'the birthplace of Australian multiculturalism'?: Retrospective commemoration, participatory memoralisation and official heritage

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In recent years, a number of scholars have advanced the notion that there is an authorised heritage discourse, evident in countries such as Australia, England, Canada and the USA, that is propagated by officially endorsed heritage agencies, both public and private.[i] 'There is, really', as Laurajane Smith has observed, 'no such thing as heritage… there is rather a hegemonic discourse about heritage, which acts to constitute the way we think, talk and write about heritage'.[ii] This discourse legitimises and reproduces national narratives and social orders. As Smith and others acknowledge, however, this process is complex. This is particularly evident in cultural practices that are not often directly linked to the heritage industry – commemoration and memorialisation.

The rise of 'retrospective commemoration' and 'participatory memorialisation' have had impacts, to various degrees and in a range of places and at different times, on the authorised heritage discourse.[iii] Retrospective commemoration refers to the effort of State authorities at all levels to express a more inclusive narrative of the nation as a result of, among other things, multicultural policy, by retrospectively commemorating a wider number of communities and people who have been officially identified as having contributed to Australia's 'national development'. New histories, or the emergence of previously hidden histories, also drive retrospective memorialisation. Participatory memorialisation concerns a range of vernacular memorials initiated by groups or individuals which have been later taken up or taken over by government authorities, or which have been sustained over short or long periods of time in conflict with them. These can range from the ephemeral to more formal, permanent memorials.

Responses to these public forms of memorialisation and commemoration have highlighted the resilience of the authorised heritage discourse which by and large incrementally and gradually accommodates social and historiographical change in a conservative revisionist paradigm. In Australia, this is driven in large part by a nationalism based on multiculturalism. Participatory memorialisation and retrospective commemoration can also ultimately stem from a desire to 'fit in' with dominant national narratives.

Memorials, however, remain amongst the most contested and enduring forms of public history. And they are both central to cementing shared cultural meanings about the past and at

times blunt statements difficult to disregard. As material culture embedded in the landscape, their meanings inevitably change over time between generations and social groups.[iv] They serve as a lasting visual referent or 'anchor points' for former mentalities or previous acts of remembrance.[v] As cultural heritage, memorials can engage or disappear in progressive nationalist narratives.

As Paula Hamilton and Linda Shopes have observed, cultural heritage in this context can be thought of as a 'socially sanctioned, institutionally supported process of producing *memories* that make certain versions of the past public and render other versions invisible'.[vi] But as Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone among others note, memory studies have been 'located most firmly in disciplines most accustomed to a concern with representation: literature, film studies, cultural studies'.[vii] Academic historians have tended to leave discussions around memory to the 'applied' field – some would say sub-field – of public history.[viii] Likewise, as Smith has commented, in archaeology, 'work on "archaeological data" that may also be perceived as someone else's "heritage" is relegated to "public archaeology" or "cultural resource management"'.[ix]

Memory studies deals with memory across generations in a range of social practices including commemoration and memorialisation. And it focuses on the production, circulation, reception and reproduction of cultural or collective memory.[x] Some have questioned the limits of this approach in terms, for example, of striking a balance between individual and group memory.[xi] Here, however, the emphasis is on the role of institutionally supported memories in forging broader cultural memory through heritage via a new settlement ideology, multiculturalism, which replaced assimilation in the 1970s.

The creation and recreation of cultural memory has become increasingly complex and fraught in Australia, as elsewhere, from the closing decades of the twentieth century. At Federation in 1901, when Australia's six separate and squabbling colonies came together as a Commonwealth, the new nation's heritage was relatively uncomplicated. Leaving aside sectarianism, over ninety-six per cent of the population were Christians and of its 3.7 million people, around 78 per cent were Australian born, and all but 3 per cent of the rest were from Britain. The bible of White Australia – the Federal census – precluded Indigenous people being counted among the Commonwealth's population. This continued until a Federal referendum in 1967 altered the constitution allowing Indigenous people 'to be counted in reckoning the population'.[xii]

Towards the end of the twentieth-century, stories of Stolen Generations of Aboriginal people – brought about by the official policy of removing mixed race children from their families up to the 1970s – of migrants who had faced racial discrimination and exploitation and of segregation and exclusion were circulating uncomfortably in the culture. These fed Australia's history wars.[xiii] Australians, David Carter has written, were 'not used to thinking about *our* history as contentious, morally compromised or volatile, as dangerous as, say Japanese or South African history, the American Civil War history, or recent Russian history'.[xiv]

This article is based on a case study of the Snowy Mountain Hydro-Electricity Scheme which has been cast and recast, principally by public institutions, as both a crucible and symbol of Australian national identity in an evolving consensual, positivist history. It also draws on an investigation of four substantial State and Federal heritage database memorial listings and a national survey of post 1960 Australian non-war memorials.[xv]

The Snowy Mountains Scheme

Commenced in October 1949 and completed in 1974, the Snowy Mountains Scheme supplies electricity to the south-eastern grid and a buttress against drought for Australia's arid inland. Located in the Southern Alps – largely in the Kosciuszko National Park – it comprises sixteen substantial dams – the biggest of which has a volume thirteen times that of Sydney Harbour – aqueduct pipelines stretching 80 kilometres, thirteen major tunnels in excess of 140 kilometres, three service towns, around 120 work camps, seven power stations and eight switching stations. With the workforce peaking at 7300 in 1959, over 100,000 people from over thirty countries – more than 60,000 of which were post-war migrants and displaced persons whom the Snowy Mountains Authority recruited in Europe – were employed on what became the largest engineering project undertaking in Australia.[xvi] Only about two per cent of the Snowy Mountains scheme is visible above the ground. But this vast complex has taken on different meanings over time.

During the opening of the third Festival of the Snows and the unveiling of the music shell and model of the Snowy Mountains area on 17 October 1959 in Centennial Park, Cooma, Nelson Lennon, Commonwealth Minister for Works and Housing, was given the additional task of unveiling a 1.5 metre rock bearing a small brass plaque which included a final paragraph:

MANY MEN WHO BUILT THE SNOWY MOUNTAINS SCHEME CAME

FROM OTHER COUNTRIES. ON THIS DATE THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE SCHEME, FLAGS OF THEIR NATIONS WERE UNFURLED IN REMEMBRANCE OF THEIR BIRTHPLACES, THEIR CULTURE AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO AUSTRALIA[xvii]

These men's ethnicity, however, was to fade out of the image of the Snowy. Instead, they were incorporated into a larger account of progress and national efficiency. National efficiency, a term widely used in the first three decades of the twentieth century but still pervasive in official policy in Australia after the Second World War, called for 'the most efficient adaptation of means to produce the highest welfare and civilisation of a people and to ensure its survival against internal diseases and the attacks of other nations'. [xviii] Social and national efficiency depended upon three essential ingredients: industrial competency, social harmony and the organisation of society to facilitate social progress. In the post World War II period, the Snowy Scheme was an icon for the project of forging a modern, homogeneous Australia. This had led Labour Prime Minister Ben Chifely to declare the scheme 'one of the greatest milestones on the march of Australia to full national development'.[xix]

Assimilation, the dominant settlement ideology from the 1930s into the 1960s, sought to make the entire population of the continent live like 'white Australians'. It also worked to make difference either 'disappear' or be suspected and feared. Grahame Griffin, who has written about the Snowy Mountains Authority's publicity machine, notes that it sought to tie the scheme into the broader national assimilationist project while also promoting the rugged natural landscape – incorporating the snow-covered alps – as symbolic of Australian identity. This, it was hoped, would replace the traditional Australian 'outback' as the iconic image of national identity. Griffin recalls his and others' experience of the Authority's visitor program:

> … the most common recollections of childhood visits to the scheme encompass the 'rugged grandeur' of the Southern Alps, the excitement of seeing snow for the first time, and the various stop-off points where one took in the panoramic views of the massive construction sites and the distant, ant-like workers. This may well have been as close as many visitors came to the people who built the Snowy Mountains scheme. As a young visitor I knew that many of these workers were New Australians, or, more commonly, foreigners (as my parents described them) and therefore different – a difference underlined by the strict segregation of workers from visitors. 'Staff' and waged labourers also had separate messing and accommodation.[xx]

These 'New Australians', or Australians in-the-making – indistinguishable from scenic vantage points from their Australian co-workers or in the Authority's copious photographic images which Griffin discusses – were, like the nation's pioneers in the 'outback', facing hardship and the vicissitudes of nature that would help forge their new character.

It is not until the late 1970s that the migrants who worked on the Snowy scheme were publicly acknowledged. Laura Neal's heroic *Snowy Mountains Story* was published by Cooma Municipal Council in 1979.[xxi] And in 1981, on the Monaro Highway at Cooma North, a memorial was erected by the Council and the Authority to the 121 people 'of over thirty nationalities' who were killed during the Scheme's construction. The names of all of the dead appear in raised letters on bronze plaques. A central bronze plaque at the monument's base in bas relief depicts a dam and tunnels being built.[xxii] Inspired in part by developments in labour and immigration history,[xxiii] cultural tourism and a nascent heritage industry, this memorialisation was framed in the context of the new settlement ideology – multiculturalism – that emerged in Australia in the 1970s.

Canadian in origin, the term multiculturalism was first used in Australia in 1973 by the Federal Minister for Immigration, Al Grasby. It was based on notions of 'justice, equality and esteem' and was principally concerned with acknowledging ethnic diversity. Replacing assimilation, multiculturalism encompassed 'government measures designed to respond to that diversity'. Paying no role in the selection of migrants, it was and remains 'a policy for managing the consequences of cultural diversity in the interests of the individual and society as a whole'.[xxiv]

In mono-cultural Australia, migrants were expected to 'fit in'; in the new multicultural regime their difference was tolerated. Conservative critics of the policy warned of challenges to national cohesion and potential social dislocation. Professor Geoffrey Blainey claimed that:

> Multicultural policy has, at times, tended to emphasis the rights of ethnic minorities at the expense of the majority of Australians, thus unnecessarily encouraging divisions and weakening social cohesion. It has tended to be anti-British and yet the people from the United Kingdom and Ireland form the dominant class of pre-war immigrants and the largest single group of post-war immigrants.[xxv]

As Castles and others have observed, however, multiculturalism had become a 'necessary ideology'.[xxvi] It was and remains a product of major cultural and social shifts. And far from

undermining national identity and cohesion, it quickly became the new way of defining Australianness and the nation, leaving unquestioned the construct of the 'nation', nationalism and continued inequalities in Australian society.

Public attention was to be sharply re-focussed on the Snowy Mountains scheme in 1999 during the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of its construction.[xxvii] A Federal inquiry into Snowy River water, developments in the national electricity market and plans for further corporatisation of the Scheme led the Authority, in a period of uncertainty, to mount over three years a public relations campaign to secure its future.[xxviii] The campaign was so successful that the Scheme's anniversary attracted front page attention nationally as well as radio and television coverage.[xxix] In Sydney, the Powerhouse Museum mounted an exhibition entitled 'Snow! Power of a nation'.[xxx]

While the massive engineering feat and the Scheme's place in building modern Australia were lauded, a key theme in the campaign was the Scheme's contribution to making a multicultural Australia. As one national newspaper noted at the beginning of 1999:

> This year Australia consciously and actively celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electricity Scheme which brought upwards of 100,000 migrants into the country. Most of these stayed and contributed most positively to the expansion of the economy in the 1950s and 1960s.[xxxi]

Heritage agencies took a fresh look at the scheme. Noting that, like 'many other 20th century places, the heritage significance of the Snowy Mountains Scheme is only just being recognised', the New South Wales Heritage Office (abolished by the State Labor government in 2008) observed, among other things, that:

> The scheme brought together a workforce of more than 30 nationalities and has been seen as a monument to multicultural Australia.[xxxii]

Given its national importance, the Scheme was subsequently placed on the Register of the National Estate which was administered by the Australian Heritage Commission.[xxxiii] Reflecting the New South Wales Heritage Office's assessment, the scheme's statement of cultural significance began:

TABLE 1

Sample of memorials by theme: Federal and State Heritage Database

THEME	FEDERAL[1]		VICTORIA[2]		NSW[3]		WA[4]		TOTALS	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Disaster – Natural (collective)	3	0.4	1	0.5	1	0.3	0	0	5	0.3
Disaster – Civil (collective)	0	0	0	0	1	0.3	1	0.3	2	0.1
Sudden Death (individuals)	4	0.6	5	2.3	6	1.8	0	0	15	1.0
Migrant Community (collective)	5	0.7	1	0.5	1	0.3	0	0	7	0.5
Indigenous Community (collective)	5	0.7	11	5.2	0[5]	0	1	0.3	17	1.1
Individual Community Role (individual)	28	3.9	1	0.5	57	16.7	26	7.5	112	7.3
Community Role (collective)	9	1.3	11	5.2	9	1.2	7	2.0	36	2.3
Violation (individual)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Lost places – time (collective)	1	0.1	0	0	2	0.6	0	0	3	0.2
Lost places – state (collective)	1	0.1	0	0	5	1.5	0	0	6	0.4
Animals (individual)	1	0.1	1	0.5	1	0.3	0	0	3	0.2
Personal Memorials (individual)	5	0.7	8	3.8	14	4.0	3	0.9	30	2.0
War	175	24.3	26	12.0	167	49.0	194	55.6	562	36.9
Churches/church buildings	108	15.0	27	12.7	25	7.3	14	4.0	174	11.4
Cemeteries	46	6.4	7	3.3	4	1.2	3	0.8	60	4.0
Other	330	45.7	114	53.5	48	15.5	100[6]	28.6	492	32.3
Total	721	100	213	100	341	100	349	100	1524	100

Notes

1. Federal Australia Heritage Database accessed 16 November 2007

2. Victorian Heritage Register and Heritage Inventory accessed 11 November 2007.

3. NSW Heritage Office Local and State Government Agencies Listings accessed 11 August 2007. The State Heritage register listed seven items as memorials. Two were war memorials; two were to Individual Community Role (individual) in the form of major memorial hospitals; one was a church; and one was the Tenterfield School of Arts were NSW Premier Sir Henry Parkes gave the Tenterfield address in the lead up to Federation.

4. Heritage Council of Western Australia Places Database accessed 11 September 2007.

5. Indigenous heritage items are listed by the Department of Environment and Conservation. This role was formerly the responsibility of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

6. Eight items (2.9%) were memorial swimming pools: three of these were war memorial swimming pools and are counted under the war memorial theme.

The Snowy Mountains Scheme (SMS), constructed 1949-1974, is the largest engineering scheme ever undertaken in Australia, and is nationally and internationally important for its engineering success and as a symbol of Australian achievement. The scheme employed over 100,000 people, from thirty different nationalities, and is significant in the history of Australia's post-World War Two migration. It can be considered a major basis of Australian multi-cultural society.[xxxiv]

This statement is repeated in the Federal Australian Heritage Places Inventory and in other sites such as the Commonwealth Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts Culture and Recreation Portal.[xxxv] During the fiftieth anniversary celebrations, it was also circulated via official speeches and media releases. At the celebrations at Jindabyne on 17 October 1999, for example, Prime Minister John Howard paid tribute to a scheme that helped to:

Build the modern Australia. But… even more importantly than that the Snowy Mountians Scheme was an amazing Australian achievement bringing people together and binding them into one mighty Australian workforce… as I moved through the crowd today, it's a reminder to me of the incredible range of nationalities, of ethnicities, of people of different cultures, of different language, many of whom may have had the odd argument with each other before they came to Australia, but once they came to Australia they all found in this new welcoming tolerant country a new homeland.[xxxvi]

Likewise, the Governor-General of Australia, Sir William Deane, said a few months earlier on the occasion of the launch of the book *A Vision for Australia: The Snowy Mountains Scheme 1949-1999*, that the 'Snowy… project can… truly "lay claim to being the birthplace of Australian multiculturalism".'[xxxvii]

The Heritage Industry

The incorporation of the Snowy Mountains Scheme into the nation's officially recognised heritage demonstrates at one level the influence of ideology and government policy on heritage discourse. Here, heritage is enlisted by the state to accommodate social and cultural change – the relatively rapid transition of Australia from a mono- to a multi-cultural society – and minimise social conflict. The Snowy is not primarily remembered as a site of racial tension and partial segregation, as a place of hard, dirty and dangerous labour undertaken by foreigners recruited specifically to undertake work most Australians did not want to do or one

of binge drinking, fighting and prostitution, all of which it was. At the end of the twentieth century, the Snowy became a symbol of national unity in diversity and the crucible from which emerged Australian multiculturalism, which it was not. Minorities, however, can choose to collaborate with these officially endorsed, revised version of the past. Collaboration leads to consensual, utilitarian pasts that incorporate marginal groups into mainstream narratives.[xxxviii]

Listing also inevitably draws places and their meanings into heritage systems and formal practices and into the worlds of the bureaucrat and the heritage specialist. Technical mechanisms, such as heritage lists, are not value free. Their conceptualisation and construction overtly and covertly shape official stocks of heritage and perceptions of what constitutes heritage.

Table 1 reports the findings of the searches of the four selected Australian heritage databases: the Federal Australian Heritage Database; the Victorian Heritage Register and Heritage Inventory; the New South Wales Heritage Office Local and State Government Agencies Listings; and the Heritage Council of Western Australia's Places Database.[xxxix] Each of the database search outcomes was examined thematically. An initial reading of the results, however, indicated a dominance of war memorials, churches and church buildings and cemeteries. In the final count, of the 1524 listed items examined, 562 (or 36.9 per cent) were war memorials. While these comprised almost a quarter of Federal listings (175 out of 721) almost half of New South Wales' listings were war memorials (167 out of 341) and they accounted for 55.6 per cent of Western Australia's memorials (194 out of 349).

After war memorials, churches were the next highest category on the listings (174 items or 11.4 per cent). This was followed by the role that individuals played in the community (112 or 7.3 per cent), cemeteries (60 or 4 per cent), memorials to collective community roles (36 or 2.3 per cent) and personal memorials (30 or 2 per cent). Thus 48.3 per cent of all listings related to war and churches. It might be contended that this is not surprising given the relatively broad time span – dating back to initial colonisation – covered by the listed heritage items. But the lists themselves were all created during the last three decades. In 1979, four years after the establishment of the Australian Heritage Commission, Professor Ray Whitmore, Chair of the Commission, bluntly noted that:

> An interplanetary traveller landing in Queensland today and turning to the
> listings of the National Trust of Queensland or the Register of the National

Estate for an appreciation of the life and achievements of her citizens since settlement would be presented with a strange picture. He would conclude that her forefathers lived in fine colonial homes, made banks and churches their principal monuments, invested in practically no public utilities, and hardly ever went to work.[xl]

The *Queensland Heritage Act*, which established that State's heritage register, was not passed until 1992. Western Australia's heritage act came into being during the previous year. Victoria's *Historic Buildings (Amendment) Act* was assented to in 1989. The current Victorian Heritage Register, however, was legislatively established in 1995. New South Wales's *Heritage Act* was assented to at the end of 1977, though its current State heritage inventory was not set up until the early 1990s.

It was not any shortage of non-war or non-religious memorials that drive these listings. A survey of non-war memorials in Australia identified an abundant diversity of these across the country (see Table 2). Only thirty, however, of the 378 memorials identified – or eight per cent – had formal heritage listings.[xli] Clearly, it is not possible to list everything. But there are obvious limitations – evident in Table 1 which reflects an antiquated but officially dominant historical narrative – to heritage registers and lists that attempt to both frame the national and serve national agendas. Imagine a history of Australia which drew primarily on the memorials in the Federal and State heritage databases. It would certainly be an 'official' history – a history endorsed by its subject, the nation state – positive in tone with an underlying theme of progress. There would be few civil or natural disasters of any kind in such an account of the nation unless they highlighted unity in diversity and the indomitable Australian spirit. Migrant communities would be largely silent and Indigenous communities relegated to a brief mention and a footnote (much Aboriginal heritage is registered on separate lists such as the one for New South Wales formerly managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, which is dominated by pre contact heritage and excludes places such as fringe camps and lockups.)[xlii] The role of individuals in community formation would form a theme, but most of these people would be explorers, pioneers, politicians or people with property. Overall, this would be a history of the forging of a modern nation through sacrifice and the emergence of a masculine Australian identity.

Table 2

Memorial Themes[xliii] by Number and Per Cent

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Theme	No	%
Natural Disaster	21	5.55
Civil Disaster	13	3.43
Sudden Death	73	19.31
Migrant community	12	3.17
Indigenous Community	18	4.76
Individual Community Role	129	34.12
Community Role	40	10.58
Violation	2	0.52
Lost Places (Time)	2	0.52
Lost Places (State)	1	0.26
Animals	11	2.91
Personal Memorials	50	13.22
Disease	4	1.05
Other	2	0.52
Total	378	100

The Tadeusz Kosciuszko Memorial

State classificatory taxonomies and heritage listings have traditionally shaped what is
considered significant and worthy of remembrance.[xliv] But there is an interaction between
official paradigms and popular forms of memoralisation out of which emerge shifts in
understandings of the past and changes to rituals and meanings in relation to memorials and
commemorations.

While formal heritage listings clearly privilege certain kinds of memorials over others, official versions of the past as expressed through memorials come under continuous pressures, subtle and otherwise, to adapt to cultural and social change, new knowledge or rediscovered pasts. Adaptations are more profound after periods of rapid change when the gap between official pasts and realities become untenable or when different groups become more powerful and are able to insert themselves into official histories. The latter process is about 'fitting in'.

On the Snowy Mountains Highway at Cooma in New South Wales there is a six metre high memorial to Tadeusz Kosciuszko (see Figure 1). Stainless steel with a bust, its plaque in part reads:

> Tadeusz Kosciuszko
>
> 1746-1817
>
> The Polish patriot and hero, spent most of his life
>
> fighting for the freedom of his country.
>
> A champion of the underprivileged and oppressed in Poland, he went to America to become one of George Washington's generals, gaining much honour in the war of independence. In Thomas Jefferson's words, he was "as pure a son of liberty as I have ever known".

Polish explorer Count Paul Edmund Strzelecki named Mt Kociuszko in 1840. The plaque indicates that he also 'discovered' the mountain, thus ignoring its Aboriginal past. The monument was raised by the Federal Council of Polish Associations in Australia 'as a gift to the people of Australia in the Bicentennial year 1988'. While commemorating the mountain's 'discovery' and naming, it is equally if not more concerned with remembering, as noted on the plaque, 'the contribution of Polish settlers to the Snowy Mountain Scheme.' Thus the monument links Polish Australians during the country's largest national celebration into the major founding myth of nation – 'discovery' – and into the post World War II project of building modern Australia. It also demonstrates the power of that dominant though largely silent ideology in Australian history and society – respectability – with its promise of esteem and social acceptability. Principal contributors, as listed on the plaque, were the Government of New South Wales, the Polish Association of New South Wales, the Major Stanslaw and Dr Maria Luk-Kozika Foundation, Maria and Henry Syriatowicz, Contal Co Pty Ltd, the Polish Associations in Newcastle and Hobart, the Polish Ex-Servicemen's Association (sub-branch 3, Melbourne) and B. and K. Singler. As K. Anthony Appiah reminds us:

Hobbs spoke of the desire for glory as one of the dominating impulses of human beings, one that was bound to make trouble for social life. But glory can consist in fitting and being seen to fit into a collection history, and so, in the name of glory, one can end up doing the most social of all things.[xlv]

National unity, as Stratton and Ang contend, can only be represented 'by suppression and repression, symbolic or otherwise, of difference' or by incorporation.[xlvi]

The Kosciuszko memorial might be considered a form of 'positive' revisionism. Polish people are here incorporated into a story of democratic nation building, not without struggle and suffering, but with progress for all as its ultimate outcome. Memorials such as this, which is now part of a heritage trail, tend to be untouched by vandals and do not receive calls for their removal. Far less able to be incorporated into official pasts, however, are shameful or forbidden histories. But when they are officially recognised, to whatever degree, these acts of 'negative' revisionism can be confronting and highly disturbing. They destabilise the historical foundations upon which a supposedly comfortable, tolerant and multicultural society rests. And they can confront individuals over their own pasts. Australian examples include memorials to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations – Indigenous people who as children were forcibly removed from their families under the policy of assimilation – which are springing up around the country.[xlvii]

One such memorial was unveiled in Darwin's Botanic Gardens in the Northern Territory on 30 July 2005 (see Figure 2).[xlviii] Highly visible, well maintained and frequently visited, this memorial materially inscribes the burden of needing to make this history publicly known. Its four large plaques provide a map indicating where the stolen children were taken in the Northern Territory; a detailed list of the legislation which bestowed powers to control and remove Indigenous people; a message to future generations; an extract from a speech by Prime Minister Paul Keating acknowledging dispossession, discrimination, exclusion and the removal of children; and a four stanza poem which begins:

> Mothers left with empty arms
> Hearts broken, minds with no calm.
> Children without an identity
> Taken from their country.[xlix]

This memorial almost wails a history that had been suppressed or ignored for two generations; its abundance of text – both official and personal – says: 'This happened; you cannot ignore it'. But it took a significant report commissioned by the New South Wales Labor Government and produced in 1982 by historian Peter Read – who coined the term 'stolen generations' – and a $1.5 million Federal Labor government inquiry published in 1997 as *Bringing Them Home* – involving testimonies from hundreds of Indigenous people – to have this history fully recognised.[l]

Memorials to victims of the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) epidemic are also growing in number. AIDS was first diagnosed in Australia in November 1982 at St Vincent's hospital in Sydney. Public anxiety and ignorance about the disease, fuelled by media reports, led to acts of persecution and discrimination against gay people. Some politicians exacerbated this situation. Ian Sinclair, the leader of the Federal National Party, blamed AIDS-related deaths to the Federal Labor Government's policy of 'promotion of homosexuality as a norm' given it's decision to develop major educational programs to fight against AIDS.[li] The virus had a devastating impact on the gay community. But by the late 1980s it had also galvanised that community politically and driven the establishment of an annual national conference on AIDs, the formation of State-based People Living With Aids associations – which supported people in 'coming out' and advocated on the community's behalf – and the creation of State AIDS Councils. These groups became involved with or initiated memorials to AIDS victims.

One of the earliest of these was the Fairfield Aids Memorial Garden which was established in the grounds of Melbourne's Fairfield Hospital near the Yarra River. Work on the garden commenced in 1987 and it was opened by Ian Harris, who had AIDS, on 9 April 1988.[lii] Another memorial garden was opened at Newcastle's John Hunter Hospital on World AIDS Day on 1 December 1994. Other memorials include the Sydney Park AIDS Memorial Grove, plantings at which commenced in May 1994, and the AIDS Memorial Bell which was installed in a peal of bells in St James' Anglican church in King Street, Sydney, in July 2003. Memorials to AIDS have become a powerful part of the representation of a deeply sad but unifying part of this community's history. But in underscoring difference these memorials also provide a strong, unambiguous corrective to the notion of a quintessential Australian identity or a homogeneous Australian community.[liii]

Conclusion

Memorials and commemorations allow us to chart the complex interactions and negotiations between officially endorsed historical narratives, public and privately sponsored memorials

and commemorations in public spaces and new histories. As Ludmilla Jordanova reminds us, 'the state… lies at the heart of public history'.[liv] And this is evident in the public process of commemoration and memorialisation. At one level, the state endorses certain narratives within which communities and organisations need to operate if they are to be officially part of the national story and its regional and local variants. Ultimate endorsement for memorials includes listings on heritage registers. The state, however, is not monolithic. Permissible pasts evolve over time given shifts in power and social and cultural change.

In Australia, the authorised heritage discourse contributes to shaping the stereotypically Australian. It actively engages in creating a contemporary national story which glosses over the more shameful or distasteful episodes and themes in Australian colonial and post-colonial history which is presented as being by-and-large progressive and benign. While the process of forging national history has become more complex and increasingly fraught, given globalisation and the emergence of new histories, as Ien Ang and others have noted,[lv] nation and nationalism remain culturally persistent.

The turn to multiculturalism from the 1970s as the principal way of defining Australianess and the nation lead some conservatives in politics and the heritage industry to appropriate the new social history, using it to present diversity as an indicator of a fair and open society.[lvi] In this process, both history – an evolving academic discipline – and the past – lived experience which has meanings and uses in the present –[lvii] were transformed into heritage which, as David Lowenthal has argued, stands 'accused of undermining historical truth [which he acknowledges is slippery] with twisted myth'.[lviii] Migrant groups can contest authorised histories, thus rejecting colonial and post-colonial relations of power,[lix] or collaborate with official retrospective acknowledgements of their part in the national saga to gain a place in the sun.

Acknowledgment

Notes

[i] See, for example, Smith, *Archaeological Theory and the Politics of Cultural Heritage*; Waterton, 'Whose Sense of Place?; Waterton, Smith and Campbell, 'The Utility of Discourse Analysis to Heritage Studies'.
[ii] Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 11.
[iii] Ashton and Hamilton, '"Places of the Heart", 1-29.

[iv] See Scates and Frances, 'Honouring the Aboriginal Dead', 36-45.

[v] See, for example, Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 201; 203.

[vi] Hamilton and Shopes, *Oral History and Public Memories*, 3 (my emphasis).

[vii] Hodgkin and Radstone, *Contested Pasts*, 2.

[viii] Hamilton, 'The Knife Edge', 9-10.

[ix] Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 62.

[x] Glassberg, 'Public Historry and the Study of Memory', 7-8.

[xi] Hamilton and Shopes, *Oral History and Public Memory*, xi.

[xii] For a concise history of racism in Australia see Marcus, *Australian Race Relations*.

[xiii] Macintyre and Clark, *The History Wars*.

[xiv] Carter, 'Working with the Past', 10 (my emphasis).

[xv] Entitled 'Places of the Heart: Post 1960 non-war memorials in Australia', this national survey was funded by the Australian Research Council and was undertaken at the Australian Centre for Public History at the University of Technology, Sydney.

[xvi] 'Snowy Mountains Scheme, Snowy Mountians Hwy, Cabramurra, NSW', place detail.

[xvii] Places of the Heart Database, item 'Snowy Workers Memorial'.

[xviii] Irvine, 'Town Planning and National Efficiency', 260-1.

[xix] McHugh, *The Snowy*, 18.

[xx] Griffin, 'Selling the Snowy', 44.

[xxi] Neal, *Snowy Mountains Story*.

[xxii] Henderson, *Monuments and Memorials,* 42-3.

[xxiii] See Marcus, 'History of Post-War Immigration' and Merritt, 'Labour History'.

[xxiv] Office of Multicultural Affairs, *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia',* ix. See also *A New Agenda for Multicultural Australia* and Commonwealth of Australia, *Multicultural Australia*.

[xxv] Blainey, *All for Australia*, 170.

[xxvi] Castles, Kalantzis, Cope and Morrisey, *Mistaken Identity, 13*.

[xxvii] Different groups of people, however, had cause to remember the Snowy such as those who lost their homes and towns due to inundations. See, for example, Read, 'Our lost, drowned town in the valley', 160-74.

[xxviii] Walker, *2000 Golden Target Awards Collection*, 25-26.

[xxix] See, for example, *The Sun Herald*, 10 October 1999, pp1 and 53 and 17 October 1999, p77; *Weekend Australian*, 16-17 October 1999, pp1-8; T*he Age*, 7 October 1999, p16. See also *National Parks Journal*, no 12, 1999 <dazed.npa.npj/199912/#Scheme> accessed 4 November 2008.

[xxx] See <www.powerhousemuseum.com/hsc/snowy/investigating.htm> accessed 3 November 2008.

[xxxi] *Weekend Australian*, 27 January 1999, p12.

[xxxii] *Heritage Office News*.

[xxxiii] The Australian Heritage Commission, established in 1976, was abolished by the conservative Howard Government in 2003. See Ashton and Cornwall, 'Corralling Conflict', 53-65.

[xxxiv] See note 16.

[xxxv] For example, see <www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/articles/snowyscheme> accessed 4 November 2008.

[xxxvi] 'Transcript of the Prime Minister The Hon John Howard MP Address'. See reports of this in *The Age*, 18 October 1999, 9 and *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 October 1999, 8.

[xxxvii] 'Address by Sir William Deane'.

[xxxviii] See, for example, Hamilton and Ashton, 'On Not Belonging', 23-36.

[xxxix] The Federal database was chosen to give a general national spread; the New South Wales database due to one third of the 'Places of the Heart' memorials coming from that state; Victoria because it is the second most populus state; and Western Australia because of its large geographical size and relatively small population.

[xl] Whitmore, 'Our engineering heritage', 126.

[xli] For an overview of this project see Ashton and Hamilton, 'Places of the Heart', 1-29.

[xlii] See, for example, Byrne, 'The Archaeology of Disaster'.

[xliii] Memorials to natural and civil disasters, sudden death – including road fatalities – migrant and Indigenous communities, animals and disease – such as AIDS – as well as personal memorials are self explanatory. Individual community role pertains to individuals who are remembered by communities for their various contributions, community role relates to the memorialisation of collective roles that

communities have played. These include memorials to emergency service workers, timber getters who opened up areas of Australia and started up an industry and organizations such as the Country Women's Association. Violation concerns memorials to those who have been murdered, raped or abused. The memorial to child sexual abuse in Hobart, Tasmania, is an example of the latter. Lost places (time) concerns memorials to places that have disappeared with the passage of time; lost places (state) to places that have been removed by official dictate.

[xliv] See, for example, Healy, *From the Ruins of Colonialism*, 77-129.

[xlv] Appiah, 'Identity, Authenticity, survival', 159.

[xlvi] Stratton and Ang, 'Multicultural imagined communities', 135.

[xlvii] See Ashton and Hamilton, op cit, pp24-25.

[xlviii] *Northern Territory News*, 29 July 2995. Thanks to Bev Phelts for the detailed recording of this memorial.

[xlix] Places of the Heart database item 154.

[l] The *Bringing Them Home* report is available at www.auslii.edu.au/au/special/rsproject/rsjlibrary/hreoc/stolen/.

[li] Thanapalasuntheram, 'A reflection: 20 years of Positive Life NSW', 1-2.

[lii] *The Herald*, 16 November 1987, p3; *Melbourne Star Observer*, 22 April 1988, p1.

[liii] For the American example, see Sturken, *Tangled Memories*, 145-182.

[liv] Jordanova, *History in Practice*, 155.

[lv] Ang, 'Intertwining histories', 23-35.

[lvi] Knauer and Walkowitz, 'Introduction', 5.

[lvii] Jensen, 'Usable Pasts', 46.

[lviii] Lowenthal, *Possessed by the Past*, x.

[lix] See for example, Pugliese, 'Migrant Heritage in an Indigenous Context', 5-18.

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