

Leichhardt's bust, or how the explorer was rediscovered during the Cold War

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In 1988, the long-lost Ludwig Leichhardt returned to Sydney, not once but three times over, and via an odd Cold War route: his doppelgänger great-great-grand nephew, also called Ludwig, travelled from East Germany to participate in a conference; the 'International Friendship League' presented a plaque to the City of Leichhardt; and a bust, for which Ludwig Jr had sat as model, was presented to Australia as a Bicentennial gift. If the bust is an uncanny, inherently unsettling art form, this one challenges us to probe the meanings invested in 'Leichhardt' in Cold War Germany and in Australia. He emerges from the gift exchange as an unstable, transnational figure: one who was never fully owned or disowned, who was subject to competing German national claims, who was ousted from narratives of the Australian nation, but who made a return on cue for the Bicentennial. But this bust figures presence and absence in ways that also ask us to think about what Leichhardt memorialization elided. In particular, its giving both disavowed *and* emphasized Indigenous experience of colonization at a time when settler Australia anxiously sought to celebrate its Bicentennial and include Indigenous people in doing so.

Introduction

^[Q2] Darrell Lewis has recently asked us in a history of the various searches for the missing explorer, 'where is Dr Leichhardt?' Lewis proposes that we look in a geographical space, central Australia (2013). However, as Thomas (2013) in his review of Lewis's book points out, we might do well to look elsewhere too, into the ways that Leichhardt has been and continues to be remembered so as to serve present-day purposes, as a myth made and remade in the mind, individual and collective. Rather than reaching here to the more familiar – Patrick White and what Priessnitz (1991) has called the 'Vossification' of Leichhardt, or to the reception of Leichhardt in Australian literature, more generally (Martin 2013) – we can turn our attention to two other locations: Canberra and Trebatsch, in regional eastern Germany – to Parliament House and a tiny Ludwig Leichhardt Museum, respectively. Those two locations would seem to have nothing in common other than that they house counterpart copies of an innocuous-seeming bust of Leichhardt, by the German sculptor, Lutz Hähnel (see Figures 1 and 2). I will use this strange doubling of Leichhardt to offer an illustration of the point that Katrina Schlunke recently made in an essay that she and I co-wrote, namely that Leichhardt is far from a settled historical figure, but rather the subject of 'an order of indeterminacy that [has] rendered his life and work available to modes of imaginative interpretation, political score settling and personalised interventions that may never end' (Hurley and Schlunke 2013, 537).

The bust is a comparatively under-researched art form (Brunner 2005, 9). This is partly because it is so ideologically freighted. Busts are often employed in inherently political situations, either as a way of enforcing the commemoration of a leader within a dispersed

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Figure 1. Lutz Hähnel's Leichhardt bust, *in situ* in Trebatsch, Germany. Picture: Uta von Lonski, reproduced with permission.

empire, or as a symbolic gift from one state to another. In the case of Hähnel's bust, its ideological freight is compounded by the fact that it was the gift of a communist state that no longer exists and, from an Australian perspective, is not greatly mourned. It might not be a bust of Stalin, but it is inscribed with the name of the last East German communist party secretary, Erich Honecker, and it cannot dissociate itself from the German Democratic Republic (GDR), or from the Cold War context of its giving. Aesthetically, that evokes the notion of 'party-minded' socialist realism, according to which Hähnel's bust would not so much be a naturalist portrayal of a real person, but rather a depiction of Leichhardt's 'type', who could then be read within a socialist master narrative (Groys [1992] 2012, 438, see also Clark [2001] 2012). The fact that Leichhardt Sr was not the actual model for the bust would therefore be beside the point from the perspective of socialist realism; it would, in fact, be entirely appropriate. In Australia, Hähnel's bust has,



Figure 2. Hähnel's model of the bust, displayed at an exhibition on Leichhardt curated by Heike Hartmann at Schloss Branitz, Cottbus, between 4 May and 31 October 2013. Picture: Heike Hartmann, reproduced with permission.

99 until recently, remained largely unseen, the victim of space concerns in the Parliamentary
100 gifts display area and the demise of the GDR as a state needing to be diplomatically
101 accommodated.¹ Its double in sleepy Trebatsch lives a secluded but altogether more public
102 life. It is unclear whether it still evokes the socialist realist codes within communist-era
103 socialized viewers.

104 The bust is also an art form associated with the idea of staging personality, and with the
105 outdated idea of ‘monumental history’ that has decreased in popularity in this country
106 since the second half of the twentieth century (Davison 1988). It is not insignificant that
107 the Parliament House art collection contains only a small number of busts, and most of
108 these were acquired prior to mid-century (Jones, Haynes, and Barron 1993). Not so the
109 GDR, where there was already a nineteenth-century inheritance of reverence for ‘great
110 national heroes of spirit’, and where monumental busts of figures like Marx and Lenin
111 retained a key place in the country’s aesthetic regime.² Recall, for example, the seven-
112 metre-high bust of Marx erected in Chemnitz (then Karl-Marx-Stadt) in 1971 (see
113 Figure 3).³ But the bust is also connected with the notion of the ‘great hero’ and with ideas
114 of subject-hood that have become discredited in recent times. What is more, busts only
115 represent the ‘top half’, and in most cases the head. On an orthodox critical reading, this
116 truncates the individual, reducing him or her to a physiognomy or ‘character’ that
117 inherently devalues the body (Kohl 2005). However, this widespread tendency to
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Figure 3. Sculptor Lev Kerbel’s Karl Marx bust, Chemnitz. Photographer: Reinhard Höll, permission granted under creative commons.

148 disregard the bust also cuts short the uncanny potentialities residing in something which is,
149 after all, a type of severed head.

150 More recent scholarship suggests that there can be something simultaneously
151 fascinating and disconcerting about the bust. When it is mimetic, we can be fascinated by
152 the likeness, but then irritated by the truncation. Why cut there? What about the body?
153 This approach posits the contemplation of a bust as an act where the recipient can be
154 challenged into an active mode of engagement. (Whereas a two-dimensional portrait can
155 be regarded passively, this scholarship suggests a striking three-dimensional bust begets a
156 conversation [Kohl 2005, 11].) There is also the fact that busts were often modelled from
157 death masks – ‘undying faces’ – somehow uncannily rendering the dead living again
158 (Benkard 1927). Scholars have also argued that the ostensibly simple commemorative role
159 of the bust is quite uncanny: the object that is ‘there’ is concerned with remembering a
160 ‘great’ individual, but that individual is ‘not there’, nor is his or her body.

161 Ken Gelder and Jane M. Jacobs have demonstrated in *Uncanny Australia* that Freud’s
162 ([1919] 1999) concept of the ‘unfamiliar familiar’ can be usefully applied to
163 contemporary Australia, and especially to capture the ‘unsettling’ ‘soliciting’ that
164 Indigenous lore performs in the settler Australian context. By contemplating the ways the
165 Indigenous secret/sacred has figured within contemporary discourse, they focus not
166 solely on the feelings of fear that this ‘unfamiliar familiar’ can and has evoked, but rather
167 advance the idea that the disconcerting-ness of the uncanny can be productive in a
168 political sense. Their overall aim is to ‘think through the uncanny implications of being
169 in place and “out of place” at precisely the same time’. (Gelder and Jacobs 1998, 139)
170 Some of these ideas can also be expanded to encompass other cultural presences/
171 absences, like the one represented by Leichhardt, a figure who, as Schlunke observes,
172 contributed to both the exploration and settlement of Australia, and who was very much
173 invested in ‘established race relations and land politics’, but was also long regarded as
174 ‘strange’ and somehow ill ‘fits’ dominant Australian narratives of self, because he keys
175 ‘an alternative history of incipient cultural diversity, intellectual dreaming, and real
176 science’ (Hurley and Schlunke 2013, 537–538).

177 Even if Hähnel’s Leichhardt bust might not give rise to feelings of fear, it is in two
178 senses a ‘double’, another classic hallmark of the uncanny. There is a copy in Trebatsch
179 and one in Canberra. The object also represents Leichhardt Sr through his physical double,
180 Leichhardt Jr, a fact that ‘strikes’ us as viewers when we see images of both men together,
181 as in two newspaper articles that were published in East Germany and Australia in 1988.
182 At that time, journalists referred to the ‘frappierender Ähnlichkeit’ (astonishing similarity)
183 and ‘striking resemblance’ between Ludwig Sr and Ludwig Jr (Corleis 1988; Warren
184 1988). But the representation through the double also reminds us that, like many other
185 visual representations of Leichhardt Sr, the closer one looks, the further one gets from any
186 ‘authentic’ representation.⁴ Leichhardt Sr’s physical body disappeared without a trace in
187 1848. Ever since, it has been both nowhere but simultaneously everywhere, as the
188 countless searchers and finders of would-be Leichhardt relics attest (cf. Lewis 2013).
189 Leichhardt’s apparition appears to move transnationally too. In 1988, for example, *The*
190 *Australian*’s journalist suggested that Leichhardt had been ‘lost [in Australia] and found
191 [in East Germany]’ (Warren 1988). That is not all that is uncanny about Leichhardt. In the
192 East German reading, Leichhardt uneasily evokes the Indigenous experience of the
193 colonial era; here too, he can potentially act as a type of transnational – but obviously
194 ‘white’ – adjunct to Gelder and Jacob’s solicitous, *Uncanny Australia*. Leichhardt’s
195 severed head can cast forth other unsettling matters too: the collection of Indigenous heads
196 during the colonial era, Voss’s decapitation by Indigenous people.

Leichhardt's instability

The 1988 bust was not a shot out of the blue. It was just the latest East German attempt to functionalize commemoration of this historical figure for present-day ends, to imagine him as part of a useful socialist 'national heritage'. This was not something that the East Germans invented either. Leichhardt had been deployed in a similar yet different way during the National Socialist era too. His surname was used during the 'Aryanization' of place names in his native region of Lusatia. Leichhardt's home village Trebatsch (a Sorbian and hence 'Slavic' name) was duly renamed 'Leichhardt' in December 1937 (Donner 1998, 38; Marx 2003, 25ff.). Leichhardt became a key local figure in the Nazification of the Lusatian 'Heimat', remembered in a 'Leichhardt-Gedenkzimmer' (Leichhardt memorial room) designed by Nazi party member Hermann Kempcke for the Beeskow Heimatmuseum (Marx 2003, 68). His deeds in Australia were also nationally commemorated, for example in Pietzner-Clausen's (1940) book, *Der Heimaterde entrissen. Lebensschicksale deutscher Männer*.

The Cold War era began inauspiciously for the commemoration of Leichhardt, both in Australia and in Germany. In Australia, Chisholm's (1941) biography *Strange New World* had advanced a negative image of the explorer that set him apart from a notion of Australian identity that revolved around 'common sense, utility and practical nous'. On this view, 'Leichhardt had offended egregiously against the ethos of mateship and hard-bitten, practical knowledge' (Nicholls 2000, 28–29). He was rendered strange and 'out of place', a quality he has perhaps never entirely shed. Chisholm's work was in key with both a critique of Leichhardt dating back to Mann, Russell and Favenc, and a denigration of Germans that arose from German colonial expansion into Australia's Pacific neighbourhood, and two World Wars (Fischer 2009, 139–140; Schlunke 2014). Leichhardt memorialization in Cold War Germany, on the other hand, was inflected by the earlier 'Nazification' of his memory, and by the fact that his home region of Lusatia was now in the Soviet Zone, what became East Germany in 1949. Geographically, at least, he became 'East German property', but he was tainted property. As Donner points out 'if the National Socialists had commemorated the explorer of Australia then how could one commemorate him in the "antifascist" German Democratic Republic?' (1998, 39).⁵ This was especially the case given that the Slavic Sorbs, whom 'Leichhardt' had been used to suppress, became a 'protected national minority' in the GDR, functioning as a symbolic link with the Soviet Union (Granata 2009, 62). Nevertheless, East German socialists began during the 1950s to construct an image of Leichhardt that could be domestically useful to their national project.⁶ The October 1963 sesquicentennial of Leichhardt's birth catalysed such efforts, but ultimately demonstrated how 'unstable' Leichhardt could be in the face of attempts to push him into a national master narrative. A coalition of local socialists, Leichhardt family members, and antiquarian Heimat enthusiasts – the 'Ludwig-Leichhardt-Komitee für Cottbus und Frankfurt/Oder' – organized a raft of events including a renaming of a street in Cottbus, lectures and gatherings, and published various articles. Significantly, they interpreted Leichhardt as a man of humble origins, who dedicated himself to the 'lofty development of mankind', who sacrificed his life for science and who could still be a role model for young East Germans (Heinz Haufe, quoted in Marx 2003, 39).⁷ However, this 'socialist' image of Leichhardt encountered resistance. The President of the East German Geographic Society thought that a 'thorough appraisal of Leichhardt's personality' was still needed (Johannes Gellert, quoted in Marx 2003, 40).⁸ Leichhardt's character even became a hot topic when the Komitee tried to persuade the Beeskow local council to rename the school in Trebatsch after him. The council flatly

246 declined, effectively considering that Leichhardt was not enough of a ‘socialist’ for a
247 pedagogic institution to be named after him. He had apparently not said enough by way of
248 political critique, *nor enough in favour of Indigenous people* (Marx 2003, 46–48).⁹ This
249 rejection restricted the free commemoration of Leichhardt at the time, and contributed to
250 the journalist Heinz Haufe deciding to write a full biography that might answer some of
251 Leichhardt’s hard-line socialist critics.¹⁰

252 If Leichhardt was an ‘unstable’ signifier within the domestic socialist frame, then he
253 also began to figure in transnational ways in the post-war era. Twenty-first-century
254 scholarship has stressed the transnational circulations that Leichhardt inaugurated at
255 earlier times, and post-war activities should be seen within that tradition (Nicholls 2012,
256 see also Schlunke 2014). The post-war iteration involved a three-cornered constellation
257 between East Germany, West Germany and Australia. At this time, the ‘Hallstein
258 Doctrine’ prevented formal recognition of the ‘other’ Germany by the West German state,
259 and by other western countries, including Australia (Monteath 2008). This was
260 understandably a sore point for the GDR. In this context, Leichhardt was essentially a site
261 at which the East German state might seek some *de facto* legitimation, or at least raise
262 itself in the estimation of the non-socialist world. However, in the process, Leichhardt
263 began to exceed the polarized Cold War setting. The 1963 sesquicentennial and its after-
264 effects catalysed some transnational circulation within Leichhardt commemoration, and
265 Leichhardt beckoned as a harbinger of integration, despite the Cold War garb he wore.

266 How did this work? In the lead up to the sesquicentennial, the communist State and
267 individual East German Leichhardt enthusiasts on the Komitee sought out ‘Leichhardt
268 Friends’ in West Germany and Australia. In Germany, the dispersed Leichhardt family –
269 divided by the Iron Curtain – represented one axis of connection. Some of the family lived
270 in what had become West Germany, and they were invited to join in the celebrations in
271 Cottbus and Trebatsch. The State was interested in their invitation for two reasons. First,
272 the western family’s involvement would offer an opportunity to canvas whole-of-
273 Germany research cooperation about Leichhardt that would reflect well on the GDR.
274 Second, it would yield the chance to ‘discuss’ with West Germans the recent East German
275 elections (Heinz Haufe, quoted in Marx 2003, 42). Favourable attention could also be
276 garnered via an Australian detour. The Komitee won over West German family members
277 to sign a joint communiqué greeting ‘the numerous Australian students of Leichhardt’.
278 This communiqué, which was published in *The Australian Geographer*, made a show of
279 thanking ‘our friends on the 5th continent’ for their interest in East German activities, and
280 expressed ‘profound pleasure’ at Australian–German ‘common concern’ for Leichhardt,
281 as well as an earnest ‘hope that the future will bring you into closer touch with us’
282 (Leichhardt et al. 1963). The letter was pan-German but sent as an address of greeting from
283 East Germany, and it spoke a desire on the part of the East German state for proper
284 international recognition.¹¹ But the letter also voiced the hopes of individual Leichhardt
285 enthusiasts about thickening transborder ties in a common area of interest. The Komitee
286 had other more underground reasons for inviting West German guests too; the guests’
287 status as westerners could be used to leverage more funding from the State for the
288 proposed celebrations, since they would make the celebrations into a showcase event
289 (Grosse-Wolf, quoted in Marx 2003, 44). Last but not least, inviting them would also offer
290 a rare opportunity for the members of the Leichhardt family, sundered as they were by the
291 Iron Curtain, to meet up in ‘Leichhardt Land’. In other words, individual East Germans
292 were able to use the State’s anxieties about its appearance in the non-socialist West –
293 concerns caused by the official non-recognition of the East German state outside the Soviet
294 bloc and exacerbated by the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 – to advance their

own private interests. Haufe did something similar in order to lobby the State to finally publish his biography of Leichhardt.¹²

What foreign affairs dividends did the sesquicentennial activities yield? One of the West German Leichhardt family members was reported as congratulating the East German State on its sesquicentennial efforts, which indicated that the investment might have paid off: ‘my expectations were thoroughly exceeded [...] I will always be happy to come to visit you all in the GDR’ (Lieselotte Leichhardt, quoted in Marx 2003, 54).¹³ In Australia, however, the result was unclear. This was because of the parallel claims on Leichhardt by the two German states. Defeat and the Cold War had created an anomalous situation where two German states staked out separate versions of a national heritage that could serve their own purposes. The East Germans did not have sole rights to the nineteenth-century explorer, who might have been born in and received much of his training in what became East Germany, but who also attended University in Göttingen, which was in West Germany.¹⁴ Moreover, he was, as his harder-line socialist critics recognized, not a proto-socialist as such. The West German state was therefore justified in coming in on the act during the 1963 sesquicentennial, making the most of the fact that Leichhardt was well known in Australia and that it, rather than East Germany, had an embassy here, as well as a growing cultural outreach programme under the auspices of the Goethe Society (now called the Goethe Institut). Leichhardt duly became a little-known front in what David Caute calls the ‘cultural Cold War’ (Caute 2003). The West German embassy in Canberra hosted an exhibition of material Leichhardtiana from the Australian National Library, as well as a Goethe Society function, at which the Australian scholar Marcel Arousseau gave an address on Leichhardt (Arousseau 1964). This event must have had more purchase on Australian Leichhardt enthusiasts, relatively few in number though they were during the 1960s, than a letter of greeting and communique from the East, or one of Haufe’s English-language articles on Leichhardt, published in the internationally distributed *DDR Revue*.¹⁵ These competing German national claims on Leichhardt would come to a head during the 1988 celebrations, further undermining the GDR’s cultural dirigisme and any neat fit between Leichhardt and nation.

Amongst the politicking, there was some room for mutually beneficial transnational contacts between ‘Leichhardt Friends’ in East Germany and in Australia. For example, the East German Ludwig Leichhardt Jr acted as a mediator in the early 1960s between the Leichhardt family and the Public Library of South Australia regarding the publication of a facsimile of Leichhardt’s (1845) *Journal of an Overland expedition in Australia*. He also assisted Arousseau in the latter’s three edited volumes of Leichhardt’s letters.¹⁶ In the 1970s, Arousseau would review Haufe’s Leichhardt biography in *The Australian Geographer*. Yet, his review also indicates the limits to the transnational affinities that East German and Australian Leichhardt enthusiasts might have felt during this era. On the one hand, Arousseau thought that Haufe’s biography might do some good by popularizing the explorer in his homeland; however, he was highly critical of what he labelled the ‘Marxist’ interpretation of events, an interpretation that the state-owned *Verlag der Nation* had insisted that Haufe stress for domestic reasons (Arousseau 1974, 471).¹⁷ In an era when Arousseau’s own volumes of Leichhardt’s letters were seeking to disentangle the ‘stranger’ from his ideological denigration within Australia, he was no doubt especially sensitive to any other type of ideologization (Arousseau 1968). Crucially, Arousseau was also extremely critical of what he calls the ‘unjust’ way the biography portrayed settler Australia’s policy of ‘Ausrottung’ (extermination) towards Indigenous people (1974, 472). Leichhardt’s putatively favourable attitude towards Indigenous people was something that the state publisher wanted stressed for domestic

344 reasons, since it could make him more of a ‘socialist’. The biography’s cover prominently
 345 depicts an Indigenous man sympathetically gazing at the East German reader, also
 346 suggesting the connection. This dispute about Leichhardt and about the treatment of
 347 Indigenous people during the colonial era underlines Rothberg’s point that ‘[a]lthough it is
 348 difficult to grasp today [...] communism provided one of the discursive spheres [...] in
 349 which the articulation of genocide and colonialism could first be attempted – and this long
 350 before the intellectual vogue for [...] postcolonial studies’ (2009, 118). In Australia, the
 351 question would only be significantly aired in the following decades as historians began to
 352 concern themselves with what W.E.H. Stanner referred to in his (1968) Boyer lecture as
 353 the ‘great Australian silence’. The German-Australian constellation became a sensitive
 354 one in this context. The Aboriginal activist Foley, who was involved in transnational
 355 networks between Australia and (West) Germany in the late 1970s and 1980s, has
 356 suggested that the Australian government was especially anxious that the comparison not
 357 be drawn between the Holocaust and treatment of Indigenous peoples, and was therefore
 358 very sensitive to the way that Indigenous issues were canvassed in Germany (2012). This
 359 aspect was to feature in a strikingly ‘absent present’ way during East German/Australian
 360 Leichhardt memorialization in 1988.

361 362 363 **1988: The communist ‘celebration of a nation’**

364 In the 25 years between the 1963 sesquicentennial and Leichhardt’s 175th birthday during
 365 Australia’s Bicentennial year much had changed in Australian–East German relations, as
 366 well as in the recuperation of Leichhardt in both Germany and Australia. In Australia,
 367 Arousseau’s and Elsie M. Webster’s publications went some way to re-establishing
 368 Leichhardt’s tarnished reputation (Arousseau 1968; Webster 1980). The policy of
 369 multiculturalism and the approaching Bicentennial of Australia in 1988 quickened interest
 370 in Australia’s non-English settler past (Hutchinson 1992). This provided impetus for the
 371 recovery of figures like Leichhardt, who now represented ‘a non-British migrant identity
 372 that could be embraced by an increasingly multicultural nation’ (Nicholls 2012, 161). It is
 373 symbolic that in Brisbane a plaque commemorating Leichhardt which had been
 374 languishing in storage since the early 1970s – effectively as unclaimed scrap metal – was
 375 now reinstated on a prominent new building (*Courier Mail* 1988). Leichhardt was also
 376 treated to a new, recuperative biography by Roderick (1988). Concurrent with the
 377 establishment of diplomatic ties with West Germany in late 1972, the GDR had sought
 378 formal relations with other parts of the non-socialist world, including Australia, where an
 379 embassy was opened in 1973 (Monteath 2008). This period coincided with the belated
 380 publication of Haufe’s Leichhardt biography, which not only promoted interest in the
 381 explorer in East Germany, but also now began to be deployed in the international
 382 diplomatic setting.¹⁸ 1988 saw concerted new efforts to use Leichhardt as what Joachim
 383 Elm, the East German ambassador in Australia, called an ‘Integrationspersönlichkeit’
 384 (integrating character) (Elm, quoted in Laurenz 2004a). Here, Elm echoed in a curious
 385 way remarks made in February 1933 by Australia’s then Resident Minister in London and
 386 one of Australia’s voices for appeasement of Germany, Stanley Bruce, when Bruce met
 387 the German Reichspräsident, Paul von Hindenburg. At that time, Bruce had also called up
 388 Leichhardt as a figure of integration between Australia and Germany (Bruce, quoted in
 389 Wagner 1936).

390 Four years prior to the 1988 ‘double anniversary’, the East German communist party
 391 began to ponder how it could make ‘the Leichhardt legacy much more useful to the GDR’.
 392 The guiding motivation here was that the GDR was interested in ‘continuing to develop a

relationship of peaceful coexistence' with Australia.¹⁹ Although the GDR maintained close contacts with Australia's socialist parties, it was clear-eyed about their ability to achieve socialist revolution.²⁰ More pragmatically, it recognized that Australia's Labour party government was interested 'in the development of relations especially in trade and commerce'.²¹ This might be valuable at a time when the East German State was in a parlous economic condition, and very much interested in sources of hard currency from the non-socialist world. Such was the economic background to the gift of the bust in 1988, which alone cost 15,000 East German Marks, not counting freight costs via Warsaw and Belgrade to Canberra, or the cost of the other related Leichhardt commemoration activities that year. There was also a public relations benefit, if only the State was well-enough prepared. The party knew that the 'double anniversary' would awaken Australian interest in Leichhardt and that Australia would likely endeavour to invite East German Leichhardt family members and antiquarian enthusiasts to participate in commemorative activities. The Party recognized that it needed not only to be able to accommodate such requests, but that it should also approach the anniversary proactively to seek kudos in the non-Socialist world, thereby further assuaging ongoing anxieties. Whatever it might have said publicly, the GDR did not approach 'Leichhardt' here as a historical figure, but rather as an opportunity 'to advertise in Australia the GDR's current achievements'. A preliminary prong in the attack was promoting the study and admiration of Leichhardt in the GDR via a newly constituted 'Leichhardt-Komitee' and a Leichhardt museum in Trebatsch. These activities would culminate in an international conference in October in nearby Beeskow concerning the exploration of Australia 'with particular reference to Ludwig Leichhardt and other German scientists'. A Leichhardt gift – the State was already contemplating giving a sculpture to the Sydney municipality of Leichhardt – would be the second prong; it would be combined with 'an exhibition about the GDR and how Leichhardt's legacy is being cultivated in our Republic'. Tied up with this, however, was the tricky question of the Bicentennial; the State therefore began to prepare itself for the question of whether and how it should mark the 200th anniversary of the founding of the British colony, and the beginning of what Haufe's official biography had called the 'extermination' of Indigenous people.²²

The GDR was therefore by no means unprepared when, during a short Australian visit by Gerald Götting (Deputy President of the State Council) in late 1987, the Commonwealth government expressed the view that a 200th anniversary present from the GDR would 'be welcomed'. It was Götting who took the initiative and proposed a bust of Leichhardt, a suggestion that met with swift approval from the Australian side.²³ Despite political differences, East German participation via a Bicentennial gift was at some level a formal necessity; it would have been inconsistent to maintain diplomatic relations with East Germany and not to participate in the rite and economy of the political gift. Australia also had a material interest in soliciting the gift. As Monteath (2008) has shown, the Australian government had long been interested in expanding trade with the GDR, and this was a factor behind the official recognition of the GDR in 1972. The mutual desire to develop trade may not have ever have paid great dividends, but it did not prevent significant effort being put to that end, including during the 1980s. But an East German gift served other interests too. As Hutchinson has identified, the Australian government's motives in relation to the Bicentenary included a desire to make a grand statement in the international forum about its status as a nation; it vented the 'status anxieties' of a new nation (1992, 8). International participation in the Bicentenary was hence crucial. The Labour government was keen to stress the multiethnic character of the nation, as symbolized by the entry into Sydney Harbour of the Tall Ships of different countries,

442 representing the different ‘waves’ of migration in the country’s history. Soliciting a gift
 443 that highlighted German contributions to the nation’s history would also accent the
 444 ‘multiethnic’ message. The East German bust-gift, which took its place in the new
 445 Parliament House amongst articles given by 30 countries – but no other busts – would
 446 contribute to the Bicentennial ‘party’ and augment Australia’s international recognition,
 447 assuaging some of the ‘status anxieties’, in however a small way.²⁴ Yet, Germany was
 448 something of a risk in 1988, given the reality of transnational ‘multidirectional memory’
 449 (Michael Rothberg) that sought a parallel between the treatment of Indigenous people and
 450 the Holocaust. As Phillip Morrissey, coordinator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
 451 programmes for the Bicentenary Authority put it at the time: ‘There is an analogy people
 452 sometimes use that asking Aboriginal people to celebrate the Bicentenary is like asking a
 453 Jewish person to celebrate the Third Reich’ (Morrissey 1988, 26) This keyed in with a
 454 significant problem for the Bicentenary, prominent Indigenous opposition which stood to
 455 undermine the goal of international recognition. Here, Indigenous activists were prepared
 456 to and did use what Hutchinson calls ‘a new transnational politics’ to advance their cause
 457 in the Bicentennial year (1992, 22). Strikingly, East Germany would be one front for their
 458 agitation.

459 460 461 **No fixed address**

462 The East German State used the opportunity of the 1988 bust-gift to foster relations
 463 with Australia that might redound in quickening economic ties and an influx of hard
 464 currency, as well as to seek international kudos through proselytizing about the GDR’s
 465 contributions to Leichhardt scholarship. It also used the gift to make statements about
 466 its policies of peaceful coexistence and opposition to nuclear warheads.²⁵ The East
 467 German ambassador Joachim Elm’s report back to East Berlin was largely positive
 468 about the returns on the Leichhardt investment, and the State file about the bust closed
 469 with a positive note. However, there were two catches to the State’s strategy. First, as
 470 with the 1963 sesquicentennial, the East German State could not fully claim Leichhardt
 471 for itself; the West German State’s rival national claim niggled away at ambassador
 472 Elm. Second, the State had to negotiate the issue of Indigenous Australian sentiments
 473 in 1988.

474 The East German State was anxious that the Leichhardt anniversary be used to attract
 475 attention towards itself, rather than its larger West German neighbour. However, control of
 476 the ‘unstable’ Leichhardt legacy again proved elusive in the transnational setting. It was
 477 not that there were two competing Leichhardt busts presented in 1988, one from East and
 478 one from West Germany that would have been too uncanny. (West Germany’s
 479 Bicentennial gift to Australia was rather a functional dinner service for use in the Presiding
 480 Officers’ suite at Parliament House [Jones, Haynes, and Barron 1993, 80].) Still, in his
 481 report, Elm expressed concern about how West German scholars were beginning to work
 482 on Leichhardt, and how the Federal Republic of Germany was also attempting to
 483 functionalize the memory of Leichhardt via a ‘Ludwig Leichhardt Memorial Fellowship’
 484 and its own ‘Leichhardt Society’ in Australia. He recognized that West Germany had
 485 stolen the march on East Germany in terms of fostering Leichhardt scholarship; a UNSW-
 486 hosted conference took place in Sydney in March, ahead of the East German conference in
 487 October, and it featured both West German scholars as well as Australian scholars ‘with
 488 close West German contacts’. The chief drawcard at the UNSW conference might have
 489 been the East German Doppelgänger Ludwig Leichhardt Jr, but his involvement seems to
 490 have been equivocal. Elm reported positively on Ludwig Jr’s involvement in the parallel

491 activities at the Leichhardt Town Hall: Ludwig Jr had used the opportunity ‘to portray our
492 Republic as a State that cultivates humanist traditions’.²⁶ However, Leichhardt Jr has
493 stated that he ignored the official script; ‘I just said what I thought’ (Leichhardt, quoted in
494 Laurenz 2004b).²⁷ Leichhardt Jr clearly enjoyed his time as keynote at the UNSW
495 conference, and spent much of his time travelling in Australia with the convenor, Jürgen
496 Tampke (Laurenz 2004a). In general, Elm was concerned about whether East Germany
497 could keep up with West Germany in terms of reaping the international Leichhardt
498 dividend. In this setting, he pondered what else the GDR should do: should it, for example,
499 employ Ludwig Jr – an engineer – full time as a Leichhardt researcher, tying him closer to
500 the State.²⁸

501 The second catch was that the East German State was well and truly aware that
502 members of Australia’s Indigenous community, whom it regarded as potential political
503 allies in the international advance of socialism, were opposed to the Bicentennial.²⁹ It took
504 fancy footwork to navigate this. The State could partly seek to avoid criticism by putting
505 the emphasis during the ‘double’ anniversary on the Leichhardtian half. It had always been
506 important to the East German State to suggest that Leichhardt had not been a ‘pacesetter
507 for colonial exploitation in the service of imperialist powers’ (Winz 1974, see also Hurley
508 2013).³⁰ As we have seen, Haufe had referred to the ‘white settlers’ policy of
509 extermination’ in his official Leichhardt biography; he also portrayed Leichhardt by
510 contrast as a good German who maintained relatively good relationships with Indigenous
511 people.³¹ The East German 1988 conference carefully profiled Indigenous Australia and
512 its ‘changing image’.³² The organizers took pains to present Indigenous art from the
513 Leipzig ethnological museum, and even included a demonstration by the ‘Berlin-Marzahn
514 boomerang group’. Admittedly, none of these activities involved actual Indigenous
515 people. However, earlier in the Bicentennial year and somewhat incredibly, a different
516 arm of the East German State paid respect to Australian Indigenous survival and protest in
517 quite an unequivocal way. The Aboriginal political rock band No Fixed Address was
518 invited to perform in February at East Berlin’s *Festival des politischen Liedes* (Festival
519 of Political Song), an important annual fixture in the East German musical calendar.
520 The group used those ‘new transnational politics’ to tell a different story than the official
521 State gift about Australia and European settlement. It is not yet clear here whether the East
522 German state wished to appease Australia’s Indigenous community in advance of its
523 Bicentennial bust-gift – whether it was pursuing a complicated double politics – or
524 whether the different arms of the State were simply disarticulated. On the other hand,
525 neither is the Australian Government’s involvement in No Fixed Address’s East Berlin
526 performance entirely clear. The Australian Government’s conception of the Bicentennial
527 ‘was one that included, or desperately sought to include, Australia’s Aboriginal people’
528 (Bennett 1992, xviii). The Bicentenary Authority duly applied a policy of ‘tactical
529 pluralism’ (Cochrane and Goodman 1992, 182). Whilst some Aboriginal groups were
530 resolutely opposed to the Bicentennial celebrations and to ‘blood money’, there were some
531 who maintained opposition as well as drawing on Bicentenary funds to mark their
532 ‘survival’ – an enduring theme in No Fixed Address’ music (Morrisey 1988).³³
533 Notwithstanding the remaining questions, it is evident that the East German State played a
534 thoroughly ambiguous, unsettled role in celebrating the Bicentennial and in fostering
535 Indigenous protest to it. It facilitated the voice of transnational protest and paid respect to
536 contemporary Indigenous survival. It also approached the Bicentennial via the figure of the
537 ‘good’ Leichhardt, who could at least potentially be viewed as being at some order of
538 remove from the British colonial project. However, the GDR knew that its bust-gift was
539 helping the Commonwealth to celebrate the ‘settlement of the continent by Europeans’.

540 It did so in order to service its need for hard currency and to assuage two sets of ‘status
541 anxieties’, its own and Australia’s.³⁴

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Conclusion

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In our joint essay, Schlunke asked how ‘we might best deal with the contemporary assemblage of popular knowledge, material memory and an expanded historical record’ that centres around Leichhardt. We began to look at the work that various Leichhardt biographies and fictional reworkings have performed, and set as a task for the future an examination of the ‘eruption of material affects in the guise of specimens and memorials, emotional geographies that connect continents but also disappear’ (Hurley and Schlunke 2013, 537, 542). Leichhardt’s communist-era bust is one such thing. It points to some of the force that the past can have in the present, and how that force can be distributed in ways that both conform to and exceed national narratives.

Leichhardt’s severed head poses insistent questions about how his missing body has been filled with meaning. The East German State literally reconstituted Leichhardt as a certain character ‘type’: a victim of classed society, a humanist scientist who was concerned with the betterment of mankind, a ‘good’ German who was well disposed to Indigenous people. In the process, the State filled an absence with the image of a real present-day East German, Ludwig Jr, who was, fittingly, an engineer when not engaged in Leichhardt research. The East German State was clear about using Leichhardt for a present-day political purpose. This sharpens our mind about the Australian side, since a gift is always part of an exchange. We should remind ourselves why the Commonwealth sought a Bicentennial gift from the East German state. Such an enquiry prompts us to ask what ideological work Leichhardt did within narratives of Australia at this time, something which I have begun to examine here, but which still calls for more research. To what extent was the newly discovered Australian Leichhardt shared – entangled – with the East German state? Where did the two Leichhardts meet in a Cold War world that is still remembered in starkly polarized terms? Where did the two Leichhardts diverge?

A related question that Leichhardt’s bust casts up here is whether he can ever be entirely contained by a single national narrative. The East German State tried to put him to service, but he evaded that at different times, either because some cadres did not regard him as socialist enough, or because he was folded into West Germany’s competing national narrative. Especially when Leichhardt travelled beyond the GDR, he slipped beyond control, coming to life in the spaces created, when, say, Arousseau found a positive side to Haufe’s biography, or when Leichhardt Jr and Tampke travelled the country together. Finally, the body-less bust and its story prompt us to ponder what got uncomfortably elided in the mutually reconstitutive effort to mark him during the Bicentennial. In 1988, the East German State both emphasized and disavowed Indigenous Australia’s claims through the parallel Festival of Political Song and the commemoration of Leichhardt. This disconcerting ‘present absence’ amplifies the Bicentennial’s own ambiguous engagement with Indigenous Australia, but it also underlines questions about how the stranger Leichhardt might have been invested in dominant land politics of the colonial era, but also had interactions with Indigenous people that were somehow different, how he was both in and out of place. He therefore can bring into a transnational dimension the uncannily provocative role that Gelder and Jacobs regard Indigenous culture playing in Australian national discourse. Leichhardt’s little bust, at rest in Trebtasch and in Canberra, can do that too.

Notes

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1. The bust was recently put back on display after a request from the German ambassador and Senator Susan Boyce. Prior to that, it had been in storage for over 10 years, having last been displayed in a short-term exhibition at Parliament House entitled 'Portraits in Stone' (Pollock 2013).
 2. On the nineteenth-century German history of busts and death masks revering great minds, see, e.g., Benkard (1927, 26ff.).
 3. On the prominence of busts in the GDR aesthetic, see also the recent 'Fokus DDR' exhibition at the Deutsches Historisches Museum, held between 7 June and 25 November 2012. A panorama shows a selection of the busts displayed in that exhibition: http://www.dhm.de/ausstellungen/fokus-ddr/flashpano/start_en.html. Thanks to Lindsay Barrett for alerting me to this.
 4. The 1988 bust is but one of a long line of Leichhardt bust-gifts and other visual representations of the explorer. Many of these are copies of absent, long-lost, disappeared or destroyed originals. The earliest bust is Charles Abraham's plaster bust of 1846, a copy of which is now in the National Portrait Gallery. For a long time, however, it was considered that 'no known copy survive[d] in Australia' (Aurousseau 1974, 472). Another bust was made from memory in 1853 by the Parisian sculptor, Verreaux (probably a relative of Jules-Pierre Verreaux, who was sent to Australia by the French Museum d'histoire naturelle, and who knew Leichhardt). It was given by the Royal Geographical Society of London to the Berlin Gesellschaft für Erdkunde later in the decade (Aurousseau 1974, 472, see also Haufe 1963, 261). A plaster copy of that bust was sent to the Paris exhibition in 1885. Another copy was purchased by Prussia through Minister Friedrich von Raumer (Haufe 1963, 263). Various representations of Leichhardt were destroyed during WWII. These include not only the Verreaux bust in Berlin, but also a portrait of Leichhardt, painted by his brother-in-law F.A. Schmalfluss from memory after his disappearance. The explorer's grand niece, the painter Elisabeth Wolf, copied this destroyed painting from her own memory after the war (Haufe 1963, table 44). On visual representations of Leichhardt, and the way many of them are copies of copies, see Gannon 2013.
 5. '[W]enn die Nationalsozialisten den Australienforscher geehrt hatten, wie konnte man ihn dann in der "antifaschistischen" DDR ehren?'
 6. For example, two editions of Leichhardt's journal of his first expedition to Port Essington were published in the then East German Brockhaus-Verlag (Damm 1951; Helbig and Schlieben 1959). Excerpts from some of Leichhardt's letters were also published in Scurla's (1959) *Entdeckungen auf vier Kontinenten*.
 7. 'die hohe Entwicklung der Menschheit'.
 8. 'gründliche Einschätzung der Persönlichkeit Leichhardts'.
 9. This was not the only problem; the council was also concerned that such a move might reawaken latent Nazi sympathies in the area (Marx 2003, 47).
 10. For an account of the genesis and reception of the biography, see Hurley (2013).
 11. This seems to be the intention of the President of the East German Geographical Society, Johannes E. Gellert (Marx 2003, 39).
 12. Publication was held up for many years, much to Haufe's disappointment. He lobbied the state-owned press assiduously. Ultimately, his lobbying revolved around the external kudos that the biography might engender both from West German experts, and, as the possibility of the GDR establishing diplomatic contact with Australia opened up, in Australia too. See Hurley (2013).
 13. 'Meine Vorstellungen wurden bei weitem uebertroffen [...] Ich werde immer gern zu ihnen kommen in die DDR'.
 14. Göttingen had links with Cambridge and Oxford universities and was a key site in transnational ties between Germany and England, and her colonies (Tampke 2006, 1, 21–22).
 15. One of Haufe's earliest articles about Leichhardt was for the *DDR Revue*, a publication for the English-speaking world (Letter Haufe to Brandl, 8 September 1963. Bundesarchiv Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR, file DY17 2355).
 16. See Pol. Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, MfAA ZR 1364/89.
 17. On the publisher's manipulation of Haufe's text, see Hurley (2013).
 18. See, e.g., Leichhardt, quoted in Warren (1988).
 19. 'das Leichhardt-Erbe für die DDR stärker nutzbar'/'Weiterentwicklung von Beziehungen der friedlichen Koexistenz', quoted in R. Zipfel, Vermerk, 20 February 1986, Bundesarchiv Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR, DY 30; 12987, 2, 3.

- 638 20. See Monteath (2008) and also ‘Informationsmaterial ueber die sozialistische Partei
639 Australiens’, April 1987, Bundesarchiv Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisa-
640 tionen der DDR, DY 30; 12987, 2–3.
- 641 21. ‘an der Entwicklung der Beziehungen, besonders auf wirtschaftlichen Gebiet’, ‘Informa-
642 tionsmaterial’, April 1987, Bundesarchiv Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisa-
643 tionen der DDR, DY 30; 12987, 2.
- 644 22. ‘die aktuellen Errungenschaften der DDR in Australien stärker bekanntzumachen’/‘unter
645 besonderer Würdigung Ludwig Leichhardts und weiterer deutscher Wissenschaftler’/‘eine
646 Ausstellung über die DDR und die Pflege des Leichhardt-Erbes in unserer Republik’.
647 All quotes from R. Zipfel, Vermerk, 20 February 1986, Bundesarchiv Stiftung Archiv der
648 Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR, DY 30; 12987, 2–4.
- 649 23. ‘begrüßt werden würde’. Letter Götting to Honecker, 14 September 1987, Pol. Arch des
650 Auswaertigen Amts, MfAA ZR 1364/89.
- 651 24. For a description of Bicentennial gifts received from other countries, see Jones, Haynes, and
652 Barron (1993, 23–25, 80–81).
- 653 25. See, e.g., Letter Sindermann to Sibraa n.d., Pol. Arch des Auswaertigen Amts, MfAA ZR
654 1364/89.
- 655 26. ‘australische Wissenschaftler mit engen BRD-Verbindungen’/‘unsere Republik als Staat, der
656 humanistische Traditionen pflegt, darzustellen’. Letter Elm to various addressees, 7 April
657 1988, Pol. Arch des Auswaertigen Amts, MfAA ZR 1364/89.
- 658 27. ‘Ich habe das gesagt, was ich dachte’.
- 659 28. Letter Elm to various addressees, 7 April 1988, Pol. Arch des Auswaertigen Amts, MfAA ZR
660 1364/89.
- 661 29. See, e.g., Zur Vorlage für das Sekretariat des ZK der SED ‘Massnahmen zur 200-
662 Jahrfeier Australiens 1988’, 5 January 1988. Pol. Arch des Auswaertigen Amts, MfAA ZR
663 1364/89.
- 664 30. ‘Schrittmacher einer kolonialen Ausbeutung im Dienste imperialistischer Mächte’.
- 665 31. ‘Ausrottungspolitik der weißen Siedler’ (Haufe 1972, 103). Cf. M. Boettcher. ‘Aktentotiz’, 16
666 August 1971. Bundesarchiv Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR,
667 DY17 2355.
- 668 32. ‘sich wandelndes Bild’. From the title the East German anthropologist Frederick G.G. Rose’s
669 paper at the conference.
- 670 33. On No Fixed Address’s music and politics, see, e.g., Castles (1998).
- 671 34. ‘Besiedlung des Kontinentes durch die Europäer’. Zur Vorlage für das Sekretariat des ZK der
672 SED ‘Massnahmen zur 200-Jahrfeier Australiens 1988’, 5 January 1988. Pol. Arch des
673 Auswaertigen Amts, MfAA ZR 1364/89.

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