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Locating Memory

Introduction

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In the late eighteenth century, rhododendrons were introduced to the Highlands of Scotland as a ground cover for game on vast hunting estates. This was a landscape that had already been cleared of most of its original inhabitants to make way for sheep during the Highland Clearances, when between 1750 and 1850 people holding traditional land tenancies were forcibly removed from their land and relocated to other parts of the United Kingdom as well as to North American and Australia. In the present-day landscape of the Highlands and islands, over which various contestations of land ownership are taking place, the rhododendrons now threaten native woodland and farmland.

In 2009 the Knoydart Foundation celebrated its tenth anniversary of community ownership of Knoydart, a former estate on the West Coast of Scotland with a 'Rhodie Bash'. The eradication of rhododendrons is a 'uniting' community activity in most community-owned areas, as the land, by way of community buy-back schemes, is returned to sustainable farmland.

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While the removal of the rhododendrons does not undo the Highland Clearances or 'decolonise' the Scottish landscape, the rhodie bashing is a revealing and shifting action. The rhododendron marks the Scottish landscape with the removal of crofting communities and the establishment of the Highlands as a playground for the upper class, as the land was given over to hunting and gaming estates. In removing the rhododendrons, that period is not removed. Rather a new period, with all of its history, is marked.

This brief account of an area of land in the Scottish Highlands gives an example of the ways the sites presented within this special section of *Cultural Studies Review* are framed and understood as the stages and vessels of various histories of violence and injustice. The articles presented herein tell us the ways by which a place can have its memory erased or remembered (or both). It does not happen by accident. For Foucault, 'place' is largely concerned with relations of power, whereby knowledge, as a power, becomes related to the site: 'Once knowledge can be analysed in terms of region, domain, implantation, displacement, transposition, one is able to capture the process by which knowledge functions as a form of power and disseminates the effects of power'.¹ This relates to the unquestioned acknowledgement of certain sites as being memorial sites, and the disacknowledgement of the memory of injustices at certain other sites. It is also present in our inability to 'pin down' or chart certain events of loss, violence or trauma to one particular site.

The articles collected within this themed section critically engage with the theme of the 'place' of historical injustice and the circulation of memory at these sites. This section aims to examine the challenges and ambiguities embedded in concepts of space and place, and also in ideas of memory and memorial. Most of the articles in this collection were originally presented at the 2012 Historical Justice and Memory Conference, which brought to Melbourne, Australia, a diverse group of academics from around the world. A strong theme that emerged at the conference was the importance of place in speaking of memory and justice.

Hermann Ruiz seeks to reframe the concept of violence through his presentation of the site of Las Brisas, Colombia, ten years after the massacre which took place there. Meanwhile, through Kerreen Ely-Harper's article on the photographs taken of former child migrants and forgotten Australians and Sue

Gillett and Charon Freebody's discussion of the relationship between cultural memory and the songs of the Black Arm Band, there is a departure from the geographically soil-bound site as the place that holds or inscribes the memory.

In addition to the articles that began as papers presented at the conference, this section also includes an essay by Shannon Woodcock and my own discussion of the role of the photographic image in both memory and justice. Woodcock tells us of one woman's experiences as a political prisoner under the Albanian communist regime, exploring what it means to tell such a story and to bear witness. My own article examines another means of telling in its discussion of two photographic projects emerging from the genocides in the former Yugoslavia which took place between 1991 and 1997, one with forensic identification purposes and the other with a memorialisation focus.

Historical research into sites of violence tends to take a dialectical approach, tracing the site backwards through recreation and hypothesis in order to arrive at the truth of the event, which might finalise what took place. The articles presented here instead trace the event forwards through the site to observe the processes by which memories of historical violence become fixed to a site and how this trauma loss continue to circulate beyond the land through active encounters. Tracing the use and invocation of the sites where historical violence took place in the construction and articulation of memory, these articles offer a unique evaluation of questions of reckoning with, and commemorating, the past. They contribute to a growing area of cultural memory research, helping unravel and enunciate the complexity of competing and contested narratives of historical violence around particular sites.

The articles also respond to the site of where the violence or loss might be found. Aside from the physical location of the original event, three of the articles present various forms of media or objects (photography, film, music and clothing) as sites through which loss might be remembered or through which the healing might begin. They trace the question of how the site of the loss is both produced and reproduced elsewhere, at a physical or temporal remove.

The political, historical, technological and cultural constructions of place together with their implications for the construction of memory, power and resistance has become a well-established interdisciplinary focus in the humanities.

The study of the ways in which memories circulate and emanate at and from particular landscapes and locations owes its original impetus to the work of Pierre Nora and Richard Terdiman together with pivotal studies in cultural theory concerning the circulation, grounding and elision of memories.² Following these studies, collective identity and memory around sites of historical violence has seen a great deal of scholarly interest and research.

The ways in which sites of difficult memories—those places where traumas took place or where justice was sought—are conceived vary in terms of their geographical focus. There are a number of significant studies of sites of historical violence that are centred upon a single site. To offer a very brief and non-comprehensive ‘world tour’: in South Africa, Heidi Grunebaum-Ralph writes of a counter-memory group that narrates tours through the apartheid era sites of the neighbourhoods and communities of Cape Town; Katrina Schlunke describes the memorial at the site of the Myall Creek Massacre in New South Wales, Australia; Jim Hicks unshackles the cityscape of Sarajevo from its image as a ‘war-torn’ city; and James Tyner walks us through the markings on the landscape of both genocide and memorial in Cambodia.³

There are also a wealth of studies that look at culturally produced sites, ranging from discussions of the sites of memorials, the transmission and translation of sites through film, music, performance and art to those sites where justice and reckoning takes place.⁴

This collection, read as a whole, allows for a unique extension of existing studies. As well as enabling the reader to draw out a comparative study of five distinct sites (although this is not in itself unique)⁵ this collection allows for a rethinking of what is meant by ‘site’ when discussing how memory is formulated and enacted at and through the sites of historical violence or loss. I mention at this point that the articles also allow us to think through what is meant by memory in these contexts, following Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan’s presentation of memory as a problematic concept in its simultaneous reference to public and private memories and also following those (Rachel Buchanan in *The Parihaka Album*, Jasmina Tesanović’s *The Diary of a Political Idiot* and Sarah Kofman in *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat*, for example) whose personal memories and places intersect with the collective.⁶ In presenting accounts of geographical spaces alongside the memories

that are held within film, story, or photography, rather than only one or the other, and presenting memories that are simultaneously private and public, a space is opened up in which to consider what place is asking of memory.

All the articles in this special section attest to the intricacy of the languages through which place asks certain things of memories of loss and trauma. In Ruiz's article, which walks the muddy track from Mampuján to Las Brisas in Colombia, the physical marks on the landscape of forced displacement ask us how the memory of trauma might coexist with our present. Woodcock writes of the specifically gendered silencings of memories of a place—the Women's Prison in the central Albanian village of Kosovë e Madhe të Qarkut Elbasan—which are ignored or forgotten in encounters at its physical site and aggressively dismissed in publicly accessible virtual spaces. Conversely, my own article deals with instances where memory is not only encouraged but sought out. Here, photographs of objects recovered from the mass graves in the former Yugoslavia ask for personal memories of the clothing worn by the missing to be drawn upon in order to clarify their fate. Meanwhile, Ely-Harper's photographs and Gillett and Freebody discussion of film and music ask us to consider not only what we remember but also how to remember.

In all these articles we are being asked to consider the active encounter that takes place at the site. These active encounters are, at their most primary level, sensory. Ruiz walks through the mud with the families of victims who are walking to meet in Las Brisas for a commemoration; photographs of objects and of people allow our eyes to single out the personal among the mass of loss in both my own and Ely-Harper's articles; for Gillett and Freebody in their writing about the Black Arm Band 'a post-contact, living history of Aboriginal survival that is also an alternative *national* history' reaches our ears through music (and its recording on film). Beyond the sensory impact, these are cognitive experiences, as we think about the ways in which power, suppression, remembrance, activism and resistance allow these landscapes to close up before us, as well as to speak and sing to us and to have their mud seep into us.

In these sensory and cognitive encounters we are reminded that the memories that circulate and are constructed around these places are only possible through our interaction with them. However, in presenting active interactions with sites that in

turn produce further sites of memory in the same vein as the 'Rhodie Bash' with which we began, this collection resists and calls to account the increasing tendency in memory studies to write of these sites as being empty.

Recent writing on sites of loss, trauma or violence and the interaction between memory and space had provided us with an ever-expanding vocabulary of the empty space: *terrain vague*, liminal space, dead zone, void. These are those sites that, without acknowledgement of the sort of active encounters described throughout this collection, are often described as being empty or resisting definition. Mark Augé writing of such places, states: 'If place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place.'⁷ However, if we are to add to this a Foucauldian consideration of the power of knowledge at work in all sites, all places, then Augé's definition becomes a difficult one. For example, where Woodcock in her article writes of the pervasiveness of active erasure and denouncement (captured in the look of recognition from the woman who had been held in the Women's Prison in Albania meeting the blank look of forgetting from her former interrogator), we find a space that is forced into being a non-place. This is a land that is by no means void or vague.

The articles in this collection describe sites where terms such as '*terrain vague*' might easily be applied, and yet where such descriptions of emptiness would sit uneasily. After all, the idea of the emptiness of such sites is not so far removed from the disappearances and suppressions of which Ruiz and Woodcock write, the colonial ideals of *terra nullius* of which Gillett and Freebody remind us, the emptying and clearing notions of ethnic cleansing in my own article, or of the silences and secrets in family memory in Ely-Harper's piece. As J.M. Coetzee, writes of the erroneous colonial notion of the nineteenth century that the South African interior was uninhabited: 'The poetry of empty space may one day be accused of furthering the same fiction.'⁸

To contemplate any of the sites presented in this collection and to imagine that we might simply sense what took place there is facile. These are, after all, sites that were often purposely emptied—for example the landscapes of the Highland Clearances of which we spoke earlier—and where the history of what took place

there has been at various times resolutely overwritten by those who have power over how such histories are told.

These articles raise crucial and thought provoking questions about the formation of place as a cradle of difficult memories. As a collection, these articles present the possibility of a comparative analysis for the reader, contributing to a unique understanding of the relative meanings and complexities inherent in tying a narrative or memory to a physical site of trauma and loss. These articles carefully delineate the shifting modes and interfaces by which the sites have formed and are formed by the historical violence and its memory. It is hoped that this special section will contribute to a growing discussion in cultural memory research that explores the importance of places and sites to questions of historical justice and processes of reckoning with the past, and a critical conversation around how we might carefully approach and describe the memories that either emerge from or are elided through these sites.

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¹ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, Pantheon Books, New York, 1980, p. 79.

² Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1996–1998, (originally published as *Les Lieux de mémoire*, Paris, 1984–1992); Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1993; pivotal studies in cultural theory concerning the circulation, grounding, and elision of memories include Laura Rorarto and Anna Saunders, eds, *The Essence and the Margin: National Identities and Collective Memories in Contemporary European Culture*, Rodopi, Amsterdam, 2009; Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendall, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2002; Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London, 1994; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Verso, London, 1991;

Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989; Paul Gilroy, *There ain't no Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation*, Routledge, London, 1987; Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1985; Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, Harper and Row, New York, 1980, [originally published as *La mémoire collective*, Paris 1950]).

³ Heidi Grunebaum-Ralph, *Memorializing the Past: Everyday Life in South Africa after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick and London, 2011; Katrina Schlunke, 'Dumb Places', *Balayi: Culture, Law and Colonialism*, vol 6, 2004, pp. 72–81; Jim Hicks, *Lessons from Sarajevo: A War Stories Primer*, University of Massachusetts Press, Massachusetts, 2013; Jim Hicks, 'What's it Like There?: Desultory Notes on the Representation of Sarajevo', *Postmodern Culture*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2001; James A. Tyner, 'Dead Labor, Landscapes, and Mass Graves: Administrative Violence during the Cambodian Genocide', *Geoforum*, no. 52, 2014, pp. 70–7.

⁴ James E. Young, 'Germany's Holocaust Memorial Problem—and Mine', *The Public Historian*, vol. 24, no. 4, 2002, pp. 65–80; James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1993; James E. Young, 'The Counter-monument: Memory Against itself in Germany Today', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1992, pp. 267–96; Daniel Libeskind, *The Space of Encounter*, Thames & Hudson, United Kingdom, 2001; Alexandre E. Dauge-Roth, *Writing and Filming the Genocide of the Tutsi in Rwanda: Dismembering and Remembering Traumatic History*, Lexington Books, Maryland, 2010; Steven High, Edward Little and Thi Ry Duong (eds), *Remembering Mass Violence: Oral History, New Media and Performance*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2014; Michael Ignatieff and Simon Norfolk, *For Most of it I Have No Words*, Dewi Lewis Publishing, Stockport UK, 2002; Kay Schaffer, 'Memory, Narrative and Forgiveness: Reflecting on Ten Years of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission', *Borderlands eJournal*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2006; Elizabeth Neuffer, *The Key to my Neighbours House: Seeking Justice in Bosnia and Rwanda*, Picador, New York, 2001.

⁵ See for example, Jessica Aughter, *The Politics of Haunting and Memory in International Relations*, Routledge, London, 2014; Katharina Schramm (ed.), Special Issue: 'Landscapes of Violence: Memory and Sacred Space', *History and Memory*, vol. 23, no.1, 2011; William Logan and Keir Reeves, eds, *Places of Pain and Shame: Dealing with 'Difficult' Heritage*, Routledge, New York and London, 2009; Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, eds, *The Politics of Memory: Contested Pasts*, Transaction Publishers, Piscataway, NJ, 2005; Maria Tumarkin, *Traumascapes*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2005.

⁶ Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, eds, *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999; Rachel Buchanan, *The Parihaka Album: Lest We Forget*, Huia, Wellington, 2010; Jasmina Tesanović, *The Diary of a Political Idiot*, Cleis Press, USA, 2000; Sarah Kofman, *Rue Ordener, Rue Labat*, trans. Ann Smock, University of Nebraska Press, Nebraska, 2006.

⁷ Marc Augé, *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, Verso, London and New York, 1995, p. 78.

⁸ J.M. Coetzee, *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*, Radix, Johannesburg, 1988, p. 71.

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