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**Memorializing colonial genocide in Britain: the case of Tasmania**

Tom Lawson, Northumbria University

Associate Dean (Academic)

Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences

CCE 2, Room 204A

Northumbria University

Newcastle-upon-Tyne

NE1 8ST

Tel: +44(0) 191 227 4515

[tom.lawson@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:tom.lawson@northumbria.ac.uk)

Tom Lawson is Associate Dean (Academic) and Professor of History in the Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences at Northumbria University. He is the co-editor of the journal *Holocaust Studies: a journal of culture and history* and is the author and editor of several books. These include *The Last Man: a British Genocide in Tasmania* (IB Tauris, 2014); *Debates on the Holocaust* (Manchester University Press, 2010); (edited with James Jordan) *The Memory of the Holocaust in Australia* (Valentine Mitchell, 2008) and *The Church of England and the Holocaust* (Boydell and Brewer, 2006).

Abstract:

Britain is a post-genocidal state, although it (not surprisingly) has no official means for the memorialization of its colonial genocides. Britain cannot however be simply considered amnesiac about its genocidal past, which it has informally memorialized across various cultural genres. This article explores this observation through a case study of the ways in which the genocide of Indigenous Tasmanians has been remembered and indeed memorialized. Accounts of the genocide of Indigenous Tasmanians have been a consistent feature of British museum, literary and academic culture since the 1830s. As such British engagement with genocide in Tasmania offers an interesting example of how genocide can be incorporated into national narratives which rely on neither victimhood or denial. This is a particularly appropriate case study because Indigenous Tasmanians were universally represented as victims of a British ‘extermination’ in the metropole from the outset. Travellers wrote home with tales of violence from the 1820s, and Indigenous Tasmanian communities were constructed as a memory of the stone-age from this point onwards. The decline of the Indigenous population appeared in diverse media: in fine art, in parliament and in print, often as a means to celebrate British sophistication and humanity. This paper will offer an analysis of all of these colonial discourses, and argue that these enduring memories speak to a stable imperial identity in Britain which was, and continues to be, strengthened rather than undermined or disrupted by the allegation of genocide.

It is a common accusation that Britain does not acknowledge the crimes of its Empire; that Britons are therefore insufficiently aware of the violence and brutality with which the British Empire was constructed and sustained.<sup>1</sup> This despite widespread acknowledgement that such violence includes incidences of genocide.<sup>2</sup> At first glance it is difficult to disagree. Certainly there appears to be very little public reflection in the British present on genocide in the British past. Notwithstanding Michael Rothberg's instruction that we see the connectedness of the memories of the Holocaust and colonial violence,<sup>3</sup> there seems little prospect of ubiquitous Holocaust memorialization encompassing sustained reflection on any other genocide any time soon, let alone one that occurred in the British world. Indeed in a controversial draft of the national curriculum for History in England published at the beginning of 2013, the government implicitly contrasted the 'unique evil' of the Holocaust with an Empire constructed simply as Britain's gift to the world.<sup>4</sup>

It might therefore be assumed that to consider the manner in which one of those incidences of genocide from the imperial past, in Tasmania, has been memorialized in Britain would be to face silence. Certainly, if we look for formal memorialization or commemoration then that is indeed the case – you will find no physical memorials to destroyed communities from Tasmania or anywhere else in the former metropolitan centre of Empire. But there is more to memorialization than the performance of memory rituals or the deliberate effort to play homage to the dead. With regard to the destruction of Indigenous peoples and communities in Tasmania, what we can see is a kind of informal memorialization, which like the physical presence of gravestones or memorial sculptures, finds a didactic purpose for both the memory of the dead and an understanding of their destruction. Throughout and across many different genres of representation in British culture since the 1820s, Indigenous Tasmanians and importantly their (wholesale) destruction has been used to underpin a repeatedly articulated version of British identity that

emphasizes British superiority. It is my contention here that this is a form of memorialization albeit one that is not often acknowledged.

It is therefore not the case that the atrocities of the Empire in Tasmania have not been remembered. This memorialization has often been submerged in British culture, but it can be found nonetheless. What is more it has been present since genocidal violence and then sustained cultural destruction was visited on Indigenous Tasmanians by representatives of the British state. What follows is therefore essentially a case study in the manner in which a *perpetrator* society can construct positive narratives about its role in a genocide. What I uncover is not the denial of the genocidal impacts of British imperial expansion, which is perhaps the kind of inverse memorialization one might expect in a perpetrator state and society. Instead we find the incorporation of those genocidal impacts into a series of different narratives, all of which underscore positive articulations of British identity. I will try and demonstrate this by considering a number of different representations of Indigenous Tasmanians in British culture since the beginning of the nineteenth century, which use the memory of the dead for the purposes of the present.

The use of the term genocide in application to Tasmania, or anywhere in Australian history, is contested, and in fact would be disputed by scholars coming from a number of different ideological directions.<sup>5</sup> Time and space do not allow for an extended discussion of the utility or otherwise of the term here. It suffices to say that I find it appropriate for two main reasons which I will briefly explore.

First, and perhaps most importantly, from the 1820s onwards the British themselves identified the impact of their presence in what they called Van Diemen's Land in terms that we would understand as genocide. In Britain, the government certainly believed that settlers were engaged in the extermination of Indigenous peoples in the 1820s and into the 1830s.<sup>6</sup> That sense endured across the rest of the century and in some ways up to the present day. In

the article that follows then I will detail the importance of the self-identification as perpetrators of genocide in British culture. In those terms the accuracy or otherwise of the term genocide to describe the history of settler Indigenous relations is not strictly relevant. Put simply, it appropriately characterises what Britons understood at the time.

However, the destruction wreaked in colonial Van Diemen's Land / Tasmania can and should be understood as genocide. From the outset the British established, as Tony Barta phrased it, 'relations of genocide' in the society they built.<sup>7</sup> There was a genocidal consensus that united all representatives of British state and society in the view that there was no future for Indigenous people in the colony. This consensus included those who wished to exterminate Indigenous people, and those who in their own terms wished to 'protect' them (both from the savage settlers and from themselves). On its own terms, 'protection' would only have been successful if Indigenous people succeeded in transforming themselves into God fearing British subjects. In addition, when they did not do so, the British developed a further narrative which understood Indigenous destruction as pre-ordained and natural, augmenting their already developed identity as the extirpaters of Indigenous backwardness.

Finally, a note on sources. What follows is a study of British cultural engagement with genocide in Tasmania. Especially in the (post) modern era, cultural production is increasingly transnational and it is difficult to disentangle *British* representations from any other when narratives and images can be instantly transmitted around the globe. I have therefore limited myself to discourses which are distinctively British or cultural products that were deliberately created for a British audience, or which had a particular impact in Britain. This means that there are what might appear to be notable gaps in the discussion that follows. There is for example no engagement with some important texts in Australian historiography which self evidently contribute to the general memorial discourses around

genocide in Tasmania, and in particular there is little engagement here with the protagonists in the public struggles which became known as Australia's History wars at the turn of the twentieth into the twenty-first century. It is not my claim that such debates had no impact in Britain, but they were seldom engaged with as an issue *for* Britain rather they were overwhelmingly presented and reported as part of Australia's process of coming to terms with its past.<sup>8</sup> Such distance and disengagement obviously tells us much about the way in which the memory of British atrocities in Empire might be avoided but my focus here is on the way stories about Empire are and were related to Britishness rather than on such absences.

Furthermore, in outlining the memorial narratives around Tasmania in British culture, I am also inevitably engaging with the debate surrounding the importance of the Empire in the everyday lives of Britons in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Bernard Porter has famously argued that Empire was relatively unimportant, that Britons were 'absent minded imperialists' only dimly aware of, for example, the violence done in their name.<sup>9</sup> Porter equally maintains in his critique of my work on Tasmania (of which this article forms a part) that the evidence for sustained British engagement with genocide is too fragmentary to justify the conclusion that violence against Indigenous Tasmanians really had any significance at home.<sup>10</sup> Regrettably a detailed study of the reception of the kind of ideas that I outline here eludes any scholar. Neither I nor Porter can really know what individuals thought when they read about murdered Tasmanians in the press, or saw their bodies and belongings exhibited in British museums. However what follows does demonstrate the sheer consistency of the narrativization of genocide across time and space in Britain. Since the 1820s Britons have been given stories of genocide in Tasmania that speaks to their superiority and British imperial purpose. The consistency of the shape and texture of these stories suggests that we can at the very least identify a tendency to domesticate and

memorialize colonial violence in an understanding of what it meant to be British. While I don't know what the people reading these stories thought of them, that the ideas within them are so similar and so consistently articulated suggests to me that these are more than just the unnoticed fragments of a conflict far, far away.

### **Narratives of destruction**

The violence that contributed to genocide in Tasmania was discussed in Britain as it was occurring. During the 1820s the colony of Van Diemen's Land underwent massive demographic and indeed territorial expansion. Increasing numbers of free migrants from Britain (as well as convicts), drove a territorial expansion which brought colonists into conflict with an Indigenous population that sought to resist the usurpation of their land and the disruption of their traditional ways of life. The conflict became increasingly violent after 1824, leading to war and the rapid depopulation of the Indigenous nations.<sup>11</sup> The violence in the colony was explained in the metropolitan centre of Empire using two complementary narratives which begin to show how the memory of genocide was used in Britain from the moment destruction began.

The first narrative proposed that the Indigenous community were engaged in an irrational and insatiable campaign of revenge. This was based on a reading of the Risdon Cove massacre, in which an indeterminate number of Indigenous people had been killed when first encountering the nascent colonial settlement in 1804. Although that incident had gone unnoticed in Britain at the time – by the 1820s it was appearing in the popular press as explanation for the developing violence in the colony now.<sup>12</sup> The second explanation for violence, again related to the Risdon Cove massacre, was that it was the result of purely settler savagery. According to this interpretation, the settlers had somehow deviated from the British imperial purpose, and embraced violence in the pursuit of colonial conquest.<sup>13</sup>



Evidently these two narratives interacted. Both involved the implicit contrast between the violent and irrational Indigenous Tasmanians, the violent settlers, and the noble British. Indeed, in a narrative which would be remade in several different ways across the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the British government consistently suggested that their Empire was the *solution* to the problem of violence in Van Diemen's Land rather than its cause. London repeatedly urged that its colonial government in Hobart intervene to restrain the violence of both settlers and Indigenous clans. As such, from the outset understanding of the conflict in Van Diemen's Land and the attendant destruction of indigenous communities was constructed in a manner which supported a vision of British moral and ethical superiority over both Indigenous resisters and the colonial settlers themselves.

These narratives were not confined to government. In the 1830s violence in Van Diemen's Land was being played out on the London stage as well as in newspapers and emigration propaganda.<sup>14</sup> William Moncrieff's popular opera, 'Van Diemen's Land', performed in 1831, presented a familiar message of conflict between the Indigenous population and British savages, in this case the convicts. In Moncrieff's fantasy the respectable settler population (those who properly articulated the British colonial vision) allied with Indigenous Tasmanians against the escaped convict population or bushrangers. Again a contrast was drawn between the benign British and the savage settlers (notwithstanding the intellectual leap involved in rendering some settlers no longer British).<sup>15</sup>

Playing on British understandings of Indigenous Australians, the central character in Moncrieff's drama was Bennelong. Bennelong had been brought to London in 1793 from New South Wales and had for two years been 'adopted as a pet of the officer set'.<sup>16</sup> In the play although not in reality, after his return, Bennelong travelled to Van Diemen's Land where he became a leader of Indigenous resistance. By indicting the convict population

Moncrieff's drama alleged that Britain had, through transportation, exported its vices. In this sense it was part of a critique of colonialism. Yet at the same time it was a defence of colonialism too. Ultimately in the play Bennelong was able to join forces with the respectable (and thus in these terms still British) settler population to repel the bushrangers that were terrorising both Indigenous and settler communities. As such it offered a vision of a co-operative future for colonialism, although it is a common future that might have come too late for the Indigenous population of Van Diemen's Land, who Bennelong acknowledged in the play were being 'extirpated'.<sup>17</sup> The memory of the dead was therefore being used here to highlight (perversely) the beneficence of Empire. Niall Ferguson used much the same logic in his history of *Empire* at the beginning of the twenty-first century which argued that had it not been for the British genocide would have spread much further than Van Diemen's Land.<sup>18</sup>

Of course by the time of Moncrieff's opera, the idea of harmonious co-existence between the settler and Indigenous populations was just a fantasy. The Colonial government, with the support of London, had effectively declared war on Indigenous peoples in Van Diemen's Land through Martial Law in 1828. The military approach legitimized violence against Indigenous people but it did not bring an end to their resistance, particularly from the Big River and Oyster Bay groups. That resistance was eventually nullified by a series of negotiations which were led by the evangelical George Augustus Robinson, and performed by his Indigenous guides. At the beginning of 1832, the Indigenous clans of whom there were now only a few hundred survivors, together decided to desist from a conflict that had devastated them. By this stage it must have been clear to them that the only alternative was annihilation. The survivors were deported from Van Diemen's Land, eventually to the outlying Flinders Island.<sup>19</sup> Such action was again supported by the narrative that this was the best manner in which the Indigenous population

might be protected – with obvious undertones regarding the protective arm of the British Empire.<sup>20</sup> By 1847 there were fewer than 50 Indigenous Tasmanians alive on Flinders Island and the community was sent back to the Tasmanian mainland. When William Lanne, the ‘last’ Indigenous Tasmanian man, and Truganini, the ‘last’ Indigenous Tasmanian woman died in 1869 and 1876 respectively the entire Indigenous population of Tasmania was declared extinct.

### **A Dying race?**

As well as the idea that the British might protect the Indigenous population from violence, another narrative was emerging in the mid-1830s – namely that, whatever the efforts of the British, the Indigenous population were inevitably bound for extinction. This was another example of memorialization of the dead in a hymn of self worship. Such a narrative could be found in diverse cultural genres. Take the example of emigration propaganda, designed from the beginning of the 1820s to entice migrants to the new world. The sunlit colonial future that emigrants were promised, did not include the Indigenous population. Where they were represented, Indigenous Tasmanians were constructed as a people without culture.<sup>21</sup> Grotesque racial characterizations of the ‘inferior’ Tasmanian abounded.<sup>22</sup> Such images of the Indigenous population might have raised alarm, or been off putting to potential migrants, as might the universal view that the Indigenous Tasmanians were (after Risdon) implacably hostile to their ‘new neighbours’. Yet such concerns could be set aside, because the idea that the population was ‘rapidly diminishing’ abounded too.<sup>23</sup> These were a people of the past, hurtling to oblivion. It was widely assumed that only the British would see the future in Van Diemen’s Land.

The dying race idea was also exhibited in London’s thriving art scene in 1835 through the paintings of the popular landscape artist John Glover. Again Glover’s narration of the idea of Indigenous extinction constructed a very clear sense of the British as the men

of the future. Glover had emigrated to Van Diemen's Land a few years previously and sent a number of paintings back to London for the 1835 exhibition. The paintings suggested a clear contrast between the Indigenous population of Van Diemen's Land who represented the island's past and the colony which represented its future. Glover's rendering of the 'colonial picturesque' has been praised because of the manner in which he captured the intensity of a 'hot Antipodean noon',<sup>24</sup> a phrase which evokes something of the quality of the light in his Tasmanian landscapes. Yet Glover also painted Indigenous groups but he invariably presented them in shade, or gloomy twilight. Apparently to Glover they were not able to share the sunshine of the bright new day he saw on the island. 'Glover's Aboriginals are dancing in the dark'.<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps the most striking of Glover's 'Aboriginal arcadias',<sup>26</sup> exhibited in London was the panoramic *Mount Wellington and Hobart Town from Kangaroo Point* which featured Indigenous men, women and children dancing and swimming in a shadowed foreground, with Hobart bathed in sunlight behind. *Mount Wellington* was one of the only paintings in which Glover presented the direct juxtaposition of Indigenous and colonial life on the island on the same canvas and as such his effort to contrast the Indigenous past and the colonial future were particularly stark here. Hobart Town stands as an impressive and regimented colonial port. Several boats, large and small, are in the harbour evoking a sense of an imperial trading centre. If this is a hymn to the imperial future, then the contrast with the Indigenous figures in the foreground could not be clearer. As ever with Glover's representations, they appear in shade engaged only in the frivolities of a simple life, with most dancing around a fire. The painting is an allegory of the final transition from Indigenous to colonial Van Diemen's Land. The 'conventionally shadowed foreground of classical landscape' represents a civilization that is to be displaced by the uplands of imperial might behind it.

Glover's paintings amounted to a public discussion of the 'extirpation' of Indigenous Tasmanians in London.<sup>27</sup> Crucially, these representations of the Indigenous population of the island as past, as a memory, were being displayed in the centre of Empire at the same time that their removal from Van Diemen's Land was being completed. The idea that Tasmanians were somehow a dying race is commonly identified as the mechanism by which the destructiveness of European colonialism was rationalized as the century wore on.<sup>28</sup> John Glover's shadowed Indigenous Tasmanians show that such rhetoric was important for understanding and justifying the ethnic cleansing of Van Diemen's Land as it was being enacted too. Thus, such ideas did not just rationalize the memory of genocide, but helped explain genocide to its contemporaries.

By the 1840s the image of the decline of Tasmanians and other Indigenous communities in British culture had hardened significantly. The radical James Roebuck wrote unapologetically in his *The Colonies of England* in 1849 that:

for the sum of human enjoyment to be derived from this globe which God has given us, it is requisite for us to pass over the original tribes that we find existing in the separate lands which we colonise ... When the European comes into contact with any other type of man, the other type disappears ... Let us not shade our eyes and pretend not to see this result.<sup>29</sup>

This new, harsher, discourse was also adopted by figures who have been subsequently adopted into the English literary canon. Samuel Sidney and Charles Dickens led the way at the end of the 1840s into the 1850s. Sidney produced a number of influential works on Australia, and wrote regularly on the subject for Dickens' periodical *Household Words* in which he was scathing about the 'inferiority' of Indigenous culture, and especially the idea that settlers should face judicial investigation for violence against Indigenous peoples.<sup>30</sup> In essence Sidney believed that extermination was inevitable, and thus questioned any effort to check this development. Dickens' famously attacked what he saw as the humanitarian idealization of the 'Noble Savage' in June 1853, in a furious denunciation which amounts,

to use twenty-first century language, to a call for genocide. Dickens wrote that it was ‘highly desirable’ that ‘the savage’ was ‘civilised off the face of the earth ... and the world will be all the better when his place knows him no more.’<sup>31</sup>

A year later, Dickens confirmed his belief in the immutable categories of civilization and savagery in another famous article for *Household Worlds* in which he investigated the death of Sir John Franklin. This narrative was also linked to Tasmania, and tangentially to genocide. Franklin had been a former Governor of Van Diemen’s Land. He had taken an Indigenous Tasmanian (known now in popular culture as Mathinna) into his home and his wife had collected at least one Indigenous skull from Flinders Island. After leaving Tasmania, Franklin had returned to polar expeditions and had died in the Arctic in 1847. Dickens’ account of his death dismissed the idea that a figure of such unimpeachable ‘fortitude, sense of duty, courage and religion’ could have resorted to cannibalism as had been reported in popular accounts of his demise.<sup>32</sup> After all cannibalism was the defining identifier of the savage, who in Tasmania, Franklin had sought to civilize. For Dickens it was unthinkable that such a figure could himself have ‘gone native’ as the differences between such populations were fixed.

A decade later, Dickens’ unapologetically exterminationist rhetoric was repeated by Anthony Trollope. Trollope’s guides to emigration to *Australia and New Zealand* demanded that his English readers face the logic of their colonial impulses and thus their progress too. Colonization was, in Trollope’s estimation a theft of land, and involved the necessary diminution and then destruction of the original owners of that land. However, he was not prepared to declare this to be morally wrong because it engendered the spread of civilization and indeed had enabled Europeans to export their surplus population and now increased the wealth of the mother country. That this had been done at the expense of Indigenous communities was not for Trollope a matter of regret (and nor was it in reality he

conjectured a matter of regret for the humanitarian philanthropists that he mocked) but simply a matter of reality. His strict sense of racial hierarchy meant that he regarded the replacement of an Indigenous population as a positive good.<sup>33</sup> In what again we would have to characterise as a call for genocide Trollope wrote: ‘of the Australian black man we may say certainly that he has to go. That he should perish without unnecessary suffering should be the aim of all who are concerned in this matter.’<sup>34</sup>

While Trollope’s language was extreme, it was simply a development of a progress narrative which celebrated British triumph. It was in that sense no coincidence that such sentiments were articulated by men regarded as radicals and liberals. It was also not a coincidence that it was a rhetoric that developed out of humanitarian concern, the echoes of which can be detected in Trollope’s desire to alleviate ‘unnecessary suffering’. His call for elimination was just another form of, or perhaps even just a development of, the kind of evangelicalism that saw colonization as the means to extinguish barbarism or to save the ‘savage’. Such rhetoric also relied on a celebration of liberal Britain, a sanctification of the British state as the only admissible route to the future. When Indigenous Tasmanians appeared, by the British’s own estimation, to have proved that they were unable to accept lessons in civilization – then Trollope’s rhetoric of destruction was the inevitable end-point. After all there was little in the discourse of humanitarianism that suggested the possibility of an enduring Indigenous culture. As *The Times* leader writer wrote in November 1851, the Australian colonies now ‘offered the spectacle of savage man cowed and overawed by the influences of a civilization which he can neither comprehend nor resist, and awaiting in harmless and listless inaction that speedy extinction to which some untraceable cause has doomed him’.<sup>35</sup>

Indigenous Tasmanians and their decline were then a contributor to a vision of the world that understood settler colonization had a ‘fatal impact’ on Indigenous culture. When

Tasmanians, and other Indigenous communities, failed to accept the worth of that settler civilization, or when they resisted it, such actions became further evidence for the inevitability of their demise. Such was the starkness of the contrast between the decline of Indigenous civilizations and the apparent forward march of Britain that in an entirely self-fulfilling cycle the impact of settler colonies became further evidence for the integral progress of British culture and society.<sup>36</sup> Genocide thus underpinned a more aggressive vision of the world that saw the eradication of Indigenous society itself as a self-evident good.

It would be quite wrong however to argue that the apparent passing of Indigenous Tasmanians did not evoke some disquiet in Britain. Accounts of Tasmanian decline were frequently an exercise in melancholia. *The Times* declared with a regret tinged with pride that ‘we have exterminated the race in Van Diemen’s Land’. In doing so the leader comment rejected the idea that the cause of that extermination was some form of inevitable doom, and asked that Britain look again at the nature of its colonization.<sup>37</sup> James Bonwick’s widely publicised account of the destruction of the Indigenous Tasmanian community echoed such requests and demanded the re-opening of debates on the nature of Empire and responsibility for Indigenous peoples when it was published in 1870.<sup>38</sup>

Bonwick’s was the most detailed representation of the destruction of Indigenous Tasmanians on offer in mid to late nineteenth-century Britain. Indeed in London, the publication of *The Last of the Tasmanians* was a literary event. As well as being widely reviewed, public readings were staged and in general it did cause the kind of reflection on the nature of Empire that the author desired. In many ways it brought together several of the fantasies and myths that had surrounded British understanding of the ‘extermination’ of the Indigenous community in Van Diemen’s Land across the previous century. And in that sense Bonwick’s book was also a product of those cultures of understanding – it was both



an anguished cry at Indigenous peoples fate, and yet in essence a defence of the colonial idea and the system that had precipitated that destruction.

Bonwick went further than the general discourse by recognising Indigenous agency during the 'Black War', referring for example to 'Aboriginal heroism' in the defence of their land. Yet for the most part he relied on traditional narratives. He argued the Risdon Cove massacre had been the original offence that precipitated Indigenous violence,<sup>39</sup> and that it was the nature of colonial society and the character of the settlers that was the root cause of destruction (rather than the idea of colonization itself). Van Diemen's Land had become a 'dust-hole for the reception of the moral rubbish and turpitude of Europe' and had been occupied without consideration of the rights of the 'inhabitants of the island'.<sup>40</sup>

Yet while Bonwick's book was outwardly a critique of the nature of the colonization of Tasmania (if not the colonial idea itself) it also conformed to a familiar colonial discourse too. Bonwick did criticise the agents of destruction in Van Diemen's Land, but he also constructed them in a familiar mode: the all-powerful men of modernity that were let loose on their helpless and hapless quarry. If Bonwick was ultimately sympathetic to the Tasmanian community and culture, he also conformed to a vision that it had simply been swept away by the might of the British Empire – the 'laughing' children of nature were no match for industrial man. 'We came on them as evil genii' Bonwick wrote, and 'blasted them with the breath of our presence'.<sup>41</sup> It was common for even those critical of the Empire and its impact on Indigenous communities to seek refuge in such imagery with which the likes of Dickens and Trollope would have also been comfortable. 'English speaking men are destined to cover the planet' wrote *The Times* in 1869, 'squeezing other races out of existence ... the aboriginal Tasmanians have actually vanished'.<sup>42</sup> As such the celebration of the might of the Empire, and mourning for its impacts became melded together.<sup>43</sup>

The reception of Bonwick's book suggests that the wider reading public may not have shared his angst at the destruction of Indigenous Tasmanian society. More often than not Bonwick's work was received as a kind of extended colonial curiosity, the literary equivalent of the bones on display in various museums. And the story told in this 'curious work' was certainly understood to conform precisely to the received narrative of Tasmanian extinction or 'the pathetic story of their attempted civilization and the gradual extinction of their race'.<sup>44</sup> As such Bonwick was understood to be confirming the wider critique of Australia as a deviant society that strayed from the British purpose in the world – as the *Morning Post* conceded 'it was a great misfortune to the aborigines of ... Van Diemen's Land that the men who came to settle among them were chiefly of a class expatriated for their offences against the laws of this country.'<sup>45</sup> The impact (and intention) of such rhetoric was to protect the colonial ideal itself and Bonwick's repetition of this well-worn narrative was thus considered little more than a footnote to the more significant history of British expansion. As one reviewer noted of a later edition, Bonwick's was a history of the 'saddest episode in the civilization of the pacific coasts' but a little too large for the 'relative importance of the story to the vast congress of the British Empire'.<sup>46</sup>

### **Remembering genocide and the idea of race**

Bonwick's understanding of Indigenous Tasmanians as a relic from a lost past reflected their position within race science too, especially within the prominent and indeed existential debate on the origins of the human race. In these debates, the Indigenous community of Van Diemen's Land, that had by 1870 been all but destroyed, were frequently portrayed as having been survivors from previous era, often literally as an example of stone-age man. These assumptions were also popularized in British museum displays, sometimes up to the present day. Crucially, the idea that Tasmanians had been exterminated, in other words that there had been genocide, was central to this discourse.

Coming from the abolitionist discourse that insisted on the common roots of all mankind, evolutionary biology and anthropology contributed to a vision of man progressing to civilization in the latter half of the nineteenth century – and of course Europeans were placed at the apex of this vision of development. It was claimed that the ‘lower’ races, like Indigenous Tasmanians, were peoples without culture who had been lost to development. According to John Lubbock, an associate of Charles Darwin’s, to study Indigenous Tasmanians was to have access to a primitive society and therefore to ‘penetrate some of the mist which separates the past from the future’.<sup>47</sup>

While men like Lubbock believed that in Indigenous society they were seeing a version of themselves in the past, a glimpse of the ‘drift and cave men’ of Europe,<sup>48</sup> there was an alternative discourse that denied the common root of mankind. For example, Robert Knox instead argued that race was a much harder characterization and delineated different species of men. Knox as a consequence foresaw a dark future, defined by racial conflict because it was impossible for different races to ‘mingle’ and as such as the ‘Saxon’ spread across the globe the ‘sure extinction’ of ‘dark races’ would follow. Again an understanding of the Tasmanian past was central to Knox’s vision: ‘Already in a few years we have cleared Van Diemen’s Land of every human aboriginal. Australia, of course, follows’. Knox’s embrace of genocide as the natural law of inter-racial contact was also predicated on a sneering rejection of ‘philanthropic’ attempts to civilize the ‘darker brethren’ as a ‘war ... against nature’.<sup>49</sup>

At first glance it might appear that it is only the overt racism of Knox (or Dickens or Trollope) that had accommodated genocide into a world view. Yet the liberal discourse which had in the 1830s and 40s advocated that ‘lower races’ could be transformed and civilized (in places like the settlement on Flinders Island) had fewer and fewer advocates as the century progressed. Indeed those that advocated protection and ‘civilization’ projects

by the later 1800s were chiefly concerned with supervising the destruction of ‘Aboriginal races’ in the manner Trollope advised, of making their disappearance from the earth and journey into history and oblivion as painless as possible. The idea that Tasmanians and other Indigenous Australians represented a kind of pre-historic hangover certainly allowed liberals to come to terms with the destruction in Tasmania more readily, because it could then be represented as a natural and inevitable process. As J.G. Wood reflected on the demise of Indigenous Tasmanians in his *Natural History of Man*, a popular publication that had originally appeared as a weekly serial, ‘For the real cause we must look at the strange but unvariable laws of progression. Whenever a higher race occupies the same grounds as a lower, the latter perishes, and whether animate or inanimate in nature, the new world is always built on the ruins of the old’.<sup>50</sup>

As such genocide in Tasmania became an important element in the progress mantra of the age for liberals as well as more hard edged racists. Charles Darwin had first observed the decline of the Tasmanian population in his Beagle voyages. Coming from the same abolitionist tradition as the philanthropists of the Aborigines Protection Society he too had been unwilling to declare the ‘extinction’ of ‘Aboriginal’ races inevitable in earlier publications. By the beginning of the 1870s Darwin’s position had hardened, and he used the example of Tasmanians in *The Descent of Man* in his account of the evolutionary progress of culture and as such the inevitable destruction of ‘Aborigines’ in the face of ascendant, triumphant, liberal man.<sup>51</sup> Like other monogenists, Darwin’s account of man’s progress from a common root both relied on and explained the destruction of Tasmanians, in a liberal age it was also a means with which philanthropists could come to terms with their violent national past.

This debate about the nature of man and human origins went far beyond a narrow professional discourse between scientists. It was represented in school textbooks, and

displayed to the public in a variety of museums. By 1900 visitors could see the remains of Tasmanians in the Pitt-Rivers museum in Oxford, the Hunterian museum of the Royal College of Surgeons and the Natural History Museum in London. In the twentieth-century what was believed to be ‘King Billy’s Skull’ – the skull of William Lanne – was displayed at the Anatomy Museum at the University of Edinburgh. The Department of Anatomy at Cambridge also reported excitedly that it had acquired a Tasmanian skull, one of the ‘last representatives of Paleolithic man’ at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>52</sup> Within that context, anthropologists regretted the ‘unhappy fate’ of the Tasmanians while collecting specimens of their remains as survivors from ‘pre-history’.<sup>53</sup>

The Natural History Museum in particular had an important cultural presence. Its acquisition of human remains was reported in the press,<sup>54</sup> and it commanded over 400,000 visitors a year.<sup>55</sup> From 1899 those visiting the zoological Mammals gallery would have seen a variety of representations of Tasmanians including skulls displayed to demonstrate the smaller brain capacity of the ‘lower type’ of man, and a full skeleton. Adopting a Darwinian monogenist approach to racial science the Natural History Museum left their visitors in no doubt what had happened to the ‘aboriginal inhabitants of Tasmania ... now unfortunately exterminated’.<sup>56</sup> The idea of ‘extermination’ was central to all of these representations. Genocide was used as decisive confirmation of the ‘inferiority’ of Indigenous Tasmanians and thus the superiority of the British. The use of the remains of the dead as trophies to represent such narratives is a form of memorialization too.

And the consistency of this discourse is striking. Tasmanian skulls were displayed in the Natural history museum, in the same manner as they had been since 1899, until at least the 1950s. Consider too the example of the shell necklace that was on display in the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter until 1997. This was first acquired by the museum in 1933 and was reported in a local newspaper as ‘pathetic relic of a vanished people’ who

were in the 'same condition as the European men of the older stone age'.<sup>57</sup> When it was finally removed from display (in order to be returned into the care of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre) the display 'remembered' that 'the natives [of Tasmania] were unable to comprehend new European values [after the invasion]. They could neither oppose nor conform, and they drifted into listless serfdom. It is not hard to see why Aboriginal culture is now the province of history'.<sup>58</sup>

### **The myth of extinction**

The idea that Indigenous Tasmanians had been *completely* destroyed was also central to this discourse. This is a particularly tenacious myth. In the late 1970s for example Tom Haydon and Rhys Jones controversial film about Truganini, *The Last Tasmanian*, was broadcast on British Television.<sup>59</sup> The film was contemporarily controversial in Tasmania because it implied that Truganini had literally been the 'Last' Tasmanian, and as such denied the aboriginality of the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal Community. In Britain, such a discourse was absent. One letter writer to the *Radio Times* described his reaction: 'I am ashamed to be British and Christian. In comparative terms it [*The Last Tasmanian*] made Hitler's extermination programme seem small-time as the *entire* Aboriginal population was annihilated in the most despicable way'. Newspapers, television and radio would continue to repeat the idea that in Tasmania, under the British flag, 'the colonists went on man-hunting safaris till there were no Tasmanian's left'.<sup>60</sup> Examples which rely on the idea of complete extermination can be found up to the beginning of the twenty-first century too. Ian Herson labelled the 'Black War' one of *Britain's Forgotten Wars* in a narrative which ended 'in barely seventy years an *entire* race has been driven to extinction. It is a stain which has never been removed from the banners of the British Empire'.<sup>61</sup>

The idea of total extermination relied on and articulated an understanding of race as a fixed, immutable and biological characteristic that allowed it to ignore the presence of an

enduring 'Aboriginal' community in Tasmania. The presence of such communities was not unknown in Britain, they were regularly reported in the British press or in travel accounts of Tasmania.<sup>62</sup> But because they were mixed race and as such not regarded as (to use the contemporary parlance) 'full blooded' they were not allowed to disrupt the idea that *all* Tasmanian Aborigines had been destroyed. After all, as well as articulating a biological understanding of race, the myth of complete extermination also spoke to the sheer extent of British power. It was in that sense part of the discourse that continued to deny the right of Indigenous communities to exist.

The idea of Aboriginal extinction was a common trope of accounts of Tasmania in travel literature in the first half of the twentieth century. The absence of Tasmania's Indigenous population was routinely referenced in these travelogues – as if it somehow added to the exotic allure of this remote location.<sup>63</sup> Yet if racial conflict was a way of confirming the otherness of Tasmania, the absence of Indigenous Tasmanians was also used to suggest the similarities between Tasmania and England and as such the completeness of the colonial victory over the Tasmanian wilderness. George Porter's *Wanderings in Tasmania* reflected for example on the success with which the colonists had transplanted English culture, at the same time as marvelling at the 'careless' extermination of the 'amazingly primitive and pathetic' Tasmanians. Again the idea of extermination was used to construct a sense of racial hierarchy – one culture had been destroyed, while another had successfully transplanted itself to the other side of the world.<sup>64</sup> Nearly 150 years later Jeremy Paxman wrote very similarly that Indigenous Tasmanians had disappeared after a 'trial of strength with citizens of the most technologically advanced nation on earth'.<sup>65</sup>

The myth of extinction was also important for another discourse that came from an alternative political direction to much of the material I have surveyed, in the sense that it was overtly critical of British imperialism. There has been a consistent strain of anti-

imperial politics and scholarship in Britain which has used genocide in Tasmania to highlight the iniquities or indeed the lie of British imperial progress. The most iconic example is HG Wells' references to Tasmania in the preface to the *War of the Worlds*, first published in 1898. Wells compared his martian invasion to the British treatment of 'one of the 'inferior races', 'The Tasmanians in spite of their human likeness entirely swept out of existence in a war of extermination waged by European immigrants'.<sup>66</sup>

But Wells' example is instructive and suggests that we ought not be too sentimental about the characterizations of genocide constructed by the critics of Empire. Whatever the force of Wells' critique, he seems to have accepted the veracity of the idea of racial inferiority too. In his *The Outline of History* he had described Indigenous Tasmanians as 'paleolithic'.<sup>67</sup> And indeed Wells used, in *War of the Worlds*, the idea of genocide as an indicator of that inferiority. And Wells has been accused of racism elsewhere. He certainly flirted with English eugenicists, and as such was operating a very similar sense of the implications of genocide in Tasmania for the understanding of racial hierarchy that defined the spirit of his age.<sup>68</sup>

In the aftermath of the Second World War, and in the era of decolonization the idea of genocide in Tasmania did become a kind of rhetorical failsafe in the critique of Empire by British scholars. VG Kiernan's *Lords of Human Kind* for example described the genocide in a knowing rhetorical flourish as a '*final solution*'.<sup>69</sup> Kiernan's use of language is interesting, and bears out to an extent Michael Rothberg's claims about the interactions of Holocaust memory and that of colonial genocide.<sup>70</sup> But these allegations of genocide were rarely well contextualized. As such these critical narratives had a tendency to infantilize (or worse) Indigenous Tasmanians as the helpless quarry of the modern and all powerful exterminationists. As such, critiques like Kiernan's emerged from and remained within a



discourse that accepted and indeed further embedded the idea of Indigenous Tasmanian racial inferiority, based on an understanding of their destruction.

Such an account begs the question of the relationship between contemporary claims that the events in Tasmania were genocide and the myth of extinction. Are contemporary historians, including myself, simply repeating the extinction myth when they cite Tasmania as an example of genocide? As Rebe Taylor and Anne Curthoys have observed particularly Australian scholars have at times avoided the characterization of Tasmania's colonial past as genocide in order to be able to prioritise Indigenous Tasmanian cultural survival.<sup>71</sup> The idea of genocide, it seems, might have been understood as a barrier to the message of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community that declared loudly *we are alive*. Certainly, as we will see, there was no cultural sensitivity to the idea of Aboriginal survival in Britain in the later twentieth century and as such there is a relationship in wider culture between the idea of genocide and the myth of extinction. Yet it does not, as both Taylor and Curthoys argue, necessarily follow that the idea of genocide must incorporate the claim of total extinction, although the latter is important for wider cultural conceptions of colonial Tasmania operating in Britain to right up to the present day. Where genocide scholars do repeat the myth of extinction it can be legitimately argued they are perpetuating the very ideas that helped rationalise extermination in the first instance.

### **Remembering genocide and the return of human remains**

Recently the idea of extermination combined with a memorial lament for the lost Tasmanians, has been crucial to debates over the return of human remains and Tasmanian cultural property from British museums. Both genocide, and particularly the idea of complete extermination, was used to construct a narrative of superiority within these discussions by some members of the British museum community.

Since the mid-1970s the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre has campaigned for remains stolen from Indigenous graves in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to be returned. This was a process that began in relation to remains held in Tasmania itself, and then spread to the rest of the world. The remains held in UK institutions have been subject to requests to return since the mid-1980s. The most symbolic of these was the demand for the return of ‘King Billy’s Skull’ from the University of Edinburgh – which was successfully negotiated in 1991. The most recent, the protracted discussions around the repatriation of remains from the Natural History Museum in 2007.

It could be argued that the process of returning remains from the UK to Tasmania is itself evidence of a kind of ‘coming to terms with the past’ in Britain – an acceptance of the historic injustices of colonialism and an attempt to begin atonement. After all, and thanks in part to the campaigning of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, all major institutions in the UK now have policies which recognise the right of Indigenous communities to the remains of their ancestors. The UK government recognised the ethical imperative to return, and indeed all Tasmanian human material has now been repatriated.

Yet further consideration of the discourses surrounding these issues suggest that British connections with its genocidal past were not being fully confronted or overcome at all in these debates. In fact the degree to which some articulations of identity remain anchored in a rather familiar colonial discourse is striking, as is the degree to which they are reliant on the memory of genocide in Tasmania. Consider first the original decision to return ‘King Billy’s Skull’. It was not reached easily. At first, the University of Edinburgh refused the request. Vigorous arguments against return were proposed within the University community and a binary opposition between what the ‘moral, political and cultural’ case for return, and the ‘scientific’ arguments against, was constructed (this is not to say that there was not an equally vigorous argument proposed for return within the university community,

there was. And what is more, it won). Those arguing against return perpetuated the characterization of Indigenous populations as irrational in comparison to the rational, enlightened and scientific West.<sup>72</sup> One of the last acts of the scientific community which argued against return was for example to declare that ‘King Billy’s Skull’ held by Edinburgh had been proven not to be that of William Lanne – an apparently desperate attempt to assert the certainty and superiority of western science over Indigenous Tasmanian faith.<sup>73</sup>

Since the return of ‘King Billy’s Skull’ there have been vigorous arguments for retention put forward publicly by the representatives of institutions such as the Natural History Museum, or the University of Cambridge. These have effectively adopted the enlightenment position (as articulated by their forebears in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) that they were (are) carrying out research for the benefit of all humanity, and as such were able to represent the universal good. In the words of Robert Foley, Director of the Centre for Human Evolutionary Studies at the University of Cambridge, ‘these [indigenous Tasmanian] skeletons are an irreplaceable record not just of particular cultures and populations, but of humanity as a whole’. What is more, Foley claimed that the descendants of those people in the present demanding return would themselves prefer to see such remains retained by museums as ‘a part of global; heritage, and as a source of historical and scientific ideas and discoveries’.<sup>74</sup> Similarly the Director of the Natural History Museum declared in 2003 that he could not consent to the idea that only an ethical case could be made for the return of remains because that ignored the universally conceived ‘public benefits’ of scientific research into remains.<sup>75</sup>

This conception of the universal benefits of science, and indeed the presumption that scientists could speak for all humanity gives some indication of the *colonial* nature of the debate about remains in the public sphere. Consider Robert Foley’s argument that

Indigenous communities themselves should want remains to be retained for 'science'. Foley suggested, quite rightly, in a 2003 debate, that the desire to return remains was historically contingent – a postcolonial articulation of identity which sought to right the wrongs of colonial injustice. Foley stated:

I think you should also remember that in the future, future generations both of ourselves and Indigenous communities may well look back if all this material has all disappeared and wonder what has happened to their history. They'll want to be , as they're hopefully given greater access to education and the wealth that goes with development then they will want to see this preserved in the same way as ... that we enjoy discovering about our pasts through television programmes and going to museums.

Such claims were suffused with assumptions that would not have been out of place in the original colonial exploitation of Van Diemen's Land. Foley not only represented western science as the natural outcome of human progress, but assumed that all other peoples will 'through development' become, in effect, like 'us'. As such the (self-declared) scientific perspective on the return of remains was an argument for an ongoing colonization.

It is not just in these progress-laden assumptions that arguments in favour of retention appeared to reflect colonial positions, which in turn indicate the endurance of some nineteenth-century assumptions. Debates about the return of Tasmanian remains in the UK have also consistently returned to the idea that Indigenous Tasmanians had been entirely destroyed. It was present in the University of Edinburgh's discussions around King Billy's Skull,<sup>76</sup> and was invariably a part of later debates around return in the public sphere too. Again Robert Foley argued the University of Cambridge was unable to return any of its three Tasmanian skulls because there was no genetic community to which they could be returned: 'the Tasmanians no longer exist, and can have no descendants'.<sup>77</sup> A group of UK museums also raised the idea of extermination as a practical barrier to return in their submission to the government working group of the early 2000s:

A further problem has been the possible lack of mandate vested in those individuals representing repatriation. In particular, to remove particular

genotypes from the possibility of scientific investigation is akin to a form of racism if not genocide, because those genotypes would be excluded from important ways in which we may continue to investigate or define our species.<sup>78</sup>

Such claims operated an entirely biological or genetic understanding of the idea of race, and as such suggest that the death of race science may have been somewhat exaggerated.<sup>79</sup> In fact the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre characterized such sentiments as reminiscent of the Nazi era.<sup>80</sup> They are certainly a clear example of the relationship between the idea of total extermination and enduring dispossession.

In another response to the government consultation on repatriation, it was claimed that although the circumstances of the collection of remains were unacceptable, we should acknowledge and indeed celebrate that such material was saved: 'had our predecessors not been so inquisitive and so organised, then this material ... would have been lost forever'.<sup>81</sup> Such a narrative involved a clear evasion of the violence involved in collection. Most remains in the UK were taken from graves at Flinders Island, where Indigenous Tasmanians had been deported under threat of force following a campaign of violent dispossession. William Lanne's skull had been stolen while his body lay in a Hobart morgue in the aftermath of his death.

It is also difficult to escape the conclusion that such statements implied the same wonder at the apparent power that the idea of extermination bestowed on the colonists themselves:

the extermination of the Aboriginal Tasmanians (genocide) is an appalling crime and amongst the worst atrocities of colonialism. Ironically, in this case, the facts render demands for the repatriation of remains of Tasmanian origin empty. Strictly speaking the Tasmanians were a geographical isolate and have no descendants to claim their relatives.<sup>82</sup>

The logic of such claims was clear – ‘we’ (that is the western scientists) won the right to control of these remains through ‘our’ wholesale destruction of the Indigenous community. Human remains were in that sense memorials to ‘our’ triumph.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion – those commentators that assert Britain is amnesiac of the violence of its colonial past are of course partially correct. Despite the ritualistic references to extermination that have been reviewed here, it would be difficult to argue that genocide in Tasmania (or anywhere else in the British world) is prominent in popular consciousness. But the endurance of that discourse of extermination, suggests it would also be wrong to argue that genocide is entirely absent too – the eruptions into public discourse reviewed above are too regular and too uniform. In fact they reflect a sense of significance that has become embedded in some articulations of British identity which seem to use genocide as evidence of superiority and which still give voice to the assumptions about Indigenous inferiority that underpinned the desire to, at the very least, expunge Tasmanian culture from the face of the earth in the first instance.

Although there is no physical memorial to those people and cultures destroyed by the British Empire, and no formal memorial rites are practised for them in Britain, it is simply not the case that there has been no memorialization. In a series of memorial laments across different cultural genres, the memory of Indigenous Tasmanians and particularly their destruction has been utilised in the construction of a particular version of being British. This is not an identity that either avoids or denies the destructiveness of the British Empire in Van Diemen’s Land but embraces it. In Holocaust studies we are familiar with the idea of efforts to ‘master’ or make ‘usable’ the past. The manner in which Britons have been invited to remember genocide in Tasmania is, it seems to me, truly an example of the

'mastery of the past'. The memory of violence is, as we have seen, used as evidence of British superiority.

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Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> See for example George Monbiot, 'How Britain denies its holocausts', *The Guardian* 27 December 2005.

<sup>2</sup> See for example Niall Ferguson, *Empire: how Britain made the modern world* (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 108-9.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional memory: remembering the Holocaust in the age of decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> See for example David Cannadine, 'The future of History', *Times Literary Supplement*, 12 March 2013.

<sup>5</sup> The most obvious example of course is Keith Windschuttle, *The fabrication of Aboriginal history* (Sydney: McLeay Press, 2002). But Henry Reynolds, *An indelible stain? The question of genocide in Australia's history* (Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin Australia, 2001) also dismisses the idea of genocide. Indigenous Tasmanian scholars have also rejected the term, largely because it is bound up with the myth of total extermination in Tasmania and does not allow for sufficient emphasis on the enduring survival of an Indigenous community. This is discussed in detail in Rebe Taylor, 'Genocide, extinction and Aboriginal self-determination in Tasmanian historiography', *History Compass*, Vol. 11, No. 6, 2013, pp. 405-418. Nicholas Clements, *Fear, Sex and Resistance in Tasmania* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2014) is the most recent example of an account of colonial violence that, following Henry Reynolds, rejects the idea of genocide in the Tasmanian context.

<sup>6</sup> Hence the famous warning from the Secretary of State for the Colonies that any policy geared towards the destruction of Indigenous peoples in Tasmania would 'leave an indelible



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stain upon the character of the British Government' in 1830. Reynolds, *An indelible stain?*, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Tony Barta, 'Relations of genocide: land and lives in the colonization of Australia', in Isidor Wallimann and Michael N. Dobkowski (eds), *Genocide and the modern age: etiology and case studies of mass death* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1987), pp. 237-51. Barta also notes that the Imperial British government understood the destructiveness of their policies in his "They appear to actually vanish from the face of the Earth'. Aborigines and the European Project in Australia Felix', *Journal of Genocide Research*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 2008, pp. 519-39.

<sup>8</sup> *Independent on Sunday*, 19 April 2009, in an article confronting the absence of Aboriginal names on Australian war memorials Kathy Marks wrote of 'white Australians struggle to come to terms with their colonial past'. Typically although the article was concerned with Australian history under British rule this was not confronted. Similarly Philip Knightly in the *Independent on Sunday*, 7 May 2000: 'it remains one of the mysteries of history that for nearly two centuries *Australia* was able to get away with the crimes *it* inflicted on the Aborigines' (emphasis added)

<sup>9</sup> Bernard Porter, *The absent-minded imperialists: what the British really thought about Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> Bernard Porter, 'How bad are we?', *London Review of Books*, Vol. 36, No. 15, 2014, pp. 36-37.

<sup>11</sup> For a narrative of increasing violence see Lyndall Ryan, *Tasmanian Aborigines: A history since 1803* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2012), p. 74-150. See also Chapter 2 Tom Lawson, *'The Last Man': A British genocide in Tasmania* (London: IB Tauris, 2014). For the most comprehensive account of the Black War see: Clements, *The black war*.

<sup>12</sup> *The Morning Post*, 14 November 1821.

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<sup>13</sup> This is the heavy implication of much government correspondence between London and Hobart over the matter at the end of the 1820s. See A.G.L. Shaw (ed.), *Van Diemen's Land: copies of all correspondence between Lieutenant Governor Arthur and his majesty's secretary of state for the colonies, on the subject of the military operations lately carried out against the Aboriginal inhabitants of Van Diemen's Land* (Hobart: Tasmanian Historical Association, 1971). The most famous being the letter sent from the then Secretary of State for the Colonies on 5 November 1830 that warned that the 'extinction' of the Indigenous population of Van Diemen's Land would leave an 'indelible stain' upon the character and reputation of the British government.

<sup>14</sup> For a general analysis of the role of emigration propaganda in Britain see James Belich, *Replenishing the earth: the settler revolution and the rise of the anglo-world* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> See W.T. Moncrieff, *Van Diemen's Land: an operatic drama in three acts* (London: Thomas Richards, 1831).

<sup>16</sup> David Sampson, 'Strangers in a Strange Land: The 1868 Aborigines Cricket Tour and Other Indigenous Performers in Mid-Victorian Britain', (PhD, University of Technology, Sydney, 2000), p. 72.

<sup>17</sup> Moncrieff, *Van Diemen's Land*, p. 37.

<sup>18</sup> Ferguson, *Empire*, p.108.

<sup>19</sup> The best account of the genocide is contained in Henry Reynolds, *Fate of a free people* (Camberwell, VIC: Penguin Australia, 2004), although Reynolds would reject the label.

<sup>20</sup> See for example the correspondence between London and Hobart in which the Secretary of State for the Colonies expresses admiration for the policy adopted on Flinders Island. Goderich to Arthur, 21 June 1832, NA PRO, CO 408, Vol. 9.

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- <sup>21</sup> George William Evans, *History and description of the present state of Van Diemen's Land, containing important hints to emigrants* (London: John Souter, 1824), p. 25.
- <sup>22</sup> Mrs Augustus Prinsep, *The journal of a voyage from Calcutta to Van Diemen's Land, comprising a description of that colony during a six months residence* (London: Smith, Elder & co., 1833), p. 79.
- <sup>23</sup> *Hampshire Telegraph*, 29 December 1823.
- <sup>24</sup> David Hansen, *John Glover and the colonial picturesque* (Hobart: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, 2003), p. 98.
- <sup>25</sup> David Hansen, 'The Picturesque and the Palawa: John Glover's Mount Wellington and Hobart Town from Kangaroo Point', in Timothy Barringer, Geoff Quilley and Douglas Fordham (eds), *Art and the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 51.
- <sup>26</sup> Ian McLean, *White Aborigines: identity politics in Australian art* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 41.
- <sup>27</sup> Glover exhibited 36 Tasmanian landscapes in Bond Street in July 1835 including several which featured Indigenous groups. The exhibition catalogue noted that Indigenous Tasmanians were 'now nearly extirpated'. *A catalogue of pictures descriptive of the scenery, and customs of the inhabitants of Van Diemen's Land, together with views in England and Italy painted by John Glover esq.* (London: Publisher Unknown, 1835).
- <sup>28</sup> For a brilliant analysis of the dying race thesis see: Patrick Brantlinger, *Dark vanishings: discourse on the extinction of primitive Races* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).
- <sup>29</sup> Quoted in Brantlinger, *Dark vanishings*, p. 6.
- <sup>30</sup> Coral Lansbury, *Arcady in Australia: The evocation of Australia in nineteenth century English literature* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1970), pp. 63-72.
- <sup>31</sup> Charles Dickens, 'The Noble Savage', *Household Words*, 11 June 1853.

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- <sup>32</sup> Charles Dickens, 'The Lost Arctic Voyagers', *Household Words*, 2 and 9 December 1854.
- <sup>33</sup> Anthony Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1873), p. 60.
- <sup>34</sup> Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, p. 76.
- <sup>35</sup> *The Times*, 19 November 1851.
- <sup>36</sup> Russell McGregor, *Imagined destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the doomed race theory 1880-1939* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1998), p. 20.
- <sup>37</sup> *The Times*, 30 December 1864.
- <sup>38</sup> James Bonwick, *The last of the Tasmanians or The black war of Van Diemen's Land* (London: Sampson, Low, Son & Marston, 1870).
- <sup>39</sup> Bonwick, *The last of the Tasmanians*, p. 36.
- <sup>40</sup> Bonwick, *The last of the Tasmanians*, p. 324.
- <sup>41</sup> Bonwick, *The last of the Tasmanians*, p. 57.
- <sup>42</sup> *The Times*, 29 July 1869.
- <sup>43</sup> Brantlinger, *Dark vanishings*, p. 2.
- <sup>44</sup> *Daily News*, 18 October 1869.
- <sup>45</sup> *Morning Post*, 24 December 1869.
- <sup>46</sup> *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 15 May 1884.
- <sup>47</sup> John Lubbock, *The origin of civilisation and the primitive condition of man: mental and social Condition of savages* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1870).
- <sup>48</sup> James Backhouse Walker, *The Tasmanian Aborigines* (Hobart: John Vail, 1900), p. 1.
- <sup>49</sup> Robert Knox, *The races of men: a philosophical enquiry into the influence of races over the destinies of nations* (London: Henry Renshaw, 1862), p. 229.
- <sup>50</sup> J. G. Wood, *The natural history of man: being an account of the manners and customs of the uncivilised races of men* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1870), p. 68.

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- <sup>51</sup> Charles Darwin, *The descent of man and selection in relation to sex* (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 212-221.
- <sup>52</sup> Cressida Fforde, *Collecting the dead: archaeology and the reburial Issue* (London: Duckworth, 2004), p. 69.
- <sup>53</sup> Henry Ling Roth, *The Aborigines of Tasmania* (Halifax: F. King & Sons, 1899), pp. v-vii.
- <sup>54</sup> *The Times*, 28 July 1899.
- <sup>55</sup> William Stearn, *The Natural History Museum at South Kensington* (London: Heinemann, 1981), p. 393.
- <sup>56</sup> Natural History Museum, *Guide to the specimens illustrating the races of mankind* (London: Natural History Museum, 1908), p. 33.
- <sup>57</sup> This comes from a fragment of a local newspaper – title unrecorded – held in the archive of Royal Albert Memorial Museum. No reference, but held in the files concerned with the return of Truganini's necklace and dated 21 October 1933.
- <sup>58</sup> From a photograph of the display provided by the Royal Albert Memorial Museum.
- <sup>59</sup> It was broadcast on BBC2 on 23 May 1978. *Radio Times*, 20-26 May 1978, p. 39. Many thanks to James Jordan for this reference.
- <sup>60</sup> *The Guardian*, 23 September 1987. For other examples see John Spurling's play *The British Empire* which was staged in Birmingham in 1980 and broadcast on BBC Radio 3 in 1982. See *The Observer* 28 November 1982. For a more contemporary Newspaper reference to the 'complete genocide of the Aborigines in Tasmania' see *The Guardian*, 15 August 1997.
- <sup>61</sup> Emphasis added, Ian Herson, *Britain's forgotten wars: colonial campaigns of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2003), p. 296.

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<sup>62</sup> See for example the detailed account of the population of the Furneaux islands in *The Times*, 23 September 1890. This population was still being reported on some half a century later. See *The Times*, 23 April 1946.

<sup>63</sup> See for example ‘Lord Northcliffe on Tasmania: Ideal Holiday Place’, *The Times*, 22 September 1921.

<sup>64</sup> See George Porter, *Wanderings in Tasmania* (London: Selwyn and Blount, 1934) and the review of that publication *The Guardian*, 25 October 1934.

<sup>65</sup> Jeremy Paxman, *Empire: what ruling the world did to the British* (London: BBC Books, 2011), p.145.

<sup>66</sup> HG Wells (edited by Patrick Barrinder & Notes by Andy Sawyer), *War of the worlds* (London: Penguin Classic, 2005), p. 9.

<sup>67</sup> Wells, *War of the worlds*, note 10, p. 188.

<sup>68</sup> John Sutherland, ‘Devil take the hindmost’, *London Review of Books* (Vol. 17, No. 24) 14 December 1995, pp. 18-19.

<sup>69</sup> Emphasis in the original, V.G. Kiernan, *The Lords of human kind: European attitudes to the outside world in the imperial age* (London: Penguin, 1972), p. 277.

<sup>70</sup> Rothberg, *Multidirectional memory*, p. 7.

<sup>71</sup> Taylor, ‘Genocide, extinction and Aboriginal self-determination’, pp. 410-14; Ann Curthoys, ‘Genocide in Tasmania: the history of an idea’, in A. Dirk Moses (ed.), *Empire, colony, genocide: conquest, occupation and subaltern resistance in world history* (New York: Berghahn, 2008), pp. 229-52.

<sup>72</sup> See ‘Extract from a paper discussed at a meeting of the University Court on 5 November 1990’. Supplied to the Author by the University of Edinburgh.

<sup>73</sup> Appendix D1 (2), Extract from Senatus Minutes, University of Edinburgh, 5 December 1990. Supplied to the Author by the University of Edinburgh.

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<sup>74</sup> Robert Foley, 'Should human parts in museums be returned to their place of origin: No', *BBC History Magazine*, July 2003.

<sup>75</sup> See 'Statement of Dissent from Neil Chalmers' reprinted in *Care of historic remains: a consultation of the working group on human remains* (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2004), pp. 62-68.

<sup>76</sup> See for example the debate in the University court on the issue where the Senior Management of the University had cautioned that it needed to be 'borne in mind that the Tasmanian Aboriginals were now extinct'. Extract from Minute of Court held on 9 July 1990.

<sup>77</sup> Quoted in *The Observer*, 28 September 2003.

<sup>78</sup> Cited in Fforde, *Collecting the dead*, p. 159.

<sup>79</sup> See Gavin Schaffer, *Racial science and British society, 1930-62* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) for a detailed interrogation of the endurance of race science.

<sup>80</sup> Department for Culture, Media and Sport, *Report of the working group on human remains* (2003), p. 53.

<sup>81</sup> Department for Culture, Media and Sport, *Report of the working group on human remains*, p. 38.

<sup>82</sup> Department for Culture, Media and Sport, *Report of the working group on human remains*, p. 38.