

Colonialism's Past and Present:
Performing History at a Gold Rush Theme Park

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Abstract: The urge to seize, to claim the past in order to experience the truth of history is a powerful impulse - one full of desire for a time apart from the here and now. Conceiving and sustaining an experience of the past is today very big business. The ongoing development of the heritage, tourism and re-enactment industries inter-link with popular historical perception in ways that raise multiple questions about the relationship between popular and academic accounts of the past and the many other ways of performing history (Denning 1996). This paper takes as its starting point a gold rush theme park, Old Mogo Town in NSW Australia, and in particular, its erasure of all evidence of the Indigenous past. From here, it is my aim to develop a revised performance of that past- one that interrogates the catastrophe of colonialism and the fate of history currently expunged from the gold rush theme park of Old Mogo Town.

Keywords: Australian mining history, theme Parks, Australian Indigenous history

Introduction

In the winter of 1860 four Aborigines died of cold and exposure on Mount Jillamatong just outside Braidwood in Southern NSW. The fact was summarily reported in the local press and was accompanied only by a comment that the deceased were 'buried by their tribesmen'. Readers of the article were not told which Aboriginal 'tribe' the four dead belonged to but it is likely that they were Walbunja people, members of the Yuin nation.

One hundred and fifty two years later, the winter deaths of the four Yuin people in 1860 is recorded on a small laminated information sheet nailed to the wattle and daub wall of one of the heritage buildings that form part of *Old Mogo Town, A Gold Rush Theme Park* on the south west coast of NSW. It appears on the sheet under the skeptical heading, '*Not Interested in Gold!?*'

The idea that interest in gold or more particularly, interest in the history of gold and representations of gold rushes past might be regarded as a discrete endeavour, an effort quite separate from Indigenous dispossession and survival is a well established historiographic assumption characterizing much goldfields history (McCalman, Cork and Reeves 2001). It is an assumption that has led some historians and others to comment that goldfields history today continues to suffer from the same 'cult of forgetfulness' that was characteristic of *all* Australian history until at least the late 1960s (Clark and Cahir 2003). Yet, the suggestion underlying the question on the little information sheet at *Old Mogo Town* that *not* being interested in gold might mean that you *may* be interested to learn of the fate of four Aboriginal people during that first gold rush era hints, I think, at a phenomenon rather more complex than the straightforward one of 'forgetfulness' that the current critique of gold fields history allows.

Remembering and forgetting, making absent and present, silencing and articulating are entangled processes. The act of remembering can produce absence; writing and speech acts can at once articulate and silence. As the historian Greg Denning has shown, remembering and forgetting are acts of performance; they refer to a past in *making* a present. In this article I take as my starting point two assertions embedded in my introduction this far. First, the dictum that remembering is a performative practice one that that is constitutive of our present as much as of any past, and second, the premise that a gold rush theme park can be taken seriously as history. Building upon these claims it is my intention to develop an account of the ways in which Indigenous pasts are at once remembered and forgotten, made absent and present at *Old Mogo Town: A Gold Rush Theme Park*.

Of course, to frame an article on gold rush history and Indigenous peoples around the representations of the past found at a heritage gold rush theme park is perhaps to invite dismissive comment. As many professional historians have argued, theme parks are hardly history, nor are they really heritage (Prentice 2005). They are 'themed landscapes' which are 'themed in order to give form to narrative, myth and ideology (Gapps 2009; see also Lukas 2007). To this extent they 'rely on easily understood narrative structures that tap into myths and visual imagery generated and sustained by popular culture' (van Eeden 2007: 114). Furthermore, the claim that all histories are performative transformations of pasts that constitute a present is, as Denning has written, surely to 'mock the seriousness or good intentions of the pursuit of meaning in disciplinary ways' (Denning 1996:55; see also Smith 2006; Jackson and Kidd 2011). Debates about what is history and what is heritage are (probably) irresolvable but they nevertheless go to the historiographic heart of any discussion of the ways in which the past is represented and expressed. At *Old Mogo Town* as I show, quite different conceptions of the represented past are produced according to the understanding of history and heritage invoked. What is remembered and what is forgotten, what is made present and what is left absent in this way I argue, appears as an artifact of historiography. However, to discern the more fundamental entanglements between those processes of remembering and forgetting, making absent and present so central to these performances of the past is not as I then suggest, so much a question of what might be regarded as history or heritage so much as it is a question as to how these non-Indigenous processes of remembering and forgetting play out in the contemporary legacy of Aboriginal presence and absence (Healy 2008:14). As I aim to show, it is the very mutability, constantly unsettled nature of these processes of remembering and forgetting that are central to understanding the ways in which history and heritage expressively, performatively transform the past to constitute the present (Denning 1996; Smith 2006).

This article begins with some of my own impressions of *Old Mogo Town*, which I recorded during a visit there earlier this year. It then moves on to reflect on the representations of the past produced at this history theme park (at least as I experienced and understood these), and particularly to reflect on these in relation to published histories of the region, mining history, and Indigenous histories of the south coast. My article then turns to consider the underlying questions, which enervate the different understandings of the past produced by these different histories and in particular, of the ways in which these inform performances of the past produced at *Old Mogo Town*. The more or less irresolvable (and arguably unproductive) debate thus generated points to my conclusion, and finally a postscript.

Old Mogo Town: Impressions: January, 2012

Old Mogo Town, Gold Rush Theme Park is situated just off the highway from the centre of Mogo Town near Bateman's Bay on the NSW South Coast. The town and the theme park are both surrounded by the Mogo State Forest, tall timbered bush land of temperate rainforest.

The buildings of the theme park are set amongst this bush and are a mixture of those erected over the years since the 1970s to house visitors to the park and buildings erected (and since restored) in the 1850s by miners and others who came to the Mogo gold fields. The cabin that we stay in here for two days and two nights has a small timbered veranda, and from here we can look out across a grassy hill and dam to the tall surrounding forest. It's very quiet, and very beautiful. This is not at all what I had expected.

The website for *Old Mogo Town Gold Rush Theme Park* seemed to promise a Disney world simulacrum of mid 19th century diggings. 'Enter a time warp' it claims, 'capture the true essence of history', and 'experience the living conditions of miners and early settlers as it was in the South Coast Area of NSW, Australia'. Instead of these promised projections of authenticity I am reassured by the reserved almost modest attempts to recreate a landscape and built environment. There are small miners' humpies, some made from sawn timber, some made out of bark. There is a small pub, a miners' inn again made out of timber, wattle saplings and daub; there is a single-room timbered church which also apparently functioned as a school and then there's a Chinese temple. There is a police station; it's the only building that is made out of stone – large bricks made from crushed oyster shells and lime, and a prison cell next door. And this evocation of life on the diggings is further elaborated through the reconstruction of mine shafts and mining machinery such as a stamping battery and alluvial mining equipment.

When I take one of the guided tours our group of fifteen adults and children are shown how to pan for gold in a small creek. We are then led around the theme park to each of the sites as our guide describes life on the diggings. It's a life characterised by desperately hard labour, much violence between miners and bitter resentment amongst the European miners of their Chinese compatriots. The Chinese miners, we are told, were prepared to work harder than most European miners, to eke out a living and often get rich on the slurry heaps abandoned by others. We are also told of the bitter resentment of authority amongst all miners especially, of the hated officials who issued the miners licenses. And our guide also describes the high cost of gold mining on health; the health of the miners and of the environment. Mercury and cyanide were constantly used by miners to extract

maximum amounts of gold from water and river sediment and so, in turn, the rivers, creeks and flood plains were horribly contaminated by both these toxic compounds.

Our guided tour of *Old Mogo Town* ends casually: our group of local holiday-makers and their children has developed a relaxed question-answer-comment dialogue with our guide, and talk only finally finishes some time after our guide has announced the tour over. No one had mentioned the Aboriginal societies dispossessed to make way for mining (and other European economic activities), nor was there any mention of the possible presence of Aboriginal people as miners or workers engaged in other activities on or around the gold fields.

After the tour and over the following couple of days I spend more time wandering around *Old Mogo Town*. There is a barbeque area that I'd not noticed the first day. It has roof posts that are painted with what are recognisably Aboriginal motifs and designs. There's also a swimming pool nearby, and the retaining wall around the garden that surrounds the pool is painted with similar designs and imagery. At one point I wander into a large, open shed containing an enormous piece of machinery that I can't identify, and a smaller one being worked on by one of the theme park staff. The walls of this shed are covered in small pieces of Aboriginal art and some photocopies of photos from what look like very old newspapers. I strike up a conversation with the staff member. He's a volunteer he tells me, and so are most of the staff who work at *Old Mogo Town*. For him, and his colleagues it's a labour of love, helping to restore old buildings and machinery, he says. I ask him about the machine he's working on and he tells me it's a printing press, and so too is the over-size piece. 'And this is also an art gallery too', I ask? 'Yes', he says, 'they were done by the Mum of a young Koori fellow who works here. She's a local artist, you know'. He tells me about other galleries where you can find her work and mentions the local Aboriginal Land Council on the corner of the highway turn-off into *Old Mogo Town*. 'She did all the art work in the playground of the pre-school centre at the back of the Land Council, with the kids too'. We chat on: later, I ask him about the photographs. 'Do you know where they might come from?' At that point another staff member/volunteer walks in and hearing our conversation joins in. 'Oh, I got those out of a book, a local history book', he says. He then tells me what some of the subjects of the photos are. One of them he tells me, 'is of Mount Dromedary: but it's called by its Koori name now, Gulaga, it means 'sacred mountain'.

Making History and Heritage on the South Coast.

The urge to seize, to claim the past in order to experience the 'truth' of history is a powerful impulse – one full of desire for a time apart from the here and now. Indeed, conceiving and sustaining an experience of the past is today very big business. The ongoing development and inter-linkage of the heritage, tourism and reenactment industries increasingly ties a growing popular enthusiasm for the recovery of a national past (Samuel 1994: 139) to consumer contexts (Lukas 2007; Urry and Larsen 2011). Theme parks like *Old Mogo Town*, which offer a 'living history' experience— now often referred to as histo-tainment—are a global phenomenon and have become a dominant business practice in the service and leisure sectors of many national economies. And although some academic historians and other professionals worry about the blurring of boundaries between 'heritage' and 'history' (Lowenthal 1998), and the relationship between these two sets of practices and national identity, an already extensive interdisciplinary literature on these issues continues to expand (Crang and Toila-Kelly 2010).

What then might we make of the history and heritage constructed in the tourist experience at *Old Mogo Town*? And what can we make of the relationship between this 'popular' almost amnesic history and heritage created for commercial and educational purposes, and 'professional', academic history and heritage studies of the south coast produced with scholarly intent and also for educational purposes that are perhaps not so 'forgetful'? And what if anything might this very local and small-scale example of the now global phenomenon that is the theme park be able to tell us about Australian heritage, history and national identity?

The little information sheet that notes the deaths of the four members of the Yuin nation tells us that this event took place in 1860, in other words, almost a decade after the rush to the Mogo and southern NSW goldfields began. When the rush to these fields started in 1851 we know, from sources written at the time as well as more recent work produced by professional historians, archaeologists, anthropologists, and others that the First Peoples of the south coast and hinterland had been subjected to European contact for almost eight decades. The first encounter – if you could call it that – was a sighting in 1770 by Captain James Cook of local Budawang people on Koorbrua Beach at Murramarang. The sighting is recorded in Cook's journal, which, in recent times has been subjected to detailed scrutiny by academic historians concerned to recover 'Aboriginal remembrance in the place of white forgetting' (Nugent 2005; McKenna 2002; Rose 2004). The first recorded contact, however, took place nine years later in 1797 when just three survivors of the 'Sydney Cove' shipwreck walked from Gippsland to Sydney (McKenna 2002). This 'historic' event has also been analysed by historians to the point that it has now been explicitly committed to a wider public memory. The NSW Department of Environment and Conservation cites this moment in its brochures and information posters for the south coast region.

Also in an attempt to remember what for so long had been forgotten by white Australians is the recovery of histories of 'invasion' specifically as these either occurred on the south coast of NSW or effected Indigenous peoples of the south coast. It is now widely known that after the Endeavour's journey, and the establishment of the colony at Sydney Cove in 1788 successive waves of invaders moved into the south coast region and hinterland. The first of these was the smallpox epidemic of 1789. According to sources written at the time together with the later work of historians, epidemiologists and other experts the disease is understood to have broken out in the colony round Sydney Cove and Port Jackson and rapidly spread to the other Indigenous populations of the Sydney basin and south coast. The effect on Yuin people various experts argue was catastrophic, killing nearly 90% of the population.

The second wave of invasion documented to have hit the peoples of the south coast and their lands then came in the early 1800s in the form of whalers and sealers who worked the coast down to Tasmania. Gangs of men carrying guns, knives and clubs, often accompanied by packs of dogs, would come ashore sometimes for weeks on end. Violent confrontation with Aboriginal people we now know was common as was the rape and abduction of Aboriginal women (McKenna 2002: 33). Sexual violence against Aboriginal women and children and physical violence against Aboriginal men is said by researchers to have further decimated much of the population that had survived the small pox epidemic as well as their descendants.

A third wave of invasion then came in the 1820s in the form of squatters who seized for themselves vast tracts of Aboriginal land. We know too from sources written at the time how destructive of Indigenous land and life this invading wave of Europeans was across

the entire continent. 'The squatter', a source from the 1840s writes, 'takes possession of the native country...without permission and without compensation, and calling it his run, orders the native off, because...his cattle...do not like black men'. Then come 'disease', 'vice' and a 'war of extermination', as the blacks fall 'like... leaves in autumn' before the dogs and guns' (Lang 1847: 267-74).

Then in the 1840s another invasion of Europeans onto Yuin country began as timber cutters moved into the tall forests of the region. By the 1860s we know, sawmills were proliferating throughout the area (McKenna 2002).

By the time the first major European discovery of gold on the south coast had taken place (at Eden in 1852) a palimpsest of colonial invasions — each catastrophic in their own ways — was laid across the country of the Yuin and other Aboriginal peoples of the south coast. Gold and the gold rushes like the previous invasions, however, had their own specifically destructive effects on Aboriginal land and people. In the first instance the rush of European workers from pastoral and other properties and industries created an opportunity for Aboriginal workers to obtain employment where this had previously been denied them. In relation to pastoral leases in particular Aboriginal people were able to reoccupy their traditional lands (Goodall 1996: 57-61). In the second instance however,

The gold rushes led to an increased demand for agricultural products (particularly meat and grain) to feed the dramatically increased population. These developments in turn all contributed to increasing mobility within the region and to the growth of European settlement with its concomitant alienation of more land from its Aboriginal owners. Gold essentially drove the locking out of Aboriginal people from their lands and began the imposition of small-scale European land use patterns. (Goulding Heritage Consulting 2005: 48-9)

In other words, gold mining in NSW in the mid nineteenth century drew a large population to previously sparsely populated areas which, in turn led to long-term population growth. Furthermore, in the years following the gold rushes of the 1850s as is widely reported by historians of the NSW colony, the issue of access to land rapidly came to dominate the political landscape in NSW and resulted in the passage of legislation colloquially known as the 'Selectors Acts' (Karskins 2010; Cochrane 2008; Goodall 1996). On the south coast this legislation began the break-up of large pastoral properties into small allotments and a shift from pastoralism to agriculture involving intensive grazing and cropping. In the period from 1860-1900 the intensification of land use and the increase in land enclosure in the region resulted in a raft of legislative and administrative restrictions on Aboriginal peoples capacity to reside on, travel over, and utilise the resources of the country. These restrictions were increasingly forcefully implemented by the statutory body created in the 1880s with the purpose of relocating from their lands and small reserve holdings those remaining Aboriginal people on the south coast. That body, as is known in popular and professional history and heritage, was the Aborigines Protection Board.

This is not the place for me to continue narrating a history of the ways in which Aboriginal people's lives and land on the south coast came to be governed in the most draconian ways by the Aborigines Protection Board; by the ways in which those Aboriginal people who managed to avoid the Board's reach into their daily lives had to endure the racism of white townspeople —whites who were intent on preventing Aboriginal children from attending school, from adults obtaining housing and employment and medical care (see

Rowley 1971; Goodall 1996; McKenna 2002). Nor is this the place to tell of how all this only changed as a result of Aboriginal people requesting, demanding and cajoling whites into recognising their rights – initially, their civil and political rights and later their social rights and rights to land – a struggle only partially abated by land rights and corporate association legislation in the 1970s and native title legislation in the 1990s. My point here more generally, is that this history, this past is now widely ‘remembered’ by academic historians and other professionals. The ‘cult of forgetfulness’ that characterised all Australian history until the 1960s has to this extent, in relation to the south coast been at least partially challenged. At the same time, however, most gold rush histories and histories of mining in NSW more specifically hardly mention the presence of Aboriginal people (Goodman 2001; 1994; Blainey 1978). The work of the historian Barry McGowan, particularly in his 2010 monograph, *Dust and Dreams: Mining Communities in South East NSW*, is an exception.

In *Dust and Dreams* McGowan draws on research into the Victorian gold fields that has shown that Aboriginal people mined for gold and other minerals, and also often acted as guides or sources of local knowledge to European prospectors to argue that the case for Aboriginal involvement in the NSW gold fields can be similarly made (McGowan 2010: 92). As McGowan tells us, several individual Aboriginal miners acquired legendary status on some southern NSW gold fields. What’s more, today the recorded oral histories of Aboriginal families and individuals in the Mogo and wider south coast area are replete with knowledge and memories of Aboriginal forbears’ lives. Much of this knowledge is on now on the public record. A website produced by the Australian National University named, *Koori Coast* narrates a rich and continuous history of the lives of the Yuin peoples from pre-European contact to the present (Koori Coast 2012). In 2005, the local government authority, the Eurobodalla Shire commissioned a multi-stage Aboriginal cultural history and heritage study (Goulding and Waters 1995; Feary and Donaldson 2010). Although this particular study focuses on sites of cultural heritage significance and not more recent sites of European making such as old mining towns and fields it is equally clear from this study that local Aboriginal cultural memory and connections with country in this region of the south coast are historically continuous to the present day.

Yet, if this history is now well known – and to this extent ‘remembered’ — amongst professional historians and others what might the neglect, the ‘forgetting’ of this say about the history and heritage of gold and gold mining at *Old Mogo Town: A Theme Park*? After all, much of this historical research and writing has been both productive of and produced by significant shifts in national understandings of the legacies of Indigenous dispossession and a revised narrative concerning national foundations and identity (Goot and Rowse 2007). Commercially-run history theme parks like *Old Mogo Town* may not be based on the very specific work of professional historians but more generally, as a representation of Australian colonial history developed for educational purposes they too raise the issue of the Indigenous past and present; the ways in which it is remembered and forgotten, made present and absent. In this regard then, in the case of *Old Mogo Town* there were (as far as I could tell), only three material reminders of an Indigenous past and presence there – the little information sheet, the shed containing the printing presses and art works, and the paintings on the barbeque area and swimming pool. These small but significant signifiers seem to at once represent both the marginalized status of Aboriginality as well as the enduring pervasiveness of Indigenous identity.

What is history and what is heritage are questions that have fired both public and professional debates in almost every country where concern about the past and its

relationship to the present is an issue. The debate is an inescapable feature of settler-colonial societies such as Australia where continuing Indigenous presence requires the settler colonial state and society to confront the multiple legacies in the present of Indigenous dispossession and historic injustice, and to address these. It is also a complex and ongoing debate.

On the one hand, according to these debates, the exemplary history of 'remembering' understood as that practice which seeks to recover the past that was, chronicled in primary sources, oral histories, and which develops and draws upon critiques of historiographic methods that have erased and silenced the colonised confronts a less exemplary popular conception of history that tends to reproduce those silencing, erasing effects. 'History explores and explains pasts grown ever more opaque with time' we are told, while popular imagination and all those popular practices associated with the past such as heritage are understood only to 'clarify pasts as a way of infusing them with present purposes' (Lowenthal 1998: xiv). In this way, heritage sites function as conduits between the past and the present. The past is experienced as a function of the present' (Rickly-Boyd 2012: 129). Historical theme parks in particular, are in this way guilty of playing the politics of the present for they are said to 'rely on easily understood narrative structures that tap into myths and visual imagery generated and sustained by popular culture' (van Eeden 2007: 114). To this extent, theme parks work to reinforce dominant discourses and practices associated with nationalist ideologies and the forms of politics they constitute.

According to this analysis then, we have an understanding of the work of professional historians as involving detailed, scholarly research, the careful examination of archival and other primary sources and their interpretation in the light of debates about the nature and practice of history, all with a view to correcting and completing the historical record. By contrast, popular practices of history are seen to give form to current, ideologically driven social agendas, many of them anchored in the reproduction of jingoistic foundational myths of the pioneering white settler whose efforts alone are responsible for the development of the nation. On this reading, *Old Mogo Town: A Theme Park* is a clear example of the latter version of history. The pioneering efforts of mostly white, male miners are enshrined in the carefully preserved and faithfully re-created buildings and landscape of the theme park. A narrative of hardship and personal cost told by the guides and recorded on all the printed information shapes the visitor's encounter with this past. This is history made commercially successful: there are four tours every day of the year with the exception of Christmas and Easter public holidays. Schools send busloads of children to stay at the theme park and experience this version of the past. Parents clearly love this place as a school holiday destination if the numbers of people visiting the park during my stay there is anything to go by. The past in these terms is clearly infused as the critics of popular history and heritage would have it, with a range of 'present purposes'.

On the other hand, however, there are those who argue for a far more pluralistic reading of history and heritage. On this view, we are told, 'history can take many forms':

It can be constructed at the dinner table, over the back fence, in parliament in the streets, and not just in the tutorial room or at the scholars desk. It can be represented through museums, historical societies, universities, books, films recordings, monuments, re-enactments, commemorations, conversations, collections, historic sites and places. (Griffiths 1996: 1)

History and heritage, popular and professional by this reading are one and the same. Heritage and popular history practices can therefore, be 'acquitted of deforming history'. Professional history particularly that which seeks to 'remember' forgotten 'authentic' pasts are, in these terms understood to be 'riddled with most of the same defects that critics think peculiar to heritage and popular history' (Lowenthal 1998: 106). The 'actual past' according to these readings can never be retrieved. 'All we have left are much eroded traces and partial records filtered through diverse eyes and minds.'

According to this analysis, I would understand *Old Mogo Town* not as a populist version of history and heritage intent on reproducing nationalist myths of the country's pioneering foundations thereby erasing some truer version/s of the past. Rather, I would understand the theme park as just one more example of some of the very many ways in which the past is performed and discursively constituted. From this perspective, *Old Mogo Town* is indeed still 'riddled with defects' but these are not failings in historical verisimilitude. History is not the past. History and heritage may constitute 'expressed knowledge of the past but this does not mean that history and the past are the same (Denning 1996: 39). *Old Mogo Town* on this reading is certainly a flawed expression of the past – forgetful of so many other historical expressions of Aboriginal peoples' presence in that past. But this is only an argument about the plural nature of history: were the theme park to remember and incorporate those Aboriginal histories now well known we still would not be any closer to 'capturing the true essence of history'.

Singular or plural, forgetful or commemorative, these debates about the nature of history and heritage tend to lock us in either or arguments and in the process perhaps let us 'forget' that 'remembering' is likely to involve much more than these debates allow. As Chris Healy whose work I lastly turn to now has shown, 'forgetting Aborigines' involves entangled processes of remembering *and* forgetting. However, and most importantly for Healy, these processes are not about the recovery or concealment of an actual past anymore than they are about the actual life circumstances of Aboriginal people in the present.

Healy's analysis of the ways in which Aboriginal people are at once both remembered and forgotten, made present and absent focuses specifically on the construction of the entire 'colonial archive'. For Healy this archive containing as it does all those texts and cultural sites where non-Aboriginal people have produced constructions of Aboriginal presence and absence generates paradoxical effects. Aboriginal people are at once remembered and forgotten through all the very many non-Aboriginal textual, cultural, and communicative practices generated over time. A board game named 'Corroborree', for example, Healy shows, works to produce a specific construction of Aboriginal people ('as semi-naked primitives who 'make fire' and 'dig for honey ants'). At the same time that Corroborree does this essentialising, racist work, however, it is producing (in equal measure) utter forgetfulness about the actual lives and circumstances of Aboriginal people at the time of the board's production. In other words, the remembering in this particular text that is the board game involves complete amnesia in relation to actual Aboriginal people and their life circumstances. Only by 'forgetting' the cultural constructions of 'Aboriginality' found in the colonial archive, Healy suggests, might we begin to 'remember' the corporeal, actual people who are Aborigines in their actual life circumstances.

I take Healy's work as a prompt that might help me think somewhat differently about the past and the present, history and heritage of mining at *Old Mogo Town* -differently that

is, to the ways in which I had initially thought about my visit to this south coast gold rush history theme park. What I take from Healy's work is that the 'forgetfulness' that is said to be characteristic of one branch of history (in this case of gold rush histories and histories of mining more generally), and not another (those histories that have sought to remember an Aboriginal presence in the past) is less a matter of any of us non-Aboriginal history and heritage makers being either 'forgetful' or not. Rather, that non-Indigenous practices of history and heritage from history theme parks to academic texts are just that, exemplars of non-Indigenous historical consciousness. Those of us who are not Aboriginal people can never 'remember' the histories and pasts remembered by Aboriginal people. But we can, in Healy's terms, work towards a moment when we 'forget' the historical constructions of Aborigines and instead try to remember real people in real situations. At *Old Mogo Town: A Theme Park*, those markers of a historical and continuing Yuin presence—the art works, the information sheet—they too refer to pasts in making a present: it is just that only the artworks, I think, are markers of a continuing corporeal Aboriginal presence, one that asks us to remember real Aboriginal people past and present on whose lands a settler-colonial society resides.

Postscript

It is four months since I last visited *Old Mogo Town: A Gold Rush Theme Park*, and the other day I looked again at the website. A new site has been constructed. The Yuin peoples' history on the south coast, their presence as labourers and miners on the gold fields, as well as their continuing ownership over their lands is now a featured link on the site. The theme park has made explicit the more implicit statements that I heard during my visit concerning the on-going, vital relationships that Yuin people maintain to this place, their country. I have planned another visit there for the winter mid-year break. In the meantime, I wonder if this latest shift in the ways in which the past is represented might not be further evidence of the mutable, unsettled nature of those processes of remembering and forgetting so central (as Healy has shown) to non-Indigenous conceptions of the past? I believe that it might also be further evidence of Denning's original insight: all history/histories can in this way be understood to be performances that refer to a past in order to constitute a present.

Conclusion

Gold rush histories like mining histories more generally have often been said to be 'forgetful' of Indigenous people and Indigenous lands upon which mining takes place. In this article I have been concerned to reflect upon some of the ways in which we might understand processes of remembering and forgetting particularly, as these coalesce around representations of the past signified in practices of history and heritage. Taking the gold rush theme park of *Old Mogo Town* as the basis for my inquiry I have tried to show that practices of history and heritage tourism no less than processes of remembering and forgetting are mutable, entangled phenomena. In this way, whilst amateur heritage makers and professional historians alike may each claim to have produced authentic accounts of the past – and thus more accurate histories - neither can really sustain the conceit that history is about the past. Indeed, as I have tried to show, not only is history and heritage not about the past: the past isn't about the past. The rather 'forgetful' heritage tourist experiences at *Old Mogo Town* anchored as they are in the imagined industrial landscape of a mid nineteenth century goldfield and given form in the restorative practices

and narratives of heritage enthusiasts professionals are acts of performance. So too are the less forgetful histories of this region of the south coast of NSW authored by professional historians. Although these histories certainly seek to recover the forgotten Indigenous past both these professional histories and popular heritage practices are performances: they are performances of white historical consciousness concerned to make a present. Seen this way, all these historical constructions, that is both those that make Indigenous people absent and those that make the First Peoples present ought to prompt us to 'forget' those constructions and instead, remember the continuing corporeal presence of Yuin people on Yuin land.

It is the second decade of the twenty first century and the Australian economy is dancing to the tune of the country's third mining boom. What if, during this boom we non-Indigenous Australians were to begin the process of remembering the continuing corporeal presence of Indigenous peoples on their lands? These Indigenous lands are after all, the lands from which a settler colonial state and society extracts the vast wealth that has made and re-made this nation. Might this remembering constitute a small prompt to non-Indigenous Australians to take seriously continuing Indigenous presence?

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