

Set in Stone?

Physical memorials to frontier violence in Australia

Catherine Fist

The commemoration of frontier violence in Australia has taken many physical forms. These monuments, plaques and other physical sites have employed different discourses over time and have often been an avenue for settler identity-work and politics. More recently, these sites of memory have been produced by or with Aboriginal people. The discourses produced in the first period discussed (1865-1965) served to produce sites of historical remembrance for settlers in order to form settler identity around white victimhood and heroism. The second period (1966-1999) was a time of evolving contestation where discourses of counter-memory, including a discourse of Aboriginal resistance and sacrifice, emerged. Also emerging were works that James Young would describe as ‘counter-monuments’, those that unsettle the idea that monuments can do memory work for us, and that memory can ever be singular and uncontested.¹ The third period (2000-2021) has seen a new discourse of reconciliation emerge, alongside the continuing counter-memory of resistance, as well as further counter-monuments. There is a tension between monuments that seek to reconcile—or make one—pasts whilst counter-monuments seek to keep debate open and encourage further questioning of the past. This essay uses physical memorials to frontier violence to demonstrate a framework for exploring evolving discourses around settler identity and how Australia views its own past on local, regional and national dimensions.

Periodisation

There are forty-four monuments to frontier conflict recorded in the Monument Australia database. I identified the first period (1865-1965) as those monuments that solely commemorated white victims. The second (1966-1999) was a period where Aboriginal victims were recognised but not always involved in commemoration, and where monument construction was intermittent in comparison to the consistency of construction throughout the 2000s. In the last period (2000-2021) Aboriginal people have been consistently involved in monument creation, there is a monument built within every three years, and a discourse of reconciliation is the norm. For an extended discussion of the periodisation in this essay, as well as documentation of the undated monuments, see Appendix 1.

¹ James E. Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 118.

Sites of memory, counter-memory and monuments

In 1989 Pierre Nora conceived of *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory) as receptacles of memory necessary when *milieux de mémoire* (real environments of memory) had disappeared.² History, to Nora, is merely a ‘representation of the past’.³ Whereas memory is ‘a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present... affective and magical’.⁴ It is only when real memory disappears that ‘external props and tangible reminders’ are necessary.⁵ These physical sites of memory take the burden from memory audiences and accomplish memory-work on their behalf.⁶ Nora’s view negates that often *lieux de mémoire* have political purpose, especially in states where history is contested.

History and memory cannot be so easily disentangled: people’s attachment to particular memories of a collective or society is often rooted in a version of history. Further, people often feel the ‘affective and magical’ dimension of memory because of their identification with the histories of one group of people and not another. Responding to Nora, Guy Beiner argues collective remembrance of the past always requires collective forgetting, that an equivalent study of *lieux d’oubli* (sites of forgetting) to *lieux de mémoire* is necessary.⁷

James Young and Michael Foucault have theorised counter-monuments and counter-memories in divergent but useful ways. Young views counter-monuments relational to Nora’s views on *lieux de mémoire*, as physical sites that place the ‘burden of memory’ back on the audience and force an active experience of memory.⁸ Conversely, Foucault views counter-memories as those of the politically subjugated, as illegitimate knowledges suppressed by hegemonic forces.⁹ There are examples that demonstrate both counter-memories and counter-monuments within current memorials to frontier violence. This essay will discuss the capacity of these memorials to reflect contemporary views on frontier conflict.

Stephan Legg, Hanna Smyth, Jay Winter and Dmitri Nikulin all take a Foucauldian view of counter-memory as related to different sets of knowledges. Legg defines counter-memory as instances where people have practiced alternative forms of identity or remembrance.¹⁰ Similarly, Smyth argues that sites of remembrance are concurrently sites of identity where marginalised groups, such as people of colour who participated in World War One, have been excluded.¹¹ Winter, unlike Nora and Young, argues that history and memory cannot be easily separated as adversarial concepts and often overlap and mutually reinforce one another.¹² Nikulin also blurs the line between history and memory, referring to ‘historical memory’.¹³ This essay argues that memory is intimately linked with contested views of

² Pierre Nora, ‘Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire’, *Representations*, no. 26 (1989): 7.

³ Nora, ‘Memory and History’, 8.

⁴ Nora, ‘Memory and History’, 8.

⁵ Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, vol. 1, *Conflicts and Traditions*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 8.

⁶ Nora, ‘Between Memory and History’, 13.

⁷ Guy Beiner, *Forgetful Remembrance: Social Forgetting and Vernacular Historiography of a Rebellion in Ulster* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 29.

⁸ Young, *At Memory’s Edge*, 118.

⁹ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon et al. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 83.

¹⁰ Stephan Legg, ‘Sites of Counter-Memory: The Refusal to Forget and the Nationalist Struggle in Colonial Delhi’, *Historical Geography* 33 (2005): 181.

¹¹ Hanna Smyth, ‘Monuments in Stone and Colour’, in *Memory*, ed. Phillipe Tortell, Mark Turin, and Margot Young (Vancouver: Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies, 2018), 184.

¹² Winter, ‘Sites of Memory’, 314.

¹³ Dmitri Nikulin, *Memory: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 29.

history in the Australian settler context. Australian historiography has been influenced by the conceptual discussions above, as well as broader historiographical trends and theories of settler colonialism.

Monuments to frontier conflict in historiography

In response to the 'History Wars' there was a proliferation of literature in the 1990s and 2000s concerning sites of memory that represented the violence of settler colonialism. Chilla Bulbeck (1991) responded to Henry Reynolds' suggestion that Aboriginal resistance fighters should be included in Australia's military memorials by analysing how frontier violence had been physically depicted.¹⁴ Alongside Reynolds, both Iain Hay et al. and Clark saw fit to make practical suggestions for making academic historical knowledge of frontier conflict more accessible to the public through physical memorialisation of these events.¹⁵ Bulbeck questioned the utility of white builders of monuments attempting to represent Aboriginal pasts and emphasised the usefulness of monuments that reveal multiple readings.¹⁶

Later historians such as Tracey Banivanua Mar, have looked at monuments through the lens of Patrick Wolfe's 'settler colonialism,' viewing monuments as attempts to eliminate Aboriginality from the landscape (the logic of elimination) and reinscribe settler metanarratives of history and ownership.¹⁷ Taking a local perspective, Iain Hay et al. analysed how the recognition of Aboriginal people (present and past) was relegated to the outskirts of Adelaide, while the Prince Henry Gardens' monument collection demonstrated the dominant culture's ability to shape who was central to the history of South Australia.¹⁸ Similarly, Joanna Besley's study of monuments in Queensland, with a focus on monuments 'as sites of memory that attempt to negotiate the meaning of 'the national' in the realm of the local'.¹⁹ Thus, memorialisation in Australia has been viewed as a distinctly political process aimed at reinforcing colonial ideology.

While drawing on the methodological approaches and analytical styles of the above works, this essay takes a longer view approach. This will be used to scrutinise the relationship between the evolution of historical debates on frontier conflict and physical memorials to these events. Monuments have attempted to fix particular understandings through stone and mortar, but in many cases create further sites for contestation.

I: *Lieux de mémoire* in the settler context, 1865-1965

Nora's theorisation of *lieux de mémoire* was written with the late nineteenth-century French

¹⁴ Chilla Bulbeck, 'Aborigines, Memorials and the History of the Frontier', *Australian Historical Studies* 24, no. 96 (1991): 173.

¹⁵ Ian Clark, *Scars in the Landscape: Aboriginal Education, Culture and Power* (Canberra, Australia: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1995), 6-8.

¹⁶ Bulbeck, 'Aborigines, Memorials and the History of the Frontier'.

¹⁷ Tracey Banivanua Mar, 'Settler-Colonial Landscapes and Narratives of Possession', *Arena Journal*, no. 37/38 (2012): 176.

¹⁸ Iain Hay, Andrew Hughes, and Mark Tutton, 'Monuments, Memory and Marginalisation in Adelaide's Prince Henry Gardens', *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 86, no. 3 (1 October 2004): 201-16, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0435-3684.2004.00162.x>.

¹⁹ Joanna Besley, 'At the Intersection of History and Memory: Monuments in Queensland', *Limina* 11 (2005), 38.

context in mind when, he argues, living memory culture declined and historiography emerged.²⁰ Despite the divergent context, Nora's theory provides fertile ground for understanding the motivations of early Australian settlers albeit with adjustments. Nora describes 'a break with the past... bound up with the sense that memory has been torn- but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists'.²¹ The first part — describing a rupture — relates to the dislocation of settlers in Australia, whereas the last — a place of historical continuity — cannot apply to settlers literally due to their short presence on the land. This leaves room to analyse how settlers constructed a sense of 'historical continuity' by producing *lieux de mémoire* of recent events.

In order to create a false sense of historical continuity, and inscribe the landscape with whiteness, settlers created *lieux de mémoire* to those they viewed as victims or martyrs of settlement. For example, settler Mary Watson died in 1881 of dehydration with her child while hiding from a group of Aboriginal people who had attacked her.²² The fountain erected in her honour five years later describes her as a 'heroine' of Cooktown alongside an emotive poem about a nursing mother. The inscription omits Watson's two Chinese servants who died alongside her. Cooktown had only been established as a town in 1873. Throughout the 1870s Cooktown was a key port for the goldfields.²³ Its population grew significantly, including an influx of Chinese migration. Growth in the town catalysed further conflict with Aboriginal groups.²⁴ In his speech at the fountain's opening in 1865, the mayor told the story of the first white woman to be born in Cooktown, who was wholly unrelated to Watson.²⁵ In the same year, Cooktown settlers searched for the brass guns thrown overboard from Captain Cook's Endeavour, physical emblems of colonial history, to display in the town.²⁶ Thus, when Cooktown was less than fifteen years established and migration was bringing change to the town's demographics, settlers chose to physically memorialise a white victim to Aboriginal violence. This memorialisation served to celebrate a history of white women's reproduction while undertaking further activities to recover a history of white settlement. Employing Nora's perspective, this can be read as an inscription of the landscape with artificial substitutes for a living memory-culture where settlers had very few ancestral roots. Further, in line with Banivanua Mar's analysis, settlers created a memory for Cooktown that directly spoke to the white, colonialist identity of its European residents. Beiner would also suggest that the absence of the Chinese servants in the memorial is an act of social forgetting crucial to understanding the motivation for the fountain's construction. The purpose of the monument was not just to inscribe whiteness, but also to remove non-whiteness.

Similarly, Port Lincoln in 1910 was part of a broader district officialised by the state government, but not yet recognised as a municipality. Settlers started the Port Lincoln Progress Committee, focussed on updating the jetty, promoting tourism, and petitioning the government for an extra

²⁰ Nora, 'Memory and History', 10-12.

²¹ Nora, 'Between Memory and History', 7.

²² Kent Watson and Diane Watson, 'Mary Watson', Monument Australia, 2010, <http://monumentaustalia.org.au/themes/conflict/indigenous/display/91193-mary-watson>.

²³ Noreen Kirkman, 'From Minority to Majority: Chinese on the Palmer River Gold-Field, 1873-1876', in *Race Relations in North Queensland*, ed. Henry Reynolds (Townsville: James Cook University, 1993), 243-6.

²⁴ Kirkman, 'Minority to Majority', 350.

²⁵ Watson and Watson, 'Mary Watson.'

²⁶ W.J.L Wharton, ed., *Captain Cook's Journal during His First Voyage Round the World Made in H.M. Bark 'Endeavour' 1768-71: A Literal Transcription of the Original MSS. : With Notes and Introduction* (London: Eliot Stock,

train service.²⁷ The Committee also collected funds and erected a memorial to Frank Hawson, a child murdered in 1840 by Aboriginal people.²⁸ Hawson's death took place during a wave of Aboriginal resistance against Port Lincoln's first settlers. By 1842 this violence had escalated to a degree that the South Australian Government intervened militarily, leading to a massacre near Pillaworta station with an unknown number of Battara (Aboriginal) victims.²⁹ There were two other massacres in the vicinity of Port Lincoln in 1849 (likely Wirangu people), one shooting and one poisoning, leading to at least another eighteen Aboriginal and two settler deaths. The omission of Aboriginal victims is stark, but also meaningful is the choice to commemorate a child of the town rather than adult male settlers who died in warfare with Aboriginal people, such as the two men involved in the shooting in 1849. In the context of 1910, when settlers of Port Lincoln form a body politic and common identity, they reached back to the killing of a white child in the early years of settlement as an innocent yet heroic emblem of settlement: 'although only a lad he died a hero'.³⁰ In a Foucauldian reading, settlers can be viewed as officialising a dominant form of knowledge, while the memories of Aboriginal victims remain subjugated. This process includes as much erasure as it does specific remembrance.

The other four monuments from 1865-1965 that commemorate white deaths all cite events where there were more Aboriginal than white deaths, and most happen when questions of identity are pronounced such as town-formation, centenaries, or other anniversaries. For example, In 1957 settlers erected a monument to the Fraser family, massacred at Hornet Bank a century earlier. Unmentioned in the memorial are the estimated 150 to 500 victims of the retaliatory massacre executed by settler volunteers and native police, and the rapes of Aboriginal women that led to retaliation on the Frasers. Just as *lieux de mémoire* are vehicles for people to identify with the French nation, settler monuments to white victims served to settle contested histories with a memory of the past based on a subjectivity of white victimhood, framing settlement as a heroic project.

II: Counter-memories, counter-monuments and contestation 1966-1999

Monuments erected in the late twentieth century contested earlier histories of frontier violence through producing both counter-memories and counter-monuments. Monuments of this generation not only contested the narrative of frontier violence as a story of white victimhood, but also contested who created them and therefore whose memories were deserving of public acknowledgment. This constitutes a two-fold expression of counter-memory relating to Legg's definition, of both alternative forms of identity and remembrance.³¹

The first two memorials in this period (1966 and 1973) detail Aboriginal deaths alongside white deaths skewed by a settler perspective, unprecedented in their acknowledgment of Aboriginal people.³²

²⁷ Unknown, 'Port Lincoln Progress Committee', *Adelaide Chronicle*, May 14, 1910.

²⁸ Kent Watson and Diane Watson, 'Frank Hawson', Monument Australia, accessed 14 May 2019, <http://monumentaustralia.org.au/themes/conflict/indigenous/display/51513-frank-hawson>.

²⁹ Lyndall Ryan, 'Colonial Frontier Massacres in Central and Eastern Australia 1788-1930', Centre for 21st Century Humanities, 2017, <https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/map.php>

³⁰ Watson and Watson, 'Frank Hawson'.

³¹ Legg, 'Sites of Counter-Memory', 181.

³² Kent Watson and Diane Watson, 'Maria Monument', Monument Australia, 2008, <http://monumentaustralia.org.au/themes/conflict/indigenous/display/51020-maria-monument>; Kent Watson and Diane Watson, 'Butterabby Graves', Monument Australia, 2013, <http://monumentaustralia.org.au/themes/conflict/indigenous/display/60850-butterabby-graves>.

The debate pre-empting the 1967 referendum on whether Aboriginal people should be counted in the Australian population may have prompted a re-evaluation of who counted in the public memory on the part of monument-constructors. By the 1970s the abolition of the White Australia policy and the momentum of the land rights movement would have made an exclusively settler memorial unfashionable.

Three monuments were constructed in 1984, indicating the ubiquity of historical debate at this time. Public debate about the historical treatment of Aboriginal people was sparked by: successive land rights cases and activism throughout the 1970s and 80s; formal calls for a treaty by the National Aboriginal Conference (1979) and subsequent rejection by the Senate (1983); the Pitjantjatjara people report radioactive contamination from atomic bomb tests in the 1950s (1980); the publishing of *The Other Side of the Frontier*, the first book to approach the frontier wars from an Aboriginal perspective (1981); and the 150 year anniversary of the founding of Victoria (1984).³³ A monument at Sorrento documents one of the first moments of encounter between Aboriginal and white counterparts in Victoria in 1803, the state celebrations evidently encouraging a re-engagement with its history.³⁴ Similarly, a memorial to Aboriginal people who were killed by Major Thomas Mitchell in a surveying expedition as part of the first 'explorations' into Victoria was erected in 1984.³⁵ These monuments did not engage with Aboriginal people in the present, nor make reference to ongoing relations. They merely recorded Aboriginal deaths rather than considering Aboriginal memories of these events in contrast to later monuments. Thus, we see alternate forms of remembrance but not of identification.

Conversely, the Kalkadoon/Kalkatunga memorial presents a counter-memory of '100 years of survival', focussing on resistance and ongoing sovereignty through the Kalkadoon Tribal Council.³⁶ In a time of fervent national debate, the inscription framed a specific battle in 1884 as 'one of Australia's historical battles of resistance', negotiating the meaning of the national at a local level, as Besley suggests.³⁷ Charles Perkins, relentless activist and then Secretary of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, erected the monument alongside Kalkadoon elders, indicating the relationship between activism in the 1980s and new discourses of remembrance. A discourse of Aboriginal resistance as military history is also present in a 1994 plaque that ends in 'Lest We Forget. *Mapa Jarriya-Nyalaku*'.³⁸ As military commemoration in Australia is well-established, linking Aboriginal history with military language served to validate the cause of memorialising frontier violence from an Aboriginal perspective. This was aided by calls from historians for Aboriginal resisters to be included in national war memorials.³⁹ The Kalkadoon/Kalkatunga memorial is a work of counter-memory in its dual challenges to the remembrance of frontier violence, and who we identify with in the past.

Aspects of counter-monuments were also prominent in the latter part of this period. Young's definition of counter-monuments carries two key aspects. Firstly, that viewers are encouraged to be active in the memory process, and secondly, that counter-monuments should emphasise the 'never-

³³ Jens Korff, 'Aboriginal History Timeline', Creative Spirits, 2019, <https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/timeline>.

³⁴ Kent Watson and Diane Watson, 'Aborigines of Port Phillip', Monument Australia, 2010, <http://monumentaaustralia.org.au/themes/conflict/indigenous/display/33435-aborigines-of-port-phillip>.

³⁵ Kent Watson and Diane Watson, 'Mount Dispersion Memorial', Monument Australia, 2018, <http://monumentaaustralia.org.au/themes/conflict/indigenous/display/33404-mount-dispersion-memorial>.

³⁶ Kent Watson and Diane Watson, 'Kalkadoon / Kalkatunga Memorial', Monument Australia, 2011, <http://monumentaaustralia.org.au/themes/conflict/indigenous/display/91742-kalkadoon---kalkatunga-memorial>.

³⁷ Besley, 'At the Intersection of History and Memory', 38.

³⁸ Watson and Watson, 'Kalkadoon / Kalkatunga Memorial'.

60 ³⁹ Bulbeck, 'Aborigines, Memorials and the History of the Frontier', 173.

to-be-resolved debate' about the past.⁴⁰ In 1988, the Aboriginal Memorial was installed in the National Gallery of Australia. The Aboriginal Memorial is an artwork that features two hundred hollow coffins produced by Aboriginal artists from Central Arnhem land, one for each year of settlement in the year of the colonial bicentenary.⁴¹ The memorial does not cite a specific event, but instead references the broader violence of colonisation. The symbolism of its place in Australia's official capital, gestures towards the broader history of violence from the nation itself. In its non-specificity; lacking dates, names, numbers or the location of an event; the Aboriginal Memorial encourages viewers to be active in their encounter with the memorial, and to think about violence against Aboriginal peoples beyond specific encounters. Ongoing debate, the second feature of Young's counter-monument, is emphasised by a plaque, fixed on to an older monument in Fremantle in 1994. The plaque to the Injudinah massacre was fixed to the Explorer's Monument 'By people who found the monument before you offensive'.⁴² The plaque not only provides an alternate account of Fremantle's settlement from an Aboriginal perspective based on resistance, but also mounts a challenge to those who erected the monument 48 years after the events: 'The monument described the events at La Grange from one perspective only; the viewpoint of the white "settlers".'⁴³ The plaque's designers promoted a view of memory as selectively choosing events of the past to commemorate, identifying with Aboriginal victims of violence instead of settlers, and making the multiplicity of readings clear to visitors by leaving both memorials visible. Thus, the plaque both encourages an active experience of memory and memorialises not just the events of 1865 in Fremantle, but also historical debates since.

III: Reconciliation as a challenge to counter-monuments, 2000-2021

Throughout the 2000s there has been a continuation of counter-memory produced through language of military memorialisation pertaining to Aboriginal resistance. The phrases 'we will remember them' or 'lest we forget' feature on three monuments in this period.⁴⁴ An additional feature of these monuments has been a discourse of reconciliation and joint remembrance of settlers and Aboriginal people with a single view of history. For example, the East Ballina memorial tells the history not just of a massacre at the site, but its own history: 'erected by a group of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Australians in an act of reconciliation, and in acknowledgement of the truth of our shared history.'⁴⁵ The use of the singular pronoun — 'the' truth — and the term 'shared' indicates a desire to converge on a consensus about the past that leaves identification and memory obscured. Similarly, the Pinjarra memorial plaque advocates 'building a united nation for future generations'.⁴⁶ Additionally, the Rec-

⁴⁰ James Edward Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) 81.

⁴¹ Kent Watson and Diane Watson, 'The Aboriginal Memorial (Poles Memorial)', *Monument Australia*, 2010, <http://monumentaaustralia.org.au/themes/conflict/indigenous/display/90152-the-aboriginal--memorial-poles-memorial->

⁴² Kent Watson and Diane Watson, 'La Grange (Injudinah) Massacre', *Monument Australia*, 2013, <http://monumentaaustralia.org.au/themes/conflict/indigenous/display/60490-la-grange-injudinah-massacre>.

⁴³ Watson and Watson, 'La Grange (Injudinah) Massacre'.

⁴⁴ See Kent Watson and Diane Watson, 'East Ballina Massacre Site', *Monument Australia*, 2018, <http://monumentaaustralia.org.au/display/21079-east-ballina-massacre-site>; Kent Watson and Diane Watson, 'Coniston Massacre', *Monument Australia*, 2010, <http://monumentaaustralia.org.au/themes/conflict/indigenous/display/80059-coniston-massacre->; Kent Watson and Diane Watson, 'Appin Massacre', *Monument Australia*, 2004, <http://monumentaaustralia.org.au/display/20069-appin-massacre>.

⁴⁵ Watson and Watson, 'East Ballina'.

⁴⁶ Kent Watson and Diane Watson, 'Pinjarra Massacre Site', *Monument Australia*, 2013, <http://monumentaaustralia.org.au/themes/conflict/indigenous/display/61063-pinjarra-massacre-site>. 52 Kent Watson and Diane Watson, 'Rec-

conciliation Memorial in Wollondilly commemorates “both black and white, whose lives were taken.” The discourse of reconciliation promotes a view of history that is singular, in order to create a unified sense of Australian identity. The identity-work of early settlers in the first period of monument creation can be seen to be iterating itself with a new political purpose: reconciliation and settler forgiveness. To view a consensus position on the past as a ‘natural’ end for debate on Australia’s past is teleological and assumes the Australian state is somehow organic, and all its people naturally amicable.

The discourse of reconciliation contradicts the view of the past promoted by counter-monuments as multitudinous. There have been two counter-monuments erected this century. The Konongwootong Quiet Place was dedicated in 2014, near the general location of the Fighting Hills massacre.⁴⁷ It features no written description of the massacre, but is merely a place for reflection. Additionally, the artwork ‘Standing by Tunnerminnerwait and Maulboyheenner’ is an abstract art piece that provides little detail of the Aboriginal men’s lives but includes abstract objects: ‘six brightly coloured newspaper stands, a static solid bluestone swing, indigenous food and medicine plantings and a reproduction suburban Victorian style fence’.⁴⁸ The abstract nature of the art encourages a more active experience of remembrance, and also connects the execution of Tunnerminnerwait and Maulboyheenner with the present. Ideas of reconciliation and those promoted in counter-monuments, both present in monuments since 2000, are irreconcilable. Those who try to emphasise how the past remains contested, related to present identities and caught up in continuing inequalities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, will be countered by a discourse of reconciliation that seeks to present a whole, undisputed picture of the past.

Conclusion

This essay has demonstrated that physical memorials to frontier violence present a window into discourses surrounding frontier violence in the past. Discourses around frontier violence have political ramifications, specifically for settler identity, throughout the three periods discussed. Monuments have been seen to both promote singular and contested views of the past, some attempting to set particular views in stone, and some deliberately emphasising multiple readings or contestation as a key part of remembering frontier violence. This essay has been primarily an exploration of settler remembrance, but increasing participation of Aboriginal people in monument production should not be understated. Material sites of memory represent both a distillation of discourses of historical remembrance and a way to influence the trajectory of these discourses.

Appendix 1

The monuments discussed in this essay are categorized by Monuments Australia under the category

conciliation Memorial’, Monument Australia, 2010, <http://monumentaaustralia.org.au/themes/conflict/indigenous/display/22362-reconciliation-memorial>.

⁴⁷ Kent Watson and Diane Watson, ‘Konongwootong Quiet Place’, Monument Australia, 2014, <http://monumentaaustralia.org.au/display/103088-konongwootong-quiet-place->.

⁴⁸ Kent Watson and Diane Watson, ‘Standing By Tunnerminnerwait & Maulboyheenner’, Monument Australia, 2016, <http://monumentaaustralia.org.au/display/110474-standing-by-tunnerminnerwait-and-maulboyheenner>.

ry of 'Conflict' and the subcategory 'Indigenous'.

1865-1965

None of the monuments in this period commemorate Aboriginal deaths. One of these monuments (constructed 1963) records an exchange between Major Thomas Mitchell and Aboriginal people of the Murray River in 1836, but does not cite any deaths. Records suggest Thomas Mitchell killed 15 to 20 Aboriginal people in this exchange. The other six monuments (1865-1953) record solely settler deaths from events where there were both Aboriginal and settler people died.

1966-1999

From 1966 to 1994, nine monuments were constructed. Monuments constructed in this period were the first to specifically memorialise Aboriginal victims of frontier violence, acknowledge Aboriginal acts of violence as resistance, and directly challenge older monuments. Two of these monuments, from 1966 and 1973, frame Aboriginal people as the instigators of violence while chronicling their deaths. Aboriginal people were involved in organising three monuments in this period, constructed in 1984, 1988 and 1994.

2000-2021

There has been an acceleration in the physical memorialisation of frontier violence since 2000, with fourteen monuments erected between then and the present-day. All of these monuments were organised by or involved Aboriginal people in their creation. They circulate on themes of reconciliation, apology and celebrating Aboriginal acts of resistance. All mention the specific Aboriginal people they describe by nation or name, except for two artworks that do not reference any specific events.

Undated

There are fourteen monuments which are undated in the Monuments Australia database, which I was unable to locate any record of the date of construction.