Chapter 7

Forgetting the wars:

Australian war memorials and amnesia

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This chapter examines the role of forgetfulness in Australian war memorials. It traces the notion of memory and its relationship with national identity and Anzac as a background to understand what part these play in Australian memorialisation. Forgetfulness is a crucial part of the memory process and its role in inducing social or collective amnesia a necessary (if sometimes unsafe) part of war remembrance. Collective amnesia is the product of processes, both official and individual, that mask aspects of war represented in war memorial design and in the rituals that accompany war commemoration in memorial spaces. Memorials are complex sites and I argue that forgetting and amnesia in memorial designs and use is possibly an essential condition of their being. They are contradictory places where the contest of remembering and forgetting is played out. The *Stolpersteine* remembrance program in Europe illustrates this contest.

Stolpersteine or 'stumbling stones' are brass stones placed on footpaths outside the former houses of Jews deported and murdered in Nazi era Europe (see figure 1, page 172). The stones record the names of the people who lived at the address, their date of birth and deportation details. So far over 610 *Stolpersteine* have been installed throughout Germany with others in countries including Austria, Hungary, the Netherlands, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Norway and Ukraine.[1]

The author of this project, German artist Gunter Demnig, asserts that "a person is only forgotten when his or her name is forgotten" and he intends that pedestrians symbolically "trip up" over the *Stolpersteine* (hence stumbling stone or block) as they walk past these buildings, thus memorialising the deportations and stimulating remembrance of the Holocaust. Demnig maintains that existing Holocaust memorials are too easy to sidestep and that the stumbling stones

present a better and more decentralised way of memorialisation. Constant rubbing by the footwear of pedestrians keeps the stones clean and shiny as a poetic and persistent reinvigoration of memory.

However, some are unhappy about this form of memorialisation. Local authorities have refused permission to install the stones, arguing that it is not an appropriate way of memorialisation – walking over the stones is a desecration of the deportees' memory and there are already enough memorials to the Holocaust. Residents of the places where the *Stolpersteine* will be placed are uneasy that their dwellings become associated with the horror of the Holocaust claiming their dwellings will lose value. Shopkeepers are fearful that their businesses will suffer.[2]

The *Stolpersteine* project illustrates the tensions in memorialisation between acts of remembrance and forgetting. Clearly this form of memorialisation (like many others) is contested on the grounds of 'where' remembrance happens, but also what needs to be remembered in everyday life. It is not necessarily that the residents wish to forget the *Shoah* but that the remembering is too intimate and local. Some would not want to know that they live in an apartment that was once the home of someone forced to leave that place and then murdered in a death camp – and have that broadcast outside their home. The project highlights the uneasy relationship between remembering and forgetting.

In Hebrew, '*Shoah*' means calamity. In recent history it is directly related to the Holocaust – the attempted genocide and extermination of the European Jews by the German Nazi party during the Second World War. The Holocaust is a key participant in the 'rise of memory' in the post World War II era and is regarded by some historians as a stimulus for the current so-called memory boom. This is the apparent rise in public and academic interest in memory and remembrance beginning in the late 20th century and continuing to our own time.

While Guther Demnig's *Stolpersteine* are memorials that relate to a specific event, Australian war memorials are usually raised to honour the memory and sacrifice of those killed in battle. They are highly political objects overlayed with local identity, bereavement, loss and national ideologies and have been partly shaped by Anzac mythology. Numerous memorials were erected in Australia after the First World War but fewer after the Second World War, because many memorials already existed. Recent studies have revealed that the rate of memorials appears to be increasing in tandem with the memory boom. Over 160 monumental memorials were built across Western Australia from the end of the First World War until the conclusion of the Second World War. Between 1945 and 1970, 60 monumental memorials were built and other forms of memorial such as buildings and gardens were also constructed. From 1980 to the present there have been well over 130 monumental war memorials

built, with over 60 in the period from the year 2000.[3] These figures suggest that war memorials are currently being constructed at rates not seen since the end of the First World War. But there are signs that the war memorial landscape in Australia is changing from traditionally and classically inspired designs to more experiential, abstract and didactic forms.

While scholarship on memory and memorials is vast, few authors to date have specifically discussed the question of war memorials and forgetting. Primary amongst these are Young, Winter, Rowlands, and Edkins whose work targets war memorialisation.[4] Tanya Luckins' book *The Gates of Memory* discusses often forgotten aspects of grief and memorialisation after the First World War in Australia.[5]

This chapter extends this work into the Australian context and argues that Australian memorials and their designs are active participants in the role of forgetting and in 'masking' aspects of war and war memory. While older memorials actively engage with forgetting and masking memory, recent shifts in war memorial design, in response to a more open view of signifying suffering and trauma, herald similar acts of remembering and forgetting.

Remembering and forgetting in Australia

We appear to be living in an age obsessed with memory. Since the mid 20th century, there has been a steady rise in academic and public interest in remembering. This 'age of memory' is characterised by an obsession with memory manifest in memorials, anniversaries, documentaries, public commemorations, truth commissions, and memoirs that recount the memories of individuals through times of tragedy and crisis.[6] The success of television shows such as 'Who do you think you are' are clear evidence of the rise of the genealogy industry and the increasing interest in the personal study of our (often military) forebears lives, habits, actions and motivations. Jay Winter traces the origins of this memory boom to the Holocaust, which "has inspired a range of reflections on the notion of memory, trauma and history".[7] Whatever its origins, it is clear that the memory boom has spread globally and shown no signs of abating.

At the heart of any consideration of memory – particularly when dealing with memorialisation – is the question of its definition. Memory is a slippery term often understood through culture itself and is not self explanatory.[8] A single definition is difficult and sometimes unhelpful, as memory across generations can be "ambiguous and conflicting".[9] There is also a distinction between personal memory and the memory of societies – sometimes called collective memory – a term that is also difficult to define.[10] However, keeping these problems in mind, we could define collective memory as "the representation of the past, both that

shared by a group and that which is collectively commemorated, that enacts and
gives substance to the group's identity, its present conditions and its vision for
the future".[11] In this view, community identity is important and it is something
that the so-called father of collective memory, Maurice Halbwachs, saw as the
result of a social framework of shared individual memories, which he labelled
a "collective memory".[12] Pierre Nora sees collective memory as something that
gathers at particular sites through the regard that many people have for the
place.[13] He says these places are "sites of collective memory". The historian Jay
Winter expands this notion into war memorials, which in his eyes become *Sites
of Memory Sites of Mourning*.[14] Ken Inglis in *Sacred Places: War Memorials in
the Australian Landscape*, depicts Australian memorials as sacred sites with past
and present multiple meanings.[15]

There are two basic camps in memorial studies. Those who emphasise memorials
are primarily subject to the agendas of nation states that want to appropriate the
violence for nationalistic purposes – usually for identity and nation building.
Here the nation plays down the violence and elevates it to bravery and sacrifice.
Other views privilege personal mourning as a primary generator of war
memorials. The function of memorials are as sites for commemoration and
spaces for people to mourn. This view is framed by a psychological emphasis on
loss and the search for meaning in the face of the meaninglessness of war. The
former view is typified by authors such as Mosse and the latter through Winter.[16]
However since memorials are complex places at the intersection of both nation
and personal loss, these elements are interwoven and the attitude and empathy
with which people approach war memorials, multilayered. Moreover, as Edkins
argues, it may not help to view memorials in such binary terms at all.[17]

For Australia and New Zealand, Anzac is a primary vehicle for national identity.
Anzac originated with the invasion of the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey in 1915
by British Empire and French troops sent to knock the Ottoman Empire out
of the First World War. Australian and New Zealand troops were involved in
some of the most severe fighting and the emerging legend, about the exemplary
behaviour of these troops under desperate conditions, fed notions of a
developing nationhood for both countries. Anzac, (an acronym of Australian
and New Zealand Army Corps) developed ideals in concert with the perceived
qualities of Australian and New Zealand troops and it has become a significant
site of national memory itself with a powerful ideology around which is formed
high expectations of personal behaviour and citizenship. Anzac mythology is
linked to Australian nationhood, an association attributed to the journalist
Charles Bean who accompanied the troops at Gallipoli and France and wrote
passionately of their exploits.[18] Although Gallipoli was a catastrophe, it was
claimed that soldiers died for a 'good cause' and the defeat was reconciled as a
test of Australian and New Zealand manhood that rendered both dominions fit

to join the rest of the world as nations. Belief was almost immediate and even the withdrawal from the peninsula was seen as a victory. Rarely in Anzac Day speeches was Gallipoli referred to as a defeat but as a 'baptism of fire' which acclaimed the qualities of the Australian fighting person – and by extension the whole country.

The Anzac mythology is the site around which much Australian national identity coalesces. However, since the 1970s when it was felt Anzac had a limited life, it has been slowly gaining ground through the pressures of a complex array of new nationalism, politics and the effects of the era of memory. Once seen as an exclusive and militaristic civil religion, Anzac has the appearance of becoming more tolerant and inclusive, witnessed by the recent inclusion of Aboriginal service people and Vietnamese and Turkish people into Anzac Day parades. Anzac Day is chief amongst war remembrance in Australia and New Zealand and it is a day peppered with commemoration ceremonies and rituals, usually beginning with the Dawn Service at sunrise.

In the national mythology, Gallipoli overshadows all conflicts that Australia has engaged. Conveniently forgotten is that it was a disaster and a minor engagement of the First World War historically dwarfed by battles such as Passchendaele (1917) where there were 38,000 Australian casualties including 10,000 deaths. In Robert Bollard's view Gallipoli's significance is inexplicable when balanced with the whole of the world war conflict and that its elevation presents an unbalanced picture of that war.[19] Also forgotten is the social context of the First World War in Australia. It fractured Australian society and, by its end, was deeply opposed and resented. The soldier heroes returned to a divided society where the working class lived in near poverty and soldiers' presence was often feared.[20]

The recent resurgence of Anzac has seen increasing crowds at Anzac Day ceremonies across the nation. For example in 2013, 45,000 people attended the Dawn Service at the State War Memorial in Perth, Western Australia, indicating a strong regeneration of interest in war remembrance. Significant sites of Australian military events, such as Gallipoli, Villers Bretoneaux (France), Hell Fire Pass (Thailand), Sandakan (Indonesia) and Kokoda (New Guinea), have recently become major places of Australian pilgrimage and ritual. Gallipoli, particularly, is a major target of national pilgrimage for Australia, New Zealand and Turkey. Numerous Australians visit Gallipoli each year, especially for the Anzac Day ceremonies, which typically attract around 6,000 Australians and New Zealanders – as well as an increasing number of Turks. Many of these visitors are young 'backpackers' or those on cheap tours for whom the visit is 'must' on their peregrinations across the world. The meaning of Gallipoli pilgrimage and reverence for this place of national war remembrance is

complex and it is highly contested. So, it would be useful to outline some of the debates and attitudes to understand the context into which Australian war commemoration and memorials currently emerge.

Disagreement in Australia is between two broad arguments about the meaning of the Anzac resurgence. In many ways these parallel the more general divisions about war commemoration discussed previously. That is, whether war memorials are the emotional products of sorrow, loss and mourning or whether there are more cynical and nationalistic aspects to their existence. In "Return to Gallipoli" Bruce Scates interviews many visitors to Anzac Cove and concludes that many of them have personal and emotional reasons for their 'pilgrimage', sometimes seen as cathartic and life affirming.[21] For these people Gallipoli is a place of great sadness, tragedy and reflection. Anzac ceremonies are transcendent and affirm personal and national values. Scates paints a scenario that McKenna and Ward see as too accepting of the emotion experienced by Australian student backpackers and others when visiting Gallipoli and other battlefield sites. McKenna and Ward's problem is that Scates has been uncritical of the oral history archive that he has 'personally' constructed (through his interviews) and that he was under the "emotional spell of his material" placing his analysis at risk. Through these things, Scates is unable to see that Gallipoli "has less to do with history and more to do with commerce and politics".[22]

McKenna and Ward argue that pilgrims' view of the Gallipoli landscape is due to conditioning and "assumptions" Australians have through "a particular set of historical forces and circumstances" which govern the emotional meanings that Australians have at Gallipoli.[23] In their view it is wrong to label these people pilgrims, as pilgrimage implies a certain "religiosity" where the sacred is already known and not discovered – merely affirmed by the pilgrimage.[24] This view of pilgrimage is far too simplistic and somewhat unhelpful when regarding commemorative pilgrimage. Pilgrimage and tourism are closely related and are interwoven.[25] As Hyde and Harman show pilgrimage is not just a religious phenomenon.[26] McKenna and Ward quote Anne Coombs who says that "a new generation is being deluded, encouraged to commemorate those futile deaths instead of examining what caused them. Expressing awe when they should be expression outrage".[27]

However war memory and commemoration at Gallipoli, and by inference the resurgence in Australia in general, are not necessarily as shallow as McKenna and Ward argue. Empirical surveys on visitors at Gallipoli paint a more complex picture. Reasons Australians travel to battlefield sites like Gallipoli are varied and involved. These include guilt, education, remembrance (national or family), commemoration, curiosity, empathy, self-discovery, and special interest.[28] Out of these Dunkley et. al. show that there are three that feature prominently in

visits to battlefield sites – pilgrimage, validation and special interest. Hyde and Harman's 2011 survey of Australian visitors to Gallipoli show similar complex motivations, including national identity, but that there was a significant focus on "family pilgrimage" to ancestors' graves.[29] Gallipoli is an authentic site and deeply significant. Hyde and Harman deduce that the beliefs that each bought to the place are a significant part of the experience, something that appears to support McKenna and Ward's argument – although the beliefs also include those that are shaped by an understanding of the cost and futility of war and the trauma to families – factors that McKenna and Ward appear to discount.

Further criticism of Anzac and its resurgence has emerged which claims that Australian history is militarised and that politicians hijack Anzac commemoration. Marilyn Lake says that Anzac is so manipulated into Australian national identity and the national psyche that to challenge it is to "court a charge of treason".[30] There is a view that the "imperial, masculine, militant event" of Gallipoli is unsuitable as the core of a national identity in the present age.[31] Anzac Day, with its boisterous flag waving, clouds historical understanding of the real roots of our national character. Australians have been duped by politicians into believing that the "Australian identity and national character can be conflated with the Anzac spirit".[32] This distortion of history is unassailable in the current political and public environment. The resurgence of Anzac has been received uncritically and has a marked effect on the writing of history, militarised to fit the myth of a warrior nation. In this context 'decaying' memorials are restored and reused to furnish a focus for this "new interest in war".[33]

Reynolds charges that Australia was not born at Anzac Cove and that a national sensibility had already developed before the Gallipoli incident.[34] This is accurate, although it should be understood that the view of Gallipoli as nation forming (a romantic 19th century view of war as ennobling) almost immediately emerged in the press and political circles as the fighting at Anzac Cove began. Reynolds and Lake also argue that the Australian national character does not depend on the actions of the first AIF or that the codes of citizenship Anzac espouse are unique in the world – aspects of the Anzac myth that has tended to persevere.[35]

Geoffrey Blainey appears to agree that there has been some "very extravagant assertions on the significance of the Anzac spirit" but he shows that Australian history has not been necessarily 'militiarised' and that the situation is far more complex. He acknowledges manipulation by politicians bent on promoting Anzac, but argues it is not a prime cause of the resurgence of Anzac as a national story.[36] For Blainey, the symbolic occasion of Anzac Day is "partly cyclical" and is not the product of cynical politics.[37] Joy Damousi claims that Anzac Day has changed from a day of "personal mourning, for the expression of grief, regret and remorse about the loss of life and casualties of war" into one that

celebrates national pride and identity.[38] Like Blainey, I think that this view is far too sweeping and that the situation is far more complicated – while personal grief is waning with the march of time and there are incidences of national flag waving, there is also genuine generational understanding of the effects of war on communities. The shared experience of Anzac ceremony and motivation for attending is – as shown by Hyde and Harman – multifaceted.

Connerton argues that for shared memories to endue they need to be continually reinforced through ritual practices of remembrance. Here, 'bodily' and active practices in ceremonies such as standing for prayers, singing and ritually placing wreaths is necessary for a successful continuance of a shared memory.[39] Rituals bring people together in a performance that preserves and reinforces memory though active participation where memory interlocks with commemoration. In this context, Anzac is a vehicle for national memory through its mythology, its political and social uses, and the material culture (such as memorials) that is the result and focus of collective remembrance and ceremony.

In the following sections the terms 'masking', 'denial' and 'amnesia' are forms of forgetting that have meaningful distinctions in the context of the discussion in this chapter. Masking can refer to the act of hiding something behind another form taking its place. For example, facemasks attempt to hide identity through a physical barrier. Denial can be where someone "denies" that something has occurred – often in the face of evidence to prove the contrary. For example, denial that the Holocaust did not happen in the face of overwhelming evidence that it did. Amnesia is a more general and subtle form of denial where the traces of a memory or a record of an event is wiped from memory for all sorts of reasons, including political and psychological. It has a psychological connection with trauma and can refer to acts of denial and masking where forgetting is part of a deliberate attempt to heal the memory of traumatic events, as described later in this chapter.

Memory, memorials and masking

In memorial design, 'masking' is the way that its physical and symbolic attributes colour or hide certain aspects of history and memory.[40] Forgetting is allied to the distance in time from a remembered event.[41] Young reinforces this aspect of remembering and forgetting and argues that memorials inevitably fail when their purpose is forgotten, lose relevance and become prey to forgetfulness and neglect.[42] If a memorial's prime purpose is to "block the work of forgetting", as Nora expressively says, then perhaps the neglect of a memorial is a failure of memory and the waning/fading of meanings attached to that memory contrary to Nora's assertion.[43] The rehabilitation of Anzac and the present climate of remembering in Australia is witnessed by a rise of commemorative activity as Australia observes the Commemoration of the Anzac Centenary 1914-1918

ensuring the number of memorials falling prey to neglect is small. This is partly because of present and future federal funding (and sometimes state or private funding) made available to communities to rehabilitate old memorials and construct new ones.

Ricour argues that the first form of profound forgetting is through the "effacement of traces".[44] This could simply be a conqueror obliterating the traces of a predecessor or suppressing the heritage of the conquered. The destruction of an Ottoman memorial on Anzac Beach at Gallipoli by Australian Light Horsemen in 1918 is an example. It commemorated the Ottoman victory over the Australian forces and was dynamited as it "incensed" the returning Australian troops. The remnant shards of marble were sold in Australia as Gallipoli souvenirs. Here, the painful memory of the Australian evacuation was "effaced" and the victor roles violently reversed.[45] On a more subtle level, effacing traces may mask aspects of memory for political, ideological or emotional reasons so we can argue that there is a direct relationship between forgetting and masking. In the context of war memorials, there are several ways that they can mask memory. These include the masking of the effects and cost of war to participants and survivors, the preservation of mythologies, the masking of narratives and events and the denial of corporeal and spiritual corruption.

Moriaty says that figurative memorials will often mask the true nature of war and its effects. She argues that figures of soldiers were portrayed "whole" masking the actual effects of war injury – a necessary thing, she says, if memorials were to maintain their healing aspects and weren't distressing for survivors. Sculptors were instructed to portray 'duty fulfilled' instead of the slaughter of the battlefield.[46] The sculpture underwent a process of amnesia or 'redescription' diverting the viewer's attention from injury and death and presenting a whole body that was classically flawless. The neoclassical figures of the art schools merely dressed in modern military uniforms updating the ideal figure of the classical hero and aligning the dead with ancient heroes unsullied by race or blood.[47] In Australia, soldier statues were variably young and smooth faced – boyish in the case of the North Fremantle War Memorial, which suggests the digger is portrayed as a type of noble innocent (see figure 2, page 172). This memorial typifies many erected in sandstone or marble in the years after the First World War across Australia forming a "deathless army" conjuring up the "ghostly presence of the nation's war dead".[48] They were usually sculpted 'at attention' or in 'reverse arms' as the North Fremantle soldier is posed. 'Reverse arms' in military drill is where the rifle is reversed so that it points down as a sign of mourning or respect. Soldier statue memorials appear to have been one of the most common types constructed – except for Western Australia where only six were built after the First World War, reasons for which are not yet established. It is not often that soldier statues are in action and very rarely in an aggressive

or belligerent stance. An example of such memorial is The Bomber, a bronze statue by the Australian artist C. Web Gilbert erected in Broken Hill in 1925 as the figure of an Australian soldier captured in the act of throwing a Mills bomb at the enemy (see figure 3, page 172). The aggressiveness of the pose was not appreciated and criticised by the *Barrier Miner* newspaper for memorialising "the cutting of throats, or stabbing with bayonets or blowing of the human body to fragments by high explosives" instead of sacrifice and mourning and the "whole terrible tragedy".[49] The ideal memorial should be simple, dignified, unboastful and unchallenging and should deflect attention from the realities of war to those of gentler concerns. Corresponding to Moriaty's study cited above, it should provide a space for mourning and help the work of healing.

In Britain, sculptural figures masked the reality of malnutrition and the effects of post and pre war poverty that many soldiers experienced. In Australia, such sculptural figures reinforced and perpetuated the mythology of the god-like Arcadian Australian soldier made famous by poet John Masefield in his propagandist book *Gallipoli*.[50] The journalist Charles Bean also lauded the Australian soldier as a distinctive antipodean type who was physically (and by extension, morally) superior to the British Tommy.[51] Jenny MacLeod notes that Bean's attitude was that the British lacked the initiative and drive of the Australians who were superior through their breeding in a tough environment.[52] Bean's view was that the British race, through generations of breeding in slums, was inferior, but that "… these punt narrow chested little men…" could, with the same environment, evolve into a "breed of men again".[53] The upshot of this was that British soldier, although brave, could not match the breeding of the Australians.

The heroic figure of the soldier standing to attention or with head bowed and arms reversed in many parks or street corners in Australia used a model that referred to the ancient Greek and Homeric notion of war as a masculine pursuit. Here the beautiful death, or *kalso thanatos* where the ancient warrior tradition was bound up with youthful beauty and noble sacrifice, masked actual horrifying death on battlefields.[54] As with the depiction of active violence (such as in The Bomber), the depiction of death – particularly traumatic death itself – was nearly always contested and criticised. However, the idea of the Homeric hero is not confined to the era of memorial building after the First World War. Recent statuary also depicts the serviceman as an unmarked rugged type. Sculpture at Vietnam memorials in Perth (2002) and Adelaide (2006) show an Australian digger on patrol accompanied by a South Vietnamese soldier – an acknowledgement of foreign military partnerships rarely seen in older memorials (see figure 4, page 172). While relaxed, and not in a formal pose of mourning, each represent the notion of the soldier as hero and not victim.

Carden Coyne takes the above line of enquiry further into the architecture of classical forms and argues that the memorial in its classical form stood for the absent body. Memorials had "profound social and emotional functions".[55] Through their emphasis on the "healing aesthetic" of classicism, the masking of the horrors of war and "...reorienting the memory of war away from violence and physical damage towards peace and community cohesion", memorials establish a reciprocity between the monument and the bereaved intertwining "death and life" emphasising sacrifice and nobility.[56] The body of the memorial stood for the body of the dead soldiers. Of course a memorial was not an appropriate response for all people, including some returned soldiers. Many thought that the money spent could be better used to alleviate the suffering of those affected by the war. In this context, Rowlands argues that war memorials can work on two levels – on a personal level of healing and reconciliation and as an evocation of disgust and condemnation. He shows that there is also a 'temporal gap' between the function of the memorial as place of healing, where people 'live through' the mourning process, and it becomes possible to forget the pain and later when the memorial becomes as 'monument' – healing is completed and it becomes a place of closure.[57] It is a moot point whether this closure is a feature of all memorials and that all memorials 'become' monuments in time or that they 'atrophy' as memory of their *raison d'être* recedes. As mentioned earlier, the re-enchantment of memorials in Australia in recent times may deny this process.

Another aspect of First World War and subsequent memorials is the denial of the defeat at Gallipoli, a debated feature on the Anzac mythology discussed earlier in this chapter. The turning of such a disastrous event into a positive outcome is not as unusual as it seems. Rowlands says that communities deliberately forget humiliating episodes, especially those that resulted in a great loss of young lives.[58] Replacing this disaster, that claimed the lives of over a hundred thousand British Empire, French and Ottoman troops including over 8,100 Australian and New Zealand troops with 18,000 wounded, was the so-called birth of the nation. Hidden under the notion of self-sacrifice to the nation, violent death was neutralised.

What the above shows is that there is a selective masking of some of the unpalatable aspects of war and war death and memory in the design of traditional war memorials. Because a memorial is primarily a collective enterprise, this is a process that operates on a collective level and there must be some sort of consensus – however unspoken – that certain things should not be symbolised or stated.

Denial and amnesia

Stanley Cohen argues that there are several ways we indulge in denial in every day life ranging from a personal "I don't want to know" to more serious official,

cultural and historical denial.[59] He also notes that there is ambiguity in what we choose to remember and forget where events may be too threatening to accept, but too difficult to ignore. Referring to Freud, Cohen says this is simultaneously a protection against reality and a failure to accept the implications and significance of a serious situation at hand. He demonstrates that there is a "wider cultural pool of collective forgetting" that can be labelled "social amnesia".[60] Nevertheless, knowledge of things past can also disappear over time through natural erosion or where uncomfortable repressed information eventually evaporates – although societies may chose to forget certain things which emerge as 'open secrets' or things that are 'knowingly not known'. While discussing the memorialisation of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, Buckley-Zistel claims that "remembering to forget" is a necessary element of the current coexistence of warring factions in Rwanda. Amnesia is 'chosen' and not coerced – memory of the tragedy still exists but it is not accessed. In the Rwandan conflict, chosen amnesia "signifies a less public denial than coping mechanism to avoid antagonisms and to be able to live peacefully".[61] This concept can be applied to war memorials where "remembering to forget" may be an essential element of coping for grieving survivors – especially masking the painful aspects of war and its effects. Of course there are dangers in chosen amnesia, where this type of forgetting may merely paper over existing problems which – in Rwanda – has the propensity to only mask the conflict and not tackle them in a meaningful way and this risks leaving the door open for further conflict.[62] As established earlier, it was not good form for the memorial to depict aggression or sculpt the dead – although a few managed this by apologising for their aggressive appearance in words that reflected sadness and sorrow caused by war.[63] It is easy to understand that most people would wish to mourn at a place that was neutral or funereal and did not bring to mind the reality of wars. Unlike many holocaust memorials, which are more didactic and uncomfortable in revealing the horror and the personal and collective situation of the people who experienced this tragedy. War memorials and most commemorative ceremonies tend to gloss over the cost of war – overcoming the feeling that lives were wasted to no avail. The notion of sacrifice plays a key part in denying that the dead died in vain. Rowlands says that sacrifice to the nation is – in many respects – similar to human sacrifice to gods. "Sacrifice justifies the taking of significant forms of life for an ulterior symbolic purpose."[64] The idea of sacrifice is to give something like a life for the greater good. The notion of sacrifice radiated by a memorial and accompanying rituals justifies slaughter for the common good. In war commemoration ritual, there is a ready acceptance of sacrifice for the good and there is a ready amnesia about the realities of war to ensure that the sacrifice remains worthy.

A particular example of this is the South Australian National War Memorial built in Adelaide in 1931. This memorial was the result of collaboration between the

architect Louis Laybourne Smith and the sculptor Rayner Hoff. Located on North Terrace, it is composed of a large monumental arch in which statuary fills the opening on both sides (see figure 5 and 6, page 173). In the base of the monument is a crypt with the engraved names of South Australians who died in the war. Each side of the arch contains an allegory on aspects of citizenship. On one side is a carved figure of the 'spirit of duty' – a male angel-like character carrying a board sword and looking down on three youthful figures of a farmer, a scholar and a girl. These figures are in bronze and are in various attitudes of looking up and realising their duty (see figure 5). The spirit carries the sword as "a cross, the symbol of battle and of sacrifice, proffered thus to all who seek it".[65] The reference to Christianity legitimises going to war as a 'sacred duty' where sacrifice may be its outcome. Here, the cross (represented by the crusader sword) conflates both the sacrifice of Christ and sacrifice in war in the defence of the nation.

On the obverse side is carved the 'spirit of compassion' as a female angel-like figure stripped to the waist and carrying a sheathed sword on one hand and supporting a suffering (or dead?) youth on the other (see figure 6, page 173). While the manner of carving stems from the art deco movement, the figures are classically inspired and are superhuman. The youthful figure signifies the aftermath of war, its tragedy and "the consummation of sacrifice".[66] The figure (while limp) is muscular, unmarked and heroic. Below these figures is the Fountain of Compassion, which represents the "ceaseless…constant flow of memories".[67] The water issues from a lion's head topped with the imperial crown representing the "British Commonwealth of Nations". Presumably this is a reference to remembrance in the context of the (now unsteady) empire. The architects of this monument claimed that they did not want the monument to be viewed as a victory arch in the classical sense but one that was a victory of the spirit.[68]

This memorial is probably the liveliest of all the state memorials built after the First World War and it typifies the concern that memorials should not be triumphalist. Despite the sadness at the cost of the war it does amplify its nobility in the service of the nation – 'nobly' is a word inscribed several times. The memorial is decidedly heroic in its demeanour and emphasises sacrifice in war as heroic and as a cost of citizenship. Interestingly, these high ideals can be perceived to be resting over the names of those that were sacrificed to the nation, hidden away in the crypt below.

New directions

> The teenager, with her coloured pencils, created flags during the 2006 Soccer World Cup. She hung them on her balcony, alongside a German flag bought at the supermarket. Unlike the two generations before her, she saw nothing unusual in confidently hanging out the black, red and gold.[69]

FIGURE 1 (ABOVE): Schmidek László *Stolpersteine*, 30 Dohány utca, Budapest, Hungary.

FIGURE 2 (RIGHT): North Fremantle War Memorial.

FIGURE 3 (BELOW LEFT): Marque for 'The Bomber' by C. Webb Gilbert (Australian War Memorial, ART 09832).

FIGURE 4 (BELOW RIGHT): Vietnam War Memorial South Australia, one of the few Australian memorials in partnership with a foreign nationality.
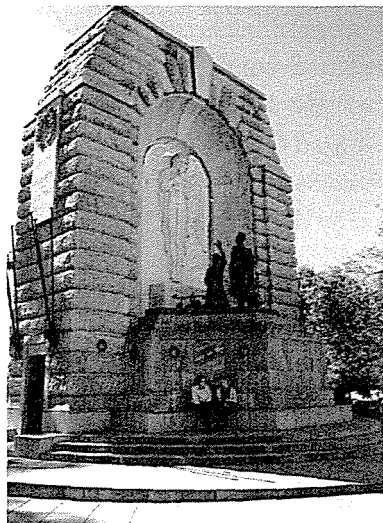
FIGURE 5 AND 6 (DIRECTLY ABOVE):
South Australia War Memorial.

FIGURE 7, 8 AND 9 (ABOVE RIGHT):
Korean War Memorial Sydney.

FIGURE 10 (BELOW RIGHT):
Vietnam Veterans War Memorial,
Washington DC, USA (photo courtesy of
E Karol)

FIGURES 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 AND 9 courtesy
of John Stephens

Australian-German artist Natascha Stellmach reveals that the tragedy of the
Second World War, the discomfiture felt in Germany about the Holocaust, and
the problematic issues of their national identity, resolves in time. The erosion of
time renders future generations with a different view on events to their forebears
– if indeed they remember them at all. As Australians with direct experience of
the World Wars die, so does the memory informed by their intimate knowledge.
In May 2002, Alec Campbell, the last Gallipoli veteran died and in May 2011,
Claude Choules, the last British Commonwealth World War One combatant
died in Perth aged 110. Survivor ranks from subsequent wars are thinning and
in time only smaller numbers from later wars of Vietnam, Iraq, Timor Leste
and Afghanistan will remain. This means that the direct memory of war and
its effect loosened and perhaps, as Graeme Davison suggests, it leaves present
generations free to interpret Anzac in the light of their own experience which
rarely includes the loss and sorrow incurred by their progenitors – an aspect
explored later in this chapter.[70] However, even those with direct experience of
war can have their memories coloured by flag waving and national mythology as
Alistair Thomson shows in his research. Diggers' recollections can be nostalgic
and "selectively affirmed" by public rituals and national mythologies, blunting
real critique.[71]

The concept of a war memorial as a substitute tomb is also weakened. Before
1966, bodies of Australian soldiers were buried in overseas cemeteries.
Memorials were 'empty tombs' representing the graves of those whose relatives
would never get the chance to visit their grave. Removal of the funereal role
allowed memorials to move from the classically inspired monuments to abstract
and more narrative and experiential interpretations of war and its effects.

Since the 1970s, and in tandem with the rise of memory and the reinvigoration
of Anzac, there has been a change in the design of war memorials. Previously,
memorials were informed by the dictates of Edwardian classicism and
references to ancient and noble architecture. Memorial styles were informed
by established cemetery architecture. In the years following the First World
War modernism did not have the established symbolism to capture public
imagination. Coupled with outright hostility to modernism by veterans groups
and a conservative Anzac ideology, it was rarely employed in war memorial
design. Recently in Australia, heroic memorials are being supplemented by
'therapeutic' memorials that tend to employ more open narratives about war
and its effects.[72] These memorials are, in part, responding to the challenge of
reaching new generations and tend to be didactic and instructive in providing
an emotional experience. They are to be experienced from within their spaces
– unlike traditional memorials that often have a single focus of remembrance.

Despite the incursion of these new types of memorial there is still divisiveness in the idea of Anzac and commemoration. Soldiers are regarded as heroes and the heroic memorial is still current. For example, the National World War Two memorial in Washington 2004 was criticised for its conservatism and classical framing of a heroic national narrative rather than projecting the realities of war. In Western Australia, an obelisk was positioned into the Mandurah War Memorial – a large abstract construction of white pillars – to placate members of the community who believed the abstract design did not convey the values of Anzac. This dichotomy between traditional and less traditional ways of designing memorials emphasises the complex and fluid nature of remembrance and forgetting and that they currently exist together.

An example of a recent Australian war memorial that is experiential and offers intricate narratives is the Korean War Memorial in Sydney (2010). Located in the north corner of Moore Park, the memorial is composed of a large mound of grassed earth on which is placed a circular wall of approximately 22 metres diameter (see figure 7, page 173). Dedicated to the so-called "forgotten war", as the Korean War is sometimes portrayed in Australia, it evokes the experience and the deaths of service personnel from New South Wales. Australia participated in this war at the request of the United Nations in defence of South Korea from invasion by the North Koreans in 1950–1953. Designed by the artist Jane Cavanough, the project is inspired by the circular *taegeuk* – a feature of the South Korean flag. The circle is bisected by a curvilinear path delineating a yin and yang motif in the memorial plan that symbolises the binaries dark and light, chaos and order that were features of the struggle (see figure 8, page 173). The path is inscribed with names of the United Nations countries that participated in the battles. On either side of the path are stylised flowers, each representing a soldier from NSW who died in the war. Throughout the memorial space are 'battle mounds' shaped like mountain ranges and with the names of battles (see figure 8). Cavanough says that her design reflects the cold harsh and austere terrain of the battlefields with "a sense of darkness".[73] The memorial tells a complex and emotional story of the conflict and is to be experienced from within its spaces. As an interactive memorial it is typical of others that try to come to grips with the bitter experience of war and its effects, and eschew a hero or exemplary figure to be emulated. Despite the new openness, I argue that this new breed of memorial is still subject to amnesia.

Present silences

Naming the dead has always been an interesting aspect of war memorialisation. It was an essential part of commemoration after the First World War as an effect of the democratisation of death forced by the enormous number of dead. 'Missing' often meant that a name engraved on a memorial might be the

only physical memory of that person. There was also the aspect of honouring both those that served and those that died by engraving them on a memorial. This was a more common practice in Australia and New Zealand, firstly for recruitment purposes during the war years and later to honour those from the district who had done their duty. While some memorials constructed after the First World War did not name individuals – usually for cost reasons in cash strapped communities – many do. From the later years of the 20th century up to the present time, naming the dead on memorials has mostly disappeared in Australia. Many memorials name them as a generic population of "the fallen" or "those who gave their lives". Naming appears to be less important than it once was probably due to time and erosion which sees individuals and their survivors lost to time. Individuals are no longer represented either by naming or by witnesses who had knowledge of that person. True, there are plenty of stories in the media telling the personal stories of soldiers and other service people in war which may be projected on to the memorial but they are not inherent or engraved into it. Currently there is a shared generic experience of war but this is not individualised and "the fallen" are an abstract population. Personal stories are subjugated within the narrative of war itself and the individual story (represented by the name) is a victim of an amnesia.

Edkins says that trauma, such as that experienced and witnessed by soldiers, is unspoken, and indeed is something that cannot be articulated readily. There is no language available to describe what they have experienced. In the context of war, part of the trauma is that there has been a betrayal of trust by those that have sent them to war in the first place. "There are no words for it [the trauma] save the language of the very social and political order that was responsible in the first place."[74] What is left to describe trauma in war memorials is insufficient and the inadequate language of the established social or political order may be all that remains to employ. Memorials therefore conceal trauma by continually returning to established forms of representation. While trauma remains outside the capacity of war memorials to describe, Edkins argues this can be sidestepped by "encircling" trauma through memorialisation that allows individual interpretation and "does not conceal the trauma of war but at the same time allows it to be marked".[75] She cites the Vietnam War Veterans Memorial in Washington as an example of a memorial that is not marked by any political statement and provided a space that cannot be symbolised (see figure 9).[76]

This process of hiding or forgetting trauma is a form of 'reification', which is the mistaken way that abstract notions are taken for the real thing. Abstraction reduces concepts and ideas to an essence shedding the larger story. A good example is the Korean War Memorial described above where the story of the war and its effects are reduced to metaphors and the importance of suffering

is abstracted. While there are narratives about hardship and the memory of violence – death and violence are still abstract notions.

Conclusion

In *How Modernity Forgets*, Paul Connerton maintains that there is a reciprocal relationship between memorials and forgetting. On one hand, the threat of forgetting produces memorials and on the other the construction of memorials begets forgetting. After memorial building there is no obligation to remember.[77] This latter quality is similar to Young's assertion that once closure is reached war memorials atrophy into monuments. He says, once the grieving process is complete then memorials become redundant and they are largely forgotten.[78] However, this is not the recent experience in Australia. Despite the distance from the events of Gallipoli, Anzac commemoration has resurged and many existing memorials are re-enchanted with ceremony. As previously discussed this is due to a complex effect of the rise of memory, nationalism and the continuous search for an Australian story.

However, what is remembered and forgotten is now is quite different to previous generations when the connections to those named on memorials were closer. Bollard argues that Anzac commemoration reeks of forgetting and ignorance, including the military insignificance of Gallipoli and how the First World War was – at its end – as unpopular in Australia as the Vietnam War was in the early 1970s.[79] He says, "Remembering has been replaced by remembrance, something far more totemic and ritualised".[80] So what is being 'remembered' by current generations in front of a war memorial and what is being forgotten? It is true that we may not remember in the strict sense of a direct experience. However, there is study to show that people can adopt the trauma and memories of their ancestors and families. Post-memory is a process where trauma may travel through generations of a family. It is a type of "retrospective witnessing by adoption" where the trauma passes to generations who are psychologically touched by the trauma of forebears.[81] Family members, sometimes generations away, adopt the ancestor's traumatic experiences and inscribe them into their own "life story".[82] In this way 'remembrance' at memorials may be coloured by the traumas of family history, parallel to the type of forgetting that is part of the current condition of Anzac mythology discussed earlier.[83] Perhaps also what is forgotten is that in national mythologies, trauma and suffering in wars are cloaked by a desperate belief that 'sacrifice' in war was not in vain. A belief that is possibly necessary for wars to continue.

We have seen how memorials go about the business of masking the unpleasant aspects of war and war memories. Earlier memorials – especially those built after the First World War – were very good at elevating the violent death of soldiers into a noble sacrifice for the nation. While this served the interests of

the nation and deflected its culpability in their deaths it also allowed a field for mourning to take place unimpeded by direct reference to the manner of death. It was unthinkable for people to contemplate that the dead had died for no good reason. The idea of sacrifice to both nation and community was preferable and this was reflected in the high ideals represented in memorials. New directions in memorial design towards more open representations of war experience still mask difficult themes by abstracting suffering and subsuming the individual and are accompanied by ritual that elevates death in war though the concept of sacrifice.

But what happens if memorials are more direct and honest? Should war memorials be even more didactic about the violence of the past? In Rwanda, memorials built at mass burial sites commemorate the memories of the 1994 atrocities. There is a practice at some of these memorials to display the bones of victims. Sometimes these are left uncleaned, and it is often survivors who place them on view as a powerful reminder of the atrocities which "can prevent forgetting and denial".[84] There is much debate in Rwanda about the merits of such gruesome display and many are uncomfortable that their relatives are unburied and are traumatised by the sight of the remains. There is evidence that visiting schoolchildren (who have no direct memory of the atrocities) become traumatised after realising that these are the bones of ancestors. Some view this practice as adding to the past horror with no healing effect. As Ibreck notes, the survivors want to convey the trauma of the genocide but are limited in the language that they can use.[85] Such direct methods of representing trauma and suffering may simply neutralise the intention.

This example reveals the difficulties faced in conveying trauma and revealing the unpleasant aspects of war. It is possible that concealment and forgetting are a necessary condition of war memorialisation particularly to cloak trauma with the concept of sacrifice. There are also limits to physical memorialisation in its capacity to represent or symbolise trauma and that abstract or metaphorical representation simply abstracts the suffering. Like the Rwandan memorials discussed above, language limits the capacity of Australian war memorials to sensibly render the unpleasant aspects of war.

Notes

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[13] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire", *Representations,* 26, Spring, 1989.

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[15] Ken Inglis, *Sacred Places: War memorials in the Australian landscape* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001), 471.

[16] George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1990; Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning.*

[17] Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics,* 94.

[18] Marilyn Lake, "Introduction: what have you done for your country?", in *What's Wrong With Anzac?,* eds. Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds (Sydney: New South, 2010), 3.

[19] Robert Bollard, *The Shadow of Gallipoli: the hidden history of Australia in World War 1* (Sydney: New South, 2013), 10.

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What is being 'remembered' and what is being 'forgotten'
within Australian war history?

The seven contributors to *Lest We Forget?* raise this
critical question by examining the experiences of disabled
ex-servicemen, of conscientious objectors, of workers
'manpowered' during the Second World War, of the
people of Lemnos, of servicewomen and nurses, and the
ongoing commemoration of Anzac.

This book clearly shows that much has been marginalised
within mainstream historical research and media
accounts of the past.

Lest We Forget? contributes to a more inclusive, open and
true-to-life account of Australia's experience of war and
its aftermath upon the nation and its people.

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