EDITORIAL

Welcome to a new forum for Australian Studies. This newsletter will serve as a bilingual platform to inform members of the Association for Australian Studies about academic and professional activities in their fields of study and research. The newsletter will accept relevant information on conferences, publications, lectures, scholarships, awards, research projects, institutions, and web links to Australian resources. The editor welcomes contributions which will help build a vital network in the field of Australian Studies, including essays, news, critiques and constructive commentary on specific subjects of research. We encourage a liberal and creative approach to the topic. The editor urges every reader to help launch this professional news forum to reflect the spirit of Australian Studies in timely information, memorable dialogue, and innovative ideas.

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Newsletter Nr.2, November 2009

Uluru at sunset © Henriette von Holleuffer

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LEADING THE NEWS:
THE BUSHFIRES 2009

ONLINE ARTICLE

The Victorian Bushfires of February 2009
by Adi Wimmer

Chronology

On Saturday February 7th a series of bushfires broke out in rural Victoria, to the North East and East of the state capital Melbourne. The name "Black Saturday" bushfires has meanwhile been accepted as the date-relevant term. Prior to the start of the fires (it was rumoured some were started by arsonists, but any concrete evidence has yet to be established) the region had experienced ten days of scorching heat, with the maximum day temperatures going beyond the 44 degree mark, and there had been absolutely no rain for nine weeks. In the afternoon of February 7th, Melbourne recorded the highest-ever temperature since measurements were started in 1859: 46.4 degrees. At the same time, there were heavy winds with wind speeds of about 100 km/h, creating the 'perfect' conditions for a huge fire front.

The fires raged in dozens of locations until February 14th, destroying approximately 650.000 hectares of woodland. 78 townships were badly affected, but none more so than the cities of Marysville and Kinglake. In those communities more than half the houses were burned down and over 70 inhabitants were killed. At the height of the bushfires, the death toll was expected to go beyond 300, which would have made the fires the worst catastrophe in terms of human lives lost since the Darwin bombings of 1942, in which 250 lives were lost. On February 17th, the authorities declared that "only" 210 lives had been lost. That figure has meanwhile been reduced to 176, according to a News.com report released on March 30.[1]

Aftermath

The events had a massive impact on Australia, most of all the citizens of Victoria. Melburnians watched their parks turn sandy and then brown as no water was allocated to relieve the drought. The water shortage also meant that no private gardens or lawns could be watered, and everything in the way of garden plants shrivelled and died. People were saddened, stressed out, and asking themselves: is this to be the future? Is this what global warming means for us? And: what if it gets even worse?

In the aftermath of the catastrophe there was an outpouring of sympathy and help for the victims. Hundreds of organizations (some of them even outside Australia) began to raise money. A National Day of Mourning was declared by PM Kevin Rudd and Victorian Premier John Brumby for Sunday Feb 22nd. 100.000 Melburnians came to the Rod Laver stadium to hear speeches and stories. Both politicians pledged substantial public funds to rebuild the destroyed houses (a total of 7.800.) The newspapers recorded a 'pulling-together' of Victorian society, a positive outcome of the tragic events.

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[1] http://www.news.com.au/story/0,27574,25262511-421,00.html

Lessons to be learned?

After a short interval, criticism began to be voiced: at the Fire Fighting Department, at the VIC government, even at the people who had been burnt out and at environmentalists. The most frequently voiced criticism at the VIC government was: why were we not warned earlier? Premier Brumby however *had* issued a stark warning on Friday Feb 6[th,] .based on a warning by the Fire department that Feb 7th would be a "high-risk" day. But no-one was able to envisage a fire that would move so incredibly fast across the countryside. Marysville for instance is a popular tourist resort; the first columns of fire were spotted at lunchtime, but no-one thought much of them. Even at 6 p.m. when smoke was already in the air many tourists were still basking in hotel pools or preparing for dinner rather than preparing to flee.

In previous years, the general wisdom given out by the Fire Fighting Department had been: when a bushfire advances, either get out very early, or stay and fight for your property - by using all the available water resources and wet blankets with which to beat out the flames. The statistics were released to the press on May 13[th2] : Of the historic total of 552 deaths (1900 – 2007) caused by bushfires, "76 people died during late evacuations since 1900 and 145 died while outside a home they were trying to save." This leaves 331 fatalities that happened when people tried to escape through forest or bushland that turned into a fiery furnace.

But on February 7th the "stay-and-fight" approach turned out to be deadly. The fires were so massive that any attempt to stop them was like stopping an elephant with a Swiss army knife. When people realized this their retreat was already cut off and they perished.

There were dozens of people who died in their cars as they tried to flee, 19 alone on the road leading from Kinglake towards Melbourne. And here local Councils have come under attack: the Fire section of the VIC government had repeatedly ordered them to fell trees lining the approach roads, creating a safety zone of some 30-50m on either side of the roads. This was not done as environmentalists always kick up a fuss when it comes to felling trees: a road lined by woodland vegetation right to the edge of a road is very pretty. Another piece of advice had been to curtail the growing of eucalypts in private gardens; this too was ignored and now these trees provided paths of attack for the advancing fire fronts. Any suggestion to environmentalists, some of whom are fierce nationalists, that the native eucalypts should be replaced with European or other overseas trees is met with fierce resistance. However, as a survivor of Marysville observed: "Two oak trees in the centre of the town were intact while all the eucalypts are now dead."

Another factor contributing to the death toll was that in some communities the Councils had slapped a ban on the popular practice of removing dead wood (as free firewood) from forests. Environmentalists had urged to keep it there as breeding

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[2] Mex Cooper: "Confusion over bushfire stay-or-go policy". *The Age*, May 14, 2009

grounds for insects and other small animals. The excess wood lying around in the forests was a contributing factor to the enormous heat generated by the fires.

One thing is clear: Australia has to impose much stricter rules preventing the progress of bushfires in future. How this is to be done will probably be the subject of heated debates over the next year. Zoning for example will have to be taken much more seriously: it may be desirable to live away from the big city, in a nicely green environment with your own back garden and your own 'native' trees, but that environment may turn into a deadly trap whenever another drought combined with a heat wave occurs.

On April 30th PM Rudd announced that a "Royal Commission of Enquiry into the Black Saturday Bushfires" had been created. Its task was to find out exactly what went wrong and what lessons had to be learnt from the catastrophe.

Some results have already been made public. One is that Victoria needs a separate fire-alert telephone network. On Feb 7th there were over 4500 emergency calls on the allocated triple zero number. And the system was unable to cope.

But maybe Victoria also needs a much improved road network. Emergency Services Commissioner Bruce Esplin told the Bushfires Royal Commission that Victoria's roads would have been "log jammed" if all residents of the fire-affected areas had tried to escape. He made a comparison with California, where even the wide West-Coast freeways are usually log jammed during a bushfire.

An emergency warning signal that interrupts radio and television broadcasts to warn of impending danger was not activated on Black Saturday because authorities didn't want to desensitize people to it. Also, the activation of the signal was tied to a "cumbersome" bureaucratic mechanism, involving a whole chain of command. Clearly, somebody did not think the fire risk was that high.

Some embarrassing details have also come to light. In the morning of February 8th, the Fire Authorities released a bulletin to the press that everyone in Marysville had been saved and were camping in Gallipoli Park. The reality was that 34 inhabitants were now dead. It was also revealed that the police and the fire fighters were using different radio networks and as a result, found it difficult and often impossible during the fire to communicate with one another.

The Commission's work continues.

NEWS IN DEPTH:
THE BUSHFIRES – HELL AND ALL ITS FURY

Reports • Thoughts • Voices
Compiled by Adi Wimmer

The Victim:
"We could not get out of town, so we walked down to the roundabout – and watched the town burn."

"There was no warning, no nothing, and in five minutes everything was burning."

"In rural Australia, there is hardly anyone who does not know somebody else affected by the fire: so many have died, and several thousand people have lost everything. When the fires came, evacuation had to be effected so fast that nobody got a chance to save the family pictures, the toys for the children, and now all of that is lost."

"Sonja Parkinson and her young son escaped the inferno in Kinglake by fleeing their home and huddling under a damp blanket in a creek. She said flames roared overhead like a jet engine and she was convinced they would die."

The Journalist:
"It's the largest natural disaster in our state's history and Australia's history."

"After more than 20 years, I remember well the last bushfire I covered as a journalist at close quarters. At the time, before journalists had to undergo fire training and be accredited to go near a bushfire zone. I was watching an elderly woman throw buckets of water at burning embers as they fell like missiles around her rural home outside Canberra. That's when the fire front reared up close by and I panicked. I ran for the car by the roadside, realising as I reached it that my colleague, a photographer, was not there. He had failed to react in time, deceived by the tunnel vision that comes with looking down a camera lens. Suddenly aware of the peril, he sprinted to the car, chased by smoke and flame, and we tore off. We got out of there in the nick of time. Now, as I cover this disaster, this time at a safe distance, I realise the old woman who had been tossing thimble-fulls of water at the feet of an inferno was actually doing what all rural folk are now trained to do: don't panic, prepare your property well and defend your home to the last. As we fled, she went inside her house and both she and her house survived. The real miracle, according to the current orthodoxy of bushfire safety, is that we survived."

The Prime Minister:
"Hell and all its fury have visited the good people of Victoria in the last 24 hours," Mr. Rudd told reporters in the fire-ravaged Yarra Valley."

"The need for humanitarian aid is expected to be great, with Prime Minister Kevin Rudd laying out the costs of the fires before Parliament. In addition to those killed, more than 500 people were injured, nearly 1000 homes were destroyed, thousands were left homeless and 365,000 hectares (901,935 acres) of the Australian countryside have been burnt black, he said."

The Nation:
"This is an appalling tragedy for Victoria but because of that it's an appalling tragedy for the nation."

"A multi-faith prayer service for Victoria's bushfire victims will be held at the Sunshine Mosque on Sunday 22 February from 2-4pm. Archbishop Denis Hart, the head of the Melbourne Catholic community, will take part in the service."

"Australia the country stands behind Victoria at this awful time."

"I thought my life was bad at the moment with losing my job and having no money to live. But I could not imagine what all the fire victims are going through. Melbourne's love and support is with you all. I have had someone I know lose everything at Flowerdale I'm just thankful that they are all safe."

"Words just do not seem enough, please know that our prayers and thoughts are with all affected by this horrendous event. Know this, Aussies are great people and when the chips are down as they are now we will all pitch in to help. The rest of the nation supports you and shares this hideous time with you. To all the emergency services you are all heroes and we are proud oh so proud of each and everyone of you. To all Victorians the nation is in mourning with you, we are with you now and will be there to assist in the future. Stay safe."

"Such a cruel side of a beautiful country. To all those lost and their loved ones, all our fireys sweating in their suits, to the salvos, the families, the businesses, the ambos, nurses, doctors, the little old ladies who make you a cuppa right when you need it, to the children … all our strength and love is with you, we open our hearts and doors to you. Lean on us and we will see it through together. God bless and don't lose spirit - never in the history of mateship has this been so needed as now."

The Fire Fighters:
"A cultural change is needed to save us: Australians living in the bush and in semi-rural suburbs must change the way they live or else risk dying in bushfires, according to the man leading the fight against the Black Saturday fires. Russell Rees, chief officer of Victoria's Country Fire Authority, yesterday said fire fighters could no longer guarantee saving the lives of those who chose to surround themselves with vegetation despite the obvious fire risks. His warnings came as it emerged that Victoria had ignored repeated demands to reduce bushfire hazards and crack down on *tree-changer* housing estates in the years leading up to Saturday's deadly fires which are believed to have killed more than 200 people and left 7000 homeless. The state was berated by the federal government in 2007 for ignoring some of the findings of two national bushfire inquiries held after the 2003 Canberra blaze …"

The Arsonists:
"Rudd has said that the arsonists suspected of lighting some fires are guilty of mass murder, and the police are busy chasing down these malefactors. But there's an old saying among Australian fire fighters - 'whoever owns the fuel, owns the fire'. Let's hope that Australians ponder the deeper causes of this horrible tragedy, and change our polluting ways before it is too late."

FOCUS ON:
THE FILM "TEN CANOES"

ONLINE ARTICLE

"That's not Indigenous?":
Reflections on *Ten Canoes*
by Geoff Rodoreda

At a recent screening of the Australian film *Ten Canoes* at Stuttgart University, students were shocked to learn that, strictly speaking, the film could not be classified as an Indigenous Australian film. Geoff Rodoreda offers some brief thoughts on important Indigenous aspects of the film.

Barry Barclay, the Maori film-maker, writer and theorist, who died just over a year ago, was the inventor of the term Fourth Cinema. Barclay sought to distinguish Indigenous cinema from first, second and third cinemas – respectively Hollywood, Art House and Third World cinemas – and create a special status, an authenticity for Indigenous film-makers and for Indigenousness in film in general. Barclay was the first Maori to direct a dramatic feature film (*Ngati*, 1987) and his life's work remains an inspiration for many Indigenous film-makers around the world. He drew up strict guidelines for what was to qualify as Fourth Cinema, the main criteria being that a film had to be directed/made by an Indigenous film-maker. As *Ten Canoes* (2006) is credited to non-Indigenous Australian film-maker Rolf de Heer, it is not Fourth Cinema and not Indigenous film.

No one – least of all a non-Indigenous Australian like me – is challenging Barry Barclay's authority to establish rules for what Indigenous cinema is, nor would I seek to have the goalposts shifted to admit *Ten Canoes* into an exclusive club. But it is important not to forget the profound contribution *Ten Canoes* has made to Indigenous/non-Indigenous dialogue in Australia and what it reveals about notions of Aboriginal story telling. I seek not to (re)categorise the film as Indigenous but to let its Indigenous attributes speak for themselves. The challenge is to reclaim the film from being lost to examination because it is not Fourth Cinema and, thereby, to risk ignoring what *Ten Canoes* has to say about Indigenousness in the Australian cultural context.

Ten Canoes is officially titled as having been made by Rolf de Heer *and the People of Ramingining* (my italics) and listed as having been directed by Rolf de Heer *and* Peter Djigirr, a Yolngu man. Rolf de Heer was invited by Australian Aboriginal actor David Gulpilil to his country in Arnhem Land to make a feature film about his, Gulpilil's, people. Gulpilil originally had a vague idea about making a Western or a "massacre film" but eventually settled on a traditional tale of love and law and culture based on a series of black-and-white photographs taken by an anthropologist, Donald Thompson, who had worked in Arnhem Land in the 1930s. Although Rolf de Heer wrote the screenplay, the story idea was Gulpilil's, and de Heer worked closely with the people of Ramingining in developing the story.

Ten Canoes is actually a story within a story; both stories take place in pre-European times. These stories are voice-framed by a narrator (David Gulpilil) who

speaks from the present. In the embedded tale, Minygululu learns that his younger brother, Dayindi, fancies his own, Minygululu's, third and youngest wife. Tribal law is in danger of being broken. And so, while the men go out onto the swamp in ten bark canoes to hunt for magpie geese, Minygululu tells his brother an ancestral story about two brothers, young love, a wrongful killing and the maintenance of tribal peace. The film switches from black-and-white to colour to demarcate the two stories. David Gulpilil's framing narration is in English but all of the dialogue in the film is in various Yolngu languages, with English (or German etc) subtitles. *Ten Canoes* is thus the first feature film to be shot entirely in Aboriginal language/s. It is, according to press kit information accompanying the film, a "story to please two cultures": it was made to "satisfy a Western cinema-going audience" by using "Western storytelling conventions" but it also had to satisfy local tastes and requirements. Indeed, the people of Ramingining claim *Ten Canoes* as their own film. It brought "laughter, pride and joy to an entire community" and it allowed forgotten aspects of culture – such as canoe making – to be "brought back from the brink of extinction". The film sparked renewed interest in Yolngu history, culture and law and has led to follow-up film making courses, a website project, an art exhibition and other cultural projects in north-eastern Arnhem Land.

Time in the Dreamtime

Many Australian films have sought to provide insights into the Aboriginal concept of the Dreamtime but none really from an Aboriginal perspective. *Ten Canoes* provides us with an authentic insight, not in an overtly obvious way but subtly, through the way the stories are told and in their very intertwining. The first words (spoken by the narrator) contrast Western storytelling conventions with Yolngu conventions. The narrator begins: "Once upon a time in a land far, far away ..." He then breaks off, laughs and continues. "Nah, not like that. I'm only joking. But I am going to tell you a story. It's not your story – it's my story."

Here, at the very beginning of the film, non-Indigenous people (Balanda) are being addressed, and 'our' classic, taken-for-granted storytelling formula is being held up to scrutiny. We are made to reflect on the fact that 'our' stories always happen once, a long, long time ago, in lands that are far, far away. In other words, our stories do not repeat themselves and are distant from us in time and space. The disruption to the narrative serves deliberately to contrast with another type of storytelling: Yolngu stories are repeated again and again, and they are of the here and now.

The here and now is accentuated in other ways throughout the film. It not only switches but *blends* between black-and-white and colour, signifying the seamlessness between the two, central stories. The most interesting and significant blend happens at the very end of the film. The narrator returns to repeat his critique of Western storytelling conventions, by asserting: "And they all lived happily ever after." (Another break, another laugh.) "No, I don't know what happened after that. Maybe …(this, maybe that) …" The viewer is left to ponder the moral/meaning of the story that's just been shown rather than a rounded ending. And then, as the actors of the black-and-white story walk out of frame the black-and-white landscape blends into colour, just as the narrator is saying: "It's a good story. Not like your story. But a good story all the same." These two stories are in fact one timeless Yolngu story; then (black-and-white time) is as now (colour and narrator time.)

In short, *Ten Canoes* breaks new ground in the dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. It tells (and shows) us that the Dreamtime cannot

(only) be understood as a story of creation, that happened once, a long time ago, and has become ancient legend. The Dreamtime is (also) a continuing process of creation, the stories of the land and its people are repeated – and lived out in real life - again and again by the Yolngu. Importantly, the 'timeless' land is central to their (very much alive) Dreaming.

Test canoe before floating

Ten Canoes not only speaks with an Indigenous voice and communicates, in a unique way, Yolngu concepts of the Dreaming, it also fulfils the social and political functions that experts attribute to Indigenous cinema.

In preparing an introductory talk for students before screening *Ten Canoes* in Stuttgart earlier this year, I came across the work of Stephen Turner, who is a lecturer in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Auckland. One of his research interests is Fourth Cinema. In a summary of his research project Turner mentions eight different functions of Fourth Cinema. He does not refer to any film in particular but talks generally about the authenticating role of Fourth Cinema for Indigenous peoples in societies like New Zealand and Australia.

Interestingly, each of the functions identified by Turner applies fully to *Ten Canoes*. Fourth Cinema "raises questions of politics, history and education" in societies of second settlement. It is also "an affirmation of first peoples" and, third, "expresses a deeper sense of historical community and law." Further, Fourth Cinema makes "political and aesthetic questions inseparable" and offers a fresh way of "seeing the place anew through film". Finally, it "forges a different basis for historical community or living together" in society, it "reconstructs the public domain in view of long history", and it "establishes a new knowledge commons".

Again, Turner was not writing specifically about *Ten Canoes*, but keeping the functions he lists in mind I cannot think of a single film in Australia that has more fully fulfilled the functions assigned here to Fourth Cinema than *Ten Canoes,* both in the broad sense of its reception and official acclaim (it won six Australian Film Industry awards in 2006) and in the sense of its value to the people of north-east Arnhem Land. Behold: the film which functions as Fourth Cinema that is not, officially speaking, Fourth Cinema.

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Please also note that GAST's annual journal *Zeitschrift für Australienstudien*, issue 21/22 (2007/08) contains a review of Ten Canoes and - by way of comparison - The Tracker (both movies were directed by Rolf de Heer), ably written by Kira Eghbal-Azar.

TIME FOR EXPERIMENTS:
A VIDEO ESSAY

Digital Storytelling and Australian History
by Henriette von Holleuffer

The digital age has opened up new areas of historical research, and historians have learned that the multimedia age allows for new methods in the presentation of historical facts. This video essay will show that Australia's history and her archival resources offer perfect grounds for professional approaches to research-based digital storytelling. It gives no technical advice but outlines an argumentation for multimedia presentations of Australian history. The essay has two parts: It presents a multimedia demonstration, followed by some reflections on the relevance of digital storytelling as a way to interpret Australian history.

Introduction

This article is an experiment that deals with choreographic aspects for the presentation of Australian history in the age of multimedia. More precisely, this video-based article can be taken as a suggestion for digital storytelling as a platform for academic research and non-academic performance. In addition, it presents a digital choreography of a selected aspect of Australian history. The author will demonstrate how visual storytelling can be a chance for historians to develop their professional talents more creatively. The principal aim of this argumentation is to show how multimedia storytelling is a relevant and exciting way to present Australian history. In Australia, more and more historians accept the fact that "the internet and new media applications are altering both the form and the content possible for historical discourse" (Klaebe 2007:3). They argue that "the challenge for public historians is to develop and effectively exploit platforms and tools in order to maximize the opportunities afforded by these new media technologies and forms" (4). Here, the term storytelling refers to the research-based narrative presentation of Australian history in a visual format.

Historians deal with the difficult task of recreating history and promoting historical thinking. They move between the two worlds of imagination and reality when trying to explain cultural developments, ideologies, wars and revolutions. For practical reasons, historians must find ways to attract academic and public audiences for their - reconstructed - views of history. To help in this endeavour, the historian of today has the unique chance to use both the critical as well as the creative side of his skills to come a step closer to depicting real history rather than virtual history. More than ever before, he can bring up vivid pictures of historic periods, of famous statesmen and also of ordinary people. Storytelling with the help of pictures is one way to reach this goal and to reach professional status in today's multimedia environment. When this author suggests the publication of multimedia essays, she is well aware of the fact that audio and visual resources have long been accepted for documenting in history. Archives all over the world provide rich sources of all kinds. Many historians

have been using slides, films or audio material to illustrate their findings and lectures. However, self-produced video clips, slide shows or so-called flash movies have not yet developed into widely accepted forms of presentation or analysis. Generally speaking, multimedia productions have not exactly become the business of academically engaged historians, with some exceptions, of course.[3] Professional scholars, like the team around the American historian Michael Coventry, who train students in multimedia authoring, have argued that this is a relevant tool for academic work and an attractive way to strengthen skills of historical analysis (Jaffee 2006: 1382). Nevertheless, even Michael Coventry states that 'to most historians, those very moves might at first glance seem to flatten intellectual complexity' (Coventry 2006b: 1396). As a result, it can be said that multimedia authoring brings us as historians to the line that separates the professional audience from the non-professional one. It is also true that historians with an interest in digital storytelling tend to move beyond academic guidelines. Practical experience shows that it is worth the digression and that in fact for academic reasons.

The Presentation

Advance Australia: Space for History or Crossing the Way of the Rainbow Serpent refers to the aim of public history which is to present (Australian) history to a wider audience. For example, video essays can be used as introduction into Australian history for tourists, business people or students. The following demonstration is an experiment.[4]

Download:
www.australienstudien.org/newsletter/media/Australia1LowQuality.mpg

www.australienstudien.org/newsletter/media/Australia1HighQuality.mpg

The following part will stress two important aspects: the multidimensional nature of historical work on one hand, and the choreographic potential of Australian history for digital storytelling on the other.

Some reflections on research and instruction

The author argues that it is the first aspect, the multidimensional nature of historical work, which leads the discipline of history toward multimedia. Historians do acknowledge the four pillars of empirical work which are essential to their approach:

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[3] Pioneers in this field of research are - among others - two American historians: Daniel Jared Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig. Their experience dates back to the early 1990s. Daniel Cohen is Director of Research Projects at the *Center for History and New Media (CHNM)* at George Mason University. Cohen's and Rosenzweig's work offers practical advice in all fields of Digital History. An example for the broad spectrum of applied Digital History can be found on the webpage: http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/ - As result, several Australian historians have started Multimedia History Projects as a way to find public audiences for their historical research. The discussion on Digital Storytelling in Australia is also seen as a way to engage public communities in History Projects.
[4] Copyright 2009 Henriette von Holleuffer

The historical question, the search for source material, its critical interpretation and the presentation of findings. By linking these pillars of historical work historians must be aware of the multidimensional structures which they create. One substructure of historical work results from the empirical approach to research and source critique. Various types of source materials require different methods of analysis and consequently demand differentiated ways of presentation. This illustrates that, at all times, historians as critical researchers had to develop some talent for choreography which they needed to put their findings together, thereby creating a virtual drama of historical action. Without the skill to work with various kinds of information on complex historical issues they would hardly be able to render a quasi-authentic depiction of certain historical developments. What each historian finally presents is his subjective version of history which results from a choreography of diverse historical interpretations. This choreography is flexible and allows for an academic approach with hypotheses, questions, and source critiques. The work with visual or audiovisual resources will supplement personal concepts and interpretations of former times.

As one result, a debate has started on the 'chasm between current practices in research and those in teaching in our profession' (Coventry 2006a: 1371) since successful instruction means to acknowledge the multidimensional aspects of history, historical evidence and historical presentation. When Michael Coventry cites his colleague, the historian Robert B. Bain, who argues that 'the problem for history teachers begins with trying to understand what defines meaning making in history' (1374), it may help to remind ourselves that the meaning of history lies in its omnipresence. No path leads through an empty space. As history pervades all of human existence, historians certainly do not need to create space for history but instead for understanding of history. When considering the 'historical-thinking skills' of their students, the scholar team around Michael Coventry attempts to create space for historical interpretations - space that goes beyond accepted guidelines and standard formats of historical presentation (1374) [5]

History itself and the complex structures of historical analysis do support unconventional ways to present the subject. Although some critics oppose the idea of visual (digital) storytelling as being a popular simplification, a growing number of academic scholars in Australia have started to use this method to present, to share and to preserve history. They do not fear that the style of tabloid or fiction will destroy the standards of text-based research and presentation. In accordance with practice in Australia and the U.S., the author of this essay argues that critics will have to accept the fact that historians have more than two types of expertise: the competence to examine a story and to tell a story. They should not leave their business of presenting history to commercial direction, but they should take on this assignment themselves by using empirical methods of analysis and professional forms of presentation. In the following, the author refers to digital storytelling as one way to help rebuild the authentic structure of Australian history and its relevant contexts.

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[5] Michael Coventry and his team of historians are well aware of the fact that historians are slow in accepting of the *Pictorial Turn* which, in 1994, W.J.T. Mitchell foresaw and which today is essential to multimedia presentation.

The choreographic potential in Australian History

One of the first examples of "multimedia" storytelling can be found in the pictorial documentation of Edouard Borovansky's Ballet Performances of the 1940s. A remarkable choreography of 1946 was *Terra Australis*. This Melbourne performance was 'a symbolic ballet about the encounter between Aboriginal people and white settlers'.[6] The artist Jean Stewart and the choreographer Edouard Borovansky, together with designer Eve Harris and scenery builder William Constable, created a 'ballet to portray issues of European settlement of Aboriginal Australia, albeit through European eyes'. *Terra Australis* is a choreographic performance par excellence. It is an artwork. However, aside from its significance as a work of art, it presents history as a multimedia story in a multidimensional space, danced in a colourful choreography by costumed actors. Furthermore, it introduced a specific interpretation of Australian history, told by Non-Aboriginal Australians. When the dancer *Spirit of Australia* [Peggy Sager] found herself in the arms of both *The Explorer* [Martin Rubinstein] and *The Aboriginal* [Vassilie Trunoff], all three artists not only made Australian Ballet History but created an early version of a visual presentation and interpretation of Australian history - translated into European ideograms. The choreography of the ballet *Terra Australis* was a perfect example for the idea of presenting history in an unconventional format. While this performance created a virtual space for historical interpretation, it displayed choreographic potential in Australian history.

The study of Australian history deals with controversial interpretations of European records and native memory. As result, the historical analysis reveals a unique symbiosis of archaic and modern fragments in the development of the continent. Moreover, the historical sources illustrate the colourful genesis of a continent where Aborigines and Non-Aborigines developed along separate lines. However, it took a long time for explorers and settlers to see Australia as a place of differentiated historical action. Europe's encounter with the Australian continent created uncertain attitudes about the unknown continent on the other side of the earth before explorers and immigrants discovered a prehistoric continent with all the creative forces which determine the development of geography, flora, fauna and human culture. It was not unusual that the European settlers began to interpret historical facts in their own way. They misused the choreographic potential in the making of history and created the myth of pre-colonial Australia as *Terra nullius*. Today, historical research has to acknowledge that this continent's history does not start at a chosen time and that, in the academic context, choreography is only meant as storyboard that tells a nearly authentic past.

If the American theorist of Visual Storytelling Corey Hitchcock argues that 'every aspect of storytelling: structure, plot, character, pace, voice, timing, and setting, has the potential to be morphed by digital contact' (Hitchcock: webpage), it must be acknowledged that Australian history offers, indeed, a perfect platform for a complex choreography of historical facts. A video-based essay makes visible different lines of historical action and allows the historian to move on different platforms of historical action. As result, the visual presentation presents historical forces and actors in different periods of time; it shows diverse fields of political, social or economic

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[6] See research comment of the displayed picture in *Picture Australia*, Collection 'Peggy Sager Ballet Photographs', National Library of Australia (Canberra), Identifier No. nla.pic-an 23924450.

interest, thereby revealing controversial aspects of history interpretation by the actors themselves. What does all this mean to the non-professional or young student of Australian history?

In the context of this specific project, the author has to keep in mind that most of the paintings of the early period of exploration in Australia show the perspectives of the white settlers who arrived on the continent since 1788. Consequently, most of the resources which can be found in archives or in pictorial collections reflect their perspectives of the continent in the early days of settlement. This exemplary digital story tells about the cultural conflict between Aborigines and white settlers. It also refers to the ideological construct of multiculturalism which still appears to be a constituent in Australian society. The cultural and political conflicts are interpreted as decisive historical forces in the modern development of the Australian continent.

Exploration and the idea of nation-building appear to be the important forces which formed (and deformed) the vast continent and defined Australia as a geographic space of ethnic diversity, cultural conflict, political controversy and scientific opportunity. It is necessary to balance the view of the white settler as shown in European art and photography by presenting some typical aspects of Aboriginal culture. The author decided to capture a sample of Aboriginal life by editing a short video sequence that shows authentic items produced by the Aborigines themselves. A modern soundtrack of Didgeridoo music links the chronological sequences of the visual story. The story defines Australia's last 240 years as a critical chapter in the geographic and cultural development of the continent where the culture of the Aborigines reaches back for thousands of years. It is the intention to revive some samples of this era of myths and legends. The presentation leaves it to the viewers whether or not they will notice a significant problem of Australian history, the desperate attempt of the Aborigines to find a place for their cultural heritage among the many elements of multicultural Australia. By referring to the title of Australia's national anthem, the audio comment reveals the idea that Australia's multicultural hybrid, the *New Australian*, must search for a symbiosis between the mythical dreamtime and the modern development of the continent. Then he will give life to the motto *Advance Australia*. *Advanced [thinking] Australians* will discover the many facets of Australian culture. They can *walk about* the different paths which Aborigines, explorers, settlers, entrepreneurs, politicians and scientists have travelled from the past until today - crossing the way of the *Rainbow Serpent.* It is the picture of the *Rainbow Serpent* which symbolizes the cultural encounter between explorers and Aborigines.

What role did space play in Australian History? Space appeared as an unlimited resource which encouraged millions of pioneers to settle in Australia during the 19th and 20th centuries. For many years the vision of settling the vast Australian continent was predominant in scientific exploration, entrepreneurship, and nation-building. The prospect of unlimited space was an important factor for colonization. However, this prospect could also bring disappointment. Due to geography and climate, the plans for unlimited colonization failed. As a result of discovery and research, Australia's wide horizons appeared as a threat to national security, and therefore Australia's political leaders modified domestic plans of nation-building and exploration. They even searched for an exterritorial influence beyond the wide horizons of the Australian continent. This historical context is the framework of the digital story *Crossing the Way of the Rainbow Serpent.*

Risks and chances

It can be said that more than a text-based presentation, multimedia authoring appeals to the discipline of the historical reporter. Consequently, he must be aware that special effects can manipulate or simplify complex historical contexts if he relies on them too heavily. However, the possible risk of simplification or triviality cannot serve as an argument against multimedia authoring when history is viewed as a symbiosis of drama, sound, and colour. A carefully edited digital story combines all three components and links them with the guiding (audio) comment of the academic researcher. When in the early 1990s the American theorist W.J.T. Mitchell stated that 'a pictorial turn' (Mitchell 1994: 15) had occurred in the human sciences he could not foresee a developing technology which would intensify the effects of this 'pictorial turn'. Mitchell may only have anticipated that 'the descriptive aspects of narrative and the visual-spatial features of memory' (184) would gain more importance in the future.

Meanwhile, the 'pictorial turn' has invaded most fields of the Humanities. The potential for choreographic presentation has increased, including visual representation and semantic interpretation. Historians also have discovered the power of imagination as a relevant part of the relationship between researcher and public audience. Mitchell finds that imagination 'is a power of consciousness that transcends mere visualization' (115). Imagination produced by empirical research and presented in a condensed style, i.e. reduced to essentials, seems to bring the historian closer to a real picture of history. Authenticity is weaker when it is limited to only one method of presentation.

The storyboard

The idea for the story *'Advance Australia: Space for History or Crossing the Way of the Rainbow Serpent'* started with the finding of two amazing illustrations. The first illustration is called 'The Story of the Bunyip'.[7] This wood engraving was created by the artists Troedel & Co. in 1882. It shows an old Aboriginal man pointing out into the bush as he tells a story to two European children. The second is a lithograph by the French Artist Nicolas Eustache Maurin, called 'Le Serpent Noir'.[8] It was made in 1839. The artist offers an interesting interpretation of the clash of cultures by using the illustration of a hunting scene in New Holland with a frightened European in the background. Although both works were made by different artists and for different editors they deal with the same subject: the encounter of Aborigines and white settlers in Australia. The pictures construct similar imaginations of the encounter. Both artists tell us something between myth and reality. Their visions of the historic context and of the aftermath of the year 1788 reveal the ambivalent character of Australian culture. Moreover, the paintings capture the complex structure of Australian history. Both pictures depict imaginations of myth and reality, conflict and dialogue, native traditions and European perceptions. What is the real history behind

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[7] 'The Story of the Bunyip', Illustrated newspaper file (Australasian sketcher, July 29, 1882), National Library of Australia: nla.pic-an21505582.
[8] 'Le Serpent Noir – Nouvelle Hollande', plate facing p. 53, vol. 4 of *Souvenirs d'un aveugle* (Paris: Hortet et Ozanne, 1839), Rex Nan Kivell Collection, National Library of Australia (Canberra), Identifier No. nla.pic-an 10099830.

the virtual world of art? The two illustrations build up a virtual guideline which can be used as structure for a visualized introduction into Australian history.

The empirical approach brought to light potential of using a variety of materials. This was the idea. Presenting different categories of historical evidence, - each in its authentic format, gives the audience an opportunity to assemble information from diverse sources. Besides this, multimedia authoring is a practical way for the audience to appreciate the complex structures of history, historical study and historical meaning. Multimedia authoring widens the spectrum of historical interpretation and does not ignore the intellectual (and emotional) competence of the audience when reconstructing history in time, space, action, sight and sound.
One of the pioneers of digital storytelling, Corey Hitchcock, states that the various tools of storytelling 'are helping or perhaps even forcing writers to think outside the reality of traditional linear narrative' (Hitchcock). As result, the traditional historian will find that

> [a *storyboard*] is a place to plan out a visual story in two dimensions. The first dimension is time: what happens first, next, and last. The second is of interaction: how does the audio information - the voiceover narrative of your story and music - interact with the images or video. In addition, it can be a notation of where and how visual effects - transitions, animations, compositional organization of the screen - will be used. (Lambert 2003: 26)

The core of information lies in the *storyboard*. As for an article or a lecture, the historian needs to examine different sources of information before a first outline for the project is presented. Different from the design of a linear narrative, the historian has to consider that the main advantage of digital storytelling is the chance to present available types of source material in a non-linear way. Next to the images, soundtracks, and transitions, it is the text of the commentator - the voiceover - which appears as the most important element of the presentation. It not only serves as the main structure of the story but also supports the academic character of the presentation. In this way, the historian puts emphasis on his hypothesis and conclusion. A condensed and thoughtfully edited comment provides an abstract for a digital story which otherwise would be dominated by visualization. The written text for the audio comment appears as the historians' chance to overcome a 'distrust of images' (Martinez 1995: 24).[9]

Many historians must realize that working with pictures, film, or music when reconstructing history 'involves the historian's point of view, feelings, and attitudes' (24). This makes them responsible for authenticity. However, the historian will never attain absolute objectivity in this reconstruction. The work with modern video and audio programs requires the historian to remain responsible for keeping the separation between fact and fantasy. The author must decide whether it makes sense to use a cartoon or a scanned pamphlet as illustrating material for the audio comment in order to give reliable evidence. Also, newly edited video sequences have to be carefully examined for their manipulative meanings in a historical context.

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[9] Katharine Martinez concludes that 'attitudes towards images can be reduced to two opposing points of view concerning reality: what one scholar has described as the scientific theory vs. the discourse theory.' See Martinez 1995, p. 22.

A digitalized historical presentation needs to interact with a spoken comment. It is the guideline which takes the viewer on the path to a deeper understanding of the subject. Moreover, it is responsible for the intellectual response of the viewer - academic or not. A thoughtful comment provides the historical context and keeps emotional reactions under control. All this serves the interest of the professional historian. The project gains completeness and complexity by skilfully combining text (voiceover), image and music. These components in a multimedia project create a synergy of intellectual responses, emotional reactions and abstract realizations. As result, the multimedia presentation will explain the past. The responses, reactions, and realizations reflect today's perceptions of the past. This is an extra benefit - also for Australian history.

Conclusion

'It's not an easy time to be a historian.' This statement by Katherine Martinez is based on the argument that today 'performance is often more important than the [historical] event or object being interpreted' (Martinez: 34). In fact, the discourse on the question of how to use visual and audio resources as historical evidence has stretched into a debate on multimedia performance and its relevance for the discipline of history. This is necessary because the 'historian's new interest in the public' cannot be limited to 'scholarly examinations of nearly every practice in which non-historians invoke, narrate, or display representations of the past' (Stearns 2000: 1). When in the 1320s and 1330s the artist Ambrogio Lorenzetti painted his allegories of bad and good government in Siena's Palazzo Pubblico, he realized that illustrative art was another dimension of the historical record. He could not foresee that one day new techniques would allow for a symphony of narrative sequences in multidimensional information. As result, the presentation of visual sources, sound bits, material items and academic comments has also restructured the house of performance for Australian history. Historians will never completely close the gap between reality and virtual worlds. But this also is a fact: While historians unfortunately will never be able to add smell to their presentation and interpretation of Australian history, they should acknowledge one talent: The historian's professional skill to tell Australia's history in most of her facets.

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[10] Two items: "Aboriginal children inside the school at Lake Condah"; "A steampowered sawmill".

[11] Three items: J2364, 2594/40; A1200, L15330; A1200,L11433.

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[13] One photograph: "Aboriginal men spearfishing" (Collection Harney/McCaffery).

[14] The author appreciates special permits for publication of the following two maps:
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[15] "Portrait of Captain James Cook".
[16] "Anthony van Diemens Land" by F. Ottens.
[17] Items of the La Trobe Picture Collection and Argus Newspaper Collection & Photographs: "The America Creek/Mount Kembla" by Samuel Calvert; "A corroboree" by George William Perry; "Aboriginals surprised by a camel team" by J. Macfarlane; "Map showing explorers routes"; "Australian Armed Forces in Papua New Guinea" (photo); "The Geographical Society's New Guinea Expedition"; "Antarctic Regions ca. 1933" and "The Antarctic continent compared with Australia and the British Isles" by John King Davis.

CONFERENCES

SYMPOSIUM
The History Wars Revisited

A Retrospective Symposium
at the Free University of Berlin, Tuesday 6 October 2009
Venue: Harnack-Haus, Ihnestr. 16-20, 14195 Berlin (Dahlem), Germany
Guest speakers:

- Bain Attwood, Professor of History at Monash University, author of *The 1967 Referendum: Race, Power and the Australian Constitution* (re. ed. 2007), *Telling the Truth about Aboriginal History* (2005), *Rights for Aborigines* (2003).

- James Boyce, freelance historian from Hobart, author of *Van Diemen's Land* (2008), winner of Tasmania Book Prize 2009.

- Stephen Muecke, Professor of Creative Writing at the University of New South Wales, author (with Krim Benterrak and Paddy Roe) of *Reading the Country* (1984), *No Road (bitumen all the way*, (1997), *Ancient & Modern: time, culture and indigenous philosophy* (2004), and *Joe in the Andamans and other fictocritical stories* (2008).

- Kim Scott, Western Australian author of *True Country* (1993), *Benang - From the Heart* (1999), *The Dredgersaurus* (2001), and with Hazel Brown, *Kayang & Me* (2005).

The History Wars of the 1990s in Australia have been variously interpreted in the broader social context as a symptom of a return to conservative values and as part of a complex of other issues in the area of policing, immigration and asylum politics. At the more immediate level of intellectual debate, they have been seen as a trench war between rigidly polarized positions and as a rehashing of debates that had already been resolved within the discipline of historiography. Did the History Wars have longer-term repercussions upon debates in the public sphere, decision-making at the level of policy, the ways in which academic disciplines or the creative arts interact with the public sphere? What directions have the historical and interpretative humanities disciplines taken as a result of or despite the History wars? Does specific disciplinary positioning inflect the ways in which the History Wars are assessed now, or the effects they have had upon public discourse? How do the various standpoints of indigenous, Anglo-Australian, immigrant or overseas commentators contrast with one another in the wake of the History Wars? Has the recent change of government evinced a turn from or continuity in the conservative discourses which underpinned much of the rhetoric of the History Wars? How did the Rudd Apology deal with moot questions of genocide, dispossession or sovereignty? And finally have the History Wars had a long-term positive or deleterious effect upon the process of reconciliation between indigenous and immigrant Australians, and upon the nation's confrontation with its own genocidal past?

Russell West-Pavlov | Professor of Postcolonial Literatures, FU Berlin |
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RESOURCES

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Die australische "AusLit-Datenbank" ist eine wichtige Daten-Ressource im Bereich der englischsprachigen Literaturwissenschaft. Das Projekt dient der Aufnahme aller literaturwissenschaftlichen Titel zu Australien. Das australische Projektteam verfolgt seit 2009 das Ziel, auch Titel aufzunehmen, die nicht in Australien erschienen sind bzw. nicht in englischer Sprache vorliegen. Dazu bedarf es internationaler Zusammenarbeit - auch im deutschsprachigen Raum. Wer relevante Titel in die Datenbank aufnehmen lassen möchte, sollte das folgende Anschreiben als Anleitung zur Titelmeldung nutzen.

Weitere Informationen:
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Standard Email

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EXHIBITION

James Cook and the Exploration of the Pacific

Am 28. August 2009 wird in der Kunst und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bonn die große Ausstellung "James Cook und die Entdeckung der Südsee" eröffnet. Kuratoren dieser Ausstellung sind namhafte Experten auf dem Gebiet der Forschung über James Cook. Zu ihnen gehören die amerikanische Cook-Kennerin Prof. Dr. Adrienne Kaeppler vom Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. sowie Prof. Dr. Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin und Dr. Gundolf Krüger vom Institut der Ethnologie der Universität Göttingen. Dort wird heute noch die ethnographisch bedeutendste Sammlung zu James Cook beherbergt. Darüber hinaus fungieren Prof. Dr. Christian Feest vom Museum für Völkerkunde in Wien und Dr. Thomas Psota vom Historischen Museum in Bern als Kuratoren. Die Ausstellung wird in Bonn bis zum 28. Februar 2010 zu sehen sein und kommt anschließend an das Museum für Völkerkunde in Wien (10. Mai bis 13. September 2010). Danach wird die Wanderausstellung in Bern gezeigt: vom 7. Oktober 2010 bis zum 13. Februar 2011.

Die Ausstellung bietet eine umfassende Einführung zur Biographie von James Cook und zur Epoche der Aufklärung. Ferner stellt sie die Südsee- und Pazifikreisen von James Cook in einzelnen Kapiteln vor, wovon besonders die erste Expedition (1768-1771) für Australienkenner interessant sein dürfte. Die Ausstellung beleuchtet zudem eine weitere interessante Thematik: "Aufbruch in die Moderne: Pazifische und europäische Perspektiven auf James Cook". Die ethnographischen Objekte der Ausstellung, die ca. 80 Prozent der Ausstellungsstücke umfassen, werden durch seltene maritimgeschichtliche Exponate vor allem aus dem Londoner National Maritime Museum ergänzt. Originalgemälde und Zeichnungen von den Cook-Reisen gehören zu den kostbarsten Exponaten der Ausstellung.
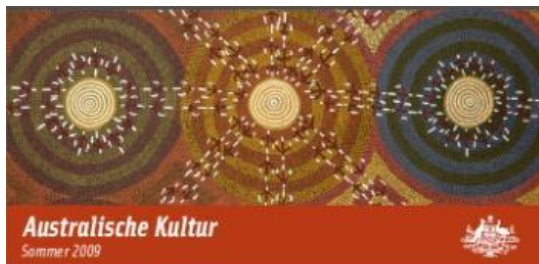
Begleitend zu der Ausstellung erscheint ein etwa 350 Seiten umfassender Katalog in englischer und deutscher Sprache. Ausgewiesene Autorinnen und Autoren haben an diesem Band, der die neuesten Forschungsergebnisse zusammenfasst, mitgewirkt.

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Best wishes …

Henriette von Holleuffer