

Three Kinds of Clay, Three Kinds of Antiquity?

The 2018 Tom Stannage Memorial Lecture by Ann McGrath AM, the Kathleen Fitzpatrick ARC Laureate Fellow and Distinguished Professor, School of History, Australian National University.



‘[Sydney Cove medallion], 1789 (original issue) Josiah Wedgwood’ #2, Call No P67, State Library of New South Wales

1901, 1790, 1968. A federation re-enactment of Captain Cook’s Landing at Botany Bay, the arrival of the second convict fleet, the surfacing of Mungo Lady. Each dated event takes place on a continent of multiple Aboriginal nations on which the earth itself is associated with narratives of antiquity. Human societies create their own mythos - trans-temporal scenarios that communicate between past and present, and across time and place.

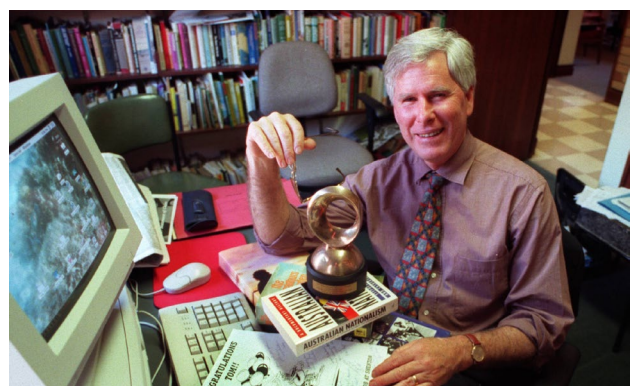
The Gweagal and Darug people’s uses of white clay attracted the attention of James Cook, Joseph Banks and Governor Phillip. In 1788, Phillip sent samples of Sydney clay to Banks, who sent them on to Josiah Wedgwood, who then manufactured a series of medallions depicting Hope, a Virtue from the Greek Pandora legend. To celebrate this, Erasmus Darwin published a poem that foretold a grandiose future for Sydney. Yet, the colony’s first colonial souvenirs and publications were transported alongside the convict cargo known as the death fleet.

In this memorial lecture, Professor McGrath will focus upon the story of how ‘Terra Australis’ or ‘Sydneia’ - Linnaean classifications for Sydney’s ‘primitive earth’ - became an agent in the importation of Anglo-Hellenic antiquity. What might such clay stories, replete with alluring female figures, reveal about plans to transform a strange earth? How could a fantastically storied antiquity, with its super-corporeal characters, co-exist with the Enlightenment’s fascination with science? Do Indigenous songlines provide clues? And how might such questions relate to the more recent articulations of deep human pasts associated with ancient places like Lake Mungo and the many sites currently being researched in Western Australia?

Ann McGrath AM is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Social Sciences and of the Academy of Humanities, and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate at Linnaeus University, Sweden. Her first book, *Born in the Cattle: Aborigines in Cattle Country* (1987) won the W.K. Hancock Prize. Recent works include *Illicit Love: Interracial Sex and Marriage in the United States and Australia* (U Nebraska 2015) which was awarded the NSW Premiers History Prize, General Category 2016; *Long History, Deep Time* (with Mary Anne Jebb, ed., ANU Press 2015). She has also contributed as an expert witness in land claims, in the Gunner and Cubillo case and in the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Her films include *A Frontier Conversation* (2006) and *Message from Mungo* (2014). Additionally, she has developed a digital history project on *Deepening Histories of Place*. Her current Laureate program is entitled ‘Rediscovering the Deep Human Past: Global Networks, Future Opportunities.’

Event Details

When: Wednesday, 8 August 2018 | 6pm - 7pm
Where: Fox Lecture Theatre, UWA Arts Building
Cost: Free
RSVP: online via www.ias.uwa.edu.au/lectures/annmcgrath



Professor Tom Stannage with his inaugural Prime Minister’s University Teacher of the Year Award in 2002.

This memorial lecture commemorates the exceptional contribution made by **Professor Tom Stannage** (1944-2012) to the Western Australian community. Professor Stannage was a prominent Australian historian who worked hard to foster a wider understanding of Western Australian history and heritage. He is remembered as an inspiring teacher and a passionate advocate for the study of history.