

# Media Development

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WACC



*taking sides*

## EDITORIAL

In *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, the headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Professor Albus Dumbledore, makes use of a 'pensieve' to delve into an incident in the past. It is a receptacle for storing memories that float in limbo until they are needed: a human external memory device.

By means of the pensieve, wizards are able to extract their own or another person's memories, keep them safely and analyse them later. This enchanted (and enchanting) technology can also be used to relieve mental overload – which would be extremely useful in today's information-saturated societies.

We need not take too seriously the fantasy world of Harry Potter. But who would not like to own such a device? What if one could review one's childhood memories or some other moment in time? What if sufferers of Alzheimer's disease could recover their lost memories?

For some years scientists have been studying silicon chip implants that mimic the hippocampus, an area of the brain known to play a key role in the formation of memories. If successful, such a device could replace its biological counterpart, enabling people who suffer from memory disorders to regain part of their lives.

Public (or collective) memory is different. Public memory is enshrined in the mythologies of nation and empire building, and in systems of social organization and control. Such symbols, records, and social structures of dependence serve to reinforce identity and allegiance.

A nation's collective memory is also preserved in its cultural heritage, its language and religion, its educational curricula, and in the memorials it erects. The mass media are also repositories of public memory, constrained by the political economy of ownership and control, the ethics of editorial decision-making, and journalistic principles of fair and balanced coverage.

How reliable are the mass media's stories and images of yesterday let alone of the more remote past? Only by rigorously cross-checking different sources of public or cultural memory might one reach a point that is reasonably balanced and accurate – an exercise in triangulating memory's ever shifting terrain.

This, of course, is the essence of positive revisionist history (rather than its negative counterpart, in which one must beware the hidden agendas of politics, ideology, class, gender, and religion.)

The notion of a right to memory is, therefore, fraught with difficulty. Whose memories are being sought? How are they to be (re)constructed? How can their veracity, integrity, and credibility be guaranteed? And, in today's information-sharing societies, what are the relationships between the right to memory, the right to information, and the right to communication?

In Cambodia, a cultural unwillingness not to speak ill of the past is confronted by the extreme discomfort of survivors of the Pol Pot regime that killed 1.7 million (one sixth of the population). While the Cambodian government pursues reconciliation based on the political expediency of amnesty, the people's right to

communicate their stories stands precariously on their inability to recover the truth of what happened.

In Uruguay a freedom of information law passed in 2008 provides the legal framework for public access to a vast quantity of secret state information pertaining to the country's military dictatorships. The law clearly stipulates that there can be no restrictions when it comes to investigating violations of human rights.

In South Africa, after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission had completed its work, the essential question was how to generate the will to form restorative relationships that could tackle resentment, bring economic restitution, and forge new political structures that were just and equitable. Restorative relationships require coming to terms with memories that others might wish to forget.

In this respect, a litmus test for a right to memory is how it might be used to transcend traumatic events in ways that overcome hatred, fear, guilt, and revenge. How might a right to memory contribute to a more peaceful and sustainable future?

And a litmus test for political, social and cultural responses to the questions at the heart of public memory is how critical and balanced they are when issues of power, privilege, and impunity haunt the present. As Paul Ricoeur has pointed out,<sup>1</sup> 'The duty of memory is the duty to do justice, through memories, to another than the self.' ■

### Note

1. *Memory, History, Forgetting*, by Paul Ricoeur. The University of Chicago Press, 2004, p. 89.

# Towards a right to memory

Philip Lee

*'History is not mute. However much they burn it, however much they break it, however much they lie about it, human history refuses to shut its mouth. Time past continues pulsating, alive, within time present, although time present doesn't wish it or doesn't know it. The right to remember does not figure among the human rights consecrated by the United Nations, but today it is more than ever necessary to claim it and put it into practice: not in order to repeat the past, but in order to avoid it being repeated'* (Galeano, 1998: 216).

Memory enables and loss of memory disables. Aristotle thought of human beings as the 'animal possessing speech', but they are also the 'animal possessing memory' – the personal and social memories that structure their lives. While losing one's sight or hearing is a misfortune, loss of memory, occasioned by accident or disease, is a deeply personal tragedy. Equally tragic is the loss of memory of a collectivity such as a community or civilization.

Memory is defined as both the ability to recover and the process of recovering information and knowledge. It can be divided into short-term and long-term memory. Short-term memory retrieves recent events, while long-term memory recalls the more distant past. Memory is 'essentially that property, shared by a large number of living organisms, of storing information about past experiences so that these can be acted on later to improve the animal's chances of survival' (quoted in Smith, 1984: 167).

If survival were the sole criterion, human memory would still be astonishing, but life as we know it would be inconceivable without it. Each and every person learns and applies language and has the ability to recognise hundreds of faces, locations, sounds, and smells. We can usually tell if we have

met someone before, been to a place before, seen a film before, or read a book before. Memory is essential to maintaining personal and social identity.

Neuropsychologist Alexander Luria wrote a case study of a soldier called Zasetzky wounded during the Second World War, who lost his ability to remember and who had to write down his thoughts and experiences in order to reconstruct his lost self. Zasetzky had suffered a bullet wound that severely damaged that part of the brain essential to making sense of the world, i.e. the combining of discrete bits of information to make a whole which can then be understood. He had no visual field on the right side and his left vision had gaps in it.

Initially, Zasetzky had no thoughts or memory at all, but gradually some things returned although not in the order expected. He began to remember his early childhood; images would flash in front of him but he could not recall them when he wanted to. He could not remember words – recognizing objects but not their names. As Luria described the dilemma:

'His only material consisted of fragmentary recollections that came to mind at random. On these he had to impose some order and sense of continuity, though every word he recalled, every thought he expressed, required the most excruciating effort... Writing was his one link with life, his only hope of not succumbing to illness but recovering at least a part of what had been lost' (Luria: 1987: xix-xx).

Remembering is seen as a virtue, but there may be circumstances in which forgetting is not only preferable but salutary. The Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges, in *Funes el Memorioso* (1942), relates a real-life encounter with a teenage boy who loses his ability to walk after a fall from a horse. The boy suddenly acquires total recollection. He remembers, for example, the shape of clouds at any given moment, as well as the perceptions associated with that moment. In order to pass the time, Funes engages in projects such as reconstructing a day's worth of past memories (an effort which, he finds, takes him another full day), and building a 'system of enumeration' that gives each number a different, arbitrary name.

According to the narrator, Funes was incapable of dealing with generalities or abstractions



*The Memorial to the Murdered Jews in Europe lies in the heart of Berlin, Germany, close to the Brandenburg Gate. It comprises 2,711 concrete stelae laid out in a 'garden of remembrance'. Designed by Peter Eisenman it was completed in 2005. (Photo: Édgar Rubio).*

and his world was one of intolerable details. He found it very difficult to sleep, since he recalled 'every crevice and every moulding of the various houses which surrounded him.' One is reminded of those few autistic savants (around 10% of people with autism according to the Autism Research Institute) who are brilliant mathematicians, linguists, or artists. Both Luria's case-study and Borges's short story illustrate Sue Campbell's observation that: 'Human memory is self-representational. It secures our identities, is at the core of our practices of responsibility, and is the basis of our sense of temporality' (Campbell 2008: 41).

If the inability to forget is problematic both for individuals and societies, imposed political, social, or cultural amnesia must be considered deliberately injurious and, in terms of human rights, unjust. One particularly insightful essay identifies a basic typology of forgetting, some aspects of which have

largely negative or detrimental, and others positive or beneficial, implications (Connerton, 2008).

The seven kinds are 'repressive erasure' (obliteration, destruction, editing out); 'prescriptive forgetting' (erasure that is believed to be in the best interests of all parties); 'forgetting that is constitutive in the formation of a new identity' (forgetting is not a loss but a gain that facilitates new beginnings); 'structural amnesia' (the tendency to forget links that are socially undesirable); 'forgetting as annulment' (flowing from a surfeit of information, discarding or storing vast quantities of information); 'forgetting as planned obsolescence' (discarding as a vital ingredient of consumerism); and 'forgetting as humiliated silence' (collusive silence brought on by a particular kind of collective shame).

Connerton describes his typology as work in progress. Two of his types are important to the formulation of a right to memory both for individuals

and for collectivities. They are ‘repressive erasure’ and ‘prescriptive forgetting’, usually carried out by States, governments, and ruling parties. We shall return to these types later, but first we should look at what is generally understood by collective memory.

### Collective or social memory

‘Collective memory’ is an umbrella term that shelters diverse socio-cultural practices and structures such as myths, monuments, historiography, ritual, conversational remembering, configurations of cultural knowledge, and neuronal networks. It has been critiqued as merely transferring concepts from individual psychology to the level of the collective, yet it is a concept that helps to identify functional, analogical, and metaphorical relationships between phenomena such as ancient myths and the personal recollection of recent experience.

Collective memory has been provisionally defined as, ‘The interplay of present and past in socio-cultural contexts’ (Erll, 2008: 2). It comprises ‘social memory’ (the starting point for memory research in the social sciences), ‘material or medial memory’ (the focus of interest in literary and media studies), and ‘mental or cognitive memory’ (the field of expertise in psychology and the neurosciences). All three dimensions are implicit in the construction of cultural memory and all three share porous boundaries.

In *De Memoria et Reminiscentia* (350 BCE) Aristotle distinguished between sense perception and memory to assert that ‘memory relates to the past’. Philosophers and sociologists had no reason to quarrel with this view, which has been explored in magisterial depth by Paul Ricoeur (2004) and, in the context of the 20th century, both by Maurice Halbwachs (1925) and Pierre Nora (1984), pioneers in the field of memory studies. Recent scholarly thinking, however, proposes abandoning the dichotomy between history and memory in order to focus on ‘different modes of remembering’ in culture:

‘This approach proceeds from the basic insight that the past is not given, but must instead continually be re-constructed and re-presented. Thus, our memories (individual and collective) of past events can vary to a great degree. This holds true not only for *what* is remembered (facts, data), but also for *how* it is remembered, that is, for the quality

and meaning the past assumes’ (Erll, 2008: 7).

The reconstruction and representation of the past take place on different levels and within different frameworks. Individual memory stores up occurrences and incidents in the family and the home, in the school and local community, in the workplace and a person’s sociocultural environment. Memories acquire place – Pierre Nora’s *lieux de mémoire* – which can be intensely personal or talismanic, as well as moment – which may be less fixed and precise.

In contrast to individual memory, collective memory is usually formalised and ritualised, recording occurrences and incidents within the wider community or nation, but from the grander perspective of ‘history’ inflected by many different points of view, insights, prejudices and – occasionally – values such as impartiality, balance, and diversity. Collective memory varies over time and involves numerous different people, practices, materials, and themes, producing what may only be historical ‘shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded’ (Nora, 1989: 12).

Collective memory also encompasses a wide range of *products* (stories, rituals, books, statues, presentations, speeches, images, pictures, records, historical studies, surveys, etc.) and *practices* (reminiscence, recollection, commemoration, celebration, renunciation, denunciation, denial, rationalization, excuse, acknowledgement, etc.) It is a highly complex process or series of processes, none of which is entirely independent.

For some, collective memory is the heritage, patrimony, and national character that form the bedrock of a continuity of identities. For others, collective memory is manipulation and deception, a tool in the arsenal of power characterized as a politics of negotiation between the desires of the present and the legacies of the past. This suggests that power relationships always lie at the heart of the construction of memory whether within the family, community, nation, or between families, communities, nations.

The concept of historical memory is familiar, especially the official history and mythology of a nation or a community that justify its existence and its actions. Crafting history has been ‘standard practice’ from ancient times right up to the present and today there are many revisionist his-

torians anxious to set the record straight. As the character Mirek observed in Milan Kundera's novel (1979) and the 20th century has confirmed:

'The first step in liquidating a people is to erase its memory. Destroy its books, its culture, its history. Then have somebody write new books, manufacture a new culture, invent a new history. Before long the nation will begin to forget what it is and what it was. The world around it will forget even faster... The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.'

The first step on the road to restitution is to resurrect or rehabilitate a people's memory. In Latin America, where pre-Columbian civilizations and contemporary nations that suffered dictatorship have been deprived of public memory, this process has become known as *reivindicación de la memoria*. The problem is that memory is fragile. The extent of that fragility depends on the historical time-frame, the political and sociocultural context, and the motives and susceptibilities that prompt resurrection, recollection, and rehabilitation.

### Obstacles to rehabilitating public memory

The history of censorship runs from its legitimisation as an

instrument for regulating the moral and political life of ancient societies to its anathematization in the face of freedom of expression and opinion today. While the struggle for freedom of expression is as ancient as the history of censorship, sustained suppression can be said to have begun with the invention of the printing press and, notably, with the Roman Catholic Church's *index librorum prohibitorum* – a list of books banned for their heretical or ideologically dangerous content.

The first list was drawn up in 1559 by Pope Paul IV and the last in 1948, being finally withdrawn in 1966. From 1543, licenses to print were issued by the Catholic Church and from 1563 by Charles IX of France. Secular rulers followed suit and systems of government control have been in evidence until the present day. In addition to licensing publication or broadcasting, or obstructing access to new technologies of information and communication, government authorities have carried out silencing by destruction.

Libraries, archives, and museums are memory's patrimony, preserving history and symbols of cultural identity. Destroying cultural artefacts intimidates and demoralizes people and erases their cultures from public memory. In 1562 most of the codices of the Mayan people in Central America were burned by Bishop Diego de Landa, who was later tried for authorizing a savage Inquisition. De Landa destroyed the codices because, 'They contained nothing in which there was not to be seen superstition and



*Palimpsests are usually manuscript pages from an ancient scroll or book that have been scraped clean and used again. A number of works have survived only as palimpsests. At one time the consumption of old codices in Greek was so great that a church decree of 691 CE forbade the destruction of manuscripts of the scriptures or the church fathers, except for imperfect or damaged volumes. Today, we are more likely to come across urban palimpsests in the form of buildings that have been renovated or – as the photo above shows – advertising hoardings that have been used more than once. (Photo: Fin Fahey. Creative Commons. Attribution-Share Alike 3.0).*

lies of the devil' (quoted in Whitlock, 1976: 106).

The codices were the primary written records of the Mayan civilization, together with many inscriptions on stone monuments and stelae. Only three codices and possibly a fragment of a fourth survive. They are The Madrid Codex, The Dresden Codex; The Paris Codex, and The Grolier Codex or Fragment. The destruction of the other codices was a deliberate attempt to obliterate a history and culture in the name of Christianity and Western 'civilization'. Paradoxically, Bishop de Landa later wrote the *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán* in which he catalogued the customs, beliefs, and writing system of the Mayan people.

In 1933, in a similar attempt to expunge Jewish life and culture from Germany, the Nazis organized the mass burning of 'un-German' books. It is often forgotten that in 1946 in retaliation, the Allied occupation authorities drew up a list of over 30,000 titles, ranging from school books to poetry, and millions of copies of these books were confiscated and destroyed. The representative of the Military Directorate admitted that the order in principle was no different from the Nazi book burnings.

In 1991 the Serbian government banned Albanian as a language of instruction at all levels of education. From 1990 to 1999 all the libraries in Kosovo were subjected to the burning or destruc-

tion of their Albanian-language collections as part of the government's 'ethnic cleansing' campaign. And in Afghanistan in 2001 the destruction of the 6th century sandstone Buddhas of Bamyan was ordered by the Taliban, who declared they were 'idols' and forbidden under Sharia law.

These are just a few examples to highlight 'repressive erasure': the deliberate attempt by means of policies and actions to expunge from public memory the history and socio-cultural identity of a particular people or community. If censorship were confined to books, artworks and languages, the loss might not be irreparable. But in every act of repression people have also been murdered or made to 'disappear'. In the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, China, Cambodia, the countries of Latin America under the dictatorships, Rwanda, and Iraq under Saddam Hussein, thousands of intellectuals, writers, publishers, editors, and teachers were killed.

### Turning a blind eye

Alongside 'repressive erasure', there is 'prescriptive forgetting', also carried out by States, governments, and ruling parties. 'Prescriptive forgetting' is characterized as being in the best interests of all parties to a conflict. A modern example is the formulation of peace agreements that contain implicit requirements to forgive and forget. In this regard, 'Societies where democracy is regained after a recent undemocratic past, or where democracy is newly born, must establish institutions and make decisions that foster forgetting as much as remembering' (Connerton, 2008: 62).

A further controversial issue is the non-investigation of crimes carried out by Western leaders or by non-Western leaders propped up by the West. The administration of George W. Bush sanctioned numerous dubious acts. They include serious moral and ethical questions about torture, rendition, wire-tapping, political appointees reserving non-political jobs for 'right-thinking Americans', giving cronies key positions in occupied Iraq, handing billions of dollars in no-bid contracts to politically connected companies, and allowing government agencies to survive major scandals. In early January 2009 President Obama was asked if he would pursue the investigation of such crimes. He responded, 'I don't believe that anybody is above the law, but we need to look forward as opposed to looking back-



*Stolpersteine ('stumbling stones') are a project of the German artist Gunther Demnig. They commemorate people deported and killed by the Nazis and are placed outside the last known residence of the victim.*

wards' (*The New York Times*, January 16, 2009).

Of course, societies do make explicit attempts to remember by establishing truth and reconciliation commissions, and setting up public memorials that are simultaneously painful and cathartic. Such memorials ask, 'How much should we remember? How much should we forget? How much should we forgive? How much should we continue to resent? To what extent can reconciliation take place?' (Lee, 2004: 47). Writers and artists also play a key role in challenging public amnesia.

In several cities in Germany, artist Gunter Demnig has put down more than 20,000 *Stolpersteine* (stumbling stones) to commemorate people who died in the Holocaust. His project involves replacing ordinary cobblestones with ones bearing a simple inscription – a person's name, date of birth, and the date and place of death, if known. The stones are placed outside the houses of Jews, gypsies and others persecuted, deported, and murdered by the Nazi regime. Stumbling over the stones prompts questions and memories.

### A curious omission

Given all of the above and the centrality of memory to the human condition, it is a curious fact that the right to memory is not enshrined in any international declaration or convention. It is arguable, however, that the attainment of many objectives contained in instruments establishing international standards actually depend upon a right to memory.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) recognises the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family. Inter alia it declares that everyone has the right to a nationality (Article 15), to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 18), to freedom of opinion and expression (Article 19), to education (Article 26), and to freely participate in the cultural life of the community (Article 27). None of these rights can be enjoyed to the full without access to collective memory.

The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948) asserts that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or war, is a crime under international law. It focuses on causing serious physical (*actus reus*) or mental (*mens rea*) harm to members of a group. In recent years, the International Criminal Court and

other international tribunals examining evidence of genocide have attempted to define 'serious mental harm' in the context of genocidal actions.

In other contexts, it seems obvious that 'mental harm' would include the 'repressive erasure' of the sociocultural memories that bind a group together. In Rwanda, the nation's history has been 'rewritten' depending on the government in power. Recently, in a spirit of reconciliation, a controversial new history of the country has been put forward which has been criticised for significant misrepresentation. Other examples of mental harm caused by 'repressive erasure' include such policies as the 'protection of Aborigines' in Australia (leading to the 'stolen generations' controversy) and church-run, government-funded residential schools in Canada.

The International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) recognises the right to self-determination (Article 1), including the right to freely determine political status and to freely pursue economic, social and cultural development. It places particular emphasis on the right of everyone to education (Article 13) so that 'education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups, and further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.'

The Declaration on Social Progress and Development (1969) sets international standards for social development policies. Affirming the right to live in dignity and freedom, it seeks the 'immediate and final elimination of all forms of inequality, exploitation of peoples and individuals, colonialism and racism, including Nazism and apartheid, and all other policies and ideologies opposed to the purposes and principles of the United Nations' (Article 2). It underlines the need for 'enlightened public opinion', the 'dissemination of national and international information for the purpose of making individuals aware of changes occurring in society as a whole', and equal opportunities for disadvantaged or marginalized sectors 'in order to achieve an effectively integrated society' (Article 5).

The Declaration on the Right to Development (1986) confirms that equal opportunity for development is a prerogative both of nations and of individuals who make up nations. Mainly concerned with the human person as the central sub-



ject of development (Article 2), it also calls for ‘popular participation in all spheres as an important factor in development and in the full realization of all human rights’ (Article 8). Full participation is a basic tenet of communication rights, but it implies access to public and social memory.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1994) strengthens and elaborates much of what was articulated in previous international instruments, paying particular attention to torture, slavery, arrest, detention, and criminal proceedings. It specifically protects the right of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities ‘in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, and to use their own language’ (Article 27).

### **Twenty-first century enlightenment**

With the object of encouraging dialogue, fostering interculturality, reaffirming the link between culture and development, and strengthening international cooperation and solidarity, the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) still fails to link collective memory to the cultural heritage of humanity.

The Convention calls for the creation of an environment that encourages individuals and social groups to ‘create, produce, disseminate, distribute and have access to their own cultural expressions’ (Article 7) and to ‘take all measures to protect and preserve cultural expressions’ (Article 8). ‘Cultural expressions’ are defined as resulting from the creativity of individuals, groups and societies and as having symbolic meaning, artistic dimension and cultural values.

Finally, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) – in a spirit of securing freedom from discrimination and historic injustices – asserts indigenous peoples’ right to ‘maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions’ (Article 5).

Specifically, the Declaration confirms that ‘indigenous peoples have the right to practise and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and vi-

sual and performing arts and literature’ (Article 11).

Furthermore, the Declaration protects indigenous peoples’ right to ‘revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons’ (Article 13). The latter is the closest formulation of a fledgling right to memory to date, which should encompass other provisions that protect cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions (Article 31).

### **What would a right to memory guarantee?**

Existing human rights law – specifically Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 19 of the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – protects the right to freedom of opinion and expression. It might be thought that freedom of opinion and expression are sufficient to ensure adequate protection for collective memory. However, as has been persuasively argued in regard to the right to communicate (Hamelink, 2003), and as can be inferred from the examples outlined above, the right to memory is also a fundamental right of all human beings that goes to the heart of human dignity, of political and sociocultural identity, and, therefore, of democracy.<sup>1</sup>

The question arises, what would a right to memory guarantee? Article 19, which leads a global campaign for freedom of expression, believes that laws which impose blanket prohibitions on the denial of genocide or of other crimes breach international guarantees of freedom of expression. It rests its case on the existence of generic hate speech laws that already prohibit incitement to hatred and the potential abuse of stifling legitimate historical debate and research.

However, as with the debate between proponents of the right to communicate and proponents of freedom of expression, the former is seen as broader and more radical than the latter. In the same way, the right to memory is broader and more radical than ‘memory laws’ that might define historical truth or undermine intellectual freedom. ‘Memory laws’ are negative in the sense that they prohibit, providing for penal sanctions against those who contravene the law. The right to memory is positive in the sense that it affirms and protects those ‘frameworks of col-

lective memory' (Halbwachs, 1925) that ensure the physical survival and moral well-being of a people.

Above all, the right to memory is a matter of justice. In all communities and societies, the choice of what is recorded in the public memory and the way it is represented is not neutral but happens in accord with predetermined perceptions and policies. This politics of remembering or forgetting essentially constitutes a struggle for power. Wherever justice is absent, wherever a politics of enforced amnesia reigns, it falls to civil society organisations to be the spokespersons of history and public memory, even if that means being in conflict with the particularities of deep trauma. In such cases, the right to memory is in symbiosis with the right to justice.

One of the most useful contributions that the field of memory studies could make is to articulate the specific provisions of a right to memory and the kinds of protections needed. This will require a cross-disciplinary approach that would see sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, ethicists, gender specialists, and political scientists working together to map the contours and define the characteristics of the terrain. It will need to pay particular attention to the impact of digital communication technologies, virtual realities, and the ever changing demands of global and local 'information societies'.

If Richard Holloway is right to assert that, 'The cruellest act in the vast repertoire of human cruelty is the denial of hope and the kindest act its restoration' (Holloway, 2008: 139), then we might paraphrase him to say that the denial of memory – which contains the hope of a better future – is an act of barbarism, and its restoration through the right to memory an act of justice. ■

#### Note

1. I am aware that there are risks in adding to a set of human rights that are often widely ignored in practice and suffer from lack of enforcement, especially as the unique moral framework of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should not be tampered with. I am aware, too, of the complexities facing adequate codification and implementation of a 'right to memory'. However, none of this should be allowed to negate the essential notion.

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# Gender and the right to memory

Anna Reading

*When US and UK troops invaded Iraq in 2002 many of the Iraqi National Museum's 5,000 year old treasures were destroyed and looted. The then U.S Defence Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld was quoted as saying, 'freedom's untidy, and free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes and do bad things.' The re-opening of the museum in Bagdad in 2009, established in 1926 by a British woman, Gertrude Bell, was hailed as a return to stability: a national public memory institution on the road to democracy.*

Occupying armies and dictators often destroy public archives and sites of memory. They smash sculptures, run roads through cemeteries, ban languages, burn books, ransack museums. Acts of terror as well as the gendered colonial legacies and cultural mixedness of complex pasts are erased.

Part of what Primo Levi (2002) calls, 'the demolition of a man', and what the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben (2005) terms the reduction to 'bare life' during such states of exception includes a war on the public uses of the past and what can only be termed 'non-memory'. This non-memory is not simply forgetting or the state censoring of particular memories. It is a void in terms of the public and mediated record of events.

Despite the seeming pervasive ubiquity of media, especially in developed countries, atrocities can happen with no mediated record of what took place. There may be for some period of time during and after a state of exception only the personal and private memories of those directly involved. Non-memory also involves at its core the demolition and

the violation of gendered norms, boundaries and identities of a given society, as Levi's words imply.

The past is not gender neutral and neither is its public invocation in the present. This is what makes the debate about the right to memory and how this is gendered important.

## Human rights are gendered

The right to memory debate has emerged in part within the context of the right to communicate, which has sought to extend the civil liberties of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, especially Article 19. At the transnational level the right to memory is situated within work on human rights with an emphasis on creating and preserving archives such as the work by UNESCO and the Working Group on Archives and Human Rights within the International Council on Archives (see Arkivforeningen, 2008).

Yet, the potential right to memory, the right to a symbolic representation of the past embedded within a set of interventions and social practices, carries with it complex and contradictory implications in terms of gender in the context of today's media environments.

As with discussions of human rights more generally, if we are not mindful, gender becomes an adjunct to rights arguments rather than central to them. Human rights writer, Anne Cubilie who has examined women's testimonies worldwide, including those from Afghanistan, Argentina and Bosnia believes:

'As long as human rights are understood as a universal category associated with the male and public realms, and women's rights are seen as corollary to rather than a fundamental aspect of the discourse, women will never have the benefit of the full range of human rights protections that men have' (Cubilie, 2005: 32).

The debates emerging around a right to memory and its absence in international covenants need to consider the significance of gender in relation to cultural memory in a number of ways.

## Testimony and witnessing

Cultural memory and its publically embedded social processes include bearing witness, testifying, archiving, curating, memorialising and commemorating, as well as the production of auto-

biographical, artistic and mediated renditions of the past. These are, in various ways, informed by and inform gendered roles, values and norms. For example, women were rarely used as witnesses in medieval Europe; the word of a female witness in some cultures still carries less weight than that of a male witness in relation to particular judicial cases.

An unequal gendered legacy of witnessing and testifying within public cultures and world faiths can impact on the kinds of stories, photographs and artefacts that are gathered. It can also impact on who they are gathered from, what is documented and preserved in public archives as well as the subsequent symbolic representation in public memory institutions, in public memorials and in the writing of histories that are then used in schools.

At the same time, how memory works in relation to gender is dynamic and travelling: it is not fixed or always directly linked to identities: it can change in different locales and times. Women can also play a significant public role: with the disappearances and detention centres of Argentina, the Grandmothers' of the Plaza de Mayo were and are crucial in the development of a public archive for the memory of the disappeared.

It is not simply that women's cultural memories may be forgotten and men's remembered, but rather how these resonate or not with what is acceptable or not in the public sphere in relation to gendered norms and values in a particular historical and cultural moment. Hence the public controversy in Israel in relation to disaffected women conscripts testimonies who had been in the Israeli army. While it may be generally easier or more acceptable in public memories to have recognition of women as victims, it is more problematic when women are shown as army conscripts trained to kill, or as terrorists, or as perpetrators or as sexually active (rather than raped).

The right to memory if we are not mindful of differing gendered legacies could result in the socio-legal right for some men in public to tell their story more loudly, be believed, and for particular stories that reinforce or are that are useful to gender oppression to be symbolically represented in archives and memorials. Likewise, past stories of forced abduction, sexual slavery and mass rape may go unheard because of the need to return to a gendered 'normality'.

In post-genocidal situations, 'non-memory' can mean that there are few or no gender specific ar-

tefacts: if not mindful of this, general artefacts are then used as an inappropriate metonym for the differing experiences of men and women. After the Holocaust, some public memory institutions and museums, for example, initially displayed the striped top and trousers of male prisoners, as representative of both men and women's experiences, publically forgetting that women prisoners wore thin dresses and were often deprived of underwear even in the sub zero central European winter.

### **A gendered jigsaw**

An understanding of the ways that symbolic representation and embedded social memorial practices are gendered is crucial to understanding the particularities of a regime of occupation, of colonialism, of genocide. Memory is a gendered jigsaw or rather a multi voiced dialogue in which men and women's stories are momentarily secured and then mobilised. A gendered understanding of memory rights needs to include the recognition of how the same story has different meanings for men and women.

When Primo Levi writes, 'What happened to the others, to the women, to the children, to the old then we could establish neither then nor later: the night swallowed them up, purely and simply,' (2000: 26) he was expressing his loss not simply as a Jew, but as a Jew who was a man. Being forced to watch your wife, sisters and daughters disappear, being made to witness them being raped, having your beard shaved off, or the opposite, being killed because you are a barber who cuts men's beards, are gender specific humiliations to being a man designed to strip away complex ethnically situated masculinities.

Attempts at democratic peace building have worked best when there is some recognition of these dynamics of gender in relation to memory, the ways in which gender cuts across the private and the public, the ways in which it is situated within a bigger picture of political right – or wrong. A sense of these gendered dynamics is an important part in the ongoing process of peace-building in Northern Ireland for example: some projects such as the audio-visual recording of memories at Armagh Prison have involved the careful inclusion of both men and women's stories as terrorists, prison warders and policy officers. Likewise, work within post-apartheid South Africa is suggestive of the positive use of gender inclusive testimony in processes of transitional justice.

There are also particular ways in which gender and cultural memory works in today's digital media environment: digitisation means that symbolic and mediated representations of the past can be easily captured, stored, globally connected and rapidly reassembled. Digital and mobile media might seem to offer some way of ameliorating communicative and memorial inequalities: the movement for citizen journalism, and the shift from audiences into 'prosumers' able to produce their own media content, for example, might seem indicative of this.

Certainly in some instances digital media technologies offer new democratic possibilities: the rise of the camera phone worldwide crosses both gender and economic divides; its data uploaded to the internet results in the possibility for rapidly globalised digital witnessing of the abuse of law and collective atrocities. A cameraphone video after the Iranian elections in June 2009 of the shooting of Neda Agha Soltan was within minutes rapidly transferred around the globe leading within hours to demonstrations in diasporic communities worldwide, as well as the rapid establishment of on-line memorials.

### **The 'global memory field'**

Yet, although digitisation does allow for the rapid creation, transfer and storage of digital memories, gendered memories need to be understood as situated and constituted through what elsewhere I have termed the 'global memory field'. This global memory field is far from being either global or digital: rather it is uneven and patchy, with spots of concentration as well as areas with little or no connectivity. Despite the impact of DIY media, giant media corporations and state memory institutions still remain powerful players, able to securitize and mobilize public cultural memories.

The inequalities of gender take place within a political economy of memory in which some memory agents are more powerful than others, and in which some countries and corporations hold greater memory capital. Developing countries while able to leapfrog particular technologies remain hampered by access to connective technologies. With information poverty there is also a poverty of public memory, which disproportionately affects women – in particular, women in Africa which has the least developed telecommunications network. Although, as Sally Burnheim, of Article 19 points

out, again there is the need to be mindful of pockets of concentration and unevenness: Botswana and Rwanda have some of the most sophisticated digital telecommunications systems in the world.

Any consideration of memory in relation to communication and human rights needs to consider the gender disparity index and how this varies in different local contexts worldwide. Anne Cubilie says that UN agencies and NGOs should recognise the difference between cultural norms and juridical policies in relation to memory. Trying to include the memories of women in places where there are juridical policies that serve to exclude and restrict women can result in violent punishment, even death. In contrast, acting to include women's memories where cultural norms serve to marginalise women can result in local levels of resistance.

### **Mobile memories**

Memories are also trans-national and trans-cultural. It is no longer (was it ever?) possible to contain memories within national boundaries. Memories are mobile: they travel with people and without people; different memories rebound off each other. American cultural memory academic, Michael Rothberg, calls this 'multi-directional memory'. His examination of questions of witnessing and their intersection with the legal in relation to the memories of the Holocaust and Apartheid South Africa suggests a 'thinking of justice beyond filiation, linear temporality, and commensuration' in relation to post-catastrophic reparation. This is also the case when thinking through the right to memory and its implications of gender justice: it is non-linear, not necessarily filial or commensurate.

### **The right to forget**

In debates about the right to memory it is also important to be attentive to how the invocation to remember might obliterate some cultures' emphasis on the need to forget or remember using modalities that don't involve museums, archives and monuments that name the dead. Some cultures maintain social cohesion through particular rituals of forgetting or through the conscious not-naming of people or events. Some use very different modalities to remember.

In some cultures, the possessions of the dead should be destroyed: to display a dead woman's dress in a museum is then an insult. To publically

name the dead may result in contamination; to forget might keep one safe from a different and more powerful culture. Any discussion of the right to memory needs not only to be mindful but also to be knowledgeable about how gender might be articulated or not within these different gendered contexts.

When the Iraqi National Museum was first established in 1926 by Gertrude Bell, while she was a respected upper class highly educated diplomat free to travel the world, she was also honorary secretary of the Women's Anti-Suffrage League which had sought to prevent women back in Britain having the vote. The Museum may have been reopened but democracy will be unstable if the complexities of the political economy of gendered cultural memory remain adjunct rather than central to the building of both civil society and its public memory. ■

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## KAWASAKI'S ROSE FILM ABOUT MEMORY, RESPONSIBILITY AND FORGIVENESS

*Kawasakiho Ruze* (Kawasaki's Rose) is the latest film by the successful Czech director-screenwriter duo Jan Hřebejk and Petr Jarchovský.

The year is 2009. In the Czech Republic, Pavel Josek, a distinguished scientist and former dissident, is due to receive a state medal for bravery. While filming a television documentary about his life it comes to light that in the early 1970s – under pressure from the secret police – Josek played a part in discrediting a friend, who was ultimately forced to emigrate.



*Kawasaki's Rose* examines betrayal decades after the fact, questioning memory as well as loyalty. It is the first Czech feature to confront the theme of informing and cooperating with the communist secret police. What is essentially a family drama sheds light on an emotional story of guilt and atonement, it explores the pitfalls of memory and the need for forgiveness.

*Kawasaki's Rose* was awarded the Ecumenical Jury Prize in the Panorama Section of the 2010 Berlin International Film Festival.

# Media, memory and emergence

Andrew Hoskins

*The advent and rapid growth of digital media and technologies has ushered in a sense of a new connectivity. This transformation is often seen to pivot around the development of real-time or near-instantaneous communications, including ‘messaging’, be these peer-to-peer, one-to-many, or more complex connections within and between groups, ‘crowds’, or networks, and facilitated through mobile media and social networking technologies and other internet-based services.*

However, as media theorists such as William Merrin (2008) have argued, this transformation isn’t merely technological, ‘It’s also driven by ourselves, as new generations embrace these technologies and discover and create new uses for them. What is fundamental is the way in which these users are reconfiguring their own social relations and expectations and producing entirely new modes of experience and knowledge.’ Indeed much power is often attributed to the contemporary ‘prosumer’, a concatenation of what were previously seen as the relatively distinct entities of media producers and audiences.

In addition to the experience of and the forging of social relations and identities in the present, the ‘connective turn’ (Hoskins, forthcoming) is seen to provide new visibility and thus new agency in terms of our relationship to the past through our capacity to shape, extend, store, organise and delete the ‘stuff’ from which individual and social memories are made and remade. ‘Abundance’ is one dimension of this trend, with a shift from media of a broadcast era dominated by a ‘scarcity’ model of produc-

tion and directed distribution, to a post-broadcast era driven by an economics of new accessibility.

This is a phenomenon that Chris Anderson has coined the ‘Long Tail’, that is to say, ‘what happens when the bottlenecks that stand between supply and demand in our culture start to disappear and everything becomes available to everyone’ (Anderson, 2006: 11).

The point here though is that what is also caught up in this revelation of the Long Tail is the past itself. In other words, the connective turn enables a working through and transformation of memory: individual, social, and cultural, that was not previously possible. At the same time, we record, store, document, archive and disseminate, current experiences and events through our ubiquitous and mobile digital culture, thus rapidly accumulating what will be tomorrow’s Long Tail, affecting the shape of future memories.

Of these twin dimensions of the connective turn, it is the latter massively increased *potential* for even relatively settled memories to be disrupted, contradicted and challenged, in other words the phenomenon that I am calling ‘emergence’ (cf. Hoskins and O’Loughlin, 2010).

## Multiple conflicting ‘fronts’

The connective turn opens up multiple conflicting and simultaneous horizons (or even ‘fronts’ on the past). These are rapidly assembled, torn up and reassembled in more self-conscious and reflexive ways by individuals, groups, nations, politicians, news organizations, terrorists etc., in other words by all those who have ready-access to the increasingly affordable (for some) tools of digital recording and production, editing, and dissemination. Yet, the power invested in the means to record, store, delete and distribute, is compromised by the very accelerating accumulation of archives.

The ‘right to memory’ forged through such media and mechanisms is made ambiguous through the wholesale blurring of the personal and the public domains of ownership and control, by social networking sites, for example. However, it is the rapid rise of the phenomenon of emergence that shapes a new contingency of memory in our new media ecology. The revelatory potential of images and video increasingly routinely captured digitally does not easily lend itself to quantifica-

tion or prediction; emergence is not scalable. Moreover, it is the very potential of emergence to suddenly and massively unsettle, or conversely to fill in or complete, the public memory and history of events that makes it such a significant dynamic of 21st century political and cultural horizons.

However, to afford the shaping or the reshaping of memory only to the immediacy (and sometimes shock) of emergence is an oversimplification. Indeed, it is the very fact that mediation can even go unnoticed until later events or findings make newly visible what once passed as unremarkable. Furthermore, and this is a central challenge to the impact on the mediation and record of events often afforded to the 'prosumer' identified above, the role of journalists as agents of memory is underexplored and underacknowledged. Indeed, one can say that investigative journalism is needed more than ever precisely to sift and to contextualise and to interpret that worthy of our attention in the avalanche of media images and video that today passes as 'news'.

I will now turn to provide an overview of an exemplar of this twin dynamic, namely of one of the most nodal events of the closing years of the 20th century, that somehow eluded the mediated emergence that may have, and should have stopped it, the Rwandan Genocide.

### Iconicity and anti-iconicity

Iconic media images of atrocity and suffering are at once paradoxical. Their iconicity is often related both to their depiction of the unimaginable and to their establishment as a template of an event in mainstream news discourses, i.e. through repetition. Often, their impact is bonded with the vicarious experience of the mediated event itself at the time, part of its reflexive history.

However, there is a kind of anti-iconicity to the video images of the hacking to death of a praying man and a woman cowering beside him, recorded by the freelance journalist Nick Hughes on a dirt road in the Gikondo area of Kigali, Rwanda, on 11 April 1994. These terrible images quickly reached global news wires and media organisations. Despite this, the video had little resonance as a news story, as Allan Thompson (2009: 247) in a compelling account explains:

'Remarkably, during a genocide that would

eventually claim upwards of a million lives, this is one of the only times a killing was caught on video by the media – perhaps the only time. The praying man Hughes regarded through his camera lens is literally one in a million.... the footage flashed across television screens around the world – CNN, Australian Broadcasting and German giant ZDF – but somehow, it didn't make any difference. Rwanda never became a *cause célèbre*. And the killing in Gikondo rolled out across the country for another three months.'

Indeed, these images were not seen then as they are so clearly today, as revealing of 'the front end of the arc of a genocide' (Thompson, p. 248). Despite the singularity of these images, their history of mediation is as if they were never shown until long after the 100-day genocide, but rather entered directly into its social and cultural memory.

Yet, Thompson's investigation demonstrates the potential of the emergence or re-emergence of images and their potential utterly (and paradoxically perhaps) both to transfix and transform social and personal memories of atrocity. The 'transfix' is the remediation (including dramatisation) of an image, sound or video, over time so that it becomes indexical of an event, a 'media template' (Hoskins, 2004a and b).

Indeed, Thompson argues that the footage of the murder of a father and daughter on a dirt street in Rwanda have become the 'stock' images of the genocide, yet are more haunting today than many of the iconic media images of our age precisely because they were not acted upon when first seen. In this way, Thompson confronts us with a terrible complicity, through the imagining of a different response and a different outcome.

However, despite the re-emergence of the Kigali images into a global consciousness (including their fictionalization in the movie *Hotel Rwanda*) the identities of the man and woman hacked to death they depicted remained unknown and their story untold. That is until Thompson (working in Rwanda in 2007 as director of the Rwanda Initiative at Carleton University, Canada) actually identified the praying victims as Gabriel Kabaga and Justine Mukangango; they were father and daughter.

But through this enquiry and revelation, Thomp-



son also found some of the relatives of the victims, still living not a great distance from the original site of the murders, captured in the Hughes' video. In his account he details being confronted with the dilemma and responsibility of affording a wife and mother the opportunity to view film of the brutal murder of her husband and daughter, 13 years on.

In terms of the families of victims being faced with the revelation of media witnessing of atrocities against their own, one can draw a comparison with the 1995 massacre at Srebrenica, where more than 8,000 Bosniak men and boys were murdered by Serbian military. On 1 June 2005 video evidence was shown to the Hague war crimes tribunal where Milosevic was on trial that showed paramilitaries leading six unarmed Bosnian Muslim prisoners (including minors) to their deaths, four being shot at close range and some in the back, as they were ordered to walk to a spot convenient for their murderers. The perpetrators were a Serbian paramilitary group called the Scorpions who themselves videotaped some of their own terrible crimes against the Bosnian Serbs.

On the evening of the showing of the video evidence in the Hague, images from the video were broadcast on a number of Serbian and Bosnian TV stations. Some of the families of the victims were in the television audience for this news and identified two of the men who had been missing for 10 years, seen by them for the first time since their disappearance in 1995. A mother is suddenly confronted with viewing her teenage son being murdered on Bosnian television.

Both Thompson's Rwanda investigation and the Srebrenica example, demonstrate the potential for journalism to shape what I have called 'new memory' (Hoskins, 2004a and b) of events. New memory is 'new' through its continually emergent state produced or at least enabled through media and technologies (and their metaphors) of the day, but these same media also at the same time reflexively shape a reassessment of the nature and the very value of remembering (and forgetting) under these conditions.

The dynamics and dilemmas of new memory are intensified by the connective turn and the potential of the phenomenon I have called here emergence. Unlike the somewhat random re-connection of the Srebrenica killing through its public mediation and personal revelation, the Rwandan case pivots explicitly around the moral dilemmas

experienced and expressed by Thompson. His alone is the final decision to show or not to show.

### Forging new memory

These cases then represent some of the tensions of the crafting of new memory in an age of pervasive media where the connectivity between people, events and their memory of events, is forged in uneven and unpredictable ways. In these circumstances, the role of the mediator needs to be placed under closer scrutiny. In other words, the responsibility of the 'gatekeeper' in determining what is shown and what is seen, as well as what is not, becomes more and not less important, given that so very much of the ordinary and the extraordinary is routinely recorded. One of the difficulties for such a project is that, as Barbie Zelizer argues, journalists themselves do not see themselves as agents of memory: 'Prompted perhaps by journalists' ambivalence about their relationship to the past, journalism is not often cited by scholars as an obvious source of memory work' (2008: 80).

Thompson's careful and considered reflections in his Rwanda investigation may be an important exception in this regard, albeit his work benefits from being founded on both his journalistic experience and his scholarly expertise. Moreover, despite the proclamations of the liberation of a Long Tail of memory by the newly equipped 'prosumer' and the 'citizen journalist', an ethics of new memory is required to see the value of more traditional journalists as having renewed significance as memory entrepreneurs.

In one sphere at least, there has been a great deal of academic and journalistic examination of the ethics of recording, broadcasting and viewing atrocity by journalists, audiences, policy-makers etc., on compassion and dispassion, on action and inaction, and on 'witnessing' (e.g. Moeller 1999, Cohen 2001, Seaton 2005, Frosh and Pin (eds.) 2009). Yet, Thompson's account as suggested here usefully contributes to these debates through probing the profound ethical issues of the revelatory new memory potential of investigative journalism.

And, as we move into an age of pervasive media, the prospects for a fine-grained journalistic shaping of both the impact of the mediation of warfare and conflict, and the personal and public record, have been seen to risk diminishment amidst (perhaps paradoxically) both the velocity of

the iconic and the sheer volume of digital content.

Yet, not even stock images are noticed for what they really show, either at the time of the events that they depict, nor later in their capacity to transform memories of those events. Thompson's writing underlines the imperative of journalists at scalar opposites, both as potential interventionists in atrocities, and also as agents of new memory. ■

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# Memory and forgetting

Judith Vidal-Hall

*'When did memory ever stop us committing the next genocide, starting the next war or invading another country?'* Private conversation with family of Holocaust survivor.

*'After so many memorials, it may be worth wondering now what a Museum of Forgetting could be a museum of?'* Adam Phillips

Landscapes of memory everywhere we look: every village churchyard, the serried ranks of the dead in cemeteries from WW1 and WW2 lined up across Europe, the memorials of the Holocaust, the turbaned tombstones of Srebrenica that commemorate our most recent 'genocide' in the heart of the continent. Confronted with this, a demand for the right to memory seems superfluous.

Memory, as others in this issue have said, is inalienable, an integral part of the human condition. We might even say that as a society, we in the UK have allowed the contemporary passion for memorialising people and events to run amok. If we think of the 'undisciplined squads of emotion' and the mountains of flowers that materialised for Princess Diana or little Jamie Bulger, we might be tempted to think that remembering had acquired the status of a commandment: 'Thou shalt not forget.'

What about forgetting, the need to escape from the burden of reality? 'Human kind cannot bear too much reality,' wrote T S Eliot, echoing Freud's view that humanity is by nature amnesiac for its own comfort, to sustain its ability to function in the world. It seems to run counter to this tendency to memory, but Freud knew it was only half the story: the other was the painful recovery of memory in order to be able to live fully.

It's a dilemma: memory or forgetting? So powerfully do we memorialise at a personal as well as collective level that it seems impossible we shall

ever be able to forget, even when we might wish for a moment we could. No prohibition can take from us the memory of our dearest loss, our most painful moment. Laws may prohibit the public expression of that memory – the contradiction of the official version – but it does not go away.

This is true even when forgetting may be a liberation, a passage to a different future, one in which, without loss, we can transcend memory, its pains as well as its joys, triumphs and tragedies both, to arrive at a place of reconciliation. As was attempted in South Africa through its Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the early years of Black majority rule. Some fear reconciliation triumphed over justice, but few would deny that the process itself prevented the bloodbath many feared in the wake of apartheid.

All too often it is memory that stands in the way of reconciliation, of the recognition by one side that the other has suffered and needs acknowledgement of that before both elements of society can move on together. Though it permeates the present and will reach into the future, the past, which is the stuff of memory, does not exist any more than the future. We have only the present and we cannot redeem the time or our deeds, save the victim or punish the perpetrator simply by calling on memory. There has to be a better way: it's probably forgetting, or what the writer Moris Farhi calls 'forgetness', an older, now archaic form. It takes courage to forget he argues in 'Time to Move On':

'Piously misusing memory ... they forge it into a weapon. With their supplication for perpetual remembrance they keep the old wounds open for every generation and promote the worship of death ... it is time to attain maturity, dispossess ourselves of that heritage, time to have the courage to forget' (*Index on Censorship* 34/2 2005: 29).

The uses of memory are at best ambiguous: it haunts as much as it 'consoles', drives to madness and revenge more often than to peace and reconciliation. Between these poles there is a vast variety of experience and it is this that engenders the preoccupation with the 'right' to memory. 'Memory is only as virtuous as its users,' says the psychiatrist Adam Phillips. It can be the creator of dangerous national myths as of historical truths. Nazis created the Aryan

myth and their inheritors today abuse the foreigner in their midst; an over-enthusiastic British historian claims the discovery of an Anglo Saxon treasure in the West Midlands (Mercia) as 'the rightful heritage of the people of this region'? Birmingham? Leicester? The latter will soon be the first city in Europe with a majority non-white, non-European, non-English population. Memory is closely tied to senses of identity, another, often dangerous, ambiguity.

But why this preoccupation now? The answer is twofold: the first lies in the quotation with which Philip Lee opens this issue. The distinguished Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano, along with others in the southern cone who in the 1970s and 1980s suffered the depredations of their armies – Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil – has long argued for the right of citizens to remember the *desaparecidos* the disappeared and to hold to public account, the architects of their disaster. Only now can they speak out: it has taken a generation and more for 'laws of memory' in these countries to allow recovery of the past.

And now it is Europe's turn to fight the memory wars. In the 20 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the demise of the Soviet Union and the 'reunification' of East and West, the euphoria of freedom regained has given way to disenchantment on some fronts and near confrontation on others. Memory is at the centre of this – the realisation that memories are not shared, that experiences are not common and that there is no common history. It must be rewritten, this time by the 'defeated', or in this case those who consider themselves the 'victims', rather than the victor. It is a demand for recognition of the 'other' memory, the different history. And very complicated it is, with a plurality of versions muddying the clear waters of what seemed to be the official history of Europe, and rival lobbies threatening to collide in the corridors of Brussels.

#### **Monuments and memorials: an interlude**

It is 11 November 2009, Armistice Day, the ultimate in memory in so much of Europe. As I sit writing this, the village church bells begin to toll. Before me, a large painting by a well-known Bosnian artist that speaks prophetically of the atrocities his country was about to undergo during the Balkan wars. At my back, people stream towards the graveyard beside my house on their way to church. Many of them are elderly, some are in

wheelchairs, some wear rows of campaign medals.

It's the only day in the year other than Christmas and Easter when the church is even remotely full. Then they will gather around the war memorial in the churchyard that commemorates the dead of two world wars – and may shortly add those from places like Iraq and Afghanistan. Our flat, fen-landscape is home to airbases in abundance; we have always sent too many of our young men to war.

But this is the day of memory above all others in our memorialising culture. James Young, a self-confessed 'memory tourist', has written extensively on how we memorialize and monumentalize the past. He also asks why? For what reasons, to what ends and in whose name do we remember and commemorate?

Mersad Berber's picture has no title but, like so much of his work, it was his reminder to us outside the Balkans that Bosnia, despite the religion of many of its citizens, is still an integral part of Europe. But because it is Muslim, we forgot Europe's history and abandoned it to its fate at the hands of the Serbs. What is he saying? 'Look, we may be Muslim now but these accidents of history – the conversion of many in the region to Islam during the centuries of Ottoman occupation – happen, and we are part of the same culture as you. Don't abandon us to our fate at the hands of the Serbs; do something. Accept that we are of the same stuff and stock and blood as you.'

Balkan memory reaches back further than ours and the 'history' they construct is different. But memory has a long fuse that complicates things throughout Europe. As Gunter Grass puts it so memorably:

'Collective memory throughout Europe serves as a pretext: you either strive to evoke it or refrain from doing so. Wars and war crimes are laid at its door. There are entire ideological frameworks it cannot shake off ... the still painful collective memory of the previous generation' (*Index on Censorship* Vol 30 1/2001 p. 62).

He's talking of Germany, of course, the 'miracle of forgetting and moving on' but he adds wryly 'Not a week passes that we are not warned about the dangers of forgetting.' Memory reaches into the future as well as the past; even today, our willingness to confront events, to accept a version of the truth that

consoles and at the same time is acceptable to those who were witness or survivors of the worst massacre in Europe since World War II, continues to elude us.

Even as I write, Radovan Karadzic, 'the butcher of Srebrenica', is in the process of attempting to manipulate that memory and rewrite history in the course of his trial for crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. According to his version of events the mass-murdering Serbian forces in the 1992-95 war against Bosnia were only defending their country against Islamic fundamentalists; there was no campaign to create an ethnically 'pure' Serbia; accounts of Bosnian death camps are a hoax and inmates were free to leave.

Karadzic also claims that the 44-month siege of Sarajevo never happened; that civilian corpses were planted in the wake of bombs to create sympathy in Western Europe; and that the 'myth' of 8,000 men and boys massacred in Srebrenica by Serbian troops in 1995 was precisely that: a fabrication to lure the West into creating a Muslim state in the heart of the Christian Balkans.

His equivalent of Holocaust denial may not succeed, but his abuse of memory illustrates the more pernicious aspects of those seeking to rewrite history. Berber, meanwhile, has been commissioned to create the official memorial to the Srebrenica dead. As the art critic and historian Edward Lucie-Smith writes in a forthcoming book on the work of Berber, 'Balkan history sets great store by memory.' He continues:

'Memory, in turn, is often presented as a justification for bitterness, and for the mindless violence that is rooted in that bitterness. It is notorious that the communities of the region cherish, not stories about victory, but stories about loss, humiliation and defeat. Yet these Balkan memories, as one examines them, become more and more elusive, dreams and fictions rather than facts. Berber's works linked to the disaster of Srebrenica are not direct descriptions of what happened there during five days in July 1995. For the most part he is content to leave that function to others, to let them (often in a gruesomely literal sense) quarrel over the bones. What he does is to mediate the operations of memory – memory that haunts, that taunts, yet in the

end serves to console. He assures us that the human spirit can transcend even the most catastrophic events, even if it has to reach back into remote ages in order to do so.'

But not quite now and not yet in Europe.

### European histories

Most of us behave as if there were only one version of history, particularly when it comes to our own. Collective memory consists in nothing more than the awareness of national myths: the sharing in a memory or a version of the past created for us by those with the power to do so – historians, politicians, patriots and participants. Once the latter have departed this life – the last soldier of WWI died in 2009 – there is no one to contradict or gainsay what the official version tells us.

This is the dangerous moment. History, goes the adage, is always the victor's version of events. But history is not set in stone. As the Oxford historian Margaret MacMillan says in her latest book *The Uses and Abuses of History* (Profile Books, UK): 'History is a process ... it can help us make sense of a complicate world, but it also warns of the dangers of assuming that there is only one possible way of looking at things.' And she warns: 'We should not be impressed when our leaders say firmly "History teaches us" or History will show that we are right.'

Which is more or less where we are currently in Russia. Like the Japanese before them at the end of the past century, they are in the process of rewriting their post-Soviet history text books; the department of history at Moscow University closed in the years immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union until it had the 'correct' version from which to teach.

And it is precisely this that is at the heart of post-Wall Europe's outbreak of memory wars and memory laws. Seventy years on, WWII has come back to haunt Europe in a way it never did before 1989. Memory has become something of a contact sport: facts are disputed, rival experiences contend against each other, emotions prevail over reason and memory is instrumentalised in pursuit of at times confused, at worst dubious, aims.

Russia is at the heart of the conflict. As the editorialist of the Dutch paper *NRC Handelsblad* noted on 3 September 2009:

'In Europe there can obviously be no talk of a fundamental historical consensus. The reason is clear. In the West the victory of the Allies was experienced as liberation. The arrival of the Americans is above all a symbol of the restoration of democracy and the rule of law. In the East the advance of the Soviet army was seen as the beginning of a second and far longer occupation by Russians and Communists. This interpretation leaves no room for the fact that the Soviet Union was an ally of the US and England from 1941 to 1945 and that in those years perhaps more than 25 million Soviet citizens died. For its part public opinion in Russia feels offended by these views. Russia sees itself as a nation of victims, and above all heroes.'

And Russia is so anxious to sustain this myth that it has recently passed its own memory law 'On Combating the Rehabilitation of Nazism, Nazi Criminals or their Collaborators' in any part of the territory of the former Soviet Union, not only represents a denial of freedom of expression, with penalties of up to five years' imprisonment and heavy fines, it criminalises the independent pursuit of history. It also puts a block on memory in tangible form, as its raid on the human rights organisation Memorial and the confiscation of its historical archives about the era of Soviet communism demonstrates.

Those who flout the law pay the price as the Russian journalist Oleg Khlebnikov discovered when he expressed a view in Russia's remaining independent newspaper *Novaya Gazeta* that the Soviet Union went to war on 17 September 1939 – the day of the Soviet invasion of Poland. It was a view directly in confrontation with the official version of events which establishes 22 June 1941, the day on which Hitler's troops attacked the Soviet Union, as the day the USSR entered the war.

Writing in the conservative Polish daily *Rzeczpospolita*, Marek Magierowski expressed his 'surprise and admiration' for Khlebnikov in the face of 'the Kremlin's swelling wave of propaganda aimed at denying at any cost that the Soviet Union bore any responsibility for the events in Europe 70 years ago. The Moscow historians portray the Poland of 1939 as an ally of Nazi Germany. This

thesis is utterly false ... so outrageous that it's not worth the trouble of polemicising against it.'

### An equivalence of evil?

Russia's falsification of events 70 years ago is the less savoury side of the memory wars that marked the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of WWII. Fed by the revival of the nationalist right in eastern Europe and a creeping historical revisionism that tries to equate Nazism and Communism, some western historians and commentators have seized on the 70th anniversary of Hitler's invasion of Poland to claim the Soviet Union was equally to blame for the outbreak of war.

It is not only the origins of the war but the nature of the peace that is dividing memories. This particular memory war between the two Europes has gathered sufficient momentum and visibility to become the subject of a vote in the European Parliament on a motion signed by Vaclav Havel and backed by the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe, that equates 'Communism and Nazism as a common legacy' of Europe that should be jointly commemorated annually on 23 August – the anniversary of the non-aggression pact – for the victims of communism and Nazism because of 'substantial similarities'.

It may not be as sinister as some commentators claim; it does not simply 'relativize Nazi crimes and rehabilitate collaborators' but is about recognition by the West of the different post-1945 fates of East and West Europe and what that involved, as *NRC Handelsblad* points out. The West may have reconciled itself to Nazis atrocities through a form of forgetfulness applied via the creation of the EU, but Eastern Europe had been the victim of mass killings from both sides and of almost a half century of a second 'occupation' and it is too soon to forget.

In this memory war – the politics of memory, the institutions of memory, museums and monuments of memory – nothing counts as much as numbers, says US historian Timothy Snyder. Snyder has done more than anyone to document the East-West numbers game and his figures, like his conclusions, are startling. The post-war occupation of the East compounds the problem: between the Europes, for as Snyder makes so clear in terms of historical memory there are indeed two, there can be no historical consensus.

In other parts of Europe, memory laws have

been put to a more positive use: the restoration of memory rather than its denial. There is a strange irony in Spain's new memory law, for instance. Writing in a recent book, *Who do you think you are? The story of Argentina's lost children* (Seagull Books, December 2009), the Argentine journalist and writer Andrew Graham Yooll talks of the Argentine junta's adoption of the model of imposed forgetting in Franco's Spain. Now, in a happy reversal of fortune, Spain's 2007 Law of Historical Memory restores the past and rewrites a chapter of Spanish history on which silence – or forgetting – had been imposed for more than 30 years.

The 'desaparacidos' of Europe are coming to light. In addition to financial compensation, the law allows the exhumation and reburial of 'bodies of victims from mass graves', annuls sentences passed by Franco's courts, restores rights and citizenship to those forced into exile and to their descendants born in exile. It has its negative aspects say critics, but the long overdue restoration of memory far outweighs the banning of fascist rallies round Franco's grave or the removal of 'graven images' in honour of that time.

Memory or forgetting? Both have their ambiguities: in the hands of the wrong people, both can be used to censor and silence; for others each can offer liberation. Which returns me to Adam Phillips' question at the opening of this piece: what would a museum of forgetting look like? Curiously I think the answer is identical: a Museum of Forgetting would, inevitably have in its cases and galleries precisely those objects we are bidden to remember – we would need them in order to know what it was we had to forget. ■

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# Memorias que duelen, cuestionan, y provocan esperanza

Germán Vargas

*Hace dos años, en mayo de 2008, un crimen provocó en el Perú la repulsa general. No era para menos, la víctima era un pequeño tierno e indefenso, el perpetrador un congresista de la República.*

Lo que hizo Miró Ruiz, el congresista, contra Matías, su víctima, fue vergonzoso, repugnante, ciertamente criminal. Los comentarios unánimes en la calle y a través de los medios fueron de rechazo al victimario. La trágica muerte de Matías avivó algo saludable en la conciencia de autoridades, líderes de opinión y ciudadanía en general, me refiero a la capacidad de indignación frente al abuso y, como dijera otro congresista, el excesivo salvajismo del perpetrador.

El lamento de la familia, la solidaridad inmediata de grupos de personas que se movilizaron bajo el lema “Justicia para Matías”, fue conmovedor. Enfurecía saber que el asesino fuese un sujeto con autoridad, y que hubiera hecho abuso de su poder.

Miró Ruiz, quien negó inicialmente su responsabilidad, no tardó mucho en reconocerla. Según se dijo en un diario, “no pudo más con su conciencia y cargado de vergüenza lo confesó todo”, pero deben haber sido las evidencias y la presión ciudadana lo que hizo que admitiese su culpabilidad.

Me interesa hacer memoria de este hecho porque es un ejemplo de cómo, ante un crimen, deberían desarrollarse las cosas en un país en el que se respeta la vida. Que toda la gente, incluy-

endo autoridades, miembros de su propio grupo político, periodistas, reaccionen unánimemente, es una señal saludable. Que nadie escogiere el silencio o la propuesta engañosa de instalar comisiones investigadoras que coquetean con la prescripción y el olvido, indica voluntad de justicia.

Que el asesino admita su culpa, diga sentirse arrepentido, pida perdón a la familia de la víctima, a la sociedad peruana, al Congreso, a su propia familia, y declare que “toda mala acción merece sanción”, y exprese su deseo de intentar resarcir el daño causado, es bastante raro.

Insólito para un país que durante dos décadas, 1980-2000, fue afectado por un conflicto armado interno que dejó alrededor de 70 mil víctimas. Fuera de lo común teniendo en cuenta que a más de la mitad de esas víctimas nadie echó de menos. No figuraban como víctimas en ninguna lista, ni siquiera en el recuento de los organismos de derechos humanos.

## Conflicto intenso, extenso y prolongado

Lo que pasó en el Perú en aquél periodo fue descrito por la Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación (CVR), en su Informe Final, como el episodio de violencia más intenso, más extenso y más prolongado de toda la historia de la República, ocasionando pérdida de vidas humanas mayores que las sufridas por el Perú en todas las guerras externas y guerras civiles ocurridas desde que logró su independencia, en 1821.

Este conflicto armado interno empezó con la decisión del Partido Comunista del Perú-Sendero Luminoso (PCP-SL), de iniciar su “lucha armada” contra el Estado Peruano, precisamente en el momento que la población asistía a las mesas de sufragio en el marco de un proceso electoral que restauraba la democracia en el país.

Minimizada en sus inicios por el gobierno recientemente electo de Fernando Belaunde Terry, la acción del PCP-SL fue extendiéndose y desarrollándose cada vez con más violencia y crueldad, ejercida contra todo aquello que implicase resistencia, particularmente autoridades y dirigentes sociales de las comunidades que buscaba controlar.

Careciendo de una comprensión y estrategia adecuada para enfrentar el conflicto, el gobierno de Belaunde así como los subsiguientes de Alan García y Alberto Fujimori privilegiaron la represión, incurriendo en prácticas generalizadas y sistemáticas de violación de derechos humanos, que incluyeron la

existencia de escuadrones de la muerte. Algunos de los crímenes de estos comandos paramilitares fueron materia de exhaustiva investigación y un prolongado proceso judicial que ha culminado con una sentencia condenatoria que impone al ex dictador Fujimori la sanción de 25 años de pena privativa de la libertad.

La guerra interna afectó a buena parte del país, y principalmente a los más pobres y excluidos. El trabajo desplegado por la CVR le permitió constatar que existió una notoria relación entre situación de pobreza y exclusión social, y probabilidad de ser víctima de la violencia. Eso se corrobora cuando, además de otros factores, se conoce que el 85% de las víctimas pertenecían a las regiones más pobres del país.

La peor parte la llevaron poblaciones del Perú rural, andino y selvático, campesino, pobre, y poco instruido, cuya suerte no fue sentida como propia por el resto del país. Asesinatos y aniquilamientos selectivos, masacres y arrasamientos de comunidades enteras, cruenta rutina informativa que no se tomó el trabajo siquiera de averiguar el número y quienes eran las víctimas.

Por eso es que la muerte de Matías pareciera ser un punto de quiebre alentador en el país pero, como se verá después, lamentablemente no fue tal.

### Trabajos de exhumación

Hace dos años, en mayo de 2008, empezaron los trabajos de exhumación en la fosa común más grande del Perú identificada hasta ahora. En ella se encontrarían los restos de cerca de 100 personas de un número mayor de varones, y sobre todo mujeres y niños, ejecutados extrajudicialmente en diciembre de 1984. Ocurrió en Putis, comunidad del distrito de Santillana, provincia de Huanta, Ayacucho.

Se trató de una sucesión de actos perversos. El informe final de la CVR registró algunos de ellos, otros datos los conocimos recién casi 24 años después por el testimonio de personas que sobrevivieron la tragedia, que ya no quieren ocultar su dolor.

Alrededor de ciento cincuenta personas de Vizcatampata, Rumichaca, Cayramayo, Orccohuasi y otras comunidades, llegaron a Putis confiados en la promesa de los militares instalados en la zona de brindarles protección. Eran personas que vivían asediados por terroristas de Sendero Luminoso pero también de otros, del Ejército Peruano. Eran personas que querían vivir en paz pero fueron engañados, y obligados a ca-

var su propia fosa traicioneramente asesinados.

Estos comuneros, sin embargo, no tuvieron la “buena suerte” de Matías. A pesar de tratarse de una masacre que concitó la atención de diversos medios del país y de agencias internacionales, ninguna autoridad rechazó el excesivo salvajismo de los perpetradores, pero hubo sí quienes se indignaron. No por la barbarie perpetrada, sino por el insistente reclamo para que se haga justicia, de familiares de las víctimas y de representantes de instituciones de derechos humanos.

Por qué un país que reacciona tan rápida y coherentemente frente al crimen de Matías, no reacciona igual frente al crimen de más de cien personas, en su mayoría mujeres y niños, vilmente asesinados?. Matías era un pequeño tierno e indefenso, un perro de raza schnauzer, pero nadie ha sugerido que su vida haya valido más que la de cien personas, o una.

Viví varios años en Ayacucho, la región que registró el mayor número de víctimas durante el conflicto armado interno, y en muchas ocasiones escuché el testimonio de personas que decían que a sus hijos, esposos, y hermanos, los habían matado como a perros. Creo que se quedaron cortas, en Putis, y en varios otros lugares, los trataron –y tratan aún- mucho peor.

Otra vez la pregunta, por qué un país que reacciona rápida y coherentemente frente al crimen de un perro, no reacciona igual frente al crimen bárbaro de cien personas?.

Cuestión embarazosa que merece responderse, y que plantea la necesidad y desafío de hacer o reconstruir la memoria. Tarea nada fácil cuando hay tantos, y muchos de ellos poderosos, que pretenden que hay episodios de nuestra historia que deben esconderse y hasta borrarse por resultar inconvenientes por trágicos y vergonzosos, o simplemente por pereza o temor para asumir lo que esa historia señala como cuentas por saldar.

### La Memoria como derecho

Dice Héctor Schmucler que “la vida de los hombres se edifica sobre algunos silencios. También la de las naciones. Silencios, es decir, voluntad de olvido que a veces es deseo de que los otros olviden lo que uno no puede olvidar.” Reflexión que compartimos en países que han atravesado periodos de violencia política, y que explica tantas propuestas de amnistía y punto final, que no son más que pretensiones de olvido, y de impunidad.



Tratar de olvidar hechos de barbarie como los ocurridos en Putis es querer evitar afrontar momentos de nuestra historia que fueron, según la CVR, marcas de horror y deshonra para el Estado y sociedad peruanos. Y como sostiene Schmucler, no es la “verdad histórica” lo que intenta olvidarse, sino la responsabilidad de preguntarse porqué el crimen se hizo posible. No lo que ocurrió, sino cómo ocurrió.

Quienes creen que la historia se puede reducir, recortar, y hasta detener, olvidan algo fundamental. Reconocer plenamente nuestra historia, importa para afrontar la vida hoy, con todo lo que ello implica. Por eso es necesario reivindicar esas memorias excluidas durante tantos años, y aún ahora.

El Informe Final de la Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación es, en ese sentido, un avance sustantivo. Representa una memoria del conflicto que incluye la voz y el sentimiento de personas y pueblos marginados. No importaban, eran no-sujetos, eran no-personas, no eran. Entonces hacer memoria significa reconocerlos, hacer efectivos sus derechos, de manera póstuma en muchísimos casos, y un ejercicio de contrición personal y colectivo que reivindica la dignidad de los ausentes, y nos permite recuperar la nuestra.

### **Lugar de la Memoria, lugar de paradojas**

El escritor uruguayo Eduardo Galeano ha dicho, “Los desaparecidos nos piden que luchemos por la liberación de la memoria, que sigue presa. Nuestro país quiere dejar de ser un santuario de la impunidad, y en esa dirección estamos dando, por fin, después de tantos años, los primeros pasos.”

Galeano dice también que quisiera contribuir al rescate de la memoria secuestrada de toda América, pero sobre todo de América Latina, tierra despreciada y entrañable.

En el Perú, uno de sus colegas tiene la oportunidad de contribuir fundamentalmente hoy para alcanzar ese objetivo. Se trata de Mario Vargas Llosa, brillante e influyente escritor, ideológica y políticamente diferente, si no contrario a Galeano, que se vio de pronto comprometido, para muchos sorprendentemente, en un proceso donde es más común identificar a gentes de izquierda.

Vargas Llosa apareció en el momento adecuado. El Gobierno peruano había anunciado su rechazo a una donación del Ejecutivo alemán de dos millones de dólares para la construcción y

mantenimiento de un “Museo de la Memoria” en homenaje a las víctimas del terrorismo. Las explicaciones, sería un exceso llamarle razones, para tal decisión fueron, estamos acostumbrados, absurdas.

Decían los opositores al museo que no era bueno echar más leña al fuego, o que era preferible destinar la donación a proyectos asistenciales directos para las víctimas del terrorismo, como si un museo fuese un edificio ornamental y carente de sentido. Ignoraban también que los alemanes financiaban varios proyectos sociales en el país, y que seguían dispuestos a hacerlo sin necesidad de renunciar al museo.

Fue entonces cuando Vargas Llosa, y otros destacados intelectuales, artistas, y líderes de diversos sectores expresaron públicamente a través de un pronunciamiento que, “Es sorprendente e ingrato constatar que el Gobierno del Perú ha rechazado dicho ofrecimiento, lo cual indica su desinterés de base en realizar la obra.” Para hacer más explícita su posición, Vargas Llosa abordó el tema en uno de sus artículos donde atribuyó a la intolerancia y a la incultura de la clase política peruana y latinoamericana el hecho de que el gobierno del presidente Alan García haya rechazado la donación alemana.

Quizás por las críticas, presión ciudadana, o súbita recuperación de la sensatez, el presidente García cambió de parecer, aceptó la donación alemana, y nombró al mismo Vargas Llosa presidente de la comisión pro museo de la memoria.

### **Carrera de obstáculos**

No será el primer sitio de memoria en el país pero acaso el más importante. Por eso será que a diferencia de otros espacios éste convoque tantos opositores. Figuran allí personajes como el Cardenal Juan Luis Cipriani, el vicepresidente Luis Giampietri, el ministro Rey Rey, periodistas, altos jefes militares, y muchos otros que persisten en hacer creer que todo es una tontería.

En medio de todo eso hay buenas noticias. Una de ellas fue la aprobación, por parte de la Municipalidad de Miraflores, de la cesión en uso de un terreno de 8 mil 301 m<sup>2</sup> ubicado en el acantilado de la Costa Verde, para la construcción del Museo de la Memoria.

Decisión que pese a haber sido unánime no fue fácil para el alcalde de ese distrito, Manuel Masías, y su cuerpo de regidores, que tuvieron que superar la presión y gritería cotidiana de grupos de poder absolutamente comprometidos con la im-

punidad, y que soliviantados por más de un ministro, tres diarios limeños, una decena de congresistas y un cardenal, asemejan por su brutalidad a una jauría de pitbulls cuando se trata de atacar a quienes hablan de memoria o pretenden justicia.

Como dijo Vargas Llosa, ahora presidente de la Comisión de Alto Nivel encargada de coordinar y promover el diseño, la organización, implementación y gestión del proyecto del Museo de la Memoria, la decisión de la Municipalidad de Miraflores fue un gesto generoso y patriótico, y creo que puede decirse también de un profundo sentido ético y democrático pues responde al imperativo de promover los derechos humanos.

Falta mucho por recorrer, pero es posible confiar en las personas que conforman la comisión. Hay que reconocer que fue un acierto invitarles, pues más allá de si se simpatiza o no con la línea política o ideológica de algunos de ellos, nadie ha puesto en duda sus trayectorias democráticas.

### **Pasos para la paz**

Un Museo, o cualquier otro sitio de memoria, sirven para recordar, rememorar lo que ocurrió, y rendir tributo a las víctimas. No cierra mágicamente las heridas. Tampoco sustituyen la justicia y la verdad.

Su utilidad radica en que quienes no vivieron esa época de horror puedan conocer lo que pasó. Promueve la concienciación de la población acerca de la gravedad del proceso de violencia, los derechos violentados, la discriminación y la exclusión de las víctimas. Genera espacios de diálogo, y quizás de compromiso para no repetir los horrores del pasado y apostar por un futuro de paz.

Una vez dijo el ex presidente chileno Ricardo Lagos, “Una sociedad no se hace más humana negando el dolor ni las páginas oscuras de su historia; al contrario, con ello sólo se denigra y envilece.” Un museo, un sitio de la memoria ayuda a evitar precisamente eso.

### **Colofón**

Hace dos años, en mayo de 2008, cuando se excavaban las fosas de Putis me di cuenta que había muchas personas allí que no solo querían recuperar los restos de sus seres queridos. Querían recuperar la esperanza.

Tiempo después, el día del entierro digno de las víctimas, pude decir que estaban entre nosotros

no para implorar tristezas, ni demandar discursos de notables, si no para disfrutar la compañía de los suyos, de aquellos que les cobijaron en sus sueños, y resistieron la indiferencia y el olvido.

Baluartes de la memoria, más que los museos, son las madres, padres, hijos y hermanos. Aquellos que sufrieron la partida, y siempre les amaron, sin reproches.

Una poeta que pasó diez años de su vida en una cárcel de máxima seguridad del Perú, dice en uno de sus versos: “escribir es hacer bulla en medio del cerebro, para que el sonido cruel del silencio, no nos detone en las sienes, ni explote el corazón.”

Hacer memoria es lo mismo. Decir nunca más a la barbarie, y gritar nunca más al silencio, aquél fundado en el miedo, la complicidad o la cobardía. Ese silencio, ese olvido, tarde o temprano puede estallarnos en la cara. ■

Germán Vargas es director del organismo no gubernamental Paz y Esperanza, basado en Lima, Perú.

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# La porfiada memoria

Marcia Scantlebury

*En Chile, no ha sido fácil para la Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia estructurar una política de derechos humanos porque, a comienzos de la transición, persistían aún profundas divisiones en el país. Hoy día se puede decir que hemos avanzado, pero aún queda mucho por hacer para levantar el velo del silencio que esconde los crímenes perpetrados en esta larga y angosta geografía de fin de mundo.*

Durante la dictadura del General Augusto Pinochet, miles de chilenos y chilenas fueron perseguidos, privados de libertad, exiliados, ejecutados, torturados o hechos desaparecer. Recuperada la democracia, los gobiernos de la Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia instituyeron las comisiones de Verdad y Reconciliación (1990) y de Reparación y Reconciliación (1992-1996).

Estas lograron identificar a 3.186 desaparecidos, ejecutados o asesinados por la dictadura. Y, luego, la Comisión sobre Prisión Política y Tortura (2003-2005) individualizó a 28.459 víctimas de las prácticas represivas del gobierno militar. Los resultados de estas investigaciones sobre una realidad oculta durante más de 30 años impactaron profundamente a la comunidad nacional.

Los pasados vinculados a guerras o dictaduras suelen provocar conflictos entre las diferentes formas de mirar la historia y, entonces, la memoria, lejos de ser un espacio neutral, se convierte en un campo de batalla cultural y política.

A esto se suma el hecho de que Chile es un país con un profundo temor al debate y, de acuerdo a las investigaciones realizadas por nuestro equipo, asocia la discusión y el disenso a la idea de quiebre, de enfrentamiento y, como resultado, de desgracia y dolor. De allí que la creación de un Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos ha rem-

ecido fuertemente a una sociedad aún marcada por la tradición del discurso único heredado del régimen militar y de la negación de la evidencia.

## Construyendo una cultura de respeto

Sin embargo, a juicio de la Presidenta Michelle Bachelet, la imposibilidad de establecer una mirada única no puede ser pretexto para dar la espalda a lo ocurrido. De allí que haya manifestado su convicción de que sólo enfrentando los dolorosos episodios vividos por nuestro país durante la Dictadura será posible construir una cultura de respeto a los derechos fundamentales.

Este ha sido el propósito de su proyecto emblemático: el Museo de la Memoria y de los Derechos Humanos. Por eso, la línea editorial de este espacio se sustenta en los contenidos de los informes de las comisiones de verdad y su exposición establece cuenta de la violación sistemática de los derechos humanos por parte del Estado de Chile entre los años 1973 y 1990. Así, una realidad que había permanecido oculta en nuestro país se transformó en espacio de memoria, poniéndose a disposición de toda la sociedad.

Negación que utilizó la dictadura cuando bombardeó el palacio presidencial y clausuró su puerta lateral: si no existía la puerta, nadie había salido por allí. Cuando cambió el número al recinto de detención ubicado en la calle Londres 38: si el número no coincidía, las víctimas nunca habían estado en el lugar. Y en el caso de los desaparecidos: si no había muerto, no había crimen.

Al no reconocer los derechos de las víctimas, los agentes del Estado les negaron la calidad de seres humanos, su existencia e identidad. Y esta política, que se implementó mediante la tortura, la ejecución sumaria y la desaparición, también se expresó a través de la privación de su nacionalidad o el desconocimiento de su existencia legal.

De allí que un propósito importante de las medidas de reparación implementadas por el Estado haya sido revertir esta situación reforzando la identidad y el protagonismo de las víctimas en nuestra sociedad. Es parte de su dignificación y ayuda a involucrar a la ciudadanía en una profunda reflexión sobre las consecuencias de la intolerancia. Porque, aunque sea imposible reparar lo irreparable, es indispensable generar condiciones que permitan que las víctimas se sientan parte de la



*El Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos en Santiago de Chile.*

sociedad que una vez las excluyó. Sin embargo, el objetivo es que los contenidos del Museo trasciendan las experiencias individuales para interpretar a todo el país y proyectarse hacia el porvenir.

Hoy, gracias a los informes de las comisiones y a la perseverancia de las agrupaciones de derechos humanos, la mayoría de los chilenos conoce lo sucedido en nuestro país y rechaza lo ocurrido. A esto se suma el hecho de que, además de impulsar las tareas de reparación, uno de los ejes de la política del gobierno ha sido el rescate de la memoria de nuestro pasado reciente.

Con esto se ha buscado lograr que el país reconozca la tragedia, la asuma como propia y conmemore con respeto a las víctimas. Recordar es importante para sanar el alma de nuestra nación.

‘No podemos cambiar nuestro pasado, sólo nos queda aprender de lo vivido. Esa es nuestra oportunidad y nuestro desafío,’ ha dicho la Presidenta Michelle Bachelet, enfatizando la necesidad de reconstruir la memoria para con-

vertirla en experiencia, y fuente de aprendizaje.

De esto se ha derivado la necesidad de rescatar y catastrar los lugares que fueron utilizados como recintos de detención, tortura y exterminio de las víctimas y reconvertirlos con un sentido formativo. Es el caso de Villa Grimaldi, el centro de tortura más importante del país, donde las propias víctimas y sus familiares construyeron un Parque por la Paz.

### **Espacios de encuentro**

En Chile los memoriales han sido espacios de encuentro que hablan de un pacto para no olvidar. Ya a partir del año 2002, las organizaciones de derechos humanos, con el apoyo del Estado, comenzaron a construirlos y en la actualidad se han levantado más de veinte.

En este contexto se enmarca también el Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos. Este espacio público ubicado en un barrio tradicional de Santiago de Chile, está dirigido a toda la sociedad y pretende ser un poderoso instrumento pedagógico destinado

a hacer realidad el imperativo del ‘Nunca más’.

La idea es que en una forma dinámica, e interactiva preserve y haga accesible al público las historias de vida de las víctimas, la documentación, los recortes o notas de prensa y los objetos que dan cuenta del golpe de Estado, de la represión de los años posteriores, de la resistencia, del exilio y de la solidaridad internacional.

Su patrimonio de archivos documentales contempla colecciones en distintos formatos y soportes, testimonios orales y escritos, documentos jurídicos, cartas personales, relatos, producción literaria, material de prensa escrita, artesanía carcelaria, largometrajes, material histórico y fotografías documentales.

También dispone de un archivo radial con todo el material radial del período de la muestra estable y otro audiovisual que incluye los testimonios de las víctimas y protagonistas políticos, periodísticos, sindicales, artísticos y del movimiento social.

El Museo cuenta con una gran nave para exhibiciones, un área administrativa, de colecciones y archivos, una biblioteca y aulas para las labores pedagógi-

cas. Dispone también de espacios para actividades culturales y para la realización de cursos, seminarios, charlas o reuniones que permiten a agrupaciones de víctimas, organizaciones de derechos humanos y movimientos ciudadanos realizar diversas actividades vinculadas a los temas propios del Museo.

Abierto a la ciudadanía, en su interior es posible contemplar todo lo relacionado con el calvario de las víctimas, entre sus funciones está la custodia de los archivos de derechos humanos que fueron declarados por UNESCO ‘Memoria del Mundo’. Estos se encuentran disponibles para ser vistos, investigados y consultados por las actuales y futuras generaciones: más del 50 por ciento de la población del país no había nacido cuando ocurrió el Golpe de Estado.

Para definir los contenidos e identidad del Museo se concertaron voluntades y se propiciaron múltiples interlocuciones. Aplicando criterios de museología participativa los encargados del proyecto se reunieron con la comunidad, las organizaciones civiles y de derechos humanos, artistas, educadores, historiadores, psicólogos y museólogos.

Además de la muestra estable, apoyada en cultura y tecnología que da cuenta del calvario de las víctimas, de sus luchas y creatividad, el edificio dispone de espacios para actividades educativas y de investigación destinados a adultos y niños, de salas para actividades culturales y de un auditorio apto para seminarios y charlas.

En sus aulas se difunden conocimientos destinados a informar y estimular en los visitantes y, especialmente en los jóvenes, la reflexión sobre la importancia de la paz, las consecuencias de la intolerancia y la



*Foto tomada el día de la inauguración con los cuatro presidentes de la Concertación: Michelle Bachelet, Ricardo Lagos, Eduardo Frei y Patricio Aylwin.*

necesidad de una cultura de inclusión, resolución pacífica de conflictos, respeto por la diversidad, la solidaridad y la valoración recíproca.

El Museo está disponible para que se discutan en sus diversos escenarios todos los temas que involucren en la actualidad a los derechos humanos en nuestro país y en el mundo: el daño ecológico, el matonaje en los colegios, la discriminación de las etnias, el trato a los inmigrantes o la violencia doméstica.

Al final de la muestra, algunas cabinas audiovisuales esperan para registrar las opiniones de los visitantes y sus propios testimonios y reflexiones.

Es probable que en este lugar encontremos más preguntas que respuestas. Porque reparar las dolorosas heridas del pasado no es fácil. Quienes sufrieron la prisión, la tortura, la detención y la desaparición o ejecución de sus seres queridos, difícilmente pueden ser compensados. Sin embargo, su dolor debe ser reconocido y, hacerlo, implica hacerse cargo de sus legítimas aspiraciones de verdad, justicia y reparación.

Necesitamos aprender de estos hechos y sacar conclusiones que vayan más allá de lo sucedido, más allá de nosotros y que sirvan a las nuevas generaciones para construir un futuro mejor.

Así el Museo operará como un puente entre el pasado y el presente y, cuando desaparezca nuestra generación en este espacio perdurará nuestra obstinada memoria. ■

Marcia Scantlebury es Directora del Proyecto Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos, Santiago de Chile.

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# Rwanda's paradox of remembering and suffering

**Jean-Pierre Karegeye**

*The history of the 20th is marked by two world wars and at least three genocides: Armenians crossed off our maps, Jews slain in gas chambers, and Tutsi with their throats slit by machetes in Rwanda. This grim picture is counterbalanced in the following article by reflections on how to move towards processes that heal.*

Occasions of massive violence have significantly provoked the advent of testimonial accounts. Jean Norton Cru, through his analyses and critiques of accounts of World War I, asked himself, as a precursor, about the conditions for the possibility of a literature of testimony. From April to July 1994, an estimated 1,000,000 people were killed in Rwanda; this means at least 10,000 were killed every single day for three months.

This extermination was not a product of emotional reaction. It was systematically planned by the Rwandan State. Political parties and the administration were engaged to exterminate the Tutsi population. How does the remembrance of such evil obligate us here and now? For survivors, to remember is to tell their story, to testify that genocide took place, they survived, and they lost their relatives.

During a symposium on Human Rights, an African politician, addressing the assembly, declared: 'Every human being has the right to life... No one can be deprived arbitrarily of this right.' Upon hearing these words, several survivors of Tutsi genocide in the audience held back tears. There is much to be considered about the scepticism of the sur-

vivors. That the affirmation alone of such an evident truth, of an axiom so totally and so simply human, seems to the victims to be derisive or insulting, reflects on the exact level of the morality of our times and the cynicism of our politicians.

Why these tears? Not because such a declaration seems false in itself, but because it seems absurd in the abyss in which the 20<sup>th</sup> century has left us. Does not our entire civilization carry contempt for human life? Let us count: three genocides, at least, and two world wars! Death, in the forms it has taken, submits to the law of numbers: we kill in series like we produce toys and machetes.

To a certain degree, human rationality no longer understands the horror of the numbers. It is no longer extermination, but instead a statistic or a detail of history. Were the survivors wrong to 'look back' during the symposium?

### **'Don't look back!'**

We know the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. Gods, humans, wild animals or birds: everything succumbs to the voice of the poet. Alas, he loses his dear Eurydice, bitten by a serpent. Orpheus decides to descend to the underworld to seek from Hades Eurydice's return to life. He gets Eurydice's shadow to follow him, but he must not look back. The fear of losing that which he loves is strong. He must reassure himself. The poor man, unable to resist, breaks the command; and the image of Eurydice evaporates.

When the poet dies, his soul will not be allowed to return to look at his loved one. We accept that the abyss that separates the survivors and the dead is insurmountable. Can we say that sometimes the survivor is among the living and his people have disappeared? Can we separate him from these people? Does not the destiny of the survivor lie in the realization that Orpheus no longer lives with Eurydice?

The stories of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah carry the idea of moral and/or political excess. The fact remains that an unusual scene announces the imminent destruction of two cities. The Lot family can save itself if it respects this decree: 'Escape for thy life; look not behind thee neither stay thou in all the Plain; escape to the mountain lest thou be consumed.' And it continues! The cities were put to fire and sword; Lot's wife defies the command and becomes a column of salt.

'Look not behind thee!' comes like an order to not

turn back to the catastrophic scenes. One could say that the command does not necessarily concern the return to the indicated places, but instead prevents the risks of a memory that takes away the person that carries it. Salt, in certain texts of the Old Testament, refers to the idea of punishment, of desolation and poison, yet on the other hand, reveals itself as a substance of flavour and wisdom in other references.

'Escape, lest thou be consumed.' Escape to where? We go where we come from: we live with our executioners; we carry the signs of the genocide with us. Here we enter into the particular nature of the genocide of the Rwandan Tutsis. Alain Goldschaläger, a Canadian scholar, has deplored the fact that the post-genocide situation does not constitute 'a clean and final break', the killers continue to live with the survivors.<sup>1</sup> He fears that testimony does not allow for, in this case, the possibility of 'catharsis.' There is a permanent risk of being transfixed by the gaze that focuses unavoidably on things of the past and on the victim, like the reflection of a mirror. Body, speech, and memory are all affected.

For the Cameroonian writer, Patrice Nganang, 'Guhahamuka exposes the connection between the trembling body and "the words that refuse to be said" in the passage of memory towards its narration.'<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the looking back and the salt statue simply represent the impossibility of seeing and narrating. Perhaps both expose the vulnerability of the victim who cannot look.

The Kinyarwanda verb 'Guhahamuka' becomes frozen or liberated speech that seals the communion between the living and the dead. Claude Mouchard casts light upon the range of this word: 'Is it primarily for a close friend, for a disappearing friend that you must talk about his death?'<sup>3</sup> And if the dead spoke instead of the living? To whom does the voice belong, to whom does the message belong, in a testimony? Only fiction can answer this question.

The first Greek myth represents the impasse of a memory enclosed within itself. The distance that separates the dead and the survivors is unfathomable. The second Hebrew myth recalls the circumstances in which memory destroys the victim. Finally, the third myth refers to the possibilities of a fecund memory, or precisely what the Senegalese poet and sociologist, Babacar Sall, calls 'fertile wound'. The paths of a fertile memory are steep and arduous. The merit consists in climbing them. Some pitfalls appear in

the elaboration of the Tutsis' writing of testimony.

The Sankofa myth comes from Africa. The taboo is lifted. Here we have it! The Akan culture spread throughout several countries of West Africa, shares the story of a mythic bird, the *Sankofa*. This bird walks or flies with his head always turned in the direction from which he came with an egg on his beak. Clearly, the egg symbolizes this future. This image has been adopted by several African-American centers and universities. The Sankofa's task is difficult because he must look back; he must return to the place he has been to gain wisdom.

### **'Look back to gain wisdom!'**

The association of survivors of the Rwandan Tutsi genocide is called 'Ibuka,' which can be translated as 'remember.' The first objectives are defined in terms of memory and justice. 'Remember,' without a doubt, enters into the logic of memory. But we see that Ibuka was born out of urgent situations. The name 'remember' makes us think of the project of perpetuating the memory of the victims. We know that Ibuka works to 'combat genocide and its consequences and prevent it from ever happening again.'

The urgencies consist of assisting and defending the rescued, researching evidence of the genocide officials' involvement, fighting against impunity, and promoting and, of course, perpetuating the memory of the victims of the genocide. We will note that the question of memory comes in last. This is to say that, by responding to emergencies, 'remember' acts as part of a social programme.

Marie-Odile Godard reminds us that the infinite 'kwibuka,' 'to remember,' is a social or communal act in the Rwandan tradition, because one remembers around a fire, as a family, with neighbours, to appease the dead. The memory becomes a pact between the living and the dead, provided that one doesn't fall into Orpheus' situation.<sup>4</sup>

The word 'sankofa' means that one does not break a taboo if one looks back in order to learn to avoid the errors of the past. As with the idea of fertile memory, George Santayana says: 'Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.' And if this anamnesis is made up of a gaze, a journey, what will it become to a survivor of extreme violence who tries to 'look back'? And what if he answers us with this adage: 'In order to know where you are going, you have to know where you have been.'

Returning to the sites of torture, in the case of genocides, can only be returning to oneself. Murambi, Nyamata, and Nyamirambo engrave themselves on the body of the victim. But perhaps this return, without deceiving oneself of its goals, is a form of knowing that allows one to by-pass, to undo the traps hung over the paths of the future. This perspective has two facets. The first refers to a mummified, paralyzing, or petrifying memory. The other refers to useful memory or fertile memory. The perspective, in its second axis, presents itself as an adventure whose force is based on the idea of passion, including suffering.

It is because of this that the horizon of this perspective is 'dangerous,' as stated by Jean-Baptiste Metz.<sup>5</sup> It is dangerous because, on the one hand, it is connected to the 'memory of evil'. The fractured story, perhaps of the survivor, exposes the power of this troublesome memory. On the other hand, this joyless perspective comes as a last resort. We are confronted with the paradox of memory. Memory is both suffering and consolation.

The paradox of memory does not exclude the possibility of rubbing salt into the wound. The challenge consists in turning unacceptable and unjustified wounds into fertile wounds. This task goes beyond the nature of survivors' narratives. It involves the whole nation. As Babacar Sall pointed out:

'The important thing is not only a common memory, but a collective future through the construction of another possible history. How to transform the genocide into a wound that is fruitful is the question summing up the Rwandan problem... Rwanda's specificity in the African context, and her will to transform the genocide's wounded memory into a resource for establishing a new contract of confidence and solidarity between Rwandans, raises the question of historical innovation. What should be a major handicap has been transformed into momentum, into enthusiasm for reinventing the nation, citizenship, and the nation-state on the basis of a new agreement.'<sup>6</sup>

A few clarifications are in order. Speaking of 'fertile or productive wounds' does not make genocide a 'happy fault', but rather reflects the determination



of survivors to defy destiny or simply not to give up in the face of extreme violence. This determination is itself complex to the extent that there exists, on the one hand, a community of survivors for whom genocidal wounds do not derive solely from memory, but from a reality that inhabits the body, recalling what Aimé Césaire describes as ‘inhabiting a sacred wound’ or ‘inhabiting one’s wounds’.

On the other hand, ‘fertile wounds’ is also a social programme. To a certain degree, the survivor’s memory negotiates with the social contract defined by the State. The survivor thereby confronts the State, which sees in him or her one ‘citizen’ among many. Looking back for ‘fertile wounds’ is a paradigm: how can genocide be commemorated every year without being a ‘hostage to the past’?<sup>7</sup> And how can society move on while standing up to revisionist movements and acknowledging the need to prevent future genocides? ■

#### Notes

1. Alain Goldshläger, ‘Témoignages des victimes: modes opératoires’ in Jean-Pierre Karegeye (ed), *Rwanda. Récits du génocide, traversée de la mémoire* (Brussels: Espace de libertés, 2009), p. 132
2. Patrice Nganang, ‘Une question de génération’ in Jean-Pierre Karegeye (ed), *Rwanda. Récits du génocide, traversée de la mémoire*, p. 247
3. Claude Mouchard, *Qui si je criais...? Oeuvres-témoignages dans les tourmentes du XX e siècle* (Paris: Laurence Teper, 2007) p.19
4. See Marie-Odile Godard, ‘les rêves traumatiques: douleur d’une mémoire extrême’ in Jean-Pierre Karegeye (ed), *Rwanda. Récits du génocide, traversée de la mémoire*, pp. 87-97.
5. I draw my inspiration from Jean-Baptiste Metz’s idea of ‘dangerous memory’, which he compared to the Christian celebration of Christ’s death and resurrection.
6. Babacar Sall, ‘Le Rwanda, une chance pour l’Afrique?’ in: Jean-Pierre Karegeye (ed), *Rwanda. Récits du génocide, traversée de la mémoire*, p. 257.
7. When President Paul Kagame received President Nicolas Sarkozy on February 25, 2010, they held a joint press conference in which Kagame said ‘We refused to be hostages of the past’ referring to the tumultuous relationship between Rwanda and France in relation to the Tutsi genocide.

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# Memories of violence in Mozambique

Victor Igreja

*Exploring the ethics of memory as cultivated by national political elites and ordinary survivors of mass political violence, this article analyses the role of memories and the implications for sustainable peace and reconciliation in Mozambique. It argues that in the aftermath of civil war and totalitarian political repression, a combination of cultural, religious and political pluralism coupled with the fact that memories have multiple meanings and purposes makes it very difficult (if not impossible) to completely suppress memories of serious violations from both the private and public sphere.*

The Mozambican civil war (1976-92) opposed the ruling Liberation Front of Mozambique (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique, FRELIMO) against the rebel movement Mozambican National Resistance (Resistência Nacional Moçambicana, RENAMO). In this article, the strategies of the politicians and ordinary survivors of the civil war are viewed through the conceptual lens of an ‘ethics of memory.’

Avishai Margalit (2002) considers that ethics of memory is related to issues about what should be remembered and what should be forgotten in society. Yet, since memory implies ‘a discrimination between items which will be preserved and those which will be suppressed’ (Petrov, 1989: 78), the process of discriminating is politically controversial and a source of great division in society.

In 1962, after almost four decades of effective Portuguese colonization, various groups of Mozambicans were united in a common front, Frelimo,

to fight against Portuguese colonial subjugation. The armed struggle for independence under the leadership of Frelimo lasted a decade (1964-74). In June 1975, the country achieved its independence and Frelimo assumed total political control.

Attempts at creating other political parties were violently crushed; some of the representatives of emergent political forces were arrested and sent to re-education camps as a punishment. Through the practice of so-called revolutionary justice, political dissidents were executed amid accusations of treason. The whereabouts of these executed dissidents remain part of the secret history of Frelimo (Cabrita, 2000).

In 1977 Frelimo transformed itself from a liberation movement into a political party and installed a Marxist-Leninist dictatorial regime in the country. Purges from public office and enterprises owned by Mozambicans who had allegedly collaborated with the former colonial regime followed; private properties were nationalized and considerable numbers of Portuguese public servants and business people fled from Mozambique to South Africa and Portugal.

Frelimo's support of the liberation movements in former Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa strained relations between the Frelimo government and Mozambique's neighbouring countries. As a result, the Ian Smith regime invaded Mozambique and committed massacres in the centre of the country. This foreign invasion coincided with the beginning of the protracted civil war between the Frelimo government and Renamo.

### **The civil war and the peace building process in Mozambique**

The causes of the Mozambican civil war remain an issue of serious political dispute. For Frelimo, the origins of the civil war are related to the Rhodesian direct foreign aggression and indirect destabilization of Mozambique through the instrumentalization of Mozambicans. Frelimo argues that this instrumentalization led to the creation of Renamo by the ex-Rhodesian secret services. With the disappearance of the Rhodesian regime, Frelimo argues that control of Renamo was handed over to the former apartheid regime in South Africa.

The implication of this position is that for Frelimo, the post-colonial war was never an internal legitimate struggle based on ideological purposes. And during the first decade of the

war, Renamo was publicly treated as *Bandidos Armados* (Armed Bandits) and puppets of the former Rhodesian and apartheid regimes.

Renamo's position diametrically differs from that of Frelimo. For the former rebel movement, the origins of the civil war are related to Frelimo's post-independence policies of restriction of individual freedoms, persecution and killing of political dissidents and the establishment of re-education camps to punish alleged pariahs of the socialist revolution. Through their policies, Frelimo also banned traditional authorities including traditional healers, which are now playing a key role to heal the wounds of the civil war in the country.

Overall Renamo attributes responsibility for the post-independence mass violence to Frelimo's Marxist-Leninist dictatorship. In this regard, Renamo treated Frelimo as a group of *Comunistas* (Communists) and they use Frelimo's inadequate socialist policies to argue that their war was part of a legitimate struggle to install freedom and a pluralistic democracy in Mozambique.

The Mozambican civil war was one of the most viciously destructive wars during the 1980s in Africa and it created an overwhelming humanitarian disaster. The war engulfed the entire country and also involved foreign troops from former apartheid South Africa, Rhodesia, and later Zimbabwe. Military instructors from the Soviet Union, Cuba, and the United Kingdom were also involved. It was a protracted war, which generated incredible tragedies: destruction of villages and properties, killing of men and rape of women, forced marriage of young girls to soldiers, food deprivation and famine.

Civilians living in the war-zones were divided between Renamo-controlled areas and the government-controlled communal villages. They continuously shifted from one controlled area to another in search of safety. This search was in vain since neither area provided safety from the extreme insecurity and continuous traumatic experiences.

In the midst of this violence and insecurity, people continued to work in their fields, to get married and divorced, and to do business. Some sort of social life survived to a certain extent (Lubkemann, 2008). However, the devastating effects of war permeated these social relations. It became common place to experience betrayals between neighbours and family members, which led to numerous detentions, acts

of torture and the murder of kin and neighbours.

The escalation of intimate violence over protracted periods made it very difficult to establish clear-cut boundaries between perpetrators, victims and bystanders. On top of these human-made catastrophes, severe drought and famine contributed to aggravate the wartime suffering and conflict.

Following two years of peace negotiations (1990-92), the Frelimo-led government and Renamo managed to reach a General Peace Agreement in October 1992. The fact that the Mozambican civil war ended through a negotiated process and that the parties to the conflict had been involved in the perpetration of serious abuses and war crimes shaped their choices on how to deal with the legacies of the past.

Therefore, the peace agreement did not contemplate the establishment of war tribunals or official truth commissions (as in South Africa) to deal with the serious crimes perpetrated during the civil war. The peace agreement was founded upon reconciliation through ideologies of silence, amnesia and unconditional amnesty. Ten days after signing the peace accords, the Frelimo party promulgated Amnesty Law no. 15/92 for crimes committed between 1979 and 1992. The immediate consequence was that after the war, the soldiers went home (Schafer, 2007) to live side-by-side with the living and dead victims in the same places where the violence took place.

In spite of law No. 15/92, which was enacted to suppress the right to create politico-legal spaces to deal with unresolved wartime legacies, both the political elites operating in the central state institutions and the survivors of the violence at the grassroots level were confronted with memories of the violence. Frelimo and Renamo members in the national parliament appropriated the memories of the civil war and initiated mutual accusations about serious abuses and war crimes.

Over the past ten years, the use of memories as weapons have taken precedence over debates about the best ways to reconstruct and develop the country and the sessions of the national parliament had to be paralysed because of the escalation of verbal violence between the deputies (Igreja, 2008). The reasons behind these memory confrontations are related to the fact that in contexts of cultural, religious and political pluralism, serious debates about what should be remembered and its importance to the establishment of new social and political relations are



inevitable. Complete silence is unrealizable and in one way or another ‘communities must make decisions and establish institutions that foster forgetting as much as remembering’ (Margalit, 2002: 13).

At the community level, the attempts to move on in silence as if nothing serious had happened during the war also led to formidable family conflict and community instability in the war torn societies in the centre of Mozambique. In order to understand the meaningfulness of these conflicts and local attempts to address them, I shall briefly describe the socio-cultural and religious beliefs and practices of the survivors that inhabit these former war affected areas.

### Silence and the eruption of war-related spirits in Gorongosa

Gorongosa is a District of the Sofala Province in the centre of Mozambique and it is founded on patrilineal kinship, polygyny and an agricultural system of production. The social world of the

Gorongosas is permeated by ancestral spirits, non-ancestral spirits, and also animal and nature spirits.

Relations between spirits and living people take place because in Mozambique, as in many other non-Western societies, people's bodies and minds are not only the locus of physiological and psychological processes. Peoples' bodies and minds can also be inhabited by spirits. And spirits are regarded as persons that have their own identities and agency. They also have perceptions, feelings and emotions and they are carriers of memories (Lambek, 1981; Igreja, Dias-Lambranca & Richters, 2008; Masquelier, 2001; Perera, 2001; Rosenthal, 2002; Stoller, 1995). In this regard, spirits establish relations with living people by possessing and taking full control of people's bodies and minds or through dreams (Igreja & Dias-Lambranca, 2006).

Spirits perform various roles: engender serious afflictions, reproduce or contest cultural identity, watch over the land and perform healing. In post-conflict contexts, spirits can be carriers and triggers of individual and collective memories of the violence (Igreja, 2009; Kwon, 2006) and they can enunciate calls for justice (Igreja & Dias-Lambranca, 2008; Mueggler, 2001). In Gorongosa, the name of the ancestral spirits is *dzoca*, which is a set of spirits that for generations possess the living through inheritance through the male line from the same male ancestor to exercise their healing powers. *Dzoca* spirits possess only individuals of families with a healing genealogy so that they can work as *dzoca* healers.

The *dzoca*'s rule of family exclusiveness in possession and healing can be suspended by temporary disruptions triggered by major societal catastrophes. For instance, during the violence of the late 19th century in which southern warriors dominated the central region populations, non-ancestral spirits emerged named *madwite* and *n'fukua*. Non-ancestral spirits also known to be harmful spirits display their power by possessing their hosts and wreaking havoc as a result of alleged past wrongdoings perpetrated by the host's kin (Honwana, 2003; Igreja et al., 2006; Marlin, 2001).

The *madwite* spirits had a reputation for re-enacting the violent behaviour of the invading southern warriors, and *n'fukua* spirits brought severe illnesses through possession afflictions (although these possession states were appeased and kept hidden by the host's family). Over time

*madwite* and *n'fukua* waned and did not leave a local institutional legacy. In the late 20th century, as a result of the Mozambican protracted civil war, *gamba* spirits emerged (Igreja et al., 2008).

### Spirits and memories that heal

*Gamba* is the name of a spirit, an affliction, and also the healer who specializes in *gamba* afflictions. In general, *gamba* is the spirit of male soldiers who died during the civil war. Their bodies were not properly buried, and people living within the war zones amid extreme conditions were alleged to have used pieces of the corpses of fallen soldiers to make protective medicines against war violence. *Gamba* spirits possess the living because of the alleged serious abuses and crimes that occurred during the war.

The intrusive character of *gamba* spirit possession and the memories that they convey to the audience are a way of compelling war survivors to break silence and engage in serious conversation about some of the violent war events. As stated above, the intimacy of civil war violence profoundly undermined family bonds, mutual trust, solidarity ties and respect for some of the traditions that for generations had offered protection and support for family and community members. Thus in the aftermath of the war, victims unilaterally forgave one another and tried to move on in silence. But taking into account the gruesome acts that had taken place on the battle fields, and particularly among the families that lived in the war zones, post-war attempts by survivors to suppress memories were morally unacceptable because it gave rise to feelings that silence could 'no longer enable individuals to perceive the truth of things' (Burrige, 1969: 8). Silence was preventing the war survivors from engaging in new and meaningful social relations.

The process that leads to the creation of such social spaces takes the following route. First, *gamba* spirits possess a person who is a relative of a war survivor that allegedly committed serious abuses and crimes during the war. Usually, but not exclusively, the focal point of *gamba* spirit possession is a woman. With the exception of *gamba* healers who have a symbiotic relation with *gamba* spirits, people possessed by *gamba* spirits suffer from intrusive thoughts about the civil war, insomnia, war-related nightmares in general and nightmares involving sexual assaults.

The host's reproductive capacities are also im-

paired until the needs of the *gamba* spirits are satisfied. War survivors have to decide whether to remain silent or to engage with the past because the blockage of the reproductive functions of war survivors is a severe affliction not only for the possessed individual but also for society as a whole. Therefore, actively and publicly dealing with the memories of the war is one of the preconditions for postwar recovery and establishment of new aspirations in life (Igreja, Kleijn & Richters, 2006).

Second, in the social spaces created by *gamba* spirits, community members (men and women) can safely engage in deliberations about the past, the reasons for the divisions that prevail among them, so that the truths about past abuses and crimes can be publicly disclosed and the suffering acknowledged (Igreja & Dias-Lambranca, 2008).

Evocation of the past is done by means of discourse and bodily performances. During the sessions of *gamba* spirits, *gamba* healers and the participants sing songs evoking memories of war events, abuse, suffering and death. While they sing the *gamba* healers are possessed by their *gamba* spirits; they get hold of a bayonet, which is their working instrument. The bayonet triggers in the audience further painful memories of the war because they were symbolic of the Kalashnikov weapons which the soldiers used to kill many people during the war.

During their performances the *gamba* healers move around in these social spaces always carrying their bayonet; they make different types of gestures and say things related to the war violence: crawling, the position of soldiers firing weapons, fighting, aggressively manipulating their bayonets as if they were going to stab people in the audience.

The objective of these performances is to induce a possession state in the patient. When the *gamba* spirit is in full control of the patient's body then the spirit starts to narrate the grisly events of the past and reveals the ways in which the indicted person participated in these alleged events. The accusations of past wrongdoing are never hastily accepted. The enunciations of the *gamba* spirits generate controversy, there are arguments and counter-arguments and accusations of memory distortion. The role of the *gamba* healers is to mediate the deliberations.

Since the *gamba* healer is also a survivor of past violent experiences and is familiar with the politics of denial, the *gamba* healer supports the *gamba*

spirit's allegations against the indicted person and kin. In order to increase the authority of his voice, the *gamba* spirit has to uncover more unknown memories that render the accusation indisputable.

When this level of evidence production is reached the 'accused' must relent and assume his or her responsibilities in the case. The way in which the evidence unfolds conforms to local notions of truth and the mechanisms to disclose it. Truth is visible and invisible; in cases of invisible truth, through the intervention of spiritual agents the truth can become logically accessible, materialized and visible to everyone. Responsibility for a wrongful act is both individual and collective, and by means of *gamba* spirits, war survivors in Gorongosa deal with their painful memories and construct their own truths about the war.

The emergence of *gamba* spirits removes the need for war victims to engage in acts of revenge against their perpetrators. The local ethics is that 'he who was hurt by the offence and died will return as a *gamba* spirit to reveal and avenge the unjust act.' This cultural belief and practice – in which the spirits of the dead establish the conditions for narrations of shocking memories of mass political violence and for justice to be collectively and publicly created – suggests that access to memory is a right. It is a right because access to memory is one of the key preconditions for a sustainable peace and reconciliation in communities deeply divided by civil war.

## Conclusion

The current ethics of memory in post-civil war Mozambique suggests that the lack of transparency in the process of deciding which events are to be officially remembered and the refusal to accept pluralism as a condition for dealing with the memories of turbulent pasts run the risk of transforming collective memories of past violence into 'programs for revenge and hatred' (Cohen, 2001: 245). The violent debates in the Mozambican national parliament can be seen as part of a publicly undeclared program of vengeance and hatred.

There is much to lose from this state of affairs because 'a society without a (tolerably authentic) knowledge of its past is strongly handicapped in its dealing with the future' (Hosking 1989: 129). In this respect, the existence of independent media could play a pivotal role by creating forums where

individuals or autonomous institutions could tell their own versions of Mozambique's recent history, thereby contributing to enlarging the space for memories and the potential for political participation.

Contrary to the strategies of national political elites, war survivors in Gorongosa managed to develop their own local socio-cultural and religious processes to deal actively with their painful memories of the war. Such local processes demonstrate that with understanding and willingness there are no conflicts that do not have a solution. The courage to face gruesome memories by engaging in public deliberations as perpetrators, victims or both is 'ethically desirable in coming to terms with the past both for the individual and for the collectivity' (LaCapra, 2001: 95).

In this respect Mozambican political elites and their institutions lag behind compared with the courage of war survivors in the centre of Mozambique in dealing publicly with the contradictory and painful memories of the civil war. ■

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# Spain and the memory that will not die

Julius Purcell

*In September 2008 Spain's home-grown 'super-judge' Baltasar Garzón announced that he was investigating not only the whereabouts of the remains of the 'disappeared' of the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), but also the huge numbers of defeated Republicans executed by General Francisco Franco in the grim postwar years. His goal was to try to amass enough evidence to charge Franco's regime posthumously with crimes against humanity. Could it be that, after so long, 'help' and 'pardon' were finally coming to the descendants of those who died defending the Spanish Republic?*

'History to the defeated  
May say Alas but cannot help or pardon.'  
W.H. Auden, 'Spain, 1937'

Auden's anthem to the doomed Spanish Republic, his sombre warning, has rarely been more relevant. According to the great Hispanist Hugh Thomas, the three-year Civil War claimed the lives of 365,000 Spaniards, a toll that includes both those loyal to the fascist rebel Franco and those who opposed him. Some historians put the figure higher. Both sides carried out brutal executions, the bodies of victims often ending up in unmarked mass graves.

When the Civil War ended in 1939, the victorious Franco regime executed an additional one hundred thousand-plus Republican prisoners, many of whose corpses were flung into yet more mass-burial pits. These unmarked mounds, visited stealthily by

the families of the 'defeated' during the dictatorship, are scattered the length and breadth of Spain.

Throughout the 1950s the Franco regime excavated and re-interred with full honours as many as possible of 'their' mass graves – those containing the 60-70,000 soldiers and pro-Franco civilians murdered in the Republican zone during the war itself. The same efforts have never been extended to the Republican defeated. And here is the emotional crux of the debate, without which it is impossible to understand the passion and anger that the graves generate today.

There have been some gestures to honour the Republicans' memory. In 2007 the socialist government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero – himself the grandson of an executed Republican army captain – passed the Historical Memory Law. Facing a backlash from conservatives, the new law was a much-amended version of the sweeping measures some had hoped for, backing down on earlier promises to grant full posthumous pardons to those executed in the postwar period. The new bill merely promised support to the historical memory associations – the loose network of volunteer groups whose members include descendants of executed Republicans – without providing much in the way of state-led initiatives.

Thus, many welcomed Judge Garzón's announcement last September. For the first time, the judiciary was taking the lead. The historical memory associations were the most fervent supporters of Garzón's initiative. While the ruling Socialist Workers' Party gave the judge's actions its cautious respect, other parties on the left were more enthusiastic.

The right, though, railed against the judge for his reckless 'opening of old wounds'. The country's opposition People's Party, some of whose senior members have fathers and grandfathers who served in Franco's 40-year dictatorship, came out strongly against the judge. The Spanish bishops, whose predecessors had endorsed Franco's authoritarian national-Catholicism, also made their disapproval plain.

Within months Garzón's ill-fated process had the Spanish judiciary up in arms; a church- and conservative-led opposition fulminating against any attempt to shine a light on the country's past; and a socialist government, once proud of its policy of historical memory, effectively in retreat. Garzón was forced to drop the investigation in November.

With the investigation halted, Spain once again

failed to offer institutional recognition of the cruelty suffered by its citizens in the Civil War and under the 40-year dictatorship that followed. The events of last fall also reveal the continuing reluctance to evaluate the defeated Republic of the 1930s and its relevance to Spain's democracy today. But if Auden's gloomy warning – that history can merely shrug and say 'Alas' – is being amply fulfilled by Spain's institutions, it is also fuelling the determination of Republican descendants to help the defeated through memory.

### **Painful memories**

Months before Garzón launches his bombshell, I find myself walking along the coast road toward the quiet, French seaside town of Collioure, just north of the Spanish border. It is April 2008 and a friend, Neus Valls, has come up with me from Spain. Below us the tidy, red-roofed town is in bijoux contrast to the vast castle at its center, as austere as a Crusader fort. Behind it rise the green Pyrenean foothills, staked out with vines. On this brilliant spring morning, smells of simmering fennel and cigar smoke drift from the seafront restaurants.

These days Collioure is a place for well-set family tourists, but it was once a place of painful arrivals and departures. A plaque set into the quayside recalls the last Jews in Spain deported from here in the 1490s. Further along, under the mighty retaining wall of the castle, another stone records the numerous Spanish exiles interned here by the French authorities in 1939.

In the winter of that year, the road we are now walking would have been packed with refugees, part of the mass exodus of troops and civilians fleeing the advance of Franco's troops at the end of the Civil War. For Valls, head teacher of an elementary school in Barcelona, Collioure is a place with memories of a more recent exile.

These are not mere day-trippers from over the border: along with dozens of others every weekend, these Spaniards are here on a literary pilgrimage.

She was nineteen in the summer of 1975, and the Franco dictatorship was nearing its end. A scuffle with police at a Barcelona demonstration forced Valls and her friends to make a drastic decision. Panicked at the possibility of arrest, they slung tents into a car and made the dash over the French border some two hours'

drive away, hunkering down here in Collioure.

Valls explains how the group of friends stayed put in a campsite for the whole summer. They swam in the sea every day, but an otherwise typical summer of young freedom in the '70s was shot through with real political danger. It was only in the fall of that year that their families told them it was safe to return.

In the market square, we suddenly become aware of more Spanish spoken around us. Middle-aged and young alike, couples are congregating under the plane trees, their gestures louder and bolder than those of the French.

These, we quickly realize, are not mere day-trippers from over the border: along with dozens of others every weekend, these Spaniards are here on a literary pilgrimage. For among the many exiles who streamed through this town in the winter of the great Republican defeat was none other than Antonio Machado, the greatest Spanish poet of his generation.

Machado's lyric on the 'pathmaker', who makes his own path by walking, is intoned in every corner of the Spanish-speaking world. Its protean form has leant itself to any number of interpretations. Al Gore invoked it in his 2007 Nobel acceptance speech. Here in Collioure, barely days after fleeing Barcelona in February 1939, defeated, ill, and with the Republic in ruins, Machado died in a house overlooking this square.

We follow the pilgrims down what is now called Rue Machado. Valls is pensive, suddenly, caught up in the complex associations this town represents. Some days before, she had told me how her mother still has vivid memories of the night in December 1936 when her own father, Juan Bautista Sostres, failed to return home from work. Sostres, a tram-worker and trade unionist in the city of Zaragoza, was sentenced to death by a Franquista military court days later, the whereabouts of his body never revealed to his family. Only two years ago did Valls's mother, now in her eighties, receive a letter from researchers finally revealing the location of the mass grave where he was buried.

I wonder what has brought these other pilgrims here, what mournful family absences lead them to seek the magic presence of Machado? For while Valls's story may seem dramatic, it is hardly atypical among families of the defeated.

An old, high wall surrounds Collioure cemetery; it has a rural feel, of moss and peace. Machado's



tomb is a large slab in a privileged position at the center, framed by yew trees rustling and alive in the stiff breeze off the sea. The pilgrims cluster around, some taking pictures, others holding books of poetry. The top of the tomb is freighted with fresh and faded bouquets. There is a Republican tricolour, and dozens of scribbled notes weighted with stones rest at the site: 'To the great poet, from your followers... in my breast a wound, and your poems in my heart.'

The intercessions for the prophet-in-exile are brought from all corners of the peninsula: 'To Machado from the residents of Cerdanyola', 'of Soria', 'of Sevilla', 'of Majadahonda, Madrid.' And elsewhere, 'Machado... the memory that will not die.' The only clear patch on the tomb is the epitaph, excerpted from a Machado verse, which has taken on an uncanny significance:

*When the moment comes of my final voyage  
On that ship in which nobody returns,  
You will find me aboard, light of luggage,  
half-naked, like the children of the sea.*

Valls sits down near the tomb. She says she would like to recite some Machado in honour of her grandfather, but when she gets to the second line, the converging emotions of the words and the place overwhelm her. The yews sigh above us, Valls rocking back and forth shaking with sobs.

### Census of the disappeared

Months later, the humid dog days in Barcelona easing toward autumn, the news breaks like a summer storm. It is the first day of September, and Judge Baltasar Garzón is all over the front pages.

In the heat of the early morning, I read the story at the newspaper kiosk. A little way off, an old man stands stock-still in the middle of the street, absorbed in the same pages. By the end of the day, Garzón's planned investigation to compile a census of the disappeared will become one of the biggest news stories of the year.

For over two decades, Baltasar Garzón has been courting both approval and outrage. Appointed a National Court judge in 1988 at just 34 years old, he became a national celebrity after tackling the country's cocaine-trafficking webs. Pictured boarding patrol ships and helicopters, the image of Garzón with his thick hair slicked up over a broad, powerful face,



*Antonio Machado's tomb in Collioure, a place of pilgrimage for Spaniards. (Photo: Sebastia Giralt.) Machado was born in 1875 and died 1939. His later poems are a virtual anthropology of Spain's common people, describing their collective psychology, social mores, and historical destiny. His metaphors use geographical and topographical allusions that frame powerful judgments about socio-economic and moral conditions.*

became a popular symbol of tough, gloves-off justice. Ever since, he has savaged the two main socialist and conservative parties for corruption, and each has duly taken turns to loathe and disparage him.

Can Garzón really set Spain's house in order? By the end of September when I travel to Madrid, the knives are already out for the judge.

Constantly assailed by left and right for playing to the media and for a sometimes-sloppy record as an investigator, he retains hero status for many. A man who irreparably changed Chile with the arrest of Augusto Pinochet, who ordered the detention of Osama Bin Laden and even had George W. Bush in his sights at one stage, possesses a belief in justice that is, at the very least, exhilarating.

And now, on this September morning, it seems

even a dead dictator is not beyond his reach. Agreeing to examine the charges of crimes against humanity filed by four historical memory associations, the investigation represents the first meaningful, national-level judicial investigation of the Franco regime.

There are plenty of rumours as to Garzón's motives for taking the case. Some say he was stung by Argentine and Chilean criticisms that he went after their dictators while conveniently forgetting his own: 'Wooden knives in the house of the ironsmith,' as the Spanish phrase puts it. Others say he is eyeing richer career opportunities on offer in the United States and that the Franco dictatorship is his last bit of unfinished business.

Can Garzón really set Spain's house in order? By the end of September when I travel to Madrid, the knives – wooden or otherwise – are already out for the judge. 'A piece of folly that will dredge up the worst of Spain's past' is the conservative opposition's verdict. Zapatero's socialist government is tight-lipped, while support from Garzón's judicial colleagues is distinctly lacking – most insist that the disappeared are the responsibility of the executive.

Yet the process shows every sign of going ahead. That very day, the combined historical memory associations, consisting of volunteers from all over the country, converge on the capital to deliver 130,000 names of the disappeared for Garzón to include in his census. For his part, Garzón has ordered the governments of major Spanish cities to submit their death registers from the war and postwar era.

The judge is not giving interviews, so I find myself in a nondescript Madrid suburb in the melancholy quiet of the siesta time. Emilio Silva, who sits with me in his lounge, is perhaps the true center of the whole storm, someone who in resolving his own family history is making national history, too.

Back in 2000, then 35, Silva went to a village near León in northern Spain to start to piece together the sad events of October 1936. That month his grandfather, also named Emilio Silva, was arrested by Franquista troops and *paseado* – that is, 'walked' a short distance from the open truck in which he and other terrified prisoners had been driven, and shot. His body was dumped in ditch.

Silva coaxed elderly people to impart information on the horrors of 1936, and one interview left a permanent mark. After broaching the topic with an elderly lady, she glanced around – 'and

this, don't forget, in the year 2000!' – to check that the window was shut. This unconscious gesture of fear deeply shook Silva. Shortly thereafter he founded the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory, which in less than a decade has supervised not only dozens of excavations of Republican mass graves, but also the identification of its victims, later reburied in family plots.

Four branches linked to Silva's association filed the charge of mass murder against the Franco regime in the National Court, the case that ended up on Baltasar Garzón's desk.

Silva will not be drawn on Garzón's motives, but expresses a certain weary satisfaction that the judge has taken the case on. A journalist by training, Silva has totally immersed himself in the association's work. As befits his profession, he has a precise and all-encompassing feel for words, and a desire to puncture certain myths. While his association has awoken huge interest in the last decade, he is by no means the first graves campaigner, he says. The crippling fear of the old lady was not felt by all, and many had taken a stand long before 2000.

Silva talks of the 'pact of silence', the notion that Spain's transition to democracy in the late 1970s was only realized by keeping quiet on the past. Reaching for his laptop, he shows me a rather different version: footage of a crowd of people descending on a Republican grave site in 1979. One stocky woman, swathed in black, recounts how the regime used to try to block access to the grave, but she and the other women still came to pay their respects. Another man says, simply, 'we couldn't talk about this before; now we can.'

Clearing the thick drapes of time and darkness covering that pinewood is possible thanks only to the fortuitous survival of a centenarian.

The pact of silence, Silva suggests, was constantly undone by such spontaneous expressions from the street. To look at the footage of these bereted country people now, to hear them talking passionately and clearly after so long in silence, is to understand the term 'transition' in its deepest social sense.

That this newfound voice has not, so far, yielded state recognition of the disappeared is the core of Silva's message. His organization's work, he says, gives the dead 'grandparents or parents honour, where no Spanish state institution has ever given honour before.' But it is a task that Silva believes

cannot be carried on indefinitely by the private sector. Zapatero's 2007 Historical Memory Law provided a sense of opportunity, but refused outright annulment of Franco-era sentences. 'The new legislation offers support to our work,' he concedes, 'but when is the state going to shoulder the burden?'

### Recovering victims and overcoming oblivion

The next day I set out to meet Silva's colleagues at a mass grave they are excavating some 300 kilometres to the north of the capital. A few hours later I am in deep country near the Portuguese border, a savannah-like plain with regularly spaced, bobble holm oaks under a big sky. The cars of the volunteers are parked on a crossroads ahead of us – as obvious a place to park as it would have been that night 70-odd years ago, when the driver searched for a site to dump his five-man cargo.

Which is why, sliding down the track into the pinewood, it is impossible not to sense for a moment those prisoners, their hands tied, stumbling deeper into this oubliette, a place far from sky, light, love, help, or pardon.

A little farther down in a clearing come the voices of the volunteers. I had imagined feverish activity, the grate of picks and shovels, but the helpers are watching an earth mover, which has already dug a rectangular trench about the size of a small truck. There is a quiet but slightly festive air to the occasion; the volunteers chat and smoke, with occasional glances into the trench itself. Suddenly a woman shouts, the digger stops, and all gather round to peer; there has been a slight change in the color of the soil, which, someone explains, may indicate buried objects. A false alarm it turns out, the digger resumes, and someone passes around a paper plate of cookies.

His hands pushed deep in a waxed jacket, Santiago Macías keeps one eye on operations, while he describes to me the method of digging. An inseparable colleague of Silva's, Macías has supervised many such digs since 2000. He makes a gesture, the machine halts again with a whir, the scoop flails a moment, then lowers again to break new ground some meters from the old trench.

'We've gone too deep on this first one,' Macías explains. 'There is nothing there, so we work out from our starting point, like spokes on a wheel, until we find something.'

Is he confident they will? He shrugs and re-

counts the occasional disappointments they have had, days spent digging and finding nothing. This time, though, he thinks they have every chance of success. Their source is the man, now over one hundred years old, who had been forced to dig the grave. He even remembers, apparently, how the bodies were laid out in a line, with one lying in a different direction from the others.

Clearing the thick drapes of time and darkness covering that pinewood, then, is possible thanks only to the fortuitous survival of a centenarian. It is a sobering thought. On the drive back, to keep some sense of critical perspective, I think of the words of American Hispanist Stanley Payne, a critic of the whole notion of historical memory.

In an interview with Spain's ABC daily in 2006, Payne argued: 'Historical memory is neither history nor memory. It is rather a version or versions [of history], created by patriots, politicians, or journalists, and even certain historians.'

I live in Barcelona, whose leftist regional government is one of the few in Spain to have enthusiastically embraced historical memory. Payne's warning note strikes a chord here, in a city with its own historical taboos. As Catalan separatism grows, and with it the tendency to lay all blame at the door of reactionary Spain, certain things are best not mentioned. The brutality of Barcelona's anarchist mobs during the Republican era itself, for example, is rarely discussed in liberal dinner party conversations. Likewise, the violent anti-clericalism and church-burnings.

Payne's comments were seized on by Spanish conservatives as scholarly proof of the dubiousness of Zapatero's Historical Memory Law. Even though in the same interview Payne approves of certain of the grave-excavation projects, the words of such a distinguished historian have become a useful brush with which to tar any effort to uncover the past.

Left-wing discourse in Spain does tend to impose a version of exclusively Republican suffering, and conservatives often lump organizations like Silva's with a general trend of historical tendentiousness. Yet fundamentally, Silva and his colleagues are activists, not historians. What moves them is a desire to 'help' (in Auden's sense), to ensure that the honor long ago granted the families of murdered Franquistas can also, now, be granted the families of the defeated.

It could even be said the taboo at the heart

of Spanish politics is as much the Republic as the Civil War and the dictatorship it preceded.

Even so, there is certainly an important political element in the message of the historical memory associations, one that is often overlooked, as it does not concern the war or dictatorship, but rather the Republic itself. The Republic, Silva and his colleagues say, was a harbinger of current Spanish democracy.

A 2005 argument by the rightist commentator Luis María Anson in the Spanish daily *El Mundo* reveals just how controversial such a theory is among conservatives. Anson railed against Zapatero's proposed Historical Memory Law. The Civil War, he argued, 'was buried and surpassed by the transition to democracy in 1978. Yet Zapatero is claiming that democratic legitimacy was established by the Republic' (emphasis added).

In fact, Zapatero, conscious perhaps of the political fallout, rarely lauds the Republic openly. It could even be said the taboo at the heart of Spanish politics is as much the Republic as the Civil War and the dictatorship it preceded. Going beyond the tit-for-tat of who did what to whom 70 years ago, the memory associations are part of a wider discourse that seeks to force the Republic's contemporary democratic relevance into the open: its freeing of Spain from the dead hand of the Church, its (attempted) abolition of rural feudalism, its support for women's rights and progressive education.

Today, democratic Spain has the most far-reaching same-sex marriage laws of any country and is about to legalize abortion. Conservatives like to portray its current socialist government as a collection of dangerous radicals who are denaturing the Catholic soul of Spain. In fact, the soul of Spanish history is precisely the long struggle between Catholic conservatism and socially progressive liberalism, the so-called *dos Españas* that characterized the liberal struggle to found the Republic in the first place and that in turn spawned the reactionary struggle to overthrow it.

The 1931-1939 Republic casts its shadow over every speech in parliament, over every discussion of democracy. But to the dismay of Silva, Macías, and their ilk, the Republic is rarely alluded to by Spanish public figures.

The day after I witness the excavation in the north, the press reports that Macías and his team have uncovered the skeletons. As pre-

dicted by the old gravedigger, one body was lying in a different direction from the others.

### Obstacles and obstructions

While in one small corner of Spain the frailest of memories overcomes oblivion, in Madrid Judge Garzón will eventually, and spectacularly, fail.

Initially, Garzón issues a writ declaring himself competent to investigate the allegations of mass murder carried out by Franco and 34 of his henchmen. They, of course, are now all dead – a point made with great ironic relish by the right-wing press, though it is the judge's intention to prove that criminality was attained in their lifetimes, even if responsibility for it was extinguished with their deaths. Garzón, say the opposition conservatives, 'has lost the plot.'

The judge's writ is a rich repository of press reports from the Civil War. 'He is prepared to slaughter half of Spaniards if that is necessary to pacify the country,' reports Jay Allen of the *Chicago Tribune* after meeting Franco in 1936. 'Our valiant soldiers . . . will show the women [of the 'Reds'] what real men are,' screamed the hideous General Gonzalo Queipo de Llano in a 1936 radio broadcast. 'No amount of kicking and screaming will help them.'

Even if Garzón proves the clarity of Franco's intentions to systematically destroy his enemies, his other problems are legion: chiefly, Spain's 1977 amnesty laws, and the fact that most of the executions took place before relevant human rights laws were established. To address the second problem, Garzón's writ centers on the victims' 'ongoing' disappearance rather than their long-ago murder.

It is a somewhat eccentric line, leapt on with glee by the right. Soon, even the National Court's chief prosecutor himself steps in to cast doubt on Garzón's competence to proceed, referring the whole process for appeal. Every day, and from every corner, the pressure on Garzón mounts.

The case is fast descending in tone from a solemn exploration of a Spanish tragedy to a courtroom farce. Between the attacks on the judge and the actions of a judiciary that can only look pettifogging to non-Spaniards, the tremendous fact of Franco's crimes slips into the background. On November 18th Garzón finally backs down, referring the crimes to regional courts to be judged as common criminal cases, and effectively scotching any effort to prove the disappearances were centralized and systematic.

The next day, Emilio Silva appears on the evening news to put the defeat of Garzón's initiative into context: ...Seventy-five years ago today, the government of the Second Republic held the first-ever democratic elections in this country in which women had the vote. It is a date that no public institution in Spain marks or remembers in any way.

The same rebuke grows louder over the winter, taken up and amplified over the French border. It is now just after Christmas, and the train is winding up through Pyrenean blizzards toward the frontier station of Latour-de-Carol. A plaque on the wall recalls a far bitterer winter: 70 years ago, when thousands of exiled Spanish Republicans passed through.

A few days later, in the medieval town of Mirepoix, I am introduced to Pablo Gandal. Pablo's name hardly strikes an unusual note here. But while southern France is now home to hundreds of thousands of second- and third-generation Spanish Republicans, Pablo is one of the few remaining survivors of the Republican rout. At 88, his feeling of injustice is undiminished: ...Every Spring in Madrid they remember how they fought Napoleon in 1808. But they cannot even bring themselves to remember what happened in 1939, they haven't got the courage to say what was fought for, what was lost. What we lost!

The figures of the 'Retirada' of 1939 are their own testament. In the two weeks between January 27 and February 12, half a million exiles crossed into France, among them seventeen-year-old Pablo, who had already seen active service in the Republican army. He was interned in the notorious camp at Argelès just north of Collioure, suffering the hunger and disease that finished off so many of his comrades.

He gives me the tour of his house: the hoard of history books on the Republic, the photos and pamphlets. Sometimes his Spanish deserts him – 'it's not really been my main language since I was seventeen' – and he clicks his fingers with frustration. His daughter Colette, who is taking Spanish lessons, quietly prompts him.

Again and again, he tirelessly recounts the events of that winter. The defeat, the scramble north, the grim camp at Argelès, the exhaustion, illness, shame, and loss.

On the walls, clusters of fading photos of comrades. A Republican flag. The whole house a shrine to a brief period in early adulthood whose flame he has not let gutter for one moment in 70

years. On the little terrace upstairs he has painted a mural of the beach camp at Argelès under the title *Les plages d'exile*. Over the barracks and barbed wire rises a sun that is shaped like Spain.

### **Remember!**

A little after the Garzón defeat, the Archbishop of Madrid assures the country it is better to 'learn to forget'. Aside from their hypocrisy – the same Archbishop has spearheaded the canonization of the many Spanish nuns and priests murdered in the Republican zone – the condescension of these words only confirms Spain's institutional incapacity to recognize the exile and death imposed on the Republic's defenders.

Instead, as the winter unfolds, it is the actions of grassroots organizations and individuals, many in France, that in some ways compensate for the rout inflicted on Garzón. It is a winter of cross-border encounters, ceremonies at Argelès and the other camps. But perhaps the most notable of the commemorations returns us to where we started: the tomb of Machado in the little cemetery in Collioure.

It is still quite early on the morning of February 22, 2009, the 70th anniversary of the death of the great poet. A stiff wind blows from the Pyrenees. Before the official act begins, a group of elderly pilgrims arrives from Barcelona, and suddenly, quite spontaneously, an elegant middle-aged woman starts to address the visitors in French-accented Spanish.

She is the daughter of an exile, and it was only since her father's death in 1985, she tells them, that she started to realize the debt owed him for his defence of democracy. 'The poet Machado, too, is our great symbol of the Republic,' she calls out above the wind, then leaning out over the poet's festooned grave: 'Don't let the amnesia imposed by Franco bury it. Tell them, ¡Recordad!'

The pilgrims nod and murmur. The contrast to her militancy is almost apologetic, as if they know but cannot quite express how the view from the other side of the border is so much more complicated.

People are arriving steadily now. Many have come long distances, the tricolour of the Republic brought over the border in the form of scarves, bandanas, even earrings. The speeches battle with the rising wind, and the crowd presses tighter around the tomb. Then, in the lull following the official ceremony, a woman starts to recite Machado's most famous lines:

*Pathmaker, the path is your tracks,  
nothing else.  
Pathmaker, there is no path,  
The path is made by walking...*

All at once, the words forming irresistible and contemporary associations, the voices of the secular pilgrims take up the poem in spontaneous unison:

*And turning the gaze back,  
look on the trail that will never be  
walked again.  
Pathmaker, there is no path,  
Only the wake on the sea.*

The act of homage disbands, and I approach a father who has come up with his young family from Barcelona. Infected by the imagery of the mysterious path, we talk about what happens to memory now; where does it go, and what is its future? His five-year-old daughter sits on the ground, forming the gravel of the cemetery into little piles. Will she come here on February 22 when she is his age?

He smiles, says he hopes she will. And then, warming to the subject, he sketches a vision of what it might be like when his daughter is 38. Spain a republic again, its crimes faced up to and pardoned, her great-grandparents' values vindicated, the debt of memory paid. ■

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Julius Purcell writes regularly for *The Financial Times* and *The Tablet*.

# Helping Dominicans recover their memory

Gabrielle Lorne

*During the 20th century, two successive dictatorships marked the history of the Dominican Republic and were responsible for nearly 60,000 victims. Deathly silence shrouded this period until very recently. Now, the archives recording this tragic past have been inscribed on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register.*

The executioner always kills twice – the second time through silence, said Elie Wiesel, Nobel Peace Prize laureate (1986). This applies perfectly to the Dominican Republic. Sharing a Caribbean island with Haiti, this country was ruled by a savage dictatorship from 1930 to 1961, and then by another, immediately after, until 1996.

Under the first regime, led by General Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina, some 50,000 people were killed, tortured or disappeared, according to Dominican historians. No-one disputes this today, but, until a massive effort to gather documents and eye-witness statements over the past five years, these years were shrouded in silence. Even ten years ago, Dominicans were not allowed to utter the word 'dictatorship'.

'The Dominican people are only just recovering their memory,' says Luisa De Peña Díaz, Director of the Memorial Museum of Dominican Resistance ([www.museodelaresistencia.org](http://www.museodelaresistencia.org)) in Santo Domingo. To come to terms with the past, she believes, it is necessary to continue to investigate the crimes committed under the Trujillo regime, to list the dead, identify all those who disappeared, and record all the forms of torture that were used. The

museum is continuing this work of remembering, since many cases have still not been solved.

Survivors are keen to help, provided that someone will listen. Until the late 1990s, the country had turned a deaf ear to their stories – their families were their only audience. Victims' relatives used to celebrate the dates of attacks against the regime, like 14 June 1960, originating in Cuba, in which every last perpetrator was killed. They would lay a flower on the tomb of the three Mirabal sisters, to commemorate their assassination on 25 November, 1960.

These three human rights militants were murdered together, as they visited their husbands in prison. It was only much later that this crime came to the attention of the world. On 17 December 1999, the United Nations General Assembly, in its Resolution 54/134, voted to designate 25 November as International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

For years, survivors and those close to them had secretly kept alive the memory of resistance to the regime. In an effort to spread their action beyond their families, while trying to avoid being persecuted themselves, they would set up foundations, often bearing the name of the victims. The first was the 'Foundation of widows, sisters, mothers, aunts and cousins'.

When a family was persecuted, it would go from house to house carrying whatever documents remained of their missing loved ones, like holy relics. These documents were not just proof of the ignominy of the regime; they also proved that a son, husband, or brother had, indeed, once existed.

### **Balaguer takes over the Trujillo regime**

Trujillo's assassination in 1961 did not bring his regime to an end, however. His successor was none other than Joaquín Balaguer, a former minister and ambassador who had spent 35 years close to the dictator. He promised to initiate transition towards democracy but his regime merely put on a more 'presentable' front. Although the first free elections removed him from power in 1962, he returned following a coup d'état and new elections in 1965; he stayed on for twelve years.

'A second dictatorship,' says Luisa de Peña, 'but this time it was legal.' Balaguer used the same methods against his opponents – assassinations and torture – as his mentor. Only, this time, the number of victims was smaller. The Memorial Mu-

seum estimates 7,000 deaths under the Balaguer regime, compared to 50,000 under Trujillo, including the 17,000 Haitians massacred in 1937.

Balaguer did not stand down until 1978, then took over again from 1986 until 1996, when he resigned to put an end to controversy surrounding the conditions of his re-election in 1994. He stood again for the 2000 elections, at the age of 94. In the first round he came third, with 24% of the votes. He died of a heart attack in 2002. An emblematic figure of the last 40 years of the 20th century, he left a heavy imprint on Dominican society.

Up until 1978, Balaguer was able to keep the archives of the Trujillo regime top secret. It was only when he was deposed the first time that this documentary heritage became accessible, testifying to the systematic and massive persecutions, illegal arrests, disappearances, ethnic cleansing, creation of torture centres and murders, ordered by the Trujillo dictatorship. The archives of the Attorney General of the Republic confirm the terrifying repression perpetrated by the State.

Crimes committed abroad are also documented, such as the attempted assassination of the Venezuelan president, Rómulo Betancourt, in 1960; the kidnapping and disappearance in New York of the Basque, Jesús de Galíndez; and the murder of the Spanish writer, José Almoína.

### **The situation today**

Hampered by the two successive dictatorships, this work of remembering only started under the present government. The political will of this government can be explained by its origins – the majority party, the Party for Dominican Liberation (PLD), was set up by Juan Emilio Bosch y Gaviño (1909-2001), the man who won the first free elections held in 1962, before he was deposed a few months later by the army, who put Balaguer in his place. Juan Bosch was opposed to Trujillo from the start. Accused of leading a number of attempts to overthrow the regime, he fled to exile to Cuba in 1937.

It was not until 2007 that his political successor, the incumbent President of the Republic, Leonel Antonio Fernández Reyna, of the PLD, started the process of 'memory retrieval', an act that helped him win a second term as president. Having led the country from 1996 to 2000, he won the 2004 elections and was re-elected in 2008.

Luisa de Peña Díaz is delighted with this show of political will. For her, 'people have always kept the memories alive, but until there was an official policy to encourage them, there could be no real action.'

These actions, above all, involve education and communication, the two main missions of the Memorial Museum, which was created by decree in 2007, as an instrument to 'help the Dominican people to retrieve and openly express its memory.'

In all, some 150,000 objects and documents have been collected, revealing the way the dictatorships operated, but also the struggle waged by Dominicans for freedom and democracy in their country. The task now is to make them available to the public, as part of the foundations of a society in which no future dictator will be able to find accomplices.

Inscription on the Memory of the World Register of the 'Documentary Heritage on the Resistance and Struggle for Human Rights in the Dominican Republic, 1930-1961' is part of this process. ■

Source: 'Dominicans recover their memory' in *The UNESCO Courier* 2009 No. 9. [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-url\\_id=46269&url\\_do=do\\_topic&url\\_section=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-url_id=46269&url_do=do_topic&url_section=201.html)

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# Genocide and lessons for humanity

## His Holiness Catholicos Aram I

*The 20<sup>th</sup> Century was an age of genocides and the list is depressingly long. But the international community was slow to respond to mass killings, often simply ignoring them.*

My people were victims of the first genocide of the 20th Century. One-and-a-half million Armenians were brutally massacred according to a well-planned and carefully and systematically executed programme of the Ottoman-Turkish government during the First World War.

This attempt, aimed at the extermination of the Armenian nation as a nation, was part of the so-called pan-Turanian policy of the Ottoman Empire, in the context of which the existence of the Armenians was a major obstacle. Therefore, we Armenians know, out of our existential and painful experience, all about the far-reaching consequences of genocide.

### The prevention of new crimes against humanity

The frightening thing is that nothing has changed. Today, as in 1915, ethnic conflicts are shredding the fabric of many societies; hatred is hardening into ideology and violence in its most horrible forms is being expressed in the name of God. Only the international community can effectively prevent new genocides.

But the international community will only be effective if it acts immediately and with a strong resolve wherever and whenever new evils generate mass atrocities. The international community must act on the basis of moral and human values and international law, and not according to geopolitical considerations and strategic interests.

The United Nations has taken important



## THE CAUCASUS REGION



initiatives in its attempt to prevent genocides. It ratified the Genocide Convention in 1948 and that was followed immediately by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In 1998, 120 states established the International Criminal Court in The Hague, which has jurisdiction over genocide. The focus of the International Criminal Court is on the crime that has been committed and not on the crime that must be prevented.

However, the international community must go beyond juridical process. It must impose its political will in positive ways; it must create early warning systems, build public awareness and promote education and dialogue.

Wherever applicable, the international community should impose diplomatic and economic sanctions, and in extreme situations, when all else has failed, engage in humanitarian intervention. The UN is currently embarking on

a reformation process, and these burning issues should be given due consideration.

### The memory of genocide: A source of living truth

People, individually and collectively, live with memory, and memory lives through them. Memory links the present to the past and conditions the future, thereby ensuring continuity. Each nation is formed around the common memory of its people. That memory sustains their existence, asserts their identity, maintains their unity and gives them a sense of belonging.

Collective memory tells the untold history of a people; it is a living source of truth. It challenges bias and partial information and builds awareness. With that awareness comes the possibility of accepting or calling for responsibility. Only when we become aware and accept responsibility can we move to repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation.

With genocide this process is crucial. Wipe out the memory and you wipe out the possibility of justice. Leave the untold story untold and you will never stop the cycle of violence. Leave people unaware and they will be that much more easily victimized. Hitler understood this well. He used the fate of the Armenians at the hands of the Turks in 1915 to justify his plans for holocaust. He knew that memories were short: 'Who today,' he asked, 'remembers the genocide of the Armenians?'

Today, some people, for political motives, still do not 'remember the genocide of the Armenians,' and others refer to it as an 'alleged' genocide. The Armenian people, however, live the memory of genocide vividly in their daily life. That memory is deeply rooted in their common consciousness. Is this not true of all the people who have experienced genocide?

We have in our world so many painful experiences, so many stories of violence and so many images of suffering that must be told and shared with others, not as an expression of hate and intolerance, but as a reminder and challenge to move to repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation.

### **The recognition of genocide: The way towards justice**

The truth that is preserved by memory must be told: 'No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all in the house' (Mt. 5:15). Only then will that truth be recognized. If it is not recognized, there will be denial.

Without recognition there can be no awareness and without awareness there can be no responsibility and accountability. Any individual, community or government that does not recognize and then does not accept responsibility for genocide commits a crime against humanity and against God.

To accept the truth of genocide and the responsibility for it takes great courage and does not come easily. It can be achieved, but only with great difficulty, through a process of self-critical reflection and evaluation, confession and repentance. The individual, community or government must re-read its own history in an inter-relational context. Only through such self-assessment and self-purification will the truth become clear and visible.

'Truth and Reconciliation' committees provide

the space in which the difficult experience of self-criticism and the equally difficult search to understand the truth can be successfully discussed by victim and offender together. The Truth and Reconciliation model has been quite successful and we must build on it. Confession and reconciliation are preconditions for a serious and constructive dialogue leading to justice.

We must avoid models of dialogue that are guided by political agendas. Governments will always refuse to acknowledge that crimes have been committed and will, therefore, not accept responsibility for them. In the 20th Century some genocides have been acknowledged and others have been denied. Where they have been acknowledged, communities and nations are moving towards justice and reconciliation. Where they have been denied, the wound of injustice is still festering.

The Armenian Genocide is still denied by its perpetrator. As an editorial in *The New York Times* recently rightly stated, 'It is time for the Turks to realize that the greater danger to them is denying history.'<sup>1</sup>

### **Impunity: Continuous genocide**

In situations where communities or governments will not acknowledge and take responsibility for genocide, justice may only be achieved through international legal bodies, such as the International Criminal Court and the International Criminal Tribunals (former Yugoslavia and Rwanda). These bodies operate on the principle of retributive justice, a systematic infliction of punishment justified on grounds that the wrongdoing committed by a criminal must be addressed by action against the criminal.

They function on the notion of revenge for past injustices and do not address the current situation caused by the criminal's action. Justice can happen only when the rights of the victims are recognized and addressed, and reconciliation between criminals and victims begins. We need a new model, one that seeks to achieve reconciliation between victim and criminal through mediation and non-violent conflict resolution; this is the method of restorative justice.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa and the Gacaca court in Rwanda are

concrete examples of this approach and process. Restorative justice generates healing by creating space for dialogue, and leads to community building. For there to be true justice and accountability, there must be reparation, restitution and compensation for the victims.

Punitive measures through the International Criminal Court and the International Criminal Tribunals and the new paradigms arising from the 'Truth and Reconciliation' committees are essential to avoid new genocides. Some of the genocides of the 20th Century have been recognized and retribution has been made. In contrast, the Armenian Genocide remains unpunished.

Impunity encourages the planning of new genocides; it perpetuates injustice, which, in turn, leads to acts of revenge in an endless cycle of violence; it is followed by new forms of injustice and violations of human rights. Offenders should be held accountable to humanity. Many offenders have not yet been brought to justice and held accountable for their crimes. Impunity means granting de facto amnesty. If we can bring single criminals routinely to justice, why can we not bring governments or nations to justice as well?

### Conclusion

Respect for human rights is crucial to any process aimed at the restoration of justice, true peace and reconciliation. Over the past 56 years, the United Nations has sought to implement the international covenants and conventions, including the convention against Genocide, that were spawned by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, during those years, millions of people have fallen victim to genocide.

Again and again, governments have ignored and bypassed their commitments to this covenant. Concrete cases are so many. Humanity should heed the painful lessons that it has learned from the genocides of the 20th Century and use that painful knowledge and bitter experience to build a world where peace with justice is established and memories are reconciled.

In today's world, globalization challenges nations, religions and cultures to engage with one another by moving towards genuine collaboration and reconciliation, by recognizing the truth and respecting and accepting each other. Negation and

denial will not promote dialogue, restore justice, build peace or achieve reconciliation.

In the 20th century humanity has paid dearly for a policy of silence in the face of genocide. Humanity must not be silent in the 21st century. Here is the painful lesson that we carry with us and the great challenge facing the international community. ■

*Reprinted with permission from For a Church Beyond its Walls, published by the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, Antelias, Lebanon, 2007.*

### Note

1. 'Turkey, Armenia and Denial', Editorial, *The New York Times*, 16 May 2006.

His Holiness Aram I is an internationally known spiritual leader and ecumenical figure who served for two terms as Moderator of the World Council of Churches. Born in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1947, he studied at the Armenian Theological Seminary in Antelias, the Near East School of Theology (Lebanon), the American University of Beirut, the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey (Switzerland) and at Fordham University (New York, USA). His major areas of specialization are philosophy, systematic theology and Near Eastern Church history. Called to serve as Primate of the Armenian Diocese of Lebanon, he was elected Catholicos by the Electoral Assembly of the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia and consecrated on 1st July 1995.

**EDITOR'S NOTE: On 4 March 2010 the Foreign Affairs Committee of the US House of Representatives approved by the narrowest of margins a resolution stating that Armenians were the victims of genocide in 1915. The resolution called on President Barack Obama to ensure that US foreign policy reflects an understanding of the genocide and to label the killings as such in statements on the issue. A few days later, the Swedish Parliament also narrowly passed a similar resolution.**

# A genocide denied

Geoffrey Robertson, QC

*Newly uncovered Foreign Office memos in the United Kingdom show how New Labour has played politics with the massacre of the Armenians*

There are few genocides more clearly established than that suffered by the Armenians in 1915-16, when half the race was extinguished in massacres and deportations directed by the Young Turk government. Today you can be prosecuted in France and other European countries for denying the slaughter. But the world's most influential genocide denier – other than Turkey itself – is the British government, which has repeatedly asserted that there is insufficient evidence that what it terms a 'tragedy' amounted to genocide. Now, thanks to the Freedom of Information Act, we learn that (in the words of Foreign Office memos) commercial and political relations with Turkey have required abandoning 'the ethical dimension'.

For the past ten years, various Foreign Office ministers, from Geoff Hoon to Mark Malloch Brown, have told parliament that 'neither this government nor previous governments have judged that the evidence is sufficiently unequivocal to persuade us that these events should be categorised as genocide, as defined by the 1948 convention.' This would have come as a shock to the architects of the 1948 UN Convention on Genocide (for whom the Armenian genocide was second only to the Holocaust), as well as to the wartime British government, which accused the Turks of proceeding 'systematically to exterminate a whole race out of their domain'. (Winston Churchill described it as 'an administrative holocaust... there is no reasonable doubt that this crime was executed for political reasons.')

What does the Foreign Office know that eluded the British government at the time as well as the drafters of the Genocide Convention, not to mention the International Association of Genocide Scholars, the

US House committee on foreign affairs and at least nine other European governments? The Freedom of Information Act has now unravelled this mystery.

The Armenian Centre in London obtained hundreds of pages of hitherto secret memorandums, bearing the astonishing admission that there was no 'evidence' that had ever been looked at and there had never been a 'judgment' at all. Parliament had been misinformed: as the Foreign Office now admits, 'there is no collection of documents, publications and reports by historians, held on the relevant files, or any evidence that a series of documents were submitted to ministers for consideration'. In any case, ministers repeatedly asserted that, 'in the absence of unequivocal evidence to show that the Ottoman administration took a specific decision to eliminate the Armenians under their control at the time, British governments have not recognised the events of 1915-16 as genocide.'

That was the answer given by the government during the House of Lords debate on the subject in 1999. The thinking behind the genocide denial is revealed in an internal memorandum to ministers (Joyce Quin and Baroness Symons) before the debate: 'HMG is open to criticism in terms of the ethical dimension, but given the importance of our relations (political, strategic and commercial) with Turkey... the current line is the only feasible option.'

## **An inconvenient truth**

Nobody noticed that this 'current line' was a legal nonsense. To prove genocide, you do not need unequivocal evidence of a specific government decision to eliminate a race – neither the Nazis nor the Hutu government in Rwanda ever voted to do so or recorded any such decision. Genocidal intentions are inferred from what governments do and from what they knew at the time they did it; and it was obvious to everyone in Armenia (including diplomats and missionaries from Germany, then allied to Turkey, and to neutral US ambassadors) that the deportations had turned into death marches, and the massacres were influenced by race hatred fanned by the government's 'Turkification' campaign. The internal documents show that the Foreign Office has never had the slightest interest in the law of genocide: its stance throughout is that the UK cannot recognise this particular genocide, not because it had not taken place, but because realpolitik makes it inconvenient.

There is no suggestion in these documents that expert legal advice was ever sought before ministers were wrongly briefed on the law of genocide. The definition of the crime includes ‘deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part’ – a precise description of the Ottoman government’s orders to deport two million Armenians to the Syrian Desert, in the course of which hundreds of thousands were murdered or died of starvation. Courts in The Hague have actively developed the law relating to genocide in recent years, but the Foreign Office memos make no reference to this – its only concern is that ministers should say nothing which might discomfort a Turkish government that it describes as ‘neuralgic’ about its accountability.

The documents show how Foreign Office officials have discouraged ministers from attending memorial services for Armenian victims and from including any reference to this genocide at Holocaust Memorial Day. They advised Margaret Beckett, Geoff Hoon and Kim Howells to absent themselves from the Armenian genocide memorial day in 2007. It is no business of the Foreign Office to discourage ministers from attending memorial services for victims of crimes against humanity. Notable in these hitherto secret documents is how government ministers parrot their Foreign Office briefs in parliament word for word and never challenge the advice provided by diplomats. None of them has ever pointed out, for example, that the ‘not sufficiently unequivocal’ test is oxymoronic – evidence is either equivocal or it is not. It cannot be a little bit unequivocal.

The other routine excuse for denying the genocide has been that ‘it is for historians, not governments, to interpret the past.’ This ‘line’ was described in 1999 as ‘long-standing’. But genocide is a matter for legal judgment, not a matter for historians, and there is no dispute about the Armenian genocide among legal scholars. Yet Foreign Office ministers insist that the ‘interpretation of events is still the subject of genuine debate among historians.’ This ‘line’ was stoutly maintained until last year, when it was placed on the Downing Street website in response to an e-petition and provoked angry replies from the public. The minister, by now Jim Murphy, was displeased, and became the first to demand to know just what evidence the Foreign Office had looked at.

The Eastern Department had looked at no evi-

dence at all. In great haste, it came up with three historians – Bernard Lewis (who had been prosecuted in France for denying the genocide, but then told *Le Monde* that he did not dispute that hundreds of thousands of Armenians had died), Justin McCarthy (a Kentucky professor whose pro-Turkish work was sent to Keith Vaz, then a minister at the Foreign Office, by the Turkish ambassador) and Heath Lowry, who, although he does not put his own name to denials of the genocide, provoked dispute at Princeton after it accepted funds from the Turkish government to endow his ‘Atatürk Chair’. He was then exposed as having helped draft a letter in which the Turkish ambassador denounced a scholar for writing about the genocide.

It is astonishing, given the number of British historians, from Arnold Toynbee onwards, who have no doubts on the subject, that the Foreign Office should grasp at the straw of three controversial Americans.

#### Will we remember?

The head of the department later told Murphy that it had stopped ‘deploying this line’ because ‘we found that references to historians tended to raise further questions.’ Malloch Brown proceeded to read out the old mantra that ‘neither this government nor previous governments have judged that the evidence is sufficiently unequivocal’ on his behalf, even though no government had actually ‘judged’ or received any evidence at all. Parliament has been routinely misinformed by ministers who have recited Foreign Office briefs without questioning their accuracy. The government’s only policy has been to evade giving any truthful answer about the Armenian genocide, because it has abandoned ‘the ethical dimension’ in the interests of relations with a Turkish government that it acknowledges to be unbalanced in its attitude to this issue.

In August 1939, Adolf Hitler exhorted his generals to show no mercy to the Polish people they were preparing to blitzkrieg because, ‘After all, who now remembers the annihilation of the Armenians?’ If the ethics-free zone in the Foreign Office has its way, nobody in the UK will remember them either. ■

Geoffrey Robertson, QC is the author of *Crimes Against Humanity: the Struggle for Global Justice* (1999). His full opinion on the Armenian genocide and the Foreign Office documents can be obtained for free from [j.flint@doughtystreet.co.uk](mailto:j.flint@doughtystreet.co.uk)

# Atom Egoyan on language and memory

Ron Burnett

*The Ecumenical Jury at Cannes 2008 awarded its prize to Adoration, directed by Atom Egoyan. Born to Armenian parents in Egypt in 1960, Egoyan moved at an early age to Canada, eventually studying international relations at the University of Toronto. There he became involved in campus theatre as a playwright and made his first films. Since then he has directed nine feature films, several television episodes, Richard Strauss's Salome, and written the libretto for the chamber opera Elsewhereless (1998).*

**A**doration, the new film by Atom Egoyan is a profound and extended exploration of language and memory through the eyes of a young teenager. In particular, the film tries to understand what happens to a child who cannot comprehend the death of his parents other than through the fragments and ellipses of conversations and comments by relatives and friends.

This is a deeply psychoanalytic film. It is psychoanalytic not because as some critics have suggested it is a coming of age film. Rather, each character has to come to terms with their own role dealing with trauma both within their families and as observers.

The psychoanalyst is the viewer who has to delve into the contradictory narratives that the characters use to justify their state of mind and relations with each other. But, viewers cannot solve the issues, cannot intervene and must struggle on their own with the implications of losing control over the evolution of the story.

In some senses, this mirrors the challenges of the main characters. They cannot exert control

over their memories or even put those memories into some kind of clear order. It takes an outsider, in this case Sabine a teacher to re-establish some sense of direction for the family.

As R.D. Laing once put it, the problem with families is that everyone has a different point of view of the same experiences, and each person feels that their point of view is the correct one. As a result, families are always in conflict with the memories that they share.

In this case, the child has no memory of his parent's death other than through the metaphors given to him by his uncle and his grandfather. The latter blames Simon's father, Sami for killing his daughter.

What is a child to make of this? The idealizations of memory clash with the realities of a world infected by violence, much of it arbitrary. What if the death of his parents was the result of a terrorist act? Is it preferable to believe that his mother died because of a momentary mistake or because someone perpetrated an act of terror? How does a child interpret the trauma of events like September 11th in the context of personal experiences? How do impersonal events become personal? And what role does the Internet play in opening up the personal struggles of a teenager to the discourses of strangers?

As Simon delves into what turns out to be a true story about a terrorist who sends his pregnant wife on a plane with a bomb designed to destroy it, he learns through the comments of friends and others, that death by whatever means is never romantic. He learns that each person has his or her own history. He discovers the paradoxes of personal discourses, intertwined with myths and illusions and this enables him to make sense of his own history.

It is within this context that Atom Egoyan explores the complex terrain of the conflicts in the Middle East. The death of a couple in a car crash is elevated into a cultural clash. The film tests the boundaries of what can and cannot be said about the conflicts between different ethnic groups bound to ideologies that they often don't understand. This too is about history and memory. How does hatred develop and why?

Simon's grandfather expresses the classic prejudices of someone who neither understands what he is saying nor the general implications of his words most of which inevitably lead to violence. His violence is discursive. Words matter and more often than not they are used to hurt those whom we do not understand.

Language is this rich space, this fundamental tool of communications that we as a culture have developed and also perverted. It doesn't matter if it is the Internet or a family supper, what we say and how we say it affects not only how we perceive the world but also how we act within it.

Simon creates a story encouraged by Sabine his teacher that slowly takes on a life of its own.



Atom Egoyan, director of the prize-winning film *Adoration* (2008).

He uses the story to channel his confusion about his parent's death into a convenient narrative that quite ironically fits into a preconceived cultural pattern in which the accidents of life have to be framed by some sort of rationale. As Simon learns that the value of life lies beyond the trauma of his parent's death, he decides to purge his grandfather's influence on him by burning something that was of great value to his grandfather.

Simon also burns the Nokia cell phone that he had been using to film a series of interviews with his grandfather before his death. This is one of the most powerful scenes in the film. The cell phone slowly melts, the images on it pixelate, and Simon's memories are channelled to a new level.

In one of his best books, *We Have Never Been Modern*, Bruno Latour explains that even though time moves forward, history is not so much about the past, as it is about the many ways in which the past and the present always converge. *Adoration* explores this seemingly endless clash between the past, our interpretation of it, and the implica-

tions of not putting a personal stamp on the ways in which we interpret our own histories. Truth is the crucial arbiter here. How do we gain access to the truth? Is it through images? Is it through the Internet? Is it through the eyes of a child? Where are the boundaries between innocence and insight?

In the final analysis history can never be reversed. The events of the past such as the death of Simon's parents cannot be undone. This is the source of endless trauma and unless we can manage it, the trauma takes over not only our daily lives, not only our fantasies but also becomes the very basis upon which we interact with our families and friends.

Much of what we learn in childhood is channelled through the words of our parents and relatives. Many of our memories are the memories of others. The transformation of memory into a discourse we can control is the thematic core of Egoyan's film. *Adoration* is a masterful story of how this process of transformation and regaining control changes Simon, but it is also an important statement about the bridges that have to be built between childhood and adulthood.

Throughout the film there is one constant that unites everyone and it is the violin that his mother played. The acoustics of the violin are like the human voice. In a scene that unites the narrative (and which we see twice), Simon's mother stands at the edge of a pier playing a beautiful piece. In the first instance the witness is Simon as a teenager. In the second, it is Simon with his father on the fateful day of his mother's death.

Both instances clash and unite with each other. Time is conflated. All that is left is the plaintive cry of the violin. Music is always about the evocation of memories. ■

Ron Burnett (PhD), President and Vice-Chancellor of Emily Carr University of Art + Design, has been President since August 1996. Recent honours include the Commemorative Medal for the Golden Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II for service to Canada and Canadians, induction into the Royal Canadian Academy of the Arts, Canadian New Media Association Educator of the Year award and appointment as Chair of the Knowledge Network Board. Dr. Burnett has also been appointed Adjunct Professor at York University in Toronto, a Burda Scholar at Ben Gurion University in Israel, and a William Evans Fellow at the University of Otago in New Zealand. He has published three books including the recent, *How Images Think* with MIT Press, over 150 book chapters and journal articles.

# 'His name was Ned': Memories of cinema and segregation

James M. Wall

*This is a story about a journey. It begins with my own memory 'rabbit hole'. Alice's fall into the rabbit hole is a story familiar to most people as Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, a book written by Lewis Carroll. The story has had many incarnations, the latest of which is a 3-D movie directed by Tim Burton, which advances the story from the original to a new plot involving a 19-year old Alice who returns to visit some of her old friends.*

The rabbit hole serves as a metaphor for the story of a personal journey I began after receiving an assignment to write about memory. Who doesn't relish the opportunity to remember? Shakespeare described the journey of remembering in his Sonnet (30):

*When to the sessions of sweet silent thought  
I summon up remembrance of things past,  
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,  
And with old woes new wail my dear times'  
waste.*

Things sought and not found, and things found filled with wisdom which change one forever. This is the joy and the burden of remembering.

My particular journey down the rabbit hole of memory is informed by cinema, appropriately enough, since the occasion for this journey was

prompted by the suggestion that I reflect upon memory after studying the role it plays in Atom Egoyan's film *Adoration*, the details of which are found in Ron Burnett's analysis in this issue.

Burnett describes *Adoration* as 'a profound and extended exploration of language and memory through the eyes of a young teenager.' He writes that Egoyan's film 'tries to understand what happens to a child who cannot comprehend the death of his parents other than through the fragments and ellipses of conversations and comments by relatives and friends.'

The experience I wish to share in this article is written by one much older than Egoyan's teenager who has the advantage, as well as the disadvantage, of looking back on a shorter life span. The story of my journey will conclude with a memory recovered from my childhood, a memory which does for me what memories do for everyone: shape the future in ways that only retrospective thought can fully comprehend.

## Scorsese on memory

We begin this journey into memory with one of our finest contemporary directors, Martin Scorsese, who recently told a *New York Times* reporter, 'I love memory'. Scorsese's films are uniquely his own vision. They reveal the director's deep love of films he remembers from his past. His films are drawn from a variety of genres, knowing that his audiences will know in advance structurally what to expect in a Scorsese film, though with twists that bring pleasure and surprise to the viewer.

Audiences grow up remembering film genres, the western, the detective story, the gangster story, the musical, the comedy, the serious or light-hearted drama. Scorsese has utilized these memories in the films he has made. I find boxing to be a violent sport which offends my sensibilities. But in Scorsese's hands, *Raging Bull* makes boxing a venue for a drama of a man determined to perform at his finest in the calling he knows best.

*Raging Bull* is a 1980 film based on the life of Middleweight World Champion, Jake LaMotta, starring Robert de Nero as LaMotta. It is one of Scorsese's finest films not because it is 'about' boxing, but because it 'is' a portrait of a man who survives the barriers he encounters with his pride intact.

My favorite Scorsese film is the 1999 *Bringing out the Dead*, based on a book about a New York



City ambulance unit, starring a troubled and restless medic played by Nicholas Gage. The medical film is a familiar genre, and Scorsese is faithful to both the ambulance service and the medical genre. But the theological content of the film is what makes *Bringing Out the Dead* a powerful memory for me. The film ends with a surprising image, a Pietà moment which enhances the film's evocation of transcendence.

*Bringing Out the Dead* and *Raging Bull* are important parts of my collective movie memory bank, not because I relish portraits of a prize fighter being battered in the ring, or a team of medics fighting through New York traffic to save lives, but because Martin Scorsese has shared with us moments that transcend ordinary existence.

In his latest film, *Shutter Island*, Scorsese relies on a variety of musical sources for his soundtrack, including music from old movies. Memory is important in *Shutter Island*. US Marshall Teddy Daniels (Leonardo DiCaprio) is haunted by memories of his dead wife as he tries to solve a mystery.

It was no accident that when Scorsese looked for an aging actor to play a role in the film, set in a mental institution from the 1950s, when such places still existed, he turned to Max von Sydow, who, as a *Times* writer notes, starred in several Ingmar Bergman films as a character living on a variety of islands.

If we followed the Bergman films, then we will remember Max von Sydow. He is a part of our personal memory bank. His presence in *Shutter Island* enriches the film because it taps into shared memories.

### Atom Egoyan's films

Egoyan is an auteur. This is a term describing a director who employs his or her artistic talent, which in Egoyan's case is considerable, to share a consistent vision through films. An auteur shapes the viewer's perceptions toward a conclusion that, like any effective work of art, remains open ended.

It is open ended because all the facts of the story belong to the auteur, not to the characters. It is the director's vision we receive. It is, of course, possible to evaluate a film as a psychological study of human interaction. But in the hands of an auteur, a psychological analysis cannot do justice to a film's vision.

Egoyan is still a young film maker. He will be 50 in July, 2010. Born in Cairo, Egypt to Armenian parents, he grew up in Western Canada. He comes from an artistic background. Both his par-

ents were painters. His initial career choice was to be a playwright. He soon shifted to making movies. He has directed 12 feature films, some of which he also wrote. He has enjoyed both critical and artistic success. His latest film *Chloe*, features major Hollywood stars Julianne Moore and Liam Neeson.

*Chloe*, which was released in March, 2010, has been described as a 'smart, sexy thriller', in which Julianne Moore plays a gynaecologist who tests her husband's (Liam Neeson) fidelity by hiring an escort to seduce him. 'It's a really intelligent script,' Egoyan told one journalist. Nothing wrong with his ego. He wrote the script.

My own favourite memories from Egoyan's films come from his critically successful artistic works like *The Sweet Hereafter*, a tense and deeply moving adaptation of Russell Banks' novel about a school bus crash. In that film, Ian Holm is featured as a lawyer who wants to represent the residents in a class action suit. Roger Ebert, of the *Chicago Sun Times*, has this to say about Egoyan's sensibility which shines through *The Sweet Hereafter*: Egoyan's film 'is not about the tragedy of dying, but about the grief of surviving.'

Egoyan's least successful work, both critically and commercially, was a film he made in 2005, *Where the Truth Lies*, another memory film which, like *Adoration*, tells two versions of death, in this instance, the death of a young Hollywood actress. This film was released, unrated, in the US, because its sexual content earned it, deservedly, an NC-17 rating, a decision which upset Egoyan.

After an interview with Egoyan in London, *The Guardian's* Cath Clarke wrote (21 January 2010):

'Watch one Egoyan film and you'll soon be able to spot another. They feel like they've been traumatized, back-ended by a car; the chronology has been knocked out of sequence, characters behave like they're in shock. Recurring themes are loss, missing bits of history and voyeurism. They can leave you deeply uneasy.'

Egoyan told Clarke, 'one of his reasons for making [*Adoration*] was to get to grips with his teenage son. When he was that age he was reading Beckett and Pinter, throwing himself into local theatre.' In his career Egoyan has combined his love of theatre

and film by directing John Hurt in a 2000 television production of Samuel Becket's one act play, *Krapp's Last Tape*, which also happens to be a drama of memory, the recurring theme of so many Egoyan films.

In Becket's play, a 69-year-old Krapp sits alone at a table repeating an annual ritual. Every year on his birthday, Krapp makes a recording of what he remembers as important – and banal – moments of the previous year. In the play, Krapp fumbles through the stack of tapes he keeps in a drawer of the table, listening to and remembering his past. He soon comes to realize the emptiness of his earlier life. If there is any doubt that memory is a central theme in Egoyan's career, *Krapp's Last Tape* will erase that doubt, just as *Adoration* will further confirm it.

### Segregation and oppression

We have arrived, after journeying through the memory films of Scorsese and Egoyan, at what this journey has delivered to me. During my childhood in a 1930s post-depression small-town Georgia community, I lived in a racially segregated culture. The children I played with, the neighbours who shared, with my parents, responsibility for raising me, were a part of that segregated life.

It was the way things were. My memory-bank of my childhood contains images and sounds of segregation, two races, black and white, living side by side, but rigidly separated in what, at the time to a child, appeared as a contented and happy co-existence. And this brings me to the story of a boy named Ned.

Families have collective memories. If we are fortunate, we continue to interact with family members who help us remember our shared family history. I rely on my Cousin Sally to help me remember our shared childhood. We now live far apart, but we have the telephone, email, and occasional visit to freshen those earlier memories.

I was making notes in preparation for writing this piece when I went to dinner with a colleague of mine who was born and raised in Michigan. We were discussing the changing racial dynamics in the United States. My colleague asked me if I was young enough to have experienced separate water fountains in public places in my native South, one fountain for the whites and another for what we then called Negroes.

To make the point that my childhood and my early adult years were lived in a legally segregated society, I said I had. Later I realized I was

mistaken. I do not remember separate water fountains. All I remember was that in the only public building that needed a water fountain, the country court house, there was only one water fountain. A separate fountain was not provided for the Negroes who came to the court house. They just knew not to use the sole fountain, which, like so much else in town, was reserved for whites.

To verify my memory, I called my Cousin Sally, who lived across the street from me in that small Georgia town until her family moved to a nearby larger city. She confirmed the single fountain, and that led us to think back to the lives we lived as children before we started grade school.

I told Sally that what stands out in my memory is the moment when I was preparing to leave for our first day in school. I asked my mother why my friend who lived at the far end of my street was not out front waiting to walk with Cousin Sally and me to school. I do not remember my mother's response. It must have been an uncomfortable moment in her life because, as I later discovered, she knew segregation was wrong.

What I do remember is my shock at what was my first existential encounter with segregation. I knew my playmate was a Negro, but I did not realize that this meant he would not be going to my school. There was a separate, and most certainly not an equal school, for non-white children.

As we discussed our first grade experience, my cousin Sally said she remembered the same shock. And then she added: 'His name was Ned'. Our playmate was Ned, a name I had long forgotten. But Sally remembered. I have no idea what became of Ned. We were childhood playmates, but we lived in separate worlds. He may have remained in our lives for a few more summers, perhaps a fishing trip to the nearby river, but slowly, Ned disappeared from our lives, swallowed up behind the wall of segregation.

### From Georgia to Palestine

That was segregation in a small Georgia town in the 1930s. What was life like for Ned? We never knew because we did not know to ask. Over time we came to realize that our family memory contained a dark, blighted reality that we belonged to a privileged race from which black people were blocked.

I like to think that my memory of Ned, whose name Sally had to recall for me, helped me toward



*Drinking fountain at the Halifax County Courthouse (North Carolina) in April 1938. The first Halifax county courthouse was built in 1759. In 1847, the first courthouse was replaced by a second, which itself was replaced in 1910 by a third courthouse erected on the site of the second courthouse. The 1938 photo of the drinking fountain on the county courthouse lawn photo is of the 1910 courthouse.*

Source: [commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Segregation\\_1938b.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Segregation_1938b.jpg)

a moment of recognition when, in 1973 on a trip to the West Bank of the Occupied Territory of Palestine, I realized that my view of Israelis and Palestinians was totally shaped by the Israeli narrative.

I had not noticed, because it was not a part of my memory bank, that the Palestinian people were segregated in the same manner as Negroes has been segregated from my white culture so many years ago.

Segregation in my American childhood was an evil practice. Segregation imposed by Israel today by walls of occupation and unlawful laws designed to oppress one population for the supposed benefit of another, is also evil.

My memory of Ned was the seed that grew

into my adult determination to resist segregation in any form, wherever I encounter it.

Since 1973, I have determined that I am called to spend the rest of my life working to end the evil of segregation. I do this now for all the children like Ned whose lives are so brutally controlled by others. ■

James M. Wall was the editor-publisher of the *Christian Century* magazine from 1972 through 1999. He was also the film critic for the magazine and is the author of, and contributor to, several books on religion and film. He is currently a Contributing Editor for the *Christian Century*, and the author of a blog, Wall Writings [www.wallwritings.wordpress.com](http://www.wallwritings.wordpress.com)

# Advocating for peace

Jan Servaes

*Around 250 armed conflicts were fought in the 20th century, over 110 million people were killed, and many more wounded, crippled and mutilated. The first decade of the new millennium has not shown any change in this pattern. On the contrary, with 9/11 and the 'war on terror' other frontlines have been opened and more humans subjected to physical and emotional hardships.*

'Violence puts the brakes on authentic development and impedes the evolution of peoples towards greater socio-economic and spiritual well-being'  
*Pope Benedict XVI (2009: 52-3)*

Analyzing the factors which caused these wars and conflicts leads to multilayered and complex explanations. Some of the reasons can be found in structural (including economic, social, cultural and political) issues relating to wealth distribution and inter-ethnic relations, the degree of politicization and ethnic consciousness, sharp economic and social crises, inter-group tensions and the collapse of central authority (Kaldor & Kalyvas, 2009, Kalyvas, 2006, Nagel, 2003).

Advocates for peace are usually 'issue' or 'program' oriented and do not often think in terms of an on-going process of social change in general or peace-building in particular. The resolution of an issue or the initiation of a program are ends in themselves. Thus the primary aim of advocacy is to foster public policies that are supportive of the solution of an issue or program.

Since public policies must be viewed as an integral part of the social and economic development process, the kind of advocacy we would like to put forward is that which is *participatory*. The focus in this

approach is on 'listening' and 'cooperation' rather than on 'telling what to do' and presumes a dynamic two-way approach towards communication.

## Media advocacy roles

Bratic & Schirch distinguish between seven roles the media play, some constructive, some rather destructive: (a) media as information providers and interpreters, (b) media as watchdog, (c) media as gatekeeper, (d) media as policymaker, (e) media as diplomat, (f) media as peace promoter, and (g) media as bridge builder (Bratic & Schirch, 2007: 9-10). *In general, mass media can play two kinds of advocacy roles: (a) they can support development initiatives by the dissemination of messages that encourage the public to support peace-building projects; and (b) they can provide the decision-makers with the necessary information and feedback needed to reach a decision for action.*

Policy-makers usually respond to popular appeal, to lobby groups, and to their own social network of policy- and decision-makers. Therefore, advocacy, political commitment and supportive policies are often themselves a product of social support systems and empowerment of people. *Advocacy should therefore be viewed in conjunction with social support and empowerment strategies* (for more details, see Servaes, 2000).

Advocacy is most effective when individuals, groups and all sectors of society are involved, through three interrelated strategies for action: (a) *Advocacy* generating political commitment for supportive policies and heightening public interest and demand for peace issues; (b) *Social support* developing alliances and social support systems that legitimize and encourage peace-related actions as a social norm; and (c) *Empowerment* equipping individuals and groups with the knowledge, values and skills that encourage effective action for change. (Further elaborated on in DFID, 2000; Fraser & Estrepo-Estrada 1992, 1998; Papa, Singhal & Papa, 2006; Omoto, 2005; Servaes, 1999, 2008).

**Decision-making versus decision-reaching** Confusion remains about what should be the *main focus* in advocacy strategies. Different kinds of problems and situations may call for different solutions. However, there is no universal approach that can be used in all circumstances and flexibility is required

in selecting appropriate strategies. Basically, one can distinguish between two fundamentally opposite strategies, which in practice should be viewed as extremes on a continuum: (a) strategies for *decision-making* (top-down); and (b) strategies for *decision-reaching* (participatory). Therefore, one could propagate either a combination of policies or strategies, or the creation of a *hybrid approach* drawing on several theories and perspectives.

It is important to recognize that decision-makers will only be willing to make a decision or change a policy under a number of conditions: (1) when they consider the issue economically or politically viable; (2) when there is enough public pressure or support; and (3) when there is strong supportive evidence and the need is felt to prioritize the issue.

However, decision-making builds on a number of ‘resources’: (a) expertise/knowledge; (b) availability/control over information; (c) political access and sensitivity; (d) assessed stature and personality; (e) group support/empowerment; and (f) a favourable socio-cultural and political-economic environment. Decision-making ideally has to be based on knowledge/expertise and the technical merit of the issue. Politics however will always play a role in the process and outcome of decision-making. (For more details, see: Crewe & Young, 2002, Figueroa et al, 2002, Lie, 2003, McMahan, 2001, Servaes, 2008).

Therefore, the issue is not primarily ‘how to get the message across’ but ‘how to improve the use of the advocacy information in decision-making’. In order to improve the utilization of information and advocacy messages the following issues are considered important (see *Box 1*).

*Box 1: Important criteria for the success of advocacy messages*

Relevance	The issue has to be considered relevant to the several stakeholder groups.
Timing	The issue has to be brought up on the right time.

Validity	The information and statistics provided have to be valid.
Cultural sensitivity	The information should be tailored to the audiences and be in line with the understandings and expectations of people or stakeholders.
Orientation of the relevant stakeholder groups	Stakeholder groups have to be trained in interpreting data, so that they are able to understand them.
Planning	The advocacy strategies and communication should be planned in advance to improve utilization of the information.
Communication	Interaction and reaching mutual understanding(s) between relevant stakeholder groups
Action orientation	Advocacy strategies have to provide information for concrete action.
Dissemination of information	Advocacy messages and information can only be used by decision-makers if they are disseminated properly.

In order to be effective, *advocacy strategies should focus on the users of the information as well as on the message*. People are actors and subjects, not objects, in advocacy efforts. The content and form of the advocacy messages have to be adapted to the specific audience of decision-makers and be based

on their needs, issues, concerns and interests to be able to catch their interest and potential engagement. *Coalition building and networking* with various interest groups and actors in the decision-making process are critical elements in advocacy strategies.

### Media and peace-building interventions

So-called ‘hate’ media and both commercial and partisan media’s sensationalist and propagandistic reporting and attacks on the ‘others’ are important ‘players’ in conflicts and wars (Bratic & Schirch, 2007, James, 2004, Elias, 1993). For Hamelink (1997: 32) it is through the media that national or ethnic propagandists can ‘suggest to their audiences that ‘the others’ pose fundamental threats to security and well-being of the society and that the only effective means of escaping this threat, is the elimination of this great danger.’

Despite evidence supporting a more ‘selective effects’ approach, many international, bilateral and national governmental and non-governmental organizations believe that *specifically ‘designed’ peace-building media interventions* can have a positive impact and stop violent conflicts. The idea behind media interventions and peace building is clearly a problematic one to make. The *mainstream line* of thought behind ‘media and peace building’ goes that journalists are not supposed to ‘take sides’ on the conflict in question, other than the side of ‘peace’ (Galtung, 1998; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005).

The findings and recommendations from a major project of the international NGO, *Search for Common Ground*, involving fifteen cases where media peace-building projects were carried out in conflict areas around the world (Afghanistan, Benin, Cambodia, Central Asia, Colombia, Cyprus, DRC Congo, Greece, Indonesia, Kenya, Macedonia, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Turkey) may be of interest. We summarize from Howard, Rolt et al (2003) and Terzis & Vassiliadou (2008).

The selected projects have striking differences, ‘but they all begin with a basic premise: that violent conflict is fuelled by ignorance and misunderstanding, and that knowledge and accurate information are vital building blocks of peace, stability, and reconciliation’ (Howard, Rolt et al, 2003: 82).

Some of the *basic questions* raised during these projects were: Who defines peace?, How is peace conceptualized?, How many types of peace ex-

ist for the various stakeholders and how do these apply in particular conflict areas?, On which criteria, premises and priorities are journalists’ choices based over the target audience and/or the issues to be addressed?, Which accountability systems are held in place in order to take into consideration for eventual fallbacks? Who decides if media interventions are indeed ‘constructive’?

In terms of the mass media, should media interventions take place at all?, Which are the defining conditions for such interventions and what is the justification for the [often international] organization’s presence in areas of conflict?, To which extent are they imposing their own value-system while attempting to introduce a media culture of peace?, To which extent are these media interventions funding driven and in which ways does it affect the process and the outcome?

Since no two ethno-political conflicts or media environments are the same, these questions led to a variety of answers and suggested solutions. There is *no such thing as a one-size-fits-all* in this. It is important to distinguish between the various stages of media intervention and the suggestions provided are meant as ‘guidelines’ rather than ‘must-follow recipes’. Therefore, the Canadian-based organization ‘Journalists for Human Rights’ (JHR, 2007) has started the publication of country-specific handbooks for a number of countries in Africa.

The various stages of media intervention projects are the following: (a) the ‘Pre-Project Assessment’ section, deals with the first stage of conducting media peace-building projects, that is, feasibility studies and pre-project assessment work; (b) the ‘Project Planning/Design’ section categorizes media projects into three broad categories, namely training, provision of hardware, and media content and provides a comprehensive outline of questions and themes that need to be addressed before a project takes place.

These are followed by (c) ‘Monitoring/Evaluation’ addresses two challenging and often controversial stages of any media [and other] peace-building project, that of implementation and evaluation. It points to important issues to consider throughout these two stages and provides guidelines on how these can be carried out most effectively. (d) Lastly, the ‘Sustainability’ of the project needs to be taken into account (For more details, see: Beckett & Kyrke-Smith, 2007, Eknes & Endresen, 1999, Gilboa,

2000, Guseva et al., 2008, Hieber, 2001, Kelman, 1995, O'Siochru, 2005, Reychler, 2007, Sida, 2004).

### In short

Advocacy, in essence, implies gaining political commitment and policy support through organized social action with the involvement of committed individuals, support from influential forces and the involvement of concerned sectors of society.

Therefore, *three streams of action* are important:

- Media must be activated to build public support and upward pressure for policy decisions.
- Interest groups must be involved and alliances established for reaching a common understanding and mobilizing societal forces. This calls for networking with influential individuals and groups, political forces and public organizations, professional and academic institutions, religious and cause-oriented groups, business and industry.
- Public demand must be generated and citizens' movements activated to evoke a response from national leaders. It may not always be easy to build up a strong public movement around peace issues -- but even a moderate display of interest and effort by community leaders could stimulate the process for policy decisions and resource allocation for peace-building. ■

*This text formed part of the keynote address at the World Congress of Signis, the World Catholic Association for Communication, 'Media for a Culture of Peace: Children's Rights, Tomorrow's Promise', Chiang Mai, Thailand, October 17-21, 2009.*

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# Berlinale 2010 focuses on family and freedom

Philip Lee

*The Berlin Film Festival celebrated its 60th birthday in style with a poster listing the titles of 15,477 films shown so far, a photographic exhibition entitled 'Star Parade', and an art installation of recycled festival billboards, film footage, and other materials called 'The Curtain' preceding an open-air screening at the Brandenburg Gate of Fritz Lang's fully restored 1927 masterpiece Metropolis.*

Three themes stood out among the more than 400 films shown at this year's Berlinale (11-20 February 2010). Foremost was the theme of 'family', both functional and dysfunctional. Directors seem to have taken to heart Tolstoy's much quoted observation at the beginning of *Anna Karenina* that, 'Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.'

A good example was *En Famílie* (A Family) directed by Pernille Fischer Christensen (Denmark, 2010). It portrayed a long-established family of bakers whose future is jeopardised when the father falls ill with cerebral cancer and none of his daughters cares to take over the business. Loyalties are put under pressure in an intricate exploration of husband-wife and father-daughter relationships that lead to an unexpected outcome.

*En Famílie* was one of two films that included lengthy and sensitively performed death-bed scenes. The other was the out-of-competition *Otouto* (The Brother), directed by Yoji Yamada (Japan, 2010). At the closing ceremony he was also given



a Berlinale Camera, a special award given to a film personality whom the festival wishes to honour.

*Rompecabezas* (Puzzle) directed by Natalia Smirnoff (Argentina/France, 2010) also dealt with family relationships, this time from the perspective of the mother. On her 50th birthday Maria's family give her a jigsaw puzzle. Solving it she discovers an unsuspected passion for puzzles but still has to cope with the traditional macho expectations of her family. The film is a delightful and unusual expression of a woman discovering herself and a certain freedom.

A second important theme at the festival was 'imprisonment': characters who come out of prison and try to re-establish a place in society, or who are socially or culturally boxed in and break out. *Submarino* directed by Thomas Vinterberg (Denmark, 2010) is the tale of two brothers who lose track of each other after a difficult childhood. Nick spends time in prison and surfaces in a grimly portrayed Copenhagen. His younger brother is a drug-addict trying to bring up a six-year-old son alone. The film has a tragic ending, with a positive dénouement redeeming what might otherwise appear sordid.

*If I Want To Whistle, I Whistle* directed by Florin erban (Romania/Sweden, 2010) is an accomplished first feature film set in a Romanian juvenile detention centre. Silviu has just five days left before being released when his long absent mother decides that she is going to take his younger brother with her to Italy leaving Silviu on his own.

The director worked closely with boys held in a penitentiary where he started to 'get to know them, to understand some of the reasons for their mistakes, to finally understand how many of their actions had been influenced by their families, the environment they come from and, last but not least, by all of us, the ones outside those prison walls.'

A third significant theme was that of reclaiming personal or collective memory about traumatic circumstances and events in an effort to move towards some kind of recognition or reconciliation. In some competition films all three themes overlapped and echoes of them could be found elsewhere in both the festival's Forum and Panorama sections.

*Tuan Yuan* (Apart Together) directed by Wang Quan'an (Republic of China, 2010) explores the social implications of divided homelands (e.g. China and Taiwan, North Korea and South Korea, East and West Germany). The story takes place in the

city of Shanghai, to which Liu Yansheng returns, a veteran of the 1949 Kuomintang struggle against Communism. He has set out find the love of his life, Qiao Yu-e, who years before married a former Communist soldier and now has a grown-up family. The film stars three 'senior citizens' of Chinese and Taiwanese cinema.

### The Ecumenical Jury Prizes

The Ecumenical Jury at the 60th Berlinale awarded its Competition prize to *Bal* (Honey) directed by Semih Kaplanoglu (Turkey/Germany, 2010) – which also won the festival's Golden Bear awarded by an International Jury whose President was German director, producer and screen writer Werner Herzog.

The Ecumenical Jury's citation reads: 'A portrait of a poet as a young child, *Bal* tells the story of the blossoming of sensibility. Yusuf lives in the highlands of northeast Turkey, immersed in a forest of overwhelming beauty. His life points to a connection with nature that provides not only material subsistence but spiritual learning, highlighting issues such as family love and involvement in the community. *Bal* invites us to go deeper into this forest, on a journey that mirrors the human soul seeking the ideals and people with whom we want to share life.'

Yusuf's father is a beekeeper who gathers a therapeutic honey that is the essence of an older, mysterious world. It is produced by a dwindling number of beekeepers and, in this evocative film, both the traditional way of life and the bees appear to be dying out.

In the Panorama section, the Jury awarded its prize to the film *Kawasakiho Ruže* (Kawasaki's Rose) directed by Jan Hřebejk (Czech Republic, 2009). 'The film recounts an episode in the life of a distinguished psychologist who deals with memory and who has previously betrayed a friend who was then forced to emigrate. It explores questions of truth-telling and lying, responsibility and forgiveness, both within society and within the family. It emphasises the importance of collective and personal memory in a context of rebuilding a post-totalitarian country.'

The Ecumenical Award in the Forum section went to *Aisheen* (Still Alive in Gaza) directed by Nicolas Wadimoff (Switzerland/Qatar, 2010). 'A documentary shot after the end of the Israeli military offensive in Gaza in 2009, the film offers impressions of daily life in Gaza, showing not only the ruins but the beautiful beach, drama classes for



Jan Hrebejk, director of Kawasaki's *Rose*.

children and the reconstruction of a roundabout destroyed by the bombs. Hope and growth blend with the sorrow of lost family members and land cultivated for generations. Life is persistent, like a dandelion growing through cracks in the asphalt.'

#### Special award to Prof. Dr. Thomas Koebner

On the occasion of the 60th Berlinale the German churches made a Special Award which was presented at the Ecumenical Reception. Carrying prize money 3000, donated by the German Bishops' Conference and the Evangelical Church in Germany, the award was given to Prof. Dr. Thomas Koebner 'in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the perception and acknowledgement of film as art form.'

Koebner founded the Institute for Film Science and Media Dramaturgy at the University of Mainz where he taught until 2007, as well as giving courses at the universities of Munich, Cologne, Wuppertal and Marburg. He was Film Commissioner in the Federal Government's Department for Economical Co-operation 1972-73, and director of the German Academy for Film and Television in Berlin 1989-92.

Koebner fostered appreciation for the relevance of film and the achievements of film artists, and significantly contributed to asserting film as a field of research and a source of cultural inspiration in Germany.

The Ecumenical Reception began with greetings

from the Commissioner of Culture of the EKD, Rev. Dr. Petra Bahr, the chairman of the Journalistic Commission of the German Bishops' Conference, Bishop Dr. Gebhard Fürst, and the Programme Manager of the Berlin Film Festival, Thomas Hailer. The laudatory speech was made by Hans Helmut Prinzler, former director of the Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek and the Berlin Film Museum.

#### Berlinale offers new takes on Islam

Two striking films in Competition explored deeper understandings of Islam in contemporary Europe. *Na Putu* (On the Path) directed by Jasmila Žbanic – winner of the Ecumenical Jury Prize for *Grabavica: The Land of My Dreams* (Berlin 2006) – is set in Sarajevo, Bosnia. Luna and Amar are a Bosnian Muslim couple whose past is overshadowed by the war. Luna finds solace in a fun-loving existence, while Amar suddenly finds himself drawn toward the way of life of conservative Wahhabis living in an idyllic lakeside community.

In *Shahada* (Faith) directed by Burhan Qurbani (Germany, 2010) the value systems of three young Muslims are put to the test in today's Berlin. Maryam is the daughter of an Imam who tolerates but cannot condone her permissive behaviour. Samir is a young Nigerian who discovers he is gay. And Ismail is a police officer who by chance encounters a woman who three years earlier was wounded by a ricocheting bullet fired from his gun. It caused her to lose her unborn child and he has never forgiven himself.

In the words of the director, '*Shahada* is not a film about religion. But the religious affiliation of the characters influences their actions and their decisions in a very certain way. It is about the path they choose.'

#### Problems of parody and extreme violence

Two films marred this year's Berlinale. *Jud Süß* directed by Oskar Roehler (Austria/Germany, 2010) is a biopic of Ferdinand Marian, the actor who infamously played the lead in Veit Harlan's Nazi propaganda film of 1940. The director's apparent intention was to explore the fine line between an artist's aims

*Facing page: Stills from Bal (top), winner of the Ecumenical Jury Award, and Rompecabezas (bottom), a captivating film about a woman discovering an unusual passion.*





Still from *A Family*, directed by Pernille Fischer Christensen (Denmark, 2010).

and how they are reached. In doing so, Roehler misjudged the sensibility and knowledge of his audience.

The film represents Marian as a naive victim of Goebbels. In fact he was an opportunist who benefitted from his position. To depict him as vulnerable, the storyline invents a half-Jewish wife for Marian, which is historically untrue. The director allows Moritz Bleibtreu to grossly overplay Goebbels, as if he were going for an Oscar, and mixes historical Jud Süß material with his own inventions. In place of critical or artistic insight, the film offers a parody of Nazi propaganda and Nazi Germany. At the press screening it was booed.

Worse by far was the stark combination of extreme violence and sexuality permeating *The Killer Inside Me* directed by Michael Winterbottom (Great Britain/USA, 2010). A neo-noir adaptation of a pulp novel by Jim Thompson already made into a film in 1976, it portrays a sadistic and psychopathic young sheriff in Oklahoma, who brutally murders two women and a young man and who causes the death of another. The film ends in self-immolation by fire killing three more people.

Soon after the beginning, the audience is shown the lengthy and vicious beating of a young prostitute who has fallen in love with the sheriff. The scene is so savage and upsetting that at the screening several people walked out. Later the sheriff also violently assaults his 'real' girlfriend and – in a scene not shown – hangs a young

man who could provide evidence against him.

The film has been labelled sadistic and gratuitous by its detractors and, following a screening at the Sundance Festival, several critics predicted that it would never find a major distributor. 'It's ultra-real, excruciating to watch and, in some viewers' minds, inexcusable,' wrote Jay A. Fernandez in *The Hollywood Reporter*. In psychological terms, the film remains unconvincing since the audience is given no clue about the killer's motivations.

Winterbottom's decision to depict graphic violence raises serious questions. Firstly, with violence against women a largely ignored topic in mainstream media, is it ethical to show such depraved viciousness on screen? From a narrative point of view, what takes place could have been inferred from well crafted 'before and after' shots – as with the murder of the young man.

Secondly, what are the implications of a high profile director's film of this kind being selected and screened by a top international festival? And thirdly, are not women's human rights being violated by such a depiction? Berlin's International Film Festival deserves better. ■

*The Ecumenical Jury* members were Rev. Werner Schneider-Quindeau (Germany) - President of the Jury; Philip Lee (Canada); Dr. Markus Leniger (Germany); Ylva Liljeholm (Sweden); Edgar Rubio (Mexico); and Alberto Ramos Ruiz (Cuba).

# IN THE EVENT...

AMARC – World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters – 2<sup>nd</sup> Asia Pacific Conference, ‘Voices for a Sustainable and Sound Future’, Bangalore, India, 20-23 February 2010.

Community Radio (CR) has become a significant entity in the Asia-Pacific region. The close to 300 participants hailing from the Kyrgyz Republic, Laos, PNG, Nepal, Japan, Afghanistan among other countries affirmed the Bangalore Declaration’s strong support for community radio advocacy, training and capacity building and gender-based policies for CR stations.

There were many key moments in the conference – the presence of nearly 70 representatives from community radio stations in Nepal, a strong contingent from Afghanistan including representatives from an all-women-run station *Nargis Radio*, nearly 20 representatives from Bangladesh, a country that is on the cusp of issuing CR radio licenses, stirring presentations from Right to Information Activists Aruna Roy and Nikhil Dey who urged the CR movement to connect to larger movements, and P V Satheesh’s strong articulation of the need for the CR movement to connect to issues such as food sovereignty.

The CR movement in South Asia has certainly come a long way from the time when *Radio Sagarmatha* in Nepal was the only one of its kind in the entire region. That was in the early 1990s. Today there are close to 136 CR stations in Nepal with 50 more stations that are soon to be licensed. In India, there has been a slow but steady change in the government’s attitude towards CR. Today there is a strong commitment from the Information & Broadcasting Ministry to the CR movement, and involvement of civil society in license screening and policy making processes.

There has been a belated push to license NGOs and it is clear that there is creativity and innovation in this sector. Gurgaon is a fast growing satellite city close to Delhi. Aarti Jaiman’s presentation of the *Gurgaon Ki Awaaz* (The Voice of Gurgaon), a CR station specifically for migrant workers and villagers whose labour built Gurgaon’s many malls but who are for all practical purposes excluded from having a stake in this brave new megapolis, clearly showed the potential of CR to empower and strengthen local communities.

While there is a lot to celebrate, there is still a lot that needs to be done. There is a danger that the CR movement in this region may become a victim of its own success. For this movement to make

a critical impact, it simply must interrogate its practices, policies, understandings, and commitments.

In India, in official parlance, ‘community’ meant state funded university campus-based communities. It is only very recently that the meaning of community has been extended to include NGOs and the communities that they serve. Having said that, it is still not clear whether or not NGOs will intentionally include local communities, the grassroots and the many sections of the excluded and whether they will enable local communities to take over the CR station at the end of a defined period.

There are bound to be many challenges in South Asia as the CR movement becomes an established part of media landscapes. This will also include government and the commercial sector getting involved in the CR movement via proxy NGOs. This trend has already begun. In Sri Lanka for example, the six CR stations are all run by the government. Conservative religious organizations have already made a pitch for CR licenses in South Asia. Commercial broadcasters in India have already expressed their interest in ‘supporting’ CR stations in India.

There are also existential issues faced by the CR movement in the region. These include issues with volunteering, convoluted licensing processes, infrastructural problems including frequent power-cuts and the politics of frequency allocation among many other issues. Sustainability, in other words, is already a major issue.

From a WACC perspective, it was a pity that hardly any WACC members were present at this important conference. The conference was held at the United Theological College in Bangalore, a premier ecumenical space and site for many a WACC meeting in the past. The only high profile WACC member present was *FemLink* from Fiji. CR has for many years been a significant sector that WACC has supported.

While WACC’s Latin American region has partnered AMARC, other regions have not consistently engaged with this organisation. And that is a source of concern for partnerships and synergies are vital to the democratization of communications.

This conference was an important milestone in the growth and development of CR in the Asia-Pacific region. ■

*Report by Dr Pradip Thomas, Associate Professor at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia, and Co-Director of its Centre for Communication and Society.*

# ON THE PAGE...

**Communication for Another development: Listening before telling**, by Ricardo Ramirez and Wendy Quarry. London: Zed Books. 220pp.

‘A pocket bible on participatory communication for development.’

Ricardo Ramirez and Wendy Quarry are optimistic, as most of us working in communication for social change. This attitude comes from practice and contact with the realities of development, with people and communities. At one point most of us, who are practitioners rather than academics, are ready to share what we have learned on the ground, in contrast with what we have picked up in academic books.

In the particular case of ‘Communication for Another development: Listening before telling’, Wendy and Ricardo want to share their optimism with managers, planners and decision-makers, meaning those ‘other’ people in development that transit out of the ‘sect’ of already converted communicators. In that perspective they have achieved an important milestone: a small book, concise, well-written and easy to read, seasoned with plenty of interesting stories from the field, emerging from practice, mostly from their personal experience. To reach its audience through empathy this book collects reflections and real stories, mostly from development institutions.

There is no foundational pretension in the book. The objective is to collect and synthesize in one place the main ideas and examples of how communication for development and social change (or other names that are well explained in the book) are essential to a development approach that serves the interest of the poorest and includes them in the planning and implementation processes because they know what they want (better than most of those that come to their aid).

For this itinerary to be shown to the reader, the authors have gone through the basic literature but better than that, through the ideas of those that have managed during the past decades to develop invigorating concepts of communi-

cation for social change based on their concrete practice. Enough room is thus dedicated to seminal characters such as Andrea Fuglesang, Don Snowden and other English-speaking authors.

We note however the little presence of important communication referents from Latin America the region where the dependency theory developed and much of the participatory approaches came to maturity (this absence is noticeable given the fact that Ricardo Ramirez is one of the authors).

To say the least, Latin America has been the main contributing region to both ‘another development’ and ‘another communication’. Apart from Paulo Freire the book does not do justice to the huge contribution (or even include them in the bibliography) of Antonio Pasquali, Jesus Martin Barbero, Mario Kaplún, Luis Ramiro Beltrán or Rosa María Alfaro, who has been for many years a key proponent of ‘another communication for another development’ (1993).<sup>1</sup>

It may be challenging to compare the body of work and hands-on experience of the above mentioned, with others that receive greater attention in the book. Maybe the choice was made considering the availability of their work in English, but then it was important to say it. The risk is of perpetuating the laziness and ethnocentrism of intellectuals in the North that do not dare to read any other language than English. Note the different attitude in Latin America, where most of those involved in the communication field have made the effort of reading in English.

## Problem of definitions

There is a core idea – almost a motto – in this book: ‘It is not good communication that makes good development; it is good development that breeds good communication’.

Define ‘good’... I happen to have a problem with the word ‘good’, even more than with ‘best’ in ‘best practices’. We can challenge ‘good’ because nobody is ever trying on purpose to promote ‘bad’ communication or development. There are other words that better characterise the type

of communication the authors are talking about, words that are not morally qualifying in intention, but describing a philosophical approach, such as ‘participatory’, ‘inclusive’, ‘horizontal’, etc.

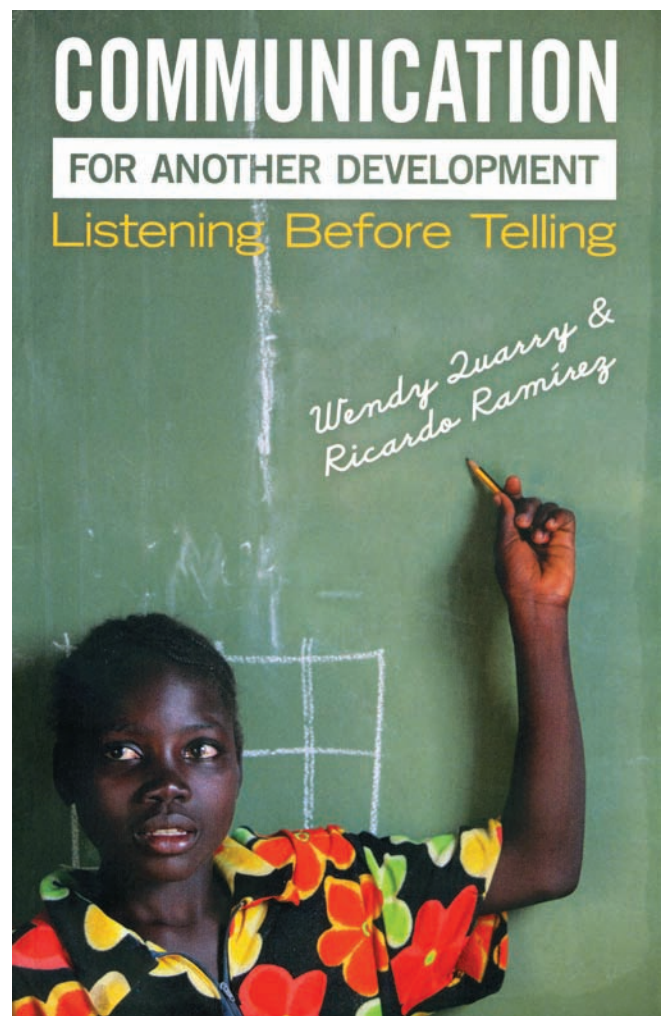
Now, if we take ‘good’ as equivalent to inclusive, participatory, dialogical, horizontal, people-centred and so on, as is later acknowledged – and nuanced – in the book, the premise itself is problematic. If the pre-requisite for ‘good’ communication were ‘good’ development, communication would not have many opportunities to prove how valuable it is. If communication is not part of development programmes that are conceived and/or planned around a vertical and non-participatory approach to development, then it will be always marginal in terms of bringing about change, and if it only piggy-backs on programmes and projects that are already people-centred and participatory (‘good’) from their inception, there wouldn’t be a challenge.

The chicken or the egg? My take on this question has always been to take advantage of any open window of opportunity. No matter which idea of development that planners have in their brains when they are about to start the design and planning of a new development programme (‘bad’ or ‘good’), if at the initial stage communication for development (‘good’) is part of the process, chances are that people (called ‘beneficiaries’ in development jargon) will be involved and more opportunities will be created for a programme that is inclusive and uses communication as dialogue and participation (by the way, the etymology of participation means *sharing*). We may lose often (we have all lived through it) but something will remain behind.

Eventually, the authors come to discuss this contradiction, putting their statement in perspective, but also acknowledging at the very end of the book that ‘a group of communicators with communication initiatives will not make the difference’ if the overall context does not change first: ‘Does this mean that communication professionals have only two choices: to work in the grey zone or become an activist? The answer is a qualified yes.’

### **Bureaucratisation of development**

At the macro level it is true, as Ricardo and Wendy state, that there have been better times when development organisations had policies (and committed people, champions) that promoted participatory



approaches to development and to communication (e.g. Colin Fraser and Manuel Calvelo in FAO during the 1970s). They created favourable environments for participatory communication to have enough leverage within development programmes.

Much has changed, for the worse, in recent years: ‘The aid sector behaves like an industry leaving little room for creativity and innovation, a hallmark of good development’, say the authors.

The bureaucratisation of development that Quarry and Ramirez point out is absolutely a fact and we need to stick our finger deep into that wound until it hurts. I could add to their great examples (such as Paul’s briefcase) my own experience in UNICEF. I saw the agency changing in few years from an organisation lead by passion and commitment with children and poverty under the creative leadership of James P. Grant – a wonderful communicator himself – to the indolent bureaucracy and mediocrity that was promoted through

the rigid and uncharismatic reign of Carol Belamy. The very soul of UNICEF was destroyed.

The 'grey zone' in development bureaucracy, with which communicators have to deal with, is the main barrier to social change and human development. Ricardo and Wendy mention their experience in designing a communication component for a rural development programme in Nepal and a communication strategy for a water supply project in Mozambique: both failed, they were cut short by bureaucrats. That is exactly what I lived through in Mozambique, when facilitating the design – a collective exercise – of a participatory communication strategy for the National Plan to Combat HIV/AIDS.

Almost a year of hard work with all stakeholders (national and provincial government agencies, NGOs and media, multilateral and bi-lateral cooperation and PLWA) turned to nothing when the UNICEF Representative decided she didn't want 'that kind' of communication (although the strategy actually covered 'all kinds' of communication, including the one that she wanted most: institutional visibility).

The authors argue that in their failures the 'champions' inside the aid organisations were miss-

ing; without them a participatory process is unthinkable because it threatens the established power. It is clearly what happened to them and to me in Mozambique, where the head of the AIDS national agency, a 'champion' (Janet Mondlane), was replaced mid-way in the process by a party bureaucrat, who, with the 'anti-champion' representing UNICEF demolished what had been collectively built.

Champions are certainly a very important factor, and this book helps to make the distinction between external champions – we communicators – and insider champions who are often missing when we approach a new initiative. The book includes profiles of various champions and underlines their importance in promoting successful communication projects over a long period of time. The choice (with much attention to Canadians because the authors had direct experience working with them) is, however, tricky when we contrast their *parti-pris* for a particular tool (video for example) with the notion that in a participatory design even the communication tools need to be determined in dialogue with communities and stakeholders.

### Planners and searchers

My favourite in the book is chapter 3, around the distinction between 'planners' and 'searchers'. The authors apply to communication the clever contribution of Easterly (2006) to the analysis of failures in development. Ricardo has included a beautiful drawing graphically showing the left and the right side of the brain (see opposite), where 'planners' and 'searchers' respectively function.

While planners are guided by what is rational, linear and predictable, searchers move towards what is systemic, emergent and adaptive. Planners do not think out of the box, they work alongside government red tape, pushing large infrastructure projects while worrying about upward accountability to donors; whereas searchers are keener to work with civil society organisations on medium and small-scale projects that involve people, to whom they feel downwards accountable.

In terms of their approach to communication, planners are 'tellers' (they already know everything and want to be heard/obeyed), results oriented, using mass media messages and communication that is really information-dissemination and public relations. Searchers, instead,

