

'Never Forget that This Has Happened': Remembering and Forgetting Violence

JOY DAMOUSI, JORDANA SILVERSTEIN AND MARY TOMSIC

*Never forget that this has happened.
Remember these words.
Engrave them in your hearts
When at home or in the street,
When lying down, when getting up.
Repeat them to your children.
Or may your houses be destroyed,
May illness strike you down,
May your offspring turn their faces from you.*

Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* (1947)

In the seventy-three years since Primo Levi extolled us to 'never forget' the genocide of Auschwitz, remembering the violence of the Holocaust has assumed many and varied forms. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries there has not been one universal way this indelible event is remembered or represented. Indeed, all acts of atrocity committed throughout the twentieth century are now recalled through a multiplicity of media and with many varied messages. Scholars have examined a range of cultural sites that have served the purpose of remembering as well as forgetting acts of violence. These include analyses of memorials, the use of oral history, family histories, personal memories, pilgrimages, artworks and sculpture, museum exhibitions, violence on the physical landscape, material artefacts of violence and state-sanctioned commemorations. Cultural media such as film and photography have been examined as forms of commemoration. In the digital age, social media offer a new vehicle for commemorative practices recalling experiences of violence and enduring aftermaths.¹

1 With the memory boom, different forms of remembering and forgetting violence have become a major theme in historiography from the late twentieth century onwards. Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (eds),

In this chapter, we attempt to capture some of the sites of memory – in Jay Winter's enduring phrase – that have emerged and are continuing to emerge in response to violent events during the twentieth century. These commemorative practices, and the sites upon which these are manifest, are not static rituals frozen in time, but are changing, contested and fluid, constantly evolving to reflect contemporary perspectives. Here we chart the shifting nature of remembrance and the forms it has taken and continues to take across a range of historical events. These include world wars, civil wars, the Holocaust, colonisation, truth and reconciliation, gender and violence, and child sexual abuse. Together, we identify the range and complexity of remembrance that has been transformed by new technologies, shifting ideologies and reinvented cultural practices.

Blood, Bodies and Bones

In the early twenty-first century, remembering violence has increasingly focused on three sites: blood, bodies and bones. In the first part of this chapter, these three sites form the basis of considering the remembrance and forgetting of past violent events that took place during the First World War, the Armenian Genocide of 1915 and the Spanish Civil War of 1936. The remembrance of these cataclysmic events more broadly brings into focus forms of commemoration that have recently concentrated exclusively on the body. These involve new technologies such as DNA testing and the retrieval and exhumation of bones of the victims of violence.

The aim is to explore this new wave of commemorative practice and argue that in the twenty-first century new technologies have ushered in distinctive forms of such practices surrounding the dead body. This is evident in many circles – especially for the families of the dead – as a highly respectful and appropriate way of remembering victims of violence. In his work on the dead, Thomas Lacquer argues there emerged a new respect for the dead from

War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). The literature on Holocaust memorialisation is voluminous, and includes Claudio Fpgu, Wulf Kansteiner and Todd Presner (eds.), *Probing the Ethics of Holocaust Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016); Saul Friedländer (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the 'Final Solution'* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); online environment, Colleen Morgan and Pierre Marc Pallascio, 'Digital Media, Participatory Culture, and Difficult Heritage: Online Remediation and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade', *Journal of African Diaspora Archaeology and Heritage* 4.3 (2015), 260–78.

the eighteenth century that began a significant shift for the ‘visibility and accountability of the dead’.²

The focus adopted in recent scholarship on the victims of violence has been to consider how human remains have become a distinctive part of commemorative practice. In 2015, Sévane Garibian wrote in a special issue of *Human Remains and Violence* of the need for scholars in genocide and memory studies to consider the importance of human remains in commemorations. He wrote that the ‘function of human remains in commemorative practices is multiple, be it memorial, cognitive, probative or cathartic’.³

Does this focus on human remains reflect a new attempt to access the ‘true’ experience of war? Is the appeal of this exercise that it somehow gives a more ‘accurate’ representation of the infliction of violent acts and how these should be remembered – that is, through the forensic analysis of the dead? The issue of ‘true’ commemoration of violent acts was raised during the debate that took place over the centenary of memorialisation of the First World War in London, to which we will now turn.

Blood: Symbolism of Violence

Blood Swept Land and Seas of Red was the exhibition constructed at the Tower of London in 2014 to commemorate the century of the beginning of the First World War. Comprised of 888,246 red ceramic poppies each to represent a British fatality in the war, it was designed by artists Tom Piper and Paul Cummins. Over 5 million people visited this exceedingly popular memorial.⁴ *Guardian* journalist Jonathan Jones was not so impressed. He attacked it, noting that it was based on a nationalistic paradigm that was romantic and narrow. It was a celebration of blood and patriotism, he argued, in the quintessential nineteenth-century tradition. It narrowly focused on mourning only British not German, French or Russian victims. More than that, it was ‘a deeply aestheticised, prettified and toothless war memorial’, which elevated war to a noble

2 Thomas W. Lacquer, ‘Mourning, Pity, and the Work of Narrative in the Making of “Humanity”’, in Richard Ashby Wilson and Richard D. Brown (eds.), *Humanitarianism and Suffering: The Mobilisation of Empathy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 51.

3 Sévane Garibian, ‘Editorial, Special Issue: Human Remains and Commemoration’, *Human Remains and Violence* 1.2 (2015), 2–4, at 3.

4 Poppies have also featured in recent public installations commemorating war, for example in Melbourne 2015 for ANZAC Day and the 2016 Chelsea Flower Show, <https://5000poppies.wordpress.com/about/> and <https://web.archive.org/web/20170219015242/http://www.phillipjohnson.com.au/our-work/showsandexhibitions/chelsea-flower-show-2016.aspx>.

form. War was everything but noble and should be represented as such. 'A meaningful mass memorial to this horror would not be dignified or pretty', Jones insisted. 'It would be gory, vile and terrible to see. The moat of the Tower should be filled with barbed wire and bones. That would mean something.'⁵ The designer, Piper, defended his artwork, insisting it was about 'loss and commemoration' and a 'communal tribute to a great loss of human life'. Piper argued that the representation of violent loss of life did not need to be overtly violent. He wished to make it accessible and not 'state the obvious', as we had been 'all inured to scenes of violence on TV and film'. Each of the ceramic poppies was sold for £25 and funds were given to charities.⁶ Critics believed 'blood' in this instance was a purely aesthetic representation. It did not 'truthfully' represent the impact of violence or the authentic experience of death. The violence of war was not fully captured. For some, the answer to doing so was to retrieve the bodily remnants of the victims themselves.

Exhuming Bodies and Bones

Sculptured bodies are erected on most memorials that commemorate violence. In the traditional form, whether on war memorials, or memorials of uprisings, or social movements, the clear articulation of a typically male face or body is central. In more recent times, the forensic identification of bodies through DNA testing as a form of remembrance of violence has emerged. Bodies are exhumed for identification and to ascertain what happened to them, which can also redefine how the genocide is not only remembered but more fully understood by closer explorations of the wounds inflicted.

This practice has now taken place with the commemoration of two events in the early twentieth century: the First World War and the Spanish Civil War.

In 2009, a systematic effort was made to exhume the bodies of dead soldiers of the First World War. Between May and August, 250 remains of Australian and British soldiers were removed and DNA samples were taken from bones and teeth found in the clay. The attention to detail of removing these remains ensured that this was undertaken with 'great care'.

5 Jonathan Jones, 'The Tower of London Poppies Are Fake, Trite, Inward-Looking – a UKIP-Style Memorial', *Guardian*, 28 October 2014, www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2014/oct/28/tower-of-london-poppies-ukip-remembrance-day.

6 Vanessa Thorpe, 'Designer: Tower of London Poppies Are Tribute to Human Cost of WWI', *Guardian*, 2 November 2014; 3 December 2014, www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/nov/01/designer-tower-london-poppies-wwi-tom-piper; www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/dec/02/why-did-you-buy-a-tower-of-london-ceramic-poppy.

This process allowed for the discovery of details of height, facial features and prewar conditions that assisted in further identification. The serious and severe traumatic injuries of the battle were clearly apparent. In the process of this excavation 6,200 artefacts were discovered. The items found constituted a form of remembrance and included buttons and buckles, as well as more personal items such as a fountain pen, a bible, a French phrase book, a leather pouch with coins inside, a rail ticket. Objects were conserved to see how they could illuminate an individual's identity.

Once the exhumation process had been completed, the individual process of identification began.⁷ This was important for families for their own remembrance and commemoration of members lost. While the Australian Army formally initiated and sanctioned this process, families of deceased soldiers have embraced this as a vital part of their own commemorative endeavours and practices.

Reburial: Fromelles Military Cemetery

In similar exercises, by the end of February 2010, 249 of 250 bodies recovered from Pheasant Wood in the Fromelles – where in July 1916 the first major battle was fought by Australian troops on the Western Front – had been reburied in the new cemetery. Again, DNA matching with descendants identified soldiers, and their names were inscribed on headstones. A formal commemorative ceremony involving Australian and British dignitaries took place with full military honours together with traditional rituals of hymn singing and prayers.⁸

In 2014, the families of soldiers buried in unmarked graves began a campaign in Australia to exhume mass graves of fallen Gallipoli soldiers. According to John Basarin, chairman of the Friends of Gallipoli committee, the arguments put forward were that 'people have paid their ultimate sacrifice and deserve to be treated – if they're found – in the normal manner they should be accustomed to, with a headstone at a proper burial place where the descendants can go and pay their respects on location'.⁹ There has been controversy and debate about the uses of this technology and the state's

7 www.wwiwesternfront.gov.au/fromelles/pheasant-wood/exhumation-and-identification.php.

8 www.wwiwesternfront.gov.au/fromelles/pheasant-wood/reburial.php.

9 Hayden Cooper, 'Anzac Day Triggers Fresh Calls to Exhume Mass Graves of Fallen Gallipoli Soldiers', www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-24/calls-to-exhume-mass-graves-of-fallen-gallipoli-soldiers/5409622.

use of it.¹⁰ Families and descendants have been active in supporting this form of commemorative practice to honour the dead by identifying them and providing a full reburial and ceremony. The centenary of World War I has especially drawn attention to these practices. But they have also now been applied to commemorative practices of other violent events such as civil wars.

Reburial

Almost two decades after the end of the First World War, the Spanish Civil War (1936–9) erupted and set the prelude to the Second World War. It was a brutal civil war with high casualties and shocking atrocities.¹¹

In remembering this conflict and its cruelty and violent crimes, families, communities and governments have undertaken exhumations of bodily remains. In the location of many of the battles of the civil war, DNA testing has been undertaken. These are especially connected to family burials and commemorative practices, and are crucial to how families are now drawing on this process to remember and commemorate the violence inflicted on their relatives. As Zahira Araguete-Toribio argues, 'DNA technology has reconvened families with their disappeared relatives and become a political agent in the mediation of complex identification demands in the aftermath of mass atrocity.' In Spain, this commemorative practice was initiated not by the state, but by individuals and families. There have been acts of reburial and these have informed particular commemorative practices. For families of communists, this has become an act of justice.¹² But it has connected families, scientists and the state. It is a 'grass roots' movement, one in which a family is mobilised to define a distinctive commemorative practice in the twenty-first century.

Resisting forgetting has been a central aspect of this process and attempts to keep remembering – through the medium of photography – is a perennial theme, which we will now consider.

10 S. E. Wagner, *To Know Where He Lies: DNA Technology and the Search for Srebrenica's Missing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

11 Paul Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain* (London: Harper, 2012).

12 Zahira Araguete-Toribio, 'Negotiating Identity: Reburial and Commemoration of the Civil War Dead in Southwestern Spain', *Human Remains and Violence* 1.2 (2015), 5–20, at 7, 15.

The Erasure of Bodies

There is a voluminous literature on the way photography serves as a form of remembrance of violence and how throughout the twentieth century it has served this purpose. Scholars draw a direct connection between this visual form and its vital role in constructing narratives about the urgent need to remember atrocities.¹³

But how do we examine cases when there is *no* visual representation of atrocity? Anouche Kunth explores the Armenian Genocide of 1915 and the attempt to erase any visual evidence through censorship. The extermination of the Armenians was quickly erased from memory and disappeared from the political agenda as the abandoned corpses in the desert were destroyed. The photographs of Armin Wegner, a nurse, powerfully represent how visual material was vital in the representation of genocide. However, any attempts to seek justice for victims became impossible as efforts failed ‘to move the lines of international law to encapsulate the specificity of crimes against humanity’, with the result that the genocide would soon potentially be erased.¹⁴

But the visual material would soon provide the material evidence that genocide had taken place. Two significant commemorations drew on these photographs to put the case that genocide had been committed against the Armenian population.

On the fiftieth anniversary of the genocide in 1965, the families of the survivors demonstrated around the world to demand justice, after decades of indifference. With the advent of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide adopted by the United Nations in 1948, this offered a new opportunity to present a case for genocide. In 1975, on the sixtieth anniversary, a pioneering work was published: Jean-Marie Carzou’s *An Exemplary Genocide, Armenia 1915*, which was accompanied by a booklet of photographs, which were crucial to the remembrance of the event.¹⁵ The photographic representation of bodily remains was a powerful form of remembrance when such remains could not be retrieved. The compulsion to *never forget* through bodily remains continued after the Second World War. Collecting the ashes of the dead became more common,

13 Liam Kennedy and Caitlin Patrick (eds.), *The Violence of the Image: Photography and International Conflict* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014); Geoffrey Batchen et al. (eds.), *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012).

14 Anouche Kunth, ‘Traces, Bones, Desert: The Extermination of the Armenians through the Photographer’s Eye’, *Human Remains and Violence* 1.2 (2015), 71–87, at 77.

15 *Ibid.*

but this was not a new practice. In the context of the genocide against European Jewry this practice was especially poignant.

Holocaust Ashes

Between 1945 and 1960, Holocaust ashes were part of the personal commemoration and remembrance of the victims of violence. In the immediate postwar period this became a common form of remembrance, involving bringing home ashes of the atrocity. As in earlier periods, pilgrimages occurred to concentration camp sites. In the postwar period, the transfer of ashes acted as a form of substitution for the body. The ashes symbolised the whole, standing for all the dead. Through these there was a form of commemoration and remembrance, in a context where bodies could not be returned for formal burial or religious rites.¹⁶

In the immediate aftermath of war, respect for the dead was paramount in communities. As new technologies have emerged, family members – as a way of extending this respect – have embraced further knowledge of the violence inflicted on them. Where the violence enacted in the first half of the twentieth century is remembered today through the vectors of blood, bodies and bones, as outlined above, the violent events explored in these next sections – namely, the Holocaust, decolonisation and settler colonialism, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions of the 1990s and 2000s – have had their memory enacted through pilgrimages, places and gatherings. In the next section, we will take each of these in turn.

Pilgrimages: Remembering the Holocaust through Travel

The Holocaust stands within European, and Western, memory as a landmark event in the twentieth century, and has played a significant role in the development and shaping of traditions of memorialising violence. Its profound status is such that, as Saul Friedlander has written, 'for many these events are so extreme and so unusual that they are considered events at the limits, posing unique problems of interpretation and representation'. Memories of the Holocaust – or, more precisely, modes of remembering the Holocaust – are today largely shaped by questions of universality,

16 Jean-Marc Dreyfus, 'The Transfer of Ashes after the Holocaust in Europe, 1945–60', *Human Remains and Violence* 1.2 (2015), 21–35.

particularity and responsibility, and when questions of what it means to participate in the remembering of this moment of radical violence are raised, it is often reflected that Holocaust memory makes a 'demand'. In the words of Deberati Sanyal, which are reflective of a much larger discussion within both scholarly writing and the broader memorial world, the demand centres around 'our duty to remember and our collective responsibility for the past and present, but also our vigilance toward new Holocaust dormant in everyday practices'.¹⁷

While such questions have provided a framing, journeys to the sites of the Holocaust have become a central form of representing and embodying memory in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Such journeys, pilgrimages or tourist ventures stand at the intersection of many of the questions surrounding embodiment, space, and memory, which shape memory studies and violence studies today. All of these aspects come together in pilgrimages to former sites of violence, as journeyers both remember what occurred and reflect on the ways in which memories and histories continue. The journey itself plays a key role in remembering violence, asking travellers to change their perspective – to become something new and gain new knowledge – through the process of embodied movement. These sites and journeys compel those visiting to participate in remembering and creating memories into the future. There are 'spectral traces' present which implore those visiting these sites of haunting to ponder the 'behavioural norms' appropriate to this embodied and emplaced remembering.¹⁸ Moreover, as Brigitte Sion has noted, 'death tourism . . . raises complex questions about ethics, politics, religion, education and aesthetics'. These questions include a meditation on what it means to make a pilgrimage to a site, and how one should act when there. At Auschwitz one can have an ice-cream while waiting for the bus to Birkenau, but is that what should be done? Laurie Beth Clark argues that for those attending such spaces 'the most widespread [behavioural] mimicry is of cemeteries, but trauma sites also frequently look like places of worship or museums, all of which imply solemnity and reverence'.¹⁹ Yet this is not always the case, as any visit to such a site can demonstrate.

17 Saul Friedlander, *Memory, History and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. x; Deberati Sanyal, *Memory and Complicity: Migrations of Holocaust Remembrance* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), p. 12.

18 Karen Till, quoted in Laurie Beth Clark, 'Ethical Spaces: Ethics and Propriety in Trauma Tourism', in Brigitte Sion (ed.), *Death Tourism: Disaster Sites as Recreational Landscape* (London: Seagull Books, 2014), p. 17.

19 Brigitte Sion, 'Introduction', in *ibid.*, p. 4; Clark, 'Ethical Spaces', p. 12.

Travels, by those acting as tourists and memory-keepers, to sites of death, disaster and trauma are not unique to the Holocaust, with sites as diverse as the Killing Fields in Cambodia, Ground Zero in New York, and the Hôtel des Mille Collines in Kigali drawing tourists interested in affective travel in order to remember and bear witness.²⁰ Yet the notion of a pilgrimage of remembrance to a historical place of violence attaches most closely, perhaps, to those seeing themselves as descendants of the victim group, with large numbers of individuals, families, and school and community groups travelling to the former homes of their compatriots.²¹ But like any form of memory or memorial, such journeys necessarily condition the memories created, passed on and retained. Amongst the remembering there is as much forgetting.²² Auschwitz is both, as Tim Cole noted, 'A site of mass tourism and a site of pilgrimage'; those who journey there can be considered 'tourists of guilt and righteousness: guilt at an almost pornographic sense of expectancy of the voyeurism ahead. And yet guilt tempered by a sense of righteousness at choosing to come to this place.'²³ Holocaust pilgrimages cannot be characterised as any one thing, occurring as they do both as part of the everyday and as an exceptional moment in a journeyer's life. Their memorial-meaning is potentially ever changing, pointing us to the complexity of remembering violence.

But it is evident that, for many, visiting such sites, or 'traumascapes', in Maria Tumarkin's terminology, engages those making the journey within notions of trauma. To be present at a site, to sit with its hauntings, is potentially to be present with memories of trauma. A site then can act as a form of testimony, testifying to a space and place of violence, and to the ways in which its past traces continue into the present. In these trauma-laden spaces, past and present collide while also remaining determinably apart. The traumatic memory and history they contain is, for

20 For example collected essays in Sion, *Death Tourism*.

21 For example, 'International March of the Living', <http://motl.org/>. For a discussion of such trips in the context of Israeli schoolchildren, Jackie Feldman, 'Marking the Boundaries of the Enclave: Defining the Israeli Collective through the Poland "Experience"', *Israel Studies* 7.2 (2002), 84–114, and Alon Lazar et al., 'Jewish Israeli Teenagers, National Identity, and the Lessons of the Holocaust', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 18.2 (2004), 188–204.

22 On forgetting amidst remembering the Holocaust, for example, Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

23 Tim Cole, *Selling the Holocaust: From Auschwitz to Schindler, How History is Bought, Packaged, and Sold* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 116, 97.

those in the following generations, a postmemory: as Marianne Hirsch explains, these memories raise the question of how ‘we [are] implicated in the aftermath of crimes we did not ourselves witness?’ This postmemory is structured by both a belatedness and a sense of being entangled; it is both linear and disruptive. Like Michael Rothberg’s conception of ‘multi-directional memory’, which places memories of different events together in a manner which ‘borrows’ and is ‘productive’, postmemory is one of the new structures through which memories of Holocaust violence are given meaning for new generations.²⁴ Building collective Holocaust memories – through pilgrimage and narration – is never an isolated project. Remembering such mass violence is embroiled in ongoing questions of politics and ethics, drawing in questions, for instance, of what an embodied memory involves, how feminist narrations come into play, and what a multilinear memory looks like.

Places: Histories of Colonisation

While slavery in the British Caribbean, Mauritius and the Cape was abolished by British parliament in 1833, the ongoing legacies of enslavement continue into the present day. Slavery, one aspect of global histories of colonialism, served to structure both British and slave societies, and in the 2010s a project was established by University College London, led by historian Catherine Hall, to track the ‘compensation money’, a ‘grant of £20 million in compensation, [which was] paid by the British taxpayers to slave owners’. The first part of the project paid careful attention to where this money was spent, ‘tracking, in so far as it is possible, what they did with the money’. In this way, new memories about places were created: new histories of Bloomsbury and Fitzrovia, for instance, were produced, as maps were made of the Fitzrovia and Portman areas of London showing where this compensation money went.²⁵ In this way, this project acts as a situated

24 Maria Tumarkin, *Traumascapes: The Power and Fate of Places Transformed by Tragedy* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2005); Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), pp. 2, 5; Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009). Also Bryan Cheyette, *Diasporas of the Mind: Jewish and Postcolonial Writing and the Nightmare of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

25 ‘Legacies of British Slave-Ownership: Context’, www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/project/context/; ‘Slaveowners in Fitzrovia and on the Portman Estate’, www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/project/fitzroviemap; ‘Rethinking Bloomsburg: A Public Roundtable at the Petrie Museum, UCL, London’, www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/project/bloomsbury.

memorial which seeks to overturn a history of forgetting slave ownership in Britain generally, and in London in particular. This historical and memorial project remembers the way that the benefits of violence were reaped not only in close proximity to the physical violence but across the globe; the ways that colonisation was – and is – a global project, and so requires a global memory of the violence. Such memorials present an idea that the violence perpetrated was not only physical but can exist in the forgetting, or disremembering, that has occurred, as well as in the making of profit from physical violence and the dispossession of land.

Alongside such projects sit others which remember violent histories of settler colonialism. One such recent memorial established in Melbourne in September 2016 commemorates the hanging of Tasmanian Aboriginal men Maulboyheenner and Tunnerminnerwait in 1842. Sitting at the site where they were executed, the memorial, named 'Standing by Tunnerminnerwait and Maulboyheenner', narrates the story of how 'The two men and three Tasmanian Aboriginal women – Truganini, Pytarruner and Planobeena – had waged a guerrilla campaign, robbing and clashing with settlers from Dandenong to South Gippsland.' At the dedication of the memorial it was narrated that 'the memorial "will forever stand as an unambiguous reminder of the brutal impacts of displacement, dispossession and despair that was inflicted upon our people and their homelands and of those who bore the brunt of that invasion and paid the ultimate price"'. This memorial was important, Carolyn Briggs, a Boon Wurrung elder, explained, as it represents 'a first step towards acknowledging our stories of the past'.²⁶

Indeed, settler colonial violence is predicated on a certain forgetting of that violence, both its initial moments of contact and the continuing violence of dispossession.²⁷ The very land, or place, on which colonisation (and decolonisation) occurred remains an important facet of memory making. Site-specific memorials to colonial violence, then, serve as one way in which colonial forgetting can be undone, or colonial memory can be made more vivid. Memorials to this historic, and continuing, violence, serve to intervene in the colonial situation.

26 Carolyn Webb, 'Monument to Aboriginals' 1842 Execution "First Step" to Recognising Brutal Past', *The Age*, 11 September 2016, www.theage.com.au/victoria/monument-to-aboriginals-1842-execution-first-step-to-recognising-brutal-past-20160911-grdvbx.html; Rob Anders and Netty Shaw in *ibid*.

27 Chris Healy, *Forgetting Aborigines* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2008), pp. 7–9.

Gatherings: Coming Together in Truth and Reconciliation

Just as Holocaust memorialisation provides an opportunity to reflect on responsibility and complicity, as individuals and as societies, and as memorials to colonialism stand on site in order to attempt to create new stories, so too do Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRC).²⁸ TRCs – to utilise a broad term emanating from post-apartheid South Africa to encompass a wide variety of commissions, hearings and movements – have now occurred across the world and have served to air a series of accounts of violence: testimonies both of the perpetrators and the victims, those who have enacted violence and those who have been subjected to it. TRCs have become a staple of national and international governing, understood widely as a foundationally important moment for a nation to gather together, both physically and symbolically.

The hearings associated with the South African TRC served as an opportunity to produce memories, as well as forgettings, about violence pursued under apartheid rule. One documentary about the TRC, *Long Night's Journey into Day* (2000), asserted that the commission raised 'some of the most profound moral and ethical questions facing the world today – questions about justice, truth, forgiveness, redemption, and the ability of brutalized and brutalizing individuals to subsequently coexist in harmony'. The TRC sits within a paradigm of 'reconciliation', a political formation which 'has emerged as a potent and alluring form of utopian politics' across 'contemporary settler societies'. Such reconciliation movements and moments – such as the bridge-walks which occurred across Australia in 2000 – can act as a moment of gathering, a performative expression of a vast set of emotions. In Australia, people were urged by Mick Dodson 'to see today, this day, as the beginning of the reconciliation process. This day, this day is the dawning of that brand new day.'²⁹

In other countries, such gatherings to speak and hear have led to formal government reports and apologies. What though are the implications when there is 'structural injury' at stake: when what is being testified to, recounted, remembered and gathered together is not a passing phase of violence but a violence which is structural to the state which initiates the

28 Sanyal, *Memory and Complicity*, p. 13.

29 'Long Night's Journey into Day', www.irisfilms.org/films/long-nights-journey-into-day/; Penelope Edmonds, *Settler Colonialism and Reconciliation: Frontier Violence, Affective Performances, and Imaginative Refoundings* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 1, 90–125; 'Howard Stands Firm after Reconciliation Walk', *7.30 Report*, ABC, 29 May 2000. Transcript www.abc.net.au/7.30/stories/s132204.htm.

gathering?³⁰ Some scholars, such as Jennifer Matsunaga, caution against seeing truth commissions as one thing, writing that while they are incompatible with projects of decolonisation, some survivors find validation in sharing their stories. Matsunaga argues that truth commissions, operating as part of transitional justice work, serve as vehicles for memory but 'generally remain silent on land-centred decolonization and Indigenous resurgence knowledge'.³¹ These gatherings then contain the same inherent contradictions as any memory source. For some they serve as a chance to restore one's place in society, or to confess past wrongs; for others they act as a screen, preventing difficult and violent memories from being fully reckoned with.

We turn now to examine the contemporary practice of public apologies, looking in particular at the memories created through apologies surrounding the violence of colonisation, violence of family separation, violence against children in institutional care and sexual violence against women. Public apologies are modes through which states and institutions frame, remember and forget violent pasts. We first focus on the meaning of apologies and then consider specific examples.

Saying Sorry – States' (Non)Recognition of Violence

Our age has been deemed one of Apology by Roy L. Brooks, given the number of apologies offered by contemporary world leaders to various groups. In an academic context, Melissa Nobles has identified seventy-two public apologies of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (until 2007) from around the world. Nobles's list covers heads of state, governments and religious institutions as well as formal groups and organisations. These are all public statements responding to histories of violence linked to war, religious persecution, internment, genocide, slavery, colonisation, apartheid and forced sterilisations.³²

30 Jennifer Balint, Julie Evans and Nesam McMillan, 'Rethinking Transitional Justice, Redressing Indigenous Harm: A New Conceptual Approach', *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 8.2 (2014), 194–216, at 195–7.

31 Jennifer Matsunaga, 'Two Faces of Transitional Justice: Theorizing the Incommensurability of Transitional Justice and Decolonization in Canada', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society* 5.1 (2016), 24–44, at 26, 38.

32 Roy L. Brooks 'The Age of Apology', in Brooks (ed.), *When Sorry Isn't Enough: The Controversy over Apologies and Reparations for Human Injustice* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), pp. 3–11, at 3; Melissa Nobles, *The Politics of Official Apologies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 155–66.

Public apologies are a historically specific response to past and present violence and injustice. Elazar Barkan has identified morality and justice as exerting a strong presence in national politics and international diplomacy since the conclusion of World War II, and increasing since the end of the Cold War. What has followed is a 'demand that nations act morally and acknowledge their own gross historical injustices'. Truth commissions, inquiries and investigations have a common focus on 'stressing personal suffering and feeling'. In this political context, apologies have been offered, and Rhoda Howard-Hassmann and Mark Gibney suggest that, through them, states and social institutions showed 'empathy to those they had harmed'. From the end of the twentieth century, Judith Brett classifies government apologies as being made 'directly to the victims of state actions' rather than used as instruments of international diplomacy and peacekeeping. The possibility of a state apologising and assuming a moral persona is identified by Mark Finnane as a novel function of national governments since the 1960s.³³

In addition to apologies offered, demands made for formal apologies also require attention. In this way victims and those affected by historical violence are calling for formal recognition, for states and institutions to speak directly to them. In terms of numbers, demands for apologies far exceed those given, and these demands, according to Alice MacLauchlan, should be understood as a call 'for a change in the authoritative historical record'.³⁴

Theorising apologies is a recent topic of scholarly attention. Melissa Nobles sees public apologies as future-focused symbolic gestures about the past, with implications for shaping politics. Jason Edwards has examined collective apologies as a rhetorical genre. Judith Brett identifies apologies as a government technique 'to restore civic harmony at those moments when the wrongs of the past erupt into the present'.³⁵ Public apologies, and

33 Elazar Barkan, *The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices*, 1st edn (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), p. xvi; Rhoda E. Howard-Hassmann and Mark Gibney, 'Introduction: Apologies and the West', in Mark Gibney et al. (eds.), *The Age of Apology: Facing up to the Past* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), pp. 1–9, at 4; Judith Brett, 'Apologizing to the Stolen Generations', in Katie Holmes and Stuart Ward (eds.), *Exhuming Passions: The Pressure of the Past in Ireland and Australia* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2011), pp. 71–90, at 74; Mark Finnane, 'Memories of Violence and the Politics of State Apologies', in *ibid.*, p. 93.

34 Alice MacLauchlan, 'The State of "Sorry": Official Apologies and their Absence', *Journal of Human Rights* 9.3 (2010), 373–85, at 374.

35 Nobles, *The Politics of Official Apologies*, pp. 2–3; Jason A. Edwards, 'Apologizing for the Past for a Better Future: Collective Apologies in the United States, Australia, and Canada', *Southern Communication Journal* 75.1 (2010), 57–75; Brett, 'Apologizing to the Stolen Generations', p. 74.

demands for them, reanimate the past at specific points, and while formal public apologies are a global trend (at times for global audiences) the meaning and impact of them are strongly tied to local and national contexts.³⁶ Examining specific apologies is vital to interrogate the meanings made of violent pasts through the apologies offered and the basis for them being offered at particular times.

There is currently widespread public remembering of historical abuse of children. One significant case is the over 170,000 children committed to the Irish industrial schools system between 1936 and 1970 due to poverty. Lindsey Earner-Byrne argues that the 1999 apology by then Taoiseach Bertie Ahern to the children abused in these schools placed attention on responsibility and national narratives, rather than nuanced historical interrogation. Earner-Byrne argues the apology and debate functioned to compartmentalise blame, first with the Roman Catholic Church and then the state, and failed to open space for examining publicly and holistically the Irish society that facilitated the large-scale abuse of children within these institutions.³⁷ While there had been pressure to examine institutions like the industrial schools since the 1940s, alongside formal inquiries, it was not until the 1990s when widespread sexual abuse within the Catholic Church was being revealed and believed, accompanied by popular television documentaries revealing the abuse, that public interest created the political context for the state to respond with an apology. Feminist activism of the 1970s and 1980s had provided an intellectual framework to consider the political structures and power dynamics that supported and enabled abuse within institutions like schools and the Catholic Church. Feminist analysis provided survivors with language and concepts to use to make sense of their experiences. Linked to this, the early 1990s marked the beginning of a period that saw a shift in Western cultures, with increasing familiarity with personal stories of survival, trauma narratives and survivors' accounts of traumatic pasts in the public sphere.³⁸

36 Katie Holmes and Stuart Ward, 'Introduction: "Poison and Remedy": The Pressure of the Past in Ireland and Australia', in Holmes and Ward, *Exhuming Passions*, pp. 1–18, at 9, discuss the global and national in a broader context of memory studies.

37 Lindsey Earner-Byrne, 'Child Sexual Abuse, History and the Pursuit of Blame in Modern Ireland', in Holmes and Ward, *Exhuming Passions*, pp. 51–70, at 51.

38 Brett, 'Apologizing to the Stolen Generations', p. 87; Shurlee Swain, 'Why Sexual Abuse? Why Now?', in Johanna Sköld and Shurlee Swain (eds.), *Apologies and the Legacy of Abuse of Children in 'Care': International Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 83–94, at 90; Christina Twomey, 'Wounded Minds: Testifying to Traumatic Events in Ireland and Australia', in Holmes and Ward, *Exhuming Passions*, pp. 37–50, at 37.

Personal experiences of childhood abuse have not always found a receptive public space to be heard. Peter Tyrrell wrote a survivor memoir of his time in industrial schools in the early 1960s but was unable to secure publication. His campaigns to have his experiences recognised were ignored, disbelieved or thought of as blackmail. Tyrrell's death in 1967 was deemed a suicide and the memoir was published in 2006 after it was found amongst someone else's personal papers. His experiences and reporting of physical and sexual abuse were also included as evidence in the Child Abuse Commission in 2009. As Earner-Byrne notes, Tyrrell's 'ability to write about this experience meant that he posthumously became a central witness to the realities of the system that has so damaged him'.³⁹ In this case we see the contingent nature of when victims of violence are listened to, and correspondingly spaces that emerge for violence to be heard and remembered rather than forgotten.

Johanna Sköld and Shurlee Swain suggest that an increased emphasis on children's rights had played an important role in shaping apology politics. The 1990s was when Western political attention began to focus on historical abuse of children in out-of-home care. This interest saw formal avenues employed to document, collect testimony and make future focused recommendations about historical violence based on adult memories. In the Australian federal context, the forced removal of Indigenous children from their families began to be investigated by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission beginning in 1995, and in Canada the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples also looked at the forced removals and abuse of Aboriginal Children in residential schools.⁴⁰ The histories that these inquiries document are ones of settler colonial violence and control. The demands and silences involved in the various apologies and non-apologies in Australian and Canadian cases cannot be examined here, but we draw attention to two moments to highlight how past violence has been understood.

The limits of public apologies reveal how violence at the heart of settler colonial projects is (and is not) acknowledged. In Canada in 1998, ten years before the formal apology to former students of Indian Residential Schools was offered by the prime minister, a 'Statement of Reconciliation' was made in Ottawa, in response to the abuses of Indigenous children in residential

39 Earner-Byrne, 'Child Sexual Abuse', p. 66; Peter Tyrrell's account is presented under a pseudonym. Final Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (The Ryan Report) dated 20 May 2009, vol. 1, chapter 8, www.childabusecommission.ie/rpt/pdfs/CICA-VOL1-08.PDF.

40 Johanna Sköld and Shurlee Swain, 'Introduction', in Sköld and Swain, *Apologies and the Legacy of Abuse*, pp. 1–2, 4.

schools. Jeff Cornassel and Cindy Holder note the 'nondescript and guarded language' in this statement that described residential schools' legacy. The only explicit apology offered was 'to those individuals who experienced the tragedy of sexual and physical abuse at residential schools'.⁴¹ No apology was given for impacts of a cultural, political, economic or psychological nature.

The language used to describe historical violence in apologies reveals the significance placed upon that violence. On 26 May 1997, the day the 'National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families' was tabled in the Australian Federal Parliament, Prime Minister John Howard spoke at the opening of the Australian Reconciliation Convention in Melbourne. He expressed his *personal* 'deep sorrow for those of my fellow Australians who suffered injustices under the practices of past generations towards indigenous people' and for the 'hurt and trauma many people . . . may continue to feel as a consequence of those practices'. In saying this, he refused to apologise on behalf of the nation. On this occasion and others, Howard spoke of 'blemishes in Australia's history'. This elided the violent structure of colonisation and the ongoing impacts of it; we see here the power of the state carrying out reconciliation on its own terms. In the personal apology given we also see historical remembering of violence framed in personal terms and largely confined to the past. The response from the audience at the Convention, however, was clear, with people standing and turning their backs while others booed. The prime minister concluded his address in 'a state of mild hysteria'.⁴²

Official apologies produce a public discursive space within which meaning is made. Ruth Rubio-Marian, examining responses to sexual and reproductive violence committed against women, argues this interpretative context is vital to provide victims with 'due recognition and some form of repair'.⁴³ One

41 Jeff Cornassel and Cindy Holder, 'Who's Sorry Now? Government Apologies, Truth Commissions, and Indigenous Self-Determination in Australia, Canada, Guatemala, and Peru', *Human Rights Review* 9.4 (2008), 465–89, at 473; see 'Statement of Apology to Former Students of Indian Residential Schools', 3 November 2008, www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100015644/1100100015649. In the contemporary context, sexual abuse has become the key marker of child victimization; Swain, 'Why Sexual Abuse?', p. 85.

42 Haydie Gooder and Jane M. Jacobs, "'On the Border of the Unsayable": The Apology in Postcolonizing Australia', *Interventions* 2.2 (2000), 229–40; also Brett, 'Apologizing to the Stolen Generations', p. 78; quotations from apology taken from full transcript <http://pmtranscripts.pmc.gov.au/release/transcript-10360>; and BBC interview quoted in Cornassel and Holder, 'Who's Sorry Now?', pp. 476–7, <http://pmtranscripts.pmc.gov.au/release/transcript-10387> for full transcript, 20 June 1997.

43 Ruth Rubio-Marin, 'Reparations for Conflict-Related Sexual and Reproductive Violence: A Decalogue', *William and Mary Journal of Women and the Law* 19 (2012), 69–104, at 94.

example of historical sexual violence in which continued demands for apology have been made is the case of survivors of Japanese military sexual slavery during World War II. While evidence of the system of military prostitution had been available since the late 1940s, Vera Mackie notes a new discursive context was required for public debate. This came from the intellectual framework developed by feminist analysis of violence against women. From this, forces of gender, class and ethnicity were understood within the internationalised industry of prostitution, which included the military. This, Mackie argues, transformed activism around women's rights as human rights and developed a discursive space for past experiences of sexual violence to be recognised.⁴⁴ From the early 1990s survivors of Japanese military sexual slavery from Korea (and later from China, the Netherlands, the Philippines and Indonesia) actively demanded an apology and compensation. In December 2015 South Korea and Japan reached a 'final and irreversible resolution' of the issue, with Japan apologising and financial payment promised to provide care for the survivors. Survivors, however, were not involved in the negotiations and continue to make demands as to how their experiences are recognised: survivor Lee Young-soo was reported as saying: 'The agreement does not reflect the views of former comfort women' and 'I will ignore it completely.'⁴⁵ Here Young-soo demands her personal history be remembered on her terms. You-me Park argues for the importance of examining the culturally specific gendered assumptions embedded in the language used in describing this history and case. Park suggests that 'a genuine apology . . . can only come in the form of recognizing the impossibility of making a suitable apology or making amends'.⁴⁶ In this case, we see the limits of language and apology, and the demands that survivors continue to make.

44 Vera Mackie, 'In Search of Innocence: Feminist Historians Debate the Legacy of Wartime Japan', *Australian Feminist Studies* 20.47 (2005), 207–17, at 209; Muta Kazue, 'The "Comfort Women" Issue and the Embedded Culture of Sexual Violence in Contemporary Japan', *Current Sociology* 64.4 (2016), 620–36; Katharine McGregor, 'Transnational and Japanese Activism on Behalf of Indonesian and Dutch Victims of Enforced Military Prostitution during World War II', *Asia-Pacific Journal, Japan Focus* 14.16 (2016), <http://apjif.org/-Katharine-McGregor/4945/article.pdf>.

45 Choe Sang-Hun, 'Japan and South Korea Settle Dispute over Wartime "Comfort Women"', *New York Times*, 28 December 2015, www.nytimes.com/2015/12/29/world/asia/comfort-women-south-korea-japan.html.

46 You-Me Park, 'Comforting the Nation: "Comfort Women," the Politics of Apology and the Workings of Gender', *Interventions* 2.2 (2000), 199–211, at 210.

Conclusion

The resurrection and erasure of blood, bodies and bones have become central to current forms of commemoration of violence. With enhanced technologies, the world wars and civil wars of the twentieth century are increasingly being remembered through these new forms. Whether these are perceived to bring more immediacy to the memory of the dead or a connectedness to and respect for the dead, retrieving bones and bodies through DNA testing has become a new, public form of remembrance. The phenomenon of pilgrimages, the formation of places and the instituting of gatherings have over time taken up important roles in the cultural expression of remembering atrocities and genocide across many contexts. The concept of the apology has been manifest in a range of cultural and political settings – from sexual crimes of war to child abuse, particularly the forced removal of Indigenous children from their families.

How we remember violence, what we choose to forget and why, and what form this takes, is a dynamic and constantly shifting cultural, political and social phenomenon. What remains constant is the enduring presence of the traces of acts of violence, however defined, at the individual, community and state level, whether they are officially sanctioned or not. These are permanent reminders of the impact of violent acts, whether these are privately engraved on people's hearts, as Levi so eloquently describes it, or recalled in public forums. The haunting shadows that have been cast by atrocities indelibly remain with us.

Bibliographical Essay

Recent scholarship on the intersection between memory and violence has highlighted the centrality of religion and its role in how violent events are remembered. This is a key theme in J. Shawn Landres and Oren Baruch (eds.), *Religion, Violence, Memory and Place* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006). Religious understandings of space and place are central to these discussions as they argue that memory and violence are often fused with religious frameworks. Scholars have also explored the role of religion and violence in relation to reconciliation and human rights, for example R. Scott Appleby, *Religion, Violence and Reconciliation* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999).

While the literature on religion and remembering violence is significant but not voluminous, there is a vast body of literature on physical memorials to the Holocaust, with James E. Young providing perhaps the definitive overview in *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), alongside texts such as Edward Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* (Princeton: Columbia University Press, 2001). Projects such as the Stolpersteine

(www.stolpersteine.eu/en/) in Europe, as well as other memorials and museums, provide places for physical, embodied and emplaced memory. Studies of Holocaust memory and memorialisation have provided some important avenues for greater understanding of traumatic memory in the aftermaths of violence. Vital works include Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), Eric Santner, 'History beyond the Pleasure Principle', in Saul Friedländer (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the 'Final Solution'* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 143–54, Primo Levi, *If This Is a Man* (London: Abacus Books, 1987) and Eva Hoffman, *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language* (London: Heinemann, 1989).

A central aspect of memory and violence needing further exploration is gender. Scholars have made compelling cases for focusing on gender in visual representation of violence. This is significant, given a dominant mode of remembering violence is through the visual, particularly in film and photographs. Ulrike Weckel's analysis of depictions of women in films documenting the liberation of concentration camps in 1945 and 1946 is notable: *Gender & History* 17.3 (2005), 538–66. Griselda Pollock argues for the power of dominant cultural scripts of feminine suffering, which circulate at the expense of historical and political analysis through the continued use of a particular photograph taken during the Holocaust; and Nancy Miller examines how two photographs of Kim Phuc (known as the 'Napalm Girl'), taken in 1972 and 1995, publicly function as gendered narratives of American national history in the context of the Vietnam War; see two chapters in Jay Prosser (ed.), *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), pp. 65–78 and 147–54.