Memory Challenges at the Edge of the World

Complementarity of "Tas-mania" and "Van Demon's Land"


Introduction

Traumascape -- of the "White Man's Dreaming"?

Terra cognita vs Terra incognita

Interweaving Demonic and Daimonic Associations in Collective Memory (Annex A)

-- Demonic associations and demonisation
-- Unusual, unsayable, unsaid, untruth -- and denial
-- Prefiguration: Van Diemen's Land as strategic pioneer in the treatment of dissent and otherness
-- Daimonic associations: imaginative, aesthetic, inspirational or spiritual
-- Refiguration of "the other" through fantasy

Memory Challenges at the Edge of the World (Annex B)

-- Symbolic journey -- to the "Edge of the World"
-- Dubious associations -- with the "Centres of the World" Cradle moun
-- Amnesia at the "Edge of the World" -- a key to unrealistic optimism?
-- Mnemonic devices for collective remembrance

Import of Nothingness and Emptyness through Happening and Mattering (Annex C)

-- Varieties of nothingness and emptiness
-- Questionable understanding of emptiness and nothingness
-- "Mattering" and "Happening"
-- "Nothing" emerging through combinations of "mattering" and "happening"
-- Dynamic complexification: integration of "no time"
-- Emergence of "nothing": creating "cognitive shelters"
-- Emergence of "nothing": globalization as exemplar
-- Emergence of "nothing": "import" of significance
-- Polarization and the dynamics of nothingness

Conclusion: Transforming the Edge of the World through Voiding the Centre

References

Symbolic journey -- to the "Edge of the World"

See Symb

The sections of Annex A highlighted the complexity of space, time and culture through which one may travel in encountering Tasmania. This is exemplified by the contrast between the wilderness areas of the west and the conventionalism of the historical dominance elsewhere of the values of "Little England", as noted by Anthony Gardner (Tasmania: Reflections of a parallel world, The Telegraph, 6 February 2001). As a symbolic journey, encountering Tasmania might be summarized in terms of the situations below.

As an explanatory device, such a journey may be framed like that of climbing a mountain, as exemplified by the classic account of the surrealist novelist René Daumal (Mount Analogue: a novel of symbolically authentic non-euclidean adventures in mountain climbing, 1959). In fact Rene Daumal's inaccessible Mount Analogue, though a creation of his imagination, was estimated by him (and others) to actually exist in the South Pacific, somewhere between Tasmania and New Zealand.

Rite of passage in the wilderness: Whilst Cradle Mountain may be experienced as hyper-commodified for quality (eco)tourism, the challenge of the 8-day Cradle Mountain Overland Trek to Lake St Clair has become a rite of passage for some 9,000 people each year,
notably Australians. This celebrates a spectrum of values -- whether or not their engagement is limited to the physical challenge.

**Ghost towns**: As noted above, many formerly busy places offer the curious eerie experience of ghost towns. As a former mining town, Queenstown in the west is indicative of what become of places elsewhere where the population is decimated -- whether after commercial exploitation has ceased to be viable or a major disaster. As the "Queen's town", the implication of the highest authority in such development is highlighted -- as well as in the heritage challenges of remaining pollution. The nature of the abandonment is emphasized by the quaint steam train service for upmarket tourism now running from there to Strahan on the coast -- a form of disaster tourism.

"**Dismal Swamp**": The world's only blackwood sinkhole forest offers a unique experience for tourists who may choose to walk down to the underground geology or shoot down via a 110 metres luge-like chute in 17 seconds. "**Dismal Swamp**" is located on the route to the "Edge of the World". The name may be seen as exemplifying the challenge of distinguishing between primeval and prime-evil in an edenic environment that, in the case of Van Diemen's Land as a penal colony, indeed came to be perceived as a dismal swamp. This was the challenge of the first European visitors and remains one for those threatened by nature unadulterated by the hand of man.

The "chute" might fruitfully model the sudden change of status experienced by those convicted and sentenced to transportation to a penal "hell hole". Although the "walkway" down is more indicative of the time taken to adjust to the new reality -- a journey of months to the opposite side of the world.

beyond dismal swamp ****

"**Edge of the World**": This is the point farthest west on the island of Tasmania. Nothing happens at that "Edge of the World".

 Appropriately it is only marked by a simple poem on a very modest plaque on a very small plinth. However -- being Australia -- it is backed up by an unusually well-appointed electrical barbecue facility for its appreciators -- perhaps reminiscent of the famed Restaurant at the End of the Universe, notably in that it was suitably occupied at the time by the likes of Walter Matthau and John Lennon (in the cult movie, Grumpy Old Men). Appropriately, there is also an adjoining eco-friendly toilet complex, common to tourist Australia.

On the plaque, the poem (**Edge of the World** by Brian Inder) reads as follows:

I cast my pebble onto the shore of Eternity.
To be washed by the Ocean of time.
It has shape, form, and substance.
It is me.
One day I will be no more.
But my pebble will remain here.
On the shore of eternity
Mate witness from the aeons.
That today I came and stood
At the edge of the world.

To the extent that it exists in "reality", the "Edge of the World" can of course be fruitfully considered as being both nowhere and anywhere. The quest for it, as for the end of the rainbow, has been instructively and delightfully portrayed in the iconic movie *The Gods Must be Crazy* (1980) and its sequels. Set in Botswana and South Africa, it tells the story of Xi, a Bushman of the Kalahari Desert (played by Namibian bush farmer N!xau) whose band has no knowledge of the world beyond.

In its early years Tasmania could itself be understood as the Edge of the World. Australia itself had the dubious distinction of being described by its Prime Minister as the "arse end of the world". Ironically, as with the Bushman on a quest to dispose of the iconic Coca Cola bottle dumped on his people from a plane, it was sought as the place for the disposal of unwanted things. The Bushman framed it as returning the unwanted gift to the Gods. The British Empire saw Tasmania as a place to dispose of unwanted people. The eco-friendly toilet might be seen as exemplifying current understanding of the edge at which ultimate disposal of consumption (at the barbecue) could be ensured. Industrial society, especially the developed world, is now challenged by waste disposal and the need for an "edge" over which it could be deposited -- especially in the case of radioactive waste.

**Tulampanga**: A focal point of tourism in Australia is Uluru, named by European's as Ayer's Rock. Tulampanga is a highly significant site for Aborigines -- a location where three distinct tribal groups met. At the centre of Tasmania, it is part of the Kooparoona Niara Region (namely the Western Tiers or Mountains of the Spirits). Both locations are protected as state reserves. Tulampanga has been named by the European's as Alum Cliffs (Gorge) and signposted, appropriately, as a "lookout" and as part of an "interpretation trail". Recently upgraded to offer insights into the Aboriginal cultural heritage, it is designed as a place of contemplation. There is no toilet or barbecue facility. Tulampanga is an unusually beautiful confluence of three very deep river gorges and is especially sacred to Aboriginal women. As with the Edge of the World, it is marked by a short poem, in this case by Phyllis Pitchford (an elder of Aboriginal descent).

**Our Ancestors**
Bear witness to Our reality
They know of
Yesterday's tears
Today's hopes
Tomorrow's dream.

In the effort to preserve
This pathway of Our history
Through the Mountains of the spirits
Please -- help Us maintain this right
As the meeting point of three (extinct) tribal groups, Tulampanga may point forward to the nature of a meeting point between the collective identities of Tasmania. Whether expressed or repressed, these might be represented by the viewworlds of the "Aborigines", the "Convicts", and the "Little Englanders", as suggested in the concluding table.

Dubious associations -- with the "Centres of the World"

See Dubi

The confusions in collective memory (including "false memories", possibly deliberately planted) are ironically illustrated in relation to the chalet in the iconic wilderness centre of Tasmania at Cradle Mountain -- named as Waldheim by Gustav Weindorfer, the Austrian nature conservationist from Carinthia. The chalet was opened to visitors in 1912 -- an initiative that continues to this day, although the original chalet was destroyed in 1974, after his death, only to be replaced by a replica (following protest).

As might be expected, access to visitors is now made possible on a much larger scale through various commercial initiatives, notably the Cradle Mountain Lodge. The name Waldheim has now been appropriated into the Waldheim Alpine Spa with its therapeutic Sanctuary (including a steam room, sauna, hot-tub and cool plunge pool, as well as a relaxation lounge), using the beauty care product line Sodashi -- derived from an ancient Sanskrit word meaning "wholeness, purity and radiance". Promotional emphasis is given to the original Waldheim motto: "where there is no time and nothing matters" (although with the implicit qualification: "except the ability to pay"). This Waldheim? A fundamental betrayal of environmental values -- or only for purists?

Such a pattern might seem to have been repeated:

- since "Waldheim", for those active in the international community over past decades, has strong and problematic associations of profound betrayal with Kurt Waldheim, another Austrian (Kate Connolly, CIA knew about Waldheim's Nazi past, The Guardian, 2 May 2001). He was the 2-term (1972-1982) representative of the world's highest collective secular expression of human values -- only then to be revealed as a former member of the Nazi Sturmabteilung (having surrendered to the British in Carinthia) -- and subsequently to become the 9th President of Austria (1986-1992). Such confusions were apparent during World War I when Gustav Weindorfer was inappropriately assumed by some in his Tasmanian community to be an enemy spy -- forcing him to retire as a hermit to Waldheim. (Curiously, at the official unveiling of the monument to Weindorfer, on 14th March 1938, Germany invaded Austria.)

- with the election in 2005 of the German Joseph Alois Ratzinger to the papacy -- the highest representative of Christian values. Controversially he had earlier been enrolled in the Hitler Jugend. A problematic choice for many given the controversy over the relation between Nazism and the papacy (John Cornwell, Hitler's Pope, 1999; David G. Dalin, The Myth of Hitler's Pope, 2005)

- the role of Donald Rumsfeld as prime defender of the free world's values against terrorism. As a paragon of optimism and positive thinking, he made singular and unashamed use of deception to push the world to a new edge of insecurity, notably through increasing US military expenditure to a level exceeding that of all other countries combined (Rand corp ***). Rumsfeld under Bush, notably failed to contrast their strategy with that notoriously articulated by Hermann Goering:

  ... people can always be brought to do the bidding of the leaders... All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce pacifists for lack of patriotism.

Such examples raise the question of the degree to which collective memories of any group in Australia are themselves inappropriately confused (cf Gary Gumpf and Richard Kleinig, The Hitler Club: the true story of Australia's No. 1 Nazi, 2007). Historically this particularly applies to the complex case of the "Vandemonians". Over many decades it has applied to the various understandings of the history of black-white relationships throughout Australia -- especially where these are framed by the fiction arising from Cook's original disobedience of his orders to consult with any indigenous inhabitants.

The saga continued on the occasion of the response by Brendan Nelson, leader of the opposition, to the Prime Ministerial apology of 13th February 2008. Given the controversy engendered by Nelson's comments, one might ask whether, like his namesake and Cook's contemporary, Admiral Lord Nelson, he had not adopted the legendary technique of looking through his telescope at the battle scene -- using his blind eye in order to be able to deny what would otherwise have been visible (a signal from his superior to cease combat), and trusting that his disobedience would be approved in retrospect.

The examples illustrate how founding truths and myths can be voided of their significance -- evacuating their original meaning. This is a process which might be described by the Australian term "white-anting". To what extent has the imaginary of both Black Australians and White Australians been "white-anted"?

Amnesia at the Edge of the World -- a key to unrealistic optimism?

See Amne

Repudiating the past: Tasmania was born through a simple change of name from Van Diemen's Land. Symbolically this was done as a rejection of a problematic past -- in order to focus on the "positive" and avoid the "negativity" of an unfortunate heritage. Name changing for such purposes is a characteristic of some forms of religious conversion in which a name with spiritual connotations is adopted as a means of confirming that the sins of the past have been washed away. It is an image management technique common to corporate entities whose initiatives are handicapped by negative publicity regarding their past activities.

The process is commonly described as a "makeover" or "reinventing oneself" in a way that enables the past to be forgotten, both by the renamed identity and by others. Typically such a change, whether formally accompanied by a new set of behaviours (a new "constitution") or not, accords little attention to the heritage of the past or to any remedial responsibilities. To the extent possible, the past never happened. All that counts is optimism for a bright future.
In Tasmania the formal change was accompanied by a repudiation of those most evidently associated with the past -- namely the "Vandemonians" (convicts, their associates and the Aborigines) -- by their "betters", including those who had been most instrumental in exacerbating the conditions of the past (cf John Quiggin, *Repudiating the past*, 2003).

**Repression of memories**: To a marked degree, those transported as convicts to Tasmania were those whose very existence it was desired to forget in England.

The subsequent repressive measures (using an "iron fist") in service to the values of "Little England" resulted in a repressed "second class" of citizens -- conveniently to be ignored and forgotten by those of the dominant higher class. Repression of memories was thus expressed in a threefold manner with respect to: the savage measures employed by the "iron fist"; the resulting condition of peoples (notably the Aborigines resettled out of sight); and any complicity in the inappropriate actions of the past (whether as a convict or as a representative of law and order).

This created a situation in which those of the higher class refused both to associate with those of the second class or to remember any associations with that class through relatives (including parents). Peter Hay also notes that for many Tasmanian descendants of those transported as convicts -- and condemned by Victorian Vandemonian laws -- efforts to identify or refer to such ancestry are avoided. He notes the difference from the somewhat comparable Prince Edward Island of Canada. Boyce notes Victorian...

**Great Australian Silence**: As noted above, the "history wars" of Australia have highlighted the traumatic nature of memory repression within that country, notably with respect to Tasmania. As editor of a work endeavouring to give due consideration to those memories, Robert Manne (*The introduction to the major rebuttal of Keith Windschuttle*, 2003) notes:

> In 1968, the anthropologist W. E. H. Stanner delivered what turned out to be perhaps the most consequential lecture ever broadcast on the ABC. Stanner called his lecture 'The Great Australian Silence'. The point he was making has often been misunderstood. Stanner did not mean that scholars and others had failed to show an interest in traditional Aboriginal society. As he understood better than most, anthropology was probably the most distinguished and developed of the social science disciplines in Australia. What Stanner meant was that both scholars and citizens had, thus far, failed to integrate the story of the Aboriginal dispossession and its aftermath into their understanding of the course of Australian history, reducing the whole tragic and complex story to what one historian had called 'a melancholy footnote' and another a mere 'codicil'.

As noted with respect to the Windschuttle study, it continues an Australian tradition of justifying and silencing colonial injustices. This tradition runs deep only because there is so much to justify, and so many voices to silence. In this respect Rebe Taylor (*Breaking a Loud Silence. The Age*, 13 September 2003) notes:

> My research has unearthed stories told in Tasmania of a horrific frontier, with one person in 1908 describing their island as a "land soaked in blood". It is in popular memory that we find the reason why colonial injustices continue to be silenced in white Australia, but the culture of remembering those injustices is no less entrenched.

"Lest We Forget": Given the sacrifices made by Australians in the wars of the British imperium, it is to be expected that the war dead should be assiduously remembered by their relatives and comrades. In emulation of the Whitehall Cenotaph celebrating "The Glorious Dead", many of the cities and towns of Australia, and often even the smallest in Tasmania, have a similar monument -- typically inscribed "Lest We Forget". The word "cenotaph" originates from the Greek for empty tomb.

"Lest We Forget" is notably repeated in response to recitation at such cenotaphs of the "Ode of Remembrance" on the occasion of memorial services for the war dead -- including the nightly reading by Australia's Returned and Services Leagues, often made in a "memorial hall".

**Ode of Remembrance** (final verses)

*They went with songs to the battle; they were young.*
*Straight of limb, true of eyes, steady and aglow.*
*They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,*
*They fell with their faces to the foe.*

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:*  
*Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.*

*At the going down of the sun and in the morning,*  
*We will remember them.*

Religions have been sensitive to the desirability of an alternative order of service for Remembrance Day. In 2005 (60 years after the end of World War II), the Diocese of Oxford, for example, announced a *New Remembrance Day Service* specifically "to include people of all faiths and none" -- presumably previously excluded. The revision was elaborated with The Joint Liturgical Group of Great Britain and the Royal British Legion "for those who gather in silence on 11 November around war memorials across the nations".

**Selective remembrance**: It is however curious that, even with the passing of time, it remains virtually unthinkable to consider any remembrance of:
• the members of the enemy military services killed by those honoured above -- there being no question of an enemy worthy of honourable remembrance
• the innocent citizens, killed by those honoured above, whether deliberately or inadvertently -- there being no question of recalling the tragic effects of collateral damage as increasingly highlighted
• those killed in defending their lands, homes and ways of life from aggressive actions by military services -- there being no question of recognizing the justice of causes foreign to those of the military authority ordering their death
• those who died as a result of treatment meted out, fairly or unfairly, by military authorities in the course of punitive “iron fist” and “scorched earth” strategies to eliminate any form of resistance

As those with the capacity to remember find their memories failing with age, this selective approach to collective memory can be explored in relation to the following issues:

• complicity on the part of (supposedly universal) religions in reinforcing the assumption of the appropriateness of the killing of “the enemy” (duly demonised for the purpose) and celebrating selectively (even by denomination) the tragic inappropriateness of the fallen being killed thereafter
• restricting the scope of “Remembrance Day”:
  • as “a time to remember and reflect on the 102,000 men and women who have given their lives while serving Australia in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations since Federation” (Remembrance Day 2007: Ceremonies in Australia). Guidelines are produced by the Australian Government Department of Veterans’ Affairs (Saluting Their Service; Valuing our Veterans; Guide on how to hold a Remembrance Day service; Interviewing a Veteran).
  • mentioning Aborigines only to the extent that they participated in those operations; the first Aboriginal memorial plaque specifically for Tasmanian Aboriginal Veterans (for the period 1901 - 1999) was unveiled in 1999 -- only the second such plaque in Australia.
  • failing to remember in any way the many who are wounded -- perhaps in ways that prevent them from leading even a remotely normal life
• the triumphant past efforts of some honoured above to proudly record the numbers they may have killed (by score marks on their rifles or fighter planes) before they themselves were killed
• competing forms of “remembrance” of those who do not subscribe to those of the Commonwealth, and their current political significance (cf Volkstraumtag, the German national day of mourning; Yasukuni Shrine and Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in Japan).
• of particular interest is the United Nations Memorial Cemetery in Korea (Busan) and its “custodians of the past”. The UN General Assembly held a special meeting in commemoration of all victims of World War II, in accordance with Assembly resolution 59/26 of 22 November 2004.

Within such a context, and given the many appropriate excuses associated with the passage of time, it is most curious to find a project of remembrance relating to the “Royal Veterans” in “Van Diemen’s Land” (Gwenda M. Webb, Tasmanian Ancestry, 16, 1, June 1995).

Collective memory: In these terms it could be argued that:

• from a cybernetic perspective, the “order” of a remembrance service might be described as focusing on “1st order” remembrance, namely remembrance of those we know, whose innocence and righteousness we choose not to question (“nor the years condemn”), irrespective of their impact on those elsewhere we did not know (who may have been innocent and righteous in the light of criteria of which we are not aware). The latter might be incorporated into a more inclusive “2nd order” remembrance -- liberated from the implicit demonisation cultivated in relation to that of the “1st order”.
• remembrance as currently conceived might be understood as simplistic in that it lacks any degree of self-reflexivity. Symptomatic of that is the incapacity to broaden the focus to include the fallen within the homeland whose deaths were brought about by the action of the security forces of the homeland. Also symptomatic is the failure to address the issue of those killed by “friendly fire”. In cybernetic terms again, such self-reflexive remembrance might be understood as of a “3rd order”.
• the considerable emphasis in Australia on Remembrance Day might be understood as a way of safely avoiding more challenging collective memories (of “higher order”) characteristic of the Great Australian Silence

The danger of such a narrowly focused collective memory is highlighted by the well-known saying of George Santayana (“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it” -- in ways that remain necessarily unforeseeable).

It is surely a measure of cultural maturity to speak, as did Richard von Weizsacker (President of West Germany), 40 years after the end of World War II, of the danger of not facing but forgetting and distorting history, and especially of the danger of disregarding the fact that many German citizens had committed crimes:

There is no such thing as the guilt or innocence of an entire nation. Guilt is, like innocence, not collective but personal. There is discovered or concealed individual guilt. There is guilt which people acknowledge or deny… All of us, whether guilty or not, whether young or old, must accept the past. We are all affected by the consequences and liable for it… We Germans must look the truth straight in the eye -- without embellishment and without distortion… There can be no reconciliation without remembrance.

The formal apology by the Prime Minister of Australia on 13th February 2008 is an example of such maturity. However, he himself declared it to be only a first step.

Aboriginal remembrance: With respect to the Aborigines:

• as noted above, according to Robert Manne, both scholars and citizens have failed to integrate the story of the Aboriginal
dispossession and its aftermath into their understanding of the course of Australian history. Unlike their implicitly demonised enemies of Remembrance Day, Australians have yet to engage in a commemorator process for the destruction of the Aboriginal way of life -- comparable to that of the Germans relating to the Nazi Final Solution. The highly politicised processes of formal apology (at the time of writing) are of course a step in that direction.

- however controversial of necessity, the efforts of Keith Windschuttle to "whitewash" such memories regarding Aborigines could indeed be considered comparable to some degree to those of the revisionists who have endeavoured to reframe the implications of the Holocaust to substantiate a pattern of denial -- just as others have sought to exploit such disasters to advance their own agendas
- it might be argued that in Tasmania there is currently more evident concern with the lessons to be learnt from the tragic extinction in the 1920s of the Tasmanian Tiger (or Tasmanian Wolf) than there is for the extinction of the Aborigines in the previous century
- the claim regarding the continuing existence of the Aborigenes, through their genetic descendants, is an elegant way to reframe positively the challenge of any endangered species -- by declaring that proximate genetic relatives continue to carry the genes of the species that has disappeared. This genetic model could be considered as pointing to the problematic possibility of a memetic analogue.

Just as it is curious to see a current reference to the "Royal Veterans" of "Van Dieman's Land", with respect to the Aborigines it is curious to note the current initiative of the Tunnerminnerwait and Maulboyheenner Commemoration Committee (Lest We Forget, 2008). This provocatively imitates the format of Remembrance Day to recall that on 20th of January 1842, over 5,000 people (a quarter of Victoria's white population) gathered at the outskirts of Melbourne to witness the execution of two Aborigines whose guilt was in question.

One complication in envisaging a complementary form of remembrance for Aborigines, and for the massacres to which they were subjected, is that in their culture naming the dead is considered inappropriate.

Should memorials inscribed "Lest We Forget" be matched by "Have We Forgotten?" on the same structure or on a complementary one?

**Mnemonic devices for collective remembrance**

See Mnem

**Historical and war memorials**: As noted by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (Sharing History: a sense for all Australians of a shared ownership of their history, 1993) in a section on Sharing History: memorialising the past, such memorials are:

- significant forms of cultural expression, they are generally erected after much public discussion with careful consideration of what would be appropriate. Memorials represent an important stage in the creation of national identity; they are a very concrete expression of public history, a way of making permanent in letters carved in stone a judgment about events, which may be local, national or international. Memorials reveal public perception, and may be seen as a measure of the popular influence of the views and writings of historians.

Although many historians may be comfortable writing and speaking of early European settlement in Australia as an invasion, public attitudes and language have not necessarily changed. The gap between popular history and the history written by academics has still to be convincingly bridged. The builders of monuments appear wedded to the view that the colonisation of Australia was peaceful, and only in recent times have hesitant steps been taken to admit to the memorials the realities of the frontier.

This study provides a valuable summary of some of the findings of Ken Inglis and Jock Phillips (War Memorials in Australia and New Zealand: a comparative survey, 1991), including:

- of the three memorials in Australia by 1900 not one marked any violent encounter between Europeans and indigenous Australians.
- on one of the few monuments to European victims of Aboriginal weapons, the inscriptions were civil, not military; the killing was categorised as murder.
- in New Zealand had ten memorials by 1900 honouring those who had 'fallen' in the New Zealand wars, the first being erected in 1865; between 1900 and 1915 over 20 memorials were erected in New Zealand to the dead of the New Zealand wars.
- in Australia the silence continued; there was no wish to remember what had happened to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Recognizing that monuments rarely tell both sides of a story, and can quickly become dated in relation to new understandings of the circumstances to which they relate, the report on Sharing History provides a significant example of a monument and a "counter-monument" proposed by those who found the former offensive.

As with the challenge of desecration of cemeteries in Europe, those anywhere in Australia commemorating Aboriginal initiatives may be blown up (as in Kalkadoon).

**Selective memorials**: There is a curious poignancy to the current initiative of the Tunnerminnerwait and Maulboyheenner Commemoration Committee (Lest We Forget, 2008). This provocatively imitates the format of Remembrance Day to recall that on 20th of January 1842, over 5,000 people (a quarter of Victoria's white population) gathered at the outskirts of Melbourne to witness the execution of two Aborigines whose guilt was in question.

One complication in envisaging a complementary form of remembrance for Aborigines, and for the massacres to which they were subjected, is that in their culture naming the dead is considered inappropriate.

Should memorials inscribed "Lest We Forget" be matched by "Have We Forgotten?" on the same structure or on a complementary one?

**Mnemonic devices for collective remembrance**

See Mnem

** Historical and war memorials**: As noted by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (Sharing History: a sense for all Australians of a shared ownership of their history, 1993) in a section on Sharing History: memorialising the past, such memorials are:

- significant forms of cultural expression, they are generally erected after much public discussion with careful consideration of what would be appropriate. Memorials represent an important stage in the creation of national identity; they are a very concrete expression of public history, a way of making permanent in letters carved in stone a judgment about events, which may be local, national or international. Memorials reveal public perception, and may be seen as a measure of the popular influence of the views and writings of historians.

Although many historians may be comfortable writing and speaking of early European settlement in Australia as an invasion, public attitudes and language have not necessarily changed. The gap between popular history and the history written by academics has still to be convincingly bridged. The builders of monuments appear wedded to the view that the colonisation of Australia was peaceful, and only in recent times have hesitant steps been taken to admit to the memorials the realities of the frontier.

This study provides a valuable summary of some of the findings of Ken Inglis and Jock Phillips (War Memorials in Australia and New Zealand: a comparative survey, 1991), including:

- of the three memorials in Australia by 1900 not one marked any violent encounter between Europeans and indigenous Australians.
- on one of the few monuments to European victims of Aboriginal weapons, the inscriptions were civil, not military; the killing was categorised as murder.
- in New Zealand had ten memorials by 1900 honouring those who had 'fallen' in the New Zealand wars, the first being erected in 1865; between 1900 and 1915 over 20 memorials were erected in New Zealand to the dead of the New Zealand wars.
- in Australia the silence continued; there was no wish to remember what had happened to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Recognizing that monuments rarely tell both sides of a story, and can quickly become dated in relation to new understandings of the circumstances to which they relate, the report on Sharing History provides a significant example of a monument and a "counter-monument" proposed by those who found the former offensive.

As with the challenge of desecration of cemeteries in Europe, those anywhere in Australia commemorating Aboriginal initiatives may be blown up (as in Kalkadoon).

**Selective memorials**: There is a curious poignancy to the current initiative of the Tunnerminnerwait and Maulboyheenner Commemoration Committee (Lest We Forget, 2008). This provocatively imitates the format of Remembrance Day to recall that on 20th of January 1842, over 5,000 people (a quarter of Victoria's white population) gathered at the outskirts of Melbourne to witness the execution of two Aborigines whose guilt was in question.

One complication in envisaging a complementary form of remembrance for Aborigines, and for the massacres to which they were subjected, is that in their culture naming the dead is considered inappropriate.

Should memorials inscribed "Lest We Forget" be matched by "Have We Forgotten?" on the same structure or on a complementary one?

**Mnemonic devices for collective remembrance**

See Mnem

** Historical and war memorials**: As noted by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (Sharing History: a sense for all Australians of a shared ownership of their history, 1993) in a section on Sharing History: memorialising the past, such memorials are:

- significant forms of cultural expression, they are generally erected after much public discussion with careful consideration of what would be appropriate. Memorials represent an important stage in the creation of national identity; they are a very concrete expression of public history, a way of making permanent in letters carved in stone a judgment about events, which may be local, national or international. Memorials reveal public perception, and may be seen as a measure of the popular influence of the views and writings of historians.

Although many historians may be comfortable writing and speaking of early European settlement in Australia as an invasion, public attitudes and language have not necessarily changed. The gap between popular history and the history written by academics has still to be convincingly bridged. The builders of monuments appear wedded to the view that the colonisation of Australia was peaceful, and only in recent times have hesitant steps been taken to admit to the memorials the realities of the frontier.

This study provides a valuable summary of some of the findings of Ken Inglis and Jock Phillips (War Memorials in Australia and New Zealand: a comparative survey, 1991), including:

- of the three memorials in Australia by 1900 not one marked any violent encounter between Europeans and indigenous Australians.
- on one of the few monuments to European victims of Aboriginal weapons, the inscriptions were civil, not military; the killing was categorised as murder.
- in New Zealand had ten memorials by 1900 honouring those who had 'fallen' in the New Zealand wars, the first being erected in 1865; between 1900 and 1915 over 20 memorials were erected in New Zealand to the dead of the New Zealand wars.
- in Australia the silence continued; there was no wish to remember what had happened to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Recognizing that monuments rarely tell both sides of a story, and can quickly become dated in relation to new understandings of the circumstances to which they relate, the report on Sharing History provides a significant example of a monument and a "counter-monument" proposed by those who found the former offensive.

As with the challenge of desecration of cemeteries in Europe, those anywhere in Australia commemorating Aboriginal initiatives may be blown up (as in Kalkadoon).

**Selective memorials**: There is a curious poignancy to the current initiative of the Tunnerminnerwait and Maulboyheenner Commemoration Committee (Lest We Forget, 2008). This provocatively imitates the format of Remembrance Day to recall that on 20th of January 1842, over 5,000 people (a quarter of Victoria's white population) gathered at the outskirts of Melbourne to witness the execution of two Aborigines whose guilt was in question.

One complication in envisaging a complementary form of remembrance for Aborigines, and for the massacres to which they were subjected, is that in their culture naming the dead is considered inappropriate.

Should memorials inscribed "Lest We Forget" be matched by "Have We Forgotten?" on the same structure or on a complementary one?
There is a logical, but nevertheless curious, selectivity to collections of the National Archives of Australia as the official locus of Australian collective memory. It indeed "contributes to the development of Australian culture by helping Australians better understand their heritage and democracy". The focus is however necessarily on "the full range of Australian Government activities since Federation in 1901". It is however claimed that the scope "includes significant 19th-century records dealing with activities that were transferred from the colonies to the Commonwealth" -- but without any clarification regarding "significant", especially in the case of materials that might be considered controversial. But, given the selective availability of information on massacres, the question is whether this selection is done so as to enable "Australians better understand their heritage" -- especially in the light of the spirit of the Prime Minister's apology.

- **those who ensure that there is no proof are responsible for proving that what is claimed to the contrary is not true**
- **how to avoid re-membering or being re-minded**

Commemorative stones and Sacred sites: Addressing the challenges of memory in relation to collective trauma, Maria Tumarkin (Wishing You Weren't Here ...: Thinking About Trauma, Place and the Port Arthur Massacre, 2001) offers three citations:

- "As much as body or brain, mind or language, place is a keeper of memories -- one of the main ways by which the past comes to be secured in the present, held in things before us and around us". (According to Edward S Casey, Remembering: a phenomenological study, Indiana University Press, 1987, p 231.)
- "The collective thought of the group of believers has the best chance of immobilizing itself and enduring when it concentrates on places, sealing itself within their confines and moulding its character to theirs". (Maurice Halbwachs ***early in the twentieth century.
- "In the course of the nineteenth century nations came to worship themselves through worshipping their past, ritualising and commemorating to the point that their sacred sites and times became the secular equivalent of shrines and holy days".34 -- The national memory that seeks to enable nations to worship themselves by worshipping their past has a particular fondness for sacred sites. As John Gillis writes ***,

There is a curious complementarity between the cenotaphs (deliberately rendered meaningless to Aborigines) and Aboriginal sacred sites (typically considered meaningless superstition by non-Aborigines). The cenotaphs are not designed to commemorate the values of the Aborigines, just as the sacred sites were never conceived to commemorate the values of the Latecomers. Both are however considered "sacred sites" whose desecration would be vociferously challenged -- and has been.

The possibility of such complementarity raises challenging issues of the comprehension of temporal topology, especially in the specific case of Tasmania:

- **Edge of the World**
- **Tulampanga**

Sacred geometry and its desecration: Although the commonality is never suggested, both derive their significance from what in western tradition is termed sacred geometry -- of which the cenotaph is but one simple example. A more generic understanding is that represented by the landscape sculptor Marko Pogacnik, who is concerned with how to perceive landscapes and environments as composed of several visible and invisible levels and how to behave accordingly. Given the fundamental challenges of commemoration between communities, Pogacnik's approach to "Earth healing" is worth consideration. With a method analogous to acupuncture -- termed lithopuncture -- he uses stone pillars and positions them on "acupuncture points" of the landscape. Cenotaphs and sacred sites might both be understood in such terms. They form part of a long tradition across cultures of the use of stele as mnemonic markers -- as with the omphalos of pre-Christian times. The famed Pillars of Ashoka, distributed across India and Pakistan, and on which Edicts were inscribed, offer an early example.

In contrast, with curious lack of reference to the Tulampanga Aboriginal site, a massive government-funded triangular sculpture has been installed in its proximity (Soulèvement - Triangulaire, point de vue) to relate to "three significant geographical features of the Great Western Tiers - Quamby Bluff, Western Bluff and the spectacular gorge" designed to "connect the visitor with the forest, the art and the environment". Failing adequate consultation with appropriate Aborigines, this might well be considered as a blatant effort to negate the significance of a sacred site, or distract from it, especially since it lies on the pathway to it.

It is however curious that official funding is available for "interpretation trails" (or "interpretive trails") which might be understood as "songlines", or European efforts to substitute for them. Is this a 'magical' confrontation between "White Man's Dreaming" and "Black
Man's Dreaming”? How is it that Cradle Mountain, as iconic wilderness centre of Tasmania, has no Aborginal name associated with it -- and German (Waldheim) is the other language of choice for the inspiration it represents, as was Dutch for both names of “Tasmania”? The exception in that area is Truganini Point, the name of the last full-blooded Tasmanian Aborigine. This corresponds to the use of French in relation to the Alum Cliffs -- and only the discrete use of Tulampanga. Is it the case that there are different cognitive functions associated with the two styles of dreaming? Perhaps descriptive (and possibly connective) in the interpretive case in contrast with refreshing and sustaining the pattern in the songline case?

- 3 worlds / two worlds (off-shore?) ***
- Edge of World -- make a deposit -- over the edge -- disposal -- public
- -- as with this story
- Hillman -- healing fiction
- omphalos *** centre -- mnemonic vines
- ** sanitized commemoration
- Keyserling -- tropisms -- wheel -- poiesis -- autopoiesis

Emblems and totems: Aside from the commemorative structures in the landscape, or constructed there, a curious bridge between the cultures of the Aborigines and the Latecomers in Australia is to be found in the role and function of the symbols of significance to both. An excellent example is provided by the Black Swan -- a bird mainly indigenous in the southeast and southwest regions of Australia. The role of the Black Swan in Australian heraldry and culture extends to the first founding of the colonies in the eighteenth century. It has often been equated with antipodean identity, the contrast to the white swan of the northern hemisphere indicating "Australianness".

The Black Swan figured significantly as gifts from the Latecomers to Aborigines in early encounters between them, notably during the circumnavigation of Van Diemen's Land by George Bass and Matthew Flinders in 1798 (cf Lyndall Ryan, The Aboriginal Tasmanians, *** and by James Kelly in 1815 (James Calder, The Circumnavigation of Van Diemen's Land, 1984), as detailed by James Boyce (Van Diemen's Land, 2008).

The Black Swan is especially significant to Aboriginal people and is a part of many different legends and dreamtime stories among different tribes. For some Black Swans are the wives of their All Father. To some, for whom it was a totem, it was taboo to kill, hunt, or eat it. Along with the emu, this swan is found on the Australian coat of arms. The coat of arms of the Australian Capital Territory, granted in 1928, includes swans as supporters: one is black and the other white, said to be symbolising those Aboriginal and those of European ancestry.

The taking of Black Swans to Europe in the 18th and early 19th centuries brought the birds into contact with another aspect of European mythology: the attribution of sinister relationships between the devil and black-coloured animals such as a black cat. Black Swans were considered to be a witch's familiar, and often chased away or killed by superstitious folk. **** Curiously, in adopting Aborginal names for some parts of its hydro-electric developments, Hydro Tasmania has used that of Catagunya, meaning Black Swan.

Stories: It is to be imagined that the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land, before the extinction, developed stories to give meaning to the process they were undergoing -- adding to their fund of learning tales. As in Australian in general, the Aboriginal people developed stories to situate the colonists within their own worldview. As noted earlier, it remains the case that Aboriginal people necessarily cultivate contrasting stories about their problematic current situation in the light of the “evils” which gave rise to the Prime Ministerial apology of 13th February 2008. They, for example, make extensive use of the documentary films and arguments produced by John Päger and Alan Lowery (The Secret Country: the first Australians fight back, 1985; Welcome to Australia: the secret shame behind the Sydney Olympics, 1999).

At the time of writing, the relevance of myth has been dramatically highlighted by Serbian film director Emir Kusturica on the occasion of the massive protests in Belgrade on 21 February 2008 against the declared independence of Kosovo. He stated that he disagreed with the Hollywood-style myths cultivated about Kosovo, did not however object to other people living their chosen myths, but strongly argued for the right of Serbs to live their founding myth centered on Kosovo.

Given the importance of stories to the culture of the Australian Aboriginal peoples, and given the alternative stories cultivated (or fabricated) about the bloody past of their association with the White Man, there is a case for exploring the relevance of stories to reframe a somewhat equivalent (if not bloodier) situation. This is the case of the indigenous Indians of Central America as they have been partially assimilated into the Spanish culture of the area. Rather than repressing the imaginal engagement with death as it has impacted on their culture, and continues to do so, it has been cultivated through La Santa Muerte (Saint Death, La Santísima Muerte, Sacred Death) -- whose petitioners are prostitutes, drug dealers and murderers, as well as multitudes of ordinary housewives, taxi drivers and street vendors hoping to cure a sick child or pay the rent or simply make it through another day without getting robbed or kidnapped or shot. (see Homero Aridjis, La Santa Muerte) [more | more]. Anthropologists date the origins of the cult to the Spanish conquest that brought Christianity in contact with the Aztec death worship. Church repression kept the tradition dormant for centuries until it resurfaced in poor urban areas. (cf Paradoxes of Tyranny and Death Judging Saddam Hussein and La Santa Muerte, 2004).

Songs: As noted by James Boyce (Van Diemen's Land, 2008) with respect to traditional songs by prisoners:

Unfortunately, most of these songs and ballads, and even the dialect used to compose them, have been lost. (p. 136)

Boyce places great emphasis on the extraordinary integration of early Vandemonian society through the pubs:

No site was more important for music -- or, for that matter, dance, betting and games -- than the public house. The freedom of
all ranks of society, including convicts and soldiers, to visit pubs -- virtually unrestricted until the mid 1820s -- is one of the most remarkable aspect of early Van Diemen's Land... Most of these pubs escaped much official interference or elite patronage, serving as a place apart where the people's culture was let be, and where daytime distinctions between prisoners and their gaolers -- who were, after all, generally from a similar class background -- were loosened. Such slackness seems extraordinary from the perspective of even a decade later, but this was a time when there were no barracks for the soldiers and no gaol for the convicts. (p. 136-7)

At present the role of song is promoted through the Folk Federation of Tasmania. However it is not its function to address the issues raised by the repressed Vandemonian memories or the challenges of the Aboriginal inheritance.

Whereas Sheffield has successfully framed a response to its economic vulnerability through mural art (inspired by poetry), it might be asked whether Tasmania offers the possibility for responding to controversial historical memories through song. Do complex societies need songs of larger scope and ambition to offer a healing process for supposedly forgotten collective wounds and traumas -- beyond the simplicities of national anthems and football songs, as discussed in detail elsewhere (A Singable Earth Charter, EU Constitution or Global Ethic? 2006; All Blacks of Davos vs All Greens of Porto Alegre: reframing global strategic discord through polyphony? 2007)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example of Palawa Kani (reconstruction of Tasmanian Aboriginal language)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(from the interpretation board in Kunanyi Park)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>milaythina nika milaythina-mana</td>
<td>This land is our country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pakana laykara milaythina nika mulaka</td>
<td>Aboriginal people ran over this land to hunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pakana-mapali krakapaka milaythina nika</td>
<td>And many died here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tapiti larapuna, tapiti putalina</td>
<td>From Eddystone Point, to Oyster Cove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tapiti kunanyi, tapiti tayaritja</td>
<td>From Mount Wellington to the Bass Strait Islands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waranta takara milaythina nara takara</td>
<td>We walk where they walked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nara taymi krakapaka waranta-tu waranta tunapri nara</td>
<td>And they will never be dead for us as long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>milaythina nika waranta pakana</td>
<td>As long as we remember them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waranta palawa, milaythina nika</td>
<td>This country is us, and we are this country</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

For further updates on this site, subscribe here