

## From the editors of this issue

In reference to the recent awareness of “the growing use of the idea of ‘entanglement’ as a key theoretical term in the humanities and social sciences” this issue reflects the increasing challenge “to move away from narrowly defined ‘national’ histories towards an understanding of [Australian] History [and presence] as an interlinked whole where identities and places are the products of mobilities and connections”.<sup>1</sup> We take up this flexible approach to gain a deeper understanding of a spectacular experiment which ended in a clash of cultures but also led to transcultural collaboration. It was the result of European ‘entanglement’ overseas, that is, Europe’s presence among Indigenous populations and its invasive influence on these societies. Like elsewhere, the colonial past is still present today in Australia and former colonial power relations continue to have an impact in the present. This causes never-ending intricate debates on the historical, political, social, cultural and legal circumstances of European settlement in Australia. Today’s coexistence of Indigenous people and new Australians of diverse backgrounds is determined by hidden implications, outspoken arguments, and concessions not yet achieved within the fragmentary context of these debates. As a result, the colonial legacy remains in the widest sense a controversial issue for politicians and academics, and this in all her facets. Academic research, therefore, will always reflect contested views on the colonial era of intercultural encounter. This also applies to the perception of the Indigenous peoples’ joint efforts to save their culture in a postcolonial context. Most notably, as this issue of the *Australian Studies Journal – Zeitschrift für Australienstudien* mainly will show, academic research on a global scale, i.e. across national, ethnic, social, religious, gender-related and disciplinary boundaries, but also across divided attitudes, might raise public awareness for shared values in an interlinked world.

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<sup>1</sup> 2017 conference committee of the *Australian Historical Association*.

This anniversary issue, the 30th, presents a wealth of interdisciplinary research in the areas of History, Indigenous Studies, Literature, Art History and Geography.

Regina Ganter's groundbreaking study on "Yolngu Conversations with Faith: The 'outward signs of conversion' to Christianity and Islam" emerges from the hypothetical question what might have happened if the Muslim contacts with the Yolngu people had not been forbidden and replaced with Christian missions at the beginning of the twentieth century. A well-known expert in this field of intercultural research, Regina Ganter provides a powerfully written insight view into the world of north-east Arnhem Land's Yolngu people by suggesting that before British colonization the Yolngu were engaging with Muslim life-worlds at a much deeper level than has previously been presumed. Learn more about this important and less known chapter of Australian cultural history.

The second article draws attention to another pattern of 'entanglement': the controversial and ambivalent historiographical interpretation of frontier violence in Australian literature. Geoff Rodoreda's brilliant analysis, "The Darkest Aspect: Mabo and Liam Davison's *The White Woman*", exemplifies the rejection of Australia's conventional historical narrative and the re-writing of this narrative to assert an Indigenous presence in the land and in history by focussing on one piece of historical fiction written in the wake of the Mabo decision. Rodoreda highlights a crucial aspect of Australia's historical (self-)understanding as result of his exploration: "Strong memories of frontier violence" and "a wilful forgetfulness as the nation of Australia is being formed" speak in an ambivalent way "to the contemporary reader: this history of the frontier is not a history that is wanted; it is not a past that anyone would choose to be proud of. But it is one that Australians are again being confronted with, post Mabo."

Another controversial issue is addressed by Kerstin Knopf in her analysis of the famous Australian film *Jindabyne* (dir. Ray Lawrence, 2006). The author stresses in an in-depth breakdown of the film the

delicate entanglement of colonial bio- and geopolitics, i.e. the appropriation and control of as well as violence committed against Aboriginal bodies and lands. She does this in symbolic images, extensive interpretations, and clear words. Her close analysis of gender, sexual violence and race show the intricate entanglement of different social and cultural categories that need to be understood in context and relation to each other. Knopf's text can be read as a cogent example of the decidedly *transnational* influences of racial narratives on national discourses.

Art historian Marthe Schmidt offers the reader far-reaching perspectives with a profound analysis of an artwork by famous landscape painter Conrad Martens, the *Stalagmites, Burragalong Cavern*, 1843. Her colourful essay seeks to highlight the implications and cultural significance of caves as an important subject of Australian art. Schmidt's article reveals the unique status of this artwork in the Australian and international context by comparing Conrad Martens' visual interpretation of Australia's 'terra incognita subterranea' with other well-known cave visualisations.

In the end, we learn that history reflects in two mirrors: The present and the future. In a period of strong suburban expansion and increased traffic intensity environmental problems grow – also in Australia. Therefore it appears necessary to focus on future problems and interdisciplinary research aspects: Geography provides new insights into innovative ideas, such as "Urban Consolidation" guidelines, which propose more compact residential development. Roxana Leitold's paper, which is an extract from her *GASt-Award*-winning thesis, analyses recent changes in the spatial patterns of residential development in the greater Brisbane area. The geographical study is based on secondary statistical data and supplementary expert interviews. Leitold's results highlight that consolidation processes are located in certain key areas. For example: the resulting architectural structures, such as multi-story apartment buildings, are not only determined by the intervention of planning authorities, but also by the strategies of real estate developers and, most of all, changing patterns of demand in a

period of new immigration. Leitold's practice-oriented research contributes vital impetus to the field of urban planning in Australia.

Our presentation of different intellectual approaches to the 'entangled' dimension of Australian Studies in a way is an unremarkable, i.e. 'unravelling' reference to traditional leader Blue Bob's (1916-2004) once vital plea for the perception of the Indigenous peoples' 'belonging' to their country: "Beginning with looking at stone tool fragments on the ground" [he said:] "And you got to look after this very important thing. This is here. All round, anywhere you see them [stone tools]."<sup>2</sup> It can be read as the prologue of our new issue.

As editors of the journal, we continue to foster the practice of Australian Studies as a multidisciplinary endeavour. The *Zeitschrift für Australienstudien / Australian Studies Journal* is a crucial forum for exchanging innovative scholarship. Our policy to encourage interdisciplinary research and submissions by emerging scholars has led to a perceptible increase in interest to publish with this journal. We appreciate this continuing interest and strongly encourage future submissions in both German and English language. Moreover, the online submission form and the availability of articles and reviews for free have exerted an impact on the reach and diversity of our readers. We could sense increasing interest in this new format at institutions, such as the Menzies Centre for Australian Studies, and at conferences across Europe and Australia. The *Zeitschrift für Australienstudien / Australian Studies Journal*, this issue shows, combines different disciplines and stresses the complex avenues – from geography over art history to literary studies – to engage with Australia in intellectually multifarious ways. Our Association also continues to issue a bi-annual electronic Newsletter which presents news, reports and debates on Australia's current affairs. Australianists can visit the *e-Newsletter* on **[www.australienstudien.org](http://www.australienstudien.org)**.

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<sup>2</sup> Pamela Robson, ed., 2009. *Great Australian Speeches: Landmark Speeches that Defined and Shaped Our Nation*, Millers Point, NSW: Murdoch Books, p. 193.

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*Henriette von Holleuffer & Oliver Haag (December 2016)*