

Carroll, John, ed. Introducers in the Bush: The Australian Quest for Identity. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.

## 1. The Bushman Legend

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*The Australian Legend*<sup>1</sup> presents the results of Dr Russel Ward's research into the historical origins and development of the national self-image. Its thesis is that a specifically Australian outlook emerged first and most clearly among the early bush workers in the pastoral industry ... and that this group has had an influence, completely disproportionate to its numerical and economic strength, on the attitudes of the whole community.<sup>2</sup> The author claims that the myth of the 'typical'—not average—Australian, although exaggerated and romanticized, has reality, not only because it is rooted in a nation's real past, but because it influences present-day ideas of how Australians ought 'typically' to behave.

In Ward's view, the stereotype of the myth is commonly regarded as

... a practical man, rough and ready in his manners, and quick to decry affectation. ... He is a great improviser ... willing to 'have a go' at anything, but ... content with a task done in a way which is 'near enough'. Though capable of great exertion in an emergency, he normally feels no impulse to work hard. ... He swears hard and consistently, gambles heavily and often, and drinks deeply on occasion. ... He is usually taciturn ... stoical ... and sceptical about the value of religion, and of intellectual and cultural pursuits generally. He believes that Jack is not only as good as his master, but

