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## Containing Marginal Memories: The Melancholy Landscapes of Hart Island (New York), Cockatoo Island (Sydney), and Ripapa Island (Christchurch)

Jacky Bowring

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### Abstract

Contained within tight geographical margins, islands are places where memories are intensified and heightened. The antithesis of the dreamy palm-covered paradises of travel brochures are the urban islands that lurk in blind spots, dark and brooding. Spatially and socially marginalised, such islands become memorials to the shadowy dimensions of civilisation: prisons, landfills, military bases, lunatic asylums, and cemeteries. Hart Island, Cockatoo Island, and Ripapa Island are liminal zones at the edges of our consciousness. There are no permanent residents on them, yet they are replete with cultural memories. Hart Island, despite being the United States' largest cemetery, is practically invisible. Out of bounds to the public, it is a cemetery for the nameless and the homeless, with graves dug by prisoners from Riker's Island jail. The island's ruins include a lunatic asylum, prison, amusement park, and Nike anti-missile base, all dissolving into the picturesque greenery. Cockatoo Island is a wholly transformed landscape with silos, dry docks, and buildings sculpted directly into the sandstone. The infrastructural modifications have housed prisons, reform schools, and shipyards. Ripapa Island is also highly modified, with its defensive opportunities realised in its long history as a pā, a military fort, and a prison, which in the late nineteenth century housed followers of Te Whiti from the passive protest at Parihaka. Bearing their weighty cargo of memories, each island presents a conundrum, a "what now?" dilemma that vexes those charged with their care: to be preserved in a reserve as at Ripapa, or gentrified as a recreational site like Cockatoo, or to remain resolutely off the map as with Hart Island?

Keywords: melancholy, memory, cemeteries, prisons, forts, liminality, heritage

## Introduction

As small, microcosmic landscapes, islands present a distinct condition. Islands are suggestive of a condition redolent with the melancholy of detachment and solitude. The word “isolation” is rooted in the Latin *isola*, meaning island. They have a unique place in our psyche, and John Gillis observes that:

*We attribute to islands atemporal, liminal qualities that we would never associate with mainlands. Despite our efforts to historicize them, to pin them down to our geographical coordinates, islands continue to be projections of the deepest layers of our subconscious.*<sup>1</sup>

Just as much as these projections could be the familiar paradisiacal imagery associated with tropical islands, these pieces of land are also coloured by the darker aspects of the subconscious, as cultural repositories of marginalised memories. In contrast to the mainland, their otherness is amplified by the necessary journeys to reach them, the passage across the limen, as embodied in Arnold Böcklin’s *Isle of the Dead* (Figure 1). Böcklin made at least five versions of this painting, which became an iconographic image of mourning that evokes symbolism associated with the passage into death, including the crossing of water, cypress trees, and the idea of a threshold or limen.

Figure 1. Arnold Böcklin Die Toteninsel / Isle of the Dead. 1886. With the permission of bpk | Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig | Ursula Gerstenberger.



Some of the most melancholy of islands are those which exist right at the edge of daily life. These are not the places of remote getaways and adventures, but the poignant repositories of memory that are seemingly moored off cities. Prisons, lunatic asylums, landfills, and cemeteries: all marginal land uses which act as alter egos to the mainlands they hover near. The atmosphere of melancholy which pervades these places is felt mostly by those who do not inhabit them, and in many cases they are not inhabited at all.

Alcatraz (San Francisco’s prison island) and San Michele (Venice’s cemetery island) are legendary urban islands, celebrated dark spots within their city’s psyches. In the case of sites such as Alcatraz, it could be argued that their attraction is motivated by dark tourism, where travellers are drawn to sites of

tragedy.<sup>2</sup> Less well known are the three islands explored in this article, namely New York’s Hart Island, Cockatoo Island in Sydney Harbour, and Ripapa Island in Lyttelton Harbour, Christchurch. The enigmatic presences of these three islands, along with Alcatraz and San Michele, are depicted in Figure 2, a figure-ground drawing which is a projection in both senses of the word. On one hand the shapes are projected, as though in a shadow play, and on the other they are the target for projections of the subconscious, as in Rorschach blots. The place these islands have in the dark realm of the psyche is intensified by the associations and resonances of their forms in this figure-ground image. All manner of thoughts come to mind in observing the islands’ silhouettes, and they seem somehow inherently sinister ... an amputated leg ... a sting ray ... a stealth bomber ....

Figure 2. Island silhouettes.  
Clockwise from top left: Hart  
Island, Cockatoo Island, Ripapa  
Island, Alcatraz, San Michele.  
Grid is 500 square metres.

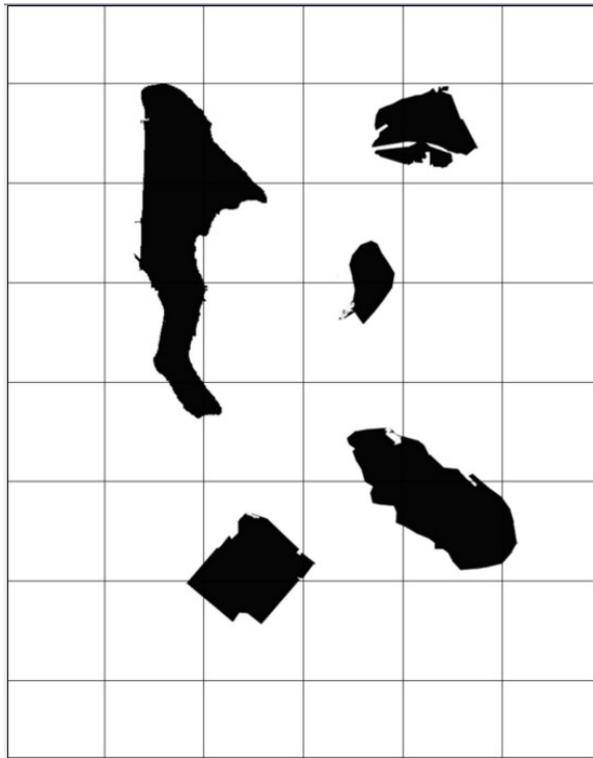
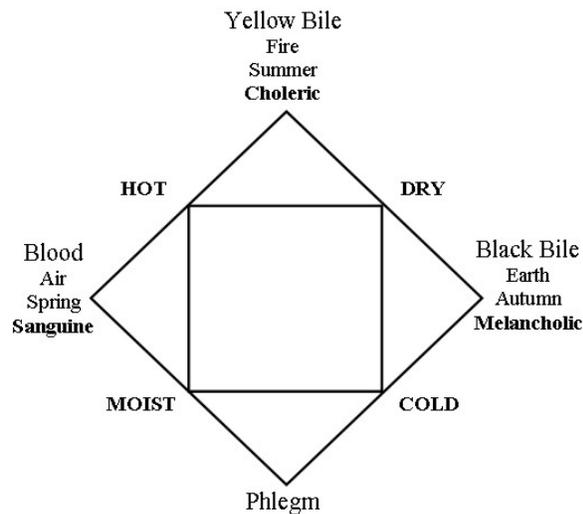


Figure-ground drawings depict solid forms as black and the background or “field” as white, and are often used in massing investigations for urban design. In this case, the seemingly objective outlines aid in subverting the apprehension of islands as benign paradises, revealing the “transformational violence” implicit in their histories. The enigmatic figures of the silhouetted forms evoke palpably poignant landscapes; places that bear scars, and which carry the heavy weight of the emotional cargo of their adjacent cities. While their physical form is wrought from nature, their metaphysical baggage is culturally fraught. The magnitude and intensity of these memories exceeds the capacity of the islands’ small footprints. They are Tardis-like bearers of the weight of memory and emotion, which far exceeds their apparent physical size. These islands are the dark spots in our peripheral vision, the projections of our collective subconscious.

Their melancholy resonates with the subconscious realm of memory and mourning. At the core of this emotion lies the sense of an irresolvable loss, the precise definition of which is elusive. Rooted in the ancient notion of “humours”, melancholy was one of four governing elements, as shown in Figure 3, and was associated with twilight, autumn, earth, the spleen, coldness and dryness, and the planet, Saturn. All of these elements weave in and out of the history of melancholy, appearing in mythology, astrology, medicine, literature, and art. The humours and temperaments were seen as complementary pairs, so that the opposite of one might be introduced as a remedy for an excess of another. In contemporary society the issue of balance is problematic, where the emphasis is firmly on the so-called positive emotions such as happiness and joy, while sadness and melancholy become marginalised. The islands provide a geographical expression of this marginalisation, a simmering reminder of the potential consequences of losing the balance.

Figure 3. The Four Humours.  
Adapted from Henry E Sigerist.  
*A History of Medicine*, 2 vols  
(New York: Oxford University  
Press, 1961) 2: 232.



The ‘problem’ of melancholy was explored in Sigmund Freud’s 1917 essay, *Mourning and Melancholia*, where he related “normal” grief to mourning. Normal mourning sees the individual process the loss, and gradually recover. “Abnormal” grief is the pathological condition he termed “melancholia”, where mourning is arrested and the process of recovery fails to reach completion. In melancholia, the individual, or ego, embeds their sense of loss within themselves, refusing to recover, not willing to let go of the loss, so that it persists as an open wound.

Freud described how the “[t]he shadow of the object fell upon the ego” and “the loss of the object had been transformed into the loss of ego”. The loss of the object, whether it be a person or an idea, therefore becomes the same as the loss of the self, the ego.<sup>3</sup> The islands’ seeming invisibility, their marginalisation, is suggestive of loss. Hovering at the edge of existence their presence is at once an absence, an irreconcilable dimension of life. Even an island which is apparently visible, such as Cockatoo Island, still conceals much of its past. Like Rico Franses’s analysis of memorials, the islands are “strangers” to us, therefore we cannot

properly grieve their absence because we do not know them well enough—thus they persist as melancholy lacunae.<sup>4</sup>

## Hart Island

Hart Island’s melancholy is intensified by its almost mythological existence. Out of bounds to the public, it is the locus of some of the darkest dimensions of New York’s psyche. Although it is home to the largest cemetery in the United States, with some 850,000 interments, no visitors are allowed, apart from in exceptional circumstances. Artist, Melinda Hunt, has made many visits to the island as part of her ongoing project which seeks, in part, to reconnect family members to loved ones buried on it.

Hunt’s access to the island is an exception to the general ruling for the site, allowing her to combine her project which simultaneously investigates the site from an artistic perspective and develops a database of the ‘missing’ as part of the efforts at reconnection. She expressed how difficult it is “to describe the overwhelming sense of anonymity and timelessness that comes from standing next to an open burial trench twenty feet wide, seventy feet long and six feet deep”<sup>5</sup> (Figure 4). As a cemetery without public access, Hart Island is perhaps one of the most melancholy of all the islands. As an institutional symbol of the denial of the “normal” processes of mourning and grief, it is the Freudian “open wound” made manifest.

Figure 4. Joel Sternfeld. James Smith, February 1992. ©1992 Joel Sternfeld courtesy of The Hart Island Project collection, <http://hartisland.net>. The Hart Island Project is a non-profit charitable organisation whose mission is to increase public awareness and access to the public burial ground in New York City.



Far removed from the image of the enigmatic gowned figure crossing the water by boat in Arnold Böcklin's *Isle of the Dead*, or Venice's San Michele where special funeral barges are part of the watery ritual of an island burial, Hart Island resonates with death and water in other ways. It invokes the crossing of the River Styx,<sup>6</sup> as each day inmates from Riker's Island prison cross over to Hart Island to carry out mass burials. As a potter's field<sup>7</sup> since 1869, Hart Island is the final resting place of the destitute and the unknown. Located at the city's margins, this cemetery reflects a "deeper social pattern of hiding [than] that which is socially undesirable in the undeveloped fringes of the city".<sup>8</sup>

Burials on Hart Island began during the American Civil War (1861-1865), when it served as a disciplinary and concentration camp, and both Union and Confederate soldiers were buried there (Figure 5). These burials were later removed to a military cemetery in 1941, but a monument and fenced area remains as a marker of the Union cemetery. However, Confederate soldiers' graves were not marked, setting in train the future of the island as a potter's field of anonymous graves. During the Civil War, over 3,000 prisoners of war were housed on the island in brutal conditions, and it was from this time that its isolation was first experienced. Drew Gilpin Faust explains how the stigma of Hart Island was rooted in the fact that it became a concentration camp for Confederate soldiers captured at Gettysburg. While garden cemeteries became popular elsewhere, the enormous loss of life in the Civil War brought about changes to mourning and caring for the dead, with the result that Hart Island sat stigmatised at the margins.<sup>9</sup>

Figure 5. Page from the New Zealand edition of the Illustrated London News 1865 showing the 'mustering out' of regiments, and engraved from a sketch made from nearby David's Island, copy courtesy of The Hart Island Project.



Not only is the cemetery concealed in the out-of-bounds zone of Hart Island, but a number of other activities have also been based there, beyond the radar of daily life. Following the island's purchase in 1869, "an extension of the House of Refuge, the prison workhouse for delinquent boys on Randall's Island, opened".<sup>10</sup> Later, victims of the yellow fever epidemic were housed on the island, as well as a women's insane asylum. A reformatory school for boys was the centre of the main cluster of buildings on the island. Over time all manner of marginalised members of society were placed on it including the mentally ill, those with tuberculosis, the homeless, criminals, drug addicts, and alcoholics (Figure 6).

An amusement park was begun in 1925, but was forced to close in case it corrupted the inmates by allowing them access to contraband, or by offering them a means of escape. A Nike anti-missile base was then built on the island in 1955, as part of the network of ground-to-air missile launchers developed to shoot down aircraft. The base, known as NY-15, and which housed 20 supersonic missiles, was later abandoned. It has since succumbed to the forces of nature, slowly transforming from the pinnacle of military technology to another of the fragments of this island's repository of shadowy memories.

Figure 6. Melinda Hunt. Hart Island Dormitory. 2004. ©2004 Melinda Hunt/The Hart Island Project, <http://hartisland.net>.



Hart Island's dark history is explored in the ongoing project by Melinda Hunt. Beginning with a collaborative project with photographer, Joel Sternfeld, she has plumbed the depths of the island. Hunt describes the burial ground as "a dark undercoat of a history painting about Hart Island" which witnesses a range of penal institutions, where "the punishment is mild but the backdrop is haunting".<sup>11</sup> Hunt and Sternfeld were intrigued by how the natural landscape of the island "seems to completely mask almost 140 years of burials".<sup>12</sup> As though to reinforce the broader concern with hiding things in the margins, the island is complicit, concealing the cemetery within its landscape. Each of the vast mass graves takes only a season to disappear into the landscape, with only the white concrete

marker posts barely visible (Figure 7). The island is almost mute, quietly brooding in the Long Island Sound. The discordance between the island’s beauty and the dark memories it conceals echoes James E. Young’s observations of the beautiful landscape of the former SS camp at Falstad in Norway. The incongruity of beauty and pain raises a “theological argument”, a questioning of the indifference of god, of nature, in the face of suffering. Young describes this condition as a “pastoral lament”,<sup>13</sup> an eminently suitable phrase for Hart Island’s bucolic, yet brutal, beauty.

Figure 7. Melinda Hunt. New mass grave and mussel shells with pages from the Hart Island burial record books. ©1997 Melinda Hunt/The Hart Island Project, <http://hartisland.net>.



### Cockatoo Island

Cockatoo Island in Sydney Harbour presents a very different face, with its natural appearance almost wholly altered by the overlays of infrastructure. The island is a chimera, a monstrous cyborg made up of prosthetic extensions and modifications for its various utilitarian tasks constructed over and tunnelled into the Sydney sandstone base (Figure 8). The transformation of the island is so absolute that no evidence has been found of pre-European use. Even *Biloela*, the alternative name for the island which is the Aboriginal word for “cockatoo”, is not a relic from a previous era, but was added in the late nineteenth century by Reverend William Ridley.

The first jail buildings were erected in 1839, using prison gangs from nearby Goat Island, followed in 1841 by the sculpting of the stone to construct grain silos and water reservoirs, and docks and other naval facilities in the late 1850s.

Even some of the prison cells were excavated directly into the sandstone, a detention space which, it is suggested, “would not have been approved had it been submitted to the Inspectors of Prisons at the Home Office in London”.<sup>14</sup> Cells constructed later in the nineteenth century had “proper punishment cells”, including two “dark” and three “normal” cells.<sup>15</sup>

Figure 8. Cockatoo Island, a sandstone cyborg.



Figure 9. The trace of a memory – Biloela.



The combined use of the island as both a prison and shipyards continued through the mid-nineteenth century, with the convicts often working on vessels held in the dry dock. There was a shift in focus in 1869 when the prisoners were re-located to the mainland jail in Darlinghurst, Sydney, and in 1871 the facilities found a further use as an Industrial School for Girls, and a reformatory for girls who were convicted criminals. It was at this time that the name was changed to Biloela, in an effort to remove the connotations of the previous prisons (Figure 9).

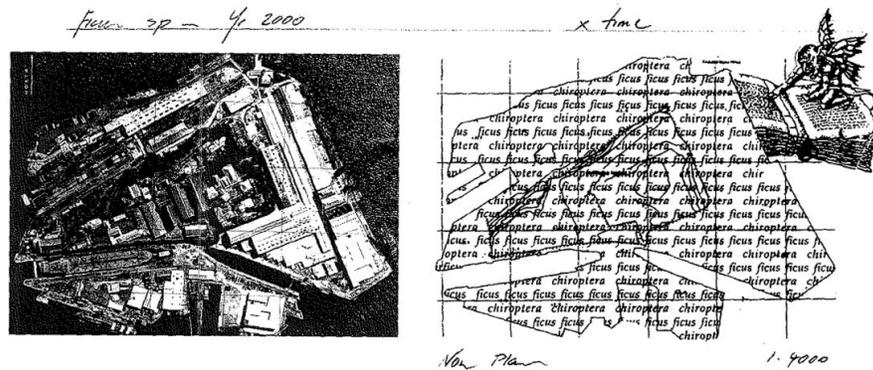
However the island retained the character of a marginal zone, and the behaviour of the institutionalised girls served to reinforce the sense of the island being beyond the pale. This was highlighted in a letter by I.S.V. Mein, the superintendent of the *NSS Vernon*, a training ship for boys moored off the island, who described how, “three girls came down abreast of the ship, in a semi nude state, throwing stones at the windows of the workshops—blaspheming dreadfully and conducting themselves more like fiends than human beings. I was compelled to send all our boys onto the lower deck to prevent them viewing such a contaminatory exhibition”.<sup>16</sup> One last prison phase began in 1888, housing petty criminals. The island’s symbolism as a place for outcasts endured, and given that the petty criminals were of little threat to society the evil was, as James Semple Kerr put it, “more seeming than real”.<sup>17</sup>

In the early twentieth century the focus shifted exclusively onto the shipbuilding yards, and the name reverted to Cockatoo Island. Development of the island’s infrastructure continued, including the intensive period of repairing

ships during World War II. More of the island was carved away to accommodate the additional buildings and facilities. Shipbuilding continued, until 1992. Heavily modified and burdened by its history, Cockatoo Island is a shadow within the bright, sparkling Sydney Harbour.

An ideas competition organised in 1996 by landscape architecture students at the University of New South Wales yielded visions such as a return to incarceration,<sup>18</sup> to maritime industry,<sup>19</sup> and a grid of fig trees which would slowly engulf the entire island and provide a habitat for bats.<sup>20</sup> Richard Weller's *Animale Ignoble* proposal is redolent with melancholy. In it, he amplified the liminal nature of the island by suggesting that "fig seeds be scattered randomly over the island and that nobody enter the site for 100 years".<sup>21</sup> His vision was of the fig trees growing into a massive tangle of dark trees, engulfing the entire island, and also attracting bats. Weller speculates on how the island will become a place of myth, how its memories will be contained within a place "not unlike the Zone in Andrei Tarkovsky's film *Stalker*"—a place on the margins (Figure 10).<sup>22</sup>

Figure 10. Richard Weller. *Animale Ignoble*: Proposal for Cockatoo Island. 1995. Permission granted.



Instead of adopting any of these dark possibilities, the island is undergoing a transformation that involves an ordered re-working of the site, a cleaving of the mess and complexity of history. Again, the insistence on happiness pushes melancholy further into the margins. Now undergoing development as an urban park, Cockatoo Island is described as "big, surprising, entertaining", and additions include a camping ground, café, and bar.<sup>23</sup> There is an uneasy feeling that in the rush to make the island a pleasant destination the past is becoming eroded, mollified, and suppressed, illustrating the conundrums of heritage in situations where the history is not a positive one (Figure 11). On one hand there is a concern for the safety and comfort of those who visit, but on the other it is critical that these zones of danger and discomfort, sadness and isolation, are not lost in the process.

Figure 11. The sanitised landscape of a “big, surprising, entertaining” Cockatoo Island.



The tension between a site’s dark past and its re-development for tourism is fraught with ethical questions, echoing those in the dark tourism literature. At sites like Alcatraz there is a complexity of history which can become elided, or even obscured, by the ways in which the heritage is packaged for tourists. Strange and Kempa caution that the “refashioning of punishment as a tourism product raises ethical questions about the commodification of suffering and its evident entertainment value”, potentially becoming voyeuristic and more akin to a theme park.<sup>24</sup>

Cockatoo Island signals this very danger, where the reconceptualisation of the island as “big, surprising and entertaining” suggests such threats are imminent. Is it possible that what Strange and Kempa describe as the “murkiest project of all”—to close a site like this to tourism—could afford it a place just below the radar. The island could still be visible to passers-by on the ferries, yet avoid becoming over-exposed to contemporary culture’s desire to commercialise every single thing in the landscape.

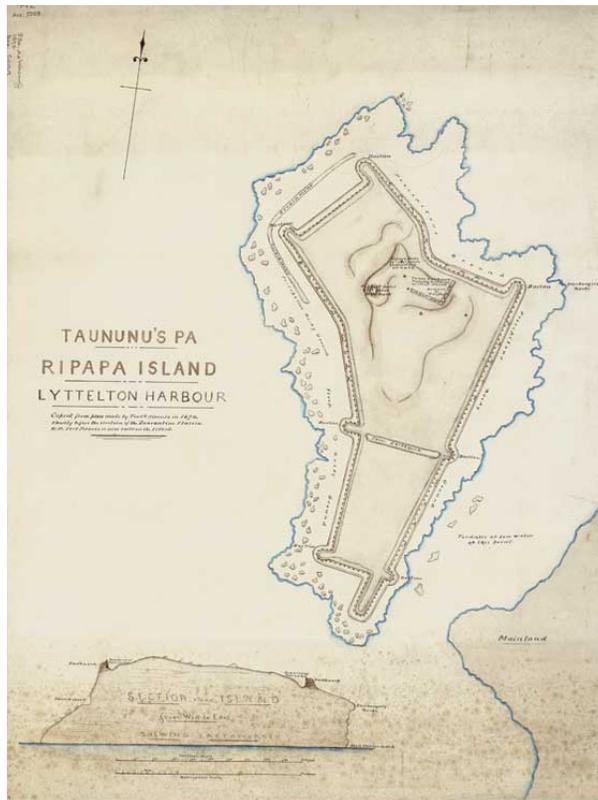
### Ripapa Island

The third exemplar of the liminal condition of islands is Ripapa Island in Christchurch’s Lyttelton Harbour. Like Hart and Cockatoo Islands, Ripapa has a complex and dark history. The defensive opportunities of an island form were realised in its long history as a pā, and a walled fort built in 1886 as part of the

defensive network against the “Russian scare”.<sup>25</sup> A series of pā were constructed on the island, with the first built by the tribe Ngati Mamoe.

In the eighteenth century this tribe was unseated by Ngai Tahu, and the chief Te Rangiwhakaputa built another pā, and called the island Ripapa. Subsequently Taununu, a warrior chief of Ngai Tahu, again constructed a pā on the site, the first to be built especially for musket warfare. This pā was fortified with earthen walls, but despite this strengthening it fell during the mid-1820s to another of the sub tribes of Ngai Tahu from Kaiapohia. The pā remnants remained until at least 1872 when they were documented by the architect Frederick Strouts (Figure 12). The only relics of the pā are now believed to be under the wall of the military fort and gun emplacement.<sup>26</sup>

Figure 12. Taununu’s pa, Ripapa Island, Lyttelton Harbour. Copied from plan made by Frederick Strouts in 1872 [c.1910] [copy of ms map]. Reference number MapColl-834.44hkcmf/1872/Acc.5099. Permission of the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand, must be obtained before any re-use of this image.



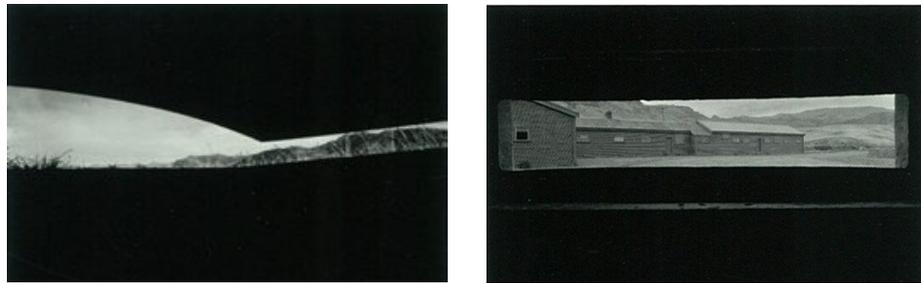
Strouts’s site recording was in order to design the quarantine station that was built on the island in 1873, a purpose for which its isolating qualities were well suited. For many of the immigrants arriving in New Zealand from Britain, the quarantine station was their first experience of the new land, and the island was known for a time as “Humanity Island”.

The quarantine station remained until 1885, but in 1880 it became a temporary prison during the Parihaka incident. Parihaka in the North Island was one of New Zealand’s largest Māori villages in the late nineteenth century, becoming a refuge for those dispossessed of their land from around the country. The leaders of the settlement were two prophets, Te Whiti o Rongomai and Tohu Kākahi, whose governing principles were those of passive resistance, not allowing arms, and

opposing the violence that lay at the heart of the land wars between Pakeha and Māori.<sup>27,28</sup>

Many of those involved in the acts of non-violence were taken from their home and imprisoned elsewhere, including the Ripapa Island quarantine barracks. The Parihaka story remains a significant part of New Zealand culture expressed in music, literature, and art.<sup>29</sup> Photographer, Laurence Aberhart, was commissioned to make a work for the exhibition *Parihaka: The Art of Passive Resistance*, creating the suite of images *The Prisoner's Dream* (1999-2000). Four photographs were shot from inside the jail, where the slit windows looked out to the bare hillsides of Lyttelton harbour, evoking at once a sense of claustrophobia and melancholy liminality, a feeling of being stranded in time and space. These images were contrasted within the suite by a photograph depicting the sublimity of Mount Taranaki, the volcano which is the dominant landscape element of the Parihaka area. This image was made using a long exposure, to create an oneiric feeling, enhancing the otherness of the two sites, of the home landscape and the island exile (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Laurence Aberhart. Details from *The Prisoners' Dream*. 2000. Permission granted.



The construction of Fort Jervis followed the quarantine and prison era, and responded to the seeming imminence of war between Russia and Britain in 1885. As part of the coastal defence system the island fort was fitted out with four large disappearing guns,<sup>30</sup> two of which remain on-site today. The island was substantially modified to accommodate the fort, involving major excavation carried out in part by convicts from the Lyttelton Gaol who were shipped across each day, and at times lived on the island during construction. An escape and a murder occurred during the period the prisoners' workforce was based there.

Prison labour was used through until 1913, when the island again became a temporary prison, this time for the "Ripapa Island Martyrs", defaulters from compulsory military training. During World War I, it reverted to a military installation, and served as a prison to house Lieutenant Commander Count Graf Felix von Luckner of the Imperial German Army. His vessel, the *Seeadler*, was wrecked in the Society Islands in 1917, and he was captured and imprisoned on Motuihe Island near Auckland. After his escape from there he subsequently surrendered on the Kermadec Islands, and was taken to Ripapa, where the fortification of the building was increased in order to contain him.

The island regained its military function in World War II, and was subsequently made a historic reserve under the Scenery Preservation Act 1903. Over the decades

that followed Ripapa was a site of curiosity, and featured in tours of the harbour, which have been suspended owing to damage sustained in the devastating Canterbury earthquakes of 4 September 2010, and 22 February and 13 June 2011. As with other sites with dark pasts, there remains a tension between access for tourists and the ways in which heritage is constructed.

The cultural complexity of islands like Ripapa means to some extent they will always elude the efforts to commodify them as tourist sites. As much as it has entered the public domain, Ripapa remains a place of otherness, holding its store of memories. Beyond the remnants of the physical form of the pā and the military installations are the metaphysical traces, the memories which reside there, most notably in the urupā, the Māori cemeteries. For Māori the island is tāpu, or sacred, following the belief that rather than passing into history, the dead remain ever-present. This threshold condition, a resting at the edge between life and death, resonates with the sense of islands as other-worldly places, hovering at the periphery of vision.

### Conclusion: marginality, liminality, and terrain vague

All three islands persist as liminal zones very close to major settlement areas. Rather than remote oceanic locations, these islands hover near the land, Ripapa even having been connected to the mainland via a footbridge for many years. The islands are loaded with symbolic cargoes, at once heavy with the burdens of society, yet also invisible. Despite Hart Island's proximity to one of the world's biggest cities, and home to that country's largest cemetery, it is in effect written out of the everyday consciousness. Cockatoo Island, although within Sydney's populous harbour, also represented a remote location for undesirables, so that in many ways it might as well have been in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

Their condition as an edge zone, a threshold state, casts islands as the ultimate *terrain vague*. Found at the city edges, or on left-over and abandoned sites, they are spatially and socially marginalised landscapes. As Hunt lamented of Hart Island, the current approach to burial "is the opposite of setting aside bodies in a special place. This is a wasteland".<sup>31</sup> The imprecision of *terrain vague* is both spatial and temporal, often existing at points of transition, where places which were previously assigned to a particular category of occupation (residential or industrial) have, with abandonment, drifted into a state of vagueness. These spaces become stranded in a different time, outside of the city's normal activities. The Zone of Tarkovsky's *Stalker* expresses the spirit of the *terrain vague*, a mysteriously imbricated space which seems to inhabit a different timeframe, an image evoked by Richard Weller in his vision for Cockatoo Island.

Each of these three islands raises questions about the place of melancholy in our contemporary landscapes, and how we deal with memories which are associated with the shadowier side of history. Hart Island continues to fly under the radar as a kind of denial, eluding detection, resisting its place on the map of

New York. The work of artist, Melinda Hunt, and others involved in gaining access for family members seeks to pull the island closer to the mainland, but even so it is becoming much more isolated rather than less.<sup>32</sup> Cockatoo Island, however, is on a different trajectory. The darkness of the island's past is shuffled off, as it becomes gentrified as a new destination in Sydney Harbour. Finally, Ripapa Island contains its memories through its designation as a reserve. Through carefully limiting access, and petrifying the island in its current state, the Department of Conservation has arrested change.

Memory and melancholy are entwined in the islands, but their place within the urban psyche is troubled. Freud's metaphor of memory as a city provides a fitting conclusion to this article, evoking the idea of the mind as a container of memories in much the same way that a city gathers up its sedimented history as ruins from many eras so that the traces of the past all co-exist contemporaneously. While Freud realised that in both the mind and the city *everything* could not be retained, his analogy, his "fantastic supposition", remains a vivid expression of the accumulation of memory in place.<sup>33</sup> Urban islands like Hart, Cockatoo, and Ripapa, are part of this mnemonic metaphor, but they are the dark zones, the memories which trouble the collective psyche.

Decisions that are made about heritage conservation, landscape narratives, and the ways in which we bury the dead, all shape the terrain of memory within culture. There is a treacherous terrain to be negotiated in the area of heritage landscapes, especially for sites with dark pasts which are vulnerable to voyeurism and commodification. To allow them their darkness, without transgressing into a pernicious and unethical response to memory and landscape, is to recognise the place of melancholy within daily life. This is a necessary point of balance, a place for Saturn, a place of twilight amidst the glare of the exhausting hunt for happiness.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>John R. Gillis, "Island Sojourns," *Geographical Review* 97(2), (2007): 274.

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, R. Sharpley, *The Darker Side of Tourism: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism* (Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2009); Carolyn Strange and Michael Kempa, "Shades of Dark Tourism: Alcatraz and Robben Islands," *Annals of Tourism Research* 30(2), (2003): 386-405; Carolyn Strange, "Symbiotic Commemoration: The Stories of Kaluapapa," *History & Memory* 16(1), (2004): 86-117; Carolyn Strange, "Holding the Rock: The Indianization of Alcatraz Island, 1969-1999," *The Public Historian* 23(1), (2001): 55-74; J. Wilson, *Prison: Cultural Memory and Dark Tourism* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008).

<sup>3</sup>Sigmund Freud, "On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia," trans. Shaun Whiteside, *Mourning and Melancholia* essay first published 1917 (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 209.

<sup>4</sup>Rico Franses, “Monuments and Melancholia,” *JPCS: Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society* 6(1), (2001): 97-104.

<sup>5</sup>Melinda Hunt, “The Nature of Hart Island,” in *Hart Island*, eds. Melinda Hunt and Joel Sternfield (Zurich: Scalo, 1998), 26.

<sup>6</sup>Hunt described her journeys with the inmates as “like ... crossing the river Styx,” in Melinda Hunt, “The Nature of Hart Island,” in *Hart Island*, eds. Melinda Hunt and Joel Sternfield (Zurich: Scalo, 1998), 25.

<sup>7</sup>‘Potter’s fields’ are cemeteries for the unknown or destitute. The origin of the term is as an area of land for the burial of strangers, as in Matthew 27: 7: “And they took counsel, and brought with them the potter’s field, to bury strangers in.” A potter’s field would have been a place to dig for clay, with the terrain of ditches and excavations providing places for burials.

<sup>8</sup>Melinda Hunt, “The Nature of Hart Island,” in *Hart Island*, eds. Melinda Hunt and Joel Sternfield (Zurich: Scalo, 1998), 20.

<sup>9</sup>Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 2008).

<sup>10</sup>Melinda Hunt, “The Nature of Hart Island,” in *Hart Island*, eds. Melinda Hunt and Joel Sternfield (Zurich: Scalo, 1998), 21.

<sup>11</sup>Melinda Hunt, “The Nature of Hart Island,” in *Hart Island*, eds. Melinda Hunt and Joel Sternfield (Zurich: Scalo, 1998), 22.

<sup>12</sup>Melinda Hunt, “The Nature of Hart Island,” in *Hart Island*, eds. Melinda Hunt and Joel Sternfield (Zurich: Scalo, 1998), 20.

<sup>13</sup>“James E. Young, “Interview during his visit to Falstad, Norway in September 2010,” accessed June 25, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66O4fd6hob0>

<sup>14</sup>James Semple Kerr, *Cockatoo Island: Penal and Institutional Remains* (Sydney: The National Trust of Australia, 1984), 17.

<sup>15</sup>James Semple Kerr, *Cockatoo Island: Penal and Institutional Remains* (Sydney: The National Trust of Australia, 1984), 50.

<sup>16</sup>I.S.V. Mein cited in James Semple Kerr, *Cockatoo Island: Penal and Institutional Remains* (Sydney: The National Trust of Australia, 1984), 11.

<sup>17</sup>James Semple Kerr, *Cockatoo Island: Penal and Institutional Remains* (Sydney: The National Trust of Australia, 1984), 11.

<sup>18</sup>Jason McNamee’s commended entry (see Rod Simpson, “Edge Conditions,” *Architecture Australia*, Jan/Feb (1996), accessed February 12, 2010, <https://www.architecturemedia.com/resources/aa/1996/01/edge.htm>).

<sup>19</sup>Ross Ramus and students from University of New South Wales, first prize (see Rod Simpson, “Edge Conditions,” *Architecture Australia*, Jan/Feb (1996), accessed February 12, 2010, <https://www.architecturemedia.com/resources/aa/1996/01/edge.htm>).

<sup>20</sup>Richard Weller’s commended scheme (see Rod Simpson, “Edge Conditions,” *Architecture Australia*, Jan/Feb (1996), accessed February 12, 2010, <https://www.architecturemedia.com/resources/aa/1996/01/edge.htm>).

<sup>21</sup>Richard Weller, “Animale Ignoble” in *Room 4.1.3: Innovations in Landscape Architecture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 120.

- <sup>22</sup>Richard Weller, “Animale Ignoble” in *Room 4.1.3: Innovations in Landscape Architecture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 120.
- <sup>23</sup>“About Cockatoo Island,” accessed March 12, 2010, <http://www.cockatooisland.gov.au/about/index.html>.
- <sup>24</sup>Carolyn Strange and Michael Kempa, “Shades of Dark Tourism: Alcatraz and Robben Islands,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 30(2), (2003): 402.
- <sup>25</sup>A pā is a fortified settlement built by Māori. Pā often took advantage of topographical opportunities for defensive positions such as cliff tops (for example, Nga Niho, Kaikoura) and peninsulas (such as Onawe, near Akaroa).
- <sup>26</sup>Michael Kelly, *Ripapa Island, Lyttelton Harbour: Concept Plan* (Christchurch: Department of Conservation, 1996), 8.
- <sup>27</sup>Pakeha are European New Zealanders.
- <sup>28</sup>Forms of passive resistance included barricading roads, building fences across the land, removing survey pegs, and “escorting” those involved in gaining possession of the land (such as road workers and surveyors) out of the area.
- <sup>29</sup>See, for example, Dick Scott, *Ask That Mountain: The Story of Parihaka* (Auckland, NZ: Heinemann/Southern Cross, 1975); the music album *Parihaka: The Art of Passive Resistance* (Wellington, NZ: Morrison Music Trust, 2000); and the art catalogue, “Te Miringa Hohaia,” eds. Gregory O’Brien and Lara Strongman, *Parihaka: The Art of Passive Resistance* (Wellington, NZ: Victoria University Press, 2001).
- <sup>30</sup>Disappearing guns were the weapon of choice during the time of the “Russian scare”. After firing, the recoil would push the gun underground, where it could be reloaded under cover. The Fort Jervis installation is one of only five remaining in the world.
- <sup>31</sup>Melinda Hunt, Personal communication, email to Jacky Bowring, July 2011.
- <sup>32</sup>Melinda Hunt, Personal communication, email to Jacky Bowring, July 2011.
- <sup>33</sup>Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989, originally published as *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* in 1930).

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### Biographical note

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