

## History goes Walkabout

### Abstract

Could the methods of History – and not just its objects of study – be decolonised? This essay explores analogous areas of cultural production, such as painting, to determine how historians might begin to produce work which lies outside the western, Euro-Christian imaginary. It focuses on the case of Australia and the means by which Aboriginal artists have reanimated and recalibrated traditional forms of knowledge, offering new bases for thinking about the history and temporalities of Australia. The work of the painter Tim Johnson is then presented as an example for History in his demonstration of the ways in which indigenous methods and ways of seeing the world can be deployed by Others. The ethical, theoretical and practical challenges which accompany such work are detailed, alongside an historiographical account of the way in which these discussions mesh with seminal debates in postcolonialism, subaltern studies and settler colonialism as they relate to historical theory. Drawing on recent work in *History and Theory*, the article asks what might be the consequences for History were it not to develop a meaningful ‘global turn’, arguing that a critical moment has been reached in which modes of understanding the world which come from outside the west need to be incorporated into historians’ repertoires for thinking and making.

Keywords: Australia, Settler Colonialism, Tim Johnson, Aboriginal art, Ethics, Historical Theory

### Prelude

In December 1992 the Australian Prime Minister, Paul Keating, made the following remarks in a speech to indigenous Australians:

It begins, I think, with that act of recognition. Recognition that it was we who did the dispossessing. We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the diseases. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice. And our failure to imagine these things being done to us.<sup>1</sup>

One of the many remarkable features of this speech was its recognition of the costs imposed by the failings of the Self’s moral imagination. Across time, white Australians bore responsibility for historic crimes and cultural injustice, but they had also failed to reflect on the lives of Others. They had not considered that their own actions could have been grounded in notions of shared humanity; nor the idea that the capacity to dispossess, smash and murder might have been tempered had the effects of such behaviours been imagined on the bodies of Selves and not simply upon those of Others.

## Introduction

Using the Australian case, this essay addresses an analogous form of imaginative failure in the discipline of History.<sup>2</sup> Like Keating, it is concerned with the violent costs of regimes of knowledge, but, more than anything else, it focuses on the creative possibilities which emerge when imaginative failures are recognised and new forms of thought are countenanced: in which Selves learn and borrow from Others.

When *History and Theory* published an important theme issue on “Historical Theory in a Global Frame” in 2015, it was predicated on the idea that there might not be a universal theory of History, but also that the custodians of historical theory might learn something from their global others. Yet alongside this deoccidentalization of knowledge, could one really imagine such epistemological reflection generating a discipline in which, say, Hindu histories of the European Reformation sat alongside accounts of the medieval world which drew on Navajo cosmology? When Hegel wrote that Africa was ‘no historical part of the world’ and Marx that ‘Indian society has no history at all’, might we not admit that they were right in the sense that if ‘history’ encapsulates methods and worldviews, as well as teleology, these foundational thinkers were only articulating what would become unquestioned assumptions in the discipline of History?<sup>3</sup> As the editors of the special issue remarked, struggling to think how the world could be imagined without reference to the West, ‘It is one thing to provincialize Europe. It is something else altogether to de-provincialize the non-West’<sup>4</sup>

‘But’, then, ‘how to write a new history?’, when, as Robert Young asked, ‘[Aimé] Césaire observed, the only history is white?’<sup>5</sup> Young then went on to note what seemed to be the marginal importance of colonial critique – concerned as it was with ‘the geographical peripheries of metropolitan European culture’ – before making two astonishing claims. The first was that such work would matter not only for ‘minorities or for those with a specialist interest in colonial history’ but would eventually ‘effect a radical restructuring of European thought’. If this aim was grand, Young’s second proposition brought with it added shock value, for he asserted that the chief and necessary target of this radical restructuring was historiography. Dry, arcane, barely useful, historical theory, scarcely of interest to historians, let alone to the rest of the academy or the world, would be targeted for if it could be rethought, it possessed the potential to unlock deeper forms of deoccidentalized knowledge. Yet how was this to be achieved? How and why would conceptual writers on the past acquire the modes of critique which would allow them to unthink their positionality, their canon, and to see the radical potentiality of their field?<sup>6</sup>

After all, when David Loy wrote a *Buddhist History of the West*, historians seemed immune to the idea that one might want to ground a study of the occident on ideas which came from outside. Loy’s book received considerable attention from theologians, but the notion that the history of the west might look different from a Buddhist perspective excited no interest in historical journals. Their guiding assumption has been that the methods and theories which ground History are necessarily western, even if its subject matter may have been pluralised.<sup>7</sup>

It has also tended to be the case that absented Others only became actors (or sources of theory) in national stories through the bypassing of History by other academic disciplines.<sup>8</sup> As Veracini notes in the Australian case:

It is not a coincidence that Indigenous history was literally repatriated from overseas by C. D. Rowley and W. E. H. Stanner working in Papua New Guinea and developing the structures that would allow a successive incorporation of an Aboriginal history within public discourse. History and colonialism were happening overseas: they had to be 'smuggled in' by scholars (it is significant that both Stanner and Rowley were not historians) who were in a position to finally bypass the conceptual blockages embedded in a settler colonial conception of history.<sup>9</sup>

This article is, however, concerned not simply with the erosion of blockages through smuggling and repatriation, but also the more global question as to whether the western – or what Gubara and Wick call the 'Euro-Christian'<sup>10</sup> – understanding of the past, or of time, possesses the capacity for transformation through dialogue with Others.

Such borrowing and reimagination evidently raises questions of the ethics of mimicry and cultural appropriation<sup>11</sup>, for it is to ask not simply whether the subaltern can speak, but whether we can speak as the subaltern. Before addressing such risks, it is worth remembering that we never perceive such hazards to exist when we devise western historical accounts of Others, for we have naturalised an assumption of Selfhood as universality.<sup>12</sup> The West is un-spatial in a sense that Others could never be and, if anything, such trends are only accelerating in the latest phase of epistemological globalization in which satellite campuses of franchised universities, such as SUNY Korea and Nottingham Ningbo compete with domestic educational brands. Can we imagine that courses on Arab-Islamic temporalities are taught at UCL Qatar or that Yoruban accounts of the world feature in curricula at the American University of Nigeria? Thinking back to the start of the twentieth century, we might wonder how Oswald Spengler can have conceived of the notion of the *Decline of the West*.<sup>13</sup> Was it simply the case that he carried with him ancestral memories of the period before the nineteenth century, before the West's triumph and the interlaced rise of the historical profession and historical science?<sup>14</sup>

The oddity of the notion that westerners ought to be able to read Others' cultures on their own terms (and the concomitant strangeness of the idea that Others might view westerners through their own frames) was cuttingly described by W.G. Strehlow. Remarking on the ethnographic sources upon which the human sciences' view of Aborigines were founded, he noted that:

If a non-white observer, who could neither read nor understand any of the European languages, had come to Europe and had by any chance written down an eye-witness account of the symbolic actions performed in a Christian church ceremony without being able to furnish any interpretation based on the actual words used in that ceremony, we should think very poorly of his account as a piece of accurate or informative descriptive writing.<sup>15</sup>

Such sentiments will seem familiar to almost any historian who has studied encounters between whites and the extra-European world anywhere in the modern period, as will Eliade's remark that 'It now seems obvious that all these hypotheses, theories and "historical" reconstructions are more significant for the cultural history of the Western world than they are for the understanding of the Aboriginal religions.'<sup>16</sup> While Strehlow was describing the nineteenth-century moment in which the structures of disciplinary knowledge were founded, we might ask both how much has changed today

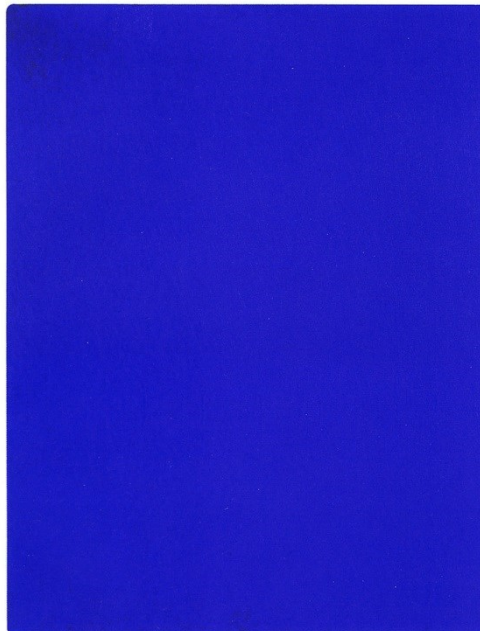
in either the Self's stance towards the alterity of the Other or the strangeness of the notion that the worldviews of 'non-white observers' might serve as the analytic basis of readings of the West.

It is true that the development of sub-fields of global and world history have meaningfully changed the scope of the discipline. What is more, Subaltern Studies, and postcolonialism more generally, have ensured that non-Westerners are dignified as subjects of History, rather than simply its objects. Nonetheless, it is one thing to be a subject and another to be the provider of methods, let alone theories. If histories of Others are simply reproduced in the genres, modes of publication and intellectual structures of the West, should we not admit that the discipline has taken just the first steps towards its globalization?

The industry of historical production is part of what is at stake here, but so too is epistemology. History is a time word built upon cultural assumptions. As Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth has shown, it was made at a time (alongside empire), it was motivated and its coming-into-being was far from natural.<sup>17</sup> Yet until historians can conceive that others' experiences of time (which they know exist) might form the bases of temporal explorations akin and equal to those of History, we will be stuck in a moment where the appearance of cosmopolitanism masks the conformity imposed by a conceptual imprisonment of which most are unaware.

#### A gallery sojourn

Because of History's conceptual inelasticity, we may need to learn from other fields of human endeavour which have pushed harder at rethinking the basic assumptions which underpin their practices. Take art, for instance:



Yves Klein, IKB 191 (1962)



Carl Andre, Equivalent VIII (1966)

### Back on track

At this point historians of gender, and perhaps other subaltern groups, might point out that epistemological reconfiguring has been critical in their projects, making knowledge from things which were there but not seen, and broadening the discipline through their openness to theories from elsewhere in the academy. In the case of writers like Carolyn Steedman this has extended to rethinkings of the form of historical knowledge and its presentation outside expected literary conventions.<sup>18</sup>

Returning to the dangers of caricature suggested by Selves wishing to learn to see as Others, it might be said that the greater risk lies in not taking such chances. We live in Strehlow's nineteenth-century world, but we also inhabit an academy in which many disciplines have confronted the alterity of Others. Drawing on Strehlow's analogy, theologians no longer assume that Buddhism ought necessarily be viewed as a religion in the Judaeo-Christian sense, nor do many even use the term in its singular form.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, the reflexive turn in anthropology abandoned the commonsensical identification of western culture as culture *per se*, opening up the possibilities for new critiques of the west and new views from and of the non-west.<sup>20</sup>

Other defences against the charge of cultural tourism can be found in Indigenous Studies. Jeremy Beckett, for example, has alerted us to the dangers of notions of authenticity and the failure to recognise that indigenous forms of knowledge are not static monuments to which need to be revered in originary forms<sup>21</sup>, while Ann McGrath's *Born in the Cattle* showed ways in which

Aboriginal cultures found authentic means of adapting to modernity (alongside Daryl Wesley's work on the incorporation of guns into rock art).<sup>22</sup> Miranda Johnson shows how the new Australian history might be hyphenated in its ethos and its form<sup>23</sup>, while Michelle Bastian writes of the possibility of the co-production of 'shared time' in Australia.<sup>24</sup> Both projects are underpinned by the notion of hybridity – so important to postcolonialism and the work of cultural producers such as Salman Rushdie, Tayyeb Saleh, Jean Rhys and the Pontecorvos – which will be studied here through the Australian case, asking how such temporal production might be actualised.<sup>25</sup>

Chancing misappropriation or misconstrual could also be seen to be an ethical imperative, for in the Australian case, we are speaking of cultures and worldviews which were generally obliterated over a period of two hundred years. The act of reanimation does not therefore always traduce the lived Other, but may be a means of preserving that which is endangered or that which was designed to be destroyed. Whether the duty of the Other's agency can be assumed by the Self is one of the central questions explored here, but let it not be said that the failure to ask such questions is anything other than a refusal to recognise a moral duty to preserve and believe in alterity. Here I am thinking of the story Stanner told in the Boyer lectures when he spoke of:

The sad story of an elderly Aboriginal whose tribe had been scattered, who saw the links which bound him to the land being broken, who felt himself to be cut off from the sources of his own life and from the continuities of his people. He was aware that everything that he had loved and everything with which he was familiar was in ruins around him and that he must come to terms with the alien white man's civilization. When he was about to leave his country to seek a place within that white man's civilization, Stanner found him burning something in a fire and asked him what he was doing. And the old man replied quietly and unemotionally: 'I am burning my dreaming'.<sup>26</sup>

Thinking of how this man must have reached this conclusion, Stanner went on to say that the broader culture's 'inattention' to Aboriginal life 'on such a scale' could not 'possibly be explained by absentmindedness'.<sup>27</sup> 'It is', he said, 'a structural matter, a view from a window which has been carefully placed to exclude a whole quadrant of the landscape. What may well have begun as a simple forgetting of other possible views turned under habit and over time into something like a cult of forgetfulness practiced on a national scale.'

Whilst the embers of dreamings still glow, there is therefore a duty to unthink the habits and forgetfulness which have taken us to where we are now, invoking a historical imperative for justice which Berber Bevernage explores better than anyone else in his consideration of the relations between time and history.<sup>28</sup> Writing of this 'haunting past', Edward Cavanagh argues that:

Philosophically undergirding Western notions of history is the somewhat arbitrary chronosophy whereby the 'past' is miraculously situated behind us (and never Immediately with us). This is surely one of history's most restrictive ideological attributes, occluding our view of deep continuities and injustices.<sup>29</sup>

'It is worth remembering', he remarks, 'that conceptions of history and its writing are never innocent', invoking the broader contribution of Settler Colonial Studies and Patrick Wolfe's remark that settler invasions need to be recognized as structures rather than events.<sup>30</sup> The 'deep continuities and injustices' spoken of by Cavanagh can only be recognised and addressed by

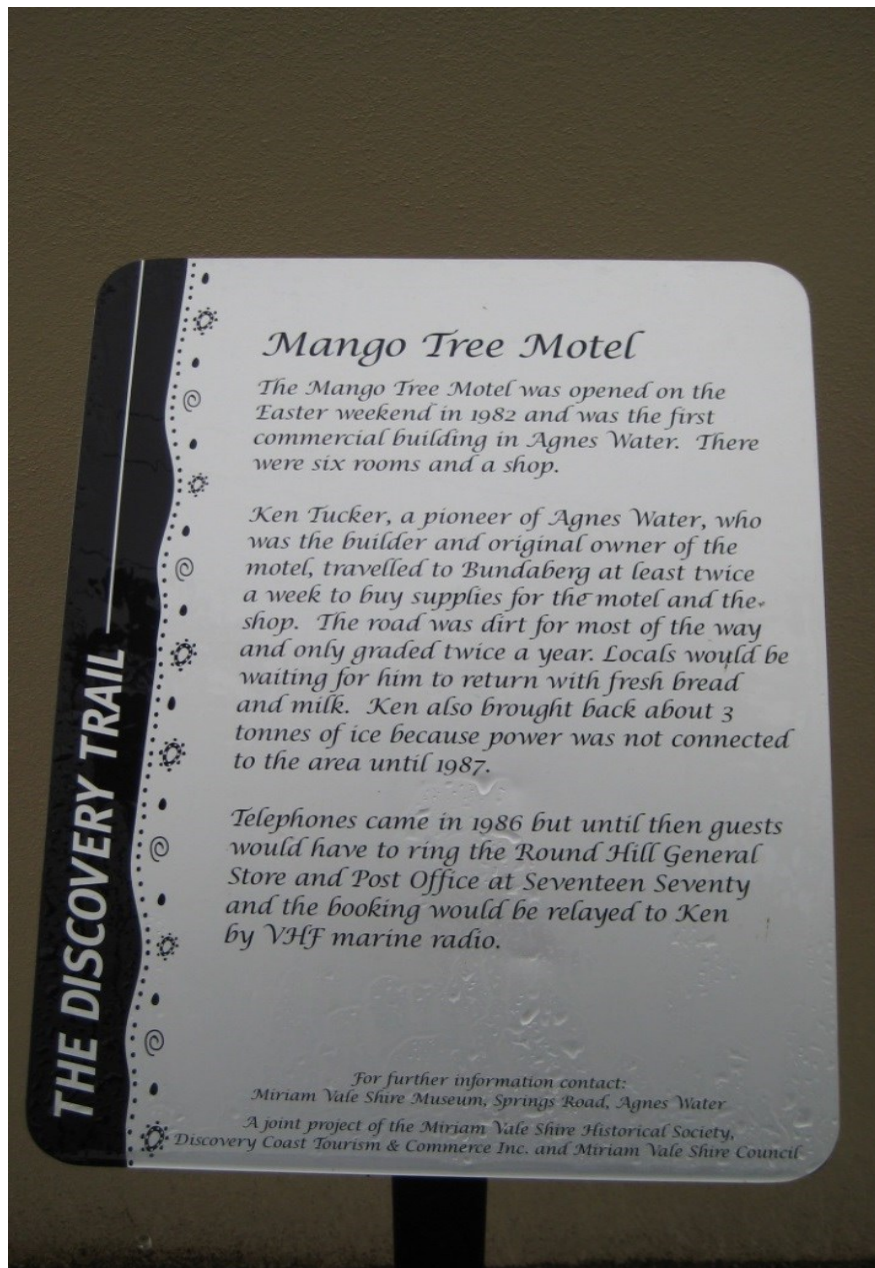
acknowledging the need for forensic reconsiderations of time, in which pastness describes that which continues and mutates<sup>31</sup> as much as it does that which has disappeared. Fierce debates in popular culture and education on the terminology used to describe the peoples of the past are one frontline in such battles, as contestations emerge over the potential for language to deliver forms of restitutive justice.<sup>32</sup>

Quite what such discussions might offer the broader discipline of History are explored in this essay, focusing on the Australian case in part because of the sophistication of debates across its academy and broader culture.<sup>33</sup>

### A motel break



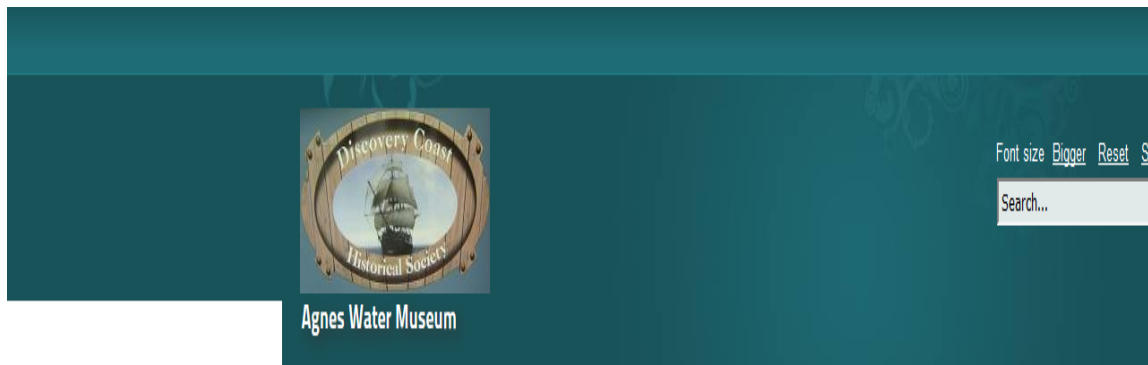
A few years ago, we pulled in at the Mango Tree Motel in Agnes Water, Queensland. Not used to driving the kinds of distances which travel in Australia demands, we were certainly glad of its comforts, but what I was not expecting was to discover that I was staying at a historic site:



It is of course too easy to play the part of the snotty European in the colonies. Ken brought back three tons of ice as well as the bread and the milk! Yet the banality of the historying here should not exclude a critique of what is at work in the Agnes Water Discovery Trail: namely the obsessive and ongoing desire of the settler colonialist to make and register facts on the ground so that his homeland is established as a place with a legitimate past stretching towards a collective future. The Mango Tree Motel functions as an emblem of Australian history in its contention that it is the built heritage of men that constitutes the past, no matter how insubstantial, as opposed to the geo-spiritual time of the continent's indigenous inhabitants, apparent all around in the beauty and complexity of the landscapes of the place (capable of being reconstituted, but effaced of potential in the settler historical project).



Agnes Water is an especially telling setting for the making of history, for its near neighbour on the so-called 'Discovery Coast' is the Town of 1770 – known simply as Seventeen Seventy to locals – formerly the community of Round Hill, but renamed in 1970 to celebrate the bicentenary of Cook's second landing on the Australasian continent. 1770 offers a classic example of historical language games' doubling of memorialisation and forgetting, for while its name notionally brings to mind the relatively recent arrival of Europeans in Gregorian, let alone Aboriginal, terms, it also of course acts as a form of forgetting and conquest by the sign (as if such a thing was needed two hundred years later). It becomes natural to head to Seventeen Seventy for a beer, for the groceries, to live from a Year Zero which succeeded and became naturalized far more successfully than was the case in Revolutionary Paris or Communist Peking. As Gilbert Wright, Secretary of the Australasian League, concluded in 1853, 'We should aim at nationality—at individuality—at a character. We should not blend our associations with the histories of the Old World. Why not have an era—a chronology of our own?'<sup>34</sup> This sense of white historical anxiety persists to our present, as seen in Ann Curthoys' 2002 essay "Does Australian History Have a Future?", in which Aboriginal Australians (and their histories and knowledge) feature only as victims of genocide who might allow Australians to contribute to transnational histories of mass killing.<sup>35</sup>



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## Indigenous Peoples of the Discovery Coast from 1770



Category: [Discovery Coast History](#)  
 Published on Friday, 09 December 2011 00:25  
 Written by JohnD  
 Hits: 2791

The page on Indigenous peoples of the Discovery Coast since 1770 is under construction. We hope to publish it soon.

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Ken, the Mango Tree Motel, 1770 and the strange case of the yet-to-be constructed pages of the Agnes Water Museum website serve as emblems of broader features of the Australian historical experience and its construction. Ken plays the role of the pioneer, the suffering white settler whose travails Andrew Lattas noted became 'a means for conferring the right of ownership to the land', constitutive of a broader historical and national consciousness as victimology.<sup>37</sup> The Discovery Trail performs a brand of 'Heritage' which Veracini suggests 'emerges as the only non-unsettling form of history in a settler determined political body. A disinclination to deal with history as process (as opposed to history as residue) is confirmed, for example, by a propensity to emphasise heritage rather than transformation.'<sup>38</sup> The Discovery Trail signposts the semiotic power of white settlers, in temporal and spatial senses, stressing the constructive power of heritage formation in a place which might otherwise be remembered for *historical* atrocities.<sup>39</sup>

The proposed page on the 'Indigenous Peoples of the History of the Discovery Coast from 1770' dramatises the genocide of the Aborigines of Queensland in the most telling and unknowing of fashions – as absence – whilst also stressing the moment of invasion as a new beginning, such that *earlier* (pre-1770) histories of Aborigines need not be considered. For as long as I have looked at this site, this page has been 'under construction', the 'hope' being that something can be published 'soon', thwarted by the alien and erased character of that which might be recorded. In a way, this also brings to mind Leonore Coltheart's broader critique of what she distinguished as "history about Aborigines" rather than "Aboriginal history", observing that 'Writing about Aborigines is necessarily the imposition of an alien explanatory framework on Aboriginal experience and Aboriginal understanding'; "a kind of epistemological expropriation" in which that which is designated as the premodern gives meaning to the modern; a vague backdrop not amenable to detailed study, let alone to its consideration on its own terms. Or, in the case of Agnes Water, a blank page.

### The Form of the History

On the one hand, settler society required the practical elimination of the natives in order to establish itself on their territory. On the symbolic level, however, settler society subsequently sought to recuperate indigeneity in order to express its difference—and, accordingly, its independence—from the mother country. Hence it is not surprising that a progressive Australian state government should wish to attach an indigenous aura to a geographical feature that bore the second-hand name of a British mountain range. Australian public buildings and official symbolism, along with the national airlines, film industry, sports teams and the like, are distinguished by the ostentatious borrowing of Aboriginal motifs.

Patrick Wolfe, 'Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native'<sup>40</sup>

Can the recuperation of indigeneity amount to more than the expression of settler difference? Is the borrowing of Aboriginal motifs always distinguished by an ostentatious shallowness designed to cloak a tale of horror with a liberal aura? Perhaps surprisingly, Veracini makes the case that positive answers can be made to these questions, describing the advent of 'a [recent] true historiographical makeover [...] firmly establishing Aboriginal history in Australian history, historiography and Academia, and "repatriating" it – conceptually as well as metaphorically.'<sup>41</sup>

While it is true that the thickets of the historiographical character of colonial society have been picked through much more in Australia than in other colonial societies, is it really the case that the concepts and metaphors of Aboriginal culture have really made their way into the mainstream of Australian history, the academy or culture? Beyond a vague sense of the meaning of the Dreamtime and the pleased identification of white society with the aura of dot painting, in what sense can it be claimed that Australian notions of knowledge and understanding in any sense lie outside of the Euro-Christian imaginary?<sup>42</sup> Indeed, we might ask why Veracini's 'Prehistory of Australia's History Wars' develops its argument without reference to Aboriginal Australians or any forms of indigenous

knowledge, while, as Moses shows, Indigenous Australian intelligentsia has been riven by divides over the ethics and value of engaging with the western academy on its own terms, asking how decolonizing knowledge is made and what it will serve now and in the future.<sup>43</sup>

How can the historian today understand Aboriginal religions and times?<sup>44</sup> In return for gaining a place in the narrative of universal history, indigenous Australians saw their numbers reduced by around ninety per cent between 1788 and the 1840s, and the individual burning of a dreaming cited earlier was but a part of a wider conflagration in which a shared culture of 'Songlines' across a continent was eliminated almost to the point of extinction.<sup>45</sup> 'Classical' Australian civilizations – which lay isolated from almost all other human cultures from the second millennia B.C.E. to the later eighteenth century – can only now be approached through oral traditions, artworks and fields such as linguistics.

Reading Australian temporalities through such fields, it is plain that they possess many features which we rarely find in other cultures. The Dreamtime after all describes a faith where no distinction is made between religion, literature, history and law, all of which are described through song. Histories are recounted through verse or art, often of a temporary nature, made on the land or painted onto bodies. These texts offer detailed temporal accounts of things which are almost absent from other historical cultures, such as mountains, seas and rivers. This implies a phenomenological intricacy which has rarely been addressed by academic literatures, for what such accounts imply is not simply that things exist both in their thingness but also in some wider sense as things in time.

Thinking through this is almost beyond us. Pictures or metaphors of objects within shards of light that stretch and travel together come to mind. To use an analogy from western culture, let us imagine a situation where we are able to understand in an equally comprehensible manner the shape and meaning of both time and events as they relate to a journey we took yesterday, are taking and will take tomorrow. It is important to note here that history does not need to be permanently inscribed by man to acquire authority. Where westerners venerate the veracity of permanence and the inscription of truth in a moment, Australian histories have a much greater capacity to come in and out of being.

For this reason, Eliade makes a very useful analogy with modernist literature:

One must read the descriptions of Spencer and Gillen *in extenso* to understand why even the most dreary landscape is, for the aborigines, charged with awe: every rock, spring and water hole represents a concrete trace of a sacred drama carried out in the mythical times. For the Western reader, these endless wanderings and fortuitous meetings of the Dream Time Heroes seem excessively monotonous. (But then the wanderings of Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses* also seem monotonous for the admirer of Balzac or Tolstoi.)

Just as modernism required new forms of reading if one was to appreciate the novel ways in which it apprehended the modern world, Australian texts demand a willingness to read and understand differently from non-Australian readers. Eliade's analogy is an especially appropriate one since it might be argued that Australian texts display precisely the kinds of temporal and spatial dislocation which troubled readers of Joyce and Eliot, brought up on very specific and stable forms of linear, progressive temporalities.

*I sat upon the shore  
Fishing, with the arid plain behind me  
Shall I at least set my lands in order?  
London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down  
... These fragments I have shored against my ruins  
... Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.  
Shantih shantih shanti<sup>46</sup>*

Less helpfully, and with echoes of his nineteenth-century forebears, Eliade asserted that:

The definitive characteristic of Australians and other primitive peoples is not their lack of historicity but their specific interpretation of human historicity. They too live in history and are shaped by historical events; but they do not have a historical awareness comparable, say, to that of Westerners; and, because they do not need it, they also lack a historiographical consciousness. The aborigines do not record things in an irreversible chronological order.

Australian historiographical consciousness can, however, be found in art and landscapes. A historiographical consciousness does not depend upon a teleological or progressive temporal ordering, and in Aboriginal art we see not just temporal description but also commentaries on the way that histories and earlier discussions of time are made.<sup>47</sup>

Neoclassical Australian art of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (especially since the 1970s) offers a deepening of traditional truth, adding complex layers of interpretation onto classical art, providing precisely the kinds of historiographical consciousness which Eliade cannot find in Australian culture (while linguistic studies also contradict his claims regarding the narrow temporal range of Aboriginal cultures<sup>48</sup>). Such discussions self-consciously address the relationship between classical and neoclassical production, the possibility of accessing ancient truths in the modern world, and, therefore, the viability of Dreaming temporalities today.

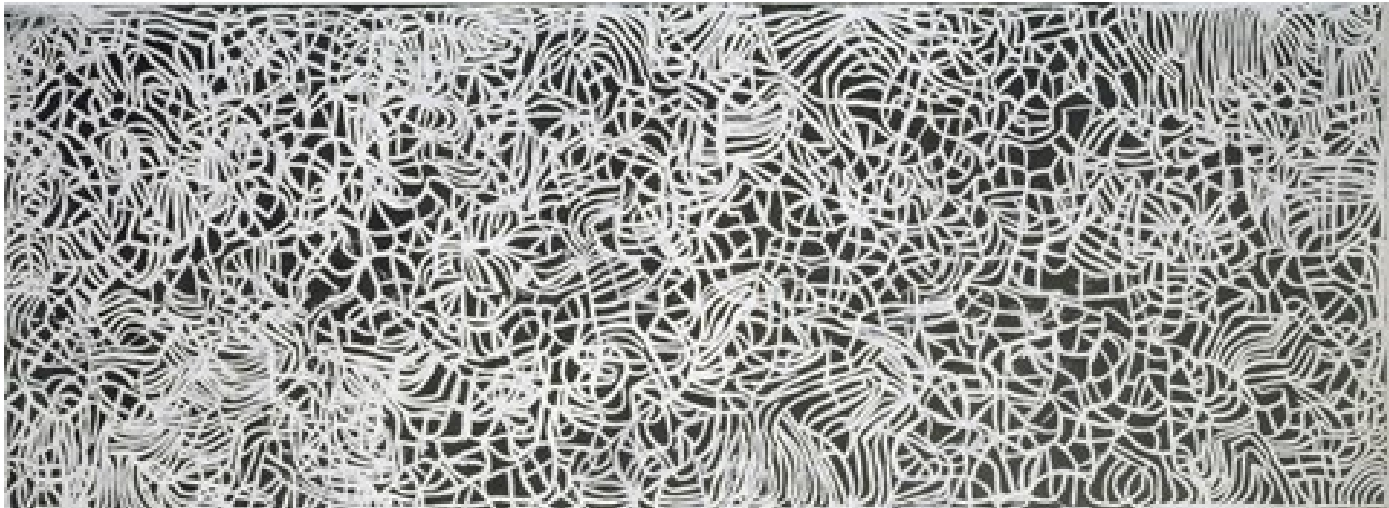


Tim Leura Tjapaltjarri and Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri, *Spirit Dreaming through Napperby Country* (1980)

Let us take Wally Caruana's account of the Tjapaltjarri's painting, which displays many of the characteristic forms of such art in the way in which it:

Depicts the journey through the artist's life and country. The painting features a path-line meandering between circular resting places, and major Dreamings of the artist are shown in three vignettes. From left to right, these are the Old Man's Dreaming, the Yam Dreaming and the Sun and the Moon Dreaming. The spears and a boomerang indicate the presence of the great ancestral Hunter. The spirit of death, a skeleton, is shown nearing the end of the journey.

The painting then lies somewhere between the representation of a journey around dreaming sites, and a journey in itself, since the manner in which one reads this long and complex set of narratives is to move along the path it represents. This, then, offers the first instance of a form of complexity which both replays and refines Australian temporalities, since the experience of viewing this painting, for those open to its heritage, is to both be in the now of the painting and to be in the then, or the will be, of its journey; the so-called *everywhen*.<sup>49</sup> The force of the past ruptures the viewer's present in the way in which the earth's coming into being emerged in the Dreamtime, along with the manner in which the sanctity of daily life was revealed in classical culture as the signs of that coming into being (which were both celebrated and incorporated into the life-stories of Australians). The painting is therefore ceremonial, but of an order of complexity not seen in classical art, suggestive of the need for the creation of a reworking of traditional tropes in permanent forms on canvases in these new times.



Emily Kame Kngwarreye, *Big Yam Dreaming* (1995)

Another great, late work, left for the future soon before death, as with Tim Leura, was Emily Kame Kngwarreye's, *Big Yam Dreaming*, though in her case her entire recorded artistic output occurred in the final decade of her life once she passed eighty. While the painting may initially induce doubts that Others may like Aboriginal art simply for its abstraction and a coincidence of formal interests with modern western painting, the more one looks at the work, the more you can feel the force within and behind it.

The productive qualities<sup>50</sup> of the Dreaming and the duty of the individual to ensure its coming-into-being were well described by a contact of Stanner (Sutton 1989: 15):

My father...said this: 'My boy, look! Your Dreaming is there; it is a big thing; you never let it go [pass it by]; all Dreamings come from there.' Does the white man now understand? The blackfellow, earnest, friendly, makes a last effort. 'Old man, you listen! Something is there; we do not know what; something.' There is a struggle to find words, and perhaps a lapse into English. 'Like engine, like power, plenty of power; it does hard work; it pushes.

The something which is there, which pushes, is certainly here, and its being ought to produce a certain sense of confidence. We cannot be all Others, we can only know so much, we rely on guides, we will not all be Bruce Chatwin, but we can aspire to his openness to the ways that others see the world such that the form of our works might disrupt the generic conventions of disciplines and serve to encourage others that they could do so less imperfectly. W.G. Sebald surely shared such aspirations.<sup>51</sup>

History often presents a conservative and officious face to the world, but it is also a shamanic practice in which time is conjured; a wilder form of human endeavour whose recognition might allow practitioners to see Kngwarreye's painting as a great work of History: an exploration of the inter-connectedness of things, an experience which can be at once both communal and personal, a guide to the structure and architecture of the world and that which lies beyond, of things which are seen and unseen and the relations between them, a statement of beauty and thanks, the duty of tradition and its radical, innovating potential, of things that we may struggle to say in words, but which we can feel. History, as Greg Dening said, was one of the 'great unsilencing arts'.<sup>52</sup>

### Timothy Johnson

In order to try to understand the value and risks which the co-production of knowledge entails – when the Self admits a capacity to be changed by the Other and chooses to follow that path – let us consider the work of the artist Timothy Johnson. Classically avant-gardist in the sense in which his career has seen him work in a number of distinct aesthetic phases, Johnson began by exploring the fields of conceptual and performance art in 1970s Sydney.



*Light performances (1971-72)*

Towards the end of that decade he was inspired by the energy of the music scene to create punk art, before deciding to travel to work alongside the artists of the Aboriginal Renaissance at Papunya Tula in central Australia, where he became a painter in the revived traditions of the desert interior. There he was one of the first white artists to see the value and importance of the revival of Aboriginal forms and the development of neoclassical forms of Australian art.<sup>53</sup> Johnson himself began to paint using the styles and motifs of the creators around whom he studied and worked, incorporating the colours, techniques and tropes of the revived Aboriginal imaginary into his own artworks.

This led some to ask whether Johnson's art was exploitative in its appropriation of Aboriginal forms. Was its hybridity on his terms?<sup>54</sup> Was the alterity of the Dreamtime lost in work which was, in the end, simply the high art precursor to so many knock-off dot-painted didgeridoos and boomerangs sold in tourist outlets all around Australia? It is important, however, to note that at the time Johnson made these works, Aboriginal art had neither the imprimatur of broader cultural acceptance through the value of exchange at the auction house or its inclusion in established galleries and museums. It was a movement less than a decade old of which Johnson, critically, saw himself as a recorder as much as a participant. Indeed, Johnson began what would become a critical new conversation about the manner in which white Australians engaged with indigenous culture, for he began to explore



questions of collaborative knowledge, production and power which have since animated producers from across the worlds of art, academia, theatre, museums, literature, filmmaking and music.<sup>55</sup>

The ethics of Johnson's collaborations seem simpler when we consider that his work was predicated on conversation and the openness to the idea of learning from others; going beyond Keating's white 'ignorance and prejudice' to ask whether all Australians might gain from accessing Aboriginal means of imagining the world. Johnson worked on canvases with indigenous artists, seeking permission when he used either techniques or individual Dreamings in his own paintings, whilst also promoting the work of his collaborators on the art market and sharing the profits from the sale of his own works.<sup>56</sup> He was also given the 'skin name' Tjapaltjarri, 'making him brother to both Tim Leura and Clifford Possum', whilst other local artists – such as Michael Nelson Jagamara and Turkey Tolson Tjupurrula – were *kirda* (equals or brothers) rather than *kurdungulu* ('managers' or 'policemen').<sup>57</sup>

Significantly, and to a degree which seems to have been underestimated in (art) historical literatures, he also saw his role as chronicling the extraordinary, world historical significance of this cultural moment, as much as he did the making of his own work. Johnson was a student of a culture whose works provide a historical account of the 'miracle in the desert'.



Like most of his work from this period, *Summer of Images* (1984) tells a story about the making of artworks at Papunya. It dignifies the significance of this neoclassical revival of a culture which was almost annihilated in the manner in which it narrates this history using language and forms which were being revived. The creator here is enmeshed in a world of making, Dreamings, place and time which speaks not only of the importance of this moment in Australian cultural history, but also the way in which it speaks to the pasts and futures of Aboriginal temporalities, which had been written out of white accounts of history and heritage.

In *Don Tjungurrayi* (1984) Johnson respects the restriction on the depiction of the faces of individuals in Aboriginal culture, describing the work of his friend in a manner which questions the borders between the artist and his subject, a painting and the world.



Here we see Don Tjungurrayi painting, but in expanding dot motifs beyond the canvas, Johnson alludes both to the manner in which Tjungurrayi is painting the world, rather than a representation of the world, whilst also signposting a new direction in his own artistic practice as he comes to appreciate such forms as means of deepening his own apprehension of the world. Not only might Australia be represented by indigenous knowledge and cultural forms, his work seemed to say, but the settlers of the colony might even begin from analogous starting points in their understandings of the place in which they lived.

This sense of the historical purpose of Johnson's work was further explored in *First contact* (1984)<sup>58</sup>:



Given the importance of notions of 'first contact' in histories and anthropologies of the meeting of Europeans with colonial Others, Johnson's title is suggestive of the manner in which he saw Papunya as an opportunity to rethink the history of Australia, and the imperial age more generally. The setting of the painting is critical for rather than the story of Australia beginning on the white beaches, forests and jungles of the coast, this is clearly a meeting in the red desert of the interior. This is the place where the remnants of Aboriginal culture remain, where they have the potential to be remade such that the broader history of the continent might emanate from its centre rather than from the voyages of Cook and Banks and the establishment of European outposts on the edges of the landmass.

Temporally, something interesting is happening here, because we are forced to ask in what sense this meeting can be thought to be a moment of 'First contact'? We know that by the time Johnson painted the work, whites and Aboriginals had lived alongside one another for two hundred years, yet the novel quality of the encounter to which Johnson is alluding surely extends beyond introducing the moment at which artists and curators will come to be interested in Aboriginal culture. This is arguably a moment of first contact understood using indigenous temporal understanding, for the figures seen here are meeting in what might almost be thought to be a counterfactual history, in which Australia is the desert, the art work and the individuals flattened across one plane, rather than the brute realities of a country which, as Keating said 'took traditional lands and smashed a traditional way of life'. Here Johnson dramatises the significance of Papunya as a new beginning

which is collaborative and in which the Self speaks in the language of the Other. It is an Australian Dreaming, not in the western sense of an imaginary picture of the world or of the future, but a reality which was, is and can be the world.

Johnson returned to these themes almost thirty years later in a series of works which pressed home a number of ideas which had perhaps been missed by critics of the earlier work. Using photographs from those times, the new paintings stressed the extent to which Papunya as a movement had involved a group innovating, teaching and learning a language, showing – as in *West Camp* (2012) – a communal endeavour of aesthetic production:



In *From a Memory Lost* (2012) Johnson dramatised the way in which he believed that Aboriginal Australians were reclaiming not only their own past through the production of art, but opening up broader questions of the representation of time and identity. Here Aboriginal artists meld into both the natural world and a cast of iconic figures familiar from across the world of Johnson's art: east Asian Buddhist stupas, western European monks, Native American horsemen:



Some may perceive a danger here in the way in which the work embodies a countercultural humanism in which cultural difference is eroded and effaced, both figuratively and literally on the canvas, yet there is also a sense in which Johnson reclaims a solidarist humanism alongside Aboriginal Australians, as opposed to the exterminatory humanism of the modern era, which developed theories that served to justify the oppression of Others on civilizational grounds. Johnson's making of art about the making of art attempts to tell us something about the purpose and process of production; the beauty, the ethos, and the making of the thing called Australia even. This is about the making of place and the way in which such a fundamental reimagining would need to take place once one does what he does, which is to start to imagine the very points of production, method and thought from indigenous knowledge.

It is important to remember that before Johnson no Australians had believed that the story of modern Australia might be told using indigenous forms of knowledge. Johnson saw in Papunya that Aboriginal Art dignified not only the indigenous past and culture, but also that it was possessed of a radical potential in the sense that it could act as a form of rupturing of western time by Aboriginal temporalities. This, though, could arguably only be achieved in reaching white audiences in a distinct manner, for if they were to see their history set alongside that of indigenous Australians, painted in a Aboriginal manner, they might be able to begin a process of unthinking and seeing the world afresh. Art was a tool of the moral imagination, in Keating's sense, seen in work such as *Where we meet* (2010) and *Harbour Bridge* (2011):



The cast of this painting includes the ships of Cook and Banks, colonial architecture, the Sydney Opera House and the Harbour Bridge, alongside Aboriginal figures, painterly styles and forms of nature associated with Dreamings<sup>59</sup>, whilst Johnson also smuggles in eclectic imagery ranging from Buddhist iconography to UFOs. In doing so, he articulates not only his own preoccupation with the duty of finding new ways of seeing emanating from the alien Other, but he presents an account of Australia and her past which can only be read as white and Aboriginal. Not that he is subscribing to a naïve idea of a conjoined history, for a part of the challenge of this work is the manner in which it is read, for while it can be appreciated for its beauty in a monocultural western sense, it can arguably only be read by those with some understanding of the architecture of the Aboriginal universe and aesthetics.

In paintings such as *Lakota Sioux* (1990) Johnson took the logic of his Australian paintings further in painting the history of indigenous Americans in styles borrowed from Aboriginal art, imagining there to be some kind of structural, or perhaps even psychic, similarity in encounters between indigenous peoples and Europeans in the nineteenth century:



The loss of those cultures, and their displacement as symbols of space and nation, inspired this heroic tableaux of the things which might have come to be seen as American had they not been destroyed. In a formal sense, even to those unfamiliar with his work, it is clear that Johnson's appropriation of Aboriginal dot painting and the abstract manner in which histories are archived across his canvases, is allowed to travel thousands of miles to stand in as the basis of the representation of a quite different people. The story of the beauty and the destruction of the lives of indigenous north Americans in the nineteenth century could, after all, be related using the forms – both mental and figurative – of the painters of the Aboriginal Dreamtime, and we ought not assume that the Euro-Christian imaginary is the only *lingua franca* which can be deployed to describe the lives of peoples across the world.

### Conclusion

The conclusion of this article is simple: we need Aime Césaire's 'new history'. How can this be obtained?: by learning from analogous fields of cultural production, such as painting, to see the gains which can come from adopting non-western forms as the bases of production. This involves



historical producers taking risks, making mistakes, courting controversy and taking missteps, but not to follow such paths will simply entrench the global hegemony of the Euro-Christian imaginary. Critically, the rootedness of this picture of the world is increasingly forgotten as it is globalised, not least since history can be adapted to local norms in the same manner as the novel, the soap opera and the feature film.

Robert Young was right to suggest that historiography was one of the key domains in which such battles should be fought. While it may seem a marginal field, its epistemological questioning possesses the capacity to restructure the grounds of the production of History, and while its producers may sometimes feel that they struggle to be heard, they should know that they have the capacity to alter the very outlook of the field. Yet the 'radical restructuring of European thought' of which Young spoke can only be effected by the combination of the estrangement of European culture in works of critique, which has arguably been achieved by works of deconstruction and postcolonialism, and by admitting methods and worldviews from the non-west into the western academy, which has barely begun.

Tim Johnson ran risks in his painting, drawing on the heritage of those such as Eliot who believed in the idea of seeing the west from outside. He would not necessarily claim that his work amounts to more than a set of new beginnings, but it is precisely the admission of the need for such novel starting points which History needs and which can be provided by historiography.

In some ways the parochialism of historiography is nowhere more evident than in the directions travelled after the work of Hayden White, the linguistic turn, and postmodern concerns with representation. Such questions have proved to be catnip for historians as well as philosophers of history and historiographers, yet their deoccidentalizing impulses have rarely been followed. Take the work of White for instance: if *Metahistory* demonstrated the ways in which the medium was the message in the case of nineteenth-century histories, how have we now arrived at a historical culture where the range of appropriate literary conventions is in many ways more limited than those White analysed in the nascent science? Was there even a sly decolonizing instinct in White's great work? History, after all, could not have been whiter than the cases he chose to analyse: the Marxes, Hegels and Rankes for whom Africa and India had no history, but if this hint was intended, it has scarcely been followed.

James Vernon was right that in adopting postmodernism lite, historians epistemologically neutered forms of thinking such that they might never impact upon the bases of their work.<sup>60</sup> The challenge posed by cases such as the Australian one, however, is to realise that engagement with Others has to be all-in, rather than based on the assumption that sheens of exoticism amount to an engagement with difference.

The reality is that historiography and the philosophy of history have had all sorts of *entrées* into nonwestern perspectives and chosen not to adopt them so as to stay within the narrow and satisfying conventions of their own language game<sup>61</sup>. This is nowhere clearer than in the epistemologically critical area of temporality; the very basis of the historical project. Historiographers, let alone historians, have shown almost no interest in the temporal cultures of the non-West and have had no desire to look at the relationship between such traditions and the production of texts about time elsewhere, or to imagine that their might be modes of explaining or understanding time which could have any influence on the production of western knowledge.

Other modes of understanding time are often perceived to be inherently ridiculous by western audiences, precisely because they do not map onto the commonsensical notions of temporality which come from our lived experience (which are therefore hard to unimagine or to see as being culturally particular).

Take Chao-Chou's famous response to the question 'What is the answer to history, the one thing which will open the door?' to which he replied, 'Have a cup of tea!'<sup>62</sup> Ludicrous! Unfathomable, precisely because to understand what was meant by this riddle would be to study the history of Buddhist temporalities so as to be able to grasp the radical offer of the Mahayana, and, in particular, the end points of Zen temporality which sought to expunge from Buddhist culture forms of reliance on everyday understandings of time which were mere illusions as compared with the radical temporal offer of ahistory. There is a great deal of work entailed in coming to understand such an idea on its own terms and it is not a form of engagement with others which historians and historiographers have shown themselves willing to undertake.

From its earliest days Buddhist thought engaged with empiricism of a kind which is similar to that which informs modern western historical thinking and the modern west more generally. Buddhism emphatically rejected the empirical method as a means of understanding the world, so part of the challenge entailed in a reconstruction of a Buddhist philosophy of history is to follow the divergent paths Buddhism took once it had rejected the empirical basis on which we centre our own understanding of the world, along with seeing why other cultures came to reject empirical, representational, reconstructionist modes of history.

This helps us to grasp that the history of the empirical, reconstructionist tradition and its rejection is more larger and complex than we think. This is apparent, in Buddhism's case, even within the foundational (Theravadan) canon where we find a rejection of 'natural' views of time in texts such as the Sri Lankan *Visuddhi Magga* (c.430 C.E.) where the method called the 'fivefold questioning' of time is enumerated (Warren 1922: 243). This consists of interrogating the key aspects of time and existence in, respectively, the past, the future and, as seen here, the present:

"Am I?

"Am I not?

"What am I?

"How am I?

"Whence came this existing being?

"Whither is it to go?"

There may be something reassuring to the western sensibility about these questions and the manner in which they cohere with foundational modes of interrogation in other religions and cultures, but the setting out of these questions in Buddhism is not to establish them as the bases of Buddhist culture, but merely to abandon them. All such questions are discarded for they represent the roots of a false picturing of the world; in which ultimate truths could be ascertained through the extension of an understanding of the self to the comprehension of the world.

Part of the moral obligation of historians to the world should be that the discipline ought to see itself as the protector and preserver of temporal traditions from such cultures. Ecologies of time and history are just as precious as natural habitats or languages, each of which are supported by massive environmental, academic, charitable and governmental efforts to preserve the beauty and complexities of our world. And while new modes of thinking about time do emerge, we should not be blind to the fact that such things can be lost, that much has disappeared, and it has of course been under the aegis of sweeping processes of western homogenisation in which indigenous knowledge and ways of life have been altered or eradicated, as was the case in Stanner's example of the old man who destroyed the last of his people's past.

Many such dreamings and modes of temporal being have been burnt or lost, but, along with Anthropology, History has an opportunity not only to preserve but to see other ecologies of time as ways of reimagining the world. After all, the process of coming to live in the time of the 'white man's civilization', was one also shared by Europeans in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, with studies of 'factory time' differing little from Paul Kropiniker's account of his insertion into a new temporal culture in Australia:

Then I had the shock of starting to live by time – three meals a day, get up in the morning at the same time, go to bed by the clock. Before, it was if you're hungry you eat, if you're not you don't, if you're sleepy you sleep, if you feel good you do what you feel like you're doing. Then all of a sudden you come into a world where you're controlled by the clock.

Historiographical inaction is a form of violence of the kind described by Paul Keating, for it denies the act of recognition, it serves as a form of exclusion and it represents a 'failure to imagine these things being done to us'. In its stead, let us have recognition, experimentation and aspirations to justice.

## Resolution

At airports passengers are greeted by banners with pictures of smiling Aboriginal faces in hard hats, promoting the plunderers of their land. "This is our story," says the slogan. It isn't.

Barely a fraction of mining, oil and gas revenue has benefited Aboriginal communities, whose poverty is an enduring shock. In Roebourne, in the mineral-rich Pilbara, 80% of the children suffer from an ear infection called otitis media, which can cause partial deafness. Or they go blind from preventable trachoma. Or they die from Dickensian infections. That is their story.<sup>63</sup>

**John Pilger**



Timothy Johnson, *Eden Burns* (1991)

Perhaps one day this civilization will produce a culture. When that happens there will be a real history of the discoveries of the 18th, 19th and 20th Centuries, which will be deeply interesting.<sup>64</sup>

### **Ludwig Wittgenstein**

The world heritage-listed Kakadu National Park will be expanded to include thousands of hectares of ecologically sensitive land that contains uranium worth billions of dollars.

In a generous act, the Aboriginal traditional owner, Jeffrey Lee, has offered the land to the federal government so that it can become part of Kakadu, where he works as a ranger.

Mr Lee, the shy sole member of the Djok clan and senior custodian of the land known as Koongarra, could have become one of Australia's richest men if he had allowed the French energy giant Areva to

extract 14,000 tonnes of uranium from its mineral lease in the area.

"I'm not interested in money. I've got a job. I can buy tucker; I can go fishing and hunting. That's all that matters to me," Mr Lee told the *Herald* in a rare interview in 2007.

"There are sacred sites, there are burial sites and there are other special places out there which are my responsibility to look after," Mr Lee said in 2007. "I'm not interested in white people offering me this or that ... it doesn't mean a thing," he said.<sup>65</sup>

*Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 May, 2010

As I said, it might help us if we non-Aboriginal Australians imagined ourselves dispossessed of land we had lived on for fifty thousand years - and then imagined ourselves told that it had never been ours. Imagine if ours was the oldest culture in the world and we were told that it was worthless. Imagine if we had resisted this settlement, suffered and died in the defence of our land, and then were told in history books that we had given up without a fight.

Paul Keating, Redfern Speech, 1992



Emily Kame Kngwarreye, *My Country* (1996)

There is one thing today we cannot imagine. We cannot imagine that the descendants of people whose genius and resilience maintained a culture here through fifty thousand years or more, through cataclysmic changes to the climate and environment, and who then survived two centuries of dispossession and abuse, will be denied their place in the modern Australian nation. We cannot imagine that.

Paul Keating, Redfern Speech, 1992



Tim Johnson, *Wind Dreaming* (2012)

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Cavanagh, 'History, Time and the Indigenist Critique', *Arena Journal*, 37/8 (2012), 17.

<sup>2</sup> The Australian case being but one example. For instance, Islamicate temporalities might be considered with reference to Moroccan time (Ellen Amster's *Medicine of the Saints* and Nils Riecken's work on Abdallah Laroui) or Shi'i temporality in modern Iran (Ali Shariati, Jalal al-e Ahmad).

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990), 175-76. See also Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Ethan Kleinberg and William R. Pinch, 'History and Theory in a Global Frame', *History and Theory* 54-4 (2015), 1-4.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 118.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 399, 408-10.

<sup>7</sup> A selection of Loy's reviews:

<http://enlight.lib.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-PHIL/ew117035.pdf>

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/191253>

<http://www.dharmalife.com/issue19/Buddhisthistory.html>

[http://www.jstor.org/stable/1466450?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1466450?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

[https://www.academia.edu/7941562/Review\\_of\\_A\\_Buddhist\\_History\\_of\\_the\\_West\\_Studies\\_in\\_Lack\\_by\\_David\\_R.\\_Loy\\_SUNY\\_Press\\_2002\\_.JAS\\_64.3\\_2005\\_724-25](https://www.academia.edu/7941562/Review_of_A_Buddhist_History_of_the_West_Studies_in_Lack_by_David_R._Loy_SUNY_Press_2002_.JAS_64.3_2005_724-25)

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236821118\\_A\\_Buddhist\\_History\\_of\\_the\\_West\\_Studies\\_in\\_Lack\\_review](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236821118_A_Buddhist_History_of_the_West_Studies_in_Lack_review)

<sup>8</sup> It has been striking that almost all of the conceptual gains which have come to History in the modern ages have come from outside the discipline, largely from para- or quasi-historians such as Loy or writers such as Michel Foucault and Robert Young, whose work has mediated theoretical developments from the wider academy.

<sup>9</sup> Lorenzo Veracini, 'Historylessness: Australia as a settler colonial collective', *Postcolonial Studies*, 10-3 (2007), 271-85.

<sup>10</sup> Dahlia Gubara and Alexis Wick, forthcoming work.

<sup>11</sup> I'm grateful to Lynn Hunt for pointing these questions out to me.

<sup>12</sup> See Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *Wittgenstein and Justice: On the Significance of Ludwig Wittgenstein for Social and Political Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

<sup>13</sup> Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) [1918, 1922].

<sup>14</sup> Georg Iggers forthcoming work on the shift in the west's idea of history from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century will look at this question in some detail. See also Rolf Torstendahl, *The Rise and Propagation of Historical Professionalism* (London: Routledge, 2015).

<sup>15</sup> T.G.H. Strehlow, *Songs of Central Australia* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1970), xvi; and see the review of this book by A.P. Elkin in *Oceania* 45-3 (1975), 245-47.

<sup>16</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Australian Religions: An Introduction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), xii.

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<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, *Realism and Consensus in the English Novel: Time, Space and Narrative* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983) and *Sequel to History: Postmodernism and the Crisis of Representational Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

<sup>18</sup> Carolyn Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman* (London: Virago, 1986) and *Dust* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001). See also Ann Laura Stoler's *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), which also, like Steedman, draws inspiration from Derrida's *Archive Fever*, troubling basic categories of history and history-making. The building blocks of the archive seem to cohere to make something solid, Stoler suggests, but we ought to be alive to the kinds of fragility masked by this authority.

<sup>19</sup> John S. Strong, *Buddhisms: An Introduction* (London: Oneworld, 2015).

<sup>20</sup> Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Work of Anthropology: Critical Essays 1971-1991* (Amsterdam: Harwood, 1992) and *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); and Alfred Gell, *The Anthropology of Time: Cultural Constructions of Temporal Maps and Images* (Berg: Oxford, 1992).

<sup>21</sup> Lorenzo Veracini, 'A Prehistory of Australia's History Wars: The Evolution of Aboriginal History during the 1970s and 1980s', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 52-3 (2006), 439-54 (451).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 448. Daryl Wesley, 'Firearms in rock art of Arnhem Land, Northern territory, Australia', *Rock Art Research* 30-2 (2013), 235-47.

<sup>23</sup> Miranda Johnson, 'Writing Indigenous Histories Now', *Australian Historical Studies* 45-3 (2014), 317-30.

<sup>24</sup> Michelle Bastian, 'Political Apologies and the Possibility of a 'Shared Time' in the Australian Context', *Theory, Culture and Society*, (0-0), 1-28.

<sup>25</sup> And this leaves to one side the colossal literatures on the hybridity of the west, such as Jerry Brotton's *The Renaissance Bazaar: From the Silk Road to Michelangelo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>26</sup> H.C. Coombs, *Kulinma: Listening to Aboriginal Australians* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1978), 31.

<sup>27</sup> Veracini, 'A Prehistory of Australia's History Wars', 440.

<sup>28</sup> Berber Bevernage, *History, Memory and State-Sponsored Violence: Time and Justice* (London: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>29</sup> Edward Cavanagh, 'History, Time', 18; Veracini, 'Prehistory', 444.

<sup>30</sup> Patrick Wolfe, 'Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8-4, (2006), 387-409. And see: Elizabeth Strakosch, *Neoliberal Indigenous Policy: Settler Colonialism and the 'Post-Welfare State'* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

<sup>31</sup> Wolfe, 'Settler Colonialism', 402: When invasion is recognized as a structure rather than an event, its history does not stop — or, more to the point, become relatively trivial — when it moves on from the era of frontier homicide. Rather, narrating that history involves charting the continuities, discontinuities, adjustments, and departures whereby a logic that initially informed frontier killing transmutes into different modalities, discourses and institutional formations as it undergirds the historical development and complexification of settler society.



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<sup>32</sup> See: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/postcolonial-blog/2016/mar/30/its-not-politically-correct-to-say-australia-was-invaded-its-history>

<https://teaching.unsw.edu.au/indigenous-terminology>

<sup>33</sup> To take just some examples: Habeich, Anne, "'Clearing the Wheat Belt": Erasing the Aboriginal Presence in the Southwest of Western Australia', in A. Dirk Moses (ed) *Genocide and Settler Society: Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History* (New York: Berghahn, 2004), 267-89; Moses, A. Dirk (ed), *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History* (New York: Berghahn, 2008); Watson, Pamela, 'Passed Away? The Fate of the Karuwal', in Moses, *Genocide and Settler Society*, 174-93; Thomas James Rogers and Stephen Bain, 'Genocide and frontier violence in Australia', *Journal of Genocide Research* 18-1 (2016), 83-100.

<sup>34</sup> Lorenzo Veracini, 'Historylessness', 274.

<sup>35</sup> Ann Curthoys, 'Does Australian History Have a Future?', *Australian Historical Studies* 118 (2002), 140–152. This is a terrible shame because Curthoys is a fine scholar, but it is telling that her vision of the future of Australian history and Australianness looks only outwards, to hoped-for respect from white others, rather than into Australia's own cultures and peoples.

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.agneswatermuseum.com/index.php/discovery-coast-history5c1f3/indigenous-peoples>

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<sup>37</sup> Lorenzo Veracini – 'Historylessness', 282 – cites Ann Curthoys, 'Expulsion, Exodus and Exile in White Australian Historical Mythology', *Journal of Australian Studies* 61 (1999), 3

<sup>38</sup> Lorenzo Veracini, 'Historylessness', 279.

<sup>39</sup> Queensland, after all, had a special place in the history of 'die outs' in Australia. See: Michael Rowland, 'Myths and Non-Myths: Frontier 'Massacres' in Australian History – the Woppaburra of the Keppel Islands', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 28 (2004), 1-16 and Raymond Evans, "'Plenty Shoot 'Em": The Destruction of Aboriginal Societies along the Queensland Frontier' in A. Dirk Moses (ed) *Genocide and Settler Society*, 150-73. The memorialisation of tragedy and atrocity in twentieth-century white Europe can be fruitfully contrasted with its erasure in Australia. See also: A. Dirk Moses, 'An antipodean genocide? The origins of the genocidal moment in the colonization of Australia', *Journal of Genocide Research* 2-1 (2000), 89-106.

<sup>40</sup> Patrick Wolfe, 'Settler Colonialism', 389.

<sup>41</sup> Lorenzo Veracini, 'A Prehistory of Australia's History Wars', 454.

<sup>42</sup> Patrick Wolfe, 'On Being Woken Up: The Dreamtime in Anthropology and Australian Settler Culture', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 33-2 (1991), 197-224.

<sup>43</sup> A. Dirk Moses, 'Time, indigeneity and peoplehood: the postcolony in Australia', *Postcolonial Studies* 13-1 (2010), 9-32. And see the 'sovereign warrior woman' critique of Moses by Aileen Moreton-Robinson, 'The White Man's Burden: Patriarchal White Epistemic Violence and Aboriginal Women's Knowledges Within the Academy', *Australian Feminist Studies* 26-70 (2011), 413-31.

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<sup>44</sup> William Gallois, *Time, Religion and History* (London: Longman, 2007), and see the review essay – ‘The Discovery and Recovery of Time in History and Religion’ – on this book by Mark Cladis in *History and Theory* 48-3 (2009), 283-94. It seems important to note that my book describes plural forms of western temporality.

<sup>45</sup> Bruce Chatwin, *The Songlines* (London: Vintage, 1998); <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jul/04/indigenous-songlines-a-beautiful-way-to-think-about-the-confluence-of-story-and-time>

<sup>46</sup> T.S. Eliot, ‘The Wasteland’, in *Complete Poems and Plays* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1952), 50.

<sup>47</sup> T.G.H. Strehlow, (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1970). Strehlow’s masterpiece – *Songs of Central Australia* – is now a very hard book to find because since it was written a new mood has emerged in Australia, where it has come to be seen to be unethical to publish and record religious ceremonial material which was never intended to be inscribed in books and articles. In part because of this, there is now a rather nuanced view of Strehlow in the field, though to my mind such ambiguity ill serves the skill and monumental quality of his work, and his great attendance to the needs of his subjects, amongst whom he lived his whole life. A sympathetic portrait of Strehlow is offered by Bruce Chatwin. See also: Anna Kenny, *The Aranda’s Pepa: An Introduction to Carl Strehlow’s Masterpiece Die Aranda- und Loritja-Stämme in Zentral-Australien* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2013). A number of excellent studies of Australian art offer both sources and important interpretative essays: Ronald M. Berndt (ed), *Australian Aboriginal Art* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), Peter Sutton (ed) *Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia* (New York: Viking, 1989), Wally Caruana, *Aboriginal Art*, 2nd edn (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), Howard Morphy, *Aboriginal Art* (London: Phaidon, 1998), and J.V.S. Megaw ‘The Dreamtime Comes To Park Avenue’, *Canberra Anthropology*, 13-2 (1990), 75-90. The best introductions to Australian religions and philosophy are probably Mircea Eliade, *Australian Religions: An Introduction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973) and Tony Swain, *A Place for Strangers: Towards a History of Australian Aboriginal Being* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Another crucial writer on Australian culture who should not be ignored is W.E.H. Stanner, whose *After the Dreaming: The 1968 Boyer Lectures* (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1969) gives a very clear picture of the methodological and moral issues at stake in the study of Australian history.

<sup>48</sup> S.A. Wurm, *Languages of Australia and Tasmania* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972), Colin Yallop, *Australian Aboriginal Languages* (London: André Deutsch, 1982) and R.M.W. Dixon, *The Languages of Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980)

<sup>49</sup> As a 2016 Harvard Art Museum exhibition was entitled, ‘Everywhen: The Eternal Present in Indigenous Art from Australia’.

<sup>50</sup> It is not, then, simply the case that the individual is a fixed point in a temporal flux or continuum, for one’s self is, was and will be in the Dreaming. This is what Stannard – quoted in I.M. Lewis, *Social Anthropology in Perspective: The Relevance of Social Anthropology*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1985, 120 – called the ‘everywhen’, which is of course strongly reminiscent of our earlier discussions of the ways in which Christianity deployed temporal grammar as a means of apprehending the world in complex ways.

<sup>51</sup> In *The Emigrants, Rings of Saturn, Austerlitz* and *Vertigo*; all (London: Vintage, 2002).

<sup>52</sup> Greg Dening, ‘Writing, Rewriting the Beach: An Essay’, *Rethinking History* 2-2 (1998), 143-72 (145).

<sup>53</sup> Fred R. Myers, *Painting Culture: The Making of an Aboriginal High Art* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 194.

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<sup>54</sup> See essays by Eric Michaels and Bob Lingard in Sue Cramer (ed) *Postmodernism: A Consideration of the Appropriation of Aboriginal Imagery* (Brisbane: Institute of Modern Art, 1989) [thanks to Roger Benjamin for the reference].

<sup>55</sup> See: Andrew Schaap et al, *The Aboriginal Tent Embassy: Sovereignty, Black Power, Land Rights and the State* (London, Routledge, 2015); D. Bird Rose, 'Worshipping Captain Cook', *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*, 34 (1993), 43-49; David Malouf, *Remembering Babylon* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993); <http://singing.indigenouknowledge.org/home/contents> ; <http://connectingcountry.arts.monash.edu.au/>

<sup>56</sup> Roger Benjamin, 'Inner Landscapes', in Wayne Tunnicliffe (ed) *Tim Johnson: Painting Ideas* (Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery), 28-43 (37). See also: Jonathan Watkins and Roger Benjamin (eds) *Tim Johnson: The Luminescent Ground* (Birmingham: Ikon, 2014) and <http://artkritique.blogspot.co.uk/2009/04/on-tim-johnson.html>

<sup>57</sup> Benjamin, 'Inner Landscapes', 30.

<sup>58</sup> The lower-case 'contact' is used here.

<sup>59</sup> We head here towards a Heideggerian history of things and dreamings such as that of the kingfisher: <http://www.japingka.com.au/articles/kingfisher-luurn-creation-story/>

<sup>60</sup> James Vernon's thoughts on epistemological neutering are of great use here, in 'Thoughts on the Present 'Crisis of History' in Britain' (1999): <http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Whatishistory/vernon.html>

<sup>61</sup> Their very-own *prison-house of language*.

<sup>62</sup> D.T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, first series (London: Rider, 1970).

<sup>63</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/apr/28/australia-boom-aboriginal-story-despair>

<sup>64</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), 64.

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/owner-wants-uraniumrich-land-to-be-added-to-kakadu-20100528-wldt.html>