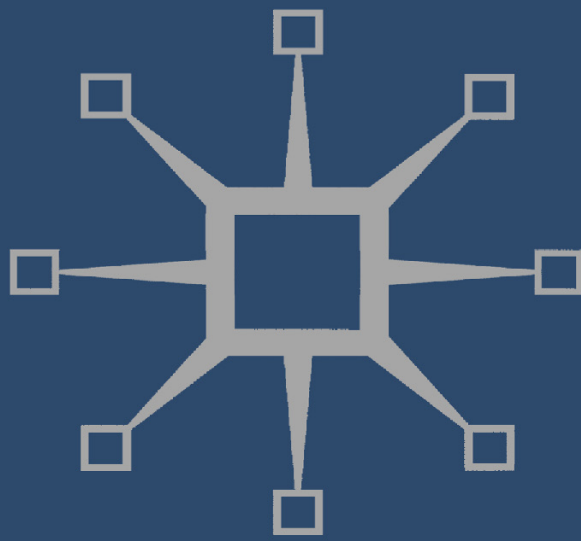# Memory and Political Change

Edited by

Aleida Assmann
Linda Shortt

Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies

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The nascent field of Memory Studies emerges from contemporary trends that include a shift from concern with historical knowledge of events to that of memory, from 'what we know' to 'how we remember it'; changes in generational memory; the rapid advance of technologies of memory; panics over declining powers of memory, which mirror our fascination with the possibilities of memory enhancement; and the development of trauma narratives in reshaping the past.

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Foreword: Remembrance as a Human Right

by Jay Winter

As the editors of this volume rightly say in the Introduction, the link between human rights and the politics of remembrance is strong and historically specific. When the framers of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights met in Paris on 10 December 1948, and presented the document to the United Nations assembled there, they were engaged in an act of remembrance in a number of evident ways. Here they were, in the Palais de Chaillot, a few metres from the spot where Hitler had stared out across the Seine at the Eiffel Tower, and surveyed his new dominions a brief eight years before. The Place de la Concorde, the geographical heart of the Revolution, was only a few kilometres away. Nearby the deputies of 1789 and 1793 framed their call to arms in not one but two earlier Universal Declarations of the rights of man and the citizen. To announce a new Universal Declaration in Paris 150 years later was an act of memory, but also of transition from the humiliations of Nazi occupation to the reassertion of the universal principles on which the French revolutionary tradition rested.

The key draftsman in the group responsible for the 1948 Universal Declaration was René Cassin, a French jurist who had lost 26 members of his family, all deported to Auschwitz. When he spoke of 10 December 1948 in later years, he claimed that it was a day shared by ghosts. 'The men of our generation', he said, 'those who did not forget 1789 or 1848, and who lived through 1914–18, 1940–44, and 1948', will have fulfilled their mission 'if and only if human rights transcend national sovereignty. Only when sovereign states will be made subject to a higher law, will "the cries of the victims" finally be heard'.[1]

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a memory document, a set of principles framed because of a historical catastrophe which preceded it. As the legal historian Robert Cover put it, '[n]o set of legal institutions or prescriptions exists apart from the narratives that locate it and give it meaning. For every constitution there is an epic'.[2] The 'epic' behind the Universal Declaration was the monumental effort to destroy the Nazi regime undertaken by the alliance which became the United Nations.

Nowhere in this document does it state that remembering is a human right. And yet that right is everywhere in it. Without the work of remembrance, in this case the work of a small group of people in the United Nations' Human Rights Commission, there would be no Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In an important sense, the spheres of remembrance surveyed in the chapters of this book have grown since 1945 precisely because we exist in what Norbert Bobbio terms 'the age of rights'.[3] I prefer a more limited claim: we live in an age in which human rights claims provide a grammar of transformation, but no assurance whatsoever that that transformation will actually occur or endure. Once rights claims are made, that is just the beginning of the struggle to realize them.

Memory work is built into most rights claims, which arise from indignation over evident and persistent violations of the dignity of men and women which we see around us. *Indignez-vous!* is the title of a current best-selling pamphlet in France, written by Stéphane Hessel, a distinguished human rights activist, who asks his readers to get angry over the indignities they see around them.[4] He is a survivor of the Resistance, a man who was arrested and tortured by the Nazis and managed to escape twice from imprisonment. He was part of the group that drafted the Universal Declaration in 1948. He is also the son of the fictional couple '*Jules et Jim*', immortalized in the classic film of that name by François Truffaud, who probed on a human level the vagaries of Franco-German understanding. Hessel is a still living carrier of memory, a man who has made of his life a remarkable human rights story.

My argument here is that the language of 'transition' may be traced to the 1940s, when the first elements of the new human rights movement emerged. These claims have taken on a life of their own, but it is important to recognize their origins in the decade of World War II. In a number of important documents – the Genocide Convention of 1948 and the Geneva Conventions of 1949 – the plight of victims of genocide and of other cruelties of war became matters of law. The Universal Declaration was not a binding document, but rather a normative statement of a standard against which to measure the behaviour of the states in which we live. Together, these accords, and other documents like them, have framed both rights claims and much of the memory work of the second half of the twentieth century and beyond.

Human rights are what I have termed a 'minor utopia'.[5] They represent a vision, one which emerged at a terrible time, to offer survivors of war a glimpse of a better world. But this utopia is less a concrete target than an asymptote, a limit which is never reached. Rights are like Xeno's

paradox, a destination both close and infinitely distant. The struggle for fully realizing human rights is something which eludes everyone dedicated to doing so.

One of those who was intensely aware of this paradox was a pioneer of the modern study of memory, Maurice Halbwachs, the author of *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*.[6] He did not live to see the rights revolution of the post-1945 period. A specialist on cosmopolitan cities, Halbwachs developed his sociology of memory in the University of Strasbourg, a transnational university if there ever was one. Formerly the Kaiser Wilhelm University, it became, after it was refashioned as a French university after 1918, the crucible for some of the most daring intellectual initiatives in the humanities and the social sciences in the twentieth century. There Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre developed their own school of history, deeply conscious of the fact that both had had the arbitrary good fortune of having survived trench warfare in 1914–18. Halbwachs' pathway was a different one, but his sense of the link between human rights and memory was just as strong, if not stronger still.

Halbwachs married the daughter of one of the pillars of the French League for the Rights of Man, Victor Basch. Both Victor Basch and his wife Ilona were murdered by members of the French paramilitary *Milice* on the streets of Lyon in 1944. In an act of stunning courage, Halbwachs walked into German police headquarters and demanded an official inquiry into the murder. For his pains, he was arrested in July 1944, and deported to Buchenwald, where he died of dysentery in February 1945. The Spanish writer Jorge Semprún has left a stunning account of Halbwachs' last days in his memoir, *Literature or Life*.[7]

For Halbwachs, civil society is bound together in associations that tell stories about what they do and who they are. The same happens in families. We are never the first to know who we are; our parents tell us our names. Collectives of all kinds are defined by the narratives they fashion about their past. Change the collective, and stories (and identities) change. Halbwachs never intended his concept of *la mémoire collective* to be translated as national memory. He meant instead the memories shared by different groups of people, whose sense of their past told them who they were. Halbwachs was the theorist of the narratives of civil society, not of the state.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is, in a sense, a Halbwachsian document. It is based on the assumption that we express ourselves most fruitfully and live most fully through the social ties we share in civil society. The Universal Declaration is the celebration of

these associations. The document mentions the word 'state' only three times. The freedoms it affirms are those of people who come together to live their lives unafraid that the state will trample on them. It is a pacifist statement. The idea is a simple and yet an arresting one: states which trample on the rights of their own citizens are likely to trample on the soil and the bodies of their neighbours. Defending human rights is militant pacifism, and Maurice Halbwachs paid for it with his life.

The 'transitions' in which human rights figure are multiple. The first is the transition from war to peace. Everyone in 1948 understood what that meant. The second is the transition from dictatorship to democracy. That was a longer-term trajectory, reaching beyond the 1940s to the human rights work of the 1970s and 1980s, in part responsible for the collapse of the Soviet empire. The third is the transition of the status of victims of violence from that of passive sufferers to active participants in the redress of the crimes from which they suffered. That too has been a long-range project, marked in judicial terms by the shift from the absence of testimony from the victims at the Nuremberg War Crimes trials to their presence in a host of later judicial or quasi-judicial frameworks. The fourth is a perennial matter. It refers to the transition from norm to practice, from rhetoric to material justice, in the ongoing history of human rights abuses we all share.

My point in this brief Foreword is simply to offer a different turn to the word 'transition', one linking human rights and remembrance. Human rights norms are now the standard against which we measure the shortcomings and failures of the states in which we live. They are '*les principes généraux de droit*', in Cassin's terms, those commitments without which anything approximating the rule of law is impossible. And yet while we cannot forget human rights, we must respect the human right to forget. This collection of chapters explores these choices we now face. For there are different strategies of transition, some entailing moving away from dwelling on the past, others reconfiguring stories about the past so that they can stand as sentinels, as reminders of what we must never do again.

Never is, indeed, a very long time. In 1948, George Orwell published *1984*, in which he made it clear that we have archives to stop our political leaders from lying about the past. Orwell was a human rights activist writing just at the moment the term 'human rights' took on new meaning. Over time, other writers, and other activists and writers have recounted narratives of suffering and injustice, and made telling the tale an act of moral significance. Listening to the tale has come to have moral purchase too. By framing the arts of remembrance, those

who speak and those who hear perform the dignity that human rights regimes affirm.

Affirmation is far from celebration, since the repeated failings of human rights campaigns in the Middle East, in China and in other parts of the world are all too evident today. But the existence of human rights norms and courts to enforce them is equally undeniable. Individuals now have standing in international law to accuse their own states of abusing their rights. That was not possible before 1948. There is an International Criminal Court in The Hague, and it has judged and jailed a number of the worst offenders against human rights, however configured.

Memory has power, the editors of this volume say justly, only when people come together in political life and transform representations of the past into matters of urgent importance in the present. Words are weapons, and like all other weapons, on occasion they misfire, or they get hijacked by those who are their target. But they have been powerful agents of change, in the two generations which separate us from World War II. For providing us with a series of measured and subtle considerations of memory as an agent of transition, the contributors to this volume deserve our gratitude and our attention.

Notes

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2. Robert Cover (1983), 'The Supreme Court, 1982 Term – Foreword: Nomos and Narrative', *Harvard Law Review*, 97 (4), 4–68, here 4.
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7. Jorge Semprún (1994), *L'écriture ou la vie* (Paris: Gallimard).

Acknowledgements

Contributors

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Literatur (Film and Text: On the Problem of Perception and Imagination in Film and Literature) (1984); *Fremde Texte als Spiegel des Eigenen. Postkoloniale Literaturen und ihre Auseinandersetzung mit dem kulturellen Kanon* (Foreign Texts as a Mirror of One's Own. Postcolonial Literatures and their Conflict with the Cultural Canon) (2006). She has also edited *Borderlands: Negotiating Boundaries in Post-Colonial Writing* (1999).

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Pablo Picasso, "Guernica" (1937), Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid

Memory and Political Change: Introduction

Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt

Memory and transition

Over the last 25 years we have been able to witness how countries that maintained brutal dictatorships and bred bloody genocides chose to set an end to oppression, violence or exploitation in order to build up a new relationship between victors and losers, perpetrators and victims, on the way towards an integrated society. The transnational advance of the norm of human rights and the emergence of a watchful global community have provided the larger framing condition for such changes. The new credo is that countries noted for injustice and violence may be *transformed*, or rather that they may *transition* from autocratic regimes to democracies. The contemporary political landscape is continuously undergoing decisive changes which are propelled, instigated and reinforced by a whole new set of instruments and institutions that are employed to overcome totalitarian and violent pasts. These changes have been bolstered by a new search for justice, which has been implemented by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), truth commissions and the International Criminal Court. The historical truth about the political crimes of the past – uncovered from archival sources or oral testimonies of victims – is today considered to have great ethical and transformative power. Memory has become a central issue in our discussions about transition, as this truth is directly related to the memory of the victims, and it is the medium of a new shared narrative of the past that integrates formerly divided perspectives. In these cases, as Andreas Huyssen has emphasized, memory forges a new powerful link between past atrocities and a peaceful future:

> As particular nations struggle to create democratic polities in the wake of histories of mass exterminations, apartheids, military

dictatorships, and totalitarianism, they are faced, as Germany has been and still is since World War II, with the unprecedented task of securing the legitimacy and future of their emergent polity by finding ways to commemorate and adjucate past wrongs.[1]

The term 'transition' has various meanings and therefore requires further clarification. It is defined in the *New Oxford American Dictionary* as 'the process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another'. In a famous essay from the middle of the nineteenth century, the French writer Charles Baudelaire defined the experience of modernity as one of flux and transition: '*La modernité, c'est le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent.*'[2] In a similar vein, globalization is today defined in terms of flux, movement and change. This can be seen clearly in Ulf Hannerz's announcement for his conference on globalization entitled *Certainty Undermined – Life-Worlds and Knowledge in Transition*, which highlights the scope of these shifts and changes, noting the impact of transnational movements of capital, people and information on stock and labour markets, which uproot relations and shake communities and worldviews. According to Hannerz, '[p]eople's life-worlds – the domain of self-evident and shared practices, beliefs, values, and communication structures – are undergoing far-reaching changes comparable to those affecting class structures, socio-cultural milieus, and gender roles'.[3]

   In modernization and globalization discourses, flows, movements and transitions are the major actors of change. They are conceived as more or less automatic processes that culminate in severe crises, as political, economic and cultural certainties are challenged and undermined. In the context of this book, we encounter another form of transition; here, transition is not associated with anxiety and crisis, but with hope for positive transformation. Transition in this specific sense is no longer conceived as a challenge, but rather as a remedy administered to a severe problem. In this restricted sense, transition is not a self-evolving process, but one that is channelled by the intentions, agreements and compromises of specific political actors. Its general effect, therefore, is the opposite of uncertainty: placed against the background of violence and trauma, this new kind of transition involves actions that reach out for new forms of order and legitimacy by instigating a profound change of political and social identity.

   It is important to clarify the focus of this book from the outset. When we define transition as 'the process or a period of changing from one state to another', the word 'state' should be taken here quite literally in its political sense. Since the 1990s, the political experiment of

'transitional justice' has become a key topic which has produced a large body of legal, social and political scientific literature. Brigitte Weiffen's chapter offers a comprehensive overview of this topic, reviewing the pertinent literature and presenting the relevant instruments, evolution and controversial evaluations of the process. There is an even greater volume of literature on the topic of how to deal with violence and oppression in post-war situations. Different organizations working on the legacy of violent pasts have developed an extensive international discourse on human rights and the promotion of peace and conflict resolution. This defines the rules for best practice, while examining limitations and failures and trying to distil general lessons from the different historical cases. The focus of this volume is, however, even narrower: it concentrates neither on transition in general nor on conflict resolution as such, but on the role that remembering and forgetting play in these processes.

Memory can play a key role in processes of change and transition because it is itself flexible and has a transformative quality. To make this point more explicit, we will start by outlining three methodological premises. The first premise is that individual memory is itself volatile and transient; it is constantly in flux. Collective memories are also essentially dynamic. This *plasticity of memory* has been much commented on by, for example, cognitive psychologists who emphasize memory's notorious unreliability. This can, however, also be conceived as a blessing. According to Daniel Schacter, 'human errors in recall' need not be called 'flaws in system design or blunders made by Mother Nature during evolution', they can also be acknowledged as 'by-products of adaptive features of memory'.[4] In exceptional cases such as rote learning, memory can lend itself to forms of exact recording, but in general it transforms knowledge in processes of continuous appropriation. Its capacity encompasses both obstinate retention and the readiness to fuse old information with new. As remembering always interacts with forgetting, there is no definite closure in the process. To put it in another way: the file of memory is never closed; it can always be reopened and reconstructed in new acts of remembering.

The second premise is that it is never the past itself that acts upon a present society, but *representations of past events* that are created, circulated and received within a specific cultural frame and political constellation. Personal memories are purely virtual until they are couched in words or images in order to be communicated. Collective memories are produced through mediated representations of the past that involve selecting, rearranging, re-describing and simplifying, as well as the deliberate, but also perhaps unintentional, inclusion and exclusion

of information. Mediation is closely related to 'belatedness', a term introduced and defined by Sigmund Freud. According to Freud's interpretation, belatedness means that for the subject there is no other reality but the one that is belated which has always already undergone a process of interpretation. What we encounter as reality is in fact the product of an act of interpretation. Thus, it follows that the relationship between the past and the present is constantly changing and open-ended. Disseminated by the mass media as interpretations or official definitions of historical events, representations are a powerful element in the construction, contestation and reconstruction of individual and collective memories.

The third premise is that *heterogeneous memories may coexist* in the individual as they do in society. Some of these memories interact with each other; others remain more or less unrelated. Some memories may exist side by side, while others are in painful states of dissonance, friction and rivalry. After political transition, the new state-installed framework for reconstructing and representing past events in the public arena may clash with other subsisting forms of memory. Individual memories are not easily overwritten and family stories are often preserved across generations through oral transmission. These may or may not be compatible with the official narrative that has been constructed in the aftermath of traumatic events.

These three premises lead us to the guiding hypothesis of this book: memory is not only susceptible to changes, it is itself *a powerful agent of change*. Accredited with the power of transforming our relationship to the past and the ability to revise former values and attitudes, memory can create new frames of action. By working through past hatreds and resentments, memory can contribute towards reconciliation and new forms of co-existence, opening up the possibility of a common future. A mere change of regime cannot in and of itself usher in a new social contract. In order to achieve reconciliation and social integration, the often oppositional generational and cultural memories also need to be respected, and/or adapted and/or contained. For this reason, it is important to study how citizens of various ethnic, social, political groups or generations remember or refer to their experiences of violence and repression or to their experiences of a non-democratic regime so that we can extend our knowledge on the relations between individual, social and political memory in transitional processes and change.

Andreas Huyssen also draws attention to memory's positive role in processes of change, noting: 'In the best practice scenario, the cultures of memory are intimately linked, in many parts of the world, to processes of democratization and struggles for human rights, to the expansion and

strengthening of the public spheres of civil society.'[5] But we must not forget that memories may also be an impediment to social and political change. Counter arguments have been raised to challenge overly optimistic readings. The most radical counter argument is that it is not remembering, but, in fact, forgetting, wiping the slate clean, which should be hailed as a formidable agent of change that ushers in social peace and integration.[6] Those who advocate forgetting in the aftermath of social rupture and excessive violence argue that, rather than being an agent of change and innovation, memory may actually impede change because it tends to stick to past wrongs and to revolve around unsettled scores. The chapters by Aleida Assmann, Susanne Buckley-Zistel and James Wertsch engage with these counter arguments and qualms, discussing the different political contexts of Spain, Rwanda and Russia.

At this point, it might be helpful to add two further premises in order to further clarify our direction. The fourth premise is that it is *not possible to neatly separate remembering and forgetting*. Every act of remembrance, whether individual or collective, necessarily involves selective, partial, or otherwise biased forms of forgetting. Sometimes, a short phase of forgetting may precede the search for historical truth; other times, as in South Africa or Rwanda, this search for truth is closed after a clearly limited time span. The problem which is posed does not take the form of a clear choice for either remembering or forgetting. Instead, we are faced with concrete choices about when, how and which events of the traumatic or guilty past will eventually be recalled and faced by individuals, community and state. As remembering and forgetting are both necessarily selective, the sincerity of the wish to overcome inveterate hostile or mutually suspicious dispositions seems to ultimately depend on a genuine agreement not to remember *everything*, but to publicly negotiate which of the problematic issues need to be addressed.

This brings us to our fifth and final methodological premise. Our reflections on memory as an agent of change may seem to suggest that memory itself is endowed with an inherent power of agency. This is, of course, not the case. In order to yield any effects, remembering and forgetting have to be tied to *human actors within cultural, political, institutional and social frames*. This book focuses thus precisely on these actors and on their contexts in the political production and management of change.

General factors of change

The rapidly growing field of memory research abounds with case studies that deal with the construction and reconstruction of memories and

with ongoing social, political and cultural contestations about redefining the past. Our focus here is, again, much narrower; we are not concerned with memory changes in general, but with the role of memory in temporally limited periods of transition, in which a government and a society undergo a constitutional change within a special legal framework. The political, legal, social and cultural process of 'transitioning' is a recent invention for which we do not yet have an extensive record of historical experience. Despite the fact that transition occurs in a controlled form and is assisted by formal measures, it has the character of an open experiment; we can never fully predict its outcome.

When we speak of change, we may talk of actors and factors that impinge upon the transition process. We shall outline some of the important concomitant factors that shape this process here.

Time is, of course, the first and foremost factor of change. Its specific power lies in transforming memory into oblivion. This process happens silently and automatically if no special precautions are taken to resist this drift towards fading. As already emphasized, memory is naturally transient; it tends to expire and disappear altogether, it does not stay put. Time is therefore an important concomitant factor of assisted political change. Although periods of transition are, formally, strictly limited in time, we still know little about the pace at which transition evolves on a social, cultural and an individual level. Only one thing is certain: these processes are not synchronous. Humans, buildings, objects, values, emotions, memories – all of these exist in discrepant temporalities, changing at different paces. The historical witness, for instance, is a liminal figure whose embodied memory connects two or three generations. Once the word of historical witnesses has vanished, the memory of a community relies exclusively on mediated representations of the past. This temporal shift from a communicative and intergenerational memory to a purely mediated long-term and transgenerational memory brings about a radical transformation in quality from a 'relative past' to an 'absolute past'.[7]

Trauma creates a paradoxical situation. In this case, time does not propel the disappearance but the (re-)emergence of memory. It leads from presence to disappearance, and then to reappearance. In such cases we speak of a period of latency, which literally means: 'hiddenness'. Time is not only a measure of pace, but also the dimension within which acts of remembering evolve and memories are reconstructed or consolidated. There is, for instance, a general notion that a certain interval of time has to pass before a society is ready to address issues of its violent past. While memory is always constructed retrospectively,

trauma engenders its own kind of belatedness. This is a form of blocking the flow of time and blurring of the boundaries between the past and the present. A therapeutic and restorative effect therefore consists in distancing overwhelming and menacing events by placing them 'in the past'.

Political regime change enforces an abrupt reorganization of memory by ushering in a new value system. Its most obvious external signs are the renaming of streets, along with a new selection of common obligatory reference points in the past for history textbooks and public commemorations. Abrupt value changes can even be introduced with the change of a political party. After Barack Obama took over office as President of the United States, his country appointed a Truth Commission to investigate the torture practices which had been employed during George W. Bush's administration. In administering this investigation, Obama drew a crucial dividing line by relegating an unquestioned status quo of the present into a distanced past.

The *social frame* also changes, causing memories to change with it; some change faster, some slower. Mentalities, social habitus and personal dispositions prove to be extremely persistent and enduring; they change at a much slower pace than political systems. If we take the case of Germany, some individuals, such as the historian Fritz Stern, have lived through 'five Germanys'.[8] Recalling these different Germanys in his memoir, Stern outlines that although he stuck to liberal democratic values throughout his life, the state in which he lived changed repeatedly beyond recognition. Scientific paradigms, lifestyles and fashions also change in rhythms of growing rapidity.

Generational change is another important factor for ushering in new social voices and visions. With the transition from one generation to another, we not only see a change of guard in the public sphere, but we can also see a shift in the frames of relevance and reference. As the experience of the older generation moves to the societal margins, becoming increasingly more obsolete (except for the exceptional role of the historical witness), the younger generation takes centre stage, unfolding a new horizon of shared experience. As they take over offices and assume a public voice, the arrival of a young generation in the public sphere may be accompanied by a rupture of a repressive silence which the older generation had maintained. In Spain, for example, as Aleida Assmann notes in her contribution in this volume, after the civil war in 1977, the first

and second generations opted for silence and forgetting in order to strengthen the new democracy. It was the third generation who turned into memory activists, becoming increasingly concerned with literally digging up the hidden crimes of the past, in particular after 2000.

Media Events also help to change memories and transform societies. The American TV series *Holocaust* (1978), for instance, profoundly changed the attitude of Germans towards the Jewish victims by opening up their blocked imagination and tapping their resources of empathy.[9] Similarly, but under rather different circumstances, Günter Grass' novel *Crabwalk* (2002) stimulated a public debate and a new emotional (as opposed to a political) interest in the historical events of flight and expulsion which German families experienced during the war and in the transgenerational impact of these events. Media events are not only important for turning the tide of attitudes and values but also for synchronizing public interest and homogenizing public collective historical memory.

Changes in memory's format and status

The quality of memory may also shift and change in a number of ways due to changes in discourse and media. We have already mentioned that media events may transform a diffuse and multivocal collective memory into a much more homogeneous one. The following outlines more of these changes:

The most salient change is certainly that *from silence* to *speaking out*, from a repressed or forgotten, to a recovered and socially circulated and shared memory.[10]

Directly related to this first distinction: *counter-memory* may change to *normative memory* which is generally acknowledged and officially recognized. In the transition process, the repressed voices of the victims move from oblivion to the centre of society. Individual memories of the victims create a new authoritative account of the nation's past, effectively transforming the nation's self-image as an 'imagined community'.[11]

Memories may move from *hot* to *cold* or vice versa. The thermostat metaphor has acquired some currency in memory discourse; it registers the difference between a *hot* and a *cold* memory. Charles Maier has also introduced a metaphor from nuclear science, the 'half-life', into memory studies.[12] What, we may ask, makes a memory hot rather than cold? How are hot memories cooled down or cold memories

heated up? Under what circumstances does a memory resonate with the society, and when is it relegated to the past or delegated to specialists?

The change from *memory* to *history* can take place under various conditions. Firstly, an event becomes the exclusive property of professional historians when there are no witnesses left to tell its story; it recedes into the distance. Secondly, when historical events which once captivated the public imagination and which were rehearsed in monuments and rituals lose their emotional grip, they become the object of scholarly investigation. Thirdly, the shift takes place when historians engage with national myths, analysing and deconstructing these as figments of a self-serving collective imagination.

Memory may also change status, shifting from *short-term* to *long-term* memory. We may also define this change as one from embodied communicative memory to symbolically encoded cultural memory.[13] It is accompanied by other parameters, such as the shift from a memory community with a narrow range of participation, to an anonymous one with a wide scope. It may also be brought about by a change in media, moving from embodied to 'prosthetic memory'[14] in a written, visual or digitized form that can be stored in archives and exhibited in museums.

Memory may also move from *informal* or *ephemeral* to *public, monumental* or *ritual* forms. This type of change makes durability and stability its distinctive feature. The first private and intimate memorials of the Holocaust which were erected by family members at Mount Zion in Jerusalem and which were later dismantled and integrated into the national Yad Vashem Memorial offer a fitting example of this.

There are other changes in the status of a memory, for example, it may change from *private* to *public*; *unofficial* to *official*; *normative* to *counter-memory*; *local* to *global*; *national* to *transnational*; *universal* and so on. These are all manifestations of the changing quality of memory, and they testify to different phases in the larger social, political and cultural processes of transition. When we speak of transformations of memory, we must emphasize the important role played by the media and the institutions which store, preserve, display and circulate information, such as archives, museums and libraries. Truth commissions, for instance, rely heavily on archival material; in order to produce a new representation of the past, new evidence has to be unearthed from the archives. It is difficult to install and to prop up a new vision of the past

in states where the archives are sealed or in post-dictatorship countries where the material traces of state crimes have been destroyed. Changes in historical memories that are caused by shifts in the political structure of a state and its society will not only affect public rituals, monuments and educational programmes, but they also impact upon the content of archives, libraries and museums; these institutions move from being controlled by the state to public institutions which are accessible to and owned by the community.

The architecture of this book

Memory deserves more attention as an actor of change and factor of social integration – or indeed disintegration – in periods of transition. The following chapters investigate the role of memory, its changes and transformative power in this open-ended process. The central questions asked here are: how do post-trauma societies deal with the legacy of a violent past? What are the benefits of remembering and/or forgetting for coping with such an experience? Can a reassessment of a traumatic and guilty past enhance the process of repairing the broken or frayed texture of social bonds? Can a shared acceptance of the burdened past help to rebuild trust and to provide a sustainable ground for a common future?

   These questions are discussed in each of the four parts which provide the thematic structure of the volume. Part I, 'Transgenerational Transmission', deals with the experience of transition from the point of view of individuals who are part of a succession of generations which originates with World War II and the Holocaust. The two chapters in this part examine the difficult psychological and emotional legacy of trauma, guilt and shame from the perspective of both the victims and perpetrators. Gabriele Schwab's chapter uses psychoanalytical readings of literary texts to discuss the phenomenon of 'replacement children' in Jewish families. A replacement child is a child born to Jewish survivors after 1945 which is unconsciously identified by its parents with an older child that was lost in the Holocaust. Schwab analyses the psychic dynamics of the replacement mechanism which transfers the parental trauma onto the sibling, destroying their unique and individual identity. As Schwab highlights, uncovering and confronting the family secret and breaking through the silence which has deformed the family structure is a step on the path towards healing. By remembering and mourning the loss, the identity of the second child can be restored as this reaffirms the distance between the generations. Gudrun Brockhaus

addresses the topic of transgenerational transmission in the context of post-war Germany. She reconstructs the changing frames of political and social memory between 1945 and the present from the point of view of social psychology, registering three stages in the process of facing the atrocities of the national past. Reflecting on the establishment of Holocaust education in German schools, public media and commemoration culture, which, to a large extent, was the achievement of the 1968er generation, she also calls attention to perplexing effects of the emotional legacy of the Nazi past which continues to linger in the third and fourth generations.

In Part II, 'Instruments of Change', the focus shifts to political strategies and coping measures employed in the transition process. Particular attention is paid here to the role of both remembering and forgetting. Aleida Assmann opens this part, examining a recent trend in German memory discourse which privileges forgetting over remembering as the more effective remedy for coping with a violent past. Exploring the healing and damaging effects of both options, Assmann argues for remembering, but concedes that shorter periods of forgetting often precede the transformative stage of the transition process. She uses post–World War II Germany and post–Civil War Spain as case studies to illustrate the complex interplay between remembering and forgetting, outlining partial overlaps in forms of selective remembering and partial forgetting. The two other contributions in this part are from political scientists. Susanne Buckley-Zistel deals with the case of post-genocide Rwanda, exploring how both remembering and forgetting have been prioritized here. While remembering is recognized as an important framing condition for coming to terms with the past on behalf of the new state, forgetting is often chosen on the local level to facilitate peaceful coexistence within the community. Introducing the important term 'chosen amnesia', Buckley-Zistel examines how this practice pacifies the immediate post-war situation, while acting as an impediment to psychic change and real social transition and preserving the dangerous emotional complex in the form of a 'time bomb'. Brigitte Weiffen's chapter reviews the national and international tools and strategies which were developed to deal with a violent past, assessing various transition policies including political, legal, material and symbolic measures. Weiffen reconstructs in a systematic and comparative manner the short history of the new tools and institutions, critically assessing their potential in the promotion of democracy and peace.

Part III, 'Re-Imagining the Past for the Future', deals with fictional and autobiographical responses to the political imperative of change.

It focuses on the important role that literature can play in changing deeply entrenched and stereotypical views about the past by practising the art of empathetic listening. As literary representations may achieve the status of shared reflexive images that have the power to impinge on individual memories, values and attitudes, they exert a vital impact on the social imaginary. Novels and films with their often equivocal agenda, have, in particular, greatly extended the access and impact of such creative re-imagining, not only presenting and reflecting on, but also actively intervening in the transition process. Linda Shortt opens this part with a chapter which brings together the concepts of generation, memory and transition. Analysing recent literary texts by Jana Hensel, a young author from former East Germany, Shortt critically engages with her attempts to re-imagine East Germany and East German identity twenty years after the fall of the Wall. Exploring how Hensel uses literature to mobilize an 'authentic' East German memory against the formulaic memory industry of post-unification Germany, Shortt examines the links between this quest for authenticity and the familiar discourse of East Germans as victims. Monika Reif-Huelser also explores the relationship between generation and memory on the basis of recent literary texts. Through her readings of contemporary South African literature by Nadine Gordimer, J. M. Coetzee and Malika Lueen Ndlovu, Reif-Huelser focuses on gender and genre, investigating how these South African writers from different generations, cultural traditions and ethnic backgrounds frame and reassess the historic shift of 'South African transition' in the literary imagination. In the final chapter in this part, Anja Schwarz turns to Australia, examining two recent novels by the Australian author Kate Grenville which are located between (family) history, memory and fiction. Writing from the point of view of a descendant of the settlers, in the novels which are analysed here, Grenville re-imagines Australia's colonial past for a shared future, marking two opposite commemorative positions which are related to the different memory politics of the Howard and Rudd governments. Schwarz discusses Grenville's use of historical sources, the limits and self-restraints imposed on the literary imagination, and the obstacles involved in creating a dialogical engagement with the troubled past. She emphasizes that, despite serious cruces and difficulties, literary fiction can make a significant contribution to enhance the capacity for ethical listening and 'empathetic unsettlement'.

The last part, 'Resistance to Change', looks at some of the more and, indeed, less obvious ways in which memories may act as impediments to change. Memories may defy change on a variety of levels: on the level of conscious constructions of national myths, of subconscious attitudes

and deeply internalized national scripts, and of embodied cultural frames. James V. Wertsch opens this part with a chapter on the 'deep memory' of contemporary Russia. As a social anthropologist, Wertsch examines the underlying codes and recurrent patterns that generate and shape collective identity. He identifies the persistence of certain national narratives, analysing their function for the reproduction of a specific Russian self-image. His point is that such narrative templates (which Wertsch also refers to as 'collective DNA') are highly resistant to change, and, for this reason, they function as political and historical self-interpretations across major historical breaks. Nutsa Batiashvili builds on this conceptual framework, employing the national narrative template as an interpretive tool to unravel disputes and discussions on how history is being re-written in post-Soviet Georgia to construct a new and self-supporting collective identity. Showing how collective frameworks and an enduring sense of 'Georgianness' shape imaginaries of the past and the future, she analyses how these national narratives seem to both inform and impede transition in Georgia. In the final chapter of Part IV, Angela H. Gutchess and Maya Siegel adopt a neurological approach to memory psychology. They offer an introduction to a new and nascent branch of memory research which investigates the interrelationship between memory and culture. Using the results of experimental test cases, they outline specific ways in which culture impacts on memory content, on memory strategies and on memory organization.

To bring this introduction to a close, we would like to remind readers of a telling scene from the *Peanuts* comic strip where Linus and Charlie Brown are leaning on a fence, talking. When Linus says, 'I guess it's wrong to be worrying about tomorrow, maybe we should think only about today', Charlie Brown replies, 'No, that's giving up', and he continues: 'I'm still hoping yesterday will get better!' Assessing the transitional processes that are the subject of this book, we may say that they nourish Charlie Brown's paradoxical hope. In common opinion, we associate the work of memory with the past. This, however, is not the full story. The various chapters of this volume, which collect perspectives from various disciplines and methodologies, testify that memory is a powerful agent of change and that the past is an essential resource for the future. As Halbwachs pointed out there is a close connection between history, memory and identity. Jay Winter summed up this position in the 'Foreword' change the collective, then stories (and identities) change. Today, we know that this also works the other way round: change the stories and the identity of the collective will change. It is true, of course, that the events of the past cannot be changed. But our perception, our narratives, our memory constructs of these events

can, as can the identity of a state, a society and/or a person. In post-conflict societies, these transformations may help to restructure and integrate societies torn in violent conflict, overcoming chasms of hatred and laying the foundation for a new future.

Notes

1. Andreas Huyssen (2000), 'Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia', *Public Culture*, 12 (1), 21–38, here 26.
2. Charles Baudelaire, 'Le peintre de la vie moderne', in Claude Pichois (ed.), *Oeuvres completes* (Paris: Bibliothèque de Pléiade), vol. II, pp. 683–724, here p. 695.
3. Organized by Ulf Hannerz, this conference was held at the International Research Center for Cultural Studies in Vienna in October 2010. It was announced in: *IFKnow*, 2 (2010), 26.
4. Daniel L. Schacter (2000), 'The Seven Sins of Memory: Perspectives from Functional Neuroimaging', in Endel Tulving (ed.), *Memory, Consciousness and the Brain* (London and Philadelphia: Psychology Press), pp. 119–37, here p. 120.
5. Huyssen (2000), 36.
6. Christian Meier (2010), *Das Gebot zu vergessen und die Unabweisbarkeit des Erinnerns. Vom öffentlichen Umgang mit schlimmer Vergangenheit* (Munich: Siedler Verlag).
7. For more information on this, see Reinhart Koselleck (1985), *Futures Past. On the Semantics of Historical Time*, translated by Keith Tribe (New York, NY: Columbia University Press).
8. Fritz Stern (2007), *Fünf Deutschländer und ein Leben* (Munich: C.H. Beck).
9. Wulf Kansteiner (2006), 'The Radicalization of German Collective Memory in the Age of Its Commercial Reproduction: Hitler and the Third Reich in the TV Documentaries of Guido Knopp', in *In Pursuit of German Memory. History, Television, and Politics after Auschwitz* (Athens: Ohio University Press), pp. 154–80. See also Gudrun Brockhaus' chapter in this volume.
10. On breaking the silence, see the edited collection by Ruth Wodak and Gertraud Auer Borea d'Olmo (2009), *Justice and Memory. Confronting Traumatic Pasts. An International Comparison* (Vienna: Passagen Verlag).
11. See Benedict Anderson (1983), *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, revised edition 2006).
12. Charles Maier (2001), 'Hot Memory…Cold Memory: On the Political Half-Life of Nazism and Communism', accessible at http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/maier2/English, accessed 9 September 2010.
13. Jan Assmann (2008), 'Communicative and Cultural Memory', in Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning (eds), *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter), pp. 109–18.
14. Alison Landsberg (2004), *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press).

Part I
Transgenerational Transmission

1
Replacement Children: The Transgenerational Transmission of Traumatic Loss

Gabriele Schwab

One of the best-known replacement children born after the Shoah to Jewish parents is perhaps political cartoonist Art Spiegelman, who grew up with the sense that he was competing with his 'ghost-brother' Richieu.[1] We learn about this ghost-brother in *Maus*, an experimental memoir written as a cartoon that features the Jewish people as mice and the Nazis as cats or pigs. Dedicated to Richieu and his mother Nadja, *Maus* opens with a photograph of Richieu. In the following exchange with Art's wife Françoise, we learn that this photograph served as the single most tangible object of Art's rivalry with his ghost-brother.

'I wonder if Richieu and I would get along if he was still alive.'

'Your brother?'

'My Ghost-Brother, since he got killed before I was born. He was only five or six. After the war my parents traced down the vaguest rumors, and went to orphanages all over Europe. They couldn't believe he was dead. I didn't think about him much when I was growing up . . . he was mainly a large blurry photograph hanging in my parents' bedroom.'

'Uh-huh. I thought that was a picture of you, though it didn't *look* like you.'

'That's the point. They didn't need photos of me in their room. I was *alive!* . . . The photo never threw tantrums or got into any kind of trouble . . . It was an ideal kid, and *I* was a pain in the ass. I couldn't compete. They didn't talk about Richieu, but that photo was a kind of reproach. *He*'d have become a *doctor*, and married a wealthy Jewish

girl . . . the creep. But at least we could've made *him* deal with Vladek. It's *spooky*, having sibling rivalry with a snapshot! I never felt guilty about Richieu. But I did have nightmares about S.S. men coming into my class and dragging all us Jewish kids away.'[2]

Presented in a nutshell, this short dialogue contains the most prominent symptoms of a replacement child. The brother is a 'ghost-brother', killed before the replacement brother is born. The parents refuse to accept their firstborn's death and never mourn him properly because 'they couldn't believe he was dead'. Even though they do not talk much about Richieu, he appears omnipresent. He becomes larger than life through silence and idealization. Prominently displayed as a constant reminder, Richieu's photograph soon begins to function, according to Art, as a kind of tacit reproach. The replacement child confronts the bitter irony that the ideal child is a dead child. Richieu becomes the container for his parents' fantasies: their dead son Richieu would have fulfilled all their dreams, while Art, their living child, fails them. It is impossible to compete with a dead child, and yet one cannot avoid the ghostly competition handed down with parental fantasies. This tacit competition with a dead sibling is a classic syndrome of replacement children. It is also a prevalent form in which parental trauma is transmitted to the next generation and often to generations to come. Art says he does not feel guilty, yet he feels the parental unspoken reproach via Richieu's photograph and he has nightmares that place him in his brother's shoes. In anger at the rival who does everything right, he does not hesitate to call Richieu a creep. At the same time, however, he also harbours the fantasy that Richieu could at least have shared or taken over the burden of the survivor trauma of Art's father Vladek that continues to impact on Art's life in profound ways.

   Art's reflections in *Maus* also raise the troubled question of how children 'remember' events that they did not personally experience, but which were received second hand from their parents. In *Family Frames*, Marianne Hirsch coins the term 'postmemory' to designate the vicarious transmission of such memory. While those who actually live through trauma are often left with gaps, holes or distortions of memory, the second generation receives traumatic memories differently: 'Postmemory – often obsessive and relentless – need not be absent or evacuated: it is as full and as empty, certainly as constructed, as memory itself.'[3] While victims of trauma live with the scars of memory so to speak – gaps, amnesia, distortion, revision, or even fugue states or intrusive flashbacks – the recipients of transgenerational trauma need to patch together a history

that they have not experienced by employing whatever props they can find including photographs and stories or letters. While Hirsch reads *Maus* as a gendered collaborative narrative of father and son that consigns the mother to 'double dying',[4] I emphasize instead Art's 'impossible psychological birth' as not only the recipient of his father's traumatic narrative, but also his 'replacement child' destined to make up for the loss of his firstborn son Richieu.

There is a particular ghostly dimension in Spiegelman's rendition of his life story that inverts history and fantasy. By contrast to Art, who figures as one of the mice in the tale, Richieu appears as a photograph. In Art's life, this photograph made him into the ghost-brother who, despite his overpowering presence, could never become *real*. By contrast, in Art's comic book, Richieu is afforded a relatively higher degree of reality than the other characters that, compared to a real photographic representation, remain after all cartoon characters. Moreover, Françoise's confession that she thought the photograph depicted Art as a child literalizes a confusion that operates throughout Art's life at a psychic level. The extent of the confusion of the boundaries between Art and Richieu and their separate identities becomes explicit for the first time in the dying father's last words. Speaking to Art, he says: 'I'm *tired* from talking, Richieu, and it's enough stories for now.'[5]

The figure of the replacement child also points to another symptom of traumatic legacies, namely, a particular form of haunting that generates the phenomenon of 'death-in-life'. In *Against the Unspeakable: Complicity, the Holocaust, and Slavery in America*, Naomi Mandel reads the figure of Art in *Maus* as a 'speaking corpse'. Referring to the passage where Art accuses his mother of having killed him with her suicide, she concludes that 'the stories of the living do not stand for the absent stories of the dead, they *are* the stories of the dead'.[6] In a complicated dialectics of identification, substitution and complicity, those who survive and bear testimony to the Holocaust often occupy, Mandel argues, the figural position of a speaking corpse. This puts a new spin on Art's role as a replacement child. In conflating his living child Art with his dead child Richieu, Art's father Vladek symbolically condemns Art to a position of 'death-in-life'. In his reading of *Maus*, Michael G. Levine argues: 'While Art is symbolically killed by his father's slip of the tongue, Richieu is revived as the addressee of his father's last words. This role reversal suggests that Vladek's testimony will have been addressed not merely to the living and the dead, but to the living *as* the dead.'[7]

According to Freud, 'death-in-life' is also a condition of melancholia that afflicts those with an inability to mourn. The latter, in turn, is not

only an individual form of foreclosed mourning and grief, it can also afflict entire communities or countries. Tropes such as 'death-in-life' or the 'speaking corpse' can therefore also be read as figurations of a traumatic foreclosure of mourning or a communal, if not national, inability to mourn such as the one that Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich (1967) have diagnosed in post-war Germany, describing as one of its debilitating effects a pervasive paralysis and deadening of intellectual, mental and emotional life. It takes art or literature to 'embody' this symptomatic condition of a traumatic legacy, and it is this very embodiment that can, almost paradoxically, become the basis for reawakening psychic life.

Historically, trauma studies have tended to over-value time at the expense of space. Abraham and Torok introduced the first influential shift in this tendency with their concept of the crypt, which is itself a time-space-concept, a 'chronotope'.[8] In addition to the burial of life in a psychic crypt, there is a further chronotopic dimension that, while relevant to trauma in general, assumes a specific role in the concept of the replacement child. It is related to the no-place and no-time of trauma that functions as a negative chronotope, that is, the chronotope of 'the nothing' of trauma. Replacement children often literally know *nothing* about the child they are supposed to replace. Sometimes, they may not even be aware of its existence. They are supposed to fill an emptiness, a nothing. This is true even in cases where they are handed down stories (or pictures) of the child who died under tragic circumstances. After all, the dead child remains 'nothing' in the sense that it never acquires a real presence. It is a ghost that haunts the living from a no-place.

At the level of discourse, the representation of the dead child often remains a 'no-place' too, that is, a gap, created either by parental silence or by fragmentary or distorted narratives replete with foreclosure or denial. At the level of fantasy, by contrast, the replacement child is destined to take the place of the dead sibling and thus undo his or her death. This fantasy operates, of course, unconsciously. It is therefore entirely possible that parents tell the story of their child's tragic death, while, at the same time, continuing to deny it unconsciously. Since the replacement child is the recipient not only of the parents' conscious discourse, but also of their unconscious fantasy, this child inherits the legacy of his or her sibling's traumatic death and the failed mourning. This dynamic is part of the process that transmits the psychic life of trauma across generations.

In recent decades, a rich psychoanalytic literature has emerged that describes the particular identity problems of so-called replacement children. The role they are assigned in parental fantasies is intimately tied to

traumatic loss. But there is more at stake, namely, a culture's changing relationship to loss, death, mortality and mourning. The rational impossibility of replacing a human being has never prevented parents from developing fantasies of a replacement child. What I want to address here is a psychic, often unconscious economy of seriality and substitution. Since, in the unconscious, the boundaries between discrete entities are permeable, and affective energies flow freely between them, people may also become exchangeable. Most of us have dreams that condense very different people into one and the same figure. Similarly, our unconscious affective economy can condense different children into one and the same child, regardless of their concrete biological or psychic differences. Psychoanalytic theories of 'replacement children' are based on extensive clinical work with children who experience psychological problems related to the fact that they were meant to replace a child that had died before they were born.

In an essay titled 'The Replacement Child: Variations on a Theme in History and Psychoanalysis', Leon Anisfeld and Arnold Richards provide a provisional definition:

> In the narrowest sense, a replacement child is a child born to parents who have had a child die and then conceive the second child in order to fill the void left by the loss of the first. . . . The psychological dynamics of the parents, who have themselves survived the trauma of the real or symbolic death of a child, mediate between the sick or deceased child and the sibling who is his or her surrogate.[9]

The replacement child is then conceived and born in response to a traumatic death that cuts off the path to mourning and grief. Unconsciously taking in their parents' fantasies, these children often grow up in confusion about their identity and sometimes even about their gender. Supposed to live someone else's life, they never quite come into their own. The death of a child is always a wound and an outrage, an improper death, a death that haunts parents, siblings or entire communities. Parents are not supposed to survive their children; this is why they are unconsciously compelled to try to undo for themselves and their affective life what should not be.

Substituting for a traumatic loss, the replacement child carries the legacy of a traumatic family history, if not a traumatic collective history. Many of the children born after histories of violence, war and genocide may, as Anisfeld and Richards show, collectively embody the fate of replacement children: '[A] child born to Holocaust survivors

replaces not simply a specific dead child or ancestor, but all those who have perished'.[10] Here, replacement children become the recipients of a transgenerational transmission of the trauma of the Holocaust. They are haunted by a death or even millions of deaths they have never directly experienced. The experience of death comes to them second hand, so to speak, through its impact on their parents. It comes in the form of moods or emotions, taking on many shapes, including grief or anxiety, hyper-vigilance or numbness, emotional unavailability or uncontrolled rage. Analysing the fantasies of replacement children, Vamik Volkan (1997) speaks of 'deposit representations', that is, representations of self or others deposited into the child's developing self-representation by traumatized parents. It is in the form of such representations that replacement children carry the legacy of a parental or generational distortion of mourning after traumatic histories.

Rather than functioning as protective shields against trauma for their children, traumatized parents transmit their own trauma transgenerationally in the form of what Masud Khan (1963) calls 'cumulative trauma'. A replacement child himself, Anisfeld describes how he was reminded of the children his own father lost in the Holocaust 'not because they were ever spoken about but because of his father's periodic "absences" or dream-like escapes from the present into the past. Thus his father's fugue states became Anisfeld's psychic reality'.[11] In 'Children of the Holocaust and Their Children's Children', Virag argues that replacement children grow up in 'unconscious identification with the persecuted or exterminated members of the family . . . . The symptoms, the play activity, the dreams, and fantasies of the children made it very clear that they knew about the family "secrets" '.[12] Rather than being properly mourned, the lost child has been magically restored to life in the parents' fantasy by a replacement child. As a result of distorted mourning and its pseudo-resolution, the child substitute will accordingly be haunted by identity trouble, often in the form of a pseudo-identity.

Anisfeld and Richards highlight the high frequency of identity disturbances in Jewish children of the post-war generation. Similar phenomena can be observed in children born in the aftermath of histories of violence such as colonialism, slavery, war or genocide more generally. Andrea Sabbadini argues that a replacement child is 'treated more as the embodiment of a memory than as a person in its own right'.[13] Survivor guilt is a common response in replacement children. Their life, they feel, is owed to the death of another. James Herzog sees mourning as a precondition for the healing of transgenerational trauma. Only after

the work of mourning is completed is it possible that 'survivors, children of survivors, and their children can remember, but not relive, and concentrate on the difficult task of being'.[14]

It is important to remember that this dynamic is not restricted to the victims of violence and their children. It also holds for perpetrators and their children, albeit in different ways. As a rule, the denial, splitting off and repression of violent histories is often even more pronounced in perpetrators than in victims, and this repression will also inevitably come to haunt their descendants. The case of post-war Germany provides a vivid illustration of an almost 50-year long attempt at silencing, followed by a floodgate of attempts to work through the legacy of the past. In the German case, this process is further complicated by the fact that the experiential generation may occupy a double role, belonging both to the nation in whose name the Holocaust was perpetrated and to the victims of acts of brutal retaliation, air raids, massive civilian casualties, destruction of cities, mass rapes of women and years of famine. Since young children were prominent amongst the civilian casualties, post-war Germany has generated many histories of replacement children. In these histories, the psychic life is inextricably bound up in a history of violence.[15] While the symptoms of replacement children, and of war trauma more generally, are collectively shared legacies of war, their transmission operates individually and must be traced specifically in the psychic life of each particular child in order to understand how parental fantasies affect the self-representation of a replacement child.

Philippe Grimbert's bestseller *Un secret* (2004; translated as *Secret*, 2008),[16] a recent memoir about replacement children, depicts this process of a transgenerational transmission of the traumatic death of a child to a replacement child in its minute psychological ramifications. Born in Paris in 1948, Philippe Grimbert grew up with his parents as an only child. It was inexplicable for him why he repeatedly succumbed to an unrelenting obsession with an imaginary companion throughout his childhood and his teenage years, obsessing about a brother who, in his fantasies, had everything he lacked: physical strength, endurance and the love of his father. Throughout his lonely childhood as an outsider in his family and at school, Philippe fed this intense preoccupation with an imaginary brother, engaging in nightly imaginary fights with him and, at times, in involuntary moments of tenderness and attraction. Louise, a close family friend who was almost part of the family group, appears to have been the only person with whom he had an intimate connection during that time, and he spent many hours with her, sharing his stories and confiding in her his thoughts, worries and hurts. When Philippe

was 15 years old, Louise revealed the family secret to him that his parents had anxiously guarded: their Jewish identity. This was a fact that he had never known or even guessed. The most important revelation, however, was that he had had an older brother who was killed in Auschwitz when he was only ten years old; he had died along with his mother Tania, Philippe's aunt who had been his father's first wife.

Nearly half a century later, Philippe Grimbert, now a French author and psychoanalyst, decided to write down this haunting family story that was profoundly shaped by this family secret.

As the narrator, Grimbert describes the revelation of the family secret as a transformational experience that would determine the entire trajectory of his life: 'Barely had the news fallen from Louise's lips that my new identity started changing me. I was still the same boy but also someone new, someone mysteriously stronger' (*S*, p. 57). In the weeks following Louise's revelation, Philippe traces the trajectory of his parents' life backwards and experiences 'an exodus that took me away from those I loved' (*S*, p. 59). He takes the shards and fragments of Louise's story to spin his own and, after a hiatus of 50 years, writes his own story of his parents' imagined life. 'I unwound the tangle of their lives and, much as I had invented myself a brother, created from scratch the meeting of the two bodies from which I was born, as if I were writing a novel' (*S*, p. 25). Tropes of haunting guide Philippe's narrative: 'The brother I had invented, who had put an end to my solitude, this ghostly big brother had actually existed' (*S*, p. 60). 'Three dead people loomed out of the shadows. I heard their names for the first time: Robert, Hannah and Simon' (*S*, p. 59).

Simon, Philippe's brother, was the child his father Maxime had had with his first wife, Hannah. Hannah, in turn, had a brother called Robert, who was married to Tania, the woman who eventually became Maxime's second wife and Philippe's mother. After Hannah and Simon were sent to Auschwitz, Maxime and Tania began their secret, illicit relationship. At this point, Tania's husband Robert was fighting at the front, but he died from an infection and never returned. Maxime and Tania married and eventually had Philippe, the son who, for Maxime, was supposed to replace his first son killed in Auschwitz. Guilt plays a huge role in this family story. Families and friends saw the union of Philippe's parents as a betrayal of those who were sent to the camps or to the war front. Philippe, the offspring of this union, not only inherits this guilt, but also the guilt of feeling that he owes his life to the death of another, his brother.

Did Philippe know without knowing? The obsession with his imaginary brother testifies to an unconscious knowledge. Obviously, his parents have passed their stories and memories onto him without ever speaking to him openly about them. Unwittingly, they transmitted the secret through unconscious channels to the next generation. Philippe thus became a vessel for his parents' unconscious, the bearer of their traumatic history. Uncanny signs of Philippe's unconscious knowledge pervade the story, revealed most viscerally in the anecdote when Philippe discovers his brother's stuffed toy dog amid the things buried in the attic. This key scene in Grimbert's memoir testifies to the generative formation of unconscious knowledge. When Philippe's mother opens an old suitcase, he discovers the dusty toy dog on a pile of blankets. Spontaneously, he snatches the dog to cuddle him, but when he notices his mother's sudden shock and discomfort, he puts it back. This is the very incident that triggers the invention of his imaginary brother. 'That night, for the first time, I rubbed my wet cheek against a brother's chest. He had just come into my life; I would take him with me everywhere' (*S*, p. 5). The invention of the imaginary brother is then already a response to the mother's trauma that Philippe receives indirectly in the form of his perception of her sudden shock. But it is a response that cannot be shared with the mother and remains relegated to secrecy. Although Philippe will not learn the family secret for a number of years, it nonetheless generates distance and loneliness, because he does apprehend that there is something in his mother's strong reaction that is withheld from him and that becomes unspeakable between them. Family secrets always create distance and loneliness.

During their second visit to the attic, Philippe appropriates the dog and instantly proceeds to call him Si(m),[17] a diminutive and indeed cryptonym of his dead brother's name that he never knew. This utterly uncanny knowledge can only have been generated unconsciously, perhaps by unwittingly picking up a name that had been hushed up. 'Where did I get that name? From the dusty smell of his fur? The silences of my mother, my father's sadness? Si, Si! I walked my dog all around the flat, not wanting to notice my parents' distress when they heard me calling his name' (*S*, p. 14). The family enters into a pact of silence where each member knows more than they are willing to acknowledge. From that moment on, they will relate to each other through the veil of a tacit and indeed uncanny knowledge, covering the unspeakable death of a child that cannot be properly mourned. The family secret silences the entire violent and traumatic history.

Many years later, after Louise's revelation, Philippe, in turn, opts for silence, deciding not to reveal his knowledge to his parents. 'The silence was going to continue, and I couldn't imagine what might make me decide to break it. I was trying, in my turn, to protect them' (*S*, p. 61). However, as in the case of Philippe's parents, this false sense of protection afforded to family secrets is set to backfire. In Philippe's case, his relationship to his imaginary brother changes dramatically: unable to feel sorry for him, he experiences a silent rage that makes him instantly feel guilty. When Louise confirms the image he had created of a strong and healthy brother who was unconditionally loved and admired by his father, Philippe experiences the pangs of a cruel jealousy. 'Louise had painted a portrait of a seductive child, very sure of his power, identical to the one who crushed me every day. Fully aware of the horror of my desire, I would have loved to feed that image to the flames' (*S*, p. 63). Philippe senses that in order to live his life on his own terms he would have to symbolically kill his brother: aware that he died in the ovens of Auschwitz and wishing to see his brother's image go up in flames, Philippe repeats the crime of the perpetrators on a symbolic level. This is a deed that leaves him crushed under an unfathomable guilt. He becomes engaged in a struggle with the dead that he can never win: 'I couldn't have known that one can never beat the dead' (*S*, p. 66). Increasingly, Philippe sees his life less as his own than as a repetition of his brother's life:

> Simon also knew the shop in the rue du Bourg-l'Abbe. He too climbed the stairs, ran along the corridors, explored the stockroom ... He played at working the till, helped serve the customers ... I'd been repeating his actions without knowing it. He'd drunk the same hot chocolate in Louise's rooms, sharing his worries and dreams. (*S*, p. 78)

After the revelation, it is as if the relationship between the real and the imaginary brother had been inverted; Philippe's life in his own inner perception more and more resembles an imaginary life, a shadow life of Simon's. When he finally discovers an old photo of Simon, he recognizes himself in his brother's image: 'At last I had seen Simon: photos of him filled several pages. His face seemed strangely familiar. I could see myself in those features, if not that body' (*S*, p. 136).

Unknowingly, Philippe's guilt also operates as a re-enactment of the parental guilt: forming their union and conceiving Philippe as their new child, they symbolically replaced his dead brother. In the logic of the unconscious, such a replacement is a paradoxical form of murder: the

dead child is killed, yet kept alive in the new child who will have to carry the dead child inside himself like a living ghost. This is directly thematized in the memoir:

> Permanently damaged by having abandoned him to his fate, and guilty of having built their happiness on his disappearance, my parents had kept him out of sight. I was being squashed by this inherited shame, much as I was beneath the body that ruled over mine each night.
>
> I hadn't realized that it was he who my father saw beyond my narrow chest and spindly legs: that son, his sculptor's model, his interrupted dream. When I was born it was Simon who they'd put once more into his arms, the dream of a child he could mould in his own image. (*S*, pp. 64–5)

Simon's symbolic murder is not only re-enacted by Philippe's birth, it is also re-enacted in the family's silence, that is, their attempt to erase his history. 'Without meaning to, they had wiped him off the list of deaths and also of lives, repeating what his murderers had done but out of love' (*S*, p. 65). 'Simon and Hannah, obliterated twice over: by the hatred of their persecutors and the love of their family' (*S*, p. 65).

Transference, delegation and displacement are crucial to liberation from a secret that covers up the loss of a child and the guilt associated with it. This process is often facilitated by transformational objects, that is, objects that both evoke and contain, or even bind, the emotions that would otherwise be overwhelming. In Grimbert's narrative, mourning is facilitated by a systematic sequential displacement of emotions attached to the dead child onto a companion animal, first Simon's toy dog Si, then Philippe's puppy Echo, and finally the dogs of a perpetrator, buried in a dog cemetery that is reminiscent of a cemetery for children. In the first instance, Si, the stuffed animal, functions as both a transferential and a transformational object. When Philippe's parents see him interact with Simon's toy, they unconsciously transfer the repressed affects that belong to Simon – mourning and guilt – onto Philippe. Later they replace Si with a real dog, Echo, who, in turn, dies one day when Maxime fails to prevent him from running into a car. Suffering from an unrelenting guilt, Maxime falls into inconsolable grief. Philippe is the one who uncovers the second displacement: his father's feelings of responsibility for Echo's death allow him to recognize that he is dealing with a displaced guilt about Simon's death. The awareness of this displacement finally releases Philippe's father from his unconscious guilt.

And yet, the dog's name Echo leaves a haunting trace, the imprint of unconscious naming. If this real dog, supposed to replace a ghostly toy, cannot but be the echo of the real Si (Simon), isn't Philippe himself caught in the echo chamber of dead names that have become unspeakable, but seem to re-emerge from nowhere, like in Philippe's originary naming of the toy dog, Si?

Grimbert's narrative is structured like a quest in which names and naming become signposts of an unconscious trajectory. It begins with the unearthing of a ghost-brother who was the victim of a violent death, followed by a long period of failed mourning that killed him a second time. It ends with the proper burial of this brother by the one who inherited the impossible task of replacing him. *Secret* is also the story of Philippe's belated coming of age, if not, indeed, the belated psychological birth of this replacement child. This birth cannot happen without a proper burial for the original child who was supposed to be replaced. Following the logic of this psychic economy, Grimbert's narrative ends appropriately with a scene at a cemetery that leads to the birth of the memoir. The latter not only inaugurates, but also traces the narrator's psychological birth. The narrative unfolds in recursive loops around family secrets, their revelation and finally their psychic integration. Rather than merely *describing* this psychological birth, Grimbert's narrative *enacts* it. Even after the secret about his brother's existence and violent death is revealed, Philippe remains haunted by the gaps and holes in the narrative. 'There remained a gap in my story, a chapter whose contents were not known even to my parents' (*S*, p. 139). It is as if Philippe needed to symbolically descend into the crypt[18] in which his brother had been buried alive for too long. He consults the research and documentation centre established by Serge and Beate Klarsfeld as part of the *Memorial* in the Marais in Paris. During his archival work, Philippe unearths bare facts and numbers: the number of the train, the date of Simon's death and the names of men, women and children deported to Auschwitz. There, he comes across the name of Pierre Laval, the minister who had authorized the deportations of children in the name of family reunion.

In his 'Epilogue', Grimbert reveals that the idea for his memoir was born when he unwittingly came across a small dog cemetery and identified it as the property of Pierre Laval's daughter: 'It was in that cemetery, lovingly maintained by the daughter of the man who had given Simon a one-way ticket to the end of the world, that I had the idea for this book. The pain I had never been able to assuage by mourning would be laid to rest in its pages' (*S*, p. 150). The sequence of dogs used as transformational objects that allow the emergence of repressed or

refused mourning in order to facilitate both its psychic and narrative integration comes full circle. As the true mourning object, the book enacts a descent into the crypt that coincides with a *re-birthing*, that is, a (re)writing of the story. In giving his dead brother a proper burial, albeit a symbolic one, Philippe Grimbert finds a way to live with the memory of the dead, rather than with their phantom life. After carrying his brother inside like a living dead, writing becomes a way of proper mourning, of releasing the ghosts of the past. On his visit to the Lavals' dog cemetery, Grimbert is accompanied by his daughter Rose. When the idea for his memoir takes hold of him, he sends her away. She leaves and waves to him without looking back. Hopefully, writing has also become a way to halt the transgenerational transmission of trauma.

The memoir that Grimbert writes after this visit to the cemetery and that he calls *Secret* persistently demonstrates the inextricable entwinement of the personal and the political. Even though *Secret* is written as a memoir, it is irreducible to its psychological dimension, because the political is consistently shown as inherent in the psychological. Family secrets also belong to a larger politics of secrecy and refused mourning. They are part and parcel of the 'inability to mourn' that Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich (1967) introduced to describe the pervasive cultural paralysis of German post-war culture.

Quite unique in Grimbert's attempts to work through and integrate his transgenerational legacy is the fact that he works in the transitional spaces between three forms of memory work: the archive, writing and psychoanalysis. For him, they are not separate but complementary and intersecting spheres and he infuses the energies he draws from one into the other. All three are, for him, simultaneously deeply personal and eminently political. In response to the public politics of secrecy, Grimbert's narrator becomes involved with the monumental task of unearthing historical knowledge based on the archival work of Serge and Beate Klarsfeld who provided the most extensive documentation of the victims of the Holocaust. Grimbert's archival work performs both psychic work of integration and political work of historical testimony. Yet, he is also performing his archival work with the knowledge that the archive, as the site where official documents are filed, intervenes only vicariously in a collective politics of secrecy.

I will conclude this analysis with a few reflections on culture-specific variations in different cultures of mourning. What psychoanalytic theories about replacement children have not asked is whether it is possible to combine proper mourning and the acknowledgement of loss with the desire to have a replacement child. Would that child carry the same legacy of an impossible sense of singularity of self, or would it have a

chance rather to inherit both a collective memory of a deeply mourned loss and an effort to redress some of the history of violence that caused this loss? We know, for example, about communal and tribal practices of adopting replacement children in indigenous cultures. Some pre-colonial indigenous cultures in the Americas practised the adoption of captive children of the enemy as replacement children for those they lost in battle. In 'The Politics of Peace (and War) in Pre-literate Societies', Johan M. G. van der Dennen talks about the adoption of children of the enemy as an avenue for preserving peace, citing the example of the Inca emperor, who routinely adopted the sons of conquered chiefs.[19] In a different vein, indigenous anthropologist Ella Cara Deloria, a member of a prominent Yankton Sioux family who studied with Zora Neale Hurston and Ruth Benedict at Columbia University under Franz Boas, refers to the practice of adopting replacement children among native peoples. In her ethnographic novel *Waterlily*, she portrays the retrieval of such a replacement child by the Sioux during intertribal Plains Indian warfare in the nineteenth century:

> The return trip was a complete triumph, for there had been reprisal killings of the enemy in hand-to-hand fights. All the stolen horses were recovered and many of the enemy's finest were taken in addition. Best of all, the young girl was rescued unharmed from the lodge of the chief, where she had been taken in adoption in place of a daughter recently dead.[20]

Although in this case, taking replacement children from the enemy does not interrupt intertribal warfare, it nonetheless requires seeing the enemy as a human being. In a war culture that dehumanizes the enemy as a people, it would be hard to adopt a child of the enemy as one's own. Dehumanizing the enemy as a people is, in fact, what prepares the ground for turning warfare into genocide. Adoption, by contrast, works with a different logic according to which, as humans, friend and enemy become interchangeable.

Yet, we can imagine a form of adoption that goes even further in an ethics of relating to the enemy. In 'Terror: A Speech After 9/11', Gayatri Spivak quotes a story told in Harsh Mander's 'Cry, the Beloved Country: Reflections on the Gujarat Massacre':

> I recall a story of the Calcutta riots, when Gandhi was fasting for peace. A Hindu man came to him, to speak of his young boy who had been killed by the Muslim mobs, and of the depth of his anger

and longing for revenge. As Gandhi is said to have replied: If you really wish to overcome your pain, find a young [Muslim] boy, just as young as your son ... whose parents have been killed by Hindu mobs. Bring up that boy like you would your own son, but bring him up in the Muslim faith to which he was born. Only then will you find that you can heal your pain, your anger, and your longing for retribution.[21]

In this story, Gandhi imagines a replacement child that would inherit the legacy of breaking the cycle of violence, revenge and retribution. It is the story that invokes the hardest possible task after mourning the loss of a child to an act of violence, namely: to imagine oneself as the enemy. Such an imaginative act transcends binary thinking and emotional structures which divide people into victims and perpetrators, or friends and enemies. Histories of violence are envisioned as systemic and destructive to both sides of the divide and, concomitantly, mourning is practised in conjunction with a redress that encompasses victims and perpetrators. Any redress aimed at breaking the cycle of violence presupposes imagining the enemy, and indeed the perpetrator, who has violated or killed your own child as a human being. If this task appears to be larger than human, it is because it not only requires a new ethics, but also a profound rearrangement of affect.

The story about Gandhi resonates with the story of Amy Biehl, the 26-year-old anti-apartheid activist stoned and stabbed to death, in a racial hate crime in South Africa in 1993, by four young men who belonged to a crowd that shouted anti-white slogans. The murderers were convicted and sentenced to 18 years in prison. In 1997, in the context of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, they petitioned for amnesty. Widely broadcast through global media, the world then witnessed how Amy Biehl's parents, Peter and Linda Biehl, publicly performed an extraordinary act of what Angela Davis, in her tribute to the parents of Amy Biehl, calls 'reconciliatory justice'. They publicly supported the amnesty and were thus crucial in the release of the four men from prison in 1998. After their release, two of the men, Easy Nofemela and Ntobecko Peni, met with the Biehls to express their sorrow for killing their daughter. On this occasion, Nofemela uttered the following words: 'I know you lost a person you love. I want you to forgive me and take me as your child.'[22] And, in a certain sense, this is exactly what the Biehls did. They involved Nofemela as well as Peni in the Amy Biehl Foundation that they had established in order to carry on their daughter's legacy, that is, her work against apartheid in South Africa. In fact,

Linda and Peter Biehl asked Nofemela and Peni to work at the Guguletu branch in the town where Amy was murdered. When Peter Biehl died, Linda Biehl bought two plots of land for her daughter's killers so they could build their own homes.[23] For all practical purposes, the Biehls treated the murderers of their daughter like they would treat their own children, supporting them financially and integrating them into their work against racism and its violent legacies.

What, we may ask, is the politics of mourning that is at work in the stories of Gandhi and Amy Biehl? I can clearly recall the shock I experienced after hearing Amy Biehl's story. This form of mourning a murdered child appeared out of proportion to me, like a primordial emotional transgression. But this may be precisely the point. Amy Biehl's story reveals that 'humanizing the enemy' does not come naturally. In order to work against racism and war, we may need to decolonize our affects, including our unconscious fears and desires. To once again invoke Gandhi: 'Only then will you find that you can heal your pain, your anger, and your longing for retribution.' And, we may add, only by healing pain and rage, and by disrupting the desire that nourishes the vicious cycle of revenge, may we be able to reclaim a life in dignity and unabashedly assert the right to live for every human being born on this earth.

Notes

1. A longer version of 'Replacement Children' appeared in chapter form in Gabriele Schwab (2010), *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press). A version with a different emphasis appeared in Gabriele Schwab (2009), 'Replacement Children: The Transgenerational Transmission of Traumatic Loss', *American Imago*, 66 (3), 277–310.
2. Art Spiegelman (1991), *Maus II: A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began* (New York, NY: Pantheon Press), pp. 15–16.
3. Marianne Hirsch (1997), *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press), p. 22.
4. Ibid.
5. Spiegelman (1991), p. 136.
6. Naomi Mandel (2006), *Against the Unspeakable: Complicity, the Holocaust, and Slavery in America* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press), p. 116.
7. Michael G. Levine (2002), 'Necessary Stains: Spiegelman's *Maus* and the Bleeding of History', *American Imago*, 59, 317–41, here 338.
8. See Mikhail M. Bakhtin (1981), 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', in Michael Holquist (ed.), *The Dialogic Imagination*, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press), pp. 84–258.

9. Leon Anisfeld and Arnold D. Richards (2000), 'The Replacement Child: Variations on a Theme in History and Psychoanalysis', *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 55, 301–18, here 303.

10. Ibid., 304–5.

11. Ibid., 305.

12. Teréz Virag (1984), 'Children of the Holocaust and Their Children's Children: Working through Current Trauma in the Psychotherapeutic Process', *Dynamic Psychotherapy*, 2, 47–60, here 58.

13. Andrea Sabbadini (1988), 'The Replacement Child', *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 24, 528–47, here 530.

14. James Herzog (1982), 'World Beyond Metaphor: Thoughts on the Transmission of Trauma', in Martin S. Bergmann and Milton E. Jucovy (eds), *Generations of the Holocaust* (New York, NY: Basic Books), pp. 103–19, here p. 119.

15. Another prominent literary example here is Hans-Ulrich Treichel (1998), *Der Verlorene* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp). Treichel disclosed the autobiographical background of his novel in his Frankfurt Poetry Lectures. See Hans-Ulrich Treichel (2000), *Der Entwurf des Autors. Frankfurter Poetikvorlesungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp), pp. 24–5.

16. Philippe Grimbert (2008), *The Secret*, translated by Polly McLean (London: Portobello Books). Further references to this text will be included in the main body in parenthesis, following the abbreviation *S*.

17. Strangely, the authorized English translation of the memoir has changed the name Sim into Si. Unfortunately, this reduces the resemblance to the brother's name, Simon.

18. I use the term the 'crypt' in the psychological sense developed by Abraham and Torok. See Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok (1994), *The Shell and the Kernel*, vol. 1, translated by Nicholas T. Rand (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press).

19. Johan M.G. Van der Dennen (2005), 'The Politics of Peace (and War) in Pre-Literate Societies'. Available online at: http://rechten.eldoc.ub.rug.nl/FILES/root/Algemeen/overigepublicaties/2005enouder/PEACE3/PEACE3.pdf, 1–26, here 17, accessed 27 June 2011.

20. Ella Cara Deloria (1988), *Waterlily* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press), p. 89.

21. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2004), 'Terror: A Speech After 9/11', *Boundary*, 2 (31), 81–111, here 97.

22. Angela Davis, 'Are Prisons Obsolete?', Speech at the First Congregational Church of Oakland, 26 July 2003. Transcript available at http://www.mindfully.org/Reform/2003/Are-Prisons-Obsolete-Davis26jul03.htm, accessed 22 January 2011.

23. In this retelling of Amy Biehl's story, I follow the information provided by Angela Davis in the speech cited above.

2
The Emotional Legacy of the National Socialist Past in Post-War Germany

Gudrun Brockhaus

In West Germany, the systemic transition from the National Socialist dictatorship into a modern European democracy was accomplished within a period of four years. The transformation of society, however, took much longer. Examining the emotional legacy of the National Socialist past in West and post-unification Germany,[1] this chapter focuses on its transformations over a period of 65 years and across three to four generations.[2] Divided into two different sections, it firstly offers an overview of three distinct phases in which the memory of the Nazi past has been framed differently through modes of externalization, moralization and institutionalization. The second part presents the results of an interview study which was conducted on the topic of 'Holocaust education'. It investigates the ways in which teachers and pupils engage with the National Socialist legacy in the classroom, exploring the emotional undercurrents in this process of transgenerational transmission. This analysis shows that, in spite of general transformations, some aspects of this complex emotional legacy seem to persist that are not fully integrated into the social and political framework.

A short overview of the reception of the National Socialist past since 1945

Phase one: externalizing guilt

The German response to National Socialism in the post-war period surprised many observers. For the majority of Germans, this period appeared to already belong to the distant past in 1945. This de-realization of one's own National Socialist past appears to point towards

a comprehensive identity crisis which was sparked by total defeat, by the victory of the hated enemy and by the radical collapse of delusions of greatness. The national collective became 'associated with failure, moral inadequacy, embarrassment and guilt'.[3] In order to escape the shameful deflation of collective self-worth, this period was 'de-territorialized' and re-imagined as a demonic empire of evil others, who had no place in personal or collective identity. In 1946, the sociologist Leopold von Wiese described this period as follows: 'The plague descended upon the people, from outside, unplanned, like a malicious attack.'[4]

The National Socialist period was not conceived as part of one's own history. Instead, every emotional connection to Hitler, the National Socialist ideology and the regime was denied. As Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich retrospectively noted, it was possible to avoid mourning and depression by deliberately 'blocking' emotional participation.[5] However, this defence mechanism resulted in a general sense of emotionlessness and psychical paralysis; there simply was not any space or energy to facilitate any identification with the victims.

As soon as the Allies or German emigrants began to speak of a German collective guilt for National Socialist crimes, this emotionally distanced approach which was characteristic of post-war Germans was converted into rage and fury.[6] The vast majority began to intensively, and we could say obsessively,[7] reject this accusation of collective guilt.[8] This can be seen clearly in the group discussions on the National Socialist past which were conducted by the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research in 1950 and 1951. The very fact that Adorno required over 200 pages to describe the sheer variety of strategies which the Germans were employing to stave off guilt speaks volumes.[9] It also raises the question as to where these strong emotions to reject attributions of guilt actually came from. In their reflections on the West German engagement with this past, the Mitscherlichs talk of a post-war German 'panicked fear of guilt'.[10] The existence of lingering guilty feelings is confirmed by the level of aggression which marked attempts to reject historical guilt. Melita Maschmann, a former Hitler Youth leader, provides retrospective evidence of this, belatedly describing how she managed to convert her feelings of guilt into a hatred of the prosecutor.[11] According to Stephan Hermlin in 1946, 'it is exactly that dogged and rebellious no, offered by many Germans, which suggest[s] a secret acquiescence to a deep-rooted guilt'.[12]

In fact, even today the excited refusal of guilt continues to be read as an 'unconscious admission of the … thesis of collective guilt'.[13] But was there really such a widespread deep sense of injustice and guilt

that it needed to be repressed? Did the outraged rejection of collective guilt not really express shame and humiliation that Germans were being accused of being criminal losers by the world public? According to Aleida Assmann in 1999, this level of excitement and shame was due to the fact that shame was publicly presented.[14] She blames injured collective narcissism for the aggressive rejection of guilt: 'The German trauma ... was not ignited by a German crime, but by the circumstances under which the Allies made this crime public. It was a trauma not of guilt, but of shame'.[15]

The public confrontation with National Socialist crimes did indeed have an enormous impact on the German national imagination. Throughout the war, the experience of adversity and moral disintegration turned identification with Germany into the last bastion of security and moral integrity.[16] Towards the end of the war, 'the retreat to an externally contested, but, in itself, understood and justified form of Germanness, acted as a reservoir of meaning'.[17] In the aftermath of defeat, this resource became even more important and it became even more essential that it should not be questioned. As Knoch highlights, investigations in the post-war period 'confirm[ed] an immense sense of nationality'[18] that was aggressively defended. 'The offensive rehabilitation of a national sense of esteem was widespread.'[19]

This assertion of a new sense of German national identity raises the following question: how did Germans manage to resolve the conflict between their positive identification with the collective to which they belonged, and their knowledge of the crimes for which this collective was being held responsible?[20] As these crimes had happened, and as it was impossible to erase them from the pages of national history, Germans were confronted with feelings of shame, humiliation, devaluation and self-hatred. It was paramount, however, that this depressive deflation of self-esteem be avoided at all costs. It could be firstly avoided by denying and playing down National Socialist crimes and, secondly, by keeping collective identity separate from the National Socialist past. 'Externalizing' the past allowed it to be kept at a safe distance; National Socialists were converted into 'others' that stemmed almost from another planet.[21] In this way, guilt was displaced and relocated to an external site where it was easier to deflect. In public controversies, the 'Nazis' became an enemy stereotype that could always be applied to 'others'. This not only explains how advocates of German guilt could be equated with Nazis, but also how Germans felt subjected to Nazi methods of persecution by the Allies – because of their internment methods, the Morgenthau Plan and the bombing of German

cities – whose arbitrary justice was legitimated only by their victory. Every opportunity to balance off the guilt account was embraced with enthusiasm and relief.

Phase two: moralizing history

Jörn Rüsen identifies the mid 1960s as a turning point in German memory culture. This ended the phase of externalizing and silencing the National Socialist past, replacing it with a form of 'moralist distancing'.[22] During this new phase, the National Socialist period came back into the German public sphere through the trials and the new form of discourse which was associated with Adorno's critical theory and the Frankfurt school, and with the Freudian therapeutic discourse of Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich. Germany's 'inability to mourn', diagnosed by the Mitscherlichs in 1967, was translated into a much-used catchphrase and a moral challenge. In 1979, Margarete Mitscherlich talked about the necessity for mourning as a prerequisite for working through the past.[23] Calling attention to the dangers of a purely cognitive visualization of National Socialist crimes, she noted: 'Objectification can only lead to repression.'[24] Germans should instead try to engage with their past on an emotional level; this was deemed to be the only way of avoiding the dangers of a subconscious lingering of this past. New pedagogical programmes were devised for schools to deal with the hitherto excluded Nazi past. This chapter of the national history was also carried into West German families by the second generation. These adolescents directly confronted their parents with their crimes in order to break the 'communicative silence' surrounding them and to uncover the hidden dimension of personal liability. Their intergenerational confrontation was supported by a moralist stance; by attacking their parents, the second generation initiated a dual separation which separated them from their parents and prevented any identification with German history. As these issues unfolded, West Germany was repeatedly rocked by debates on how to deal with the German past. As a direct consequence, accepting moral responsibility and being accountable for this past became part of the official West German political programme.

There was a decisive shift in the German emotional response to its guilty past after the four-part American series *Holocaust* was broadcast in January 1979. Watched by circa 20 million people, this series unleashed hefty reactions. In an article entitled 'Holocaust. The Genocide of the Jews moves Germans', the German weekly news magazine *Der Spiegel*

argued on 29 January 1979: 'The sentimental NBC series has managed to achieve something which rational arguing has failed to accomplish for decades. Many Germans, and particularly young Germans, have been affected.'[25] Almost every press article at the time emphasized the emotional and personal impact of this series, highlighting the widespread sense of shock in Germany. As Märthesheimer and Frenzel summarized in 1979: 'A nation is affected.'[26] Despite the reservations of some more intellectually discerning media which were critical of the Hollywood approach in *Holocaust*, the series became a turning point in the German reception of the Holocaust. It also had consequences for pedagogical programmes, as it indicated that purely cognitive processes were insufficient to deal with the memory of the genocide of the Jews and the war crimes. A real shift away from the period of National Socialism necessitated an emotional response: antipathy for the crimes committed, combined with empathy for the victims. According to the didactic historical hopes of that time 'sympathy makes history conceivable'.[27]

These changes in the approach to the Nazi past did not, however, affect the entire nation. There were still large pockets of society where the negative emotional response to its legacy remained remarkably constant. National Socialism and its crimes were not, as the Mitscherlichs had wanted,[28] recognized as part of German history and identity.[29] The German legacy of guilt continued to be a hot topic that was vehemently discussed. This can be seen clearly in the debates, rows and affairs which polarized West Germany between the 1960s and the 1990s. One camp (to generalize; this included the leftists, liberals and the so-called 68ers) identified with the victims of German history, denouncing the parental generation as Nazi perpetrators and supporters, using this to solidify their group identity. For them, the perpetrators remained 'other' and the National Socialist history became the parental history. Adopting an accusatory stance, they placed themselves on the side of the innocent victim. Dirk Moses describes this as follows:

> The rage of the Non-German Germans – Erikson would call theirs a 'negative identity' – against the polluted collective self-image was split off and projected onto German Germans, who represented the polluted agent and who acted as emotional reservoirs against whom scorn could be constantly directed to stabilize a Non-German German identity.[30]

The other camp (in general the more conservative types who clamoured to a positive German identity) tried to rescue their sense of self

by projecting guilt onto those accusatory groups. Rage and hatred were no longer directed against the Allies, but against the enemy within, that is, against those accusatory groups who they felt were victimizing them. The 68ers, the taboo custodians with their 'moral cudgel', the self-appointed representatives of the victims of National Socialism, were compared to and equated with the Nazis, just as the Allies had been in the immediate post-war period.[31] In fact, we can still see this type of criticism in the reading of the 68ers as 'Hitler's children'. According to Tilman Moser in his vehement criticism of *The Inability to Mourn*: 'In light of the persecutory attack on Germans, it almost became possible to speak of an inverted anti-Semitism.'[32]

Every debate on the National Socialist past has been marked by extreme emotional responses which include hatred, malice, revenge and destruction. This range of emotions demonstrates the extent to which people feel they are under attack when confronted with the accusations of guilt which the National Socialist past continues to signify for young Germans today. Large-scale rejection was supposed to protect this most vulnerable part of German self-perception. Each camp acted as a scapegoat for the other: by directing their anger at the opposition, both camps managed to avoid confronting the legacy of this past.[33] In this way, this phase of intensive engagement with National Socialism was also marked by an agitated rejection of any attempt to impose guilt.

This period was also characterized by 'an atmosphere of emotional insecurity' which caused anxious navel-gazing about the ritual competency of state representatives who had to participate in commemorations at home and abroad. The media continually observed and commented on their performances in the newly established memory culture; this in turn led to an incessant monitoring and review of public gestures and emotional displays. Particular attention was paid to German politicians during their visits to Yad Vashem or Auschwitz to ensure that they managed to adequately express the expected level of sentiment and to check whether they employed the appropriate gestures, mimics and language. A similar level of suspicion was applied to those holding public speeches, for example, on anniversary days or at the opening of museums. Helmut Kohl offers a prime example here. While on a trip to Israel in 1984, Kohl expressed relief at his belated birth which had exempted him from personal involvement in the National Socialist past. His phrase, 'the grace of belated birth', became *the* faux-pas of the year. In 1988, Philipp Jenninger, the West German President of Parliament, had to step down from his political position because he chose the wrong tone in his speech commemorating the events of the

pogrom of 9 November 1938. Adopting a rather monotonous tone, he failed to display what was considered the necessary level of distaste or revulsion when he described the opinions of German supporters of the National Socialist regime; this proved to be a fatal mistake.[34]

Phase three: institutionalization

President Weizsäcker's speech commemorating the end of World War II after 40 years in 1985 was an important turning point in German memory culture. This speech overcame the moralizing framework which had dominated until this point, uniting diverse groups in a sense of common German identity. This was possible as Weizsäcker explicitly rejected the morally charged concept of collective *guilt*, while simultaneously emphasizing the *responsibility* of all Germans to accept the legacy of the Nazi past and to enter into a debt of remembrance due to all victims of its violence.

The history of perpetration and, in particular, of the experiences of Jewish victims eventually moved into the centre of German memory culture. We may refer to this phase as 'institutionalization'. Public media, films, museums, monuments and rites of commemoration became an integral part of the political culture. Local initiatives, public institutions and big firms began to examine their particular history during the National Socialist period; literature, the media and private individuals also began to engage with this past more intensively. In the 1980s and 1990s, individuals began to examine the role which their families had played in this past. The increasing temporal distance from these traumatic events also made it possible for the third post-war generation to engage with the suffering of the victims. Rather than continuing to be caught up in an endless spiral of guilt and rejection, younger Germans have increasingly begun to empathize with, and to feel genuine sadness for, the victims, while also respecting the suffering endured by Germans.

With the growing distance from its National Socialist past, contemporary German society appears to have accepted that history as part of its identity. Emotionally charged debates about National Socialism in either the public or the academic sphere are becoming less frequent. Instead, this Nazi past has become a creative reservoir for new imaginings and formats, including comedy films. This is something which would have been inconceivable a few years ago. With historical research now offering us increasingly detailed knowledge about the National Socialist past and 'Holocaust education' making National Socialism into part of a

universal education on values and human rights, it has become possible to thematize the traumatic consequences of bombings and mass rapes without relativizing German guilt. This can be seen clearly in the family novels written by young authors of the third generation which blur the traditional lines of division between accusatory and victim-centred literature.

The disappearance of the generation of historical witnesses represents one aspect of the 'institutionalization' of this past. As the embodied experience of National Socialism vanishes, it is increasingly replaced by mediated representations. The historical events of this period are, as such, subject to the laws of the entertainment industry, namely: plain sentimentality, personalization, easily digestible TV dramas, so-called 'info-' or 'histotainment' and melodramatic feature films such as *Sophie Scholl. The Final Days* (2005) and *Downfall* (2004) which were both huge commercial successes. It is now generally accepted that the German past has been worked through and that the post-war period with its emotional insecurity, its public scandals and eruptions provoked by the Nazi past is now over. This approach to the past began with the Red/Green coalition in 1998.[35] Although Chancellor Gerhard Schröder still faced considerable criticism when he spoke of the Holocaust Memorial as 'a place which one should enjoy visiting', it was impossible to stop the trend towards a more touristic approach towards the National Socialist past (rather than one characterized by negative emotions and disgust).[36]

The Nazi past in the classroom

The stormy emotions which previously characterized German debates on the National Socialist legacy appear to be a thing of the past, and many contemporary observers feel that a less vexed discourse on this past may now finally be possible. To assert the normalization of the German past, however, may be somewhat precocious. The Nazi past may perhaps be of such a monstrous quality that it can never be 'normalized'. In spite of the growing temporal distance from this burdened past, the emotional stakes invested in this period of German history do not seem to have cooled down in the third and fourth post-war generations. Instead, they still seem to be part of their emotional outfit. In the last section of this chapter, I will adopt a more empirical stance by turning to a pilot study undertaken by the Institute for Social Psychology at the Ludwig-Maximilian University in Munich (Germany)[37] and examining how students and teachers describe their experiences of teaching and studying National Socialism and the Holocaust in the classroom.

When writing about the emotional responses of the third and fourth generations to the Nazi past, we have to distinguish between at least four possible attitudes. There are:

1. Those who deliberately write themselves into the legacy of the past. Various family novels written by the third generation – for example Tanja Dückers' *Himmelskörper* (Heavenly Bodies, 2004) or the novels by Thomas Medicus and Stefan Wackwitz follow this complex, morally and intellectually charged project.[38]
2. Those who have fully adopted and internalized the norms of Germany's new memory culture, but who shy away from the negative truth about their own family history. Under this pressure of cognitive and emotional dissonance, they (un)consciously distort the truth, transforming their Nazi grandparents into brave rescuers of Jews.[39]
3. Those who have preserved a (secret) reservoir of affects connecting them to National Socialism.
4. Those who have lost all interest in the subject and who 'feel nothing'.[40]

The group presented in the following report fits into the third category outlined here. In a 2002 study on the historical awareness of these younger generations, it became clear that the majority of those questioned could not see any 'correlation between national history and their own lives'. Thus, they could not be expected to engage in a personal and moral debate about the crimes of their ancestors.[41] They do not have a 'sense of belonging to' or a 'responsibility for' the former perpetrators, nor do they feel that the National Socialist period 'has anything to do with [them] today'.[42] They are unwilling to see any connection between themselves and the National Socialist past. If identified with this German collective by external parties, their strong reaction exposes the continued existence of emotional problems in relation to this past.

At this point, I would like to turn to the pilot study which questioned teachers and pupils about their experiences of school lessons on the Holocaust and National Socialism. In their answers, teachers have generally prioritized a non-moralizing approach; lessons should not be constructed in a framework of moral accusation. This rejection of moralizing has become a constant feature of discussions on 'Holocaust Education' in schools. It highlights the dilemma surrounding the creation of learning goals in the school system that aim to build a commitment to civic values by generating negative emotional responses such as disgust, horror, grief or despair.

The interviews with the teachers also show that they still associate these lessons with an emotional and a moral change in their pupils. They formulate the following learning aims in conjunction with the topic of National Socialism and the Holocaust: pupils should be emotionally affected by the lesson; they should reject and judge the absence of morals in the National Socialist system; they should develop strategies to prevent the development of new waves of intolerance or of contempt for humanity. Expecting this student response, teachers are highly sensitive to forms of indifference, disinterest or lack of concern.[43] However, as shock and concern are spontaneous gut reactions, these affective responses can hardly be applied as learning goals in a formal pedagogical schedule. The school situation adds a further complication: how can open communication on emotional and moral questions develop in a situation which is regulated by compulsory attendance, limited timeframes, learning monitored through marking and a hierarchical teacher-pupil relationship?

Given these ramifications, it is not surprising that, when teaching classes on National Socialism and the Holocaust, many teachers display an attitude of emotional insecurity. They try to reduce the potential for conflict (for example, they do not wish to be perceived as moral apostles). Thus, they devalue and undermine the didactic instruments which they normally employ. Instead of developing their own lessons, many teachers rely on films (particularly on dramas and motion pictures rather than documentaries), on visits from survivor witnesses to '*authentically transmit*'[44] the historical experience of the Holocaust, as well as on visits to concentration camps where they depend on the aura of the site to transmit the message. These framing conditions often prevent an open and lively discussion about the past, creating a space where pupils may feel coerced into giving the 'proper' response.[45]

Recorded history classes provide clear evidence of emotional pressure.[46] In practice, the theoretical decision not to moralize is actually converted into its opposite. As the interview transcripts show, the application of manipulation tactics can also be seen in the interviewer's behaviour. If the teacher or pupil fails to offer a politically correct answer, the interviewer does not remain neutral. Instead, they quickly change the topic, or employ cooling out techniques to stop the interviewee defending National Socialism; they also engage in moral censoring of attempts to trivialize Nazi crimes.[47] Oftentimes, they place politically correct positions or sentiments into the mouths of the interviewees. For example, when a student criticizes the school lessons on National Socialism which he felt had not dealt with all aspects of the period, saying: '*You did not learn anything about the "good life" enjoyed by the Arians or*

those a bit higher up in the system!', he is reprimanded by the interviewer who admonishes him: '*At the expense of human rights.*'

This is not just an example of a slippage in interview techniques; under pressure to perform, the interviewer is less open. This is clearly illustrated in the following example when the interviewer negates and repudiates one youth's voyeuristic fascination with violence. In his descriptions of the treatment of the victims of National Socialism, Ali employs graphic images and language: '...*and the stuff that was done to them, gassing, torturing and so on...people were cut into pieces and shot at with rockets!*' Having reacted five times with a non-committal '*mhm*', the interviewer then comments: '*Yes, that is unimaginable.*' Thus prompted, Ali, who had just demonstrated how imaginable this torment actually was for him, and who could perhaps have continued to further imagine it, answers: '*Yes, it is unimaginable.*'

Classroom investigations show that teachers also display the pattern of denial which is demonstrated here by the interviewers.[48] Pupils react strongly to the lack of confidence which they register in their teachers in classes on National Socialism. They describe their teachers as inauthentic, pressurized and humourless. They feel subjected to a moral pressure which limits their freedom of thought. Their criticism of classes even extends to accusations of indoctrination and suspicions of moral prescription. This re-establishes lines of division, leading to different opinion groups in the classroom. The pupils perceive moral engagement with National Socialism as a topic which is imposed on them by their teachers. Meanwhile, teachers turn away from their pupils in disappointment, describing them as disinterested, numbed, incapable of empathy and morally indifferent; they remain unaffected by what they have seen, unpacking their lunches at memorials and singing ditties on the bus journeys.

In contrast to this negative stereotype put forward by teachers, the interviews with pupils paint a rather different picture. Here, pupils express their shock and disgust at the extent of the atrocities of persecution and the Holocaust; many empathize and even identify with the victims. At the same time, the interviews show that there is a high level of negative emotion surrounding the question of German guilt. Both pupils and teachers are united in their rejection of any accusations of guilt and both groups admit that they are tired of being subject to accusations and of being linked to Nazi crimes simply because they are German. Some interviewees report that they often feel under attack by foreigners – by, in particular, Americans, people from the UK and Turkish classmates – who are perceived as eager to confront Germans

with their guilt, demanding humility. As a post-war German, it is impossible to defend oneself against these claims and this may generate rage or frustration. This reaction to a depreciation of national worth appears to run quite deep, producing a dynamic of equivalence which attempts to balance the guilt account by recounting the crimes of others: the Turks caused the Armenian genocide and the Americans attempted to eradicate the Indians.

This coexistence of empathy and aggressive deflection deserves further examination. It has become clear that, today, a greater, and less ambivalent, empathy with the victims has become possible. This stems from the fact that young people no longer identify themselves as part of the 'guilty' or responsible collective and empathy becomes easier when the victims are no longer read as evidence of guilt.[49] However, problems arise when the national narrative of the perpetrator history is brought into alignment with concepts of selfhood. For example, if the family history contains perpetrator elements, these are often still denied by the third and fourth generations. Negative emotions also become evident if individuals as Germans are personally confronted or identified with the National Socialist legacy. Within a well-preserved, fixed dichotomy of victims and perpetrators, Germans are often still identified as a 'symbolic nation'[50] of the paradigmatic perpetrator.

In spite of the shifts in dealing with the National Socialist period, it is clear that its complex emotional legacy has not altogether subsided.[51] It may be generally unrealistic to try to integrate something as destructive as the National Socialist past into collective identity. It remains to be seen whether we are dealing here with an 'inability to accept guilt or . . . the objective difficulty to accept such an extensive guilt'.[52]

Notes

1. In this chapter, I shall concentrate on West Germany and unified Germany. The affective history of the GDR took a different turn. All translations included here are my own unless otherwise stated.
2. Generation is used here as a biological category. I will not include moralizing discussions on the children and grandchildren of victims and perpetrators. For other studies see Kurt Grünberg and Jürgen Straub (2001), *Unverlierbare Zeit: psychosoziale Spätfolgen des Nationalsozialismus bei Nachkommen von Opfern und Tätern* (Tübingen: Edition Diskord).
3. A. Dirk Moses (2007), *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 35. According to Moses: 'Even if a group has started the conflict and inflicted the most damage, its members will feel victimized by the enemy, with attendant feelings of humiliation and hopelessness, after it was defeated. The deflation of the collective self-representation

and self-idealization will be all the greater if the defeat is compounded with the shame of having committed genocide.' Moses (2007), p. 35.

4. Cited by Jörn Rüsen (2001), 'Holocaust, Erinnerung, Identität', in Harald Welzer (ed.), *Das soziale Gedächtnis* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition), pp. 243–59, here p. 247.

5. See Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich (1967), *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern. Grundlagen kollektiven Verhaltens* (Munich: Piper).

6. The Allies, and in particular the Americans, tried to 'stimulate a sense of Germany's war guilt and of the collective guilt for such crimes as the concentration camp', using billboard posters and enforced guided tours of concentration camps. Habbo Knoch (2001), *Die Tat als Bild. Fotografien des Holocaust in der deutschen Erinnerungskultur* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition), p. 152. According to Knoch, this type of enforced de-Nazification was quickly stopped because of the negative reaction of the German population. Knoch (2001), p. 153.

7. This is confirmed by Jan Friedmann and Jörg Später (2002), 'Britische und deutsche Kollektivschulddebatte', in Ulrich Herbert (ed.), *Wandlungsprozesse in Deutschland. Belastung, Integration, Liberalisierung 1945–1980* (Göttingen: Wallstein), pp. 53–90, here p. 54. Knoch also thematizes this. See Knoch (2001), p. 212.

8. According to Knoch, in October 1946, 92 per cent rejected collective guilt. In 1947, this figure rose to 95 per cent. Knoch (2001), p. 170.

9. Theodor W. Adorno (1975), *Schuld und Abwehr* in *Gesammelte Schriften*, 9 (2) (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp), pp. 144–324.

10. Mitscherlich (1967), p. 10.

11. Melita Maschmann (1963), *Fazit. Kein Rechtfertigungsversuch* (Stuttgart: DVA), p. 188.

12. Cited by Knoch (2001), p. 190.

13. Norbert Frei (1996), *Vergangenheitspolitik. Die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS- Vergangenheit* (Munich: C.H. Beck), p. 399.

14. Martin Walser also voiced such thoughts in his controversial speech on 11 October 1998 when he received the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade in Frankfurt.

15. Aleida Assmann (1999), 'Teil I', in Aleida Assmann and Ute Frevert, *Geschichtsvergessenheit, Geschichtsversessenheit: vom Umgang mit deutschen Vergangenheiten* (Stuttgart: DVA), pp. 19–150, here p. 139.

16. See Sven Oliver Müller (2007), *Deutsche Soldaten und ihre Feinde. Nationalismus an Front und Heimatfront im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer).

17. Knoch (2001), p. 215.

18. Ibid., p. 217.

19. Ibid., p. 42.

20. Adorno (1975), p. 150.

21. According to the Mitscherlichs, the 'inability to mourn' which they diagnosed amongst post-war Germans, stemmed from an attempt to prevent an emptying of the self: depression. Identification with National Socialist megalomania led the self to become inflatedly narcissistic. See Mitscherlich (1967), p. 77.

22. Rüsen (2001), p. 250.
23. Margarete Mitscherlich (1979), 'Versachlichung kann nur zur Verdrängung führen. Voraussetzung für die Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit: Die Notwendigkeit, zu trauern', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 23 January, p. 15.
24. Conservative politicians and historians reacted allergically to these calls for a subjective engagement with the National Socialist past from the outset, describing it as a politically dangerous naivety. Hermann Lübbe offers a fitting example of this. See Hermann Lübbe (1989), 'Verdrängung? Über eine Kategorie zur Kritik des deutschen Vergangenheitsverhältnisses', in Hans-Hermann Wiebe (ed.), *Die Gegenwart der Vergangenheit. Historikerstreit und Erinnerungsarbeit* (Bad Segeberg: C.H. Wäser), pp. 94–106.
25. See *Spiegel*, 29 January 1979.
26. Peter Märtesheimer and Ivo Frenzel (1979), *Im Kreuzfeuer. Der Fernsehfilm Holocaust. Eine Nation ist betroffen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer).
27. Stern used this as the title for their article about the results of the interview led by the Demoskopie Allenbach on *Holocaust* on 18 January 1979.
28. Mitscherlich (1967), p. 31.
29. The failure of psychological principles which, following this, were understood as accusation and as self-righteous moral demands have been associated with the Mitscherlichs right up to the present.
30. Moses (2007), p. 36.
31. This is thematized by Micha Brumlik et al. in their volume on recent German debates. Rejecting memory, aggression, as an externalized rage, feeds off those who remember or represent the undesirable aspects of the individual or collective past. See Micha Brumlik, Hajo Funke and Lars Rensmann (2004), *Umkämpftes Vergessen. Walser-Debatte, Holocaust Mahnmal und neuere deutsche Geschichtspolitik* (Berlin: Hans Schiler), p. 9.
32. Tilmann Moser (1992), 'Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern – hält die Diagnose einer Überprüfung stand? Zur psychischen Verarbeitung des Holocaust in der Bundesrepublik', *Psyche*, 46, 389–405, here 397.
33. According to König, the awareness of Germany's criminal past was never as present as it was during the 1980s. See Helmut König (2003), *Die Zukunft der Vergangenheit. Der Nationalsozialismus im politischen Bewusstsein* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer), p. 37. There was a brief moment in the 1990s when a personal relationship to the German perpetrator past became evident; this topic was discussed broadly in the public sphere during the controversial *Wehrmachtausstellung* (Exhibition focusing on the war crimes committed by the Wehrmacht on the eastern front from 1941–44), which was prepared by Hannes Heer and Gerd Hankel and which ran 1995–99. Since then, the personal and familial relationship to the perpetrators has been thematized in the recently popular German family novels. See, for example, Ulla Hahn (2003), *Unscharfe Bilder* (Munich: DVA); Stephan Wackwitz (2003), *Ein unsichtbares Land* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer); Thomas Medicus (2004), *In den Augen meines Großvaters* (Munich: DVA).
34. He had adopted his argument from Sebastian Haffner's *Anmerkungen zu Hitler* (1978) and thus, this was not in any way evidence of Nazi sympathies. See Sebastian Haffner (1978), *Anmerkungen zu Hitler* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer). The story that Ignaz Bubis, former Chairman of the Central Council

of Jews in Germany, gave an identical speech elsewhere to considerable applause from the audience is often recounted. Even if this is not true, this story appears to me to be in keeping with the tone of the time.

35. For a detailed exploration of normalization and the different attempts to 'normalize' the National Socialist past since 1989, see Stuart Taberner (2005), *German Literature of the 1990s and Beyond. Normalization and the Berlin Republic* (Rochester, NY: Camden House).

36. For further information, see Claus Leggewie and Erik Meyer (2005), *'Ein Ort, an den man gerne geht.' Das Holocaust-Mahnmal und die deutsche Geschichtspolitik nach 1989* (Munich: Hanser). According to Reichel: 'Individual engagement with the past at particular memory sites has long been organized into a largely commercial history and museum tourism.' Peter Reichel (1995), *Politik mit der Erinnerung. Gedächtnisorte im Streit um die nationalsozialistische Vergangenheit* (Munich: Hanser), p. 324.

37. This study has also been featured in a special edition of the Bavarian journal for politics and history *Einsichten und Perspektiven*. See Gudrun Brockhaus (2008), ' "Bloβ nicht moralisieren!" Emotionale Prozesse in der pädagogischen Auseinandersetzung mit dem Nationalsozialismus', in, *Einsichten und Perspektiven. Themenheft. Holocaust Education. Wie Schüler und Lehrer den Unterricht zum Thema Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust erleben*, 1, 28–33.

38. Tanja Dückers (2003), *Himmelskörper* (Berlin: Aufbau); Wackwitz (2003); Medicus (2004). For further examples, see Verena Carl and Tanja Dückers (eds) (2004), *Stadt Land Krieg* (Berlin: Aufbau) and Claudia Brunner and Uwe Seltmann (eds) (2006), *Schweigen die Täter reden die Enkel* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer).

39. See Harald Welzer, Sabine Moller and Karoline Tschuggnall (2005), *Opa war kein Nazi. Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer).

40. See Joachim Landkammer (2006), ' "Wir spüren nichts." Anstößige Thesen zum zukünftigen Umgang mit der NS-Vergangenheit', in Joachim Landkammer, Thomas Noetzel and Walter Ch. Zimmerli (eds), *Erinnerungsmanagement* (Munich, Paderborn: Fink), pp. 51–82.

41. Nina Leonhard (2002), *Politik- und Geschichtsbewusstsein im Wandel* (Münster, Hamburg: Lit Verlag), p. 90.

42. Ibid., p. 54.

43. The foolishness of attempting to generate emotions through pedagogical actions had already been highlighted to counter the Mitscherlichs' 'inability to mourn'; mourning cannot be executed on demand.

44. Quotes from the interviews will be featured in italics.

45. One wonders what would happen if the personal opinions expected from pupils were actually anti-foreigner slogans and catchphrases, or if the desired emotional response was directed towards German suffering rather than the suffering of the victims, or if the question was raised about Jewish guilt.

46. See Wolfgang Meseth, Matthias Proske and Frank-Olaf O. Radtke (eds) (2004), *Schule und Nationalsozialismus. Anspruch und Grenzen des Geschichtsunterrichts* (Frankfurt am Main, New York: Campus).

47. For example, pupils mention the ingenious war strategies, the fascinating Nazi successes and Hitler's kind humanity which could not be held responsible for the Holocaust.
48. Meseth et al. (2004).
49. Meier is of the opinion that it is precisely because the grandchild-generation is free from the National Socialist past that they are able to empathize with the victims; the departure of the historical actors has also resulted in rupture. See Christian Meier (1997), 'Goldhagen und die Deutschen', *Internationale Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, 1, 119–23, here 123.
50. Aleida Assmann (2006), 'Zur (Un)Vereinbarkeit von Leid und Schuld in der deutschen Erinnerung', *Zeitgeschichte* (33) 2, 68–77, here 69.
51. According to Knoch, the intergenerational transfer of historical understanding is marked by a persistent generational transmission which stabilizes collective memory 'from below'. There is hardly any evidence of repressed feelings of guilt, but there are numerous indicators of the separation, denial and projection of guilt. In many ways, this mirrors the zones of silence and the rules of discussability which mark the public sphere. See Knoch (2001), p. 22.
52. Helmut Dubiel (1999), *Niemand ist frei von der Geschichte. Die nationalsozialistische Herrschaft in den Debatten des Deutschen Bundestages* (Munich: Hanser), p. 286. Dubiel emphasizes the negative effects of this, highlighting that postwar German collective identity was seriously damaged by their inability to accept guilt, or indeed to accept such an extensive guilt. However, there was also no historical model where engaging with a past history of violence had been successful. As Moeller highlights: 'Germany has no unique claim to the "stigma of violence", nor is it alone in confronting enormous problems in incorporating memories of a violent past into its present.' Robert G. Moeller (2002), 'What has "Coming to Terms with the Past" Meant in Post-World War II Germany? From History to Memory to the "History of Memory"', *Central European History*, 35, 223–59, here 250.

Part II
Instruments of Change

3
To Remember or to Forget: Which Way Out of a Shared History of Violence?

Aleida Assmann

To remember or to forget?

During the 1990s, the innovative term 'culture of remembrance' was coined, providing a cultural framework within which we automatically assume that remembering is a beneficial obligation that we must fulfil. Remembering thus appears to be a significant social and cultural resource. This picture has been recently thoroughly upset by Christian Meier, whose latest book *Das Gebot zu vergessen und die Unabweisbarkeit des Erinnerns* (*The Imperative to Forget and the Inescapability of Remembering*, 2010) posits the theory that it is the ability to forget which should be considered the cultural achievement; remembering is only to be recommended under absolutely exceptional circumstances such as Auschwitz.[1] Using Meier's study on the importance of forgetting after civil wars as its point of departure, this chapter opens up a more general discussion on ways of possibly overcoming a shared history of violence.

In his book, Meier turns away from reading memory as a means of preventing the recurrence of acts of violence. In his reading, it is precisely these acts of remembering which keep the destructive energies alive for the historical actors. This premise leads him to the following conclusion: if the process of remembering sustains feelings of hate and revenge, then it is the process of forgetting which will mollify the conflictive parties, initiating the process of reintegration that is necessary for survival. Clearly, the state cannot influence the personal memories of its citizens, but it can prohibit, under penalty, public discussions which are predisposed to cause old sores to reopen and which may lead to the mobilization of new resentments and aggression arising from remembering old injuries and feelings of hate.

In his book, Meier demonstrates that the Athenian polis success-
fully implemented this pacification process after the conclusion of the
Peloponnesian War.[2] In this context, a new word was coined for this
norm of forgetting, '*Mneisikakein*', which literally means 'remembering
the bad'. Within the Athenian legal system, this signified a 'prohibition-
to-remember' as a 'prohibition-to-communicate'. It was effectively an
act of public censure for the sake of the common good. This practice
was also applied subsequent to the 30 Years' War and it was spelled
out in the 1648 Peace Treaty of Münster-Osnabrück: '*perpetua oblivio
et amnestia*'. In the aftermath of civil wars, the adage to 'forgive and
forget' historically facilitated a rapid political and social integration;
the stuff of conflict was neutralized between the former front lines by
means of the extensive application of amnesties. Meier's most cogent
example, however, is the Great War, which, in comparison to their
European neighbours, was kept alive much too vividly in German mem-
ory. Systematically cultivated resentment aroused feelings of injustice
which mobilized aggression and propelled the Germans into World
War II. By contrast, it was the healing therapy of forgetting which laid
the foundations for a new Europe. Meier uses examples from Greek,
Roman and later European history to underpin his hypothesis that,
after excesses of violence and civil wars, political communities can be
repaired by forgetting and that this is the only way that conflictive
parties can be reconciled with one another.

This scenario is correct insofar as a shared history of violence is a neg-
ative legacy for a state and a society; similar to a sensitive explosive, it
may detonate at any moment. It is of vital importance that this dan-
gerous potential be defused, particularly as this legacy cannot be easily
disposed of and because it provokes a continuing negative aftermath.
The question which arises, and this opens a wide field for conflicting
interpretations, is: whether remembering or forgetting is more suitable
for achieving this goal? Reflecting on this problem in his book *The Ethics
of Memory*, Israeli philosopher Avishai Margalit formulated two possible
answers, which he symbolically assigned to his two parents who dis-
cussed this issue after World War II when it became apparent that most
of the members of their large families had been murdered. The mother's
point of view was:

> The Jews were irretrievably destroyed. What is left is just a pitiful
> remnant of the great Jewish people [which for her meant European
> Jewry]. The only honorable role for the Jews that remains is to form
> communities of memory – to serve as 'soul candles' like the candles
> that are ritually kindled in memory of the dead.

<u>This was the father's point of view</u>:

> We, the remaining Jews, are people, not candles. It is a horrible prospect for anyone to live just for the sake of retaining the memory of the dead. That is what the Armenians opted to do. And they made a terrible mistake. We should avoid it at all costs. Better to create a community that thinks predominantly about the future and reacts to the present, not a community that is governed from mass graves.[3]

In Israel, for example, the father's position was initially adopted after 1945. Although Israel emerged from the Holocaust rather than a civil war, it prioritized forgetting rather than remembering in this instance. Attention was focussed on founding a new state; this represented a new beginning for the survivors and a positive prospect for succeeding generations. After two decades, and even more clearly after four decades, Margalit's maternal position then came increasingly to the fore. The survivors turned back to their pasts, which they had tried to keep at bay for so long. Israeli society began to transform itself more and more into a ritualistic community of remembrance after the wars of the sixties and seventies. Margalit's example places Meier's inexorable choice between remembering *or* forgetting into context, illustrating that remembering and forgetting do not necessarily constitute absolute opposites; instead, they may alternate over time. This is confirmed if we look back on the history of the twentieth century from the vantage of the present; the manner in which we deal with the traumatic past and the methods which we employ have changed a number of times. Before examining the main shifts which are evident since 1945 and before moving on to discuss other forms of conflict and the interaction between forgetting and remembering, I would like to illustrate the scale of the problem we are concerned with by turning to a literary example.

'Forget, forgive; conclude and be agreed' – the core of the policy of blotting out the past, the so-called '*Schlussstrichpolitik*' (literally: drawing a line under the past), can be found in these four imperatives which are taken from Shakespeare's historical drama *Richard II*.[4] In this case, the call for oblivion emanates from the King, who wishes to mediate in a row between two protagonists. Despite the fact that this command is reinforced by the King's authority, it is unsuccessful. A smouldering, 18-year history of betrayal, conspiracy and murder cannot be resolved by compelling an act of forgetfulness; on the contrary, it is at this exact point that an unbridgeable rift opens up, a fissure which leads to a civil war that will last 100 years, claiming King Richard II himself as

its first victim. Appearing as prosecutor for one of the parties involved, Bolingbroke invokes a mythological precedent to justify his right to revenge: the blood of his murdered relatives had been crying to heaven like that of Abel murdered by Cain:

> Which blood, like sacrificing Abel's, cries,
> Even from the tongueless caverns of the earth,
> To me for justice and rough chastisement;
> And, by the glorious worth of my descent,
> This arm shall do it, or this life be spent.

<div align="right">(<i>Richard II</i>, I, 1, 104–8)</div>

Shakespeare devoted no less than ten dramas to the Wars of the Roses, which preceded the peaceful epoch of the Tudor dynasty in which he himself lived, clearly demonstrating the feudal vicious circle of family honour, power and revenge. He was particularly interested in ensuring that this self-destructive era of violence was anchored in the memory of the English nation. In doing so, however, he had no intention whatsoever of keeping the fire of revenge burning. Unlike Meier, Shakespeare, who showed us that the command to forget is fraught with paradoxes and pitfalls, attributes a peace giving and integrative role to the process of remembering. The historical dramas show that the feudal ethos of the destructive imperative to keep a memory of revenge alive essentially distorts the vision of the nation as a whole. The feudal nexus of memory and revenge respects neither the person as an individual nor the commonwealth as a whole. These feudal identities of the powerful aristocratic families, with their readiness to fight in the defence of their honour and in the maintenance of their good name, had to be overcome in the transition to an Early Modern absolutist territorial state. The nation which came about after the Civil War in the era of the Tudor monarchy created a new patriotism which subsumed – but did not eliminate – the particular interests of the established families; a nation for which Shakespeare and others created the connecting memory and cohesive cement in his drama cycle. In that process of early state formation, the national history – and here specifically the trauma of the Civil War – was reconstructed as a common reference, displacing conflict-laden and divisive memories. For the English nation, the memory of overcoming this history took the place of the feudal recollection.

   'Forget, forgive; conclude and be agreed' – rather than preventing the Civil War, Richard II's blotting-out policy became one of its triggers.

And, according to Shakespeare, what stood at the end of the Civil War was not a mutual forgiving and forgetting between antagonistic parties, but the common memory of the newly founded nation. This nation constituted itself as a new community which defused old memories, precisely by the process of inheriting them. Edward Hall, historian to Henry VIII, wrote a historical work about the Wars of the Roses, which was one of the sources that Shakespeare would later fall back on. In the dedication to his work, the chronicler exclaimed: 'What nobleman of the most ancient origin, whose family history would not have been contaminated by this separation!'[5] Similar to Hall, Shakespeare also weaves the bisected recollections of the conflicting parties together into the common memory of the nation in his civil war dramas. Both the historian and the dramatist transform feudal recollections into the national pool of recollections; the feudal ethos was overcome by a new national ethos. Henceforth, the individual understood himself as part of a new and inclusive identity. Identification with a joint history replaced the feudal sacredness of blood and legitimation by birth; the patriotic honour of the country displaced the sacredness of the lineage. Family honour was translated into national honour.[6] It is important to note that this epochal change in the political constitution and social fabric was not supported by a process of forgetting, but by a process of remembering. This example shows that the process of remembering does not only have a divisive, but also a transformative and integrative power.

This idea of memory's transformative power has no place in Christian Meier's argument; this may explain why he places all his bets on the one and only card of forgetting. In the following, I would like to free the terms 'forgetting' and 'remembering' from a rigid polarity by showing that forgetting can be a cure, but it is by no means a cure-all. Both of the socio-political practices, forgetting and remembering, can exert both damaging and healing effects. The decision whether it is better to favour the one over the other depends on the historical context and above all on the cultural values and general circumstances prevailing in each instance. I would like to refer to the situation in post-war Germany as an example of the radical transformation of the general cultural framework.

The politics of forgetting in Germany post 1945

The palliative of forgetfulness was indeed applied after World War II, as Meier repeatedly points out, in order to reconstruct West German

society and to consolidate European peace. Subsequent to a short phase of prosecution of prominent Nazi culprits at the Nuremberg trials, most Nazi officials and followers were rehabilitated. Hermann Lübbe retrospectively coined the term 'communicative hush-up' (*kommunikatives Beschweigen*) for this practice.[7] This 'culture of silence' functioned as a kind of protective zone or cocoon, within which the transformation of society could take place. The democratization of citizens could proceed faster and more effectively in the protective climate of a non-thematization of 'Brownshirt' German biographies, than in an atmosphere of mutual distrust and accusations. And, in fact, the Allies tolerated the post-war continuity of the Nazi elite in order to facilitate the process of rapid reintegration in the context of Cold War power politics. In the post-war period, this collective hush-up was common practice internationally as well as in West Germany. In his 1992 essay 'Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe', Tony Judt has shown that during the Cold War national memories in Europe were put into cold storage to support the political status quo. According to Judt, the official European version of the wartime experience included the 'universally acknowledged claim that responsibility for the war, its suffering and its crimes, lay with the Germans'.[8] Given the excessive scale of the evil that had been committed by Nazi Germany, this consensus was certainly grounded on historical facts. Judt, however, points to the comforting effect of this formula for European nations: within this framework, many memories of what had happened during and after the war were 'conveniently lost'.[9] This commitment to forgetfulness continued in East and West until the end of the Cold War period. The willingness to forget went much further, however, encompassing German guilt as well. Winston Churchill already said as much with particular clarity in a speech he gave in Zurich in 1946. This speech shows that, from the perspective of the newly constituted House of Europe, the war should be overcome by the tried and tested means of forgetting. He argued that the Germans, and those who had collaborated with the Axis powers, should no longer be confronted with their recent past. After those most responsible had been condemned in Nuremberg, he demanded an end to 'the process of reckoning' and declared:

> We must all turn our backs upon the horrors of the past. We must look to the future. We cannot afford to drag forward across the years that are to come the hatreds and revenges which have sprung from the injuries of the past. If Europe is to be saved from infinite misery,

and indeed from final doom, there must be an act of faith in the European family and an act of oblivion against all the crimes and follies of the past.[10]

De Gaulle and Adenauer also pursued this post-war consensus policy of forgetting. They reviewed military parades together and were jointly present at the celebration of High Mass in the Cathedral of Rheims in 1962. In this way, they signalled a policy of forgiving and forgetting beyond national frontiers, in both military and religious contexts. The historical background was chosen for highly symbolic reasons: the document of German Capitulation had been signed in Rheims, the town in northern France where General Eisenhower had installed his headquarters, on 7 May 1945. The religious ritual of purification was of great political importance: this symbolic act of forgetting accelerated West Germany's integration into the Western European Alliance. During the 1950s and 1960s, society was characterized by what was at the time called '*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*', mastering the past, which we generally describe today as a form of blotting out the past ('*Schlussstrich*'). From the German perspective, at this time the past was equivalent to guilt or blame, which could be dealt with through various measures such as reparations, diplomatic relations with Israel, '*Aktion Sühnezeichen*' – Action Reconciliation Service – and other activities in the hope of expiating that guilt or, at least, of getting it off the agenda. It is important to note that, at that time, forgetting was not conceived of as a repression of memory; rather, it was connected to a spirit of renewal and of openness towards the future. This hope in the regenerative power of the future was a central value of the theory of modernization shared by all European countries in both East and West.

This emphatic and persistent commitment to the future is illustrated by an episode which occurred in May 1966 when Adenauer was on a visit to Israel. During the course of this visit, he was received by the Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol in Tel Aviv. On this occasion, Eshkol emphasized the long powers of recollection of the Israeli people, a consequence of their protracted history of persecution. Noting that his people remember their enemies just as they remember their friends, Eshkol placed Adenauer amongst his friends, not least because of his contribution to the reparation contracts of 1952. The former Chancellor responded that he was aware of the terrible persecutions suffered by the Jews, in particular since he himself had suffered under the Nazi reign of terror. He had also been interned and his own life had been

in danger. During his chancellorship he had applied himself to 'the process of reconciliation with the Jewish people and with the French neighbours'.[11]

So far, so good. At the end of the evening, however, there was an unexpected clash in the Prime Minister's house, when Eshkol announced in his after-dinner speech:

> The Israeli people are waiting for new signs and evidence for the fact that the German people recognize the terrible burden of the past. Reparations are only a symbolic restitution for the bloody pillage carried out. There is no atonement for the atrocities and no comfort for our plight.

Horrified by these words which he interpreted as an attack on Germany, Adenauer reacted with an emphatic appeal to

> ... overcome the time of atrocities, which cannot be made undone. We should now commit them to the past. I know how hard this is for the people of Israel to accept. But when good intentions are not recognized, nothing good can come of it.[12]

It took two more decades before the policy of forgiving and forgetting came under critical attack. Helmut Kohl's and Ronald Reagan's visit to the military cemetery at Bitburg – where some members of the SS were also buried – on 5 May 1945, the 40th anniversary of V-E Day, was the last and most scandalous event in this chain. This political ceremony of remembrance was perceived to be a simultaneous ceremony of forgetfulness towards Holocaust victims which led to international outrage.[13] Bitburg, President von Weizsäcker's speech on the 40th anniversary of the end of World War II, the 'wild excavations' in an area of Berlin that was later designated 'Topography of Terror' and the so-called Historians' Debate were all steps in West Germany's transition process in the mid 1980s as it moved from a public policy of forgetting to a policy of remembering.[14]

It must be added that leading terms in the policy of forgetting, such as 'mastering the past' and the plea for closure, had already come under criticism in the 1960s as a form of self-forgiveness and forgetfulness.[15] A new era of therapeutic discourse began in the middle of the 1960s with Alexander Mitscherlich, the foundation of the Sigmund Freud Institute and the Frankfurt School's discourse of critical theory, advanced by Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, and the reception of

Walter Benjamin. This eventually effected a change of paradigm in West German public discourse, shifting the perspective away from the perpetrators onto the victims who had suffered under the Nazis. Discussions were guided less by attempts to save face in West German society and more by embracing the perspective of Jewish victims. The connotations of remembering and forgetting exchanged their meaning and value in this transitional phase towards a new cultural framework. Whereas forgetting, as a strategy of renewal and integration, had had positive connotations within the context of a cultural orientation towards modernization, it now became negatively associated with denial and cover-up. Remembering, in contrast, previously negatively associated with a fixation on the past, hate, revenge, resentment and divisions, was now re-valued as a therapeutic and ethical obligation. When Hermann Lübbe formulated his retrospective justification for the policy of covering up the past and introduced the term 'communicative hush-up', he once more assumed the role of advocate of the pragmatic-functionalist paradigm (as Christian Meier has done with his book) as opposed to the therapeutic, critical and moralistic paradigm.

Truth commissions: the paradigmatic shift from forgetting to remembering

Peace, according to Christian Meier, is quite a different matter from justice. Those who want to achieve justice through remembering are necessarily endangering social harmony which, as is shown by history, was again and again founded on a policy of forgetting.[16] This older model for peace processes after civil wars was universally replaced in the 1980s by a new concept which closely combines the two contrasting poles of justice – or remembering – and peace – or forgetting. I refer here to the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, which facilitate a process of coming to terms with the past and the recognition of victims as a first step towards social peace. In this context, remembering takes on a therapeutic, cathartic and purifying function. It is not a final goal or an end in itself as in the case of ritualistic commemorations of the Holocaust, but rather an important and irreplaceable intermediate step. There are numerous examples in various cultural contexts for such transformative remembering. In Christian Confession, for instance, one must remember in order to forget: the sins must be listed and spoken, before they are forgiven by the absolution of the priest. The artistic process of catharsis is similar: re-enacting a painful experience on the theatre stage allows the burden of the past to be re-lived and expiated.

According to Aristotle's theory, groups which go through such a process are collectively purified. Remembering to forget is also the basic aim of Freudian psychoanalysis, which lifts the burdensome past into the conscious, so that it may be left behind. The process of remembering in the form of a public and political procedure takes on a similarly therapeutic function as a means of forgetting: a painful truth must be brought into the open and made public, the victims must be offered the opportunity to speak of their suffering and their stories must be listened to and acknowledged with empathy in order to finally alleviate this painful burden of memory. It was in accord with this process that the tribunals of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission were organized which took place in South Africa between 1990–96; developed under the direction of Bishop Tutu und Alex Boraine, these processes were a mixture of tribunal, cathartic drama and Christian confessional ritual.

There are currently about thirty such Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRC) in operation throughout the world; however, the rules of the game have to be reformulated according to each individual situation. Although the component 'J' for 'Justice' is by no means excluded in these transition processes, the component 'T' for 'Truth' takes on a particular relevance. This policy of remembering is characterized by open discussion in a social forum and by professional and public acknowledgement of what has happened, rather than a process of covering-up or turning a blind eye. Focussed as it is on reconciliation and integration, we can see this as a new form of coming to terms with the past, which bolsters the transition of dictatorships and other regimes which have grossly violated human rights into democracies.[17] In traumatically divided societies, the road to a constitutional state and to social integration today proceeds through the bottleneck of remembering as a first (or second) step in coming to terms with mass murder and similar crimes. The burden of guilt is alleviated and the traumatic account can finally be consigned to the past as a consequence of political rituals of regret and the recognition of the victims.

The model of the Truth Commission was developed in South America, where countries such as Chile, Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil transitioned from military dictatorships into democracies during the 1980s and 1990s. Victims of these dictatorships appealed to the global paradigm of human rights and coined new political terms such as the 'violation of human rights' and 'state terrorism'.[18] Based on these new terms and values, new investigation committees were implemented and these formed the basis for the truth commissions. They built on the transformative power of historical truth and the significance of active

memory work. 'To remember in order not to repeat' developed generally into a political and cultural imperative. With the support of the human rights paradigm, a new and influential discourse about victims was established to replace the traditional political narrative of class warfare, national revolutions and political antagonisms. The universal value of human dignity, in the sense of the physical and social integrity of the person, moved centre-stage. These universal values introduced a new political agenda which created a space where other forms of oppressive measures of the state could also be criticized, including racial or gender discrimination and the suppression of indigenous peoples. This transformation of values became an important symbolic resource in the process of implementing the notion of 'crimes against humanity' into the global perception of justice. This worldwide advocacy for the support of victims of violence in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries introduced a global change similar to the transnational movement for the abolition of slavery in the nineteenth century. The important difference is, however, that in this instance the victims are able to speak for themselves and demand their right to recognition and memory in a globalized world. The propagation of their voices and their public visibility and audibility has created a new world ethos which makes it increasingly difficult for national state regimes to sustain a repressive policy of forgetfulness and cover-up. In post-dictatorship societies, the process of remembering has in the meantime become a condition for the social adaptation which must follow upon the change of system in order to extend and deepen the transformation of society. Remembering can then lead to a form of coming to terms with the past with the aim of leaving the history of violence behind, in order to attain a common future.

The Spanish Civil War as an example of forgetting and remembering

When we look at these current examples of the aftermath of civil wars, we are no longer satisfied with a straightforward either-or in the matter of remembering or forgetting. One must above all take a closer look at the general framework: who is ordering a policy of silence? Which form of self-exculpation is associated with it? How great and how sustainable is the acceptance of the decreed process of forgetting? I would like to turn to the example of Spain, a European country which has been engaged in the aftermath of its Civil War for over 70 years. In Spain there was indeed a 'pact of silence', or forgetfulness, as outlined by Christian

Meier. However, this did not come about at the end of the Civil War (1936–39); it was postponed for almost four decades until Franco's dictatorship ended with his death in 1975. The pact in 1977 was intended to underpin the transition (*transición*) from autocracy to democracy. This transition has been characterized as 'the birth of democracy out of the spirit of dictatorship'.[19] All political crimes prior to 1977 were granted an amnesty by the unwritten law of silence. By guaranteeing impunity for crimes committed on both sides of the Civil War and during the military dictatorship, it was hoped that victors and the defeated would be placed on an equal footing. The option of forgetting was in accord at the time with a widespread consensus in society. Nearly 40 years after the end of the Civil War, the Spanish were prepared to let the problems of the past be past, so as not to endanger their fragile democracy. That democracy was not founded upon a self-critical discourse; instead, for a long time, it was overshadowed by the fear of a relapse into totalitarianism.[20] The second generation deferred issues related to guilt or mourning in the interest of consolidating a common future. But this compromise did not in the least contribute towards equality and integration in a society divided by the Civil War. As Paul Ingendaay notes: 'The ideological separation between the victors and the defeated which the regime constantly emphasised, has since hung around the necks of the Spanish like a lead weight.'[21]

In contrast to Meier's historical examples, the decreed process of forgetting in Spain failed to result in a true equilibrium. Instead, it actually stabilized the power of the Franquists and prolonged that power into the democratic era, by means of institutions such as public administration, the armed forces and the judiciary. This particularly applied to the politics of history in a country permeated by monuments and symbols of the Franco era, while the historic experience of the Republicans found no public expression.[22] The end of the Civil War, in the sense of a joint consignment to forgetfulness, did not come about; on the contrary, it was the victor of the Civil War, General Franco, who systematically distorted the memory of the Civil War with his self-serving nationalist and religious myths together with a consistent repression and de-legitimation of the vanquished Republicans' side of the story. This one-sided version of history had been established and propagated for years in school books, monuments and anniversary celebrations; historical studies and critical revision of this manipulated view of history had no chance in the face of the fact that the archives remained sealed. By means of this blatant asymmetry of power, the Civil War was prolonged into the dictatorship, and the dictatorship was prolonged into the democratic state

on a mental and physical level. The pact of silence not only protected the Franquist wrongdoers, it also prolonged the enemy stereotype of the murdered communists and democrats, who had been pursued as 'anti-Spanish' and 'Reds'. The memories of the Republicans, which were granted no space in society, became encapsulated in unofficial and local counter-memories of marginalized groups and families.

There were individual activities of remembrance right at the beginning of the democratic phase which exhumed some of the Civil War victims, whose bodies had been hastily hidden, without ceremony, in fields and ditches. Due to the pact of silence and the taboo surrounding issues related to guilt, these private commemoration ceremonies remained outside the focus of public interest for decades. This changed in the mid 1990s, and again after the turn of the century, when the layers of silence enshrouding these topics became increasingly porous; Republican counter-memory began literally exhuming the past, skeleton by skeleton. This new memory project originated in the third generation, which went looking for the bodies of their lost grandparents and found them distributed throughout the country. It is estimated that 30,000 Republicans still lie hidden under Spanish soil.[23] The grandchildren, born into democracy, broke the pact of silence; they were convinced that remembering, rather than forgetting, should form the cornerstone of Spanish democracy. Their claim was that the names of the dead should be uncovered and their skeletons be returned to the families, so that they be reinstated in familial, social and national memory. For this purpose, memory activists such as Emilio Silva founded the 'Association for the Recovery of Memory of History'. On their own initiative, they have recovered the remains of more than 4000 execution victims of the bloody phase of the Franco regime. The work of these self-declared advocates of historical memory, who work as archaeologists, anthropologists and geneticists on the identification of Franco's dead, can be well compared with the activities of the non-governmental organization (NGO) 'Memorial', whose members are currently engaged in Russia in exhuming and rehabilitating Stalin's victims without the support or approval of the state.[24] In contrast to the activities of 'Memorial', these actions in Spain triggered a veritable boom in remembering, which was reflected across the board in Spanish media, films, literature and historic research and which has found a huge public resonance.

The issue of forgetting or remembering has been newly posed by the third generation that posits the reading that a sustainable democracy cannot be built upon heaps of unidentified corpses and repressive silence. The pact of silence which the second generation had closed

enabled a transition to democracy, but it explicitly did not resolve the traumatic legacy of violence. Instead, it consolidated a deep division within society. Today, we can see that silence did not dissolve the memory of the traumatic past; it was materially preserved in the earth and in the families. It is only now returning from this latency to society, 60 to 70 years on.

At the end of October 2007, nearly 70 years after the end of the Civil War and three decades after the second generation's pact of silence, there was a further turnabout in Spanish history policy. Prime Minister José Luis Zapatero, himself the grandson of a Republican grandfather who was murdered and whose body disappeared, rescinded the amnesty law after 30 years. He passed the 'Law of Historical Remembrance' (*Ley de Memoria Histórica*) through parliament which officially condemned the fascist dictatorship for the first time, assuring its victims of recognition and restitution. Zapatero not only conceded here to the internal pressure of Republican family memories, he was also responding to changes in the general political climate of remembrance which favoured recalling the crimes of states and dictatorships even after such an extended period of time. His efforts to achieve a balance of perspectives in memory by measures which included the dismantling of Franco memorials was sharply criticized by the other side; he was accused of overstepping his duties and digging his nails into old wounds, thus jeopardizing the inner harmony of his country. For the moment, a judicial clarification of past crimes still seems inconceivable in Spain. Spanish 'star' solicitor Baltasar Garzón, who, in 1998, issued an internationally regarded warrant for the arrest of the former Chilean Dictator Auguste Pinochet, and who has been carrying out investigations against those responsible for the murders and kidnappings of the Franco regime, is himself now in the dock. Rather than being a plaintiff, he has become an object of accusation by ultra-right wing splinter groups who wish to discredit the process of coming to terms with the dictatorship and have received the full support of the Supreme Court.[25]

Here we are again faced with the fundamental question asked by Christian Meier in his book: does the demand for justice automatically endanger social harmony? Are the two values necessarily incompatible? Demands for prosecution and compensation can indeed lead to polarization and the reopening of old wounds.[26] The cultural framework in which these demands are embedded determines whether this happens or not. In order to prevent remembrance from releasing a destructive power and to tap its integrative potential, this cultural framework must

be supported by Spanish society in its entirety. It must be founded on a general consensus that such self-critical memory work is a necessary step to a civil society. If understood as a transitional step, it does not need to divide the community; on the contrary, it may decisively contribute to the democratic consolidation of the common cause. The call to forget comes, generally speaking, from former Franco supporters; they hope that the status quo of the established historical view will not be disturbed and that the crimes perpetrated will remain unavenged. The urge to remember, however, tends to come from Republican families; it is not necessarily driven by a desire for revenge and/or retaliation, but by a desire for social balance and integration. In a landscape saturated with Franquist symbols, the hidden and hitherto neglected sites where the victims were unceremoniously disposed have become the most significant *lieux de mémoire* for Republicans.[27] The need for recognition which is felt by family members and their descendants encompasses the rehabilitation and propitiation of the dead. It is their task to mourn and to bury the dead and to complete this last ritual duty of commemoration for their relatives. That is why they exhume their relatives from the anonymous graves in which they were hidden and forgotten in order to ensure that they get an appropriate burial after such a long period of delay. This form of socially or religiously motivated ritual commemoration brings to an end an intolerable situation and grants the dead – and their descendants – recognition and peace.[28]

Summarizing, we may say that a reconciliatory process of forgetting can only function under certain framing conditions which have to be carefully observed: this process must bring together both sides and it must be perceived as a mutual unburdening. That was never the case in Spain, due to the asymmetric power relation and the significant delay in the process. In the long run, however, the state decree of oblivion collided with basic social and religious needs. A central issue remains the obligation to the dead, who require an appropriate burial. Elaborate rules regulating the interchange between the living and the dead are at the core of every culture. It is exactly this basic humane task of bringing peace to the dead, which is most gravely upset after a history of excessive violence. There are no graves for the millions of Jewish victims who were gassed, burned and dissolved into thin air. That is why this particular wound cannot be healed. In Spain, as well as in other dictatorships in South America, the victims were made to disappear; they were shot and hidden in mass burials. In Spain, increasing efforts have been made over the last decade to identify and rehabilitate the anonymous dead and

to grant them a ceremonious burial; in this way they are returned to their families. It is the responsibility of society and of family members to grant the dead this final act of recognition and respect. But if family members remain lost, if their fate remains uncertain, if the wrong that has been done to them is not recognized and if there is no memorial place for posterity, then such a forgetting preserves the trauma. Such a society has not yet attained social peace but continues to be haunted by the ghosts of the past. A readiness to welcome a joint future can hardly come about before these urgent commemoration debts to the dead have been repaid.

In his study, Christian Meier collected examples which suggest that, even in our own time, the process of forgetting after civil wars is the only tried-and-tested solution for social peace. He continues: 'there must be strong new arguments or motives, or perhaps hopes for progress, in order to break with this tradition'. The examples given here make us doubt the validity of that tried-and-tested solution, however, and instead support the argument that the two terms remembering and forgetting should be taken out of the rigid polarization in which Meier has placed them. In practice, 'remembering' or 'forgetting' are rarely mutually exclusive practices, which is why we should pay more attention to crossovers such as selective forgetting and partial or transitional remembering. The crucial question must always be: who profits, who suffers from forgetting? Can a fresh start really be achieved on an equal basis or is the price too high which one group has to pay? I hope to have shown that in spite of many problems, puzzles and pitfalls, there are indeed some new arguments, motives and perhaps even hopes for future dealings with a history of shared violence.

Notes

1. Christian Meier (2010), *Das Gebot zu vergessen und die Unabweisbarkeit des Erinnerns. Vom öffentlichen Umgang mit schlimmer Vergangenheit* (Munich: Siedler). There are other studies that have analysed the political strategies of forgetting in a wider context. Stanley Cohen has looked at 'modes of forgetting by which a whole society separates itself from its discreditable past record. This might happen at an organized, official and conscious level – the deliberate cover-up, the rewriting of history – or through the type of cultural slippage that occurs when information disappears'. Stanley Cohen (1995), 'States of Denial. Knowledge, Accountability, and the Policing of the Past', *Law and Social Inquiry*, 20 (1), 7–50, here 15. See also Stanley Cohen (2001), *States of Denial. Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering* (Cambridge: Polity Press), p. 138.
2. Nicole Loraux (1997), *La Cité divisée. L'oubli dans la Mémoire D'Athènes* (Paris: Payot); Hinderk Emrich and Gary Smith (eds) (1996), *Vom Nutzen*

des Vergessens (Berlin: Wiley); Avishai Margalit and Gary Smith (eds) (1997), *Amnestie, oder Die Politik der Erinnerung in der Demokratie*, translated by Hartmut Kuhlmann and Wilhelm Werthern (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp).

3. Avishai Margalit (2003), *The Ethics of Memory* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press), pp. viii–ix. Margalit differentiates between two modes of forgetting: *covering up*, and *blotting out*. In comparing these practical possibilities, he argues in favour of the first mode.

4. William Shakespeare, *Richard II*, I, 1, 156 in W.J. Craig (ed.) (1974), *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (London: Oxford University Press), p. 382.

5. Edward Hall (1542), *Dedication to the King, The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families*, quoted in Lily B. Campbell (1964), *Shakespeare's Histories: Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy* (London: Methuen), p. 69.

6. This is the interpretation offered by Zdenek Stribrny: '...the whole conflict between France and England is presented as an encounter between the surviving feudal order and the English nation-state as it developed in Shakespeare's own time'. See Zdenek Stribrney (1964), 'Henry V and History', in Arnold Kettle (ed.), *Shakespeare in a Changing World: 12 Essays for the 400th Anniversary of his Birth* (London: Lawrence and Wishart), pp. 844–901.

7. Hermann Lübbe (1983), 'Der Nationalsozialismus im politischen Bewusstsein der Gegenwart', in Martin Broszat, Ulrich Dübber and Walther Hofer (eds), *Deutschlands Weg in die Diktatur* (Berlin: Siedler), pp. 329–49.

8. Tony Judt (1992), 'The Past Is Another Country. Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe', *Daedalus*, 121 (Fall), 83–119, here 87. See also Tony Judt (2005), *Postwar. A History of Europe since 1945* (New York, NY: Penguin Press), p. 160.

9. Judt (1992), pp. 83–9. Ian Buruma described this logic as follows: 'It was comforting to know that a border separated us from the nation that embodied the evil. They were evil, so consequently we must have been good. The fact that we grew up in a country which had suffered under the German occupation meant, to us, that we were on the side of the angels.' Ian Buruma (1994), *Erbschaft der Schuld. Vergangenheitsbewältigung in Deutschland und Japan*, translated by Klaus Binder and Jeremy Gaines (Munich: Hanser), p. 11. Confronted by members of the 'Committee for Jewish Claims on Austria', the Austrian government declared: 'All suffering of the Jews during this period was inflicted upon them by the Germans and not by the Austrians; Austria bears no guilt for all of these evil things, and where there is no guilt, there is no obligation for restitution.' Quoted from Heidemarie Uhl (2005), 'Vom Opfermythos zur Mitverantwortungsthese: NS-Herrschaft, Krieg und Holocaust im Österreichischen Gedächtnis', in Christian Gerbel, Manfred Lechner and Dagmar C. G. Lorenz (eds), *Transformationen gesellschaftlicher Erinnerung. Studien zur Gedächtnisgeschichte der Zweiten Republik* (Vienna: Turia + Kant) pp. 50–85, here p. 57.

10. Randolph S. Churchill (ed.) (1948), *The Sinews of Peace. Post-War Speeches by Winston S. Churchill* (London: Cassell), p. 200. I would like to thank Marco Duranti for drawing my attention to this.

11. Rainer Blasius (2009), 'Der gute Wille muss auch anerkannt werden', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 60, 12 March, p. 21.

12. Journalist Hans Ulrich Kempski recorded the following text: 'the Nazi era killed as many Germans as Jews...we should now let this era fall

into oblivion'. See Hans Peter Mensing (ed.) (2009), *Adenauer: Die letzten Lebensjahre 1963–1967. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen, Gespräche, Interviews und Reden*, Band II, September 1965–April 1967 (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schönigh). See also Rainer Blasius (1997), *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1966* (Munich: Oldenbourg).

13. Geoffrey H. Hartman (ed.) (1986), *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective* (Bloomington, IN: John Wiley & Sons).

14. It is interesting to note that, with the exception of the Weizsäcker speech, the push for change came from below rather than from above. It was a bottom-up movement of two generations (namely, the so-called 45ers and the 68ers) that were reacting against top-down initiatives which inaugurated the memorial shift towards a civil society.

15. Norbert Frei (1997), *Vergangenheitspolitik. Die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS-Vergangenheit* (Munich: C.H. Beck); Edgar Wolfrum (1999), *Geschichtspolitik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Der Weg zur bundesrepublikanischen Erinnerung 1948–1990* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft).

16. Meier (2010), p. 81.

17. For an overview of activities, see Pierre Hazan (2007), 'Das neue Mantra der Gerechtigkeit', *Überblick, deutsche Zeitschrift für Entwicklungspolitik*, 43 (1 and 2), 10–22. The edition of May 2007 is devoted to the theme of justice in the aftermath of conflict.

18. Elizabeth Jelin (2010), 'The Past in the Present: Memories of State Violence in Contemporary Latin America', in Aleida Assmann and Sebastian Conrad (eds), *Memory in a Global Age. Discourses, Practices, Trajectories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 61–78.

19. The formula '*die Geburt der Demokratie aus dem Geiste der Diktatur*' (the birth of democracy out of the spirit of dictatorship) comes from Christian Schüle (2003), 'Die Toten kehren heim', *ZEIT,* 22, 22 May.

20. Walther L. Bernecker and Sören Brinkmann (2006), *Kampf der Erinnerungen. Der Spanische Bürgerkrieg in Politik und Gesellschaft 1936–2006* (Nettersheim: Graswurzelrevolution).

21. Paul Ingendaay (2009), 'Einen Nationalsalat, bitte!', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 77, 1 April, p. 33. In this article, the author describes the one-sided symbols of Franco's memorial policy which continue to exist 70 years after the 'day of victory' on 1 April 1939.

22. According to Ingendaay, there is a difference between left and right violence. The victors had persecuted and humiliated the losers for decades with Church support. In Spain, the regime renamed squares and roads for its victims that had fallen for 'God and Spain', creating a pompous death cult. See Ingendaay (2009), 'Siebzig Jahre Scham: Die Totenruhe des Bürgerkriegs', http://faz-community.faz.net/blogs/ancho/archive/2009/09/02/siebzig-jahre-scham-die-totenruhe-des-buergerkriegs.aspx, accessed 30 September 2010.

23. Schüle (2003).

24. Alexander Etkind (2009), 'Post-Soviet Hauntology: Cultural Memory of the Soviet Terror', *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory*, 16 (1), 182–200.

25. Paul Ingendaay (2010), 'Gerechtigkeit für Baltasar Garzón', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 90, 19 April, p. 29. This article also refers to the foreign press. The *International Herald Tribune* carried an editorial which explicitly stated that it was not Garzón's investigation, but the deeds of the Franco regime which constituted the crime to be debated. The process against Garzón was termed a 'parody of Justice'.
26. Compare the situation in socialist Yugoslavia during the 1990s.
27. Pia Hörstrup (2009), 'Hass und Rache', in *Die Stimmen des Flusses* (von Jaume Cabré), State Exam Dissertation submitted to Konstanz University, p. 76. I gained many insights from this work.
28. The importance of knowledge about family members who died in wars and in civil wars for those involved and the transformation in the significance of that knowledge within American society has been impressively shown by Drew Gilpin Faust, who uses the American Civil War as a case study. See Gilpin Faust (2008), *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York, NY: Knopf).

4

Between Pragmatism, Coercion and Fear: Chosen Amnesia after the Rwandan Genocide

Susanne Buckley-Zistel

Over 16 years after the genocide, Rwanda's local communities remain severely affected by the experience of violence and attempts to overcome the legacy of this past represent a major challenge. Unsurprisingly, people who lived through the genocide against Tutsi and moderate Hutu, and through the 1990–94 war between the Habyarimana government and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), remember their past differently with their memories being informed by their role then and their current situation. However, the Rwandan memoryscape is not simply informed by recollection, it is also shaped by forgetting. Although at present the deliberate eclipsing of particular memories, what I term *chosen amnesia*, may be essential for enabling community cohesion and facilitating the coexistence necessary for the intimacy of rural life in Rwanda, it also impedes the social transformation that would render ethnicity-based violence impossible, as it prevents the social cleavages that allowed the genocide to occur from being challenged.

This chapter offers readers an insight into local processes of social transformation and reconciliation in Rwanda. It is based upon substantial field research undertaken during 2003–04 in Nyamata district in Kigali Ngali province, in particular around Nyamata town and Ntarama, and in the Gikongoro Ville, Karaba and Nyaruguru districts in Gikongoro province. These places were chosen because of their proximity to mass graves and genocide memorial sites.[1] In the first section of this chapter, I examine how ethnic divisions have been distorted through, if not invented by, history and memory since colonialism; this is followed by an investigation of the different memories of genocide

which are presently evoked, and eclipsed, in local narratives. The focus on memory, reflected in narratives on the past, helps to show how identities are constructed in discourse and language, while exploring if these constructs create a greater sense of group cohesiveness or, indeed, whether they reinforce those ethnic cleavages between Hutu and Tutsi which gave rise to genocide and other massacres. This discussion will finally lead to an examination of the risks inherent in the selective remembering of Rwanda's past.

Narratives and the past

The idea that the world does not present itself in the form of 'well-made stories, with central subjects, proper beginnings, middles and ends, and a coherence that permits us to see "the end" in every beginning'[2] is central to my argument. Rather, it is our desire for coherence, integrity and closure that coverts events into a meaningful plot. This is achieved through the narration of linear narratives, understood as 'discourses with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way for a definite audience, and thus offer insights about the world and/or people's experience of it'.[3] The way that we talk about an event is not a simple representation of reality; it involves selectivity, rearranging, re-description and simplification, as well as the deliberate, but also perhaps, unintentional inclusion and exclusion of information. Thus, as narratives reflect, the meaning of an event is constituted rather than found. Importantly, according to Hayden White, '[t]he production of meaning . . . can be regarded as a performance, because any given set of real events can be emplotted in a number of ways'.[4] In other words, there is always a different story that can be told about an event. However, although the past can be told in many ways, not all interpretations are always possible or desirable. Rather, the present and the past are closely intertwined. As Paul Antze and Michael Lambek note, there is a:

> . . . dialectic relationship between experience and narrative, between the narrating self and the narrated self. As humans, we draw on our experience to shape narratives about our lives, but equally, our identity and character are shaped by our narratives. People emerge from and as the products of their stories about themselves as much as their stories emerge from their lives.[5]

Narratives thus have a performative function since they constitute identities. This is particularly significant for collective identities, as a

common interpretation of the past creates group cohesion.[6] Individual and collective memory are intrinsically connected through the process of remembrance. According to Maurice Halbwachs, our individual memory answers expectations we assume from our environment; the way that we remember is already framed by the answer which we seek to give in response to this environment. For 'even at the moment of reproducing the past our imagination remains under the influence of the present social milieu'.[7] Memory, in this way, depends on immediate, social environments and it is always collective.[8]

Collective identity is, however, not only produced by remembering, but also by forgetting. As Ernest Renan has famously pointed out with reference to the nation, 'the essential element of a nation is that all its individuals must have many things in common but it must also have forgotten many things'.[9] In a similar vein, Stanley Cohen suggests that entire societies may choose to forget uncomfortable knowledge, turning it into 'open secrets' which are both known by all, and knowingly not known.[10] He introduces the term 'social amnesia' to refer to:

> …a mode of forgetting by which a whole society separates itself from its discreditable past record. This might happen at an organized, official and conscious level – the deliberate cover-up, the rewriting of history – or through the type of cultural slippage that occurs when information disappears.[11]

While the official re-writing of history is relevant for Rwanda, it is this notion of 'cultural slippage' which is of particular interest for us in this chapter. It raises the question as to why, on a local level, some things are chosen as worthy of being remembered, whilst others are forgotten: what function does selectivity serve?

Chosen amnesia

Although all interview partners during field research considered memory about the genocide to be very important, on a local level, some aspects of the past were consistently omitted from their narratives. Interviewees explicitly called attention to the discrepancy between public appearances and felt emotion; despite attitudes expressed and adopted in public and, at times, despite participation in reconciliation projects, people's hearts often told a different story. Moreover, I was repeatedly cautioned, particularly by those engaged in reconciliation efforts, not to trust my impression of peaceful coexistence; people seem

to hide their true feelings, especially from outsiders. This concealment bears similarities to a form of selective amnesia, or what I have termed *chosen amnesia* to differentiate it from Cohen's social amnesia.

The Greek word amnesia refers to a 'loss of memory' or an 'inability to remember'. While it is often used with reference to individual mental conditions in psychology, referring to a lack of memory as a temporary response of the brain to a highly traumatic event, in this chapter, it implies a social, collective inability to remember. This inability, however, does not include a fading of memory or a new, radically different interpretation of the past; rather, it implies that memory is still stored in the mind, even though people currently choose not to access it.

Chosen infers a degree of agency. In the Rwandan case, the inability to recall appears to be deliberate; interviewees almost refused to remember some features of their past. For instance, they often replied that they could not recollect any of the causes of the genocide. If remembering is informed by the present circumstances, as argued by Halbwachs above, then so is forgetting. Choosing amnesia thus appears to be a direct consequence of present needs. As I will demonstrate later, in the regions where I completed my fieldwork (Gikongoro and Nyamatai), people live together in conditions of close proximity and mutual interdependence in order to manage the challenges of daily life. The past is distorted then, because group cohesiveness is essential in the present. This, according to Maurice Halbwachs, is common practice, as 'society tends to erase from its memory all that might separate individuals, or that might distance groups from each other'.[12]

To a large extent, my research in Rwanda has revealed the opposite of Vamik Volkan's notion of *chosen trauma*. According to Volkan's idea, *chosen trauma* occurs when, after experiencing a painful event, a group feels helpless and victimized by another group. He says:

> ... the group draws the mental representations or emotional meanings of the traumatic event into its very identity and then it passes on the emotional and symbolic meaning from generation to generation. For each generation the description of the actual event is modified; what remains is its role in ... the group identity.[13]

If we put it differently, *chosen trauma* allows a group to find a sense of closure and bounded identity in order to be able to differentiate clearly between friend and foe. By contrast, *chosen amnesia* leads to a deliberate exclusion of traumatic events from discourse in order to prevent a sense of closure; it provides space for flexible boundaries between

groups, undermining clear distinctions between us and them. While *chosen trauma* and the repetition of trauma narratives help to construct a group identity which is separate from the identity of the opponent who caused the trauma, *chosen amnesia* has the opposite effect. Eclipsing memory neglects the collective experience of an event, hindering the formation of a shared, group-specific past and the production of a sense of group identity.

In this sense, *amnesia* is *chosen*, as opposed to coerced, and it should not be confused with public denial. Rather, it is essentially a coping mechanism which helps to avoid antagonisms and to facilitate peaceful coexistence. Remembering to forget is thus essential for local life, where members of different ethnic groups, perpetrators, victims, bystanders or saviours have to live together in the same community.

The question arises as to why some events are eclipsed, while others are remembered. This is influenced by a number of factors including circumstances, environments and audiences. As Liisa Malkki shows with reference to Burundian Hutu refugees in Tanzania, despite having the same background, these refugees may react very differently, depending on their current situation. While those living in isolation in refugee camps tend to rely on memory to define their identity, urban refugees often try to escape their past by assimilating into Tanzanian society in order to get by.[14]

The issue at stake in this context, however, is not just which stories are being told and which ones are being forgotten, as different stories are also being told at different societal levels. Amongst other divisions, we can see a clear split between the local and the national, and the public and private spheres. Consequently, it is important to note that, with reference to reconciliation, *chosen amnesia* is applied exclusively here to local public memory; 'local', in this case, signifies the societal level of bounded communities and neighbourhoods, in short the immediate life-world on which the individual depends. This is opposed to the national level where memory work is a highly politicized, top-down governmental project.[15] 'Public' then refers to the narratives at broader communal levels which include often mutually mistrusting neighbours or strangers like researchers (both foreign and national). This can be juxtaposed with the private, intimate realm of the family which provides a safe space where specifically Hutu or Tutsi views of the past, present and future may be aired and shared.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will examine the decision to eclipse aspects of the disturbing Rwandan past more closely. After briefly exploring how the very interpretation of Rwanda's history has

led to cleavages between ethnic groups, this analysis traces the tension between what is remembered and what is deliberately forgotten in today's Rwanda, demonstrating why *chosen amnesia* is a necessity for rural coexistence.

Contested history in Rwanda

Ever since it has been rendered into written form, first by German and subsequently by Belgian colonial anthropologists, Rwanda's historical discourse has essentially been a top-down political project which aims to either establish group cohesion or division.[16] The colonial administration introduced the 'Hamitic hypothesis', since discredited, which argued that Tutsis originated from northern and eastern Africa, while Hutus belonged to the Bantu people and thus constituted the country's indigenous population. While the Tutsi people, who, it was claimed, physically resembled Europeans, were portrayed as superior and were thus endowed with social and political functions, Hutus were assigned the role of common farmers. Consequently, over the course of history Tutsis came to be seen by Hutus not only as immigrants, but rather as foreign occupants and oppressors. With the advent of independence, the feeling of inferiority grew amongst the Hutu people, leading to their so-called 'Social Revolution' of 1959 and to the first pogrom against Tutsis, which was then repeated in 1962 and 1973.

There continues to be a fierce debate to this day about whether ethnic differences in Rwanda were invented, or 'merely' politicized by the colonial powers. Regardless of their origin, ethnic identities in Rwanda have become highly significant and, since independence, ethnic differences have been successfully manipulated for political ends by the two Hutu heads of state, in particular under the presidency of Grégoire Kayibanda (1962–73), but also in the lead-up to the genocide from 1990 onwards under President Juvénal Habyarimana (1973–94). Essentially, and at the risk of over-simplification, in anti-Tutsi discourses, Tutsi are portrayed as minorities, foreigners, authors of injustice and enemies of the Republic, while the Hutu identity is defined as that of the indigenous majority and of the former victims of injustice who emancipated themselves against the Tutsi monarchy in 1959.[17] Consequently, racist prejudices between Hutu and Tutsi have turned into 'a structural feature of Rwandan society, fulfilling simultaneously important political functions for the elites and socio-psychological function for the peasant masses',[18] paving the way for the popular participation in the 1994 genocide.

Remembering and amnesia

Today, there is a strong awareness of the detrimental impact of the different interpretations of Rwanda's history and of the divisions that this has caused. This, in turn, has led to fierce debate amongst academics and politicians about how this history should actually be portrayed. Even the development of history curriculum has now become a highly politicized issue.[19] Nevertheless, in a country with poor formal education and knowledge transmission, the collective memory vocalized in day-to-day encounters and in oral history is of greater significance than official history, and, as argued by Halbwachs above, the social environment shapes what is collectively recalled and what is forgotten.[20] In this context, many interviewees find themselves remembering some aspects about the past, most notably the shock and horror of the 1994 massacres, while deliberately forgetting others, such as the social divisions at the heart of the genocide. In the following, I will deal with the factors which call for memory and forgetting in separate sections, examining how this is affected by the present social milieu.[21]

Remembering the genocide

Despite the increasing temporal distance from 1994, the legacy of the war and the genocide remains omnipresent in Rwanda. Survivors have often not only lost loved-ones, but also their homes and property; many women suffer from HIV and AIDS as a result of the widespread sexual violence executed at this time.[22] A large proportion of the impoverished, rural survivors feel neglected by the government.

Against the backdrop of this present milieu, it is clear that remembering the genocide is of high importance; this was supported by all Rwandans that we interviewed. Generally, they emphasized memory's educational role and preventative function, while also insisting on its importance as a form of showing respect for the dead who should not be forgotten. Every year groups of survivors gather at the numerous memorial sites for commemorative events. The significance of memory can be seen clearly in the following statement by an elderly female survivor, whose son participated in genocidal killings:

> We have to remember people who died in 1994. It is important to remember someone that you love, a relative, a friend. We have to commemorate it in order to put a mechanism of prevention in place, and to ask God to help us. For me, we cannot forget what happened. (Elderly woman, Gikongoro)

The general consensus on the importance of remembering the genocide can, perhaps, be explained by the fact that all sides suffered during the war and the genocide and in many cases, people are still struggling with the after-effects.

However, despite the importance attributed to memory as something common to Rwandans, it is also divisive and the victim and perpetrator categories are still a subject of dispute. Even though none of the interviewees denied the reality of the genocide committed against the Tutsi, large parts of the Hutu population still consider themselves to be victims: victims of war, of refugee camps and/or post-genocide revenge acts and killings.

This can be seen clearly in the interviews: the accused and their families often conceived of themselves as victims. As the genocide was a phenomenon with mass participation, many Hutu were imprisoned afterwards, placing a heavy burden on their relatives who had to cultivate the land and simultaneously care for their children in conditions of severe poverty. Moreover, after the genocide, many Hutu lost their lives, perishing in refugee camps in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in overcrowded prisons or at the hands of the post-genocide army. Having suffered their own losses, many Hutu cannot understand why they are not allowed to mourn their dead publicly or why they are not included in the national commemoration ceremonies, as the following statement illustrates:

> To remember is good, but it should be inclusive. For instance, my parents were killed during the genocide. But when they [the public] remember they remember only Tutsi, so I am frustrated because they don't remember my family. (Young, rural woman, Nyamata)

This frustration is also echoed in the words of an elderly man, demonstrating that this is not confined to one generation:

> It is important not to forget the past so that we can prevent the future. But the bad was not only the genocide but also the Hutu who died in the Democratic Republic of Congo of diseases, and also those who were killed in revenge when they came back. Nobody has won this war, everybody has lost at least one family member. (Elderly man, Ntamara, Nyamata)

These quotes flag up the clear divisions in Rwandan memory. On the one hand, we can see an official form of memory which insists that

Tutsi suffering be remembered; this is particularly prevalent amongst the survivors and their families. Others, however, call for *all* suffering to be recognized and remembered. This split goes along Tutsi/Hutu lines, illustrating, while also simultaneously perpetuating, ethnic divisions. Sometimes this is further complicated by a lack of understanding and/or compassion for the other group, and discussions about the hierarchy of suffering that debate about which victim is more severely affected are common.

Amnesia about past divisions

The responses from interviewees with a rural background, who stem from the regions around Nyamata and Gikongoro, present a very different picture. They respond that 'all is well' and 'we are living together peacefully'. Although the memory of the genocide remains present and it is frequently evoked in conversations, the causes of the genocide, or of other pogroms against the Tutsi people, can often not be recalled. Instead, the circumstances which led to the genocide seemed to have disappeared into oblivion and the past is described as harmonious. This can be seen in the following statements where the killings are portrayed as a sudden rupture, executed by the authorities:

> The war was created by the state and the authorities. We as peasants did not know what was happening. Before we were living together, sharing everything. Only when the genocide started divisions started. (Young, rural man, Nyamata)

> According to me, I cannot determine who is responsible for the genocide. We heard that people were being killed without knowing who planned it. (Young, rural woman whose husband is imprisoned, Nyamata)

> It was bad governance. Authorities create divisions among Rwandans, that Tutsi and Hutu are different. Also, it was because of selfishness. Before 1990 ethnicities were living together, sharing beers, and getting married to each other. The conflict came after 1990. At Gikongoro, before the war, Tutsi and Hutu had good relations. (Young Tutsi male, released from prison, via *Ingando,* after confessing his participation in the genocide, Gikongoro, off Road to Cyangugu)

The young men from Nyamata and Gikongoro both present a version of the past which sees both ethnicities living together harmoniously until the sudden outbreak of violence. Responsibility for this is attributed in

two different ways: there are those who argue that they cannot explain it and, secondly, there are those who blame the elite. If blame is apportioned, it is always attributed to external parties – for example, to the pre-genocide government and the elite – while ordinary people are not held to be guilty or responsible. This strategy of scapegoating functions to render ordinary Rwandans collectively innocent.

It also seems to have given rise to the reading, popular amongst Hutu interview partners, that all Rwandans are victims. While Tutsi and moderate Hutu were victims of violence and killings, the predominantly Hutu perpetrators were victims of manipulation and misuse, if not also violence. This explanation corresponds to the current government discourse which views the causes of the genocide as bad governance and top-down manipulation[23] and which appears to have found agreement with both Hutu and Tutsi. As some Tutsi interviewees explained, in the rare moments where individuals from both ethnic groups discuss the genocide and Hutu perpetrators explain how they were manipulated or even coerced into participating in the killings, the survivors, at least, appear to be convinced that this participation was not voluntary. Whether this statement is truly heartfelt or simply a concession in light of the conversation is, of course, difficult to determine.

Nevertheless, as demonstrated by Jean Hatzfeld,[24] who collected interviews with perpetrators, it is clear that popular participation in the genocide was not necessarily always forced or coerced, but also a result of personal inclination. Furthermore, without wanting to underestimate the pervasive power of the genocide dynamics, individual cases suggest that some people were able to refuse to participate or to buy themselves out of having to kill.[25]

Between pragmatism, coercion and fear

Given previous massacres against the Tutsi people in 1959, 1962 and 1973, this insistence on past harmony and the inability to recall earlier forms of ethnic antagonism is, at the very least, surprising. In particular, as – arguably – the Rwandan genocide seems to have stemmed from, amongst other factors, deeply entrenched images of ethnic divisions and a dynamic of social exclusion and impunity.[26] During the fieldwork, however, the Rwandans we interviewed did not want to remember any of the social and economic cleavages that marked their society. This does not mean that these divisions are no longer significant; *choosing amnesia* should be recognized as a deliberate social coping mechanism to deal with the disruptive experiences of the past. The code of

silence which constrains much of the post-genocide discourse of these issues is expressed in the following statement by an elderly man from rural Nyamata, who, after seven years in prison, was released in 2003, presumed innocent:

> Just after the war there were many problems. People returned from exile, there were also revenge killings. People could not talk to each other. Everybody was afraid of everybody. Today, it is as if we have forgotten everything. At the moment it does not exist anymore. People never talk about the past because it brings back bad memories and problems. We pretend it does not exist. (Elderly man, Nyamata)

The question here is how can this coping mechanism be explained? Which aspects of the present milieu persuaded interviewees to cordon off their past? It appears that pragmatism, coercion and fear are the most prominent factors; in the following, I shall address each of these in turn.

Given the constraints and compromises of rural life in Rwanda, people often do not have the space to articulate their grievances publicly, as this would upset the social balance. According to the Rwandan historian Charles Ntampaka, it may take two or three generations before the situation cools sufficiently to allow individuals to speak out.[27] For now, maintaining a peaceful daily life has become a pragmatic priority. Sharing beers in bars, helping neighbours with hospital transports or fetching water are, amongst other things, all part of everyday life. Intermarriage also occurs and Rwandans are often very quick to highlight these signs of coexistence to demonstrate that the groups do somehow get on. Survivors, in particular, do not feel able to live alone; they need communities, as the following statement underlines:

> We have to be courageous. Living in the community, we cannot live alone. A survivor cannot live alone. For example, we live with a family which killed our relatives. We have to relax and remain confident, and pretend that there is peace. *Kwishyra mu Mutuzo*. (Woman of mixed parentage, married to a Tutsi, Karaba Umudugudu, Gikongoro. She lost all of her family; most of his family has also died.)

The Kinyarwanda language expressions *Kwishyra mu Mutuzo* and *Kwihao Amahoro* mean 'pretending peace'. They constitute a coping mechanism which makes social equilibrium possible and which relies upon the

silencing of all antagonisms. According to my interviewees, this reflects a widely employed modus operandi, often constituting the only way to live amidst mutual mistrust. This is what I call *chosen amnesia*.

Furthermore, in order to promote national reconciliation, the Rwandan government actively endorses the argument that ethnicity in Rwanda was not only politicized, but actually invented, by colonial occupation. Consequently, in today's coercive, public discourse, all references to Hutu, Tutsi and Twa are avoided (and occasionally charged with divisionism); these terms have been replaced by a nation-building discourse of an all-inclusive 'Rwandaness'. In public community meetings, radio broadcasts and events, Rwandans are encouraged and keenly instructed to reconcile with each other and to live together peacefully. Where occasional aggression against survivors occurs, local authorities react by holding community meetings which instruct community members to get along with each other. In the interviews, a number of genocide survivors lamented the fact that they are being told they *have to* forgive. However, even though they find this difficult, they do obey government directives as they feel they have no choice. 'We are prepared to forgive', they frequently explain, 'but it does not come from our heart.'

Fear of the other group is often another factor which is also linked to the fear of testifying at *gacaca* courts, regardless of the role as a victim, witness or perpetrator where there has been a significant amount of killings. However, while survivors are more concerned with being eliminated as witnesses, Hutu fear being accused and unjustly imprisoned for social or economic reasons: denouncing, rightly or wrongly, a genocide perpetrator has become a convenient way of getting rid of opponents.[28]

Unsurprisingly, lack of security is a greater issue for survivors, particularly for those who have decided to stay on their family's land in rural Rwanda and who are often surrounded by the same families who murdered their kin. Intimidation against them has apparently increased with the first waves of releases of genocide perpetrators since 2003.[29] Nevertheless, a paradoxical, yet frequent answer offered by interviewees to questions about security explained that 'cohabitation is peaceful since we don't dare to attack each other'. Or, as stated by a representative of AVEGA, the widowed survivors' organization:

> We don't have any problems living together. But we also don't have a choice. If we don't live together the genocide will start again. (AVEGA representative, Nyamata)

The strategy of 'pretending peace' is thus a widely spread, and widely believed, attitude. Many interviewees have highlighted that they do not behave honestly with each other, but that they play 'hide and seek'. Mutual suspicion leads to separate ways of life, insofar as this is possible; everyone stays within their own corner.

Our fieldwork experience is broadly in line with the analysis of Charles Ntampaka, who seeks to situate the strategy in a historic context.[30] As he notes in his account, after the so-called Social Revolution and the first Tutsi massacres in 1959, people on the hills organized '*l'umusangiro*', a sharing of drinks, as a sign of reconciliation. The experience of sharing drinks with former enemies symbolized a pact; it acted as a visible sign of putting mistrust to rest. Marriage was another way of seeking reconciliation; children were offered into marriages, forging blood alliances.

Ntampaka argues that these popular customs are also being practised in the aftermath of genocide, as rural farmers are more preoccupied with re-establishing social harmony than with clinging to their memories. According to his reading, people are motivated by a desire to return to normality, rather than a desire to forget the victims of the genocide. Ntampaka argues that those who were in a position to get revenge have done so; others, meanwhile, have decided to peacefully coexist with their neighbours, and those who seek justice are pursuing it. He cites a Rwandan proverb to strengthen his thesis, '*ubuze uko agira agwa neza*': if there is nothing you can do, it is better to be nice.

However, Ntampaka's analysis appears somewhat simplified. On the one hand, the cycle of revenge has not yet stopped. It is exceptionally difficult to estimate the number of genocide-related killings, particularly as the perception of deaths caused by poisoning is extremely high, even though this is often impossible to prove. On the other hand, not everyone who seeks justice is actually able to pursue it. In particular in *gacaca* tribunals, the outcome often depends on social power, corruption, coercion or silencing.[31] Finally, Ntampaka, crucially, misses the great potential danger in the attitude of 'being nice'. In a conversation, a Rwandan peace activist identified repressed emotions and resentments as one of the factors which caused the 1994 genocide. This created a fertile ground for the authorities to manipulate through misinformation and propaganda; it also made it easier to incite large parts of the population to engage in acts of violence and murder. Today, the attitudes of those Hutu and Tutsi that we interviewed, their prejudices and antagonisms, have not changed and the cleavages between the groups seem deeper than they were prior to the genocide.

The deadlock of past, present and future

Unquestioned and open to abuse and manipulation, history and memory have had a devastating impact on Rwanda's people and its politics in the past, and there is an acute awareness of this. In order to escape this past, they choose to eclipse it. This, however, does not mean a denial of what has happened, but instead, it constitutes a deliberate coping mechanism: it is only by constantly being aware of what to forget that rural Rwandans are able to cope with their present social milieu and their day-to-day life in the proximity of the 'killers', who, out of genuine conviction or coercion, participated in the genocide, or of the 'traitors', who denounced the right or wrong people.

A paradox remains: why subject the decades of tensions between Hutu and Tutsi to *chosen amnesia*, while keeping alive the memory of the genocide which is commonly regarded as crucial? With regards to the genocide, this chapter argues that the implications were so strong that each individual life in Rwanda is today defined by this tragedy, be it for social or economic reasons. By deliberately forgetting the circumstances, my local interviewees are able to avoid publicly distinguishing between friend and enemy. From an ontological perspective, deliberately obscuring some narratives on the past prevents a sense of closure and fixed boundary drawing which demarcates one identity group from another. It constitutes a deferral; bounded, in this case Hutu or Tutsi, communities are deliberately left open. This pretence of peace is essential for day-to-day survival.

Moreover, by deliberately forgetting past divisions, bystanders and participants are able to avoid acknowledging their guilt and at least partial responsibility for the genocide. By apportioning the blame on a third party outside the community – for example, former politicians and elites – the community members are relieved of all responsibility. The external scapegoat makes it possible for all parties to feel victimized; this guise of victimhood in turn creates a sense of collective identity.

The danger of *chosen amnesia* is that it leaves social antagonisms untouched and unresolved. It impedes social transformation so that ethnicity-related killings still remain possible in this order. As many Rwandans with whom I discussed the reconciliation process argued, the lack of change constitutes a time-bomb. If, for whatever reasons, the current government is replaced by a dictatorship which chooses, once more in the history of Rwanda, to incite ethnic hatred, the message will again fall on fertile ground.

As outlined in this chapter, the achievements of community-based Rwandan reconciliation processes may appear pessimistic and they may seem to be at odds with many other accounts. However, considering the enormity of the crime of genocide and the particularities of Rwanda's living conditions, this is not really surprising. After over 16 years it is time to face the past and to challenge the prevailing, antagonistic ethnic cleavages. Caught in the deadlock of past, present and future, it is time to ask how to escape the prison of memory without choosing a form of amnesia which risks repeating the same crimes.

Notes

1. This argument was first made in Susanne Buckley-Zistel (2006), 'Remembering to Forget. Chosen Amnesia as a Strategy for Local Coexistence in Post-Genocide Rwanda', *Africa*, 76 (2), 131–50. Its qualitative approach draws on in-depth interviews with individuals as well as group discussions. Interviewees stemmed from diverse backgrounds, ranging from relatives of people accused of participating in the genocide, individuals who had been released from prison, Tutsi returnees who were brought up in the diaspora, survivors working in survivor organizations or at genocide sites and individuals seeking to contribute to the reconciliation processes.
2. Hayden White (1987), *The Content of the Form: Narrative Theory and Historical Representation* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press), p. 24.
3. Lewis P. Hinchman and Sandra K. Hinchman (1997), 'Introduction', in Lewis P. Hinchman and Sandra K. Hinchman (eds), *Memory, Identity, Community* (Albany, NY: State of New York Press), p. xx.
4. White (1987), p. 44.
5. Paul Antze and Michael Lambek (1996), 'Introduction. Forecasting Memory', in Paul Antze and Micheal Lambek (eds), *Tense Past. Cultural Essays on Trauma and Memory* (New York, London: Routledge), p. xviii.
6. Pierre Nora (1993), 'General Introduction: Between Memory and History', in Pierre Nora (ed.), *Realms of Memory. Rethinking the French Past. Vol. 1. Conflict and Divisions* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press), p. 11.
7. Maurice Halbwachs (1992), *On Collective Memory* (Chicago, IL, London: University of Chicago Press), p. 49.
8. Ibid., p. 43.
9. Ernest Renan (1990), 'What is a Nation?', in Homi Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge).
10. Stanley Cohen (2001), *States of Denial. Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering* (Cambridge: Polity Press), p. 138.
11. Stanley Cohen (1995), 'States of Denial: Knowledge, Accountability, and the Policing of the Past', *Law and Social Inquiry*, 20 (1), 15.
12. Halbwachs (1992), p. 183.
13. Vakim Volkan (1991), 'On Chosen Trauma', *Mind and Human Interaction*, 3 (13), 3–19.

14. Liisa Malkki (1995), *Purity and Exile. Violence, Memory and National Cosmology Among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press).
15. Nevertheless, the national policy of remembrance and history writing also includes a selective recollection of the past; discussing the national nation-building discourse would extend the scope of this chapter. See Susanne Buckley-Zistel (2009), 'Nation, Narration, Unification? The Politics of History Teaching after the Rwandan Genocide', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 11 (7), 31–53.
16. For a more detailed account, see Susanne Buckley-Zistel (2006), 'Dividing and Uniting. The Use of Citizenship Discourses in Conflict and Reconciliation in Rwanda', *Global Society*, 20 (1), 101–13.
17. Faustin Rutembesa (2002), 'Le discours sur le peuplement comme intrument de manipulation identitaire', in Faustin Rutembesa, Eugene Ntaganda and Justin Murwanashyaka (eds), *Peuplement du Rwanda. Enjeux et Perspectives. Cahiers du Centre de Gestion des Conflicts* (Butare: Editions de l'Université Nationale du Rwanda), 3–16, here 4.
18. Peter Uvin (1997), 'Prejudice, Crisis, and Genocide in Rwanda', *African Studies Review*, 40 (2), 91–115, here 91.
19. Buckley-Zistel (2009).
20. Halbwachs (1992).
21. A word of caution is necessary at this point. Many of the following accounts cannot be anything but generalizations, homogenizing diverse experiences of war and genocide into the positions of victims, perpetrators, bystanders and so on, rather than Tutsi and Hutu. This reflects the highly sensitive nature of the research; because of this, it was often not possible to clarify the exact role of the interviewees in the genocide. Directly probing into levels of personal involvement would have immediately restricted, if not actually terminated, conversation.
22. For further discussion, see African Rights (2004), *Broken Bodies, Torn Spirits. Living with Genocide, Rape and HIV/AIDS* (Kigali: African Rights), AVEGA (1999), *Survey on Violence Against Women in Rwanda* (Kigali: AVEGA).
23. Interview with Fatuma Ndangiza, Executive Secretary of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, Kigali, 1 December 2003. For a detailed discussion of collective versus individual guilt, see Nigel Eltringham (2004), *Accounting for Horror. Post-Genocide Debates in Rwanda* (London: Pluto).
24. Jean Hatzfeld (2003), *Une Saison de Machettes* (Paris: Seul).
25. See, for instance, African Rights (2002), *Tribute to Courage* (Kigali: African Rights).
26. Uvin (1997).
27. Eugène Ntaganda (2002), 'Le discours sur le peuplement au Rwanda à travers les perceptions de la population rwandaise', in Faustin Rutembesa, Eugène Ntaganda and Justin Murwanashyaka (eds), *Peuplement du Rwanda. Enjeux et Perspectives. Cahiers du Centre de Gestion des Conflicts* (Butare: Editions de l'Université Nationale du Rwanda), pp. 103–19, here p. 117.
28. Interview with human rights activist, Kigali, 26 April 2004.
29. Personal field notes from Gikongoro and Nyamata, 2003–04.

30. Charles Ntampaka (2003), *Memoire et Reconciliation au Rwanda. Ecart entre les Pratiques Populaires et les Actions de l'Autorite.* Available from http://www.fl.ulaval.ca/celat/histoire.memoire/histoire/cape1/ntampaka.htm, accessed 29 May 2003.
31. Susanne Buckley-Zistel (2005), '"The Truth Heals"? – Gacaca Jurisdiction and the Consolidation of Peace in Rwanda', *Die Friedens Warte*, 80 (1–2), 113–29.

5

From Domestic to International Instruments for Dealing with a Violent Past: Causes, Concomitants and Consequences for Democratic Transitions

Brigitte Weiffen

This contribution focuses on the way the state and the international community deal with the legacy of a violent past after repressive dictatorships or civil wars. During the 1980s and the early 1990s, attempts to institutionalize memory and to come to terms with the past in the transitional period after the collapse of repressive authoritarian regimes were usually undertaken within a domestic framework. Since the 1990s, there have been increasing numbers of external initiatives to promote democracy and, in light of increased international interventions to enforce and keep the peace, the mechanisms of truth, reconciliation and justice have also become internationalized. Institutional procedures and the politics of memory now increasingly involve international actors; the duty of lifting the lid of silence off painful periods of history has almost become an international norm.

This chapter examines the connections between democratization and memory in transition, focusing particularly on the shift from domestic to international instruments for dealing with the past. Firstly, it analyses the extent to which addressing the past goes hand in hand with building a stable democratic regime that prevents future abuses. Following this, it presents the standard instruments for dealing with a violent past, examining how and why the internationalization of transitional justice procedures came about and exploring the different variants which are now evident. Building on this, the third section discusses current interpretations including substantial criticism of these changes, and the last

section draws some conclusions on the consequences of these changes for the practical purpose of promoting democracy and peace.

Pardon or prosecute? The impact of transitional justice on democracy

During the process of democratic transition, successor governments are faced with a myriad of questions when dealing with the memory of past atrocities at the level of political institutions: should they prioritize justice for victims or forgiveness for perpetrators in the interests of democratic consolidation? Should former leaders face trial and prosecution as other criminals would, or should they be pardoned so that their supporters have less incentive to try to undermine the new democratic order? How will victims react if perpetrators are treated leniently? What are the psychological consequences for victims who watch their former oppressors going about their daily business free and unpunished? To what extent can other measures, such as apologies by the perpetrators or a truth commission that documents and disseminates the facts of the past era, act as a substitute for punishment from the point of view of the victims?

Comparative research on democratization has concentrated on the advantages and disadvantages of prosecuting and punishing and of forgiving and forgetting. In their pioneering study *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, O'Donnell and Schmitter list several factors that should be considered when dealing with the past, while also making a general statement in favour of prosecuting past human rights violations.[1] Samuel Huntington also compiles the main arguments for and against prosecuting the perpetrators in *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*.[2] Advocates of punishing and prosecuting argue that there is a moral obligation to prosecute because of the victims and their families. There is also a legal obligation, as international law requires that the successor regime punish vicious crimes against humanity.[3] There is another facet here; the rule of law and the equal application of the law are essential components of democratic regimes. As democracy is based on law, it must be clear that no one is exempt from this – not even high-ranking officials or military or police officers. In former military dictatorships, prosecution mirrors the establishment of civilian control over the security forces. Democracy does not really exist in a country if the military and police establishments can prevent prosecutions through political influence or by threatening a coup. Prosecution of these perpetrators

may not only help to prevent future violations of human rights, it is also necessary to assert the supremacy of democratic norms and values and to encourage public belief in these. According to O'Donnell and Schmitter:

> It is difficult to imagine how a society can return to some degree of functioning which would provide social and ideological support for political democracy without somehow coming to terms with the most painful elements of its own past. By refusing to confront and to purge itself of its worst fears and resentments, such a society would be burying not just its past but the very ethical values it needs to make its future livable.[4]

Even if prosecutions are impossible in the immediate aftermath of the transition, at the very least, the extent of the crimes and the identity of those responsible should be made public. As Huntington notes, accountability is essential to democracy; it requires exposing the truth, disclosing the suffering of the victims and making clear that the state and its agents were responsible for causing this suffering.[5] It is important to create a full public record of the atrocities; in addition to this, a broad public debate about which truth is real and acceptable is desirable in a democracy.

While, on the one hand, this seems rather persuasive, it should be noted that there are, on the other hand a number of convincing arguments which advise against pursuing justice by prosecuting those responsible for violating human rights.[6] As prosecution alienates the individuals or sectors of the population identified as wrongdoers, it may deepen cleavages and polarize politics to the point of a renewed rebellion or coup. Thus, in order to stabilize democracy, it may seem more beneficial to simply let bygones be bygones. According to the advocates of a policy of forgiving and forgetting, the main goal in a transitional situation should be reconciliation, rather than retribution. The process of democratization involves the explicit or implicit understanding among the major groups of society that the divisions of the past must be set aside and that there will be no retribution for past outrages. In most situations, amnesty is required in order to establish the new democracy on a solid basis. It is deemed preferable to consolidate the peace of a country where human rights are guaranteed today rather than to retroactively seek a justice that could compromise that peace.

This retroactive justice is problematic. At the time they were committed, the crimes of the authoritarian officials were justified or even legal,

and oftentimes the public supported their actions to suppress terrorism, defeat guerrillas or restore law and order to society. Prosecution becomes difficult when there is no clear victim–perpetrator dichotomy, when both opposition groups *and* government forces grossly violated human rights. A general amnesty for everyone will provide a stronger base for democracy here than any attempt to prosecute either side or one side only. The same holds true when violence has been widespread, when many people or social groups share the guilt for the crimes committed by the authoritarian regime because they accepted and thus perpetuated it, as was the case in communist regimes, or when large fractions of the population were involved in mass atrocities themselves as is frequently the case in civil war situations.

The decision to prosecute and the public interpretation of the successes and/or failings of prosecution also depend on the power dynamics between the outgoing and the incoming elites at the time of transition.[7] While the outgoing regime will certainly want to avoid prosecution, the priority of the new democratic government is to stay in power and to achieve the long-term goal of democratic consolidation by establishing the rule of law, consolidating the legitimacy of the new democratic institutions and achieving national reconciliation. Although democratic governments may want to confront the outgoing regime over human rights abuses, they are generally unwilling to risk a coup to achieve this goal.

Transition Studies usually distinguishes between transitions from above, negotiated transitions and transitions from below.[8] Virtually every authoritarian regime that has initiated a transformation to democracy from above has also decreed an amnesty as part of that process. In most negotiated transitions, the terms of amnesty are either explicitly or implicitly a bargaining chip between government and opposition. Officials from authoritarian governments that collapsed or were overthrown are usually targets for punishment. However, any shifts that strengthen the military demand for impunity and weaken the political and public demand for truth and justice will make it difficult to carry out trials. This can be seen clearly in the example of Argentina.[9]

An overview of transitional justice mechanisms

From domestic to international instruments of transitional justice

Over time, different procedures have emerged for dealing with the past after a dictatorship or in post-conflict situations. There are judicial

and non-judicial instruments, whose selection is often connected to the prevalent concept of justice. While the retributive justice approach advocates judicial proceedings against, and criminal prosecution of, the perpetrators, a restorative approach focuses on individual healing and societal reconciliation. It is possible to distinguish here between domestic and international instruments. The number of transitional situations where domestic trials are employed to prosecute alleged perpetrators of gross violations of human rights within the existing judicial system (using domestic laws, judges and prosecutors) is comparatively small. These domestic trials are often thought to be counterproductive and they may even jeopardize reconciliation.

Although they are often perceived as a mere 'second-best' solution, truth commissions have increasingly emerged as a viable alternative to domestic trials. Established in an ever-expanding number, they are regarded as a functional equivalent to judicial proceedings. Truth commissions are non-judicial bodies; they do not have the authority to criminally prosecute perpetrators. However, some truth commissions are invested with important investigative powers including the power to subpoena, to search and seize, to settle legal rights and to grant amnesty in exchange for giving testimony (this practice was applied by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission). While trials are directed at the perpetrators, intending to hold them legally accountable for their misdeeds, truth commissions focus on the victims and survivors, offering them a space to tell their story. By accumulating evidence and victim narratives, these commissions aim to achieve an overview over the scope and types of human rights violations committed, to collect documents and to establish a historical record.

Vetting and lustration programmes are also employed as domestic instruments of transitional justice. These programmes examine and vet state officials, removing those responsible for serious misconduct from public sector posts. This approach was generally employed in Central and Eastern Europe after the transition from a long-standing communist regime. Reparations also fall into this category of domestic instruments. These carry with them an acknowledgement of the crime. Depending on the context in which they are granted, and on how they are interpreted, they may contribute to the process of societal normalization or they may increase tensions. Amnesty is the last domestic instrument which will be mentioned here. In some situations, amnesty has ended up being an inevitable concession to former dictators.

As national criminal justice systems have often been either incapable of holding, or unwilling to make, former leaders legally accountable

for human rights violations, there is increasing support for the notion that the international community should bring these crimes to trial. Since the Cold War ended, support has grown for implementing international instruments, mainly in the form of courts and tribunals. As a first step, the United Nations (UN) Security Council established the ad hoc International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda (ICTY and ICTR) in 1993 and 1994, respectively. The Rome Statute, signed in 1998, established the International Criminal Court (ICC) as a permanent body to hear the most heinous crimes. This statute formally came into force in July 2002. The ICC has jurisdiction over the crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression. ICC jurisdiction complements the national courts; this means that it can only prosecute when local courts prove unable, or unwilling, to do so. Additionally, it can only initiate investigations on crimes committed after its inception in 2002. The cases currently being dealt with at the ICC involve investigations against presumed perpetrators from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, the Central African Republic and Darfur, Sudan.

By the beginning of the new millennium, we can see the development of a form of 'tribunal fatigue'. Without a doubt, this can be attributed to the shortcomings of the ad hoc tribunals and to the decision of the United States to abstain from the ICC. This prompted renewed interest in alternative forms of accountability. 'Hybrid' courts which are characterized by a mixture of international and domestic law, procedure and personnel seem to offer a form of synthesis. This model has recently been applied in the former Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste, Cambodia and Lebanon. The discussions surrounding the applicability of traditional informal justice mechanisms, such as *gacaca* courts in Rwanda or the *Mato Oput* ceremony utilized for reconciliation by the Acholi people in Uganda, represent a new and recent development, as does the possibility of combining different tools of accountability.

Towards a global phase of transitional justice?

Despite the range of different options on how to deal with a violent past, transitional justice mechanisms do not come as a pre-prepared toolbox where policy makers simply have to choose the most appropriate instrument applicable to their case. These instruments were developed over time and different types of transitional justice are linked to the historical context of their emergence.

The first historical phase of transitional justice began in the aftermath of World War II.[10] The Allied-run Nuremberg trials which prosecuted members of the Nazi High Command in 1945–46 are the most recognized symbol for the triumph of human rights in international law. These trials established the legal basis of prosecution of state officials for 'crimes against humanity', sending a clear message that authoritarian regimes would never again be allowed to massacre their own populations with impunity. However, this development did not last, as the Cold War led to a bipolar balance of power and to an impasse on the question of human rights.

The second phase of transitional justice is associated with the third wave of democratization which started in Southern Europe in the 1970s, then spread to Latin America and Asia during the 1980s, finally reaching its peak with the demise of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. In contrast to the first phase of the post-war justice project which was characterized by interstate cooperation and war-crimes trials, this second phase is distinguished by a search for domestic solutions for transitional dilemmas. This includes questions on how to heal and reconcile societies, and how to incorporate the rule of law and consolidate democracy. In this second phase, many of the relevant actors and institutions were located outside of the sphere of law and politics, encompassing: churches, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and human rights groups that advanced a variety of alternative forms of conflict resolution, such as truth commissions. This is why Teitel identifies 'the move from the courtroom to the hearing room' as one of the central features of the second phase.[11]

By the end of the twentieth century, the third, global phase, which Teitel refers to as the 'steady-state phase of transitional justice' has emerged. This is characterized by 'the fin de siècle acceleration of transitional justice phenomena associated with globalization and typified by conditions of heightened political instability and violence'.[12] As situations of political instability and conflict continue to persist around the world, the question of how to deal with human rights violations is ever-present, causing transitional justice to move from the exception to the norm. This lays the basis for a generalization and normalization of a law of violence. As a result, universal human rights standards are more frequently invoked and the prosecution of perpetrators increasingly relies on international criminal law and international courts.

The shift from the second to the third phase can be attributed to the changing context of democratic transitions and, thus, of transitional

justice. While in previous decades, democratization was an internally driven process, democratic transitions during the 1990s often stemmed from external incentives and they were sometimes even forced by external pressure. States which democratized between the 1970s and the early 1990s usually had favourable internal conditions. They exhibited at least an intermediate or even a high level of socioeconomic and human development; they had an educated population and a functioning civil society which, in many cases, was the driving force behind democratic transitions. Some of these states had experienced previous phases of democratic rule and they had disposed of established political parties and a strong state with functioning institutions. Although previous dictatorships were characterized by harsh repression, violence was limited and often clandestine. Violence was usually top-down, executed by state organs; the victims were a clearly defined group, encompassing, in most cases, dissidents and social activists which the regime termed 'subversive'. The perpetrators – the secret police or certain groups within the military – were also easily identifiable.

Since the 1990s, a different pattern has emerged and the background conditions of democratization efforts which have become evident present us with a completely different scenario. The African, Asian and Central American countries that embarked on democratization during the 1990s were, in most cases, poor, plagued by a high level of inequality, injustice and social exclusion, oftentimes based on ethnic differences. These countries usually had little or no previous experience with democracy and, if at all present, there was, at most, only a weak civil society. The state and its institutions were fragile. Additionally, in the majority of cases, the attempt to democratize coincided with the end of a civil war. Consequently, the recent past which now had to be dealt with was often marked by widespread violence and mass atrocities; this was a horizontal violence with victims and perpetrators located throughout the entire population, making clear distinctions impossible.

These differences in the background conditions which affect democratization also impact on whether and how memory politics are institutionalized. The majority of countries democratized during the first phase have been influenced by Christianity, so there is usually consensus on human rights as a value system and, thus, a strong impetus to face up to past violations of human rights. As the democratic transition process is mainly domestically driven, methods for addressing the violent past stem from the power structure and bargaining strategies of domestic political and social actors. The instruments chosen are intrinsically linked to the political moment of the transition and, if the actors embark

on the search for truth and justice, this generally forms a strong symbol for a new beginning.

By contrast, in most of the countries emerging from civil war and mass atrocities, non-Christian cultural traditions generate a different understanding of human rights. Value may be attached, for instance, to the community rather than to the concept of individual rights. There may also be a different interpretation of the concepts of reconciliation, justice and memory and, as a result, in some societies, traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution may contradict the principles that the instruments employed by occidental societies are based on. Additionally, democratization in post-conflict situations may pose an even more complex challenge than a 'conventional' transition from authoritarian rule. A broad range of transformation processes are initiated simultaneously; these not only include democratization and the necessity of resolving how to deal with the crimes committed by the previous regime, but also economic reconstruction, the (re-)establishment of political and administrative institutional structures, and security and peace-building components such as demobilization and the reintegration of former combatants.[13] Each action must be considered from the point of view of the potential effect which it could have on democratic consolidation and the possible consequences which it may have for the peace process. In most post-conflict situations, the instruments of transitional justice are not chosen by the domestic elites in the transition process; instead, they constitute only one component of externally induced peace-building strategies. They are used in conjunction with other measures, such as the deployment of peacekeeping forces, as well as attempts to rebuild the economy and instruments to promote democracy. Because of its international dimension, transitional justice usually comes in the shape of international or internationalized trials which may be combined with truth commissions. Thus, international influence is increasingly used to compensate for the internal conditions of democratizing countries in the third phase of transitional justice which are less favourable for a successful democratic transition and for attempts to deal with the past.

The shift towards globalized transitional justice

The sustained worldwide spread of democracy, despite oftentimes adversarial conditions, is generally explained through the end of the Cold War, the phenomenon of globalization, the universalization of human rights norms and the increased tendency of the international

community to promote and defend these norms. Talk of the 'world public' only began after 1989. If atrocities are committed in the world, these are witnessed by the world public, who invoke universal values or the so-called 'global ethic' to condemn these acts. This kind of global awareness is facilitated by the globalization of the economy and the media.[14]

If we analyse the facets and dynamics of globalization, we can see close links between structural changes (such as economic, political and social globalization) and the influence of external actors (encompassing international organizations, the foreign and development policies of powerful states and international NGOs). Globalization enhances action in support of democracy and human rights. According to various studies which assess the impact of globalization on political liberalization and economic development, economic globalization takes place when cross-border trade and capital increases and when restrictions on these flows, such as tariffs and import barriers, are reduced.[15] Economic integration and openness may foster the rule of law, civil liberties and good governance. The main indicators of political globalization are state memberships in international organizations and the diffusion of norms and values which are often promoted through conditional foreign aid. These international organizations promote the dissemination of democracy and human rights by adopting democracy clauses and human rights treaties.

On a non-state level, social globalization develops with information flows (measured by the spread of radios, newspapers and cable television, and the number of internet hosts and internet users), increased personal communication via telephone and mail traffic, international tourism and migration and 'cultural proximity', exemplified by the proliferation of McDonald's restaurants, IKEA stores, bestseller books and blockbuster movies. According to Karns and Mingst, the revolution in communication technology helps to defend human rights: for example, TV stations broadcast abuses committed by repressive governments, making these known worldwide; the internet may also be a useful tool for suppressed groups and their supporters, allowing them to diffuse information about their situation.[16] In this way, social globalization helps to organize defenders of human rights. Since the 1970s and 1980s, the number of human rights organizations has soared, triggered by the dictatorships in Latin America and their brutal techniques for repression. Concomitantly, international links have emerged between internal activists and exile communities, and transnational umbrella organizations have been created. Since the 1990s, former grass-roots social movements have evolved into professionalized NGOs which today form

an important part of the global policy network that offers expertise on how to promote democracy and human rights and fight against impunity.

Freedom House, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) and the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) are some of the most prominent examples of NGOs that bundle academic activities and consultancy. The US-based organization Freedom House focuses mainly on promoting political rights and civil liberties. It compiles indices of freedom and reports on countries, while also financing activities that support democracy and human rights activists in countries in transitional situations. Based in Stockholm, International IDEA engages in research and consultancies on democracy assistance and reconciliation after violent conflict.[17] The ICTJ is a network of jurists and human rights activists which was founded in April 2000. With headquarters in New York and offices in Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa, it aims to collect expertise on instruments of transitional justice, to expand the network and to engage in non-profit consultancy activities for local actors in the field who play an important role in the decision of how the country should deal with its violent past.

Variants of globalized transitional justice

Inspired by globalization and the increasing influence of international actors, two variants of globalized transitional justice have emerged.

Transitional justice via transnational networks

In what I call the 'bottom-up' variant, transitional justice is pushed by transnational networks. Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui have underlined the crucial importance of international NGOs in this process.[18] The global monitoring and institutionalization of human rights has created an international context where governments may actually ratify human rights treaties, while continuing to disrespect human rights. However, the emergent global legitimacy of human rights does help global civil society to put pressure on these governments, ultimately improving the human rights practices of the state. Human rights advocates have repeatedly been able to use international norms to breach seemingly impregnable barriers to accountability for atrocious crimes committed in their countries. There are several examples where domestic activities to bring perpetrators to trial have been reinforced by international support and transnational initiatives in favour of investigating and reopening cases from former dictatorships.

The Pinochet extradition proceedings represent a paradigmatic example of foreign or international judicial processes which try to hold individuals accountable for human rights crimes. In 1998, the former Chilean military dictator General Pinochet went to Britain for medical treatment at a London clinic. A journalist from the *Guardian* reported that he had entered the country and Garzón, the Spanish prosecutor, applied for an extradition order to bring Pinochet to Spain so he could face charges of gross human rights violations during his rule in Chile. This began a long and complex legal process in the United Kingdom which established the important legal precedent that heads of state do not have sovereign immunity from prosecution for repressive acts which they have committed which are not considered legitimate acts for a head of state.

The Pinochet case was a landmark for the human rights movement, and it has been widely celebrated as a turning point in the extension of international human rights standards.[19] In fact, it is so significant that the possibility of holding former dictators legally accountable in a foreign judicial process subject to universal human rights standards and international criminal law has become known as the 'Pinochet effect'. Since then, there have been additional attempts to try former Latin American military leaders in several European countries. Foreign judicial processes promoted by the international human rights movement have also made a difference for human rights practices and civilian control of the military in the countries where former governments had been responsible for those crimes. After Pinochet's return to Chile, for example, the Chilean courts removed his immunity and the Chilean President formed an investigative commission on torture. This was a crime which the truth commission had not dealt with in the immediate aftermath of the democratic transition. In 2005, the remaining military prerogatives were eliminated from the Chilean constitution. The 'Pinochet effect' is thus an example of how the memory of survivors and the families of the victims, at home and abroad, may act as an impetus for, and an agent of, change.

Transitional justice by intervention

In what I call the 'top-down' variant, transitional justice is brought to the target country through external intervention. The human rights revolution and the rise of an international democratic norm strengthen expectations that the outside world will act, should governments deviate from these norms. The concept of 'humanitarian intervention' is increasingly embraced worldwide, granting the international

community the right to intervene for human rights and security reasons. International influence is even extended to the task of dealing with human rights violations committed in the country before or during the intervention. The ICTY and ICTR were established as a peace enforcement mechanism under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Truth commissions in countries such as Guatemala, El Salvador, Timor-Leste and Sierra Leone were installed as part of externally brokered peace accords or by the UN Transitional Administration, and hybrid courts were set up jointly by the UN and the national governments. The ICC's principle of complementarity reflects the expectation that the international community will prosecute atrocities when governments fail to act properly.

More recently, a reformulated approach to humanitarian intervention has emerged, the responsibility to protect. *The Responsibility to Protect* is the title of a report which was produced in 2001 by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) which was established in response to the history of unsatisfactory humanitarian interventions.[20] This report tries to formulate a clearer code of conduct for humanitarian interventions, advocating a greater reliance on non-military measures. Engaging with the discourse surrounding the issue of humanitarian intervention, it argues that the notion of a right to intervene is problematic and that this should be replaced by a responsibility to protect. Rather than interfering in the conduct of other states, under the responsibility to protect doctrine, the international community has a responsibility to intervene and to protect the citizens of a state that has failed in its obligation to protect its own citizens.

This responsibility comprises three stages: to prevent, to react and to rebuild. Justice and reconciliation form part of the responsibility of rebuilding. The report highlights:

> ...the importance of making transitional arrangements for justice during an operation, and restoring judicial systems as soon as possible thereafter. The point is simply that if an intervening force has a mandate to guard against further human rights violations, but there is no functioning system to bring violators to justice, then not only is the force's mandate to that extent unachievable, but its whole operation is likely to have diminished credibility both locally and internationally.[21]

It also states that externally imported 'justice packages' should only be employed as a temporary solution while the re-establishment of local

institutions is pending.[22] However, if domestic attempts to advance this process are weak or non-existing, the suggested provision of norms and practices which are not supported domestically runs the danger of turning into external imposition. The initiatives may be doomed to failure if the task is only taken up by international rather than local actors, as they will have no long-term effect for societal reconciliation and peace-building.

Good or bad? Divergent views on globalized transitional justice

Although the global spread of transitional justice is often greeted with enthusiasm, it should be noted that there is another, more sceptical side to this. It is striking that most of the enthusiastic, sceptical and negative assessments of this phenomenon run parallel to the debate on the worldwide diffusion and promotion of democracy.

Enthusiasm

Enthusiasts see the diffusion of democracy and human rights and the increasing use of transitional justice mechanisms as positive developments. In the 1990s, scholars in International Relations, particularly adherents of the liberal, constructivist and transnationalist schools, advocated a new focus on normative and moral issues in international relations. This change represents the 'ideational turn' in international politics; it is most clearly evident in the emergence of universal human rights norms.[23] Ideational literature highlights the importance of transnational human rights organizations and networks. After World War II, these organizations helped to establish regional and international human rights regimes, and they later contributed to the adoption and enforcement of human rights practices. With their support, international human rights norms are increasingly internalized and/or socialized into domestic practices. This has been alternately termed the spiral model of human rights change,[24] the 'justice cascade'[25] or the 'boomerang effect'.[26]

Some sociologists, for example, Levy and Sznaider, take issue with the perception that the supremacy of state sovereignty and the absoluteness of human rights are mutually exclusive.[27] According to them, globalization and the universal human rights discourse do not necessarily lead to the demise of sovereignty. However, an increasingly de-nationalized understanding of legitimacy contributes to a reconfiguration of sovereignty itself. In line with this reconfiguration, Levy

and Sznaider advance the notion of cosmopolitan memory: while the concept of collective memory is nationally bounded, cosmopolitan memory shifts attention away from the nation-state framework on to nation-transcending idioms which span territorial and national borders.

Scholars of law mainly draw attention to the universalization of legal standards. With respect to democracy, Franck and others have high-lighted the rise of a universal right to democratic governance,[28] while other authors have expressed their appreciation of the advent of a uni-versal human rights regime.[29] There is now a legal obligation – set by international human rights law – to prosecute human rights violations by a prior regime. Additionally, under the principle of universal juris-diction, a state is entitled and may even be required to begin legal proceedings with respect to certain serious crimes, irrespective of the location of crime and of the nationality of the perpetrator or victims.[30]

Endorsement with caveats

When examining the promotion and consequences of universal human rights norms and globalized transitional justice, it is important to take note of several caveats. Firstly, it is questionable whether the paradigm of universal jurisdiction reflects the empirical reality. Enthusiasts tend to broaden the 'Pinochet precedent' to encompass the world as a whole. However, this overlooks the fact that all of the action in the Pinochet litigation occurred within the European Union and, thus, within legal systems with strong credentials of constitutionalism, judicial independence and shared democratic values. It is unclear whether the same mechanisms would be as successful if charges were brought in a country where the courts lack autonomy and where the government is authori-tarian and intensely anti-Western. For these reasons, some authors such as Richard Falk doubt that the world as a whole is ready for universal jurisdiction based on Pinochet-like charges.

Even those former proponents who advocated a universal 'duty to prosecute human rights violations' during the 1990s (for example, Diane Orentlicher), or who hailed the 'justice cascade' and 'spiral mod-els' of human rights diffusion have now become more modest and sceptical of the viability of universal justice in their recent publica-tions.[31] Sikkink has recently admitted that the spread and socialization of human rights norms do not work in all contexts and that it is now necessary to examine the interaction of domestic and international opportunity structures in a more nuanced way.[32] In her recent article in 2007, Orentlicher clarified that she never intended to advocate a general duty to prosecute human rights violations which would automatically

set in when an authoritarian regime ends; instead the scope of duty of the state to prosecute – set by international human rights law – should be placed in context. There are times which are unfavourable when the norms cannot be enforced. In such situations it is preferable to say 'not yet'. In sum, rather than generalizing universal mechanisms, context sensitivity seems to be the new guiding principle for human rights advocates.

Furthermore, when acting to defend human rights and democracy, the problem of establishing legitimate international authority may pose serious challenges.[33] If human rights norms and the responsibility to protect are increasingly embraced worldwide, this leads to an erosion of the norms of Westphalian sovereignty. When the international community is seen as having a legitimate interest in the domestic governance practices of states, the norms of sovereignty become more contingent. However, even if this 'reconfiguration of state sovereignty' is agreed upon, the question remains unanswered as to which states or international bodies have the right and the authority to decide where to act to defend democracy and/or to protect human rights. The most logical thing would be to turn to the UN. However, only the United States currently has the military power at its disposal to systematically engage in the large-scale interventions; the UN has no troops or military capacity of its own. Even if the universal diffusion of human rights and democratic values is regarded as positive, the lack of a legitimate international authority necessitates caution in its promotion worldwide.

Criticism

Criticism of the globalization of transitional justice tends to coincide with a critique of the liberal peace paradigm. This paradigm states that domestic stability, fostered by freedom, equality and by what Immanuel Kant called a 'republican constitution',[34] constrains the international behaviour of the state, leading it to cooperate peacefully in a federation of equal states. Drawing on this philosophical basis, Western foreign policy makers have therefore promoted democracy abroad in order to enhance international security.[35]

Generally, this paradigm is reproached for implicitly assuming an imperialist stance in promoting Western values. Proponents of liberal intervention on behalf of democracy believe that one model of domestic governance, namely, liberal market democracy, is superior to all others. Alternative strategies, such as indigenous peacemaking, are neglected.[36] The liberal peace paradigm is not only used to legitimize promoting democracy, but also the universal adherence to human rights norms and the referral to international criminal law in the face of human

rights violations. Accordingly, the implementation and enforcement of international treaties are employed to guarantee domestic stability and thus international security. This development inverts the relationship between domestic governance and state behaviour in the international sphere as envisaged by Kant: while Kant focused on domestic arrangements, hypothesizing that international behaviour would follow accordingly, recent interpretations of Kant erroneously reverse this relationship, establishing compliance with international law as a prerequisite to domestic stability. Furthermore, conforming to international law is used as a benchmark for legitimacy in the international community. Consequently, members of the international community either adhere to a model of liberal democracy or risk external intervention.

Critics also highlight that the essence of political and civil liberties and human rights is undermined if these are imported from the outside. Because the very purpose of the language of human rights and democratization is to protect and enhance individual agency, rights advocates must respect the autonomy of those agents, if they wish to avoid contradicting their own principles.[37] External intervention may impede an indigenous evolution of democratic practices. In the context of democratic transition, the symbolism of who makes and enforces the law is particularly important. The danger is that the people may see external support for the new incumbent regime or the regime's adherence to international standards as a form of prioritizing international over domestic concerns; this may lead to difficulties in establishing political and legislative authority. International support for unelected groups such as NGOs also presents a challenge to the authority of a new government.

By putting former leaders on trial, the international community sends the signal that the domestic judicial system is not considered adequate for dealing with the perpetrators. This may in turn raise questions about the entire constitutional edifice. International interference may mean that indictments are inappropriately timed or one particular group may be targeted disproportionately; this, of course, places the impartiality of international justice in question. The operation of international criminal law may serve to reinforce feelings of collective threat, heightening tensions between the state and the international community. International isolation and stigmatization have the potential to destabilize the transitional state. Thus, intervention runs the danger of undermining the very outcome it seeks, namely, the establishment of representative democracy and respect for human rights.

In addition to reproaches for their flawed interpretation of the Kantian peace paradigm, humanitarian interventions are also criticized

because Western approaches to peacemaking adopt highly standardized formats, which Mac Ginty refers to as 'peace from IKEA; a flat-pack peace made from standardized components'.[38] In fact, *The Responsibility to Protect* report provides a catalogue of best practices which it claims are applicable to humanitarian interventions and peacekeeping missions all over the world. Critics highlight the danger that peace support interventions may become non-reflexive and uniform, reflecting the accumulated skills and capacities of intervening parties rather than the precise needs of the recipient society. International action on behalf of human rights may also be rejected as an expression of Western imperialism. It is frequently alleged that democracy and human rights are not promoted as values in themselves, but as instruments to reach other goals such as peace and security. Therefore, as Ignatieff warns, human rights are not above politics, but they are a sort of politics themselves.[39]

This critique is reinforced by the inconsistency of decisions to intervene. If human rights are universal, human rights abuses everywhere should trigger external intervention. However, sometimes the international community may intervene earlier, or it may only take retrospective action; other times, it may fail to react at all. A retrospective enforcement of human rights norms may result from previous failure. Yugoslavia and Rwanda offer two examples of civil wars where the international community failed to curb violence and prevent genocide. As a result of this, international actors, particularly the UN, were charged with indifference, incompetence and neglect of moral and legal duties. It was only due to this pressure that the ad hoc International Criminal Tribunals were established.[40] Some analyses even claim that the creation of both ICTY and ICTR was initially intended to avoid costly military sanctions or humanitarian intervention rather than to enforce the norms of universal human rights and international humanitarian law.[41] The United States also represents another manifestation of inconsistency, advocating the spread of universal values, while simultaneously failing to ratify the Rome Statute of the ICC. The inconsistent application of values which these examples illustrate threatens to undermine the actual values themselves.

Conclusion: how to foster memory in democratic transitions?

In order to assess whether the globalization of transitional justice and the external promotion of values such as democracy and human rights

are positive developments, the first point that needs to be clarified is whether there are indeed universal values upon which all of the world's states agree. Universal human rights treaties and declarations such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the idiosyncratic emergence of human rights standards and monitors in regional organizations like the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Organization of American States (OAS), the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) or the African Union suggest that there is, at least, a minimum consensus, even if the subscription to norms is in many contexts merely declaratory and there is evidence of a lack of implementation in most of these organizations. In addition to this, human rights organizations have been founded worldwide and they are increasingly engaging in cooperation via transnational network structures.

It is also interesting to note that even the most sceptical of critics do not question in itself the value of democracy or human rights; instead, they generally criticize the ways in which these are spread and implemented. What is contested is whether it makes sense to promote these values externally and, if so, who is entitled to do this and to intervene to defend them. Drawing on the challenges which transitional justice and, particularly, the external promotion of transitional justice mechanisms pose for the consolidation of peace and democracy, it appears that several general guidelines should be followed. To create favourable conditions for dealing with the past, there must be a sense of balance between local actors, international actors and structural constraints.

The first issue that should be considered in this context is timing. In a transitional situation, domestic power dynamics and/or structural factors tend to be unfavourable for memory politics. There are obviously times when it is not possible to process the past immediately, because of imminent and pressing priorities such as the rapprochement of former conflict parties, the stability of a recently installed regime, economic reconstruction, the fight against poverty or coping with economic crisis. However, it seems preferable to postpone, rather than to completely abolish, the issue as power balances may shift over time, or structural factors such as the economic situation of the country may become more favourable. Power dynamics are not permanently fixed in societies where, in light of the threat presented by and the political influence of former incumbents, the attempt to prosecute was ultimately unsuccessful, or where a moderate approach towards transitional justice was

adopted from the outset. Sustained or increasing demand for truth and justice by the public or by human rights organizations, often supported by an exile community, transnational human rights networks or international media attention, may lead to the implementation of a more pro-human rights policy in the democratic consolidation phase.[42] The Pinochet episode illustrates that promises of leniency, made in the context of a pacted transition or a transition from above, may dissolve over time, especially with the help of international encouragement. Societies that are unable to mount prosecutions during the early years of their democratic transition may have greater political space to do so as time goes on.

The second implication is that without domestic support external imposition of democratic institutions, human rights standards and transitional justice instruments are doomed to fail. International assistance should support local efforts; it cannot completely substitute them. It is crucial that there are legitimate domestic actors who are willing and able to take up the challenge of dealing with the past. Hence, the choice and implementation of transitional justice mechanisms has to happen in an interactive process between external and domestic actors. Recent efforts to create hybrid courts or externally funded truth commissions run by domestic actors as well as efforts to combine international or hybrid tribunals with domestically driven reconciliatory measures such as truth-seeking bodies or traditional informal mechanisms seem to delineate a third way which is in between domestic and international instruments.

Notes

1. See Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter (1986), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press), pp. 28–32.
2. Samuel P. Huntington (1991), *The Third Wave. Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press), pp. 211–31.
3. See Diane F. Orentlicher (1991), 'Settling Accounts: The Duty to Prosecute Human Rights Violations of a Prior Regime', *Yale Law Journal*, 100 (8), 2537–615.
4. O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986), p. 30.
5. Huntington (1991), p. 214.
6. Ibid.
7. For further information on this, see Huntington (1991); Elin Skaar (1999), 'Truth Commissions, Trials – Or Nothing? Policy Options in Democratic Transitions', *Third World Quarterly*, 20 (6), 1109–28; Alexandra Barahona

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8. See Huntington (1991); Scott Mainwaring (1992), 'Transitions to Democracy and Democratic Consolidation: Theoretical and Comparative Issues', in Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell and J. Samuel Valenzuela (eds), *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press), pp. 294–341; J. Samuel Valenzuela (1992), 'Democratic Consolidation in Post-Transitional Settings: Notion Process, and Facilitating Conditions', in Mainwaring, O'Donnell and Valenzuela (eds), *Issues in Democratic Consolidation*, pp. 57–104.

9. See Huntington (1991); Carlos S. Nino (1991), 'The Duty to Punish Past Abuses of Human Rights Put Into Context: The Case of Argentina', *Yale Law Journal*, 100 (8), 2619–40.

10. For further information, see Ruti G. Teitel (2003), 'Transitional Justice Genealogy', *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, 16, 69–94; Ruti G. Teitel (2005), 'The Law and Politics of Contemporary Transitional Justice', *Cornell International Law Journal*, 38, 837–62.

11. Teitel (2003), p. 83.

12. Ibid., p. 71.

13. See Volker Matthies (2002), 'Krisenprävention und Friedenskonsolidierung', in Mir A. Ferdowski (ed.), *Internationale Politik im 21. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Fink), pp. 123–43; Roy Licklider (2001), 'Obstacles to Peace Settlement', in Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson and Pamela Aall (eds), *Turbulent Peace. The Challenges of Managing International Conflict* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace), pp. 697–718.

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Part III
Re-Imagining the Past for the Future

6

Re-Imagining East Germany in the Berlin Republic: Jana Hensel, GDR Memory and the Transitional Generation

Linda Shortt

Transition through unification

Twenty years after the fall of the Wall, 2009 has provided critics and commentators with a perfect platform for observing the successes and failings of the process of German unification. From the vantage point of the present, we can see that although the systemic transition from state socialism to liberal democratic capitalism was officially sealed by the Unification Treaty of 3 October 1990 which formally erased the former territory of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the transference of East German emotional and identificatory allegiances to the new German state have proven more difficult to negotiate.[1] This 'affective transition' has been impeded by two main factors. Firstly, the circumstances of 'transition through unification' meant that former East Germany was simply absorbed into former West Germany. Unification was effected at rapid speed using Article 23 which simply extended the constitution's area of jurisdiction. This meant that East Germans were expected to reorientate themselves towards former West Germany's cultural norms and values. Rather than a fusion of equals, unification appeared to be a victory for the West, whose superiority was confirmed by the very collapse of the East. Secondly, the social and economic circumstances of post-unification Germany resulted in dissatisfaction with unified Germany; despite the financial investment from the West, modernization of the East resulted in deindustrialization and a rise in unemployment. The combined effects of disorientation in, and dissatisfaction with, the unified present, led to the development of a

reactive 'eastern identity' during the 1990s which seemed to impede the drive towards 'inner unity' because of its backward-looking nostalgia.

In her reflections on this development in 2000, Patricia Hogwood suggested that this eastern identity could be merely a transitional phenomena, but that it may also become a lasting subculture.[2] Taking this as its departure point, this chapter examines how eastern identity is currently being reinterpreted and reshaped by Jana Hensel, a member of the so-called 'transitional generation' – the generation that grew up in the GDR, but that came of age in unified Germany – in order to try and sustain it. As this identity no longer has a base in accepted geographical boundaries, Hensel must mobilize other experiences and myths in order to bolster it. Examining her autobiographical work, *Achtung Zone. Warum wir Ostdeutschen anders bleiben sollen* (Attention Zone. Why We East Germans Need to Remain Different),[3] which was published punctually for the 2009 anniversary celebrations, this chapter explores how Hensel retrospectively rewrites and adds to the history of the GDR and to the story of German unification by critically engaging with GDR memory and what she describes in blanket terms as 'GDR self-doubt', in order to invite identification with, and indeed to re-author, a confident East German identity. Divided into three main sections, this investigation pays particular attention to the interplay of memory and generation. It firstly outlines briefly the generational profile of the transitional generation, exploring their characteristics and their place in the contemporary German memoryscape. This is followed by two sections which focus specifically on *Achtung Zone*. Concentrating on Hensel's engagement with GDR memory culture and analysing her critique of how the GDR is being remembered, this investigation highlights how Hensel's attempts to explain certain features of this discourse actually promote a renewed reading of East Germans as victims. It also demonstrates the impact of her attempts to find a new method of approach to the GDR past on her generational profile. As will be shown, this experiential transitional generation appears to be re-described here as a 'postgeneration'.[4]

Before beginning with the analysis proper, I would like to briefly place *Achtung Zone* in the context of Jana Hensel's other literary works. This is not the first text which Hensel has written about the GDR. Since she shot to fame with *Zonenkinder* (*After the Wall: Confessions from an East German Childhood and the Life that Came Next*, 2004)[5] in 2002, Jana Hensel has become the public face for a melancholic East German sense of dislocation, which laments the passing of the GDR Heimat. While *Zonenkinder* mobilized East German memory to prevent the former East

from going quietly into the new German – which was essentially the old West German – order, *Neue deutsche Mädchen*,[6] which she co-authored with Elisabeth Raether, tried to overcome the polarization between East and West by introducing a new German female identity which seemed to transcend these divisions.[7] Mimicking a generational rupture, this 2008 text actually conjured up a female identity which was established in opposition to the older West German feminist generation, epitomized by Alice Schwarzer, whose concerns were no longer considered timely. Focusing on the post-unification period of social transition and on the opportunities for personal experimentation which this period presented, *Neue deutsche Mädchen* outlined a female identity which was marked by contemporary concerns (*NdM*, p. 26), describing how these new German girls 'arrived' into stable lives and relationships in Berlin after the interstitial period of transition (*NdM*, p. 47).

Viewed in this literary genealogy, *Achtung Zone* seems to represent a return to the original 'zonal' form as it strives to promote East German difference. Focusing on the post- rather than the pre-unification period, this 2009 text calls for a reassessment of concepts of German unity which concentrate on sameness. Inspired perhaps by multiculturalism, Hensel moves to redefine unity so that there is space for different identities to coexist. This move towards a more pluralistic reading of German identity is, in and of itself, not necessarily alarming – it has also been put forward recently by Jan-Werner Müller, who reminds us that all political cultures are split in some way and that social alienation and conflict are not necessarily pathologies which need to be overwritten for social cohesion.[8] However, as will be shown, Hensel's pluralist approach is somewhat undermined by her attempts to sustain an East German identity by homogenizing it.

The transitional generation

Situated at the intersection of biology and culture, the term 'generation' is generally understood to refer to an age-defined subgroup, where individuals are exposed to and shaped by similar historical experiences and events. In this way, it provides a space where memory and identity, and change and transformation are problematized and performed. The inflationary application of generational categories in Germany recently has meant that 'new generations' and forms of generational consciousness have been seen to emerge almost daily. If we look at the generation of those who experienced the fall of the Wall as youths, we can see that this generation has been conceptualized differently by different

theorists. While Bernd Lindner describes those born in East Germany during the 1960s and 1970s as a 'removed' or a 'distanced' generation, who were left to find their way without advisors in the new era, Thomas Ahbe and Rainer Gries talk about a 'Wende Generation' (generation of the 'Turn') that sets in in 1973.[9] This analysis employs Jana Hensel's own category of the '*Zonenkinder*', the children of the Zone, who were born in the 1970s and who were profoundly affected by the events of 1989/90. Socialized in the East, this transitional generation witnessed the collapse of established norms and values at a formative age; in fact, the fall of the Wall is generally thought to have coincided with, or indeed to have brought about, the end of their childhood.

In the 1990s, political scientists and sociologists pegged this generation, who had witnessed the productive potential of the parental protests, as 'one to watch'.[10] Anticipating the development of a protest consciousness and stylizing this generation as a form of 68er revenant, they assumed that they would take to the streets to protest against social injustices in unified Germany. From the vantage point of the present, however, we can see that this has not come to fruition. Decidedly unrebellious, this generation has been shaped more by the experience of transition than of protest; marked by change and instability, they have learned to be distrustful of all forms of authority. While their cuspal situation at the time of historical change, on the one hand, exacerbated their initial sense of alienation in the new order, it also, on the other, facilitated their integration. The magnitude of the events of 1989/90 destabilized established values and norms, unsettling former securities; in this way, the fall of the Wall and unification levelled out the GDR generational hierarchy, pushing all East German generations back into the biographical starting blocks. The impact of this new beginning was tempered by biographical age. Younger generations were able to finish or to continue their training in the new unified system, thus making the transition easier. This opportunity was not afforded to all generations and many older East Germans experienced difficulties finding employment in the new system where their qualifications and experiences were often not accepted or even recognized.

This generational advantage of youth in the situation of transition has two clear consequences for the intergenerational relationship between parent and child. Firstly, it prematurely inverts the parent–child hierarchy; as the parent generation has more problems adjusting to the new order, they become a source of worry for the child, who manages the jump into the new system more easily. Secondly, although both

generations are joined together by the communality of the experience of beginning anew, the parent generation is exposed as the historical loser of unification, a fate which the child does not want to replicate and which in turn motivates their drive to assimilate.

Since the turn of the century, the transitional generation has been at the forefront of discussions about the GDR. As the last generation that was socialized in the East, these 'kids' from 'the Zone' were old enough to have personal memories of the GDR at the time of the fall of the Wall, but too young to have made themselves culpable in this regime. As Debbie Pinfold has pointed out in her analysis of representations of the GDR childhood, this generation has been largely responsible for the wave of autobiographical texts on this period which have flooded the German book market throughout the 'Naughties'.[11] Countering the popular post-unification portrayal of the GDR as 'Stasiland' (a portrayal which left no room for other narratives), these authors wrote their personal, and oftentimes apolitical, experiences of life in the GDR into cultural memory.[12] By documenting the stories (of the 'right' life in the 'wrong' one) which had not yet found their way into history, their autobiographical narratives function, in the words of Pierre Nora, as a kind of 'revenge of the underdog', a form of 'writing back' which attempts to alter the official narrative.[13]

While this autobiographical approach to history offers an opportunity to diversify the narratives, it may also be sometimes problematic. This can be seen clearly in *Achtung Zone*; here, Jana Hensel uses the biography of the Vietnamese contract worker Phuong Kollath to re-engage with the Rostock attacks in 1992. Although Kollath's story allows Hensel to expose xenophobic tendencies in the GDR which have not yet been acknowledged on an official level,[14] this personal approach also allows her to re-write these attacks as an effect of the chaos of transition which overwhelmed authorities. Highlighting how the failure of the authorities to resolve the problem of asylum seekers in Rostock efficiently caused the situation to escalate, Hensel seems to dilute their racist motive, dislodging them from a specific East German racist frame (*AZ*, p. 162). In this way, although the attacks are denounced and they are written into the GDR narrative, their historical weighting shifts and they become an accident of human frustration with the administrative machine.

To sum up then, the cuspal position of the transitional generation in 1989/90 has linked their private identity quest with public readings of history; their sense of who they are is not only shaped by

their dual socialization, it is also caught up in the struggle which takes place in unified Germany between private and public memory discourse on the GDR. In the next section, this investigation turns to examine this in more detail, exploring how the GDR is being remembered in post-unification Germany.

Remembering to forget: GDR memory in unified Germany

In *Achtung Zone*, Jana Hensel engages with memory on two different levels. Firstly, she critiques how German memory culture manages the memory of the GDR, outlining how the current obsession with the GDR has led to a ritualization and a marginalization of authentic memory in the post-unification period. Secondly, and directly related to this, she uses memory as an agent to ignite a reactive sense of community amongst East Germans. Drawing on her personal experience of alienation from the memory discourse, Hensel encourages East Germans to return to their authentic experiences. Although some aspects of her critique of the German memory culture are justified, as we shall see, her quest to understand how memory has been ritualized homogenizes East German identity. East Germans are re-authored as a victim collective; they are victims of the West, of the media and of their own lack of self-confidence.

In their chapters in this volume, both Aleida Assmann and Susanne Buckley-Zistel have highlighted the significance of forgetting for facilitating peaceful coexistence during transition. Given Germany's highly self-reflexive memory culture, developed as a result of the process of coming to terms with the National Socialist past, 'forgetting' the crimes committed by the GDR did not seem to be an option in the post-unification period. In fact, the process for engaging with the GDR past was very quick off the mark: trials were initiated to try perpetrators, debates took place over how GDR history would be written in school books, governmental agencies were set up to engage with the Stasi archive (the so-called Gauck Commission, now the Birthler Commission) and, later, victims of the GDR state were granted pensions.[15] This state-directed attempt to juristically come to terms with the past went hand-in-hand with a 'memory takeover' in the public sphere. After an initial post-Wall phase of euphoric amnesia, the 1990s and the 'Naughties' have been marked by a veritable explosion of memory on an official and an individual level. The cultural scene has been dominated by nostalgic reminiscences of pre-fall times which have been produced by both easterners (ostalgia) and westerners (westalgia).[16] The GDR has

been taken out of the commemorative drawer and paraded through the public realm to mark every imaginable anniversary.

Achtung Zone critically engages with this popular over-exposure of the GDR, writing against this form of over-remembering which paradoxically seems to induce forgetting and impede authentic memory. This takes place on two different levels. Firstly, as Hensel notes, discussions and representations of the past tend to reduce the reality of the GDR to the story of its collapse. Focusing either specifically on the 'event' of the fall of the Wall or linking it with 17 June 1953 and writing this past into an East German oppositional genealogy, history (and here, it is mostly history written by the West) re-writes the East German story as a series of attempts to overthrow the system (*AZ*, p. 60). This version of history allows it to be integrated into the West German narrative. Propagating the notion of an organic German identity which division could not erase and which is expressed by these protests, this reading of events strengthens the western project of 'inner unity' (*AZ*, pp. 60–1).

Secondly, Hensel notes that discussions on East Germany tend to compress real experience into 'storyable' narrative which can be recycled. This reduction of experience to anecdotes is something which she already touched upon in *Zonenkinder*; here, she drew attention to the fact that the western search for the 'authentic East' had led to an eastern reduction of biographical experience to stereotypical stories complete with Stasi museums and descriptions of surveillance (*Z*, p. 31). *Achtung Zone* highlights how the passage of time has further exacerbated this problem. In 2009, memory has become more dissociated from biographical experience and rememberers are increasingly forced to fall back on story stockpiles, leading to a homogenization (and a fictionalization) of experience:

> Aus den einstmals persönlichen Geschichten ist ein Brei geworden, der mit den Jahren immer gleichförmiger, formelhafter und unspezifischer geworden ist. Die dauernd wiederholten Erinnerungen helfen mir nicht mich zu verorten. Im Gegenteil, dieser Brei an Anekdoten widersetzt sich meinen Erinnerungen, er überlagert, blockiert und verstellt sie. (*AZ*, p. 35)

> (Once personal stories have become a form of pulp, which has become more uniform and formulaic and general every year. I cannot locate myself in these incessantly repeated memories. On the contrary, the anecdotal pulp opposes my memories, blocking, overlying and changing them.)

Drawing attention to the role of the media in generating story stock-piles, Hensel demonizes the media, turning East Germans into passive consumers and writing them into the role of victims of the media machine. Rather than making a space for the articulation of memory, the media are shown to colonize it in order to construct an entertaining past: 'Aus dem Beschreiben der Welt in den Medien ist längst ein Vorschreiben geworden' (*AZ*, p. 44) (The media descriptions of the world have become prescriptions.) Concentrating on iconic images and succinct sound-bites that encapsulate the spirit of the historical moment, mediatized memory overwrites real experience which may not fit this 'picture-perfect' memory mould; the fragile memory of lived experience does not stand a chance against this media colossus.[17] This situation is further aggravated by transgenerational transmission, which then conserves and recirculates these stories, facilitating a forgetting of real experience.

Hensel outlines a kind of vicious cycle; the stories about the East have not only become clichéd and formulaic, but the questions which are asked about this past have also become ritualized. Memories are recycled to fit formulaic questions and questions are recycled to fit the stories that people tell. According to Hensel, this dynamic has been set in motion by an East German double consciousness (*AZ*, p. 47). Their attempts to see themselves through 'the eyes of others' seems to stem, firstly, from a lack of confidence in eastern identity which is in turn attributed to the circumstances of 'transition through unification' (*AZ*, pp. 21, 30), placing the West firmly in the position of perpetrator. Secondly, it also stems from the fact that the collapse of the GDR resulted in the collapse of the East German linguistic register (*AZ*, p. 46).[18] In order to speak, the East adopted the language of the West. This led them to consider post-unification life in terms of a maximization of opportunities (*AZ*, p. 49), causing concepts of East German solidarity to take a nosedive. Re-describing East Germans in terms of winners and losers, this western vocabulary created new divisions: the winners were those who made the transition into the new system, while the long-term unemployed became the losers (*AZ*, p. 55).

Ostalgia is also re-described here as an effect of this adoption of western language. By retrospectively re-authoring their lives in the vocabulary of the West, which defines East German difference through the past, East Germans, according to this reading, became caught up in their past. Unable to break their way out of this grammar, they fall prey to ostalgia which constructs criticism of the present as nostalgia for the past. As Hensel explains:

> Dabei haben sie es nicht geschafft, aus den Denkmustern jener Sprache, die ihnen stets die Vergangenheit als Vergleichsgegenstand zitierte, auszubrechen. Sie blieben sich darin treu. Sie erfüllten die Erwartungen. (*AZ*, p. 43)

> (They did not manage to break their way out of this linguistic pattern of thought which constantly cited their past as an object of comparison. They remained faithful to this. They fulfilled the expectations.)

Here, we can see a simultaneous move towards a more critical stance on German memory and the fabrication of a counter-myth. Although Hensel criticizes ostalgia (notably without critically engaging with her own role in disseminating ostalgic readings of the GDR in *Zonenkinder*), and although she attempts to move away from the 'event' of 1989/90 by focusing on the years of transition, this does not seem to represent an attempt to move towards a post-ostalgic take on the past. Instead, Hensel falls back into a familiar pattern of reading East Germans as dislocated victims, who are alienated from their language and their memories (*AZ*, p. 47); as we have seen, the West is re-anchored as the root cause of this.

   In the next section, this chapter explores how Hensel tries to write authenticity back into the memory discourse on the GDR by writing in her own memory lapses and her inability to remember. As will be shown, this has profound effects on her reading of her generation, which is written out of the experiential collective.

Between memory and post-memory: the transitional generation and the GDR

To date, the literary works of the transitional generation have generally been divided into two categories between (1) those works which view systemic transition positively and which highlight the personal advantages of being able to experience both systems and (2) those works which adopt a more melancholy tone, nostalgically lamenting the passing of the GDR Heimat and employing the memory of this past as a counter-present. Essentially divided between 'integrative' and 'ostalgic' readings of transition, these categories are championed by authors like Jakob Hein and Jana Hensel, respectively.[19] If viewed through the prism of *Achtung Zone*, we can see that a further differentiation is now needed. While positive readings of the transitional generation's cuspal position

which allows them to experience both the GDR and unified Germany suggests a biographical form of the illusive 'inner unity' conjured up in Willy Brandt's much quoted formula, '*Nun wächst zusammen, was zusammengehört*' (now that which belongs together will grow together),[20] even ostalgic texts like Jana Hensel's *Zonenkinder* may actually promote unity by incorporating the past into the present and re-establishing biographical coherency. In *Zonenkinder*, Hensel set out to write against the historical amnesiac present, using consumer products, fashions, trends and cultural practices to conjure up a version of the GDR past. Rescuing her childhood from the memory of the dictatorship, she authored her own narrative of origin, regrounding herself in her apolitical memories of GDR. Her breezy journey westwards, symbolically without any baggage, at the end of her autobiographical reflections on her childhood, suggests, as Debbie Pinfold has also noted, a form of 'arrival' in the new order.[21] The 'baggage' of the past has been integrated, after a period of biographical exile.

In *Achtung Zone*, the GDR past resurfaces as a problem, as it is written out of the narrative self's biographical memory. Not only has the fall of the Wall initiated a biographical rupture which separates her life into a before and after (*AZ*, p. 49), but the pressure of adjusting to the new system, the disappearance of the cultural references that supported biographical memory and the ritualization of GDR memory culture have caused authentic memory to disappear behind '*eine Mauer aus unüberhörbarem, lautem Schweigen*' (*AZ*, p. 44) (a wall of deafening silence which cannot be ignored). The past is no longer accessible as something personally experienced; instead, it is mediated through symbolic systems which cannot always be understood. This alienation from the past is made poignantly clear by Hensel's (unsuccessful) attempt to disentangle the Mühe/Gröllmann affair. Almost one third of *Achtung Zone* is spent trying to gain a purchase on this memory contest which centred firstly on Gröllmann's possible past as a Stasi informant and secondly on Mühe's role in exposing this past. Employing only print documents, witness reports and interviews as sources, she is unable to decode this public argument which, in her view, divided a generation into different camps – with the majority supporting Gröllmann (*AZ*, p. 97). While, on the one hand, Hensel's distance from the past impedes her ability to comprehend this struggle, it is also conceived as a virtue, as it prevents her from falling into the argumentative trenches, allowing her to adopt the stance of an 'objective' outsider.

Given the length of the exposé on the Mühe/Gröllmann affair, the investigative results drawn may seem quite paltry; noting how both

parties were engaged in defending their approach to the GDR past in the present (*AZ*, p. 95), Hensel reduces their conflict to an inability to communicate (*AZ*, p. 138). However, her engagement with this debate illustrates the difficulties of dealing with mediated memory quite effectively. If we place her dissociation from the past, her awareness of a disturbance in the symbolic systems and her imaginative attempt to reconstruct based on mediated memory side by side, it seems as if her engagement with the GDR past is being re-written in post-memory terms. While Marianne Hirsch's category of post-memory refers to the memory of non-experiential generations who were affected by transmitted traumatic experiences which preceded their births but which seem to constitute their part of their own memories, Hensel's 2009 description of her generational position appears to suggest a variant of this but the shift from memory to post-memory occurs within one generation. These post-generational memories of the GDR consist of 'not-memories';[22] they remember through the memories of others. Reflecting on her own engagement with the pre-unification period, she notes:

> Als hätte mein Leben erst in jenem Jahr [1989] begonnen. All die, die davor liegen, sehe ich wie durch einen Schleier. Danach beginnt der reale Teil meines Lebens, eine Zeit, die tatsächlich stattgefunden hat. Die davor habe ich mir ausgedacht. . . . Ich selbst war nicht dabei. Ich selbst war in jenen Jahren nicht anwesend. (*AZ*, p. 17)

> (As if my life just began that year [1989]. All the other years appear to me as if behind a veil. After that, the real part of my life begins, the part which really happened. I only imagined the bits before. . . . I wasn't there myself. I was not present in those years.)

> Ich erinnere mich nicht mehr an das, was einst gewesen ist. Ich erinnere mich lediglich an die Erinnerungen der anderen. An das, was die anderen als ihre persönlichen Erinnerungen ausgeben. Ich gebe vor, mich zu erinnern, weil auch die anderen ständig vorgeben, das zu tun. (*AZ*, p. 35)

> (I don't remember that which once was. I can only remember the memories of others. I remember that which they say is their personal memory. I pretend to remember because the others also pretend to remember.)

> Es ist das Gefühl, schon einmal gestorben zu sein. (*AZ*, p. 180)

> (It feels as if you already died before.)

Cut off from their dead memories, and placed outside of the experiential community, this generation is forced to rely on the parent generation for authentic accounts on and insights to this past. As these discussions are not taking place in the public sphere, the transitional generation becomes the victim of parental silence on the GDR – as already suggested, incessant and ritualized talking about the GDR also amounts to silencing here – as they are unable to imagine their way back into this past with any certainty (*AZ*, p. 180). This absence of public debate also serves another purpose however; it provides Hensel with a further platform to attack how GDR memory is being managed. Suggesting that the reaction to the public debates on the GDR may have caused these intergenerational exchanges to migrate out of the public and back into the private sphere (*AZ*, p. 185), she recasts East German silence on the past as an effect of official memory mismanagement.

Conclusion

To bring this to a close: this chapter has examined the role of the transitional generation in shaping GDR memory. Focusing particularly on Jana Hensel's *Achtung Zone*, it has examined whether the memory of transition is in fact in transition. Analysing how the GDR is being remembered and how East German identity is being conceptualized in the post-unification era, *Achtung Zone* appears to mark an attempt to move beyond an ostalgic form of discourse on the GDR. Criticizing how the memory industry has mismanaged GDR memory and how East Germans have fallen into a ritualized engagement with their own past, Hensel moves to abandon reflecting on 1989/90 as an event, encouraging people to think outside victim/perpetrator dichotomies in order to find a new way of talking about this past. Unfortunately, this 'new approach' seems to mobilize a by now rather familiar and perhaps oversimplified discourse of East Germans as victims of western memory. The only new aspect here seems to be the re-description of the transitional generation, who are written out of the experiential collective and into the role of post-memorial guardians of this past.

Notes

1. While former West Germans also had difficulties identifying with the new unified German identity, this lies outside the scope of this chapter. For further explorations of this topic, see Linda Shortt (2011), 'Reimagining the West. West Germany, Westalgia and the Generation of 1978', in Anne Fuchs,

Kathleen James Chakraborty and Linda Shortt (eds), *Debating German Cultural Identity since 1989* (Rochester, NY: Camden House); Stuart Taberner (2005), *German Literature of the 1990s and Beyond* (Rochester, NY: Camden House); Stuart Taberner (2007), ' "West German Writing" in the Berlin Republic', in Stuart Taberner (ed.), *Contemporary German Fiction. Writing in the Berlin Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 72–107; Andrew Plowman (2004), 'Westalgie? Nostalgia for the "Old" Federal Republic in Recent German Prose', *Seminar*, 40 (3), 249–61.

2. Patricia Hogwood (2000), 'After the GDR: Reconstructing Identity in Post-Communist Germany', *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 16 (4), 45–67, here 64.

3. Jana Hensel (2009), *Achtung Zone. Warum wir Ostdeutschen anders bleiben sollten* (Munich, Zurich: Piper). In the following, all references to this work will be included in parenthesis in the main body using the abbreviation *AZ*. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

4. Marianne Hirsch introduces the term 'postgeneration' to talk about non-experiential generations who are connected to historical experience through transgenerational transmission. See Marianne Hirsch (2008), 'The Generation of Postmemory', *Poetics Today*, 29 (1), 103–28, here 103–8.

5. Jana Hensel (2002), *Zonenkinder* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt). All future references to this text will be included in parenthesis in the main body using the abbreviation *Z*.

6. Jana Hensel and Elisabeth Raether (2008), *Neue deutsche Mädchen* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Piper). In the following, all references to this work will be included in parenthesis in the main body using the abbreviation *NdM*.

7. This East/West collaborative writing project seems to be an actualization of the text written by Margarete Mitscherlich (Federal Republic of Germany, FRG) and Brigitte Burmeister (German Democratic Republic, GDR) which highlighted the differences between East and West German women. See Margarete Mitscherlich and Brigitte Burmeister (1991), *Wir haben ein Berührungstabu. Zwei deutsche Seelen einander fremd geworden* (Hamburg: KleinVerlag). There are a number of problems with this 'new' German identity developed by Raether and Hensel, not least the fact that the authors fail to look past their own personal boundaries, while claiming to speak for a generation of women. Their depiction of female identity also remains decidedly limited; they continue to define themselves through their relationships to men.

8. Jan-Werner Müller (2009), 'Just Another *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*? The Process of Coming to Terms with the East German Past Revisited', in Karin Leeder (ed.), Special Issue 'From Stasiland to Stasiland to Ostalgie: The GDR Twenty Years After', *Oxford German Studies*, 38 (3), 334–44, here 343–4.

9. Bernd Lindner (2003), ' "Bau auf, Freie Deutsche Jugend" – und was dann? Kriterien für ein Modell der Jugendgenerationen der DDR', in Jürgen Reulecke (ed.), *Generationalität und Lebensgeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg), pp. 187–215, here pp. 209–14; Thomas Ahbe and Rainer Gries (2006), 'Die Generationen der DDR und Ostdeutschlands', *Berliner Debatte Initial*, 17, 90–109, here 102.

10. See, for example, Claus Leggewie (1995), *Die 89er. Portrait einer Generation* (Hamburg: Hoffman & Campe).

11. Debbie Pinfold (2010), 'We Weren't All *Zonenkinder*: Post-*Wende* Accounts of GDR Childhood', unpublished manuscript, courtesy of author.

12. Examples include Claudia Rusch (2003), *Meine freie deutsche Jugend* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer); Daniel Wiechmann (2004), *Immer bereit: Von einem jungen Pionier, der auszog, das Glück zu suchen* (Munich: Droemer/Knaur); Robert Ide (2007), *Meine Eltern, die Wende und ich* (Munich: Luchterhand); Sascha Lange (2007), *DJ Westradio: Von meiner glücklichen DDR-Jugend* (Berlin: Aufbau).

13. Pierre Nora (2002), 'The Reasons for the Current Upsurge in Memory', *Eurozine*, 19 April, http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2002-04-19-nora-en.html, accessed 10 September 2010.

14. Christoph Hein has been writing against this reading of the GDR for some time. See, for example, Christoph Hein (1985), *Horns Ende* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand) or Christoph Hein (2004), *Landnahme* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp).

15. Jan-Werner Müller (2009).

16. Much has been written on this cultural phenomenon. For a concise but detailed overview on ostalgia, see Anna Saunders (2006), 'Normalising the Past: East German Culture and Ostalgie', in Paul Cooke and Stuart Taberner (eds), *German Culture, Politics and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization* (Rochester, NY: Camden House), pp. 89–103; Paul Cooke (2005), *Representing East Germany Since Unification: From Colonization to Ostalgia* (Oxford, New York: Berg); Paul Cooke (2004), 'East German Writing in the Age of Globalization', in Stuart Taberner (ed.), *German Literature in the Age of Globalization* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press), pp. 25–46. On westalgia, see note 1 and Andrew Plowman (2006), ' "Normalizing" the "Old" Federal Republic? The FRG Between 1949 and 1989 in Recent German Fiction', in Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke (eds), *German Culture, Politics, and Literature*, pp. 137–50.

17. In her work on prosthetic memory, Alison Landsberg puts forward a more nuanced reading of the interaction between spectators and media in relation to memory. Mass culture is not merely a site of deception and domination here. See, for example, Alison Landsberg (2003), 'Prosthetic Memory: The Ethics and Politics of Memory in an Age of Mass Culture', in Paul Grainge (ed.), *Memory and Popular Film* (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press), pp. 144–61.

18. This disappearance of the East German linguistic code was also a topic in *Zonenkinder*. See Hensel (2002), pp. 21–3.

19. Paul Cooke (2007), ' "GDR Literature" in the Berlin Republic', in Stuart Taberner (ed.), *Contemporary German Fiction*, pp. 56–71, here p. 67.

20. Recent commentators have remarked on the fact that this catchphrase was not actually part of the speech which Willy Brandt delivered at the Schöneberger Rathaus on 10 November 1989; however, as it seemed to capture the spirit of the times, it was retrospectively inserted into the published version and it became one of the political slogans for the election campaign in 1990. See Hensel (2009), pp. 11–13; Wolfgang Emmerich (2009), 'Cultural Memory East v. West: Is What Belongs Together Really Growing Together?', *Oxford German Studies*, 38 (3), 242–53, here 242–3.

21. See Debbie Pinfold (2007), ' "Erinnerung ideologisch entschlacken" or Lost in Translation: Reflections on Jana Hensel's *Zonenkinder* and Its American Translation', *German Life and Letters*, 60 (1), 133–48, here 146.
22. This term was introduced by Eva Hoffmann in her reflections on the transmission of Holocaust memory. See Eva Hoffmann (2004), *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History, and the Legacy of the Holocaust* (New York, NY: Public Affairs), pp. 6, 9.

7
South African Transition in the Literary Imagination: Nadine Gordimer, J.M. Coetzee, Malika Lueen Ndlovu

Monika Reif-Huelser

This chapter explores the relationship between cultural products and historical change, examining how contemporary South African writers engage with South Africa's past and present, writing 'Transition' into the literary imagination. 'Transition' is one of the terms which is used to describe the period between 1990 and 1994 – that is, between Nelson Mandela's release from prison and his election as President; it is also referred to as 'dismantling apartheid' and 'the creation of the Rainbow Nation'. In the public sphere, this process of dismantling was carried out in newspapers, political speeches and texts. This chapter examines the cultural importance of literary texts which hold up a mirror to transitional processes, offering a space where fears and misgivings which may not have a place in official discourse can be thematized. Acting as a container and giving a 'name to what has no name, especially to what the language of politics excludes', literature acts as 'one of a society's instruments of self-awareness...because its origins are connected with the origins of various types of knowledge, various codes, various forms of critical thought'.[1]

Examining Nadine Gordimer's novel *None to Accompany Me* (1994), J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) and Malika Lueen Ndlovu's two poems 'We've only just begun...' and 'That time has passed' (2000), this chapter explores the impact of gender and generation on modes of representation. Although all three writers were born in South Africa, each adopts a different generational perspective on transition which is reflected in their work: Gordimer was born in 1923, Coetzee in 1940 and Ndolovu in 1971. Investigating how their experiences impact upon their writing, this chapter analyses thematic points of connection and

departure between these texts. As will be shown, while Gordimer focuses on individual hopes and disappointments and on anxiety and courageousness, Coetzee, a modern sceptic, remains challengingly distanced from the emotional processes of his characters. Meanwhile Malika Ndlovu's poems, taken from her poetry collection *Born in Africa but*, deal with the emotions and memories of a younger generation that has grown up in, and lived through, apartheid and whose political judgements have been shaped and formed by the parental generation.

We've only just begun ... – 'Where are we?'

I would like to use Ndlovu's poem 'We've only just begun ...' to frame this analysis. Exploring the performative stages and phases of the transitional process, this poem raises questions about memory and identity, describing a sense of non-orientation which provides an ideal springboard for this analysis.

> *We've only just begun ...*
> This is the crying stage
> the one standing
> empty in readiness
> after the torturous whys
> the gruesome hows
> the haunting whens
> have been uttered
> recorded
> registered
> reported
> far and wide
> while an anthem of grieving
> surges on the inside
> This is the howling stage
> the one waiting
> a battlefield of evidence
> after the words spat out
> the apologies puked
> the hollow blessings
> hanging overhead
> like lost haloes that some
> are too wide-eyed
> too numbed

> to receive
> Commissioned truth
> expected forgiveness
> where are we?[2]

The last question 'where are we?' provides us with a good point of departure. Depending on the emphasis, it can be read in two ways. Ndlovu may be asking *where* we are in the experimental process of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, at a point where it seems difficult to isolate different stages, ends or outcomes with any certainty. Or where are *we* in the huge mechanism of transforming society and memory? Is there an inclusive 'we' as yet, a national identity that will include all South Africans? This 'we' could also refer to those who are not included, who feel sidelined in the top-down process of 'commissioned truth' and 'expected forgiveness'. Where, amidst these expectations and processes, are we – wide-eyed, numbed – able to receive commissioned truth? Where are the individuals with their losses and wounds? Can they be 'healed' through collective rituals and the manipulation of emotions in public hearings?[3] Her question may reach even further, inquiring into the state of democracy in her country at the beginning of the new millennium. She may be asking about the connections between the past and the future, about the links between individual experience and the public and popular stagings of history. Bundling together all of these facets, 'where are we' asks about the place of the individual and of the South African state and society in the unwieldy and unprecedented difficult process of transition. This process encompasses a reordering of society, culture and identity, as well as a re-rationalizing of the power structures. Creative imagination is called upon here. Ndlovu's two poems 'We've only just begun . . .' and 'That time has passed' which frame this analysis function as a kind of lens through which the other texts will be read.

Generating history through narrative: Nadine Gordimer's *None to Accompany Me*

Published in 1994, Nadine Gordimer's eleventh novel *None to Accompany Me* tells the story of two racially different families, one white, the other black, whose narratives intertwine in the tales of the parental and the younger generation. Because of its multigenerational frame, the family novel provides a useful format for exploring change; it traces the impact of history on biography and outlines the consequences of generational

rupture and conflict. It also illustrates the impact of politics on per-
sonal relations and the effects of state violence on social structures in
a way that makes a problematic history accessible and comprehensible
for the reader. During apartheid, Gordimer also employed the family
structure with its generational succession in her writing to illustrate
how the passage of time and the changing social and political con-
texts affected biographies. In this way, she was able to tackle thorny
issues such as social injustices, economic hardship, violence enacted
by the police and so on without actually openly attacking individual
wrongdoers.

Published at the end of a politically and socially turbulent four-year
transitional period in South African history, Gordimer's novel explores
the relationship between political ideals and social realities. It exam-
ines the potential and limits of transition, investigating whether the
political promises of the 1990s have been translated into real deeds and
exploring how the South African people, black and white, have tried
to arrange themselves in the new social order. Focusing on notions of
truth, faith in others and reliability, Gordimer reads these values as the
basis for political as well as personal commitment. Her protagonist Vera
Stark repeatedly returns to questions of authenticity, in fact, her leading
question is: *how can I know that what I know is true?*

Photographs may act as evidence that authenticates or verifies that
something took place. Playing with this notion of the photograph as
evidence, Gordimer opens her novel with a literary translation of a pho-
tograph which has lost its point of reference, as the memory which it
supported has disappeared. This simultaneously undermines the evi-
dential worth of the picture, while creating a space for imaginative
investment:

> And who was that?
>
> There's always someone nobody remembers. In the group photo-
> graph only those who have become prominent or famous or whose
> faces may be traced back through experiences lived in common
> occupy that space and time, flattened glossily.
>
> Who could it have been?[4]

By directing the reader's attention to the unknown person in the lit-
erary representation of a group photograph, the narrative voice makes
us *see* the 'dangling hands and the pair of feet neatly aligned for the
camera, the half-smile of profile turned to the personage who was to

become the centre of the preserved moment, the single image developed to a higher intensity' (*NAM*, p. 3). Although we read our way into the unknown person's body, moving from one detail to the next and straining our vision to make sense of what we *see*, this textual revelation fails to unveil meaning. According to phenomenological theory, such cases create an opportunity for imaginative investment.[5] We anticipate what could happen to fill this void.

Our reading of the photograph is affected not only by our limited understanding of what is depicted, but also by our awareness of what is not being shown. While the presence of an unknown stranger makes us aware of memory ellipses, the nature of the photograph means that the frame sets an impenetrable limit for our eyes. As John Szarkowski notes, photography surrounds 'a portion of one's cone of vision'[6] with a frame. It is similar to memory in that it 'preserves a moment of time and prevents it from being effaced by the supersession of further moments'.[7] By intersecting two medial representations of the real, the linguistic and the iconographic, Gordimer exposes the ways in which they actively involve imagination. As the first sentence of the novel, the performative gesture of the non-contextualized question, 'And who was that?', focuses attention on medial strategies for making sense: we *see* a person *seeing* another outside the frame of reference and we *see* the person within the frame *expecting* the outsider to enter the scene of vision. There is no narrative guidance as to what might follow.[8] This criss-crossing connects the fictional world of fiction with the reader's experiential world, provoking a sense of being lost in translations. This corresponds exactly to the emotional situation of Gordimer's protagonists. Hence the author underlines the epistemological problem of beginning, which never actually starts from scratch, but which embodies knowledge of the past and the projection of a new order simultaneously.

Although Gordimer draws attention to the imaginative investment of photographs, she also immediately limits this curiosity, noting 'on the edge of this focus there's an appendage, might as well trim it off because, in the recognition and specific memory the photograph arouses, the peripheral figure was never present' (*NAM*, p. 3). Trying to identify the unknown person seems pointless, as 'the camera is a fluid way of encountering that other reality' beyond the world of physical objects and bodies. By introducing the self-referential photographic image, Gordimer provokes a dialogue between two ways of representing realities of human experience.[9] Relief can only come if the parameters of the frame are changed:

...if someone were to come along – wait! – and recognize the one whom nobody remembers, immediately another reading of the pho- tograph would be developed. Something else, some other meaning would be there, the presence of what was taken on, along the way, then. Something secret, perhaps. Caught so insignificantly. (*NAM*, p. 3)

If someone were to recognize the mystery stranger, the whole story would change, and our concepts of truth and knowledge would also be altered. Both of these depend on the social constructions of perception and reality which Gordimer's novel questions and challenges.

Undermining the authenticity of the photograph in this way, Gordimer's introductory passage to her novel outlines the shaky ground which memories are built on, exposing the instability of the points which are used to access the real. In *On Photography*, Susan Sontag noted that to photograph 'is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge – and therefore power.'[10] In other words, the photograph creates an illusion for the viewer that they have access to reality as well as to knowledge and truth.[11] Gordimer's rendering of the iconography of the photograph and its effect on knowledge seems to undermine Sontag's observation; here, the photograph is an empty referent, no one can answer the question 'who could it have been?'

This 'no one' brings us to the enigmatic 'none' of the title. Given the historical situation and background against which the narrative unfolds, 'none to accompany me' appears to be a statement of resigned isolation, of being alone in a ruptured world. Throughout the narrative, however, this is invested with a number of references and we are drawn into a complicated net of interpersonal, interracial and intersexual relation- ships, into problems of understanding in a family and into a political situation which is fluid, unstable, euphoric, sceptical and yet simul- taneously hopeful. This 'none' seems to correspond to Jasper Johns' description of a photograph as an 'object that tells of the loss, destruc- tion, disappearance of objects. [It d]oes not speak of itself. [But t]ells of others'.[12] The other is absent and absence *is* the story; this is the same issue which preoccupies Gordimer's narrator. Just as photographs 'give people an imaginary possession of a past that is unreal',[13] this other reality may also emerge from a narrative. By beginning her novel in this way, Gordimer uses the literary translation of a photographic image as the catalyst for another narrative – we could say a meta-narrative – in which the story of 'dismantling apartheid' is told. This story, preserved

in the experiences and remembrances of her characters is an 'other reality', a fluid image, an imaginary ownership 'of a past that is unreal'.

Photographs are not only used to highlight our perspectivized methods of reading events, they also act as a reminder of the real situation in South Africa when, during apartheid, photographs were employed to discriminate against people. Used, on the one hand, to document supposed terrorist intentions, photographs were employed to legitimate execution; they were also used to document atrocities. There are numerous reports about how photographs were used as evidence of atrocities or even as documentation when, for instance, the bones of unknown persons were found who – judging from the marks on the bones – died under torture and were then buried secretly on some faraway torture farm.[14]

While exploring the problems surrounding the truthfulness and representability of the past in a fictional context, Gordimer brings our attention to three problems associated with photography. (1) Do photographs actually represent reality and provide evidence of truth? (2) If photographs act as a kind of witness, authenticating what happened in the past, how are they – or indeed are they? – connected to the present. What are the criteria that allow us to recognize that the event in the past and the moment of discovery in the present are both part of the same event? (3) What are the significant differences between the visual and the linguistic medium? Do they not both tell stories in their peculiar way – one with images, the other with words?

Gordimer's protagonist, Vera Stark,[15] is both an active supporter of and simultaneously an allegory for transition. A white civil rights lawyer, who represents black South Africans in their struggle to reclaim their land, Vera is depicted as a typical liberal who opts to stay in South Africa during transition. As the novel makes clear, this decision can only be acted out in a lonely and highly individual trajectory. To be ready for change means to dare to free oneself from old habits and traditions and to face up to an uncertain future. In order to achieve her own independence, Vera decides to free herself from the constraints of her marriage to Bennet. However, this elicits harsh criticism from Annie, her lesbian daughter, and her son Ivan. Casting Vera as an agent of change and the younger generation as non-comprehending traditionalists who fear new trends, Gordimer inverts the traditional reading of the younger generation as a dynamo of societal progress.[16]

After Vera discloses her decision to leave her husband and to move into the annexe in Zeph Rapulana's house, the scene which unfolds between mother and daughter highlights the hardened fronts between

the generations. Despite her non-traditional family life, Annie and her female partner have adopted a black child, Vera's daughter is afraid of the rupture which her mother's decision will cause in the family narrative. When she finds out that her mother has sold the family home, Annie is 'instantly, frighteningly indignant: home, the old home, it must be kept intact even if one never sees it again, doesn't want to' (*NAM*, p. 309). Holding onto stability and onto her own right to break away – and thus to her need for her mother to maintain a steady course – Annie ignores the fact that the lived reality of her same-sex relationship would not have been possible if the system of moral codes had not already begun to change. Rather than supporting the maternal bid for independence, she reproaches her mother, querying her timing – 'Don't tell me you and [Ben] are getting divorced at your age?' (*NAM*, p. 309) – and accusing her of unreasonably escapist tendencies; her references to Zeph also expose her scepticism of, and distaste for, the 'smooth-talking representative of the new middle class' (*NAM*, p. 311). Dismissing her mother's reasoning that she needs her freedom to uncover the truth about her life, Annie suggests that her mother's efforts would have been better spent keeping the family together, rather than trying to build a new society in a new state. Clamouring to tradition and stability, she queries whether her mother's life was worth it:

> What?

> Everything. All that you made happen. The way you're suddenly making something else happen now.

> But *that's* not the question. It's not a summing-up. It's not (Vera has the expression of someone quoting) a bag of salt weighed against a bag of mealies.

> And so? You're not obliged to answer because I'm your daughter. I'm not looking for a guiding light . . . (*NAM*, p. 313)

The entire scene is built up on the interaction of several linguistic and thematic levels. There is an interesting shift in social roles. Although her daughter prioritizes the personal over the political, Vera views her personal life as transitory, viewing the political as transcendent, like art (*NAM*, p. 305). Unlike her daughter, Vera is not afraid of change and she has the energy to 'pay the price for staying on', as Coetzee's central female character in *Disgrace* terms it. When Annie affirms that she is 'not looking for a guiding light', she seems, on the one hand, to be trying to

protect herself against being dominated by her mother; on the other, it seems as if she is afraid of losing her sense of stability as all structures which have preserved what she considers to be the traditional order are dissolving.

Having spent a considerable amount of time living and writing in a society where sexuality was one of the main issues for repression and exclusion, Nadine Gordimer has transformed sexuality into one of her central metaphoric themes for liberation and independence. When sexual practices, eroticism, physical attraction are introduced as a dominant theme in her novels, they are generally employed to query whether intimacy is possible and what the cost of this might be. In this respect Gordimer uses sexuality as a myth and as a metaphor; sexuality can be liberating, but in most instances it is colonization.[17]

Vera is simultaneously hopeful and despondent. She has no illusions about politics and is aware of the senseless spiral of violence which seems to perpetuate itself:

> People kill each other and the future looks back and asks, What for? We can see, from here, what the end would have been, anyway. And then they turn to kill each other for some other reason whose resolution could have been foreseen. (*NAM*, p. 305)

Although this reads like the résumé of a pessimistic individual, Vera is still hopeful that a different future will be possible. She hopes that, in the yet unknown future, it may be possible to see that there was a 'purpose in the attempt to break the cycle? On the premise that the resolution is going to be justice? – even if it is renamed empowerment' (*NAM*, p. 305). Vera is the character to whom Gordimer ascribes the moral obligation to account for the unsolved questions of retributive justice; she rearranges her life in order to create a place for others by making a place for herself in the new society, which no one really can imagine. She does this in spite of her family's expectations and, indeed, against their wishes in order to work towards an imaginary and perhaps utopian prospective order; to a certain extent, she also acts against reader expectations.

As Salman Rushdie remarks in his essay 'Imaginary Homelands', writers and politicians are natural rivals. Both 'try to make the world in their own images' and both 'fight for the same territory'. Literature not only intervenes in politics, it also presents an alternative reading of the real. As Rushdie notes, 'the novel is one way of denying the official, politician's version of truth'.[18] Seen in this way, literature has the power to magnify hidden intentions, to discover veiled interests, to imagine

future consequences of present-day political decisions, and to display the dialectical relationship between individual and society. In the case of South Africa, the process of transition cannot be reduced to the short period between 1990 and 1996. Dismantling apartheid and initiating a process of transition is a long-term process that reaches deep into the past and far into the future. It is entrenched in the minds and memories of the people and cannot be wiped out in such a short time. This is what Nadine Gordimer suggests through the character of Vera Stark. Even if it takes several generations until the new society will be a reality, it is time to start working on this project now, to build it up during this time of transition.

Gordimer uses her protagonist to speak to the reader when she has Vera Stark reflect on three stages of her journey throughout the novel: baggage, transition, arrival. These three stages are important for Vera's life as well as for the social and political history of South Africa between 1990 and 1994. While 'baggage' alludes to Vera's marriage and to the legacy of a violent colonial history, 'transition' takes place during the story itself, producing a solitary yet liberating decision at the end. This retreat into the solitary self may seem to be a romantic escape; but 'Vera sees it as a stage on the way, along with others, many and different' (*NAM*, p. 306). 'Arrival' refers to a stage where the future rests mostly on hope and in the belief in the human desire to change circumstances for the better. This use of arrival is almost paradoxical; rather than a home-coming, it is a belief in the possibility of a home. The chapter entitled 'Arrival' is placed at the end of the narrative, linking it back to the epigraph by Proust which functions as an invitation, an encouragement and a truth for human life: 'We must never be afraid to go too far, for truth lies beyond.'[19]

J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*[20]

Like Gordimers's novel, Coetzee's *Disgrace* also retrospectively engages with transition. Published in 1999, five years after Gordimer's novel and almost nine years after the beginning of 'dismantling apartheid', this novel emerged at a time when the first consequences of the new state and its social order were becoming visible. The rebuilding of African cities seemed to signal that some form of transition was underway, evident in the reconstruction of Soweto and the urban area of Gauteng. Founded as a black township in 1963, Gauteng bordered the mining belt in north Johannesburg. It provided the stage for the outbreak of bloody uprisings against the apartheid regime in 1976, and it was also

the area that Bishop Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela chose, symbolically, for their own houses to be built in a well-kept new construction area.[21] The return of the remains of Sara Baartman to South Africa was another sign that the tide had changed and that racial discrimination was a thing of the past under Mandela's leadership.[22] Nelson Mandela had negotiated with the French authorities for eight years before he was able to bring Baartman home after 200 years of 'exile'. For Mandela, this was an act of public remembrance and an avowal of the wrongs committed in the past, in accordance with the first lines of the new South African Constitution:

> We, the people of South Africa,
>
> Recognize the injustices of our past;
>
> Honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land;
>
> Respect those who have worked to build and develop our country; and
>
> Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa was adopted in May 1996 and amended in October 1996, three years before Coetzee's *Disgrace* was released onto the literary market.

Embedded in this special historical period, *Disgrace* is a novel which can be read in many different ways. It has been the topic of much critical reflection, as the large number of journal articles, essays and books dedicated to Coetzee's writing attest.[23] For the purpose of this chapter, I will focus on those parts of the novel which deal with the issue of transition.

Disgrace tells the story of David Lurie, a 52-year-old Professor of English Literature, who specializes in Romanticism. Twice divorced, he now lives alone, visiting a prostitute to satisfy his sexual desires. After this arrangement falls apart, he embarks on a relationship with one of his female students, an indiscretion which has serious consequences; it sets a chain of emotions in motion which leave him in 'disgrace'. Charged with sexual harassment, Lurie is called to appear before a university commission that demands remorse. Although he pleads guilty to the charges, this fails to satisfy the committee that desires remorse and a 'spirit of repentance' (*D*, p. 58). A long debate which lasts for several days ensues where the committee demand an apology which reflects his 'sincere feelings' (*D*, p. 54). Lurie, however, refuses:

> He shakes his head. 'I have said the words for you, now you want more, you want me to demonstrate their sincerity. That is preposterous. That is beyond the scope of law. I have had enough. Let us go back to playing it by the book. I plead guilty. That is as far as I am prepared to go.' (*D*, p. 55)

The entire storyline surrounding David Lurie's hearing, the questions, confessions and – to put it in Vera Stark's terms – the colonization of his mind is a clear allusion to the workings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. It is possible to read Lurie as a personification of Coetzee's doubts about this whole therapeutic enterprise: 'Confessions, apologies: why this thirst for abasement? . . . . They circled around him like hunters who have cornered a strange beast and do not know how to finish it off' (*D*, p. 56).

Rather than engaging in a charade of apologizing to earn forgiveness, Lurie decides to leave his urban academic safety-zone to visit his daughter Lucie, who lives on a small farm far away from the city. The relationship between father and daughter is quite difficult; since her parents divorced, Lucy had had no contact with her father. The novel tracks the gradual détente and establishment of a rapport between them, despite fundamental differences in their politics.

In the countryside, Lurie is able to observe and tries to understand the shifting relationship between blacks and whites in the new South Africa. Away from the city, he gradually assimilates into country life, and even begins to help out at an animal clinic, despite his initial misgiving: ' "I'm dubious, Lucy," he says. "It sounds suspiciously like community service. It sounds like someone trying to make reparation for past misdeeds" ' (*D*, p. 77). Although he reacts allergically to anything sounding like pity, repentance, restoration or 'good-heartedness', he starts to work at Bev's shelter, putting down unwanted and sick dogs. When Bev asks him whether he is in any kind of trouble to stay with women and dogs so far away from 'culture' and the city, Lurie answers: 'Not just in trouble. In what I suppose one would call disgrace' (*D*, p. 85). Here, 'disgrace' has a double meaning: on the one hand, it refers to Lurie's troubles with the university administration; on the other, Lurie himself seems to convey that the fact that he has to accept the present surroundings (as his last resort) is disgraceful for him. Hence the fact that Bev empathizes with him, when she, as a woman, represents everything that he despises, adds to his disgrace. He remains a colonizer in some way, dividing people into grades of worthiness depending on whether they meet his standards or not.

We may say that Lurie's situation bears similarities to Vera Stark's, but for different reasons. Similar to Stark, Lurie also cuts his ties with his past life, but while she emancipates herself from her family, he seems to seek a form of refuge in the father–daughter relationship – even though the power structures which characterize this are reshaped and renegotiated throughout the novel. Like Stark, Lurie also has little respect for the procedures used to celebrate truth and target lies.

The unexpected, although somehow foreseeable, attack on the dogs, on Lurie, on Lucy and on the house interrupts the story before it becomes too 'pastoral'. Instigated by the black servants and a group of black youngsters gathered around Petrus, a kind of foreman on the farm and Lucy's hired help, the vandals poison the dogs, assault Lurie and rape Lucy. Similar to Gordimer's photograph and her epigraph, the truth of the event remains outside the frame of the novel. Nobody knows *who* is really responsible for this crime. The question of *why* they did it is also not raised.

Rather than the storyline, it is the mode of presentation which fascinates the reader. The narrative is fast-paced, to the point and sparse with words; it is interrupted with dramatic events which, in turn, become the centre of longer passages of dialogue. These dialogues reveal the thoughts and opinions of those involved in the event, providing a moral basis for the judgements pronounced.

I would like to examine the assault and Lucy's rape a bit closer here, as this attack brings many issues from the last phase of apartheid and the ensuing period of transition to the fore. The chronology of the attack reveals the fact that it was premeditated; the dogs were targeted first, then Lurie, then Lucy and then the house. In this way, all traces were eliminated which could lead back to the *real* or *true* wrongdoers. The general situation is one of intense uncertainty and security; the victims do not know who was responsible or how they should prepare against further attacks of that sort. The rule of law appears ineffectual and there is a sense that there is no one to turn to or to trust. Lucy's situation is reminiscent of Vera Stark's condition towards the end of Gordimer's novel. Although there are other people around, the feeling of lonely solitariness is quite strong for both female protagonists. As women, they are aware of the danger of being alone on the streets; both are ready to cope with that danger.

Lucy's sense of isolation becomes even more pronounced when she realizes that she cannot agree with her father's reasoning. He argues from a white, liberal, middle-aged middle-class, male perspective. Caught up in structures of justice and law, he wants to call the police and report the attack. In Lurie's cosmos, it is up to the white

people to decide what is 'right' and 'wrong'. Although she is alienated by the emotions behind the crime against her – 'It was done with such personal hatred. That was what stunned me more than anything. The rest was … expected. But why did they hate me so?' (*D*, p. 156) – and despite her fears that the attackers will return, Lucy refuses to leave South Africa.

Coetzee's novel is dotted with realistic features which interrupt the story – for example, when her father slows down while driving, Lucy cautions him 'Don't … Not here. This is a bad stretch, too risky to stop' (*D*, p. 157). With these small hints, Coetzee gives his allegorical story a 'realistic' touch. In the novel, South Africa is the protagonist; this distinguishes it from Gordimer's novel where Vera is searching for her self. She is caught up in her political engagement *to work* for ideas such as equality, democracy and justice; these are abstract concepts that she probes from a theoretical and historical standpoint. In *Disgrace*, it is the land itself and its history that takes centre-stage. The characters and their mishaps simply mirror what has happened to the land – colonization, appropriation, rape. Coetzee carefully uncovers Lucy's story layer by layer for her father and for the reader. When, after a long stretch of narrative time, we come close to the key term 'rape', it is not Lucy but her father who pronounces it: 'I will pronounce the word we have avoided hitherto. You were raped. Multiply. By three men' (*D*, p. 157). Lucy later uses a different register to talk about what has happened to her, saying: 'I am pregnant.' To speak of 'rape' is to turn one's back on history, violence, domination, humiliation and *disgrace*; her phrasing turns to the future, to open possibilities, hope and eventually love towards the child who, although conceived in violence and hate, holds a promise for the future. Coetzee's novel can easily be read as an allegory: the woman and the land suffer the same fate.

This reading, however, cannot cover up the numerous ironic, sometimes even sarcastic, references to the blind hopes of the generation in power around the 1990s, or the references to the imperviousness of the older generation – like Lurie, they are educated, trained in aesthetic sensibility, academic knowledge, but they are hopelessly lost in the transformation of the political framework. Lucy also does not have clear or distinct ideas about her future, but she trusts in her ability to adapt to future circumstances. This is evident in her decision to give up the land to Petrus:

'… Tell him that he can have it, title deed and all. He will love that.'

There is a pause between them.

'How humiliating,' he says finally. 'Such high hopes, and to end like this.'

'Yes, I agree, it is humiliating. But perhaps that is a good point to start from again. Perhaps that is what I must learn to accept. To start at ground level. With nothing. Not with nothing but. With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity.' (*D*, p. 205)

One of the most disturbing entries in Lucy's list of nothings is 'no dignity'. Her decision to keep her baby *is* an act of human dignity and, in this way, she seems to contradict herself. If dignity is possible, it comes from enduring humiliation. Coetzee seems to deliberately leave this open, perhaps to convey that his understanding of truth and justice is different.

The novel ends with Lucy, unlike her father, willing to enter into the next stage and resolving to be a 'good person' (*D*, p. 216). She is ready to take on responsibility for another human being. Pragmatic, without her father's romanticism, she consents to marry Petrus, explaining to her father:

I don't believe you get the point, David. Petrus ... is offering an alliance, a deal. I contribute the land, in return for which I am allowed to creep in under his wing. Otherwise, he wants to remind me, I am without protection, I am fair game. (*D*, p. 203)

Rejecting romantic feelings and notions of consolation, *Disgrace* presents the reader with a harrowing story that takes place in turbulent times. Ill-equipped to deal with the new situation, Lurie and his daughter must try to adjust to it. This is Coetzee's contribution to paving a new way for the future.

Malika Lueen Ndlovu's 'That time has passed'

At this stage of the investigation, I would like to return to the second poem by Malika Lueen Ndlovu which I mentioned in the introduction. It complements the analysis thus far. A South African woman who was born in 1971, Ndlovu grew up during apartheid, experiencing the turmoil and unrest of the late 1980s as a teenager. She was only six years old when Steve Biko, one of South Africa's most significant political activists and a leading founder of South Africa's *Black Consciousness Movement,* was brutally murdered. His death in police detention in 1977 turned him, posthumously, into a martyr of the anti-apartheid struggle.

Despite or perhaps because of her youth, Ndlovu has vivid memories of that time which has informed her poems. Having lived through what is officially called the period of 'dismantling apartheid', she has developed her own opinions on how the past should be dealt with, on what dismantlement should look like and, significantly, on what should come at the end of that process. Referring to the period in which she writes as the 'RDP – Democracy – TRC – So now we are free – era', she makes her scepticism and sense of uncertainty about how her country is developing known. Spotlighting the complex historical processes which took place between 1990 and 1996, a period marked by extreme violence and insecurity, her doubts about the developments are located in the hyphens between the words and the political rhetoric of such grand promises as 'reconstruction', 'development', 'democracy', a social framework based on 'truth' and 'reconciliation'.[24]

The poem which I would like to deal with here is 'That time has passed', meaning that the time of rage and revenge, the desire to strike back and hurt, the urge for retributive justice have had their time and that now it is time for something else. Structured in three sections which build on each other, it mirrors the subject's progress from wounded silence to taking up responsibility for change and thus embracing the possibility of healing. Opening with: '*They tell me* that the time for rage has passed', the poem charts the shift from 'them' to 'I'. The phrase 'They tell me...' is repeated three times until it is replaced by the actively interfering 'I' in the second stanza: '*So I have to bring* up the wounds...' (emphasis added). In the third section, the emancipated 'I' enumerates the actions necessary for the transitional process, while also emphasizing that the birth of a new nation, like the birth of a baby, 'does not come without blood'. To show this fully, I would like to cite the entire poem here:

> *That time has passed*
> They tell me that the time for rage has passed
> they tell me that this is not the place
> this is not the stage for rage
> that this is not the time
> they tell me that time has passed
> So I have to bring up the wounds
> and take them to the graves
> or I remind them of the numbers
> and the names I remember

> the ones I could never forget
> but they tell me that this is not the place for rage
> this is not the time for grieving
> they tell me that the time for grieving has passed
> Yes this is a time for recollection
> yes this is the time for remembering
> for reclaiming
> for renewal
> for healing
> yes this is the time for innovating
> generating
> but it does not come
> without blood
> like any baby.[25]

In her lyrical voice, Ndlovu positions herself in the present, reflecting retrospectively on the past – 'yes this is a time of recollection' – and prospectively on to the future – 'generating/but it does not come/without blood like any baby'. The title of her poetry collection, *Born in Africa but*, invites a similarly imaginative approach. Formulated in the present, 'Born in Africa' reaches back to the past which is known and which has consequences in the present. However, the juxtaposing conjunction 'but' which is pending at the end of the phrase, connotes a yet unfinished beginning of an unknown future. The subject, called upon to judge the past in order to project a liveable future, moves in an otherwise indefinable present. The 'but' connotes the impossibility of filling in the blank and of completing the sentence at this point in time. In the poems included in this anthology, it is not so much remembering which finally leads to a kind of 'healing', but the discriminating processes of 'reclaiming', 'renewal', 'innovating' and 'generating'. The movement of transition takes place in an open present and thus in a space of time which makes a new connection possible between the past and the future.

As 'That time has passed' belies, it is difficult if not impossible for Ndlovu to merge her personal memories with the official memory policy of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The keyword was 'forgiveness', a sentiment with which the narrative voice clearly struggles. 'So I have to bring up the wounds and take them to the graves' describes the process that has to happen in order to be able to accept renovation and regeneration which, they say, will pave the way for transition into a new society. Remembering and forgetting are central for transition here. Central cultural obligations that can be regulated by the state,

they are also processes of consciousness which are beyond the influence of our will.

In her other poem 'We've only just begun...' which I dealt with briefly at the outset of these deliberations, Ndlovu also evokes the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, when pain was made public, when people were expected to forgive atrocities, when narratives of personal memories dominated the scene. 'We've only just begun...' reminds us that the process of transition is slow and ongoing. The ten years between 1990 and 2000 (when her book was published) do not seem to have been long enough in order to pronounce judgement on the successes or failing of the attempts to consolidate the entire nation after a long history of injustice and devastating violence. Her poem also signals that the tone of South African literature is changing: the wailing and mourning are subsiding, slowly and gradually this is giving way to other feelings: a modest hope and a sober enjoyment of life.

To bring this to a close: not only do the novels and poems discussed stem from different years, but their writers also differ in gender, age and race. That is to say, they are closer to, or further away from, the historical period called 'Transition'. Although this is officially deemed over in 1994, some historians stretch the end date to 1996, the year, in which the Truth and Reconciliation Commission stopped its hearings. It is clear, however, that South Africa is still in the process of transition and has not yet found a reliably stable structure despite the high hopes which were pinned on the World Cup of 2010. As I have shown, each writer uses personal and collective memory to create her or his version of Transition from a present to which the period in question is already past. Transition connotes the channelled social and political change, which starts from a certain point in history and moves into an open future. Despite the sceptical undertones, they all look to the future with curiosity, hope and great expectation. However, they also remain grounded in the pitfalls of transition. Despite the proliferation of Truth Commissions in African and Latin American countries, there is no ready model for the new South African society which can provide a guarantee that the 'Truth and Reconciliation' project will work in the long run. For this reason, the literary imagination has become an important space where the pitfalls and potentials of this groundbreaking historic project can be reflected.

Notes

1. Italo Calvino (1986), *The Uses of Literature*, translated by Patrick Creagh (San Diego, CA, New York, London: Harcourt Brace & Company), pp. 89–101, here p. 97.

2. Malika Lueen Ndlovu (2000), 'We've only just begun . . .', in *Born in Africa but* (Cape Town: Educall Publishers), p. 24.

3. See my essay 'Erzählen. Erinnern. Versöhnen? Beobachtungen zum Umgang Südafrikas mit den Folgen seiner traumatischen Geschichte und dem Versuch, die Demokratie zu wagen', in Michael C. Frank and Gabriele Rippl (eds), *Arbeit am Gedächtnis* (Munich: Fink), pp. 229–48.

4. Nadine Gordimer (1994), *None to Accompany Me* (London: Penguin), p. 3. All further references to this novel will be included in parenthesis in the text using the abbreviation *NAM*.

5. See M. Merleau-Ponty (1964), *Le Visible et l'invisible, suivi de notes de travail*, edited by Claude Lefort (Paris: Gallimard).

6. John Szrakowski, quoted in Susan Sontag (1977), *On Photography* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux), p. 192.

7. John Berger and Jean Mohr (1995), *Another Way of Telling* (New York, NY: Vintage International), p. 89.

8. See Roland Barthes (1970), 'Der dritte Sinn. Forschungsnotizen über einige Fotogramme S. M. Eisensteins', in Roland Barthes (1990), *Der entgegenkommende und der stumpfe Sinn* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp), pp. 47–66. In his article on Barthes, Johannes Riis argues that the notion of 'the Third Sense' is not dependent on the progress of history; instead, it provides a particular model of aesthetic experience. 'Dans ce type d'expérience, nous sentons que la situation est significative pour les personnages, mais notre attention est attirée vers des détails apparemment insignifiants, inconnus des personages.' Johannis Riis (2002), 'Cinémas: revue d'études cinématographiques/Cinémas', *Journal of Film Studies*, 12 (2), 117–34. This corresponds to the situation we experience in Gordimer's episode with the photograph.

9. Jerry N. Uelsmann, surrealist American photographer, quoted in Sontag (1977), p. 200.

10. Sontag (1977), p. 4.

11. This is particularly obvious in close-ups, where we are presented with details which are hidden from our normal eyesight. Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Béla Balàcz, S. Kracauer and Roland Barthes have drawn attention to the impact which this has for the theory of photography and film. See also Reif-Huelser (1984), *Film und Text: zum Problem von Wahrnehmung und Vorstellung in Film und Literatur* (Tübingen: Günter Narr Verlag).

12. Sontag (1977), p. 199.

13. Ibid., p. 9.

14. See, for example, Antije Krog's semi-documentary novel *Country of My Skull* which provides the reader with ample evidence for these issues. Together with her radio team SABC, the author reported on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission under the name Antjie Samuel. Stories which she heard and documented during the hearings were inserted into this stylistically experimental novel. Antije Krog (1998), *Country of My Skull* (Parktown: Random House).

15. According to the etymological dictionary, the word 'vera' comes from the Island language; it has the same range of meaning as the English verb 'be'. But, of course, it is also Latin (verus, *vera*, verum) and means *true*.

16. On the privileging of youth as a force of social change, see Karl Mannheim (1928), 'Das Problem der Generationen', in Karl Mannheim, *Wissenssoziologie. Auswahl aus dem Werk*, edited by Kurt H. Wolff (Neuwied, Berlin: Luchterhand), pp. 509–65.

17. Vera and Annie intentionally break out of the frame of traditionally codified social roles and female identities. For Annie, the lesbian relationship seems to promise an escape from colonial structures, whereas Vera, despite herself, wants to believe that the turnaround with respect to gender, social class and racial partnership holds the hope for changing roles and places in the new society.

18. Salman Rushdie (1991), 'Imaginary Homelands', in *Imaginary Homelands. Essays and Criticism 1981–1991* (London: Granta Books), pp. 9–36, here p. 14.

19. The sentence is by Marcel Proust, quoted in *None to Accompany Me* as an epigraph.

20. J.M. Coetzee (1999), *Disgrace* (London: Vintage). All further references to this novel appear in parenthesis in the main body of the text following the abbreviation *D.*

21. This was also the part of South Africa where Mahatma Gandhi rallied with the Indian workers, organizing marches against the living conditions and working out his concept of non-violent resistance, which was very successful in South Africa but less effective in India when he returned in 1915. So We To is the abbreviation of South Western Township, which was the site of some of the watershed events in the struggle against apartheid; it also provided the stage for renewed riots in 2008.

22. Sarah Baartman was born 1789 in the Gamtoos River Valley in the Eastern Cape. She was taken to Europe and displayed as a freak because of her unusual physical features.

23. See, for instance Derek Attridge (2005), *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading. Literature in the Event* (Durban: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press), pp. 138–61; Elleke Boehmer (2006), 'Sorry, Sorrier, Sorriest: The Gendering of Contrition in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*', in Jane Poyner (ed.), *J.M. Coetzee and the Ideal of the Public Intellectual* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press), pp. 135–47; Rosemary Jolly (2006), 'Going to the Dogs: Humanity in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*, *The Lives of Animals*, and South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission', in Poyner (2006), pp. 148–71.

24. Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) is a South African socio-economic policy framework which was implemented by Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) in 1994 following months of discussions, consultations and negotiations between the ANC, its Alliance partners the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the South African Communist Party and the wider civilian society. The programme aimed to alleviate poverty and address the massive shortfalls in social services across the country. In the programme's White Paper, other more than urgent issues were addressed, such as housing, land recuperation, new jobs and so on.

25. Malika Lueen Ndlovu (2000), 'That time has passed', pp. 67–8.

8
'That's Not A Story I Could Tell.' Commemorating the Other Side of the Colonial Frontier in Australian Literature of Reconciliation

Anja Schwarz

On 15 February 2010, exactly two years after Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd offered the *Apology to Australia's Indigenous People* as the first act of the reconvened parliament, Australian author Kate Grenville was invited to contribute an opinion piece to the *Guardian*. In her article, Grenville looked back on the progress that the project of reconciliation had since made and conceded that, while there had been some movement, 'the Rudd government can't point to any spectacular policy changes or huge improvement in outcomes'. Rejecting the notion, however, that the Apology had been just 'hot air, a cynical exercise in spin', Grenville discussed the difficulties faced by the government's housing programme for Indigenous communities as one example of 'just how tangled the problems are'. While symbolic acts were never enough, she concluded, the Apology remained an 'overdue and necessary first step'.[1]

  This was not the first time that the author was asked to speak on behalf of Australian reconciliation abroad or at home.[2] Indeed, Grenville's role as the *Guardian*'s expert on reconciliation 'down under' is hardly circumstantial. Introduced as 'an award-winning Australian author' – at the time, the British paperback edition of *The Lieutenant*, her latest novel portraying the first years of Australia's colonial history, had only just been published and it had been favourably reviewed by this newspaper[3] – she is accorded a prominent role. Her creative

preoccupation with this period in history seems to authorize and validate her position as a sought-after expert on the process of Australian reconciliation, that is, as a commentator, who occupies the discursive position of the settler-descended Anglo-Australian who is sympathetic to the Indigenous cause.

This chapter analyses this position while also exploring how Grenville's two most recent novels – *The Secret River* (2005) and *The Lieutenant* (2008) – take recourse to memories of the nation's colonial past in an attempt to intervene in the transitional processes which Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations are currently undergoing in Australia.[4] I argue that, in both her novels, Grenville works through some of the key concerns that face white, settler-descended Australians in this context. In her opinion pieces, interviews and non-fictional writing, Grenville has certainly invited this reading of her novels by explicitly linking her writings to contemporary events. For example, her books are linked to the oppositional grassroots reconciliation politics under John Howard's subsequent conservative coalition governments (1996–2007), on the one hand, and to the 2008 *Apology to the Aboriginal People of Australia* as the first act of Kevin Rudd's Labor government (2007–10), on the other.

Contextualizing *The Secret River* and *The Lieutenant*

The first of the two novels, *The Secret River*, relates the story of William Thornhill, a convict roughly modelled on the figure of Grenville's own great-great-great-grandfather, who is transported to the colony of New South Wales in the first decades of the nineteenth century and who, after his pardon, settles on the Hawkesbury River. Here, he rises from poverty to affluence and falls in love with the country he comes to call his own. Throughout the book, an ongoing conflict with local Aboriginal people which eventually turns violent when Thornhill and his neighbours 'disperse' them in a gruesome massacre.

In her memoir *Searching for the Secret River*, Grenville locates her decision to write about Australia's early colonial history in the Reconciliation Walk across Sydney Harbour Bridge in May 2000. This was a grassroots event that drew a quarter of a million participants; it was organized in defiance of the conservative Howard government's unwillingness to offer a state apology to Australia's Indigenous peoples. In this memoir, Grenville describes her encounter with a group of Aboriginal

men and women, who were watching the march from the sidelines as follows:

> At the end of the row, a tall handsome woman frankly staring, as if to memorize each face. Our eyes met and we shared one of those moments of intensity – a pulse of connectedness. . . . It should have made me feel even better about what I was doing, but it sent a sudden blade of cold into my warm inner glow. This woman's ancestors . . . might have been living on the shores of Sydney Harbour when the First Fleet sailed in. The blade I was feeling was the knowledge that my ancestor had been there too. . . . He'd have come ashore right underneath where an Aboriginal woman and I were exchanging smiles. (*SSR*, p. 12)

This passage is paradigmatic for the manner in which Grenville has related to both of her novels in public. Cross-mapping onto the past the contemporary Harbour Bridge encounter and the politics of reconciliation that inspired it, this passage illustrates how the writer is not only concerned with constructing her own author-persona as someone engaged in reconciliatory politics,[5] but also with the establishment of a particular relationship between past and present that merits further investigation.

Similar to its predecessor, *The Lieutenant* is based on historical events and figures. It has variously been described as 'a companion piece' to *The Secret River*[6] which 'walks similar ground',[7] engaging with many of its themes, 'but from a different perspective'.[8] Grenville herself describes both novels as mirror-images of each other, 'a kind of ying and yang', explaining that '[t]he early days of settlement in Australia seem to have been the best of times and the worst of times, bringing out both the glorious and the terrible in people'. The two novels jointly explore this duality: while *The Secret River* focuses on the violence characterizing early settlement, *The Lieutenant* allows Grenville to tell the story 'about two people who find a way to start speaking to each other'.[9]

The Lieutenant fictionalizes the prolonged encounter between New South Wales' first astronomer, William Dawes (renamed Daniel Rooke), and the Indigenous girl Patyegarang (recast as Tagaran) in the closing decades of the eighteenth century. To this day, Dawes remains relatively well known as one of the very few actors in early colonial Australia who, as Cassandra Pybus ironically remarks, 'can inspire a universally good press from historians'.[10] The astronomer appears to have been an outsider during the first European settlement on Australian soil. His exemplary historical status is ensured by the fact that he had tried to

learn the language of the Cadigal people during a time of increasing conflict at the emerging colonial frontier. Eventually stripped of his rank, Dawes was sent home for refusing to take part in a punitive expedition to Botany Bay following the spearing of the colony's gamekeeper.[11] Although Dawes' notebooks which extensively document his conversations with Patyegarang were long thought to have been lost, they were rediscovered in a London archive in 1972; for Grenville these became one of the prime sources for her novel.

Grenville has repeatedly reiterated that her writerly interest in the past is motivated by the concerns of the present. Eight years after the walk across Sydney Harbour Bridge, her point of reference in *The Lieutenant* is no longer opposition to Howard's conservative politics, but an endorsement of Kevin Rudd's Apology. In a statement that is posted on her publisher's website together with a short video clip, Grenville describes the book as 'not just another historical novel'. She notes:

> You know, in 2008, post Kevin Rudd's Apology, we are entering another kind of Australia and another kind of possibility for dialogue between black and white is opening up, I think for the first time in 200 years, for the first time since Dawes had his conversations with Patyegarang. So in a way, I am thinking that his story tells us something that might be useful for us going into the future.[12]

Highlighting the usefulness of the story of the historical encounter between Dawes and Patyegarang for the future, Grenville invites readers to place her novel in the frame of the Apology's reconciliatory nation-building project. As it promises insights into the past which are important for the contemporary process of reconciliation, *The Lieutenant* – similar to *The Secret River* – seems to transcend the realm of fiction. In fact, critical discussion of these novels tends to focus on their engagement with the process of reconciliation and with the Australian academic 'history wars' on the nature of the country's colonial past.[13] This has unsurprisingly disgruntled historians who, as Mark McKenna puts it, are growing increasingly tired of '[t]he rise of the novelist as historian, of fiction as history'.[14] According to these historians, the author's claims about the political and historical relevance of her novels illegitimately crosses the line between imaginative fiction and evidence-bound history.[15]

While these 'robust and telling critiques'[16] of Grenville's sentimental and sanitized portrayals of colonial history by a range of prominent Australian historians certainly make good reading, offering insights into the state of debates on Australia's colonial past,[17] this chapter is more

interested in what these novels convey about the functions of memory in transitional societies than in their historical accuracy. With this aim in mind, it appears more productive to adopt the stance outlined by Kate Mitchell in her analysis of *The Secret River*. Mitchell reads Grenville's project as an attempt to reconcile the author's sense of the past with the changing public uses of history in the context of contemporary reconciliatory politics, rather than an attempt to accurately represent historical events. She suggests that in *The Secret River* Grenville tried to 'rewrite her family story in a way that repositions her as a settler-descended Australian vis-à-vis the country's history'.[18] This interest in the functions of colonial memories in the context of Australia's contemporary phase of transition also appears to have informed Stella Clarke's defence of Grenville against the historians' attacks in *The Australian*. As a nation coming to terms with its colonial past, Clarke argued, 'we [Australians] need all the help we can get'.[19] Against this background, this chapter examines the kind of 'help' that literature can offer in the contemporary phase of transition. In order to better understand how Grenville's novels articulate commemorative positions for settler-descended Australians in the current process of reconciliation, it is necessary to first examine the Apology and its prehistory with regard to how this process relies on the power of testimony and an ethics of listening.

Reconciliation and an ethics of listening

Apologies constitute a special and often highly formalized kind of speech act. The regretful acknowledgement of a previous fault or offence is uttered with the intention of introducing a moment of change to an interpersonal or inter-group relationship. In the Australian case, the proceedings on the eve of the event made it clear that Rudd's Apology on behalf of the government would be offered with the intention of bringing about such a transformation. Parliamentary protocol was altered so that, from now on, the institution of a new government would always be preceded by a smoking ceremony and Welcome to Country by the Ngambri People of the Canberra region. This ceremony was followed by the actual Apology which was delivered to an audience of politicians and Indigenous Australians inside Parliament House, as well as to millions of viewers, who had gathered in front of public screens around the country to witness the event:

> Today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history. We reflect on their past

mistreatment. We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were Stolen Generations – this blemished chapter in our nation's history. The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.

We apologize for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians. We apologize especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country. For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry. . . .

We the Parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation. For the future we take heart; resolving that this new page in the history of our great continent can now be written. . . . A future where all Australians, whatever their origins, are truly equal partners, with equal opportunities and with an equal stake in shaping the next chapter in the history of this great country, Australia.[20]

Kevin Rudd's speech falls into the category of what New York lawyer Ruti Teitel has termed the 'transitional apology', which is described as 'a leading ritual of political transformation'.[21] According to Teitel, transitional apologies play a vital role in mediating regimes at a time of change: they 'advance transformation in the collective',[22] while also ensuring the continuity of power. As such, they continue to puzzle the philosophy of law. The state, after all, apologizes for acts that were not illegal or even considered immoral at the time of their accomplishment, but which have subsequently come to be regarded as wrong. According to Michael Fagenblatt, apologies therefore engender paradoxical moments in which the state deploys its sovereignty against itself 'in the name of a good that goes beyond its own political legitimacy'.[23] They are 'both within and beyond justice', Teitel agrees, and incorporate 'the notion of general binding law, while at the same time offering the possibility of the transcendence of the law'.[24] In a recent article, Danielle Celermajer and Dirk Moses have expanded these observations, referring specifically to the Australian debate:

The paradox or tension that apology uniquely holds in place is the assertion of a continuity and a break between two conflicting

> normative positions or identities.... [I]t opens the possibility of a different future only because it simultaneously asserts continuity, but cannot be fully, logically derived from the past. In saying sorry, Australia was indeed asserting that it was the nation that sanctioned removal.... At the same time, apparently paradoxically, it was declaring that it was not that. Within the apologetic moment, it occupies the conflicting normative identities, and gestures the movement from one to the other.[25]

This particular shift from one identity narrative to another is also evident in the composition of the Australian Apology. Rudd began by referring to the fate of the Stolen Generations as a 'blemish' marring the character of the nation and which, by implication, had to be treated or removed in order to arrive at a recovered sense of self. Arguing that '[t]he time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future', Rudd's speech act connected past, present and future. In this way, it constructed the 'line in political time' which is characteristic of apologies and which allows for the simultaneous existence of discontinuity and continuity in the body politic.[26]

   On the actual occasion of their utterance, state apologies acquire their transformative force from the performative power of public speech – the mass viewing and collective witnessing of Rudd's performance in Australia's public spaces was therefore vital to the production of 'a new public truth'.[27] They are, nevertheless, necessarily preceded by a longer process of self-questioning. The Australian case was no exception: the Apology was motivated by a changed sense of self which was embraced by non-Indigenous Australians once they came to acknowledge the historical experiences of Indigenous Australians. According to Fagenblatt, the recognition of this perspective engendered a sense of shame for wrongs committed in the name of the nation. This, in turn, became the driving force for the Apology:

> [A] shameful act only becomes shameful when one goes over what one has done and endures it from a new perspective.... It...involves being seen from a new moral perspective or having a new moral perspective imposed on one by the other.[28]

It is in this context that the role of memory in Australia's process of transition comes to the fore. As Gillian Whitlock correctly remarks, the Apology's act of acknowledgement not only impacted upon a

present sense of self, it also significantly intervened into Australia's hegemonic memory discourses. The recognition of an Indigenous perspective on the nation's history authorizes 'glimpses of a past that no longer seems to be ours', thus making it necessary to engage with the national heritage in a new way.[29] In this way, Rudd's Apology authorized a new sense of the past in the public sphere, integrating memories that had previously been relegated to the personal, counter-cultural sphere.[30]

Highlighting how the Australian Apology relied on the prior articulation of Indigenous memories, these Australian critics echo Ruti Teitel's more general remarks about transitional apologies. In their modern form, Teitel argues, apologies have an important prehistory. Thus, it would actually be more appropriate to speak of an 'apology process', rather than of a singular act. Apologies depend on 'the prior action of other political actors involved in the processes of investigation, laying the foundation for the apology's exercise'. Rather than acting on its own accord, the role of the executive in transitions over the past two decades 'has been to ratify findings arrived at by diverse bodies such as truth commissions or historical commissions'.[31]

In the Apology, Rudd actually drew on this prehistory, highlighting the vital role of memory for the process of transition in his speech which directly followed and contextualized the formal Apology. Opening with a question – 'Why apologize?' – he began to recount the life of Nungala Fejo, an 80-year-old Indigenous woman, who had been taken away from her parents when she was four years old. As the children were raised on different mission stations, she was also later separated from her brothers and sisters. Thus broken up by state authority, her family would never be reunited again. Relying on and repeating Indigenous testimony in Parliament in this way, Rudd's speech evoked the *Bringing Them Home Report* published in 1997; a document that summarizes the findings of the *National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* (HREOC, 1997). Based on extensive testimony by more than five hundred Indigenous witnesses, the report threaded together individual memories of past injustices to produce a damning historical narrative of the forcible removal of Indigenous children, who were usually of mixed descent, from their families and communities. It made recommendations about current laws, practices and policies, and about the services that should be available to the victims. The Reconciliation Walk across Harbour Bridge (which Kate Grenville took part in) was related to this publication; its participants were united in their protest against the Howard government's

unwillingness to engage with the report's findings and the national Apology in 2008 was, in turn, one of its key recommendations.

The apology process establishes a particular relationship between individual memories and the process of social transition. Three aspects are of particular significance here:

1. The authority accorded to Indigenous testimony.
   Enlisted in the 'apology process' through the *Bringing Them Home Report*, individual Indigenous memories of child removal no longer circulate as private counter-memories that are incompatible with the collective memory of the nation. The report brought these testimonies into the public sphere, presenting them as authoritative accounts of the nation's past. Thus, they were converted into 'part of mainstream knowledge and debate about national histories and good citizenship'.[32]
2. Individual memory and the nation.
   In this new context, the notion of individual suffering and the eventual possibility of healing through testimonial speech acts are mapped onto society as a whole and harnessed to a national politics of reconciliation. The apology process thus turns memories of individual fates into a resource for the collective creation of a new community that overcomes the wrongs of its past.
3. The transformative power of listening.
   The apology process accords Indigenous accounts of past injustices the vital role of bringing about a transformation in non-Indigenous Australia. This transformation is predicated on an ethically charged act of listening that, while at first unsettling, results in the creation of a new imagined community. The *Bringing Them Home Report* drove this point home. It argued that the damage inflicted by child removal could only be addressed if the entire community listened to the stories with an open heart and mind and committed itself to reconciliation.[33]

Grenville's fictional explorations of the apology process

Having examined the apology process in depth, I would like to shift focus to consider Kate Grenville's *The Secret River* and *The Lieutenant* against this background. Divided into three subcategories, this section explores how these two novels investigate and rework aspects of the apology process, evaluating their contribution to a critical

assessment of the role of colonial memories in the current process of transition.

Individual biographies and the nation

Viewed through the lens of the apology process, Grenville's novels read as settler-Australian answers to the Indigenous testimonies documented in the *Bringing Them Home Report*. While the report invests Indigenous biographies with public authority in an attempt to transform the prevailing understanding of Australia's past, *The Secret River* and *The Lieutenant* appear to be fictional responses to this imperative of change. In fact, Grenville seems to project onto her protagonists the notions of unsettlement and eventual transformation that are envisioned as desirable outcomes from the successive acts of testimony, listening and healing outlined in the *Bringing Them Home Report*.

If we examine the story of William Thornhill, *The Secret River* reads as an allegory on the unwillingness to engage with Indigenous counter-memories of the nation's past that characterized the Howard years. Thornhill's inability to perceive and acknowledge prior Indigenous ownership of the land that he has come to love so much is allegorized in the motif of a rock carving. He first encounters this Indigenous art work when he arrives at the Hawkesbury River. Recognizing 'a human hand at work' (*TSR*, p. 154), Thornhill's first impulse is to hide this evidence of the land's prior occupation. However, the picture is etched too deeply into the stone to permit erasure. Eventually, he builds his house over the carved stone, conveying, as Kate Mitchell explains, 'a sense of purpose, of deliberate concealment; it gestures toward the "cult of forgetting" upon which white Australia was founded'.[34] Thornhill thus personifies a perspective on the colonial past that the Howard government was accused of upholding when refusing to engage with the findings of the *Bringing Them Home Report*.

In *The Lieutenant*, on the other hand, Grenville employs elements of the classic *Bildungsroman*, exploring the trope of a nation growing up that had also underpinned Rudd's speech. The novel begins with the boy Daniel Rooke, an outsider, who is transformed, through hard experience, into an exemplary man of moral integrity. Befriending an Indigenous girl and learning her language, *The Lieutenant*'s protagonist is 'replaced, syllable by syllable, by another man' (*TL*, p. 280). Just as the Apology is invested with the power to transform the nation, Rooke begins, in Grenville's words, 'as one thing and ends as something entirely, unexpectedly different. . . . He learns how to become fully himself, I think, fully human'.[35]

The authority of testimony and Grenville's troubles with the Indigenous voice

While the act of according authority to Indigenous testimony was imperative to the *Bringing Them Home Report*, it may seem peculiar to look to Grenville's novels for an engagement with Indigenous voices, as her writing is generally concerned with a settler-descended view of Australia's past. However, Grenville has repeatedly emphasized her ongoing preoccupation with how to adequately represent an Indigenous perspective on the events that her books portray. In *Searching for the Secret River*, she refers explicitly to the problems she encountered with historical sources. For example, records of an encounter between Governor Phillip and an elderly Indigenous man in 1788 documented the moment of contact from the perspective of the English alone (*SSR*, p. 112). Unable to 'hear' the old man's voice in the documentary evidence, Grenville limits her imaginative engagement with it, as she notes:

> What I didn't want to do was to step into the heads of any of the Aboriginal characters. . . . That kind of appropriation . . . didn't seem . . . appropriate. . . . That's not a story I could tell. I do believe that you have to draw on what you know to write well, and I don't pretend to understand or be able to empathize particularly with a tribal Aboriginal person from 200 years ago; that's beyond me.[36]

Although they acknowledge Grenville's ethical rationale for not wanting to embark on an act of cross-cultural ventriloquism, a number of reviewers have criticized what they perceive as a mono-dimensional portrayal of the historical encounter in Grenville's texts. As one reviewer remarked, 'while Grenville's whites are mostly plausible, the Aborigines are . . . card-board cut-outs, mainly there to suit the story'.[37] Inga Clendinnen has also objected to Grenville's one-sided form of remembering the past. Writing against Grenville's claim to have gained historical insights through re-enactment,[38] Clendinnen objects specifically to the author's purported inability to imagine her way into the Indigenous side of the encounter, noting:

> We cannot post ourselves back in time. People really did think differently then . . . . How much 'culture' do we really share with British people of 200 years ago? Are we seduced into an illusion of understanding through the accident of a shared language? . . . It is not a simple thing to fathom something of what the [Indigenous] Australians

around what became 'Sydney' thought about white incomers . . . but I hope I have demonstrated in *Dancing with Strangers* [Clendinnen's own account of the colony's first years] that with patience, attentiveness and sufficient testing on the ground it is possible to penetrate a little distance.[39]

Critics like Clendinnen will be hardly surprised by Grenville's purported relief that she was able to rely on extensive source material when writing *The Lieutenant*. Sticking to the rule that she 'would not invent any dialogue',[40] she used Dawes' notebooks to access moments of past interaction. By keeping to these recorded conversations, she limited her work as a writer to supplying the context in which an exchange of words may have happened,[41] without having to 'make that leap into imagining the Indigenous point of view'.[42]

Once more the problematic nature of Grenville's politics of remembering the colonial frontier comes to the fore. While her well-intentioned ethical concerns paradoxically resulted in a silencing of Indigenous voices in *The Secret River*, in *The Lieutenant* she appears to naïvely believe in the capacity of historical documents to convey 'exactly what they said to each other'.[43] In this way, she seems to be curiously unaware of the innate bias of her sources. Dawes, after all, cannot have been a neutral observer of the conversations in which he himself participated. Apart from the generic conventions that necessarily shaped his journal writing, these records are also informed by their author's scientific concerns as a proto-linguist and by his subjective understanding of these speech acts.

These remarks notwithstanding, it is not my primary aim to simply accuse Grenville of getting it wrong. Instead, I would like to examine the difficulties she has in adequately representing the colonial past and in doing justice to an Indigenous perspective on these events; these difficulties are, in my opinion, characteristic of the inherent tensions that trouble memory politics in the post-settler colony. They serve as a cautionary reminder of the problems involved in turning the individual life stories of historical actors – victims or perpetrators – into resources for reconciliatory politics of a national scale and for the collective creation of a new community. One might argue that just as Grenville restricts Tagaran's/Patyegarang's participation in the historical dialogue to signify an Indigenous willingness to communicate and to bridge the gap between Indigenous and European actors, so one might be able to detect a limit to the willingness and capacity of present-day non-Indigenous Australians to listen to Indigenous positions that

reject the reconciliatory trajectory of past suffering and contemporary healing through testimonial and listening. In light of the analysis of *The Lieutenant* offered here, one might suspect that counter-memories that cannot be accommodated by this trajectory have little place in the national discourse on reconciliation. This point was also made by Gillian Whitlock, who, sounding a note of caution, referred to testimony as a 'constrained autobiographical performance'. According to Whitlock, in postcolonial contexts, 'testimony is characteristically the genre of the subaltern witnessing to oppression to a less oppressed other, and in a form which the other can recognize as culturally and socially appropriate'.[44] While highlighting the importance of testimony for the current process of transition in Australia, Whitlock thus reminds us that Indigenous testimony gains access to the public domain only 'in ways which are carefully managed by non-Indigenous interests' and which make 'the act of witnessing part of ongoing dynamics of settler colonialism'.[45]

The transformative power of listening and the ying and yang of relating to the past

In the *Bringing Them Home Report*, the act of listening to Indigenous testimony establishes an ethical relationship with the past; the motif of listening also features strongly in Grenville's novels. It is here, however, in the literary representation of the act of listening and of the relationship between past and present that this motif implies, that we find the biggest differences between both novels.

The Secret River's protagonist fails to listen to Indigenous voices and, accordingly, is not willing to acknowledge Aboriginal claims to original ownership of the land. Even when William Thornhill does arrive at some recognition of an Indigenous perspective – for example, when he stumbles across the rock carving of the fish – he fails to acknowledge this insight and refuses to act accordingly. In *The Lieutenant*, however, Grenville uses the figure of William Rooke to explore the transformative power of listening. The account of how white settlement in New South Wales began opens with a description of the European settler's metaphorical deafness to their new surroundings which appear to be encoded in a language that the recent arrivals do not understand. For example, looking at the shore from aboard the ship, Rooke notes, '[t]he place flowed past, a blur of namelessness. Tree. Another tree. Bush. Another sort of bush. White flower. Yellow flower. Red flower' (*TL*, p. 96).

As they begin to make a home for themselves on the new continent, the First Fleet's passengers are shown to develop two ways of 'listening' to this 'unrelenting newness': on the one hand, they partake in numerous acts of making 'the strange familiar, to transform it into [the] well-shaped smooth phrases' (*TL*, p. 139) of their voyaging accounts, which were written for publication upon their return to Europe. Rooke participates in this act of listening-translation when he makes weather recordings that turn '[t]he language of muddle, of wobble, of improvisation . . . into exactitude' (*TL*, p. 79). More and more, however, in the act of learning the Indigenous language, the astronomer no longer translates the strange into the familiar but begins 'to enter the strangeness and lose himself in it' (*TL*, p. 139). With Rooke, Grenville thus develops a European character, who is transformed by the act of listening and who is thus capable of engaging with his Indigenous counterparts in an ethical manner: 'It was this: you did not learn a language without entering into a relationship with the people who spoke it with you' (*TL*, p. 233).

The different degrees to which William Thornhill and Daniel Rooke are willing and able to recognize and listen to Indigenous characters has a direct impact on the manner in which they perceive the historical context of which they are also part. Whereas *The Secret River* reads as an allegory of the failure on the part of settler Australians to acknowledge their entanglement in historical violence, *The Lieutenant*'s protagonist is described as aware of his historical role. As a member of a punitive expedition put together in the attempt to assert white authority over the settlement and instructed by the Governor to bring back six Aboriginal heads, Rooke eventually walks away from the job, understanding nevertheless his role in the violence of colonization:

> It was the simplest thing in the world. If an action was wrong, it did not matter whether it succeeded or not, or how many clever steps you took to make sure it failed. If you were part of such an act you were part of its wrong. You did not have to take up the hatchet or even to walk along with the expedition. If you were part of that machine, you were part of its evil. (*TL*, p. 280)

Here, Rooke appears to develop historical hindsight, enabling Grenville to establish a link between past and present and to articulate an ethically charged commemorative perspective on Australia's colonial past. Like Rooke, contemporary Australians continue to feel responsible for the wrongs committed in their name, even though they did not commit

the historical acts of violence – this became very clear during the apology process. Throughout *The Lieutenant*, Grenville repeatedly invokes this ethical relationship to the colonial past by staging cross-cultural contacts between the First Fleet arrivals and the Indigenous population and imbuing these moments with metaphorical significance. This becomes particularly clear when the local Aboriginal people visit the young settlement for the first time; Rooke experiences this as 'a moment as astonishing as a star moving out of its place' (*TL*, p. 139):

> Warungin leaned forward and put a hand on Rooke's chest, on the front of the red jacket. 'Berewal-gal,' he said. He left his hand there, as if understanding could flow out of it, pass through the red wool, and into the man beneath. Rooke could feel it, the slight pressure of his hand against him. The first touch between two such separate beings. He almost expected a flash, as when lightning leapt between air and earth. And with Warungin's hand on his red wool chest, Rooke understood. (*TL*, p. 143)

In this and a number of other passages, Grenville invites her readers to engage with these moments of contact as more than simply flows of affect between historical characters. Instead, these moments of contact establish a sensual connection to Australia's past; after all, her protagonist Rooke is offered as a historical figure that we can identify with, as he embodies our own contemporary values. This becomes particularly clear in the novel's closing lines that see Rooke sent back to Britain where he will be tried in court for having disobeyed the Governor's orders on the punitive expedition:

> As the ship gathered away, he could see her [Tagaran] down on the very end of the point. . . . As the wind filled the sails and the *Gorgon* picked up speed down the harbour, he waved, and she answered straight away, her arm drawing one large shape through the air. Between them across the water a long thread stretched out, spinning out longer and longer as their figures grew small. (*TL*, p. 302)

This description invokes a sense of connection in many different ways. On one level, it affirms the ongoing friendship between Rooke and Tagaran. On another, it appears to be a metafictional comment on the bond that readers have, by this stage, formed with the literary text and the sense of loss they experience while reluctantly letting go of the fictional world. On yet another level, these lines depict the kind of

connection that Grenville seeks to establish between the past and the present in her novels, emphasizing the commemorative position vis-à-vis this past that she seeks to endorse: a melancholic looking back to a forgone possibility of amicable encounter that in the context of present-day Australia is thought to convey 'something that might be useful for us going into the future'.[46]

In this way, in *The Secret River* and *The Lieutenant* Grenville actually successively maps out, as 'a kind of ying and yang',[47] two possible commemorative positions that settler-descended Australians may occupy in the contemporary process of transformation: an initial unwillingness to listen to Indigenous testimony with a corresponding sense of being cut loose from the past in the case of *The Secret River*, followed by the reaffirmation of a connection with the past as portrayed in *The Lieutenant* and as heavily endorsed by the author. This connection is presented as the desired outcome of the ethically charged project of listening.

Conclusion

Living through this period of transition, Australian citizens might need 'all the help they can get'[48] in order to reimagine their relationship to the colonial past. However, as this chapter has shown, the manner in which Kate Grenville's novels intervene in this process reveals some of the dilemmas that trouble these types of commemorative projects. Rather than rejecting outright Grenville's often simplistic portrayal of the historical events, I would like to argue for a more nuanced appraisal of the current plethora of retrospective reinterpretations of Australia's colonial beginnings of which these novels, as well as Inga Clendinnen's own *Dancing with Strangers*, form part. All of these interpretations attempt, in their respective genres, to reimagine the relationship of settler-descended Australians to their nation's history. According to the cultural critic Katrina Schlunke, it is precisely this multiplicity of engagements with historical stories – such as that of Patyegarang and Dawes – that allows us to be hopeful. The different reiterations and rewritings make it impossible to conceive of the past as fixed in a single place and time. In this way, as she notes, it becomes impossible to 'possess' the past and 'home' becomes a never-ending negotiation for the settler.[49] As such, contemporary novels that reimagine Australia's colonial beginnings may actually be particularly well suited in bringing about what Dominick LaCapra has described as an 'empathetic unsettlement' that fiction can achieve 'by giving at least a plausible "feel" for experience and emotion which may be

difficult to arrive at through restricted documentary methods'.[50] It is clear that the process of transition cannot simply end with the Apology and an assumption of mutual understanding. Instead, it requires an ongoing willingness to listen, even to those voices that are not easily intelligible within the order of discourse established by reconciliation. Fiction might be one of the places where one might begin to practice listening.

Notes

1. Kate Grenville (2010), 'A True Apology to Aboriginal People Means Action As Well: Australia's Prime Minister Was Right to Say Sorry, but Two Years on Little Has Changed for the Better in Indigenous Communities', *Guardian*, 15 February.
2. See N.N. (2009), 'Acknowledge the Aboriginal Wars with a Memorial: Grenville', *Australian Associated Press General News*, 2 March.
3. See Jane Housham (2010), 'Review: *The Lieutenant*, by Kate Grenville', *Guardian*, 30 January.
4. Kate Grenville (2008), *The Lieutenant* (Melbourne: Text Publishing). Future references to this text will be included in the main body using the abbreviation *TL*; Kate Grenville (2005), *The Secret River* (Melbourne: Text Publishing). All subsequent references to the text will be included in the main body using the initials *TSR*; references to Grenville's memoir *Searching for the Secret River* (2006, Melbourne: Text Publishing) will be included in the main body using the abbreviation *SSR*.
5. See Tom Griffiths (2009) for a critical comment on Grenville's self-staging techniques in *Searching for the Secret River* with regards to the proclaimed difference of her project from that of historians. Tom Griffiths (2009), 'History and the Creative Imagination', *History Australia*, 6 (3), 74. 1–74. 16.
6. Katy Guest (2009), 'Uplifting Tale of a Quiet Man Who Sees Truth in Words', *Independent*, 20 February; Stephanie Cross (2009), 'Literary Fiction', *Daily Mail*, 30 January.
7. N.N. (2008), 'Troubled Relations', *Daily Examiner*, 8 November.
8. Jane Shilling (2009), 'A Deft Historical Tale of Discovery – of Both a New Continent and of the Explorer's Own Self', *Sunday Telegraph Magazine 'Seven'*, 25 January; Jay Parini (2009), 'Heavenly and Earthly Bodies: Kate Grenville Repossesses History in a Story of Sea, Stars and Settlers', *Guardian*, 31 January.
9. N.N (2008a), 'An Interview with Kate Grenville', http://kategrenville.com/ The_Lieutenant_Interview, accessed 30 August 2010.
10. Cassandra Pybus (2009), ' "Not Fit for Your Protection or an Honest Man's Company": A Transnational Perspective on the Saintly William Dawes', *History Australia*, 6 (1), 12. 1–12. 7.
11. Inga Clendinnen (2003), *Dancing with Strangers* (Melbourne: Text Publishing); Tim Flannery (1999), 'Introduction', in Tim Flannery (ed.), *The Birth of Sydney* (Melbourne: Text Publishing), pp. 1–42; Phyllis Mander-Jones (1966), 'Dawes, William (1762–1836)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 1 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press), pp. 297–8.

12. Kate Grenville (2008), 'Kate Grenville on *The Lieutenant*', http://www.youtube.com/watch?v= kH9-LexkRz4, accessed 30 August 2010. See Metherell (2008) for other statements by the author that make a similar claim: Gia Metherell (2008), 'Chance Discovery Inspires Latest Novel', *Canberra Times*, 31 October.

13. For an accessible summary of these debates, see Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark (2003), *The History Wars* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press).

14. Mark McKenna (2005), 'Writing the Past: History, Literature and the Public Sphere in Australia', Public Lecture held at the Queensland College of Art, Brisbane, 1 December. Transcript also available at http://www.humanitieswritingproject.net.au/mckenna.htm, accessed 30 August 2010.

15. McKenna (2005); Inga Clendinnen (2006), 'The History Question', *Quarterly Essay*, 23, 1–72; John Hirst (2005), *Sense and Nonsense in Australian History* (Melbourne: Black Inc.).

16. Griffiths (2009), 74. 8.

17. For a discussion of these reviews, see Anja Schwarz (2010), ' "…Just as it Would Have Been in 1861": Stuttering Colonial Beginnings in ABC's Outback House', *Reeanctment History*, 1 (2), 18–38.

18. Kate Mitchell (2010), 'Australia's "Other" History Wars: Trauma and the Work of Cultural Memory in Kate Grenville's The Secret River', in Marie-Luise Kohlk and Christian Gutleben (eds), *Neo-Victorian Tropes of Trauma: The Politics of Bearing After-Witness to Nineteenth-Century Suffering* (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi), pp. 253–83, here p. 273.

19. Stella Clarke (2006), 'Havoc in History House', *The Australian*, March, 4–10.

20. Kevin Rudd (2008), 'Apology to Australia's Indigenous People', *House of Representatives Official Hansard*, 1, 13 February, http://www.aph.gov.au/Hansard/repsldailys/dr130208.pdf, accessed 30 August 2010.

21. Ruti Teitel (2006), 'The Transitional Apology', in Elazar Barkan and Alexander Karn (eds), *Taking Wrongs Seriously: Apologies and Reconciliation* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press), pp. 101–14, here p. 101.

22. Teitel (2006), p. 102.

23. Michael Fagenblatt (2008), 'The Apology, the Secular and the Theologico-Political', *Dialogue*, 27 (2), 16–32, here 21.

24. Teitel (2006), p. 102.

25. Dirk Moses and Danielle Celermajer (2010) 'Australian Memory and the Apology to the Stolen Generations of Indigenous People', in Aleida Assmann and Sebastian Conrad (eds), *Memory in a Global Age: Discourses, Practices, and Trajectorie* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 32–58, here p. 51.

26. Teitel (2006), p. 104.

27. Chris Healy (2008), 'Apologizing for Stolen Time', *Melbourne History Journal*, 36, 7–10, here 9.

28. Postcolonial critic Sarah Ahmed makes a similar point in arguing that the 'proximity of national shame to Indigenous pain may be what offers the promise of reconciliation, a future of "living together' ". See Ahmed (2005), 'The Politics of Bad Feeling', *Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association Journal*, 1, 72–85, here 72. And Celermajer and Moses expand that those apologizing 'do not find the source of the condemnation in who they already are…but only by virtue of the perspective of the other. It is only an encounter with the other that allows for a development of

the existing norms beyond their historical expression. ... It was the other's speech, here literally the testimony of the Indigenous Australians, which tore non-Indigenous Australia out of itself, and gave it a different view of itself.' See Moses and Celermajer (2010), pp. 51–2. For further references, see Fagenblatt (2008), pp. 21–2.

29. Gillian Whitlock (2006), 'Active Remembrance: Testimony, Memoir and the Work of Reconciliation', in Annie E. Coombes (ed.), *Rethinking Settler Colonialism: History and Memory in Australia, Canada, Aotearoa New Zealand and South Africa* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), pp. 24–44, here p. 24.
30. Healy (2008), p. 9.
31. Teitel (2006), p. 106.
32. Whitlock (2006), p. 35; see also John Frow (2001), 'A Politics of Stolen Time', in Jon May and Nigel J. Thrift (eds), *TimeSpace: Geographies of Temporality* (London: Routledge), pp. 73–88.
33. HREOC (1997), p. 4. This point was reiterated by the *Bringing Them Home* Commissioner, Ronald Wilson, in the edited version of a selection of Stolen Generations' narratives, arguing that the injustices of the past can only be addressed properly 'when there is an understanding that comes through listening, followed by an acknowledgement of the shameful deeds of the past and a genuine expression or regret'. Ronald Wilson (1998), 'Preface', in Carmel Bird (ed.), *The Stolen Children: Their Stories* (Sydney: Random House), pp. i–xiv, here p. xiv.
34. Mitchell (2010), p. 278.
35. Rosemary Sorensen (2008), 'Past Imperfect', *The Australian*, 20 September.
36. Ramona Koval and Kate Grenville (2005), 'Interview: The Secret River', *Radio National: Books and Writing*, available at http://www.abc.net.au/rn/arts/bwriting/stories/s1527708htm, accessed 30 August 2010.
37. Robert Murray (2007), 'Hollywood on the Hawkesbury', *Quadrant*, April, 67–9, here 68.
38. Grenville had argued that 'basically you've got to go out there and experience it ... So much as I could in the book, I did everything I had to describe. ... I am a great believer in the experiential theory of writing.' Grenville quoted in Clendinnen (2006), p. 23.
39. Clendinnen (2006), p. 26. Clendinnen conveniently omits that a number of critics had regarded her portrayal of Australia's colonization based solely on the journals of early colonists as equally limited in scope and biased: see, for instance, Anne McGrath (2003), 'The Rhythm of Strangers', *The Age*, 1 November; Deirdre Coleman (2004), 'Inscrutable History or Incurable Romanticism: Inga Clendinnen's Dancing with Strangers', *HEAT*, 8, 201–13; Philip Morrissey (2007), 'Dancing with Shadows: Erasing Aboriginal Self and Sovereignty', in Aileen Moreton-Robertson (ed.), *Sovereign Subjects: Indigenous Sovereignty Matters* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin), pp. 65–74.
40. N.N (2008a).
41. Koval and Grenville (2008).
42. Kerry O'Brien (2008), 'Kate Grenville Joins 7.30 Report', *Australian Broadcasting Transcripts*, 22 September.
43. N.N (2008b), 'Finding the World Within', *Canberra Times*, 27 September.
44. Whitlock (2006), p. 33.

45. Ibid., p. 41.

46. Kate Grenville (2008a), 'Kate Grenville on *The Lieutenant*', available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kH9-LexkRz4, accessed 30 August 2010. A little earlier in the novel, Grenville had already introduced this claim to contemporary significance with a reference to the historical sources on which she based her book. Foreshadowing her protagonist's death, the novel renders Rooke's dying thoughts of Tagaran and the question of what will remain of their friendship. 'It was enough for him to know that they were there. When he and Tagaran were dead, when their children's children were dead, the notebooks would tell the story of a friendship like no other' (*TL*, p. 298). Since Grenville based her novel on historical notebooks – a point she stresses in an accompanying author's note – these lines serve to establish a correlation between her novel and the archival evidence of the Dawes/Patyegarang encounter, thus reinforcing her claim for the relevance of *The Lieutenant* beyond the fictional realm.

47. N.N (2008a).

48. Clarke (2006).

49. Katrina Schlunke (2009), 'Home', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 108 (1), 1–26, here 24.

50. This has been mentioned by Kate Mitchell (2010). See Dominick LaCapra (2001), *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press), p. 13.

Part IV

Resistance to Change

9
Deep Memory and Narrative Templates: Conservative Forces in Collective Memory

James V. Wertsch

Over the past few years, public intellectuals in the United States have begun speaking of the collective dioxyribonucleic acid (DNA) of nations. In analysing 'the myth of American innocence', for example, Robert Kagan asserts that a predilection to interfere in the affairs of other nations is 'embedded in the American DNA'.[1] Meanwhile, Fareed Zakaria has written about the 'cultural DNA' of India as it shapes the 'post-American world', and David Brooks has argued that US involvement in Afghanistan reflects 'America's DNA'.[2]

   Such claims about collective DNA are subject to the usual limitations of metaphors drawn from one field and applied to another and as such do not provide answers to questions such as: what is the counterpart of ribonucleic acid (RNA)? What would it mean to splice collective DNA? Nonetheless, these claims point to some useful insights, primarily in the form of assumptions that lie behind them. I shall be concerned with three in particular. The first is that there is an underlying code to be unearthed and interpreted in order to account for surface phenomena. Just as chemical DNA is viewed as a key to understanding biological organisms, the implication is that by unpacking the underlying collective DNA code we can better understand how human society functions. A second assumption is that rather than being some sort of universal collective unconscious, collective DNA differs from one group to another. The authors noted above mention American, Indian and Chinese DNA, implying that there may be as many collectives as there are codes. And a third assumption is that the underlying code is largely fixed and slow to change. Indeed, Robert Kagan brings up American DNA in the context of arguing that certain aspects of the country's culture have undergone little transition since its founding.

National narratives as collective DNA

There are several possibilities for what might constitute collective DNA code, but an obvious one takes the form of national narratives. At least since Aristotle narratives have been viewed as fundamental cultural resources for human thought and identity.[3] Because their mastery does not require extended formal instruction, they are widely and naturally used as 'cognitive instruments' for making sense of the world.[4] And this applies nowhere more clearly than in the case of the narratives that modern nation-states use to make sense of our own and others' actions. Jan Assmann has argued that national narratives give rise to a particular way of relating to the past that is distinct from 'cultural memory'. Specifically, a national narrative 'is one particular "cultural text", a coherent ordering of events along a strict narrative line serving as an intellectual and emotional backbone of national identity'.[5] From this perspective national narratives are important because they provide groups with core ideas about their past and their role in the world.

In what follows, I shall take national narratives to be <u>'cultural tools'.</u>[6] These tools do not simply allow us to express ideas we might otherwise have; instead, they shape thinking and speaking in fundamental ways and, thus, they can be viewed as 'co-authors' of discourse. Given their crucial role, it is important to understand where these tools come from, to explore, for example, how they are produced and how they are employed and internalized by group members. These issues have been intuitively recognized by the elites of modern states who have routinely harnessed national narratives as instruments to be used in the construction of 'peoplehood'[7] and imagined communities.[8]

How does introducing the notion of collective DNA advance the discussion of national narratives? After all, this discussion has been taking place, at least since Ernest Renan gave his lecture 'What Is a Nation?' in 1882, without such metaphors. The answer has to do with levels of analysis. The study of national narratives typically assumes that the objects to be analysed are written and spoken texts in their surface form. In contrast, talk about DNA suggests there is a deeper code of some sort. In fact, ideas about codes that underlie social and psychological processes have long been part of the humanities and social sciences. For example, the father of modern memory studies, Frederic Bartlett (1932), introduced the notion of 'schema' in an attempt to account for patterns that underlie psychological processes, and the Russian Formalist Vladimir Propp (1968) proposed a small set of textual 'functions' that underlie a wide range of folktales.[9]

Such claims suggest that national narratives might be analysed at more than one level, and, in this regard, I shall argue that a useful distinction can be drawn between 'specific narratives' and 'narrative templates'.[10] <u>Specific narratives</u> are surface texts that include concrete information about the particular times, places and actors involved in events from the past. Examples are accounts of the German invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 and the Russian war in Georgia that took place in August 2008.

In contrast, narrative templates are generalized schematic structures that do not include such concrete information. They are cookie cutter plots or storylines that can be used to generate multiple specific narratives. As such, they function in the role of the underlying codes suggested by DNA metaphors. The notion of a template suggests that this sort of storyline is used repeatedly by a mnemonic community to interpret multiple specific events by fitting them into a schematic plot line.

An illustration: the Russian national narrative template

The usefulness of the construct of a narrative template stems from its ability to provide insight into what motivates the interpretation of concrete events and what general thread runs throughout a set of such interpretations in a 'mnemonic community'.[11] As such, narrative templates should be able to tell us something about a set of specific narratives that is not obvious in their surface form. In order to explore these issues, I shall outline a particular national narrative template, namely, one that often shapes the interpretation of events in the Russian mnemonic community. As will become clear, this narrative template has a powerful impact on what Bartlett termed the 'effort after meaning' by its members.[12]

The workings of this national narrative template are sometimes evidenced in the very appellation of events. For example, in Russia the massive conflict of 1941–45 is known as the Great Fatherland War (Великая Отечественная война), a term that echoes the 'Fatherland War' (Отечественная война), or what is known in the West as the Napoleonic War of 1812. The parallels between these two events in the Russian mnemonic community become all the more apparent when one considers that the expression 'Hitler as a second Napoleon' has long enjoyed widespread usage in this collective. This expression suggests that two events separated in time, place and participants, each with its unique specific narrative, are viewed as instantiations of the same underlying storyline.

The narrative template at issue in the Russian case applies to a much larger set of events than these two colossal clashes. Consider, for example, the 1938 film *Alexander Nevsky*, where Soviet director Sergei Eisenstein suggested that the looming threat from fascist Germany could be viewed through a lens from a much earlier time than the Fatherland War against Napoleon. In this film, invading Teutonic knights in the thirteenth century were referred to as 'the German' (немец) and depicted in helmets that came straight from the uniform of the invaders in the impending conflagration in 1941. Again, the comparison points to an underlying code that connects specific narratives. The list of parallels goes on, with Russians sometimes speaking of the multiple conquests by foreigners, including Mongols, Germans, Swedes, Poles, Turks and Germans again.

What the specific narratives of these events have in common for the Russian mnemonic community is an underlying code that can be termed the 'Expulsion of Foreign Enemies'. Its elements can be summarized as follows:

1. An 'initial situation' in which Russia is peaceful and not interfering with others.
2. *Trouble*, in which a foreign enemy viciously attacks Russia without provocation.
3. Russia nearly loses everything in total defeat, as it suffers under the enemy's attempts to destroy it as a civilization.
4. Through heroism and exceptionalism, against all odds, and acting alone, Russia triumphs and succeeds in expelling the foreign enemy.

This narrative template often mediates the effort after meaning in the Russian mnemonic community. It is a cultural tool that is widely understood and employed by Russians when making sense of events, both past and present, and as such it provides a plot line for specific narratives such that they take the shape of the same story told over and over with different characters.

Before turning to other illustrations of this narrative template at work, it is worth noting that I am not suggesting it is a fabrication or a figment of the imagination of this mnemonic community. Russia obviously *has* suffered at the hands of foreign enemies on numerous occasions. However, I am suggesting that the narrative template provides an interpretive framework that heavily shapes the thinking and speaking of the members of this community. It does so to such an extent that their interpretations of some events may be quite surprising to those coming

from other collectives, reflecting how differences between mnemonic communities are organized around distinct underlying codes.

This comes into sharp focus in cases where mnemonic communities have strikingly different interpretations of the same event. For example, it is surprising for members of other mnemonic communities to hear Soviet communism described as a foreign enemy, this time in the form of Western ideas that the Russian people finally managed to defeat and expel, but in fact this storyline is by no means new. Indeed a nineteenth-century version of it can be found in the 'Demons' of Dostoevsky's novel, where alien ideas had invaded Russian society and had to be cast out in order to avoid a descent into nihilism and atheistic inhumanity.

Going back to the assumptions that underlie claims about collective DNA, what evidence is there that national narrative templates are immutable, or at least very resistant, to change? The comments I have made about the Russian case suggest that this narrative template has been in existence for some time, but other evidence from recent events is equally telling. Consider, for example, the fate of collective memory during the social and political transformation that accompanied the break-up of the Soviet Union. At the time, it was widely asserted that Russia was undergoing a deep political and cultural transformation, including its collective memory. The transition years witnessed a massive outpouring of new films, memoirs, history textbooks and other texts about the past, and much of it was devoted to refuting Soviet accounts that had held sway for decades. For example, instead of insisting that the Communist Party was the principal architect of the victory over fascism in the Great Fatherland War, post-Soviet history textbooks sometimes went out of their way to assert that it was *despite* the inept efforts of Party officials that the Soviet Union prevailed.[13]

Such assertions would have put their authors in prison, or worse, during earlier decades of Soviet rule, but with the break-up of the Soviet Union, these claims became commonplace. The fact that such discussions were part of everyday life in post-Soviet Russia led many to assume that the collective memory and national narrative were undergoing a fundamental transformation. However, a closer analysis reveals that the new specific narratives that appeared in this context did not reflect a shift in the underlying narrative template.

One of the most telling episodes of transition, or the lack thereof, can be found in accounts of the 'secret protocol' of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939. This protocol detailed the agreement between Stalin and Hitler to divide Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, Poland and Romania between the Soviet Union and Germany. Throughout the following

decades Soviet authorities steadfastly denied the existence of this protocol even though rumours about its contents surfaced in the West within weeks of the Pact's signing. It was only in 1988, after Soviet archivists had finally found the 'missing' document, that Mikhail Gorbachev acknowledged its existence.

People whose territory had been affected by this secret protocol naturally resented the unwillingness of Soviet authorities to admit to its existence. In their view, the refusal to deal with this episode was particularly telling because the debate was not only over lost territory but over the very nature of the Russian national narrative as an intellectual and emotional backbone of national identity. For decades people in places like Estonia argued in private that if Soviet authorities were forced to stop denying the existence of this protocol, they no could no longer cling to the view that theirs was a story of being victimized by foreign aggression and brutal occupation; they would have to recognize that, in some cases, they were also perpetrators. From this perspective, such an admission would challenge one of the most cherished and deeply held self-images of Russia, outlined here as the Expulsion of Foreign Enemies narrative template. This effort to turn the national narrative tables on Russia continues today in Estonia at sites such as the Museum of Occupation in Tallinn, devoted primarily to the decades of Soviet occupation that followed World War II.

During this era of social upheaval, there were, to be sure, some signal, though temporary, revisions and admissions. In Russian history textbooks, for example, this was a period of 'narrative rift',[14] where what had been a confident official story became halting and uncertain in face of challenges such as the existence of the secret protocol of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. However, this narrative rift was soon mended as the narrative template reasserted itself in state-sponsored official accounts of the past. For example, initial post-Soviet acknowledgements in Russian history textbooks that the Soviet occupation of Estonia was immoral and illegal disappeared in subsequent editions which organized the account around narratives like 'Stalin's Difficult Choice'. This amounted to revising the account such that it implicitly recognized the unfortunate consequences of annexing the sovereign territories of the other country, but asserted this was part of a necessary and larger strategy to save the world from fascism. This essentially mended the narrative rift that had arisen in the immediate post-Soviet period, making the specific narrative once more quite consistent with the Expulsion of Foreign Enemies narrative template.

The power of this Russian narrative template is not only evidenced in the interpretation of events from previous centuries, but in efforts to make sense of contemporary happenings. Consider, for example, Russian accounts of the August 2008 war with Georgia that emerged in its immediate aftermath. These accounts frame the conflict in such a way that ignores or rebuts Georgian claims that the Russian action was aggressive expansionism. They also dismiss claims that Georgia is some kind of laboratory for democracy as naïve, if not transparently dishonest. Instead, the Expulsion of Foreign Enemies narrative template was harnessed to present a picture in which the real agenda in Georgia was to create a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) outpost that could eventually serve as a site for launching aggression against Russia. From this perspective, the Russian incursion into the breakaway Georgian enclave of South Ossetia was an act of legitimate pre-emption against an aggressor, and also liberation for the Ossetian population, many of which indeed did side with Russia.

This perspective comes through loud and clear in statements made by Russian leaders and media at the time of the August 2008 war, statements that were motivated in part by attempts to provide 'spin' that would shape the way the conflict will be remembered in the future. As is often true in such cases, one effort at spin was in competition with another, in this case an effort by Georgian leaders and media, and these competing campaigns resulted in such different versions of the war that it is sometimes difficult to appreciate that the two sides are talking about the same event.[15]

For example, consider a comment by Vitali Churkin, the Russian ambassador to the United Nations (UN) at the time of the conflict. In a television interview for an American station on 12 August 2008, he stated that 'of course Russia was the victim',[16] something that would surprise Georgians and most Western observers, given the massive invasion of Georgian territory by Russian armed forces. Churkin, however, viewed the bombardment by the Georgian army of Tskhinvali on the opening night of the conflict as another instance in which a Russia that had been living peacefully and which had no intention of interfering in the affairs of others had been attacked without provocation.[17] Indeed, Russian President Vladimir Putin later drew concrete parallels between the opening bombardment of Georgian forces on 7 August and the opening of the German attack in the Great Fatherland War.

From the perspective of the national narrative template that Churkin, Putin and others were employing, the foreign enemy was actually much

larger than Georgia. Indeed, Georgia was taken to be just the tip of an iceberg of a NATO effort to surround Russia. According to this view, the roots of aggression extend back several years and include the support from Western countries and non-governmental organizations for the 'colour revolutions' in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, as well as more direct aggressive actions such as US plans for anti-missile defence systems in Poland and the Czech Republic. The fact that these claims are met with incredulity in the United States does nothing to reduce the certainty with which they are held in the Russian mnemonic community.

Perhaps an even more striking example of the power of the Russian national narrative template to shape interpretation of contemporary can be found in an episode that occurred a few weeks after the August 2008 war with Georgia. The internationally acclaimed orchestral conductor Valery Gergiev, a Russian citizen of Ossetian descent and director of the Mariinsky Theater in St Petersburg, organized a performance in Tskhinvali, the bombed out capital of South Ossetia. He announced to those in attendance, as well as to the much larger audience watching the live broadcast on Russian television, that he had come 'to see with my own eyes the horrible destruction of this city', and he went on to say, 'I am very grateful as an Ossetian to my great country, Russia, for this help [in repelling Georgian aggression]'.[18]

The centrepiece of the evening was Dmitri Shostakovich's 7th 'Leningrad' Symphony, which had premiered in December 1941, a few months after the German Siege of Leningrad began. For Russians and for many others this sombre and triumphal work remains one of the sacred instruments for commemorating both the darkest hours and eventual victory in the Great Fatherland War. The Leningrad Blockade lasted until January 1943, resulting in the death of over one million Soviet citizens. Not surprisingly, it remains a major chapter in the heroic story of the Soviet victory in that titanic struggle and one of the most important modern instantiations of the Expulsion of Foreign Enemies narrative template.

The 2008 conflict between Russia and Georgia was, of course, much, much less momentous. Indeed, it is referred to as the 'Five-Day War' because of its short duration; the total Russian and Georgian deaths numbered around 700. Presumably, Gergiev's intent was not to suggest that the scale of the Five-Day War was equal to that of the Siege of Leningrad, and others have noted that his performance echoed the 'exaggerated claims of Russian leaders that the Georgian shelling [on the first evening of the conflict] was a genocidal war crime'.[19] Nonetheless,

the fact remains that Gergiev and others saw Shostakovich's Leningrad Symphony as an appropriate lens through which to view the Five-Day War with Georgia, a comparison that reflects the workings of the Russian Expulsion of Foreign Enemies narrative template.

When considering such examples from the Russian mnemonic community, it is worth keeping in mind that the general processes that I have outlined occur everywhere in the world. As such, there is, in this regard, nothing special about the Russian case. Instead, it is an all too common reflection of what Jan Assmann terms the 'mono-perspectival, ethnocentric, and narcissistic'[20] orientations of national narratives. The narcissism involved is not so much a matter of selfishness – indeed many national narratives are organized around themes of how selfless the collective is, how much it has sacrificed to save other groups, or even humankind from some terrible fate. Instead, it is a kind of cognitive ethnocentrism that stands in the way of understanding the power and legitimacy of other national narratives. In extreme cases, the result may be what Thomas de Waal has termed 'sealed narratives'[21] such as those behind the frozen conflict between Azeris and Armenians in Nagorny Karabakh.

Properties of narrative templates

Up to this point, I have emphasized the generalized, schematic nature of narrative templates, which is precisely what lies behind their capacity to be used to generate multiple specific narratives. Indeed this pattern of wide application can sometimes even be extended to multiple mnemonic communities. For example, with references to 'Russia' taken out, the Expulsion of Foreign Enemies narrative template might appear to some to apply to Georgia! But this is something that would strike both Russians and Georgians as ridiculous, if not offensive. There is obviously something that limits the possibilities for generalization, something that makes it impossible for most Georgians and Russians to say that their two mnemonic communities are based on the same general story. This limitation comes from a tendency of narrative templates that operates in opposition to their penchant for wide applicability, a tendency towards ethnocentric particularity. In Jan Assmann's words, a 'national narrative tells us who "we" are by telling the story of "our" development, our past and our becoming'.[22]

This ethnocentric particularity stems from forces that characterize most national narratives. Specifically, members of mnemonic communities tend to assume: (a) that their national narrative template

applies exclusively to themselves and not to anyone else, and (b) the template is the one true story of their group, with no competing narrative template imaginable. These assumptions obviously set off one mnemonic community from another, even when they seem to share the same generalized schema of a storyline.

The upshot is that narrative templates are organized around a tension between two opposing poles: a proclivity for schematization and generalizability, on the one hand, and a tendency towards ethnocentric particularity, on the other. The latter is what lies behind often encountered claims about how 'our nation's history is unlike that of any other country'. This results in many nations' assertions that they are not only unique, but somehow more unique than anyone else. It also often lies behind claims about having a special, even messianic mission for humankind, claims that often are associated with a tendency to reject the legitimacy of others' perspectives and national narratives.

The claim that a national narrative template belongs exclusively to one group is tied to the second assumption that no alternative or challenger is allowable, or even imaginable. Once a narrative template is embraced by a mnemonic community, the idea that there might be legitimate alternatives, especially alternatives suggested by someone outside the group, is likely to be dismissed as heresy. For example, suggestions that Russia's actions in Georgia are part of a campaign of brutal occupation, rather than a chapter in the Expulsion of Foreign Enemies story, are not only rejected by members of the Russian mnemonic community as false, but viewed as hostile. Similarly, Kagan's suggestion that the basic story of America is one of aggressive expansionism rather than of a city upon a hill serving as a model of universal democratic values is surprising, indeed often offensive to many Americans.

In trying to understand debates over what the appropriate national narrative template of a country is, distinction between what Mink called 'narrative truth'[23] and what might be termed 'propositional truth' is useful. The latter is about the correspondence of statements with evidence in the form of archives or eyewitness accounts. For example, an argument over propositional truth could concern whether the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was dated 23 August 1939 (true) or 1 September 1939 (false). In contrast, an argument about narrative truth could be over whether Stalin's effort to create the secret protocol of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was part of an agenda of Russian aggressive expansionism or part of a wily, long-term strategy to defeat a foreign aggressor. In short, disputes over narrative truth are disputes over which underlying code is the right one for making sense of an episode

from the past, and this usually involves disputes over what the 'real' motives were for a particular action. Given that human motives are essentially inscrutable, such disputes involve a theory of truth grounded in coherence rather than correspondence.

Conclusion

Discussions of transitions – or the lack thereof – in collective memory often operate at cross purposes because we fail to differentiate between surface and underlying levels of analysis. Recent claims about collective DNA are suggestive in this regard. They point to the need to examine underlying codes that distinguish one mnemonic community from another and remain relatively fixed and immutable to evidence. I have outlined the implications of these assumptions in terms of how specific narratives differ from narrative templates. The latter are distinguished by the fact that they provide a common, schematic plot line that can be instantiated in multiple specific narratives.

A review of several instantiations of the Russian Expulsion of Foreign Enemies narrative template suggests that national narratives, at least in their underlying form, are highly resistant to change. For example, even in the face of what appears to be disconfirming evidence and even in the context of massive political and cultural transformation, the Russian narrative template has appeared to remain largely intact. Part of the reason for this is precisely their highly schematic, generalizable narrative form, something that makes them difficult to falsify. This property of non-falsifiability has been discussed by Smith in 2003 and, in the Russian case, it was reflected in phenomena such as the capacity to ignore and then overcome evidence about the secret protocol of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

If schematization and generalizability comprise one basic property of the Russian national narrative template, ethnocentric particularity is another, opposing tendency. This is characterized by a narcissistic perspective, which is undoubtedly another source of the resistance to change found in many national narratives. The seemingly paradoxical set of properties of this narrative template means that it is a flexible, yet very powerful cultural tool for co-authoring some very narcissistic and ethnocentric forms of thinking and speaking.

In my effort to outline the Russian national narrative template, I have presented its tendencies as the norm rather than the exception. Recognizing this might help us understand the tough odds that confront anyone trying to foster transitions in memory, and in the long run may

suggest new strategies for how to go about doing this. It might also lead us to search for counter-examples where the transition of memory seems to have occurred, and in this connection cases like Germany and Israel may be instructive. As authors such as Buruma[24] have suggested, Germany may be an interesting exception to the norm I have suggested and may contrast with countries like Japan when it comes to creating new national narratives about traumatic events from the past. And Israel provides what is perhaps the most complete and ambitious project of creating a national narrative for a state that only recently came into existence.

The more general point is that like many other cultural tools, national narrative templates can be used in positive and productive ways, on the one hand, but in some very deleterious and dangerous ways, on the other. It is the latter tendency that leads to the mnemonic standoffs and sealed narratives that contribute to human conflict, and one of our tasks to find better ways to recognize and escape the dangerous paths down which they lead.

Notes

1. Robert Kagan (2006), *Dangerous Nation* (London: Atlantic), p. 2.
2. Faereed Zakaria (2008), *The Post-American World* (New York, NY: Norton), p. 157; David Brooks (2009), 'The Winnable War', *New York Times*, 26 March 2009, p. 2.
3. Aladaire MacIntyre (1981), *After Virtue. A Study in Moral Philosophy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2nd edition 1984).
4. Louis O. Mink (1978), 'Narrative Form as a Cognitive Instrument', in Robert H Canary and Henry Kozicki (eds), *The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press), pp. 129–49; Jerome Bruner (1990), *Acts of Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
5. Jan Assmann (2006), 'Culture Memories and National Narratives: With Some Relation to the Case of Georgia', in James V. Wertsch and Zurab Karumidze (eds), *White Paper Report Prepared for the Georgian Ministry of Education.* Based on the working meeting 'Negotiating a new national narrative in Georgia', Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Conference Center, Bellagio, Italy, 1–5 August 2005.
6. For further details on this, see James V. Wertsch (2002), *Voices of Collective Remembering* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press).
7. Rogers M. Smith (2003), *Stories of Peoplehood. The Politics and Morals of Political Membership* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press).
8. Benedict Anderson (2002), *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso).
9. See Frederic C. Bartlett (1932), *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) and Bartlett and

Vladimir Propp (1968), *Morphology of the Folktale*, translated by Lawrence Scott (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press).

10. This distinction bears some resemblance to others such as that between 'explicit' and 'implicit' national narratives as outlined by Aleida Assmann, but it often draws from different theoretical traditions and has somewhat different implications. See Wertsch (2002); Aleida Assmann (2006), 'Checklist for a Georgian National Narrative', in James V. Wertsch and Zurab Karumidze (eds), *White Paper Report Prepared for the Georgian Ministry of Education,* p. 18.

11. Eviatar Zerubavel (2003), *Time Maps. Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press).

12. Bartlett (1932), p. 44.

13. See Wertsch (2002).

14. Wertsch (2009).

15. James V. Wertsch and Zurab Karmudze (2009), 'Spinning the Past: Russian and Georgian Accounts of the War of August 2008', *Memory Studies*, 2 (3), September, 377–91.

16. See http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/europe/july-dec08/georgiadeal_08-12.html, accessed 30 April 2009.

17. It is worth noting that his view also presupposes that Russian interests, if not borders, extend to the 'near abroad', given that South Ossetia was a part of Georgian territory, and still is according to every nation of the world except for Russia and Nicaragua.

18. Arthur Lubow (2009), 'The Loyalist', *New York Times,* 12 March 2009.

19. Ibid.

20. Jan Assmann (2006), p. 19.

21. Thomas de Waal (2003), *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War* (New York, NY: New York University Press).

22. Jan Assmann (2006), p. 19.

23. See Mink (1978).

24. See, for example, Ian Buruma (1994), *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan* (New York, NY: Farrar Strauss Giroux).

10

The 'Myth' of the Self: The Georgian National Narrative and Quest for 'Georgianness'

Nutsa Batiashvili

This chapter examines the emotionally charged debates in Georgia which have been unleashed by recent attempts to change how history is being written and taught. In December 2008, Simon Janashia, director of the National Curriculum and Assessment Centre at the Georgian Ministry of Education, gave a talk on the new history books at the Centre for the Study of the Caucasus and Black Sea Region (CBSR).[1] This presentation generated intense discussion and passionate responses. One historian teaching at the University of Georgia exclaimed; 'This is some kind of experiment that they are trying to conduct on Georgia...you are trying to raise global citizens and uproot patriotism in this country...that's what it is!' This type of impassioned response is typical for the debate on the new history textbooks. Critics are dissatisfied that someone else has a monopoly on the nature of collective memories which will be instilled.

The debate at the Centre shifted back and forth from this kind of general and abstract concern to more technical issues which were connected to the actual textbook itself. In general, listeners found it difficult to really understand who the historian was addressing with his complaints, and they had difficulties narrowing down what he was trying to say. As state projects tend to receive a negative response – this is more the rule than the exception – I was not really surprised at this criticism. However, I was curious about the line of reasoning behind this disapproval, about the specific grounds for this criticism and about the role of collective memory in all of this, as I wanted to know how history textbooks could cause such unsettlement.

One of the most interesting moments of the discussion came at the end of the meeting. In his closing remarks which outlined a general

concept of history instruction, Simon Janashia introduced the audience to a list of 'values' (*girebulebebi*) which he believed were integral for the school curriculum. There were eight points in total, but the top three items on his list included respect for human values and rights, empathy and care, and love for the homeland. For the disgruntled historian from Georgia, such ordering epitomized what 'the state project' was all about, as he felt that the hierarchy disadvantaged core Georgian values: 'This is exactly what I am saying', he exclaimed. 'How can you have "love of homeland" in third place?...So what?...We are getting rid of patriotism now?'

The speaker's level of astonishment made it clear to me that the issues causing concern here were not just about history teaching. There are a number of other problems bubbling under the surface, including: concepts of future citizenship, democracy, Georgian statehood and how the knowledge and collective memory of Georgian identity impact upon how people imagine the country's changing future. Discussions on the history books tend to centre on political ideological issues rather than on how history should be taught to children.

When the new Western-oriented government came to power in Georgia after the peaceful revolution in 2003, they embarked on an educational reform which not only intended to modernize and enhance the educational system, but also to eliminate deep-rooted corruption.[2] This broader context of change and transformation has provoked widespread public criticism of state-directed educational projects. Critics have treated these changes as a threat to the 'value of knowledge', highlighting that standardizing examinations may actually distort ways of knowing. Focusing on Georgian literature and history, these critics raise concerns about protecting the 'language we speak' (language and literature) and the 'memories of who we are' (history), two elements which are considered essential components of Georgianness (*qarTveloba*). From this perspective, culturally valued knowledge is not about guaranteeing universal intelligence or analytic skills; instead, it provides culturally specific knowledge about the group. Read in the frame of this wider discourse on cultural knowledge, the university historian's objections to Janashia's speech gain a new dimension, as he questioned what Georgians need to know, what form this knowledge should take in order to be passed on to future generations and, finally, who should have the right to decide what is imparted and transmitted.

In my opinion, these two discourses are interrelated; the historian's response picks up on deeper issues, but Janashia's project seems to actually be designed to respond to these issues. Thus, this entire discursive

encounter reflects what Mikhail Bakhtin calls hidden dialogicalism. This implies a chain of texts that is, in this specific case, not only addressed to Janashia, but which is part of a 'generalized collective dialogue'.[3] This chain is constructed as a response to another chain of texts circulating within the community. The logic and the arguments on both sides are mediated by cultural frames that make things conceivable in a certain way. The hidden dialogue bears a relationship not only to the specific subject matter under discussion, but it indexes larger frames of cultural cognition. These frames are linguistically and semantically embedded formulas for conceiving Georgian history and politics. They are what Maurice Halbwachs calls 'collective frameworks of memory [that] do not amount to so many names, dates, and formulas, but truly represent currents of thought and experience within which we recover our past . . .'.[4] As outlined here, these frames are fundamentally characterized by the sort of dialogic organization proposed by Bakhtin. While shaping the imagination of the past, collective frameworks also operate as social matrixes which cultural, social and political meanings are woven into. As such, they do much more than recover the past; they mediate collective imaginaries of the future and quite frequently shape how we respond to ongoing events.

By introducing this brief but tense encounter between Janashia and the university historian, I want to highlight the deep-rooted beliefs and forms of thinking which underlie almost every debate in Georgia and which stem from the memories of Georgia's past. Furthermore, I want to illustrate how collective memory is both represented in and articulated by the national narrative which mediates how the group conceives of itself in the present. This means that the purview of these frames is not limited to representing the past. It extends to symbolizing collective selves, addressing theoretical questions about emotional dimensions that are usually characteristic of narrative tools. For example, how can something that is supposedly a *practical tool* for organizing information arouse such passions? Ernest Cassirer's reflections on the nature of symbolic forms provide an interesting starting point for this analysis. Cassirer's philosophy examines how humans produce 'self-contained communities of meaning',[5] while creating the objective world. I am particularly interested in his view that symbolic systems become much more than practical mechanisms while serving as interpretive tools; these systems come to represent human efforts at self-expression or self-conception. In his essay 'Language and Myth', Cassirer introduces myth as a special mode of human thought which not only transforms reality by representing it through a certain prism, but which is also

impregnated with self-expressive emotions. One of his ideas which leads into the mode of mythical thinking is that the human mind is not necessarily concerned with facts. Its 'prime talent' is not 'discursive reason'; instead, 'language is born of the need for emotional expression'.[6]

Following Humboldt's notion of 'inward form of language', Cassirer explains that linguistic conception – naming objects, endowing significance – comes from the same process as mythic ideation. Language and myth share the ability to give names and, by that process, to endow significance to objects in the world. However, as Cassirer highlights, 'the name is never a symbol but is part of the personal property of its bearer, property which must be carefully protected'.[7] A similar line of reasoning is applied to his characterization of mythical conception:

> The mythical form of conception is not something superadded to certain *elements* of empirical existence; instead, the primary 'experience' itself is steeped in the imagery of myth and saturated with its atmosphere. Man lives with *objects* only in so far as he lives with these *forms;* he reveals reality to himself, and himself to reality, in that he lets himself and the environment enter in this plastic medium, in which the two do not merely make contact, but fuse with each other.[8] (Original emphasis)

Here, we can see some of the principal tenets of Cassirer's philosophy. He emphasizes that myth as a symbolic form is an essential part of human existence; it is an instrument that mediates our relationship with the external world. The only way that symbolic systems, or what Cassirer calls 'plastic mediums', can achieve this mediation is through embodying or fusing human experience – a human's self – into its form and structure.

Following Cassirer's line of reasoning, I argue that, as forms of *mythical thinking*, narrative modes of collective remembering take the linguistic and symbolic form that he believed represented a symbolically 'objectified' or 'externalized' self. This allows me to examine the relationship between Georgia's national narrative, something that also corresponds to Cassirer's notion of myth, and the concept of 'Georgianness' – a collective effort at self-imagining that is frequently deployed or implied in public or private discourses. Secondly, it allows me to explore how and why these two important aspects of Georgian culture – the national narrative and ideas on characteristics inherent to Georgians – shape modes of thinking and define the emotional character of debates and discussions such as history textbook debate.

The Georgian national narrative: a constant but thwarted attempt to return to the 'Golden Age'

Having studied numerous political discussions and conversations, as well as textbooks and media sources in Georgia, I have identified three main frames which are generally employed to contextualize trends in Georgian history. Depending on the topic of discussion, people may refer to one or more of the following:

(a) Georgia's ceaseless effort to reintegrate its historic territories into a powerful state. The precedent for this existed during the Golden Age between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. History is read here as a series of repeated attempts that are thwarted by the appearance of a 'new enemy'.
(b) Georgians' ability to preserve national culture, namely, language, religion (Orthodox Christianity) and national identity, despite the fact that external enemies persistently try to defeat and culturally assimilate Georgians. From this perspective, encounters with the external world endanger Georgian statehood and national traits constituting 'Georgianness'.
(c) Georgians have been able to resist their enemies and preserve their culture because of their innate characteristics which make them irreconcilable to external domination.

These frames are meaning structures that constitute narrative templates, serving as mechanisms that underlie representations of the past. The notion of a narrative template has a lengthy history beginning from the writings of Frederic Bartlett on 'schemata' to the studies of Russian formalist Vladimir Propp (1975). More recently, Wertsch has argued that collective memory should be conceived as a form of mediated action. Building on Bartlett, Wertsch emphasizes the active processes that remembering involves. Proposing that collective memory or the narrative organization of history should be subjected to a two-level analysis (see chapter 9 in this volume), he reintroduces the notion of a schematic narrative template as a cultural tool that mediates processes of collective remembering.

Three of the themes already outlined make up central aspects of Georgia's national narrative template. As an interpretive cultural tool, the national narrative is not a linear text which can be read in one way only. Instead, it provides different platforms from which we can view the past. If we take the example of the attempt to integrate Georgian

territories, we can see that the narrative is generally marked by the following features:

1. 'Trouble' in the form of a 'new enemy' appears to thwart this movement. The external threat is supported from within by internal collaborators (traitors).
2. Georgians manage to maintain their cultural values (especially language and religion) through steadfast resistance to external domination and acts of individual martyrdom; they free themselves of enemy domination.
3. Once this domination is removed, efforts to reintegrate territories are once again initiated.

Typically, Georgians employ this kind of schematic formulation of the past in political discussions or when they are trying to analyse ongoing events such as the Russian-Georgian War of 2008. Indeed, the same template of external intrusion may also be used when considering the West's intervention in Georgia's political matters. Writing on the psychology of 'implicit theories' in 1989, Ross suggested that schematic templates are not 'readily available to consciousness'.[9] Bartlett made a similar claim in relation to 'schemata'. To put it succinctly, these templates allow Georgians to formulate Georgian events similarly. In cases like the history textbook debate just outlined above, where the claims made were based on this narrative template, participants may not have been consciously aware that the narrative provides them with a framework within which they formulate and justify their arguments.

The narrative is not only schematic, it is also plastic. It can 'stretch out' like rubber and mould itself to the many contexts in which it is harnessed. In so doing, it reveals some elements that are not evident in the simple formulation, but which continue to maintain features necessary for narrative structure. In particular settings, people may emphasize some aspects of the narrative template while downplaying others; certain discourses highlight Georgia's unavoidable destiny to struggle with a powerful enemy, while others emphasize the element of internal collaborators – traitors. There are also instances where this narrative template evolves into an almost triumphalist story, accentuating the Georgian ability to endure centuries of assaults and invasions and to somehow survive, while preserving their cultural essence.

The variations on the basic themes of collective memory often depend on the general setting in which it is articulated as well as on the purpose and motivation of the presenter. Narratives are typically devised to

make a point or to put up an argument. In such instances, they are constructed as a response to somebody else's words and reveal what Mikhail Bakhtin calls the addressivity of a text.[10] When Georgians present themselves to the world or engage in self-reflection in response to foreign impulses, they emphasize the antiquity of Georgian culture and history, the importance of its geographic location and its beautiful landscapes and nature. This is clearly shown in the following passage from the preface of a history textbook (7th–10th grade) which was published in Soviet Georgia in 1974:

> The historical development of the Georgian people took place on the territories that it currently occupies ... it is part of Caucasia that connects Europe to Asia .... Rich and diverse is the nature of Georgia ... Georgia – one of the leading Soviet republics – is a country of a heroic past and a very old culture .... The Georgian people have gone through an extremely difficult and long path .... This book will tell us about the heroic past and present filled with many rich interesting events.[11]

It would be natural to assume that much has changed since 1974 and that things written under the strict censorship of the Soviet state would no longer apply to twenty-first century Georgia. Nevertheless, the image presented here is still commonly employed today, as virtually any Georgian website which features the country's profile documents. This can be seen in the following excerpt from a website produced and written by Georgians entitled 'About Georgia':

> The sea, mountains, desert, plain – this is the landscape of Georgia. Diverse is the nature of Georgians, defined by these contrasts. The history counting five thousand years and Christianity of fifteen hundred years reveals why Georgian nation is so unique. Georgian alphabet is one of the few existing in the modern world. The oldest writings in Georgian language is easily read and understood by modern Georgians without any translation (almost unprecedented).[12]

Although the general themes conveyed in these two passages are quite similar, contemporary accounts tend to prioritize the importance of Christianity and the Georgian language in cultural heritage over anything else. Georgia's geographically 'strategic' location is presented as part of the reason for the continuous assaults from external enemies; this is also a central constituent of the uniqueness of Georgian culture,

as is illustrated clearly on a site designed to provide investment advice for businessmen interested in the country:

> Archeological data points to the existence of the Neolithic culture in the territory of Georgia since 5000 BC till the Christian era. In the closing centuries of pre-Christian era Georgia's culture came under a strong influence of Greece from the west and Persia from the east. The adoption of Christianity as an official religion by King Mirian in 354 contributed to strengthening multilateral ties with Byzantium. Although Arabs invaded Tbilisi in 645, Georgia managed to preserve high degree of its independence, its language and religion. In 813 King Ashot established the Bagrationi royal dynasty which ruled until 1801.[13]

Most frequently, these history snippets are included to correct the general assumption made about ex-Soviet countries that they have only emerged because of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and that they did not exist as an independent state before this. The fact that all of the texts provided here (internet sites) were originally written in English, speaks to the assumption that they are intended for a foreign audience that operates according to particular presumptions and perhaps even prejudices, rather than for the native Georgians.

On his website about his 'homeland', Levan Zvambaia, a young man from the city of Kutaisi, notes:

> Georgia is one of the most ancient countries of the world. This millennium is the fourth in the history of Georgia.... Many great and tragic events occurred in this land during these centuries. Situated between the Black and Caspian Seas, right at the boundary of Asia and Europe, the crossroads of the world's commercial routes, at the junction of world's cultures and religions, Georgia attracted like a magnet many a conqueror. The century in and the century out waves of invasions and inroads rolled across Georgia.[14]

These stories are remarkable because they condense events that stretch over centuries into a few lines. What is included and what is omitted very much depends on the context, but the general storyline is retained throughout. Narrative can be applied to various settings by emphasizing one element or another. For instance, discussions of Georgia's struggle for territorial integrity are most frequently couched in terms of its longstanding effort to restore the might and glory of the eleventh–thirteenth

century Golden Age state. In my general formulation of the template, the struggle for territorial integrity is the primary force that drives Georgians. The Golden Age provides an image of an ideal state that is generally assumed to have been part of the Georgian agenda since the beginning of time. While acting as a reminder of greatness, it represents a state of normalcy, a realization of Georgian potential, or a triumph of the true Georgian nature and essence. It is not simply a story of success, but a story of 'who we *truly* are'. As Aleida Assmann highlights 'the myth of a golden age . . . acquires the status of a normative past that reminds and admonishes a nation of its former greatness'.[15]

The movement towards the 'state of normalcy', or, in the Georgian case, a realization of this true self, is understood to be constantly thwarted by external enemies and internal collaborators. Wertsch and Batiashvili have identified this narrative as 'foiled attempts to return to the Golden Age', suggesting an essentialist formulation of Georgian history.[16] Most of the history textbooks, even the ones from the Soviet era – it even may be more appropriate to say: *especially* the ones from Soviet era – 'presuppose an essential character of Georgian tribes leading toward a natural tendency of state formation'. The movement was set in motion when King Pharnavaz I founded the first Georgian state in the third century BCE. As one of the textbooks notes:

> . . . the period of Pharnavaz is the *beginning* of the long process of integrating the territories inhabited by Georgian tribes in a single state. . . . Henceforth, an integrated Georgian ethnocultural system was formed based on the political and economic organism founded in the Kingdom of Kartli (Iberia) founded by Parnavaz. (emphasis added)[17]

The textbook also notes that 'the long process of unification of the Georgian land was completed by David the Builder'.[18] This iconic figure rules the Middle Ages in Georgian collective memory (1089–1125). His significance has not diminished in twenty-first century Georgia. This Golden Age narrative has served as a national moral compass for defining political goals and weighing strategies in attaining them. Representing the 'state of normalcy' in Georgian imagination, this is a period where the Georgian culture thrived; it is marked by the development of literature and poetry, and the construction of monasteries and temples, alongside the emergence of democratic institutions.

Most Georgians assume that this is the most accurate account of their history. There is no doubt that Georgia has indeed had to endure a

number of assaults and invasions throughout the centuries. What is striking about the collective memory of these episodes is that they are all plotted using the same basic narrative template. By contrast, as I have noted elsewhere, 'from the perspective of formal history, each episode was unique in some way and involved a host of complex motives'.[19] Collective memory rarely acknowledges these differences; in this particular case, the narrative template reduces various invaders from different epochs into a single category of 'enemy'. Romans, Turks, Mongols, Arabs, Persians or Russians are merged into one category.

'Georgianness' and the world beyond it

There are two fundamental beliefs which arise from the 'reality' portrayed by the Georgian national narrative. Firstly, Georgian statehood is a natural phenomenon; secondly, the external world always seems to present some sort of threat. This is not necessarily a threat to Georgian statehood; instead it may be a threat to Georgian cultural values. Georgianness may be prioritized over the subscription to a particular political system, because as long as Georgia preserves its national identity through language and religion, the passage of time is inconsequential: Georgia will always be able to regain its state and territories. According to this logic, the Georgian state exists regardless of its current political status or the formal governance over its territories. This narrative emphasizes the dangers that ensue from contact with the external world, a criticism which was reflected in the arguments of the disgruntled historian at the outset. His statements imply that alien intruders in the Georgian cultural system may be more harmful than any threat to Georgian statehood. This world view is so powerful that it renders what some see as a benevolent 'West' – something that the Georgian nation is aspiring to become part of – into an alien force that can infiltrate and pollute cultural values. As a result, the notion of the West appears as a double-edged sword; it is something that will assist the Georgian effort of territorial reintegration; it could, however, simultaneously potentially damage cultural or even *spiritual* integrity. Ambivalence towards the West tends to be more implicit than explicit. It is doubtful that the historian was conscious of any convoluted logic when he said, 'this is some kind of experiment that *they* are trying to conduct on Georgia ... *you* are trying to raise global citizens and uproot patriotism in this country' (my emphasis). He was probably not even aware that he shifted between 'they' and 'you' because he knew that he was referring to the 'West' and to its agent, a 'Western-oriented' government in Georgia, respectively.

The logic on which his utterance rests is so deep-rooted and powerful that it does not necessarily require conscious awareness.

Mythologized views of the past obscure concrete details of what is happening on the ground; we are unable to see how the past differs from the present or to identify the role of community or even an individual (apart from a powerful monarch) in building a strong state. The conception of the new history curriculum, presented by Simon Janashia at the December seminar, was based on similar claims. He began by listing the kind of images and beliefs that (old) history textbooks produce. His slides employed all of the central aspects of Georgia's national narrative that I have outlined above. His speech indirectly implied that certain things needed to be revised if Georgian education is to be successful. However, his suggestions focused mainly on rethinking Georgia's place in the world; he suggested how to deal with images of an enemy, how to emphasize collaboration and not only self-defence and how to accentuate values of civil society, institutions and civil rights. Janashia did not suggest abandoning the idea of Georgia as a glorious state or Georgian culture, but, in the eyes of the critics, his project was somehow assumed to be part of the state's agenda of Westernization, epitomizing an 'experiment' to exterminate Georgian culture and its essence. These claims are not grounded in any kind of substantive evidence. Far from it, they reflect beliefs in an ever present external threat that is at the core of the national narrative.

What is even more fascinating is the fact that this case reveals a deep-seated fear that the Georgian culture will be destroyed and the Georgian essence polluted if the narrative structure of collective memory is changed. This suggests that narrative structures as symbolic means have an intrinsic value which is beyond their capacity to convey or represent something. As Cassirer notes, symbolic forms do not merely *represent* things, they *present* them. Symbols become the organs, inseparable parts of the objects they convey. To repeat Cassirer's own words, through symbolic forms man 'reveals reality to himself, and himself to reality, in that he lets himself and the environment enter in this plastic medium, in which the two do not merely make contact, but fuse with each other'.[20]

As I have outlined it, this debate illustrates that the dissatisfaction with the new history textbooks does not really stem from the textbooks themselves; instead, it stems from a more general sense of frustration about who holds the 'rights to history'. The underlying assumption is that deciding which past should be remembered will also determine

the future and the kind of Georgians that will become the products of this memory. In the debate which I have sketched, Janashia and the Georgian historian were both concerned with the type of Georgians which this process would produce rather than the knowledge which history teaching would impart; will they be either 'global citizens' or 'patriots'? Their concerns are based on an understanding of an essentialized Georgian nature which seems to be at stake if Georgian history is rewritten. The very term that people sometimes employ – 'Georgianness' (*qarTveloba*) – denotes some characteristic traits that are common to all Georgians; this is what makes us *us*. This notion of Geogianness is located at the intersection of past and future, it is embedded and embodied in collective memories and internalized by members of a collective. Any effort to reimagine Georgia's history, to rearrange its narrative could fundamentally transform its essence.

Although the term Georgianness can be heard in a number of contexts, it is related primarily to collective memories of a common past rather than to anything else. As a cultural concept, the history of the Georgian people is a product of this 'character' and, simultaneously, its structuring force or producer. The relationship between history and Georgianness (history as cultural construct, operative at an interpretive level) is convoluted and complicated.

As Jan Assmann notes, 'history turns into myth as soon as it is remembered, narrated, and used, that is, woven into the fabric of the present'.[21] Narratives as symbolic, linguistic forms exemplify the human tendency of mythico-poetic ideation. They are analogous to myth in selecting certain aspects of a group's social experience (what we call history) and endowing significance to certain events by giving them linguistic form. In essence, narratives are linguistic 'names' of certain aspects of a group's existence. They are names in a sense outlined by Cassirer, who wrote that a:

> . . . person's ego, his very self and personality, is indissolubly linked, in mythic thinking with his name. Here the name is never a mere symbol, but is personal property of its bearer; property which must be carefully protected, and the use of which is exclusively and jealously reserved to him.[22]

Myths are also linguistic/symbolic signs that name objects in the environment and define the relationship between these objects. In so doing, myth gives reality meaning. On an expressive or emotional level,

linguistic signs and their meanings make up an indissoluble expressive whole and the meaning-bearing matter of the sign is fused with the object.

Myths are not just a mere symbolic portrayer of man's surrounding reality, which includes a past experience in the case of national narratives; they also symbolize the human apprehension of values. As such, myth is more the story of human sentiment about the object it describes than an account of objects in the environment. Nevertheless, myths are not usually understood as images, but they are accepted as a reality that allows no criticism or doubt. As one of Cassirer's most insightful interpreters, Susanne Langer, argues:

> ...human beings actually apprehend *values* and expressions of values *before* they formulate and entertain *facts*.... All mythic constructions are symbols of value...they are charged with feeling, and have a way of absorbing into themselves more and more intensive meanings, sometimes even logically conflicting imports.[23] (Original emphasis)

In the Georgian context, the emotional dimension of national narratives as *mnemonic myths* is defined by how they shape a sense of Georgianness.

As a cultural concept, Georgianness presupposes a belief in the essential, inherent nature of Georgians and as such falls under the heading of a mythical construct for Cassirer. The concept of Georgianness and its non-rational (Cassirer's 'non-discursive'), but persistent mythical nature leads to attempts by Georgians to imagine some kind of collective self. In other words, it represents an attempt to find and articulate those commonalities of traits that characterize Georgian individuals, and, through that process, to make sense out of 'self'. It is an attempt to find meaning and to invest a single concept with all these meanings.

The significance and cultural value of this concept is manifested through collective memories and national narratives. The national narrative, or what in general discussion is referred to as 'our history', is the 'organ' of the concept of Georgianness, it is one of its symbolic expressions. As language, narrative also 'is essentially hypostatic, seeking to distinguish, emphasize, and hold the object of feeling rather than to communicate the feeling itself'.[24] This amounts to saying that narrative is a symbolic form that represents or conceives of the nature of collective selves – Georgian selves.

In my view, efforts to conceive collective self are driven by a desire to understand one's own past, but more frequently by the human attempt to define the situations they find themselves in. Reflections on *who we*

are relate past and present experience of the people in a way that lets them explain, rationalize and deal with whatever is happening now, globally, locally or existentially, which challenges the reality that people have to face. In so doing, a consistent pattern becomes culturally established in the public imagination that links the nature of the group to its past and present experience. In the Georgian context, this is usually manifest in public rhetoric surrounding the country's political matters. Attitudes tend to express the sentiment that 'we always end up like this, because of who we are, because of our character!'; the underlying assumption here is that there is a culturally accepted pattern which national narratives reveal.

Each culture has its own constellation of symbolic systems, especially myths that express the group's individuality and constitute ways of interacting with others. As such, national narratives are one of the dominant symbolic forms that shape our political perceptions and actions. A national narrative is a nation's autobiography, its attempt to understand its personality and life. It is an effort to make sense of what happened and project this understanding into the future.

Notes

1. The Centre for the Study of Caucasus and the Black Sea Region was launched in the summer of 2008, and its goal is to develop a network of scholars working in the area as well as to create a venue for interdisciplinary collaboration. For further information, see http://www.cbsr.ge, accessed 22 June 2011.
2. The reform intended first and foremost to fundamentally transform entrance examinations to higher education. This involved standardizing tests and applying changes to exam subjects.
3. James Wertsch (2005), 'Generalized Collective Dialogue and Advanced Foreign Language Capacities', *Plenary Paper for Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University).
4. Maurice Halbwachs (1980), *The Collective Memory* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, Harper Colophon Books), p. 64.
5. Deniz Coskun (2007), 'The Politics of Myth: Ernst Cassirer's Pathology of the Totalitarian State', *Law as Symbolic Form. Ernst Cassirer and the Anthropocentric View of Law* (The Netherlands: Springer), pp. 135–72, here p. 153.
6. Susanne K. Langer (1958), 'On Cassirer's Theory of Language and Myth', in Paul Schilpp (ed.), *The Philosophy of Ernest Cassirer* (New York, NY: Tudor), pp. 381–400, here p. 384.
7. Ernest Cassirer (1953), *Language and Myth* (New York, NY: Dover), p. 50.
8. Ibid., p. 10.
9. See James Wertsch (2002), *Voices of Collective Remembering* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press), p. 62.
10. See Tzvetan Todorov (1984), *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle. Theory & History of Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press).

11. Mikhail Meskhi and Valter Guchua (1974), *saqartvelos istoria History of Georgia 7–10 grades* (Tbilisi: ganatleba), pp. 3–4.

12. The website organizers are, as they state themselves, a 'small group, but with wide experience in sphere of Information Technology, [who] have decided to create a site About Georgia'. About Georgia Website, http://www.aboutgeorgia.net/about/, accessed 18 April 2009.

13. Investment Guide Website, http://www.investmentguide.ge, accessed 18 April 2009.

14. See http://georgia.iatp.ge/news.htm, accessed 18 April 2009.

15. Aleida Assmann (2005), *Checklist for a Georgian National Narrative*, White Paper Report Prepared for the Georgian Ministry of Education: 'Negotiating a New National Narrative in Georgia', p. 18.

16. See James Wertsch and Nutsa Batiashvili (in press), *Mnemonic Communities and Conflict*.

17. Mariam Lortkipanidze and Nodar Asatiani (2001), *saqartvelos istoria* (History of Georgia for 10th grade history instruction) (Tbilisi: cisartkela), p. 44.

18. Ibid., p. 67.

19. Wertsch and Batiashvili (in press).

20. Cassirer (1953), p. 10.

21. Jan Assmann (2005), *Cultural Memories and National Narratives with Some Relation to the Case of Georgia*. White Paper Report prepared for the Georgian Ministry of Education 'Negotiating a New National Narrative in Georgia', p. 14.

22. Cassirer (1953), pp. 49–50.

23. Langer (1958), p. 388.

24. Ibid., p. 386.

11
Memory Specificity Across Cultures

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Recent evidence suggests that culture can operate as a lens, bringing distinct aspects of one's environment into focus based on cultural priorities, values and experiences. Individuals from Western cultures tend to focus on that which is object-based, categorically related or self-relevant whereas people from Eastern cultures tend to focus more on contextual details, similarities and group-relevant information. For example, when asked to describe animated vignettes of underwater scenes, American descriptions focus on the prominent fish in the scene, Japanese participants, on the other hand, incorporate many more contextual details, such as the colour of the seaweed and water and the relationship of the fish to the other elements in the scene.[1] These different ways of perceiving the world suggest that culture shapes the ways in which individuals attend to and remember aspects of complex environments.

This chapter reviews the ways that culture can contribute to memory formation, in terms of its effects on both behaviour and neural function. The specificity of memory – that is, the details, organization and features of memories – offers a useful framework for considering how culture can shape memory systems. Given the limits on information processing capacity, the specific details encoded and retrieved in memory come at the expense of other details. Comparing the types of details and processes that individuals from one culture prioritize over others offers insight into the type of information given priority in cognition, perhaps reflecting broader cultural values. Furthermore, this chapter also examines some of the ways that bilingualism and linguistic ability affects memory.

To date, the field of Psychology has often treated human experiences and ways of interacting with the world as largely universal processes. Results from research studies conducted primarily in Western

locations, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Europe, were thought to extend to people from far-flung corners of the world, with few attempts to test this assumption. With the rise of the field of Cultural Psychology and the increasing globalization of research endeavours, the potential for cross-cultural differences in human behaviour and thought is receiving increasing consideration. In terms of human cognition and information processing, extensive experience in a culture may affect the type of knowledge acquired. It may direct attention to certain aspects of the environment, determine the types of details to be encoded into memory and convey strategies for processing and organizing information in memory and thought.

Memory seems to be a promising mode through which to measure the effects of culture on cognition. Specific details are encoded and retrieved in memory at the expense of other details. This trade-off helps to reveal what a culture most values and prioritizes through memory. Such an imprint of culture is possible because memory is a constructive process, meaning that memories do not exist as static, fixed representations of events that occurred in one's past. Rather, memory is dynamic and it can potentially be shaped and reshaped by the current motivations and goals of the individual. Culture may serve as a particularly potent aspect of the environment, contributing to one's life experiences and impacting upon one's perspective on the world. This lens through which one interacts with the surrounding world can be shaped by culture in terms of what information people attend to in the world around them, and how they reconcile this information with existing knowledge and schemas. Because information processing is limited, certain information from complex environments is necessarily prioritized at the expense of other information. In terms of memory, culture guides information processing by encoding, retrieving and even distorting specific details. One's culture may affect the types of memories one recalls and, furthermore, it may reveal the values and priorities of a culture for information processing.

Certain cultural differences in values and ways of perceiving the world have been identified, particularly in terms of the concept of self and the extent to which other people are considered to be interconnected with the self. Previous studies have shown that East Asians have a more collectivist culture; they devote more attention to the larger family structure or social group.[2] Their relationships and connections with other people who share close social bonds impact greatly upon their concept of the self. Those growing up in Western cultures, in contrast, are more individualistic; the self is considered to be a more

independent entity that exists apart from other individuals in the social network.[3]

Differences in social processes across cultures may impact on cognition and information processing. Evidence suggests that Easterners, including Chinese, Japanese and Koreans, tend to be more holistic in thought whereas Westerners, including Americans, Canadians and Western Europeans, tend to be more analytical. These aspects of culture can be traced back to the ancient Greeks for Westerners and to the more collective Chinese traditions for East Asians. Nisbett and colleagues propose that it was the societal organization of ancient Greek and Chinese civilizations that systematically shaped cognition in distinct ways that contribute to cognitive differences across Westerners and East Asians today.[4] Because of the complex nature of relations and roles across individuals, the Chinese were highly socially interdependent. This social organization meant that the Chinese 'would always have been looking outward, trying to coordinate their actions with those of others while minimizing social friction'.[5] The Greek social system was more independent, with fewer and less involved social relationships. As Nisbett and Masuda note: 'The independence of their lives might have given them the luxury of attending to objects in light of their personal goals in relation to them.'[6] On the basis of the divergent nature of these social relationships, Greeks adopted an analytic approach, emphasizing rules, objects and their features and categories. By contrast, Chinese adopted a more holistic approach, emphasizing relations between objects and the importance of the context in which objects are embedded. These differences in ancient cultures may have affected the organization of Eastern and Western cultures today.

Data indicate that East Asian participants generally do, in fact, pay more attention to the field and context. East Asians invoke the social context more than Americans when explaining the behaviour of an individual, mentioning the role of other fish when making attributions about the behaviour of a single fish.[7] For example, when shown an animation with one fish followed by a group of fish, East Asians were more likely to say that the group of fish was chasing the one fish, having the group cause the movement, whereas Americans were more likely to state that the single fish was leading the group, a more individual-oriented understanding of the scene. Even for contexts that are not so strongly social (for example, animations of fish swimming underwater), Japanese participants noticed and described the background more than American participants.[8] Furthermore, Americans are better able to ignore conflicting context when focusing on objects.[9] These studies serve as evidence

that members of East Asian cultures pay more attention to context than American participants, consistent with the idea that East Asians prioritize holistic processing.

This holistic information processing bias also carries over into the way that relationships are perceived between objects. When given several names of objects, Chinese participants tend to group by functional relationship instead of by category.[10] For example, when presented with the items 'squirrel', 'seagull' and 'nut', Americans tend to pair the squirrel and the seagull together because they are both animals (that is, they share a categorical relationship). East Asians, however, tend to pair the squirrel and the nut together, giving explanations that emphasize the functional relationship of the items – the squirrel eats the nut.

Evidence for cultural differences in memory

As described above, memory is a constructive process, meaning that it is malleable and can be shaped and distorted in fundamental ways. Culture may determine what information is attended to, encoded into memory and, ultimately, what is accessible for retrieval. Culture may also guide which details are stored accurately, as well as how the details are distorted. A memory specificity approach encompasses these potential influences of culture, determining 'the extent to which, and sense in which, an individual's memory is based on retention of specific features of a past experience, or reflects the operation of specialized, highly specific memory processes'.[11] Memory specificity states that one's specific past experiences affect an individual's current memory by determining which details are prioritized and included in memory. Such past experiences include the culture in which one was raised. In this section, we will review some of the evidence for cultural differences in memory, and we will conclude by discussing promising future directions.

One way in which cultural groups differ is in their memory for objects and contexts. After viewing animated vignettes of fish swimming underwater, Japanese tend to recall information about background detail, such as the seaweed and the colour of the water, more than Americans. Americans, on the other hand, describe the primary objects from memory (for example, one large fish and two small fish) without retrieving the contextual detail.[12] In a follow-up study, Masuda and Nisbett explicitly manipulated the presence of contextual information to test whether this differentially affected memory across the two cultures. After encoding a series of pictures of objects presented against meaningful backgrounds (for example, a wolf emerging from a forest),

Japanese and Americans were tested on their memory of the object (the wolf) when the original background had been removed and replaced by a blank white background. This removal of contextual information impaired the memory performance of the Japanese participants, but not Americans, suggesting that the memories of Japanese individuals are more context-dependent; in memory, objects are more strongly associated with their backgrounds.

Neural differences across cultures also indicate differences in memory for objects and contexts. Much of this work has used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), which is a non-invasive approach that allows one to make inferences about which parts of the brain are most active based on differences in the magnetic properties of oxygenated and deoxygenated blood. During an fMRI experiment, a series of images of the brain are acquired while a participant lies still in a magnetic resonance imaging scanner. The person performs tasks while looking at text or images projected on a screen and can press buttons to give their response to the information. For example, participants could view pictures of objects alone on a blank background, or pictures of objects placed in a meaningful context. Experimenters can later estimate which regions of the brain are more engaged during the encoding of objects with backgrounds compared to those without backgrounds, and then they can compare the magnitude of this difference across participants drawn from two cultural groups. In this example, those brain regions which show the largest response are more active due to the presence of a background. In this way, fMRI experiments can help to localize different brain functions to different areas of the brain.

Functional MRI experiments comparing Easterners and Westerners during the processing of object and context information reveal neural findings that are consistent with the behavioural results put forward by Masuda and Nisbett in 2001. Americans engage more object processing regions than Easterners when people encode complex scenes that contain both a focal object and meaningful contextual information.[13] The most robust cultural differences emerged in a part of the brain that responds to semantic information about objects. In background-processing regions, however, cultural differences were negligible. This is somewhat surprising, given that behavioural studies have suggested that East Asians may be attuned to context and Americans more attuned to objects. However, the finding of a cultural difference in the neural activity underlying object, but not background, processing converges with the results of another fMRI study. An additional paradigm employed to study cultural differences in object and background processing

capitalized on the property of neural regions to adapt with repeated use during a task. This means that a neural region that initially responds very robustly to a particular picture would adapt, or respond less, during subsequent presentations of the same picture. To separate adaptation responses to backgrounds from those to objects, the researchers created quartets of pictures where either the same background was repeated across all four presentations but the object was new, or vice versa (for example, the same object was repeated across all four presentations but the background was new). Quartets consisting of the same complete picture or entirely novel pictures were also included in the experiment for control purposes. First, without considering the role of culture, the researchers found that the lateral occipital complex (LOC), a region in the visual cortex that is particularly sensitive to object information, responds to repeated objects by showing greater adaptation when the object is repeated across quartets compared to when the object is not repeated.[14] A different region, the parahippocampal gyrus, which is in the medial temporal lobes and is particularly sensitive to scene information, adapts when backgrounds are repeated across quartets. When the role of culture is considered, cultural differences emerge in object-processing regions, in line with the previous finding from the scene encoding task.[15] Older Singaporeans show less adaptation, or change, in neural responses in object regions than those exhibited by older Americans. However, cultural differences are only pronounced for older adults; young adults exhibit similar neural responses across the American and Singaporean groups. The presence of cultural differences for older, but not younger, adults may indicate that the effects of culture on cognition are more pronounced when people are immersed in a culture for a longer period of time or are undergoing neurobiological changes due to ageing. However, it is difficult to rule out cohort-specific effects (cultural forces that affect only a constrained generation of individuals, with effects limited to a particular time and place). Due to the limited amount of research addressing cultural differences across age groups, particularly for older adults, additional studies are needed to better understand the ways that culture affects cognition across the lifespan.

   As these studies illustrate, fMRI holds great promise for the study of cultural differences because identifying the *location* of brain regions that exhibit cultural differences can indicate the types of processes that differ, constraining theories about the nature of cultural differences. These studies show that cultures seem to differ in object processing. This may not have been apparent through the use of solely behavioural measures,

which seemed to emphasize cultural differences in the processing of background context. Despite the differences in paradigms, participant groups and even in the specific neural regions that emerge in these two fMRI studies, the results suggest that the effects of culture operate in relatively lower-level perceptual and semantic processes. One might have expected cultural differences to emerge in the prefrontal cortex, a region subserving more higher-order processes. This pattern of cultural differences would have indicated that the lens of culture operates through much higher-level executive functions, which play a role in guiding attention, switching between competing demands and other effortful, resource-intensive processes. Such a pattern emerged in a study of cultural differences in attentional processes[16] but, to date, it has not emerged in studies of long-term memory. Thus, culture does not appear to shape the encoding of pictures containing objects and backgrounds by functioning as an attention-demanding lens; rather, culture shapes the engagement of more automatic perceptual and semantic processes.

Easterners and Westerners also differ in the extent to which they organize information by categories. Categorization can affect memory through its potential use as a strategy to organize incoming information and through its connection to rich stores of existing knowledge, which can provide multiple cues to aid in retrieving information from memory. One of the classic findings in Psychology is that people tend to spontaneously organize information by categories during recall.[17] For example, when presented with a list of randomly intermixed words, some drawn from the category of 'fruits', others drawn from the category of 'clothing' and others drawn from the category of 'animals', people tend to spontaneously cluster the words by category when recalling them from memory. They systematically retrieve the words one category at a time. To test the influence of culture on the tendency to use a category-based strategy in memory, Chinese and American participants learned lists of 20 words in which the items were drawn from four different categories. The words had been normed across both cultures to ensure that the items shared a similarly strong relationship to the underlying category across both Chinese and American cultures.[18] Participants then listed all of the words that they could remember; we assessed the amount of information recalled, as well as the order that information was outputted, according to categories. Results indicate that while younger adults did not differ across cultures in their use of categories, older Americans order the words they retrieved by category to a greater extent than older Chinese.[19] According to our interpretation, these results indicate that a greater absorption of culture over time may magnify cultural differences,

particularly when strategies are well practised and require little effort to implement, as could be the case for categorization.[20] Although age groups could cause differences in the strategies and information processing biases that culture conveys *within* a cultural group (the meaning of 'culture' could differ across younger and older adults), we maintain that our results likely reflect effects of ageing per se, as cross-cultural differences in the use of categories have been identified in a number of previous studies testing largely younger adults drawn from diverse cultural backgrounds. Thus, it seems unlikely that our older adult cohort would be unique in the way that they use categories, compared to younger adults.

Consistent with the differences in social systems across cultures, memory for self and others is another area in which cultural groups differ. As noted, Westerners tend to have a more individualistic orientation whereas East Asians adopt a more collectivist one.[21] These collectivist and individualistic orientations can affect the content of memory; this was demonstrated through the study of autobiographical memory, memory for one's personal experiences and history. In their autobiographical memories, Asians emphasize social interactions and contain more information about people compared to Caucasians, while Caucasian Americans tend to recall more individual, as opposed to more social, information than Asians.[22] Asians' memories, in turn, contain more information emphasizing social interactions and people than do Caucasians' memories. Culture affects both initial encoding processes in addition to the way in which memory is reconstructed upon retrieval. Cultural differences emerge early in child development, with autobiographical memory and self concept dynamically contributing to the construction of each other.[23] For example, cultural differences in childrearing practices influence the onset of autobiographical memory, with children raised collectively in reformed kibbutzim reporting later first memories than children raised in more individualistic settings.[24] This finding suggests that autobiographical memory is formed hand-in-hand with the development of the view of oneself as an independent entity.

The study of self and other also allows for another application of the concept of memory specificity, in terms of unique domains of memory. One example from the social domain is the distinction between self and other: thinking about oneself is vastly different than thinking about other people. The self is associated with memory enhancements, as well as patterns of errors, that do not characterize memories for other people.[25] Neuroimaging methods provide strong support for this

distinction by revealing that self-referencing engages a unique region of the brain, the medial prefrontal cortex, which is not engaged when referencing other people.[26] Moreover, engaging the medial prefrontal region during encoding is associated with subsequent recognition of self-referential information, suggesting that the region is implicated not only in thinking about the self, but plays a critical role in memory.[27]

Some evidence for cultural differences in the specificity of memory exists for the encoding of information in relation to the self or other. Americans treat the self as a unique and distinct domain; East Asians extend that domain to include close others. For the domain of the self, the construct is highly specific for Americans, but broader for East Asians. Recent work with fMRI provides converging neuroscience evidence that the relationship between self and others differs across cultures.[28] While both Westerners and Chinese differentiate self from distant, unfamiliar others, only Westerners differentiate self from close others (for example, mother). These differences also emerge in memory measures, with self-referenced adjectives better remembered than mother-referenced adjectives for Americans, whereas memory for both conditions is equivalent for Chinese.

Future directions

The brief review of cultural differences in memory establishes that culture can shape the type of information encoded into memory (for example, object versus context; self versus other), as well as the use of memory strategies such as categorization. Thus far, though, the research is limited, adopting an approach that emphasizes 'how much' information is accurately recalled rather than assessing the details and qualities of those memories. For example, types of details, whether perceptual or emotional, could be differentially emphasized across cultural groups. Memories can also be distorted by being overly general, consisting of gist-based, or general thematic information, without specific perceptual details. Remembering that one saw a bicycle, but not remembering the specific perceptual details such as its colour or the shape of the handlebars, is an example of an overly general memory. Preliminary data from our laboratory provide some support for the idea that specific details of memories can be encoded differentially across cultures. After encoding a series of perceptually detailed pictures, participants had to discriminate the previously studied picture from a very similar exemplar (for example, a picture of a strawberry ice cream cone versus a vanilla ice cream cone) on a memory test. This approach allows one to assess

how much perceptual detail is encoded into memory. Correct responses require more detailed visual information to be available (for example, the appearance of the ice cream) in order to distinguish the item from a conceptually similar one. On this task, American participants exhibited better memory for the perceptual details than East Asian participants.[29] This pattern is consistent with prior work by Nisbett et al. in 2001, suggesting that Americans are more feature-based and analytic in their information processing. This type of an approach, which emphasizes details, could also allow a better exploration of memory distortions and errors, in order to test whether information is systematically translated in memory so that it is more consistent with the values and goals of the individual. Such an approach may allow for more sensitivity in detecting cultural differences than one based on the amount of accurate information retrieved.

Another promising approach to the study of culture is a further exploration of cultural differences in autobiographical memories. Autobiographical memories include rich sensory, spatial, contextual, personal and emotional information, and engage a number of corresponding neural regions.[30] Given the complex and diverse types of information which is contained in autobiographical memories and the quantity of information that may be retrieved for these personal memories, there is abundant opportunity for some details and types of information to be prioritized over others. Moreover, contextual information, including social contexts, can comprise a substantial portion of autobiographical memories, and these are known areas of cultural differences.

The interplay between language and memory also is an important topic for further consideration. To some extent, language shapes thought, with some research suggesting that testing language can mitigate the extent to which cultural differences emerge in cognition.[31] In terms of preferences for category or relational strategies to organize information, East Asians who are tested in their native language sometimes exhibit larger cultural differences than East Asians tested in English, compared to Americans.[32] However, the overall pattern of cultural differences in preferred strategies extends across testing language for this task. These findings would likely extend to the domain of memory, with the language of presentation (for verbal information) or even the language in which the test is administered influencing the types of details remembered and the strategies used to encode information into memory. Furthermore, language is often an integral part of a culture, and studying how language affects memory will further our understanding of how culture affects memory.

It is also possible that the effects of language exert broader influences on memory for bilingual populations. Linguistic ability has been shown to affect many different cognitive functions. For example, it affects several functions which may have an influence on how one is acculturated, and may affect how one creates memories. Bilingualism affects cognition by increasing the amount of associated information that is available to an individual such that switching languages allows bilinguals to perform better on brainstorming tasks,[33] to exhibit heightened awareness of phonological structures and sounds,[34] and to be better at learning novel words.[35] However, bilingualism can also hamper cognition by increasing the amount of competing information that must be inhibited. For example, in the study of lexical retrieval, the ability to recall the meaning of a single word (to generate a synonym or antonym), and lexical access, the speed and ability to access one's vocabulary, appear to be poorer for bilinguals than monolinguals.[36] The second language is thought to interfere and cause slower reaction times in tasks requiring only one language.[37] When a word in one language is activated, the second (or third) language is activated as well, and the individual has to inhibit the other languages to focus on a single language. Interestingly, bilinguals' greater experience with interfering and competing information may lead to advantages in some domains when tasks require executive control, including task switching, working memory and inhibition control. Due to their experience in focusing on only one language and inhibiting other languages when speaking, bilinguals can be better able to resolve various types of response conflicts.[38]

In terms of the advantages of bilingualism in memory, research thus far is largely confined to the topic of working memory, as opposed to long-term memory which has been the focus of our review. Working memory is comprised of the information that one is holding in mind and currently thinking about at any given moment. This includes the active manipulation and monitoring of information.[39] Inhibition control is used in working memory to focus only on certain items and to keep other items out of working memory. Executive control in working memory directs one's attention to certain items while directing one's attention away from other items. Bilinguals are believed to have higher levels of working memory due to their experience inhibiting one language any time another language is used.[40] However, this finding is not conclusive, as other studies have found similar working memory abilities between bilinguals and monolinguals.[41] Inhibition should also contribute to long-term memory, with a role in memory retrieval through focused selective attention. When one is retrieving a memory,

one first activates a category of memories then inhibits the items other than the specific desired memory. Therefore, the retrieval of one piece of information causes inhibition of similar pieces of information that do not need to be recalled at that time.[42] Stronger inhibition control therefore can enable a greater retrieval of the correct memories at the cost of inhibiting similar memories in the future, which would suggest that bilinguals should have an advantage for long-term memory tasks requiring greater inhibition of related information. We are currently conducting research to address the potential advantages of bilingualism for long-term memory when there is competing information. The study of linguistic ability and memory builds upon previous research on culture and memory to further our understanding of how the different aspects of culture, be it language or cultural values, affects how one codes and processes memories.

Summary

Although the study of cross-cultural differences in memory is in its infancy, initial results suggest ways in which culture affects not only the content of what is stored in memory, but also differences in memory strategies that impact the organization of and access to information. Future work can extend into richer domains of memory, using more nuanced measures to assess the qualities – both accurate and inaccurate – that have been incorporated into representations in memory. Culture has the potential to be studied in a variety of ways focusing not only on Eastern and Western differences, which has been the emphasis of research so far. Rather, cultural differences can also emerge within a nation based on subregions, linguistic differences and subpopulations. Importantly, culture is a mutable construct; even priming different aspects of one's culture or identity, such as collectivism or individualism, can lead individuals to behave in a culturally proscribed manner to a greater or lesser degree.[43] Thus, the study of cultural differences in memory holds great promise as a window into the ways that people view the world and organize the information they encounter around them, based on their cultural experiences.

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