

Embodied Spaces of Nation: Performing the National Trauma at Hellfire Pass

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Figure 1. Memorial with Flanders Poppies at Hellfire Pass

Introduction

In recent years, much theoretical attention has been paid to the question of mobilities and the creation of identities in a world characterised by global flows of cultures, commodities, signs, images and ideologies. Sheller and Urry (2006) and Urry (2007) have examined the growing volume of people in constant movement. For them, “mobilities” is the new paradigm, encompassing both the increasing movement of social actors and a concomitant expansion in interconnections and new forms of proximity. Bauman’s (1996) work engages with the problem of establishing identity in a world of mobilities. Along with the flâneur, the vagabond and the player, he identifies the tourist as the postmodern successor to the pilgrim. These characters provide the metaphor for the ‘postmodern strategy moved by the horror of being bound and fixed’ (Bauman, 1996: 26). The postmodern horror of fixity is, however, confounded by the simultaneous desire for “home.” While tourists want to immerse

themselves in the strange and the bizarre, part of the pleasure of the journey is the knowledge that the safety and predictability of home is waiting (Bauman, 1996: 29-30); the desire for the exotic and unpredictable coexist with the desire for the familiar and the stable. "Home," however, is itself a shifting and mutable category, less and less clearly defined and bounded. For the tourist 'homesickness means a dream of *belonging*; to be, for once, *of* the place, not merely *in*' (Bauman, 1996: 30). This essay begins with an image – a photograph taken in Thailand (Figure 1) – which displays symbols of the nation few Australian tourists would fail to recognise. The tiny Australian flag and the toy koalas clinging to the crucifixes are alone enough to invoke homesickness in a foreign land; but the display of artificial Flanders poppies is so potent a symbol of a formative moment in the development of the national identity that it has the power to make Australians imagine belonging.

Within the spaces of global flows, certain situated spatial practices, such as tourist mobilities, can reconfigure space, create hybrid habitats of meaning (Hannerz, 1996) and offer the possibility of being both *in* and *of* the place. Deterritorialised cultural practices can also reconstruct place to provide meaning engendered by the engagement with the exotic, while simultaneously recalling the meaning of home. Transnational mobility resulting in the remaking of place can bring about new modes of constructing individual and national identity and make possible the multiple attachments to dispersed places that are a feature of global society. For Urry, the places of the nation can be constituted through an 'imagined presence', defined by objects and images that are carried across members of a community (Urry, 2000: 140). They can also be defined by corporeal mobility, or performance (Urry, 2000: 149). For a visiting tourist, spaces can be simultaneously alien spaces unconnected to the home culture, and places which resonate with national and individual meaning. In Augé's terms, they are relational and concerned with identity (Augé, 1995: 77). The area around Kanchanaburi in Western Thailand, and in particular Hellfire Pass, is such a place for Australians.

A growing body of work on tourism and leisure demonstrates that it is social *performance*, rather than any particular aspects of tourist sites that creates place (for example, Bærenholdt et al 2004), and tourism practices are increasingly examined in terms of performance and dramaturgical practice (Adler, 1989; Crang, 1997;

Edensor, 2001). Coleman and Crang argue that tourism is an event that mobilises and reconfigures spaces and places, 'bringing them into new constellations and therefore transforming them' (Coleman and Crang, 2002: 10).

Specific kinds of performances are enabled by a node that encompasses both propinquities and dispersed networks. The Kanchanaburi district in Western Thailand is one such node that fixes, in the tourist moment, flows in a dispersed network of national memory to the propinquities of a specific locality. Various sites in and around the town of Kanchanaburi and Hellfire Pass are, in Pierre Nora's terms, *lieux de mémoire*, locations of national memory outside the geographical boundaries of the nation (1996; 1989). Within the mobilities paradigm, as described by Sheller and Urry (2006), the national territory is less central to national self-definition than specific places, landscapes and symbols (Urry, 2007: 263). These sites are part of an extensive network of landscapes of Australian national memory linked to a larger narrative of a globalised national identity which connects theatres of war in Thailand with Turkey (especially Gallipoli), Egypt, Singapore, Vietnam, Papua New Guinea, Malaysia, France and other sites that are performed by tourists and embodied through social networks. As such, they are, in Massey's (1993) terms, constructed on a far larger scale than the place itself. They are connected to the nation and transformed into places of national belonging by the performative practices, styles of embodiment and engagement with the material aspects of the site.

This article examines tourist performance in and around the town of Kanchanaburi and at Hellfire Pass to disclose the ways in which the places of nation are produced, the ways in which Australian identity is configured in a deterritorialised space of nation, and a national presence felt, and the ways in which the memory of the nation's war experience is embodied and performed. It privileges performance, affect and experience over the tourist gaze (Urry 1990) to examine the ways in which nation and self are performatively produced in a geography of emotion. The next section will give a brief background to history of the Thai-Burma Railway and Hellfire Pass and their place in the national narrative of Australia. Performances expected of Australian visitors are inscribed in the national narrative and scripted before arrival. Following that, I will discuss the use of space in Kanchanaburi and finally, I will

consider the embodiment of the national memory in tourist performances at Hellfire Pass.

The Thai-Burma Railway and the National Narrative

As is well known, Japan entered World War Two as a combatant force on 7 December 1941 with an attack on Pearl Harbour, thereby ensuring the engagement of the United States in the war in the Pacific. The strike was intended to disable US military power in the Pacific and facilitate Japan's strategic imperative to dominate Southeast Asia and subsume the entire region under its the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Simultaneous operations were also launched on Malaya and Hong Kong. The success of the Malayan campaign in January 1942 was followed by the capitulation of the British in Singapore in February 1942, the capture of the Burmese capital in March 1942 and the surrender of the Allied Forces in Java in the same month. By April-May 1942 the whole of Southeast Asia was under Japanese military command.

The principal reason for the building of the railway between Thailand and Burma was to establish a strategic military supply line for the movement of troops and equipment to the Burma Front, and ultimately for the invasion of India. After the Imperial Japanese Navy lost control of the Pacific to the US at the Battle of Midway in June 1942, it was also intended to provide an alternative to the vulnerable sea route to Rangoon via Singapore and the Straits of Malacca. The Japanese wanted a railway to connect Ban Pong (near Kanchanaburi, 130 kilometres West of Bangkok) with Thanbyuzayat in Burma (now Myanmar) through the Three Pagodas Pass on the border of Thailand and Burma. The railway eventually covered some 415 kilometres through dense jungle and over a terrain characterised by steep gradients. It is considered to be an exceptional engineering feat carried out under the most difficult of circumstances including inhospitable tropical conditions.

It is presumed that around 275,000 labourers (Australian-Thai Chamber of Commerce, 2004:15) worked on the rail line. This number was made up of people from Burma, Java and Malaya, along with Allied prisoners of war, many of whom had been incarcerated in Changi prison after the Fall of Singapore and shipped to

Thailand. It is estimated that 94,000 people died during the building of the railway, including 2,710 Australian prisoners of war. [1] For this reason a predominant image of the railway is that it claimed 'a life for every sleeper' (Clarke 1986), and it is commonly referred to as the Death Railway. Deaths were predominantly due to overwork, starvation, poor sanitation, lack of medical supplies, excessively violent and oppressive treatment by captors, tropical illnesses, cholera, typhoid, exhaustion and so on.

Part of the rail project was a bridge over the Mae Klong River, later known as the Khwae Yai River. It has gained mythological status as part of a linked series of discourses surrounding the "Bridge on the River Kwai", generated to a large extent by David Lean's 1957 film of the same name. The film was selected by the United States National Film Preservation Board for preservation in the Library of Congress. The bridge was not blown up by British prisoners, as depicted in the film, but was damaged a number of times by Allied bombing raids during 1944 and 1945. The bridge that forms the tourist experience at Kanchanaburi is not the original bridge, but a reconstruction, allegedly made from the same materials; it crosses a tributary of the River Kwai, not the main river. It is most commonly referred to as "The Famous Bridge on the River Kwai."

In the Kanchanaburi district there are several cemeteries where the remains of many of the Australian prisoners lie. The most powerful signifier of Australia's war experience and symbol of national trauma, however, is Hellfire Pass. In order to build the railway through steep jungle-covered mountains a series of cuttings was constructed. Because of the demand for expediency, the work of cutting went on around the clock. The oil pot fires and bamboo fires that were kept burning all night lent one cutting the epithet "Hellfire Pass."

Kanchanaburi today has a population of around 54,000. Tourism to the town and its environs centres on "war tourism," but also includes adventure tours and visits to the series of limestone caves in the area, Erawan National Park, the Kanchanaburi Monkey School, a number of waterfalls, the Tiger Temple and the many *wat* (temples) in the district, amongst others. A cursory stroll through the town reveals, however, that the town itself is dominated by memorials to the war; signifiers of

World War Two are the defining features of the town. Within a short distance of the Kanchanaburi Station and bus stop, can be found the Thai-Burma Railway Centre, the War Museum at the Bridge, the Chungkai War Cemetery, the Kanchanaburi War Cemetery (Don Rak Cemetery), the War and Art Museum, the JEATH War Museum and the bridge itself. [2] This is not the Thailand of the conventional, globally available images such as the bars of Patpong, the beaches of luxury resorts at Ko Samui and Phuket, the Golden Triangle of drug lord Kun Sar and so on. In Kanchanaburi, such configurations and discursive constructions of Thailand are overshadowed by the discourses and material remains of the war experience.

As a high-popularity international tourist destination, the town of Kanchanaburi and its environs is a transnational social space. Such spaces are the nodes of intersecting cultural engagements for tourists and other categories of the mobile. They can also be, as Guarnizo and Smith have argued, the spaces of identity formation (1998: 21). As the site of a significant national trauma for Australia and a key location of the experience of World War Two, Kanchanaburi is a space of national identity formation. It is a site for the establishment of a normative view of Australian identity which privileges one aspect of the nation's range of cultural traits, while erasing others. It is the intersection of an encounter, not just with the exotic Other, but with a combination of Others, which represent, on the one hand enmity and brutality (the Japanese), and on the other, succour and shared suffering (the Thais).

Bærenholdt and Haldrup have drawn attention to the construction of place through both material production and imaginative place production (2006: 214). Tourist places are embodied, performed and made possible by engagement with the material, but are also discursively ordered; imaginative mapping combines with material mapping in a place which is already known to the tourist through narrative. Places can be emotionally mapped (Bagnall, 2003) even before the tourist arrives. Hellfire Pass is a symbolic site for Australians and central to the national image; it is performed and embodied through social networks, but it is also discursively produced and emotionally mapped. It is preceded by a form of scripting, a 'cognitive map' (Jameson, 1991) which preempts and prescribes forms of knowledge and emotional response.

Frow (1997) recalls the ways in which ancient Japanese poets established the formal essence of the objects on which they were gazing. This ensured that the poetic or figurative inscription that preceded arrival promoted a form of knowledge which could be recognised and which had 'a greater force than the appearances of the world' (Frow 1997: 66). For the Australian tourist visiting Kanchanaburi, the Bridge on the River Kwai, the Thai-Burma Railway and Hellfire Pass, what he or she sees is already given, the general responses circumscribed and foreshadowed. It is difficult for alternative representations not to be forestalled by the discursive production of place, and the expectations of appropriate performance. It is obvious, as Edensor (2001) has pointed out, that if the social drama is an attempt to transmit meaning and identity, it is contingent on the audience understanding the message.

Kanchanaburi is already "mapped" or discursively constructed before the Australian visitor arrives. It is already understood as a place where the Australian character was formed and consolidated. The stories of mateship and willingness to sacrifice for fellow countrymen are reiterated in the photographs, drawings, dioramas and other visual reminders that can be seen in the museums in the district. They confirm Australia's self-image of tough, laid back, brave and perhaps above all egalitarian people. It is a place where heroism is constructed, both group and individual. Edward "Weary" Dunlop, who is celebrated as a national hero, was a surgeon captured by the Japanese in Java and shipped to Thailand where he was a doctor for the prisoners on the Thai-Burma Railway. The many memorials dedicated to Dunlop in Australia are 'figures of memory' (Assman, 1995: 129), concrete reminders of the nation's experience through which national and group identities are articulated and perpetuated (Assmann, 1995). They link the national *lieux de mémoire* in Australia with places of significance outside the national territory. Visitors are prepared by well known figures of memory, such as shrines of remembrance and other memorials, and appropriate responses are authorised by history books, school curricula and the public discourses generally. The following newspaper article provides a cognitive map of the formation of Australian identity in Thailand:

Tom Uren, a distinguished former left-wing parliamentarian, remembers his time as an Australian prisoner of war near Hellfire Pass on the notorious Burma-

Thailand Railway, where he served with the legendary Weary Dunlop. The Australian doctors, led by Dunlop, combined medical ingenuity with comradeship. They saved lives by securing medical supplies and drugs on the black market. But they worked as part of a team. 'We were living by the principle of the fit looking after the sick, the young looking after the old and the rich looking after the poor,' Uren says. His wartime memories are referred to in a new book, *Australia: A Biography of a Nation*, by distinguished Australian journalist and author Phillip Knightley. Knightley uses the Uren Hellfire Pass story to illustrate the best qualities in the Australian character – a view that every life has an inherently equal value, and a remarkable capacity, when the chips are down, to improvise. (Clark, 2000:7)

The imaginative construction of Kanchanaburi, also entails the construction of myths, in particular the mythological inscriptions of the bridge and the celebrity created by the film *Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957). The bridge is an important symbol of the prisoners' resilience and ingenuity in the face of adversity. Kanchanaburi is also emotionally mapped as a symbol of the brutality of war, entailing the construction of images of the Other, in this case the Japanese. Images of the Japanese were configured around this experience for some three decades and the Burma Railway was a code for Japanese brutality. It was an almost monologic imaginary that lasted in Australia for nearly two generations after the Second World War. These are what Barthes called 'cultural texts' (1972) in which are embedded, not just the realities of war, but also expanded fields of meaning which have implications for the national address and the continuation of the national ethos as it is inscribed. Such cultural texts are an integral component of the emotional mapping of place.

The Use of Space at Kanchanaburi and Hellfire Pass

If tourism is a staged experience (Crang, 1997; Edensor, 2000), or as Adler argues, travel is a performed art (Adler, 1989) then the performance, like any other, involves manipulation of symbolic meanings, forms of spatial regulation, and regimes of discipline that govern movement. The bridge, the pass and the town of Kanchanaburi itself are all parts of a landscape of trauma for Australia in which spectacles emerge which require the stage management of appropriate performances for the renewal of

national identity and patriotic fervour. As in the urban landscapes described by Thrift (2004), the mobilisation of affect has become part of the landscape, an integral aspect of the construction of place, and the stage management of performance.

Like the services held at Gallipoli, a service to honour those who died is held at Hellfire Pass every year at dawn on ANZAC day in a simulation of a military ceremony. The following news report provides an emotional map (Bagnall, 2003). It recalls Massey's notion of places that are constructed out of intersections, social relations and co-presence to create meaning on 'on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself' (Massey, 1993: 67).

Kanchanaburi is located as one site among a network of sites of Australia's national memory across Asia. It also demonstrates the importance of the mobilisation of affect in the process of constructing and linking places in the context of a larger scale of Australia's identity:

Bangkok, April 24 AAP - Thousands of Australians will gather at war memorials across South-East Asia tomorrow, to remember the fallen in Asia's wars. From Thailand to Singapore and Malaysia, Australians will gather to remember those lost in both world wars, and conflicts in Vietnam and Malaysia . . . In Thailand, memorial services will be held at Konyu Cutting, better known as Hell Fire Pass, on the infamous Death Railway, 60km from Kanchanaburi town and 120km from Bangkok . . . Australia's defence attache in Bangkok, Colonel John Blaxland said he was conscious of how deeply felt the ceremonies would be at Hell Fire Pass, and the Allied War Cemetery in Kanchanaburi township. About 600 people are expected at Hell fire [sic] Pass for the service. 'It is hard for some to fight back the tears, even after all these years,' Blaxland said of those who made the pilgrimage to the site each year. . . . Smaller services are also planned in Laos, Cambodia, and Burma. (Corben, 2008)

Another prescribes performance in the emotional terrain of national identity:

Kanchanaburi, Thailand (AP) - Veterans carrying candles held a religious service at dawn Wednesday in the jungles of western Thailand to honor Allied prisoners who died building the Thai-Myanmar 'Death Railway' during World War II. More

than 400 Australians, New Zealanders, Americans and Britons joined the ceremony marking ANZAC Day in Kanchanaburi province, 110 kilometers (70 miles) west of the capital Bangkok.

They included survivors among the 60,000 prisoners of war who were forced by the Japanese army to labor on the railway. Some 12,400 of the Allied prisoners died due to overwork, mistreatment and disease.

Later Wednesday, hundreds of people joined another ceremony held at a war cemetery in Kanchanaburi town. ANZAC Day commemorates Australians and New Zealanders who lost their lives at the battle of Gallipoli, Turkey in World War I. It's an occasion when those countries remember their dead from all wars. ANZAC stands for Australian New Zealand Army Corp.

The Australian and New Zealand ambassadors to Thailand laid wreaths at the rock face of 'Hell Fire Pass,' where a path for the railway was cut with pick and shovel through a mountainside in 1942 and 1943. (Wongpaithoon, 2001)

Spatial and social controls by tour operators ensure that mobilities are curtailed and that the spatial and temporal intersect to facilitate the stage management of the performance and mobilise affect in a ritualised affirmation of the national identity. One tourist website offers the following arrangements:

. . . Australians and other nations participated [sic] in WWII come together on ANZAC Day in Kanchanaburi and spend time remembering the sacrifices of those who died in building the Death Railway. ANZAC Day 2009 in Thailand will be commemorated by conducting a Dawn Service at Hellfire Pass and a Memorial Service at Kanchanaburi Allied War Cemetery (Don-Rak). Normal timings for these events are:

a. Dawn Service at Hellfire Pass

time: Memorial Service commences at 05:30 and lasts approx 30-35 minutes

venue: Konyu Cutting, below the Hellfire Pass Memorial Museum

details: Walk into site takes approx 20 min via steps and along the old railway line. Please note the track is rocky and uneven in parts.

b. Gunfire Breakfast at Hellfire Pass Memorial Museum

time: Upon completion of Dawn Service.

venue: In the vicinity of the Hell-Fire Pass Memorial Museum car-park area.

details: Tea and coffee with traditional shot of Bundaberg Rum.

Please Note: Hellfire Pass is approx 75km north of Kanchanaburi town. The trip from Kanchanaburi town to Hellfire Pass takes approximately 45 minutes by road.

c. Memorial Service and Wreath Laying Ceremony

time: 11:00 - 12:00

venue: Kanchanaburi Allied War Cemetery, Kanchanaburi town

details: Traditional Memorial Service and Formal Wreath Laying Ceremony.

(<http://www.kanchanaburi-info.com/en/festival.html#bridgefestival>)

The travel section of *The Age* newspaper promoted a tour to Thailand under the sub-heading 'Kwai memories':

The Anzac Day dawn service at Hellfire Pass on the infamous Thai-Burma railway is the centrepiece of a week-long trip to Thailand from April 23. Travellers will attend memorial services at Hellfire Pass and Kanchanaburi's Commonwealth War Cemetery on Anzac Day. They will also travel and walk part of the railway, and visit the Australian-financed Hellfire Pass Museum and the bridge on the River Kwai. (The Age, 2001: 12)

Clifford's frequently cited work on travelling cultures (1992) problematises a 'cosmopolitan-local' polarisation which promotes as axiomatic the notion that 'certain classes of people are cosmopolitan (travelers) while the rest are local (natives)' (Clifford 1999: 108). His dissolution of the boundaries between those who travel across cultures and those who inhabit them provides a conceptual zone in which the contradictions of mobility and immobility circulating in the same imaginative and material space can be accommodated. While Australian tourists in Kanchanaburi and at Hellfire Pass are one of Urry's twelve main forms of mobility in the contemporary world (2007: 10-11), in engaging in the rituals and spectacles of

nationhood here, they are momentarily 'of the place, not merely *in*' it (Bauman, 1996: 30). A paradoxically transient belonging is afforded by a momentary intersection of tourist mobilities with local immobilities and the creation of a habitat of meaning for the Australian national memory.

Hannerz (1990) also considers the distinction between cosmopolitans and locals. For him, a genuine cosmopolitanism is the willingness to engage with the Other, an openness toward divergent cultural experiences and a search for contrasts rather than uniformity (Hannerz 1990: 239). The 'state of readiness' (239) that he ascribes to the cosmopolitan can be partly attributed to Frow's 'poetic or the figurative inscription that precedes arrival' (Frow 1997: 66). The spectacle of nationalism of Australia, in particular the celebration of Australia's historical military involvement, history books, school curricula and popular culture has promoted standardised historical narratives and largely pre-empted alternative understanding and affective perception. This affords a state of emotional readiness for tourists that precedes arrival in an otherwise alien space.

The cognitive map or emotional map is not just translated into certain kinds of spatial practices, but is also reflected in a particular aesthetic that has afforded Australian tourists competence in an alien culture and in their interactions with the ontological Other. This competence, in Hannerz's account may be of a generalised or specialised kind (Hannerz 1990: 239). If the Kanchanaburi and Hellfire Pass are cognitively mapped before arrival by the national narrative and by the discourses of commodification and tourism marketing, then these places are no longer spaces of the alien, but disalienated places. In the city, according to Jameson, this involves:

the practical reconquest of a sense of place and the construction or reconstruction of an articulated ensemble which can be retained in memory and which the individual subject can map and remap along the moments of mobile, alternative trajectories. (Jameson, 1991: 51)

At Kanchanaburi and Hellfire Pass the places of Australia's national trauma have been reconquered and reconstructed in an ensemble which articulates a normative Australian national identity. The cultural competence it offers is located in a limited

field of national characteristics, authorised above others. Jameson, drawing on Althusser's (1977) work on ideology, also makes the point that the cognitive map functions to represent an imaginary relationship to the real conditions of existence. It enables, in this case, the tourists' imaginary relationship, not just to the suffering of individual prisoners, but to an ensemble of structures which configure and represent the nation as a whole.

There are any number of package tours from Bangkok on offer to direct the tourist through the many museums and cemeteries in the district, the Death Railway, the Bridge on the River Kwai and so on. The stage directions for these tours ensure that the performances are carefully managed and that mobilities are severely restricted by a sort of spatio-temporal straightjacket which does not allow more than 20 minutes in any one place before the visitor is herded along to the next station on the pilgrimage to sacred sites. Tours are generally carried out with such unseemly haste that tourists are prevented from wandering into any places of potential interest that are not in the itinerary, lest the schedule is disrupted and the 'Thai lunch in a jungle view restaurant' not eaten on time. As in all tours with set itineraries, the places of interest are selected for the tourist. To go to Kanchanaburi and not spend your allotted ten minutes gazing at or clambering on the Bridge on the River Kwai would be as inconceivable as going to Paris and not seeing the Eiffel Tower.

Near every site is a string of stalls or small shops selling war memorabilia, books, postcards, and other tourist items. It is possible to buy putatively genuine Japanese, British and Myanmar helmets for around US \$100, amongst other World War Two military paraphernalia. What is always evident, however, in the many museums and cemeteries that are situated all throughout Kanchanaburi, is the imagined presence of Australia. The JEATH [2] Museum in particular is dominated by displays of photographs of Australian prisoners of war, reconstructed huts, personal belongings of prisoners of war, tributes to Australian mateship, courage, egalitarianism and the spirit of survival, newspaper clippings from Australia, and a disturbingly grotesque set of models of starving prisoners building the railway.

The Kanchanaburi War Cemetery and the Chungkai Cemetery both contain a high percentage of Australian war dead (see Figure 2). While Kanchanaburi and Hellfire

Pass, like other tourist sites around the world, are spaces of flows, they are also 'places' in Augé's sense, in that they are 'relational, historical and concerned with identity' (Augé 1995: 77). They are deterritorialised places of nation for Australia in which Australian tourists can feel themselves simultaneously local and foreign.



Figure 2. Australian graves at the Kanchanaburi War Cemetery

Embodying the National Memory

Since 1985, work has been conducted by the Australian government to clear and reclaim the cuttings from the overgrown jungle, and to establish a memorial museum and information centre for tourists. This work included building access pathways, stairs and landings which would facilitate movement around a 'memorial walking trail'. This promotes what Adler has defined as the performance of travel which entails 'movement through space in conventionally stylized ways' (Adler, 1989: 1366).

The museum – administered by Australia's Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Office of Australian War Graves – contains photographs, plaques, displays of objects used by prisoners, digging tools, food containers, interactive displays, signs in Thai and English, Australian military uniforms and other objects of memory. It features a

contemplation deck overlooking the Kwaie Noi valley (Figure 3). It was formally dedicated in 1985 to the memory of the prisoners who worked and died on the railway, and is a concrete statement of the significance of the site for Australian nationhood. More importantly for this study, it prepares the visitor for the walking trail. The walking trail is a pathway through the cuttings which follows the original railway from Hellfire Pass to Compressor Cutting via the sites of Hintok Cutting, the Three Tier Bridge, Hammer and Tap Cutting and Konyu Cutting. Visitors are advised about the extreme conditions (intense heat, humidity, rough terrain) and warned that the walk should not be undertaken by those unprepared for these conditions. Strong shoes, protective clothing and an adequate supply of drinking water for the walk are prescribed. The walk takes between 1.5 and 2.5 hours in a simulation of the trek undertaken by the prisoners every day. Visitors can assume a role and “act out,” in safety, the drama of surviving the Death Railway, with props including water, insect repellent, sunscreen, hat and audio guide.



Figure 3. View from the Contemplation Deck at the Hellfire Pass Memorial Museum overlooking the the Kwaie Noi Valley. It features the Peace Vessel made by Peter Rushforth, a prisoner on the Thai-Burma Railway who trained as a potter at RMIT.

It is recommended that visitors follow the path with the aid of an audio tour. The audio tour provides the itinerary for walking. In the performance of travel, an itinerary functions to choreograph the movement through space, and ‘translates the spatial

order of a map into temporal sequence, defining proximity and distance in terms of time and feasibility' (Adler, 1989: 1369).

The following is an abridged transcript of the CD for the Hellfire Pass walking tour:

After you've read the visitors information sign, and you've checked your water and sunscreen supplies we can begin our descent into Hellfire Pass. Got your hat? You can listen now, as you make your way towards stop 5 ...

The men who worked here knew it as Konyu Cutting. The tools they used were primitive [sound of tapping] ...

The Japanese engineers began to apply maximum pressure and men were forced to work around the clock [sounds of birds chirping] ...

At this point you'll have to decide which route you want to take. Ideally, we would prefer that everyone climb the stairs on the right [sounds of footsteps on gravel and rock] ...

Just over to the right is the pathway the prisoners took as they marched from their camp to the railway cutting ...

This is Hellfire Pass. [sound of drums] This entire section is 600 metres long and 25 metres deep at its highest point ... The entire pass was drilled and cleared by hand. Hammer, tap; hammer, tap; blast, clear; hammer, tap; hammer, tap; blast, clear ...

Walk a bit ... just weeks after work on Konyu Cutting it rained and rained and rained, never letting up [sounds of thunder and monsoon rains] ...

Let's now head into the cutting. We'll meet again at Stop 9.

Look down the length of the cut. Now take a moment to consider the logistics of drilling through this solid rock hill wide enough for trains to pass through. This superhuman feat was accomplished against unrelenting human horror ...

This is not the most comfortable place, but let's sit here for a while anyway – close your eyes for a moment. Imagine the heat and humidity, hunger and disease, rain and wind, lashings and pain ... Hunger on the railway was a permanently nagging and gnawing state of being ...

We are now standing on the old railway track ... let's start walking. A few steps down, just over to the left you will see the cement footings with the bamboo indicators ...

Look straight ahead. Along the path you will see an original dry stone wall ... feel the discomfort of the stones underneath as we walk towards the Kwae Noi lookout ... imagine doing this walk, hour after hour through searing heat or bucketing rain by the light of day, or dark of night ... on swollen ulcerated feet, up and down, back and forth ...

This is a good place to rest. Look carefully into the far distance. Do you see the shape of the white water tower? ... This place is quite lovely, don't you think? It's a still kind of beauty, and offered many a man solace during his period as a prisoner ...

We'll carry on our journey towards Stop 13 ... Look at your map and see if you want to join us there. If not, you can always listen to the next three stops as you walk back towards Hellfire Pass.

... This is the contemplation deck. The valley looks so peaceful now. This was not always the case. The line between savagery and civilisation was well and truly transgressed here ...

Thank you for taking the tour today. (See Figure 4)



Figure 4. Stop 17 on the walking tour of Hellfire Pass

The walking tour of Hellfire Pass is a carefully choreographed and guided performance through a landscape of emotion. The power of this audio tour to conjure the imagined presence of the nation is effected in three main ways. First, the voice on the CD is unmistakably Australian. The tourist hears the accent of home, and is addressed directly ('Got your hat?') thereby putting the listener into the 'state of readiness' to engage with the stage managed and choreographed experience. It is as if the speaker and the listener are well enough acquainted for the speaker to advise the listener and to elicit emotional responses ('this is a good place to rest ... this place is quite lovely, don't you think?'). The narrative that accompanies the walk addresses the listener as if the events were actually happening, given an added dimension by the use of the inclusive 'we'. The listener is introduced to the prisoners by name, and hears the voices of survivors telling their stories. They become intimately connected to the prisoner through excerpts from Weary Dunlop's diaries, narrated details of the bodily functions, injuries and illnesses of prisoners, vivid descriptions of the violence of Japanese and Korean guards, and references to self-consciously national traits such as ingenuity in the face of hardship, mateship and courage. The listener is invited to share the emotions felt by the prisoners ('it's a still kind of beauty, and offered many a man solace during his period as a prisoner'). The voices are interspersed with sounds (thunder, music, birdsong, footsteps on gravel,

hammering, tapping and so on) that conjure an atmosphere in which the presence of the prisoners can be imagined.

Hellfire Pass is created as a place of nation that not only comes alive in the moment, but creates a concurrence of times: the historical time of Australian nationhood with the quotidian time of local reality. Listening to the audio tour while walking Hellfire Pass is an emotional experience and an affective outcome of relational encounters between the self and the landscape (Conradson, 2005: 104), in this case, mediated by the audio tour. As Thrift has shown, affect can be actively engineered (2004), and the source of the emotions can seem to come from somewhere outside the body, from the setting itself (Thrift, 2004: 60). Urry extends this notion when he asserts that 'affect is an emergent effect of bodies in relationship to each other and especially through their distribution in time and space' (Urry, 2007: 237).

Second, the walk is a performance that creates the space of the nation through its ability to simulate the experiences of prisoners. It is arduous, to say the least, over uneven terrain and in extreme humidity and heat. Displays at the museum, and other discursive inscriptions of the Pass prepare the visitor and provide the emotional or cognitive map so that the visitor anticipates the physical and emotional exhaustion he or she will feel at the end of a two hour walk in the cuttings through the Thai jungle. In cautioning the visitor that hats, water, and mobile phones in case of an emergency, are necessary, a minor anxiety is created that further mobilises affect. The landscape, like a lot of tourist spaces is sensed (Edensor, 2006) and linked to the materialities of inhospitable terrain. You know you will *feel* what the prisoners felt when you embody and perform a simulation of their experience. One tourist, Deborah Jones, noted:

I went to the province primarily to travel on the train, to walk over the bridge and to visit Hell Fire Pass. But my main purpose of visit was to pay tribute to the 13,000 Aussie lads who perished there during World War II. It was some 600 steps to get back to the top from Hell Fire Pass. I did it with water, insect repellent, a guide and in my own time – the lads who perished there did it after an 18-hour day cutting stone with hand tools and with Japanese guards. The Canberra Times, 2006: 14).

The creation of place through performance and the emotional attachment to nation renewed and reaffirmed through the shared experience of the walk –not just with other Australian tourists, but with the felt presence of the prisoners – is consistent with Urry’s argument that ‘corporeal mobility is . . . part of the process by which members of a country believe they share some common identity bound up with a particular territory’ (Urry, 2000: 149).



Figure 5. A cutting at Hellfire Pass

Third, the landscape through which the audio tour guides the visitor is a symbolic space that can be navigated physically and emotionally by a series of signposts (see Figures 1 and 4). These might be considered to be stations along the way to guide the pilgrim through the sacred site of a nation, especially since, as Edensor has pointed out, the distinction between the pilgrim and the tourist is blurred (1998: 4). Signifiers of Australian nationhood form improvised shrines along the route. Apart from Australian flags, toy koalas and kangaroos, hand-made dedications and makeshift crucifixes, artificial Flanders poppies – signifiers of the link with another war in another foreign place – appear at every turn. The spirit of the ANZACs, so important to the Australian national identity, is visually represented in the contrast between the red poppies and the near monochromatic dull ochre of the rock face

through which the cutting was dug (Figure 5). While this may be the least familiar to tourists from elsewhere, it is perhaps the material signifier that most encourages the mobilisation of affect for the war experience as a moment of the nation's self-invention. It provides a privileged aesthetic that can engender the homesickness to which Bauman refers, the longing to be 'for once *of* the place, not merely *in*' it (Bauman, 1996: 30).

Conclusion

If the spatial logic of the global system is flows (Castells, 1996: 442), the cultural logic of the global system is also flows (Appadurai, 1996: 32-36). Globalised movements of peoples and goods have dissolved the idea of uniqueness or rootedness of place and culture (Bhabha, 1990). The global mobilities of tourists can engender a sense of detachment and loss of belonging, but, in certain modes of intersection with local immobilities, they can also create new ways of belonging. If the places of the nation can be constituted through an 'imagined presence,' defined by objects and images, that are carried across members of a community (Urry, 2000: 140), then Kanchanaburi and Hellfire Pass, with their symbols and signifiers of Australian agency in the area, are the places of Australian nationhood. That might also be true of the places of Australian-ness created by mass tourism such as Kuta Beach in Bali and other popular holiday destinations for Australians. Hellfire Pass, however, is not a holiday destination; it is a geography of emotion which has immense power to mobilise affect. This is achieved not just by the symbolism, the heterotopic spaces marked off as sacred, and by the aesthetics of death and suffering; more importantly, it is felt, experienced and sensed as the scene of death and suffering of fellow Australians. This relies not just on forms of mobility that transport the tourist to a foreign land, but also on the mobilities required to undertake the walk in simulation of the prisoners' trauma. The corporeal mobility, or performance, of walking Hellfire Pass more than anything else creates a space of nationhood, and allows Australians to feel at once '*of* the place, not merely *in*' it, to feel at home (Bauman, 1996: 30).

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transnational cultural practices; urban space and power in Asia; cultural politics in Southeast Asia. She is part of a team of researchers from Australian universities awarded an Australian Research Council Discovery Grant for a project entitled 'Theatre in the Asia-Pacific: Regional Culture in a Modern Global Context'.

Endnotes

[1] Of the 30,000 British prisoners of war, 6,540 died on the railway; of the 18,000 Dutch prisoners, 2,830 died; of the 13,000 Australians who worked on the railway, 2,710 perished. Around 133 Americans were lost. It should be noted that of the 200,000 Tamils, Burmese and other Asian labourers, 80,000 perished in the building of the railway (Australian-Thai Chamber of Commerce 2004: 15).

[2] JEATH is an acronym meaning Japan, England, Australia, Thailand, Holland.

List of Illustrations

(All photographs are attributed to Fergus Hudson).

Figure 1 Memorial with Flanders Poppies at Hellfire Pass

Figure 2 Australian graves at the Kanchanaburi War Cemetery

Figure 3 View from the Contemplation Deck at the Hellfire Pass Memorial Museum overlooking the the Kwae Noi Valley. It features the Peace Vessel made by Peter Rushforth, a prisoner on the Thai-Burma Railway who trained as a potter at RMIT.

Figure 4 Stop 17 on the walking tour of Hellfire Pass

Figure 5 A cutting at Hellfire Pass

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