

K. S. Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Revised Edition, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2008), 640 pages, ISBN-0522854796.

This new edition of *Sacred Places* is timely, covering as it does the momentous events of the past decade since the initial edition of 1998, thereby reanalysing the legacy of past memorials and mourning in the light of 9/11 and the ensuing War on Terror. It is interesting also to read this work in relation to recent philosophical writing on violence, and objects of mourning, as Inglis excavates the space between silence and the memorial, where a subtle and rigorous interrogation of war, nation and state is possible.<sup>1</sup>

*Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape* is a far reaching work which sets the work of war memorials in the context of the colonial era when Australian subjects and land were considered British. Inglis writes hauntingly of a time when the ‘conflict with Aborigines was never warfare’, the myth perpetuated through education where young people ‘learned of no Aboriginal casualties’ (p.21; 22). *Sacred Places* contrasts this silence with North American and New Zealand memorialisation of conflict. Inglis indicates that this knowing silence emanated from racist guilt, describing the uncanny work of memorialisation in Australia as being both a reminder of the massacre of people and land besides the valour of the victors.

Inglis chronologically charts the events and use of war through the iconography, site and text of memorialisation, interrogating its function and ramifications for nationhood - both for the included and excluded in Australia, revealing the ethnic and gendered divides. The political dimensions of imperialist war-memorials are also explored. Inglis deals movingly with the performative acts of pacifism, particularly in this new edition where one of the main changes is the detailing of Richard Ramo’s ‘Temple of Peace in “Anzac Days”’ (chapter 5). Here, Inglis reveals that new research suggests that the fabrication of the specifics of the deceased (names and dates) on this particular memorial may have been produced for political means. Indeed, Inglis subtly charts the diverse manner in which pacifist action has developed. Chapter 8 charts the increase of individual and group action against war and the interrogation of memorials between World War Two and Vietnam. In chapter 9, Inglis builds towards the strands of interest that are most pertinent to the twenty-first century, charting the slowly-changing attitude to aboriginal peoples. He discusses how the new developing respect for aboriginal sacred places, besides a parallel awareness of the sacred nature of Anzac memorial sites, led to altered texts on memorials to include the formerly excluded and to document the surfacing of evidence of atrocities on both sides. This latter chapter shows the emergence of feminist action on, and analysis of, war and of the cult of Anzac. It also explores the religious connotation of the cult of Anzac as a civil religion.

‘The Epilogue: Towards the Centenary of Anzac’ (pp.458-583) is the new and most interesting section of this definitive work. Inglis investigates the work of the Australian armed forces as peacekeepers, the politics of financing of monuments, besides the changing iconography. The major theme that emerges is the movement towards and against inclusive memorialisation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Inglis explores the performance of Anzac memorialisation and its potential, citing George Browning’s words on Anzac day 2000, that ‘Anzac could embrace the indigenous spirit, and we would be well on the way to a truly national day’ (p.491) and also the words of the poet, Geoff Page:

‘A memorial on Anzac Parade to all people killed on both sides in Australia’s colonial war of occupation... “would be an open and healing recognition of a long-repressed aspect of our mutual past.” ’ (p.493).

*Sacred Places* demonstrates how education is fundamental to the continuation of myth, shown in the manipulation of the Anzac memorial and Anzac commemoration through incorporation into the national curriculum for the education of the young. Inglis also documents the use of memorial by the Howard administration and its militarization of the Australian War Memorial: in particular, the targeting of the Memorial’s ‘Discovery Zone’ towards tourists, where there is an inevitable divorce from realities of war and the stark omission of ‘conflict between black and white’ which perpetuates the colonial myth (p.501). The importance of writing and publishing on this latter subject, which has come to be termed ‘the history wars’, is highlighted by Inglis. He writes from his own experience and the misrepresentation of his thoughts on the necessity for equality of ethnic representation, during the launch of the first edition of this book in 1998.

The epilogue critiques the recent work of the political right and those historians who have negated attempts to commemorate such conflicts that were fundamental to the making of Australia in the colonial era. Significantly, the last section details the wars and memorialisation of the post-colonial era and their links with the past: Australian involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan; the changing economic relationship with Japan and the ensuing development of dual-national commemoration and the broad spectrum of global commemoration in the twenty-first century. Inglis explores the complexities of memorialisation where the deceased are tourists, not soldiers or workers, and addresses wars by non-state organisations and the issue of naming acts as either of terror or of war. This edition is particularly useful in its subtle psychological probing into the necessity for memorialisation in terms of universal reflection, fundamental to work towards peace and an inclusive history in the post-colonial era.

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<sup>1</sup> Zizek, S; *Violence*, (London: Profile, 2008). Butler, J; *Precarious Life: the Power of Mourning and Violence*, (London: Verso, 2006).