot of the houses have only three walls, the fourth being the rocky face of the hill. They are like the old biblical pictures” (I. Williams, 2.1.1916).

The commander of the 28<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Australian Imperial Force, Herbert Brayley Collett (1877-1947), describes in his book, *A Record of War Service*, what it meant to the soldiers to be transported to Lemnos (Collett 137-147): “Removed, for the time being, from the everlasting noise and risk of battle, feeling also that the morrow would bring real rest and a life of comparative ease, the troops slept well ... After daylight the transport entered Mudros Bay” (137). The immediate experience of peace and rest after his arrival on Lemnos underlines his perception of the island as a place beyond war. And it was also exciting because the “males had a somewhat brigandish appearance in their dress of top boots, divided skirts, sheepskin coats, and astrak[h]an caps” (142). Collett writes vivid descriptions of the villages where the houses are “painted with colour of a violent blue” (143). He refers to parts of the cultural life which could be characterized as exotic, at least from the perspective of an Australian, such as “the sale and export of a certain red earth which, with much religious ceremony, was dug out at stated times of the year” (143).<sup>10</sup> Both William’s and Collett’s narratives were more

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<sup>10</sup> Collett refers to the *Terra Lemnia* which is used to cure slow-healing wounds.

than just a soldier's ordinary recollection of a visit at a typical Greek café "where the menfolk gathered and drank the thick sweet coffee" (Collett 144). Most accounts diverge from simple description by revealing feelings of comfort and ease which moved the visitors from overseas. It appears that the authors were emotionally impressed by this environment of silence, colour, and peaceful isolation.

### **The Metaphorical Language: Phillip Schuler's and Albert Savage's Photographs**

The camera had the ambivalent task of capturing both images of war *as well as* of peace. For the Australian war correspondent Phillip Frederick E. Schuler (1889-1917), peace was a subject of his emotions, the antithesis of the horror of war, which he described when seeing the battlefields at Gallipoli:<sup>11</sup> "I say that the feeling of peace on the scene took away some of the sense of horror that crept into one's mind with the memories of the blood that had poured out on the tops of the cliffs" ([Schuler] *The Age*, 4.10.1915). Schuler had been sent to Greece as a special war correspondent for *The Age* (Hurst).<sup>12</sup> He arrived in Gallipoli in mid-July 1915, but he sent his war reports back to the editors of *The Age* in Melbourne from Lemnos because he was not allowed to stay in Gallipoli for longer than one month ("Despatches from Gallipoli"). With time on his hands, Schuler wanted to discover the island. He accumulated an eclectic, yet comprehensive collection of photographs which highlight a world beyond war.<sup>13</sup> Among them are nearly 90 photographs of extraordinary quality. Schuler chose 'peace' as the overriding subject of his photography on Lemnos, carrying his camera to attractive locations that he considered worth documenting. It appears that Schuler was impressed by the ancient Greek countryside which existed beyond war's reach, and Lemnos showed, in Schuler's pictures, an aura of peace, purity and seclusion from modern war. His photographical work about the Greek mythological

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<sup>11</sup> See for Phillip F.E. Schuler's biography: NAA (*National Archives of Australia*): B2455, Phillip F.E. Schuler, World War I Service Record; AWM (*Australian War Memorial*) Database, "ANZACS online: Phillip Schuler".

<sup>12</sup> Schuler's German-born father was the editor of *The Age*, and himself a writer.

<sup>13</sup> *Australia's War Memorial* holds most of Schuler's photographs.

island is full of allusions to the ancient Elysium somewhere in the Archipelago of the Aegean Sea. Schuler's photographs show the rocky coast line, fishermen in their boats, old women, soft hills with old trees, herds of goats, orchards with olive trees and men riding their donkeys. So the island culture which appeared to be *authentic*, *timeless* and *aesthetic* captured the imagination of the visiting photo artist from Australia. We will see that photography is not limited to mere documentation; it also uses metaphors to communicate emotions.

Schuler's effort to create *authentic* pictures was one way for capturing the aura of an ancient island and its multicultural society. The portrait of several Turkish dock labourers exemplifies this in an impressive way.<sup>14</sup> A spectator looking at the photo is drawn into the scene: a Mediterranean fishing village full of vibrant life. One can hear the Greek or Turkish hails of the fishermen – as well as the shout of the artist at the right moment of posing: "Don't move!" As a result, the scene displays a carefully arranged shot immortalizing a moment in the life of an Aegean island with a history shaped by migration and transcultural contacts (Pèrcopo 100-103).<sup>15</sup>



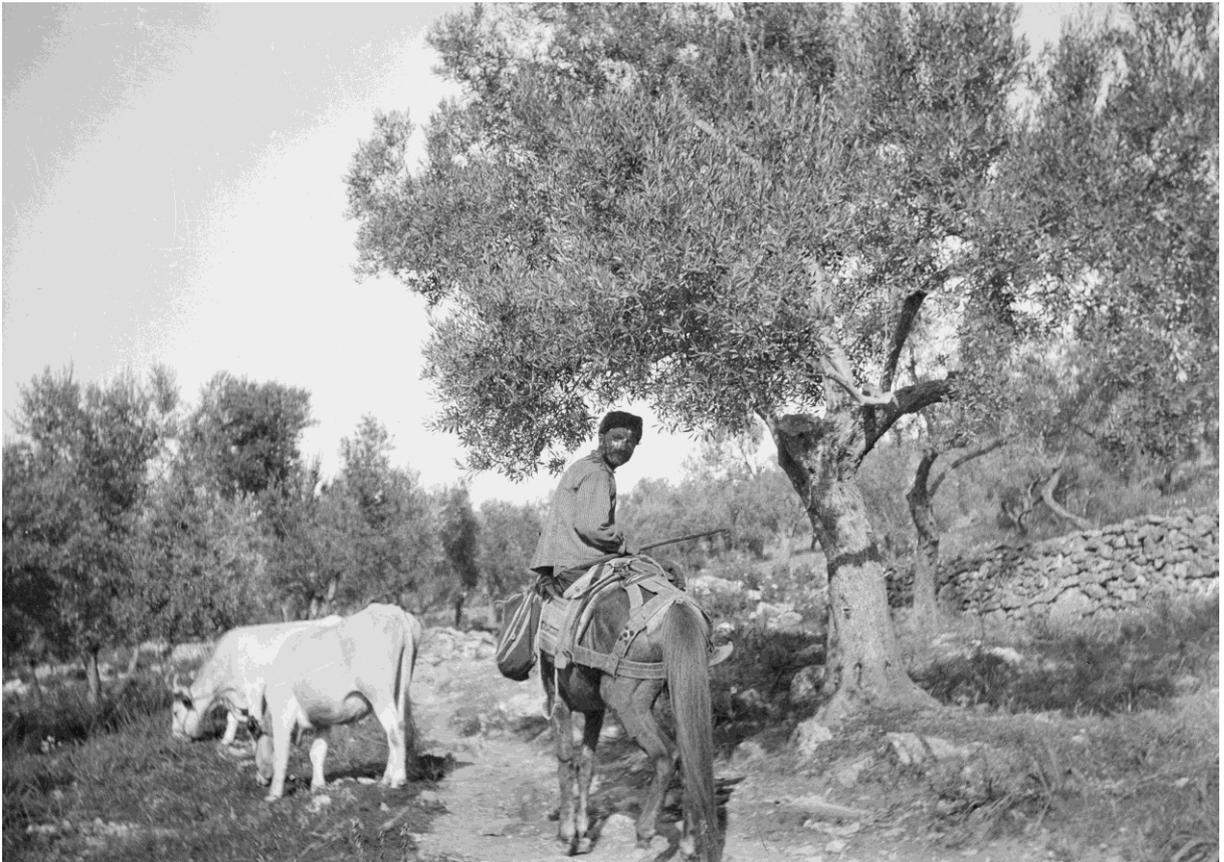
**Turkish dock labourers – Lemnos (Phillip Frederick E. Schuler 1915/16)  
By courtesy of the Australian War Memorial (PS 1985)**

<sup>14</sup> AWM, Photo Collection Phillip Schuler: PS 1985.

<sup>15</sup> Pèrcopo discusses the role of "cosmopolitanism" as a relevant aspect of the Mediterranean island cosmos.

Moreover, the image illustrates the historical significance of the moment: While the ANZACs were fighting against a Turkish enemy at Gallipoli, the military use of the island forced the Turkish minority of Lemnos to work for the Greeks and their Allies.

Schuler left us several photographs of pastoral scenes.<sup>16</sup> One in particular leads the observer to the subject of peaceful life on the ancient island of Lemnos.



**Pastoral scene on Lemnos (Phillip Frederick E. Schuler 1915/16)  
By courtesy of the *Australian War Memorial* (PS 1933)**

This photograph is a carefully arranged composition representing a world beyond all time – a well-balanced still life resembling an artful painting, a *timeless* Aegean Arcadia. In the centre of the photograph is a man on his horse.<sup>17</sup> The rider and his mount are resting amidst a herd of cows, the animals are grazing peacefully. Beautiful flowered meadows line the rocky path of the horseman and his

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<sup>16</sup> Elias reads the *pastoral moment* as a “distraction from the claustrophobia of warfare” (2008:247).

<sup>17</sup> *AWM*, Photo Collection Phillip Schuler: PS 1933.

herd.<sup>18</sup> It is a scene bathed in light. The horseman has stopped under a group of old trees, providing shade in the heat of the day. The photographer and spectator are connected in mind and in sight. The herder's head is turned around and he is looking straight into the camera. It seems as if the rider is patiently waiting for someone coming up behind him. Both composition and perspective encourage a silent dialogue between the Australian and the Greek, between the war reporter and the shepherd. It is a dialogue between people of contrasting worlds. The dread of dying in a vivid life, however, was an essential experience which indirectly linked with the life of the war reporter and the fate of the Arcadian shepherd. Schuler captured this symbolic moment thereby suggesting an iconic interpretation of the idea of Arcadia.<sup>19</sup>

The symbolism is found in the idea that "nature could point homeward, to a life of innocence and peace" (107), according to the German-American cultural historian George L. Mosse (1918-1999). Mosse called this imagery the "transcendent function of nature" and referred to it as Arcadia (107). Art historian Ann Elias, nevertheless, is pointing to limitations in time: In the context of war, only "temporary transcendence" is possible (2008:247). Eyewitness Schuler captures this very perception of temporary life in tranquillity. His image shows the perceived isolation of an idyllic landscape where herders pasture their livestock in harmony with nature – which is what Arcadia actually means (Meyers *Konversations-Lexikon*, Vol. 1:896-897). Altogether the still-life and its metaphorical interpretation of an *Arcadian* life summarize the perception of life on a peaceful island – but within the shadow of death.

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<sup>18</sup> Schuler created a horizontal and a vertical version of this motif. Only the vertical shot reveals this detail.

<sup>19</sup> Art historians offer controversial interpretations about perceptions of death and life in the utopian land of Arcadia: Nicolas Poussin's painting "Les bergers d'Arcadie" (Location: Musée du Louvre, Paris) is subject to interpretations which refer to the ambiguity of an Arcadian way of life. Happiness is confined by death – the ancient idea of a utopian Arcadia compromises this ambiguity; see Panofsky 1-9.

Schuler's picture of Lemnos' old capital Myrina shows a similar subject.<sup>20</sup> The view focuses on a tidy row of fishing boats in the foreground. From the centre, the view rises to the ruins of an old fort on top of a hill. On the left side of the central axis is the Aegean Sea. The panorama to the right presents a typical still life of a Mediterranean siesta: fishermen stroll or rest on the wharves while their fishing nets are drying in the sun. Homer's description of the *Elysian Fields* comes close to this portrayal of a site of happiness and tranquillity – a place where the surrounding waters of the Okeanos send a refreshing breeze to the land (Homer, *Odyssee*, 4, 563-568).<sup>21</sup> It appears that, with this view, the mind stops thinking of the rage of battle. Silence breaks the clamour of war. This is peace – perceived as an *aesthetic experience*, and, according to Noël Carroll's theory (165), contemplation allows this judgement: the "appreciation" of life, not yet "stripped of its value in times of war" (Van Bergen 215).



**Myrina – Lemnos (Phillip Frederick E. Schuler 1915/16)  
By courtesy of the Australian War Memorial (PS 1968)**

<sup>20</sup> AWM, Photo Collection Phillip Schuler: PS 1968.

<sup>21</sup> For more reading in a contemporary (German) context (as Phillip F.E. Schuler had a German-Australian biographical background), see the following entries: "Elysium," *Meyers Konversations-Lexikon*, Vol. 6, 73; "Elysion," in: Irmscher, ed., *Lexikon der Antike*, 148.

French semiotician Roland Barthes would have perceived Schuler's photographs as "*habitable*, not *visible*" (Barthes 38). Schuler's pictures would have 'touched' him emotionally: "It is quite simply *there* that I should like to live" (38). This subconscious "longing to *inhabit*" has been described by Barthes as a journey backward or forward to a timeless sphere of subjective well-being (40). Whatever the idea had been, turning "men's minds toward a mythical past, toward the 'genuine'" [or] withdrawal to a "particular Arcadia" – with his photograph of Myrina or the view of the pastoral scene, Schuler turned his mind toward a space of peace where the time stands still (Mosse 125, 107).

Schuler created photographs of remarkable artfulness by concentrating on the island as a place of mythological origin. The Australian nurse Florence Elizabeth James-Wallace and the English-born photographer Albert William Savage, who was posted as a private to the 3rd Australian Hospital, followed a similar approach. Both, like Schuler, captured (or collected) iconic features of the island for an album: the sun flooded landscape, the patient herders, and the ancient villages. The nurse and the soldier had a particular interest in local people's life, and they focussed on examples of island culture, such as religion.<sup>22</sup> One iconic image shows an old priest, wearing the traditional robe of the Greek-Orthodox Church.<sup>23</sup> The man with his full beard looks dignified; he is standing amidst a group of women and children. The photographer presents a familiar view of an ancient Greek village – a community in which the church is at the centre of village life. One of the album's most beautiful photographs has the caption: "Village Folk".<sup>24</sup> Savage's view focuses on an old couple. The man and his wife have come forward from the

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<sup>22</sup> The images are part of the Picture Collection of Florence Elizabeth James-Wallace: The two albums which are held in the Manuscript Collection of the *Fryer Library/ University of Queensland* (Mss F831) include silver gelatine photo prints created by Albert Savage. (This collection may contain photographs taken by F.E. James-Wallace). Some images can be accessed online. Another album created by Savage is held at the *State Library of NSW (Mitchell Library)*, PXE 698: "Photographs of the Third Australian General Hospital at Lemnos, Egypt and Brighton (Eng.), 1915-17".

<sup>23</sup> Savage or F.E. James-Wallace, "A Grecian Padre & his flock": <http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:706>

<sup>24</sup> Savage, "Village Folk": <http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:708>

historic centre of the village in the background [in a metaphorical sense: from the origin] and they have stopped on the rocky path – patiently waiting for the visitor in front of them to take their picture. Their appearance has been shaped by migration across cultural borders and the colourful mixture of different ethnic groups which is so typical in the Mediterranean archipelagos (Braudel 150). Schuler's, Savage's, and James-Wallace's photographs can be seen as works of art because they serve their own reflections on the meaning of life, Lemnos' persisting world and its intercultural heritage. For them, Lemnos was a place of meditation not far away from countries under fire.

## **Conclusion**

In the comforting shelter of the nearby Greek island of Lemnos, the evacuated Australian soldiers from Gallipoli felt so intrigued by the scenic beauty and tranquillity of the island that they wrote notes and created pictures showing Lemnos as a peaceful island. Although for them, in the field hospitals death and suffering was part of daily life (and subject of documentation), most visitors experienced Lemnos as a remarkable place: It was not an island where, generally, people lived in happiness and harmony, but this foreign island was seen as a safe shelter in times of war. Removed from the battleground, the soldiers experienced moments, hours, or days of rest and relief from pain. Historian George Mosse referred to the contrasting emotions by saying that the soldier's "war experience was lifted out of daily life" (Mosse 125). It made time stand still. Lemnos' ancient history and archaic culture, its scenery and peacefulness turned the Australian mind toward an Aegean Arcadia and "toward a mythical past" (125). The Australians' wartime encounter with Lemnos illustrates that metaphorical interpretation is important in the perception of the Aegean world. Some Australian soldiers who were photographers managed to show what cannot be easily captured: the imagination of a world beyond war, during war time. Their photographs and accounts furnish proof of the power of imagination while searching for a metaphorical language of peace. Part of Australia's images of Lemnos can be regarded as personal reflections

depicting the Greek island in two ways: as a symbol for eternal ways of life, and as a capsule of peaceful and bucolic life. A number of Australians experienced Lemnos as an Arcadian island that brought “real rest” (Collett 137). Islands can be places with an ambivalent character, as Philoctetes had to learn. For Australia’s wartime visitors, Lemnos was a ‘sacred space’ where “by our very presence here *les extremes se touchent*”, as John Monash observed (Monash 23.9.1915).

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