POSTSCRIPT 1: THE TIME OF PLACE

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THE CASE STUDIES IN THIS VOLUME EMPHASISE FORCEFULLY THAT PLACES have meanings, and these meanings change over time. They change simply because of time—they leave the memory of those who witnessed the events, and who then told their stories to their families and communities. In this telling of stories memories change, the interplay between recollection and emotion shifts, and the function and purpose of stories change to serve particular arguments in particular contexts. These stories are passed down to subsequent generations and are further transformed, and eventually they seep into history. But these transformed meanings are subtle and multifaceted.

In this volume references are made to the ‘biography of place’. Places tell stories, they speak to us through the landscape before our eyes and such place-related stories are especially powerful when the landscape is one of memorialisation. Place-based stories provide a direct link between individuals and the environment: “Within this understanding was interwoven an embodied sense of visiting the actual physical place, a place where the soil had been soaked in blood and tears” (Sørensen and Adriansen this volume).

LOOKING BACK TO LOOK FORWARD

Events and memorials, which are designed to be a vehicle for remembering and reconciliation, serve in many cases to keep alive the memories of conflict, grievance, injustice, and pain. They also demonstrate, however, that it takes two to create conflict, and both parties suffer and their pain is a shared experience. The legacies of war, both memories in the mind and material remains in the physical environment, are an important component of the reconciliation process. For example, former French President Nicolas Sarkozy (at the Arc de Triomphe on Armistice Day 2009 in the presence of German Chancellor Angela Merkel) made an emotional reference to the bonding between the two countries through their shared suffering, and the fact that German children had cried for their dead fathers in exactly the same way as French children had. Sarkozy’s reference to that most painful of reflections, ‘lost children’, reminds us of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s powerful tribute sent to an official Australian, New Zealand, and British party visiting

Anzac Cove in 1934, a tribute which is reproduced on the memorial to the Anzacs killed at Gallipoli in 1915:

Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives. . . . You are now lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehments to us where they lie side by side now here in this country of ours, you, the mothers, who sent their sons from faraway countries wipe away your tears; your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land, they have become our sons as well.¹

Atatürk’s speech, like that of Sarkozy 75 years later, has to be set within a wider political context. William ‘Billy’ Hughes, Prime Minister of Australia during the First World War, said: “Australia was born on the shores of Gallipoli.” One might perhaps suggest that Turkey was too; Kemal Atatürk, who distinguished himself at Gallipoli, played a key role in the Turkish War of Independence and went on to become the first President of the Republic of Turkey in 1923.

Emotional penances, which seem to be looking back in sorrow, are often looking forward to a future. Sarkozy also used the occasion for remembrance to talk about a closer co-ordination of economic and energy polices and plans for the appointment of a Franco-German Minister. On 7 December 1970, Willy Brandt knelt down at the monument to the Warsaw Uprising (the Kniefall von Warschau), a penitential gesture which almost 50 percent of the German population thought was ‘exaggerated’ (Der Spiegel 1970), but which was seen by Brandt as a symbolic sign central to his policy of Ostpolitik. And on 22 September 1984, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl held hands with French President François Mitterrand in front of the Ossuary at the Douaumont cemetery in Verdun. This gesture was not only meant to signal reconciliation between two men to events in the past, one whose father had fought at Verdun (Kohl) and the other who had fought over the same ground in the Second World War. It was also a statement about the future, about the ‘European Project’ and France and Germany’s position at the centre of it.

These examples do not seek to denigrate such acts as cynical posturing, but we should not become too misty-eyed and ignore the fact that the memorialisation of the past can be functional serving future economic interests, massaging the collective memory, and healing past psychological scars.

**MEMORY IN CONTEXT**

These observations remind us how the meanings of memorial sites are simultaneously located in the individual, their identities and group allegiances, in those local communities which look out every day across a landscape that saw death and destruction, and in the larger social, political, economic, and historical contexts in which individuals, families, and communities live.
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The oral historian Allesandro Portelli (1991) recounts his experience of interviewing elderly resistance fighters who opposed the Fascists in Genzano near Rome. The men arranged themselves for the interview by seniority in terms of political experience rather than age. The first speaker talked about life in the village under German occupation and Allied bombardment. The next speaker set his account of anti-Fascist resistance farther back in time and described how the villagers were dependent upon the underground organisation of the 1920s and 1930s. The third speaker talked about how resistance was not possible without the pre–First World War socialist tradition and electoral successes. The final speaker traced his village’s revolutionary tradition back to the riots in response to Pope Pius IX’s visit to the town in 1848. Our narratives of the past are shaped by memory and history, which in turn at least partially explain who we are and how we have got to where we are. Even for these men seemingly shared and well-known events and places meant different things.

For Portelli, time has both a quantitative and a qualitative dimension. He conceptualises these quantitative and a qualitative dimensions as two axes. Its quantitative dimension refers to the accumulation of experience. This presents time as linear, divided into events, periods, and epochs in a horizontal fashion—a temporal plane that stretches from our past into our future. Its qualitative dimension, however, is conceived vertically, reflecting the multidimensionality of our lives and the contexts in which our lives are lived, ranging from the personal (i.e., home and the private sphere with the everyday occurrences of family events through the life course), the collective (i.e., the life of the community, the neighbourhood, the workplace), and the institutional (i.e., the sphere of politics, governments, collective organisations, and set within national and international historical contexts). Within any one moment many things may take place simultaneously with different meanings and significances for those who experience them. Meaning and memories reside in the horizontal and vertical axes of time as well as space. We live through layers of events, which simultaneously occupy local places and global spaces, with individual lives part of a complex web of relationships that are both ‘here’ and ‘there’. For example, the bombing of Gernika was, in Portelli’s terms, not only a personal and collective experience but also an institutional event. This point is brought out by Dacia Viejo-Rose (this volume) who discusses how the reconstruction process after the bombing sought to affect the symbolic meaning of the town. Through her analysis of the rebuilding of the Plaza Mayor (Foru Plaza) and Ayuntamiento, Viejo-Rose demonstrates how the state lent ‘materiality to its authority’ and in so doing aesthetically and symbolically linked the past with the present. She also shows how, after the demise of Franco’s régime, Gernika was not only reclaimed for itself but was also used for wider readings of the meaning of urban spaces and places through various international voices.
AFTER CONFLICT COMES . . . CONFLICT

In the opening paragraph to his essay ‘Give War a Chance’, Edward Luttwak, the influential American policy adviser to the U.S. Secretary of Defence, the National Security Council, and the U.S. military, argues:

An unpleasant truth often overlooked is that although war is a great evil, it does have a great virtue: it can resolve political conflicts and lead to peace. This can happen when all belligerents become exhausted or when one wins decisively. Either way the key is that the fighting must continue until a resolution is reached. (Luttwak 1999: 36)

The argument advanced by Luttwak is that by prosecuting war to an indisputable conclusion, peace is inevitable. Such a view has to be challenged. Following Portelli, the dimensions of time and space are infinite, and there can be no winner of wars. From a more immediate perspective the end of war is rarely and smoothly transformed into a condition of peace, as if conflictual states are binary. War mutates into a more managed state of conflict in which adversity has to be confronted, negotiated, and resolved. Political conflicts and internalised animosities rumble on across generations and across borders, if only amongst the descendants and diaspora. The forgotten detritus of war in terms of altered and scarred landscapes, restored trenches at battlefield sites, purposeful monuments and memories and annual ceremonies ensure that while they may seek to become symbols of peace and reconciliation, memories of war are an ever-constant shadow. In some cases, the presence of these physical and mental memorials only serves to ensure that peace does not follow war.

In all the case studies in this volume, the conflicts discussed are usually bracketed within a specific time period. But of course the authors of these chapters are only too aware that the origins of these conflicts have histories extending beyond the beginning and concluding dates that normally bracket conflicts (e.g., Bosnia 1992–1995 and Cyprus 1974). The dates of conflicts are nominal and represent only the most recent ‘flaring’ of hostilities. Moreover, they often have no conclusion, because while there may no longer be open warfare, on-going political instability and inter-ethnic tensions remain.

This complex relationship between place, politics, and ethnicity is well illustrated by a Serb memorial in the village of Kravića (about a fifteen-minute drive from Srebrenica) to those who had died in the Bosnian War. When the CRIC research team visited Kravića a member of the Serb community, standing before the memorial, recounted his experience of the killings and destruction in his village. The memorial, built by the community, incorporates seating for participation in commemorative events and history lessons for children. On the opposite side of the road is an older memorial to the Partisans who fought against
the fascists in the Second World War. Their spatial proximity and alignment immediately ties one story about one moment in the past to a completely different moment. Even though the historical context, causes, and ideologies are different and the fact that the Bosnian Muslims were neighbours not invaders, the two memorials along with the physical evidence in the local valley of the consequences of war in the form of burnt-out houses seem to support on-going narratives which are used to justify past, present, and possible future actions. A few kilometres away at the Srebrenica-Potočari memorial site, the graves of more than seven thousand Bosnian Muslims stretch into the distance, forming an arc around the ‘Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery for the Victims of the 1995 Genocide’. On the same day as the visit to Kravića, standing in this memorial, a Bosnian Muslim told his community’s story.

HERITAGE AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR RECONCILIATION?

This volume raises an important research question: to what degree can heritage be used as an instrument for reconciliation? Cyprus may be seen by Europe’s tourists as a sunny and relaxed Mediterranean island with good food, wonderful beaches, and friendly hosts. Thoughts of war and inter-communal strife are the last things on many tourists’ minds as they flick through the holiday brochures, even if they are aware that there is on-going conflict on the island. Cyprus is split in half by the UN-controlled Buffer Zone and guarded by armed troops from both Greek and Turkish communities. Sitting precisely in the middle of this Buffer Zone is the Ledra Palace Hotel, which, Olga Demetriou (this volume) asserts, embodies nothing less than the heritage of the Cyprus conflict. Following the failure of the Annan Plan (2004) and the continued existence of checkpoints, the Ledra Palace has become a symbol of failure.

Sørensen and Adriansen argue that sites of conflict continue to have ‘owners’. The war lives on, for example, in Bosnia where each side carries on the conflict and animosity through its stories, through its memorials, through the burnt-out and abandoned houses of those who have been forced to leave either the area or even the country, and through the everyday reminders of the shelling such as the Sarajevo Roses (i.e., the mortar shell marks on the streets of the city which have been filled with red resin ‘roses’ as an ever-present reminder of and memorial to those killed). The memorial rituals in Dresden are now the German-wide focus for clashes between the Far Right and the Left, with neo-Nazi marching on the anniversary of the 1945 Dresden air raid, Gernika’s bombing remains totemic of fascist assault and has been capitalised on by various factions in the Basque conflict. And, as noted above, Verdun continues to be an important part of the French and German psyche such that more than ninety years after the end of the First World War, two national leaders cannot meet there on the day of remembrance and reconciliation.
Most languages possess maxims that speak to the therapeutic effect of time: ‘Time heals’ (U.K.), ‘Time is anger’s medicine’ (Germany), ‘Nature, Time, and Patience are the three great physicians’ (Bulgaria). But these may be best considered as words of comfort rather than prophecy. History is not just what comes after politics, but can be the fuel of politics. How can people heal if they live in landscapes that are still wounded? People may try to ‘forgive and forget’, but time and place are always there to remind the descendants of both victors and vanquished of past injustices, brutalities, and pain. Memorials, heritage sites, museums, commemorative parades, and ‘recreational’ re-enactments all pick at the scabs of the past, and in so doing the wounds left by conflict take more time to heal and inevitably leave a scar. These sites and practices may seek to honour and respect the past, and be part of a reconciliation process, but meaning is dependent upon the vantage point. A peace memorial can so easily be seen as a blame memorial.

Are we placing too much responsibility on the heritage to do our reconciliation work for us? The markers of war and conflict, such as memorials or battlefield sites, far from being part of a forgiveness and reconciliation process, in fact become sites where old conflicts are re-constructed, re-positioned, and re-presented. People and places cannot be separated, suggesting that the reconstruction of the heritage is as likely to lead to the reconstruction of long-felt grievances and injustices as it is to lead to understanding and resolution. Do we really imagine that a political peace process lasting just several years can eradicate not just the physical but also psychological grievances incubated in some cases over centuries? As I write this, the Ulster Protestant Orange Order has just completed its annual day of marches (12 July 2013) through the Catholic areas of Belfast and Londonderry to commemorate the victory of King William III over King James II in 1690; yet again the marches were the scene of inter-communal violence, although the rhetoric presented to the outside world is one of a peace secured (RTE 2013).

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The central idea that runs through this commentary is that the meanings of war and their associated places and spaces change over time. A question that has sat in the background throughout these reflections is how are these different meanings remembered?

Collective memory: past, present, and future

Susan Sontag argues that society cannot ‘remember’ because memory is embodied and cannot be transferred between people or inter-generationally: ‘All memory is individual, unreproducible – it dies with each person. What is
called remembering is not remembering but a stipulating: that this is important, and this is the story about how it happened' (Sontag 2003: 85–86).

In contrast, Assman asserts that although autobiographical memories cannot be embodied by others, they can be shared with others. They are shared through our interaction with other individuals, and through our interaction with the material world. That is, they become embodied and embedded in speech, in memorials and places, and in commemorative events and thus become grounded in the ‘durable carriers of external symbols and representations’ (Assman 2008: 49). In this way cultural memories are transmitted across societies and generations. But this should not be thought of as a passive process. These carriers of external symbols and representations become functional; they are used to understand the world and construct ideologies: ‘Ideologies create substantiating archives of images, representative images, which encapsulate common ideas of significance and trigger predictable thoughts, feelings’ (Sontag 2003: 85–86). To thoughts and feelings, one can add practices.

In all of the case studies, the conflicts are tied to place; the evidence of the conflict remains in the landscape. In some cases it may be invisible to the outsider, residing solely and deeply in the collective memory. In other cases the presence of a memorial may be all that there is to denote the significance of place, although this alone may be sufficient to keep the embers of conflict alight. In some cases, however, the evidence is all too present as the Cain-like marks of war in the form of bullet-pocked apartments in Sarajevo or burnt-out houses in Srebrenica testify. They testify not only to what has happened in the past. For those who were victims of such attacks and have been displaced, one suspects these marks are also seen as a forewarning of what might happen in the future should they try to return. They are a symbolic threat.

Memorial places: past, present, and future

All the conflicts that comprise the case studies have a physical presence in the landscape. Today, this does not strike us as being significant; we expect to see the extant remains of conflicts in one form or another. But before and during the nineteenth century while the detritus of conflict might remain on battlefield sites for years, there were not only few memorials to battles, but the burial of the war dead was often not systematically memorialised. For the British, it was only towards the end of the First World War that the need for the bereaved to visit where their relatives had fallen, and perhaps if they were fortunate visit their grave, was recognised and made possible. The carnage of the First World War and the public’s reaction to the loss of millions led to the establishment of the Imperial War Graves Commission in 1917 (Summers and Harris 2007). Battlefield visits became popular and have remained so to the present day.
Not only do all the sites of conflict in this volume have a strong sense of place, but they also possess a pervading sense of the ‘Other’. The ‘Other’ is the adversary. When talking with the Bosnian Muslim guide at Srebrenica one could not fail to have a vivid sense of the Serbian ‘aggressor’. It was not difficult to imagine the men and boys being marched through woods and summarily executed, not least because we have seen the photographs – the ‘archive of images’ to which Sontag refers – of the executions above the grave pits. In Verdun, French and Germans soldiers died and are buried in the same place. In Nicosia, the Greek Cypriots look across barbed wire to the observation posts on the Turkish side of the Green Line and see who the enemy is (and vice versa, of course). In each of these cases there is an ‘Other’ which is known and part of a felt experience. But will this be so in the future?

Zygmunt Bauman argues that one of the defining characteristics of modernity is the changing relationship between time and space:

Modernity starts when space and time are separated from living practice and from each other and so become ready to be theorized as distinct and mutually independent categories of strategy and action, when they cease to be … the intertwined and barely indistinguishable aspects of living experience, locked in a stable and apparently invulnerable one-to-one correspondence (Bauman 2000: 8–9)

One of the implications of this separation for Bauman is that power becomes extra-territorial; it is no longer constrained by the friction of space. This is perhaps another aspect of Portelli’s assertion that we live through layers of events which simultaneously occupy local places and global spaces, and that our relationships are both ‘here’ and ‘there’. The instantaneousness of communication is partly responsible not only for the shrinking of space but also for its irrelevance. For Bauman, the changing nature of power relationships is particularly pertinent to the prosecution of war and conflict. In this age of ‘liquid modernity’ those with power conduct war in a completely different way to the manner in which it was fought in earlier times. An important characteristic of ‘liquid wars’ is that they are undertaken remotely, using the latest technology to both maximise infrastructural damage on the enemy and minimise personnel causalities. Smart bombs or guided weapons had their origin in the Second World War, but were only effectively employed on any scale for the first time in the First Gulf War (1991), and even then only for ‘difficult missions and special operations’ (Sample 2003). This kind of technology was subsequently used by NATO in the bombing of Serbia in 1999. By the time of the invasion of Iraq in 2003, 90 percent of the bombs used in the early stages of the conflict were smart bombs, and the United States had half as many air and ground forces at its disposal as it had deployed in the First Gulf War (Sample 2003).
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The essence of this ‘smart’ technology is that computerised and satellite-controlled, shocking, highly damaging, remote, and seemingly placeless weapon delivery systems operate at high speed and seek to ‘soften’ and terrorise the enemy so that forces on the ground will have a critical and lower risk advantage. The introduction of drones into the Afghanistan war took the technology one stage further. The objective of the NATO-led forces that bombed Bosnia and Serbia was not one of straightforwardly gaining territorial advantage. The coalition in fact sought precisely to avoid this as it could have led to an even more drawn-out, costly, and damaging PR war. But as Sample (2003) goes on to suggest, ‘Preventing bombs from killing civilians and destroying infrastructure will pay dividends after the war has concluded, by fostering the public support among Iraqis that will be vital for a smooth transition to a new leadership.’ Or expressed more potently by Bauman:

[W]ar in the era . . . of liquid modernity . . . is about . . . crushing the walls which stopped the flow of new fluid global powers . . . and so opening up the so-far barricaded and walled off inaccessible space to the operations of the other non-military, arms of power . . . War today, one may say (paraphrasing Clausewitz’s famous formula), looks increasingly like a ‘promotion of global free trade by other means’. (Bauman 2000: 12).

Maybe it has ever been thus. As I suggested above, there have been at least two previous phases in the memorialisation of war and conflict. The first in which there was little physical memorialisation in the landscape. Collective memories were refuelled either by the intergenerational recounting of familial stories or academic histories. In the second phase, which is well represented by the case studies, there are no shortage of ‘durable carriers of external symbols and representations’.

Are we now entering a third phase? Will the advent of ‘liquid warfare’ with its reduced emphasis on territorial acquisition and ground forces break down what has popularly been termed the tyranny of time and space and have implications for remembrance and reconciliation? Yes, we will have the place where the bombs dropped. We will have the scene of the crime, but where is the ‘Other’? Where is the adversary that launched the attack? They are everywhere and nowhere. They are placeless and timeless. Atatürk would not now be able to say the moving words he did without there being an ‘Other’ who were recognised as ‘heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives . . . that . . . are now lying in the soil of a friendly country’. The Johnnies and the Mehmets would not be lying ‘side by side now here in this country of ours’ and ‘in our bosom and are in peace.’ A knowledge of, and even a closeness to, the ‘Other’ may be an important first step on the way to a more hopeful management of conflict and reconciliation.
Does the new era of ‘liquid wars’ make remembrance, reconciliation, and mourning more difficult? Does it ensure that grievances and feelings of injustice are perpetuated? Will there be opportunities for former adversaries to come together in the ‘liquid wars’ of the future in order to understand and start to see the conditions under which the ‘other’ lived or was forced to act?

NOTE