

Remembering together in Rwanda and South Africa

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Abstract

Memory after violent conflict is a contentious issue. The way in which the past has been remembered has often been the impetus for renewed violence rather than healing and reconciliation. Exploring collective memory in the Rwandan and South African contexts, this paper argues that how we remember is more important than what we remember if the process of remembering is to contribute positively to the post-conflict recovery process. Memory making has taken place through memorials, monuments, ceremonies, education, the media and social discourse since the end of Apartheid in South Africa and the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. These processes will be analysed in the context of Nigel Hunt's psycho-social framework of personal and collective memory. Further, Miroslav Volf's suggestions as to how to remember well, in a way that brings healing and reconciliation, will be applied to the contexts of Rwanda and South Africa. The argument will be made that integrating the conflicting and contending narratives after a traumatic event and remembering *together* is key in terms of how to remember.

Keywords: memory, narrative, Rwanda, South Africa, reconciliation

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Introduction

Although the contexts may differ vastly, the issues at stake in terms of remembering in countries recovering from violent conflict are somewhat similar. South Africa experienced forty-six years of racial segregation under the Apartheid system. During this period, 18 000 people were killed and 80 000 opponents to the Apartheid system were detained, with 6000 of these being tortured (Graybill, 2004). Beyond this, structural violence resulted in millions of people being undereducated, kept in poverty and stripped of their human dignity while a small minority were privileged with superior jobs, education and standard of living. In Rwanda, following two long dictatorships that favoured the majority Hutu over Tutsi, a civil war broke out in the early 1990s between the government and the Rwandan Patriotic Front, which was composed of refugees, largely from Uganda, who wanted to return to their home country. While this was going on, in April, 1994, the government set into motion a plan that resulted in the genocide of almost a million Tutsi and moderate Hutu. In the short period of three months, Rwandans endured unimaginably brutal violence as people were massacred by machetes often wielded by their neighbours or friends.

Both countries started their recovery processes in 1994 but have chosen different routes according to their unique contexts. In the case of South Africa, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was implemented which offered amnesty in exchange for the full disclosure of the truth. This allowed South Africans access to the information of what had really happened under the secretive system of Apartheid. Perpetrators had to be accountable for what they had done, but those with economic skills could maintain their positions and contribute to building the country. In Rwanda, the traditional justice system of *gacaca* was revived and has now tried over a million people. This approach has meant that there has been individual accountability for crimes committed, which was significant in a country that had experienced decades of impunity (Graybill, 2004).

Beyond the TRC and *gacaca*, which have contributed to how the past is collectively remembered in the respective countries, both countries have also taken various other steps in terms of remembering. These include memorials and monuments, the rewriting of history, educational initiatives, debate in the media, developing relevant government policies and laws, and the social discourse that has developed to come to terms with the past.

In this paper, memory will be considered from the perspective of personal and collective narratives, arguing that memories form part of the broader narrative through which we make sense of the world. The way in which trauma disrupts our narrative and how memories develop after that disruption will be explored, drawing from the work of Nigel

Hunt (2010). This will be followed by a discussion about the relationship between collective memory and identity, considering the different ways Rwanda and South Africa have chosen to remember their violent pasts, and the impact of this on national identity. From there, Miroslav Volf's insistence that it is not only what we remember but *how* we remember that really matters will be considered. This paper will argue that contending memories need to be in dialogue in order for shared memories to emerge. The conclusion will suggest some ways in which we can remember together.

Memory, narrative and reconciliation

Memories are first and foremost stories that we tell ourselves and each other about the past. As human beings, we are constantly in the process of writing and rewriting the stories of our lives, in order to make sense of the world around us. Our memories become part of this story and part of our sense-making efforts. Hunt (2010) argues that we are all natural storytellers and audiences, presenting our stories to others and receiving others' stories. These narratives that we share with one another are multi-leveled, fluid and dynamic, and we revise them continuously. Adding to this complexity is that we may hold multiple narratives in tension at the same time.

Our memories form part of our personal narrative. Although memories tend to be fragmented and incomplete, we draw them together into our personal narrative in order to make sense of them. The narrative of our memories becomes part of our broader life story which informs who we are and the kinds of decisions that we make. Both personal and social factors impact on what we remember (Hunt, 2010, 118).

In the same way as we as individuals have complex narratives about our lives that incorporate our memories it can be argued that nations have collective narratives and shared memories. Brendon Hamber and Richard Wilson (1999) suggest some caution when assuming that nations have similar psyches to individuals, particularly if this means the sacrifice of individual experiences in national projects of reconciliation. Their critique will be kept in consideration, but nevertheless, this paper will assume that similar dynamics exist between national and personal narratives as far as processes of remembering after violent conflict is concerned. Collective narratives shift and change in much the same way as individual narratives do. The memories of a nation form part of this narrative and contribute to shaping the identity of that nation. Hunt writes that "Collective memory is information about society that is accumulated over the years and develops into a kind of 'social fund' and is drawn upon in the development of social discourses and individual narratives" (2010, 5). In

describing the relationship between collective and personal narrative, Hunt (2010) suggests that there is an increasing awareness that a person's individual memory is located within a particular historical context that needs to be taken into account.

The dialogue and tensions between personal and collective narratives are clearly illustrated through the TRC proceedings in South Africa. On the one hand were the personal testimonies of individuals who were sharing their trauma and on the other was the collective story that was emerging out of the multitude of testimonies. Although the final five hundred page report that emerged from the TCR proceedings included as many personal narratives as possible, individuals reported feeling lost in the larger project of national reconciliation (Bundy, 2000). Hamber et al. (2000) undertook a study with twenty women who survived political violence during Apartheid and testified at the TRC. His study reveals that these women had thought that they were testifying in order for the perpetrators to receive punishment, and that they were very angry that their perpetrators received amnesty. Hamber et al. (2000) write that although the TRC may have had a role to play in the national process of healing, and that telling their stories may have been cathartic for some, others felt like 'pawns' in a national healing process, where their suffering was used to help the nation but they themselves benefited from it very little. However, for the many particularly white South Africans who claimed ignorance of what was really going on during Apartheid or who still believed the justifications of the system, the TRC played a crucial role in revealing the truth of the past and changing destructive collective narratives pervasive in South African society.

A similar dynamic can be seen in Rwanda, between the personal narratives of those speaking out as witnesses at *gacaca* trials, and the national project of writing history. Although many have reported that knowing the truth of what happened through the testimonies of perpetrators at *gacaca* trials have given some sense of closure, for others, the process of testifying has reopened the wounds and resulted in retraumatisation. Karen Brounéus (2008) in her research which focused on women testifying at *gacaca* hearings found that testifying involved intense psychological suffering. Part of the reason for this is that during the hearing they were harassed by perpetrators who did not want their testimonies to be heard. Many had also lost most of their family, meaning that their social support systems were fragile. Like Hamber, Brounéus (2008) comes to the conclusion that truth telling at commissions and trials is not necessarily beneficial to the individual. Further, apart from the effect on the survivors, perpetrators stories and the contextualization of their actions within the broader narrative of violence in Rwanda in the early 1990s has become lost in the *gacaca* process. Perpetrators take personal responsibility at a *gacaca* trial through which the

collective movement of the genocide, the pressure exacted on ordinary people to participate and the prevailing chaos which influenced people to act with unusual violence was lost (Pottier, 2001). Yet *gacaca* played a necessary role in the national process of coming to terms with what happened and developing an official record of genocide crimes, which has contributed to the narrative of Rwanda today (Wielenga & Harris, 2011).

Remembering after collective trauma

Hunt (2010) argues that trauma disrupts the narrative of our lives. Particularly if our personal narrative held beliefs that the world was good or that particular people were to be trusted, experiencing violence at the hands of a neighbor or family member will lead to a breakdown of our social and personal structures and belief systems. Hunt suggests that healing comes through integrating the traumatic event into an adapted narrative. Our memories of the traumatic event need to become part of a new narrative that helps us to make sense of the world again. The more senseless the trauma, the harder it is to integrate the trauma into our existing personal narrative.

Recovery from trauma means making sense and meaning of what happened and incorporating the new trauma-related information into personal and collective narratives. Some may not incorporate the trauma but avoid it and live symptom-free lives, for others, avoidance may lead to further problems (Hunt, 2010, 126). There are cases, such as that of Mozambique, where the route of amnesia after violent conflict was chosen. Although there has been no return to political violence in that country, an unusually high level of societal violence persists which some argue is because the violent trauma of the past has not been dealt with collectively (Enge Bertelsen, 2003).

How memories are reintegrated and what new narratives we form, as individuals and a society, are crucial in terms of our identity and our relationship to others and the world around us. In cases where there is a history of violent conflict between different groups of people, how the past is remembered will have a significant impact on whether individuals in these groups will be able to reconcile. The collective narrative that is developed will have to be such that it can be incorporated by individuals into their personal narrative. If this does not take place, individuals may reject the collective narrative, and if there are enough people who reject it, this may result in violence.

In the case of Rwanda, the genocide brought an intense disruption to personal and social narratives. Prior to the genocide, although structural inequality along ethnic lines

existed, Rwandans I have interviewed tend to describe the country as peaceful and stable¹. Rwandans saw themselves as hard working and indifferent to politics. The genocide changed that completely, forcing every Rwandan to confront the deep divisions and political manipulations prevalent in their past.

Many have discussed how Rwandan history was written with a destructive colonial bias that created the very conditions for genocide (Mamdani, 2001; Pottier, 2001; Chretien, 2000; Prunier, 1995). In order to make sense of and integrate the genocide, the Rwandan government, through the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC), has been working on the project of rewriting Rwandan history. This project attempts to situate the genocide in the colonial construction of ethnic identity and calls for a united Rwandan identity that transcends ethnic divisions. This is a clear example of what Hunt (2010) describes as an existing narrative that needs to be adapted and changed in order to integrate the trauma. In the case of Rwanda, the genocide not only needed to be integrated but demanded a complete revision of existing narratives.

Similarly, in South Africa, a complete revision of existing narratives has had to take place. Many white South African during Apartheid believed in its ideology, even justifying its precepts within a Christian theological framework. Today, the most recent South African Reconciliation Barometer reports that 87% of South Africans believe Apartheid to have been a crime against humanity². This is a major revision, in particular for those who benefited from Apartheid and perhaps died to support the system in the country's internal conflicts and border wars. But even those who were disadvantaged by Apartheid have had to revisit their perceptions of the past and their identity. It is still a struggle for many, after years of subjugation, to believe in their rights as citizens and experience a sense of ownership of their country. Integrating the trauma of Apartheid has meant situating it within the conflict between the British and Afrikaners in the early parts of the twentieth century, and within broader European race theories. Revising the national narrative has also meant revising national identity which South Africa has done largely through its ideology of unity in diversity.

Remembering and who we are

¹ Interviews undertaken in Kigali, Rwanda for my doctoral research between 2005 and 2010.

² The South African Reconciliation Barometer is a nationwide survey that has measured socio-political changes in South Africa annually since 2003.

According to Hunt (2010), revising our narratives as a result of trauma will have a direct impact on our identity. The examples above indicate the relationship between our narratives and who we are. Hunt writes (2010, 10),

“War experiences can fundamentally change one’s sense of self or identity. Our identity consists of the beliefs we hold about ourselves, the world and the future ... Witnessing or being involved in a traumatic event can lead to a breakdown in one’s belief system and impact on one’s identity”.

Volf adds to this that we are much of what we remember, and that we can remember in healing ways or hateful ways, each influencing who we become. He elaborates on this saying that our memories could lead us to become bitter and revengeful, with a desire to pay back what we suffered or they could lead us to want to make certain the future for ourselves and others is better.

Prominent leaders in South Africa such as Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu strongly subscribed to the idea of remembering in such a way as to foster a more inclusive national identity that would emphasise the human dignity of every South African. Tutu (2000) describes how the desire to live out the precepts of the Constitution and have the reconciliation process be a shared one between all South Africans was fundamental in deciding on a truth-telling with amnesty route. Forgiveness played a central role in the TRC proceedings, drawing its meaning both from Christianity which is practiced by the majority of South Africans as well as from the African concept of *ubuntu*. Graybill writes that in South Africa’s interim constitution was written: “There is a need for understanding but not for revenge, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for *ubuntu* but not for victimization”. *Ubuntu* derives from the Zulu expression ‘*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*’ (People are people through other people). She quotes an example of a testimony at a TRC hearing that embodies this concept: “One of those supporting amnesty was Cynthia Ngeweu, mother of Christopher Piet (one of the Gugulethu 7 who was assassinated³), who explained her understanding of *ubuntu*:

³ The Gugulethu Seven is the name of the group of seven young anti-apartheid activists who were killed in an ambush by the South African apartheid security forces in Gugulethu, a township outside of Cape Town, in 1986.

‘This thing called reconciliation...if I am understanding it correctly...if it means the perpetrator, the man who has killed Christopher Piet, if it means he becomes human again, this man, so that I, so that all of us, get our humanity back...then I agree, then I support it all’”.

This was at the heart of the TRC, a rehumanisation of both perpetrator and victim, so that South Africans could begin to engage each other as equal human beings. The desire to remember the past in order to create a positive shared identity was also seen in the kinds of terms Tutu, Mandela and others coined such as the ‘rainbow nation’ and ‘unity through diversity’. Baines (1998) describes how sporting events and the media have participated in building the image of unity amidst the many language and cultural groups, from the South African Broadcasting Association’s ‘*Simunye*-we are one’ slogan to the Castle Lager slogan of ‘one beer, one nation’.

However, the way South Africans have remembered the past has not always resulted in the inclusive, shared national identity these leaders may have hoped for. Baines (1998) argues that nationalism has the danger of becoming exclusivist and tends to emphasize a political affiliation over affiliation to a community, but adds that multi-level nationalism that incorporates national and communal identities may create a public national culture which a diversity of people can identify with without losing their own cultural affiliations. However, he argues that the ANC’s rhetoric has leaned towards being Africanist, even though it still insists on non-racialism. There is a fear that black empowerment and the accompanying policies of affirmative action and BEE will result in what some inaccurately name ‘reverse-Apartheid’. From a completely different angle, there are those that fear identities becoming lost in the ‘rainbow nation’. Interestingly, the Afrikaner nation has reidentified themselves as a minority group in the new South Africa, an identity that gives a different kind of political leverage (Baines, 1998).

In the case of Rwanda, not only has the trauma of the genocide changed the way people perceive themselves and others, but the events that have taken place since the genocide have further shifted concepts of national identity. Pre-genocide Rwandan identity was largely related to ethnicity. After the genocide, through the active intervention by the government, there has been a move away from the concept of ethnic identity to a shared national identity. And not only did ethnic groups need to be drawn together into a shared identity. After the genocide hundreds of thousands of Rwandans returned to Rwanda from exile in various neighbouring African countries. The influx of Rwandans carrying with them

the experiences and cultures of these countries impacted on Rwandan identity as well. Prior to the genocide, Rwanda was a relatively closed country and few Rwandans had travelled. With the influx of returnees, it was as if Rwanda was suddenly opened up to the world around it (Prunier, 1995). Related to this last point, since the genocide, Rwanda has entered into the technological age and the global economy. It has shifted from being a Francophone to an English speaking country. Information technology, computers and the internet are being introduced country-wide, development is booming and Rwanda is now an important country to consider in terms of East and Central African relationships.

Since the genocide, Rwanda has transformed itself from an inefficient post-colonial state to an increasingly developing, modern society. This has posed a challenge to people's sense of personal and collective identity. In terms of all these changes, how the past is remembered will have a significant role to play in creating a shared narrative that will offer Rwandans a sense of identity in that rapidly changing context.

Not what we remember, but *how* we remember

Having explored memory, the impact of trauma on memory and the relationship between memory and identity, we now come to the crux of the paper, which is that *how* we remember is more important than what we remember. Volf discusses the fragmented and distorted nature of our memories, arguing that we shape our memories as much as they shape us. This is where *how* we remember becomes significant. "Because we can react to our memories and shape them, we are larger than our memories ... How our memories shape our identities depend not only on the memories themselves but on what we and others do with those memories" (Volf, 2006, 26).

He describes four ways in which memory leads to well-being. The first, he suggests is personal healing by, as Hunt describes, integrating the trauma into ones personal narratives through making sense of the trauma. Healing comes not so much from the remembering itself but from "interpreting the memories and inscribing them into a larger pattern of meaning – stitching them into the patchwork quilt of one's identity" (2006, 28). For example, those who suffered under Apartheid can remember it in a way that emphasises their victimhood and paralyses them in terms of taking action to improve their lives or they can remember it in the way Tutu (2000) suggests, where he views all South Africans as wounded and in need of rehumanization. This perspective makes the past meaningful in the present and is inclusive, positive and hopeful.

The second, Volf argues, is acknowledgement. “If no one remembers a misdeed or names it publically, it remains invisible. To the outside observer, its victim is not a victim and its perpetrator is not a perpetrator ... A double injustice occurs – the first when the original deed is done and the second when it disappears” (2006, 29). This is what drives victims to speak out. Public remembering here becomes an act of justice. Volf refers at this point to the South African TRC which he says was exactly this, public memory as an act of justice.

The third, he suggests is solidarity. The memory of suffering can inspire and energise us to fight against the suffering and oppression around us (2006, 31). In line with Rwanda’s slogan of ‘never again’, as we are reminded of what happened, we increase our commitment not to allow genocide or violence to take place in Rwanda again. But more than this, Volf argues that the memory of suffering should lead us to fight for a more just and compassionate society, not only for the victims of the remembered violence, but for everyone.

The fourth is protection. Memory can protect the victim from further violence. Once evil has been revealed it may prevent it from reoccurring. Volf adds a warning to this:

“As victims seek to protect themselves, they are not immune to becoming perpetrators ... The memory of their own persecution makes them see dangers lurking even where there are none; it leads them to exaggerate dangers that do exist and overreact with excessive violence or inappropriate preventative measures so as to ensure their own safety” (2006, 33).

In the case of Rwanda, Mahmood Mamdani (2001) has written a book titled ‘When victims become killers’ and believes it is the perceived victimhood of the previous government that led them to implementing the genocide. His hypothesis comes with a warning for the survivors of genocide not to allow their victimhood to be a reason to become the next round of perpetrators.

How we remember is most visibly seen in the memorials and monuments that are erected by the post-conflict government. Partly because of the political compromises made in the South African context, former monuments and memorials were not destroyed in the way they often are in a post-conflict state. This has made it hard for the new regime to position itself visibly in the public space. The TRC helped to begin the construction of a new national narrative. The report encouraged the erecting of memorials and museums, particularly those that would emphasize the fact that all black South Africans had been victims of Apartheid. According to the recommendations made in the report, these memorials should be located

within communities, and assist communities in processing the trauma, especially for those who were not able to participate in the TCR (Weldon, 2009).

Major monuments that were erected in South Africa, particularly under the influence of Thabo Mbeki, included Freedom Park in Pretoria, Robben Island in the Western Cape, the Apartheid Museum and the Women's Goal on Constitutional Hill in Johannesburg and the Hector Pietersen Memorial Museum in Soweto. These have become sights where the post-Apartheid ideology has been most boldly communicated in the public sphere. Weldon (2009) is critical of these because she argues that they create an official narrative that excludes whites and even excludes many of the victims of Apartheid. It gives the message that one official narrative has replaced another and that debate about the past has come to an end. Weldon describes how 'local memorials located in vernacular culture can become sites of counter-memory' such as the Amy Biehl memorial in a Cape Town suburb. These local memorials that express the complexity of memories in conflict, or memories that do not sit comfortably with the official narrative, are helpful to survivors of violent conflict to give voice to their own process of integrating trauma.

In Rwanda, the significant memorial sights include the Kigali Genocide Memorial Site, the Murambi Genocide Prevention Centre, the Ntarama national memorial site, the Bisesero site, and the Nyamata national memory site where bones have been preserved and are displayed. The month of April is annually a time to commemorate and remember the genocide. As with the case of South Africa, Rachel Ibrek (2010) describes the tensions between the official attempts to remember, which are often situated in a particular political ideology, and the attempts by survivors themselves, who are not necessarily concerned with the political context as much as with their own need to process their grief and trauma. Ibrek (2010) describes the narrative of survivors as one that challenges the national narrative, reminding us that amidst the project of nationalization, the suffering of those individuals who died and those who survived needs to be heard. Ibrek, (2010, 341) writes,

“For Rwandan genocide survivors, memorialization was a reaction to the genocide. It arose out of loss and trauma and became part of their everyday existence. The bereaved joined together to remember because they were grieving for the loss of loved ones and empathized with the losses of others ... Their involvement was also purposeful, intended to expose the truth of the atrocities of 1994, to gain recognition and to prevent genocide. As such, survivor engagement in the construction of genocide memorials is distinct from, and sometimes at odds with, the state impulse to

employ memorials to consolidate its power. Survivors' intrinsic concerns are in tension with efforts to instrumentalize genocide memory".

As Volf describes, the intention of survivors' in remembering the past has to do with personal healing, acknowledgement, solidarity and protection. In both the cases of Rwanda and South Africa, this needs to be attended to if these countries are to remember their past well.

Contending memories in dialogue

As mentioned before, Hunt (2010) discusses that developing a narrative that incorporates the traumatic event is crucial for growth to occur. But the narrative that is developed must be effective and coherent. Disorganised narratives (where the person is immersed in the perceptual elements of the traumatic event and cannot draw them together), dissociated narratives (silent stories) and dominant narratives (narratives that are too cohesive) are ineffective in terms of growth. Drawing parallels to the sphere of the collective, it may be argued that disorganized, dissociated and dominant narratives are also ineffective in terms of a nation's growth.

In Rwanda, making sense of what happened has been a conscious process in which the current government has invested many resources. Several active processes have contributed to a collective sense-making process. These include *gacaca*, *ingando*, the efforts by the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC), laws and policies, development projects, the before-mentioned changes in society, and public discourse and dialogue. NURC has had a very clear sense of communicating Rwandan history, why the genocide happened, what happened during the genocide and what the way forward is for Rwandans. In a way, NURC is doing the work of integrating the trauma into a collective narrative they hope all Rwandans can internalise and that will lead to a progressively deepening sense of national unity and reconciliation.

The results of the recent Rwandan Reconciliation Barometer⁴ and other forms of measurement would suggest that by-and-large NURC has been effective in developing a collective narrative that Rwandans are integrating into their personal narratives. However, there are some persistent silent narratives on the periphery, particularly from those in other countries who use the internet as their platform. Using Hunt's language we might call these dissociated narratives, and as long as they are not integrated, they have the potential of

⁴ The Rwandan Reconciliation Barometer is a nationwide survey to measure the effectiveness of the NURC in bringing about reconciliation. It was first implemented by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation in 2010.

disrupting the collective narrative. Some would also argue that the collective narrative that is developing in Rwanda may be too dominant and cohesive. It makes too much sense disallowing for the tensions and struggles that often exist in the sense-making process.

Hunt (2010) suggests that we are continuously re-storying our pasts and that there needs to be movement in our narratives rather than that they become static and rigid. He writes that some may reject the official social discourse and develop alternative narratives. As long as these alternative narratives remain in dialogue with the dominant narrative, it can lead to healthy social debate. Where these alternative narratives are not able to be in dialogue, Hunt suggests that conflict and war could result.

Some of the struggle that takes place in the development of shared narratives may be seen in the process of developing school history curriculums. Gail Weldon (2009), in a comparative study of the development of history curriculums in Rwanda and South Africa, writes how both countries struggled to form their history curriculums when, in the past, history teaching was used as a way to create divisions in society.

In South Africa, directly after Apartheid, history was sidelined in terms of curriculum development. It was only in 1999 that a curriculum was developed by the influential Minister of Education at the time, Kader Asmal. Where under Apartheid, history education was about teaching a dominant narrative that all South Africans should believe, Asmal strongly felt that the new curriculum should teach the critical skills necessary to see why and how dominant narratives formed and critique them in the context of the multiple voices present in South African public debate (Weldon, 2009, 167). One official history did not replace another; rather “there was an attempt to provide for diverse memories, usually subjugated knowledge’s, recognizing South Africa’s diversity. It did not reject the old narratives, but placed them in the context of a broader canvas of narratives from vernacular histories” (Weldon, 2009, 179).

However, with such an open curriculum, it has left the possibility that former perpetrators can avoid the parts of the history syllabus that they are uncomfortable with. Weldon describes how the focus in Rwanda has been to centralise education and encourage conformity on the part of teachers in order to ensure that genocide ideology is not taught in schools but that instead the message of national unity and reconciliation is heard. In South Africa, education has been decentralised provincially, meaning the national education department has little power over what is taught. This means that some provinces may well implement Asmal’s vision of teaching critical thinking, whereas others may fall back to

traditional ways of teaching history, even reverting to Apartheid-era curricula (Weldon, 2009, 181).

The fear in Rwanda is that if particular contending memories are allowed a voice, it may lead to renewed violence and division. After World War II, the voice of the Nazi perpetrator was not allowed to be heard. Yet, the late 1940s was a very different period in which the internet and global networks did not exist. The danger today is that the voices that are not welcome within the official narrative will continue to be heard, and if not in dialogue with the official narrative, then on the margins. As long as they remain on the margins they remain a threat and cannot be integrated or challenged. Simon Turner (2008) describes this in the Burundian context, exploring the ways that Hutu in the diaspora have used the internet as an alternative political space to air their views. I would argue that these voices on the margin need to be engaged, however dangerous or unhelpful their contributions are in the hope that in the public discourse that ensues they will become less radical and marginalised and slowly be integrated into a deeper and richer shared narrative that a wider group of people can become a part of.

Remembering together

Volf (2006) reiterates again and again in his book that memory can lead either to healing or revenge. He poetically writes,

“Instead of simply protecting a person, memory may wound another. Instead of generating solidarity with victims, it may reinforce cycles of violence. Instead of truthfully acknowledging wrongdoing, it may bolster a victim’s false self-perceptions and unjust demands. Instead of healing wounds it may simply reinjure. Remembering wrongs will forge an identity, but the identity may be that of a person imprisoned in his own past and condemned to repeat it” (2006, 34).

Wrong suffered, suggests Volf, do not just need to be remembered, but in their remembering, redeemed. One way he suggests of redeeming memory is by remembering truthfully. Even though memory is fragmented, distorted and subjective, Volf believes there is a degree of truthfulness that can and must be maintained if memory is to be healing and just. Repression or distortion of memory does not lead to healing. Repressed memories do not disappear, but instead tend to interfere with healthy functioning, and may lead us to repeat the trauma either as victimizer or victim (Volf, 2006, 74). Hunt (2010) has found the same to be

true with his work with veterans from World War II. As they become older, the memories of the war they suppressed have not softened, but have instead become even more pervasive and difficult to ignore. Volf argues that we must “name the troubling past truthfully” and adds that “truthful naming will not by itself heal memories of wrongs suffered; but without truthful naming, all measures we might undertake to heal such memories will remain incomplete” (2006, 75).

Volf asks how we can remember truthfully when we distort memories in order to protect ourselves from the painful wounds of the trauma and suggests, like Hunt, that through integrating the trauma into our narratives we create spaces for new identities and new possibilities. “We integrate events into our life-story by giving them positive *meaning* within that story”.

How to remember truthfully was under debate constantly in terms of the TRC. The approach taken was to adopt four understandings of truth: factual or forensic truth, personal or narrative truth, social or 'dialogue' truth, and healing or restorative truth. Bundy (2000), however, critiques the report, saying that on the one hand it argues that the past is a “a site of contending constructions and perspectives, a realm of subjective, partial truths”, truths that may only emerge in time, and are dynamic, changing and multiple. On the other hand, it argues that this report is the final, factual truth of our past, and that “we should accept that truth has emerged”. Bundy argues that the report makes no effort to negotiate the discrepancies between the forensic data and the many contradicting narratives of individuals.

Villa-Vicencio (2000), however, writes that the stories that emerge in testimony are incomplete, as memory is incomplete. He poetically calls for a listening to the incompleteness, the silences, the body language, and the complexity of emotions that accompany telling narratives of the past. The important issue, for Villa-Vicencio, is not that one complete, coherent truth is told, but that new insight is gained into what happened, along with “an empathetic understanding of how a particular event is viewed by ones adversaries” (2000, 27). The crux is not getting to the truth, but having people on opposing sides begin to see each others' truths with the kind of empathy and understanding that will allow for healing to begin to take place.

However, this does not mean that for Villa-Vicencio (2000) the truth does not matter. In fact, he argues that all stories need to be heard and that the reconciliation process is threatened when some are subsumed or suppressed so that only a dominant narrative survives.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed memory in the context of the personal and collective narratives we develop in order to make sense of the world. When a traumatic event takes place, our personal and collective narratives are disrupted. Remembering the past involves integrating the trauma into our existing narratives. This paper has stressed, along with Miroslav Volf (2006), that we can remember in ways that are healing and inclusive or ways that lead to further wounding and revenge.

A cautionary note was made that we need to be careful when equating personal narratives, trauma and healing, with collective and national processes. As Hamber and Wilson (1999) argued, nations do not have the same psyches as individuals. In fact, personal stories and pain are sometimes lost in national projects of reconciliation as happened to some extent both in the case of South Africa and Rwanda. The impact of memory on national identity was explored, describing how, in the case of South Africa there was an emphasis on remembering in such a way that all South African might be rehumanised. In the case of Rwanda, the rapid changes since the genocide were discussed, resulting in Rwandans having to significantly transform the way they perceived themselves.

After nation-wide trauma, narratives of the past need to be rewritten in order to integrate the trauma in meaningful ways. This paper discussed the importance of integrating all narratives, even those that are in conflict with the dominant narrative so that the narratives on the margins do not become excluded and violent narratives but rather narratives that remain in dialogue and become part of the social discourse of a nation. This asks for individuals in a nation to remember together, sharing their stories, so that all the contending voices are heard. Volf stresses the importance of remembering truthfully, and this includes remembering the truths of the perpetrator as well as the victims and survivors.

Once our memories have been integrated, argues Volf, we no longer need to be defined by our trauma. He writes (2006, 80),

“Our memories may live in us, but they no longer occupy us; they may cause pain but they no longer exhaustively define. We are more than what we have suffered, and that is the reason we can do something with our memory of it – integrate it into our life-story, turn it into a junction from which we set out on new paths, for instance. And because we are more than what we have suffered, we may be able to embark, maybe haltingly at first upon a journey of reconciliation with those who have wounded us”.

This is what it means to remember well. We remember together through sharing and hearing the many contending voices. We remember truthfully, in a humane and caring way. And we integrate our memories in such a way that they lead us on a journey of reconciliation.

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