



M. Christine Boyer

Princeton University School of Architecture

M. Christine Boyer is an urban historian whose interests include the history of the American city, city planning, preservation planning, and computer science. Before coming to Princeton University in 1991, Boyer was professor and chair of the City and Regional Planning Program at Pratt Institute. She was a visiting professor in the Ph.D. program at TU Delft School of Design for Spring 2005.

*She has written extensively about American urbanism. Her publications include *Dreaming the Rational City: The Myth of American City Planning 1890-1945* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1983), *Manhattan Manners: Architecture and Style 1850-1900* (New York: Rizzoli, 1985), *The City of Collective Memory* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1994), and *CyberCities* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996).*

COLLECTIVE MEMORY UNDER SIEGE

The case of 'heritage terrorism'

In the Age of Empire and the global reach of capitalism, there appears no object that cannot be preserved, celebrated as a place of memory, perturbed by the logic of consumption—old buildings, theaters, historic town centers, market places, museums, etc. have become saturated by a ‘tourism of collective memory’. In the global state of war, moreover, severe divisions along regional, national and local lines arise and these have deployed a politics of identity that intersects with ‘collective memory’, however the latter is defined. It is this conflation of collective memory, war and identity politics which I will address below.

Since architectural collective memory is literally carved or erected in stone, and is thus tangible, monolithic, recognizable and permanent, it has been called the archetypal collective memory.¹ If collective memory is under siege in the 21st century, as will be argued here, what then does architectural collective memory actually signify? What fundamental assumptions about history, memory, identity, the nation underlie architectural practice when it ventures into the process of memorialization or stages theatrical performances of material evidence and artifacts of recall?

“Since memory is actually a very important factor in struggle,” Michel Foucault remarks, “if one controls people’s memory, one controls their dynamism.

1 Jeffrey K. Olick: *The Politics of Regret On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility* (New York, London: Routledge, 2007), p. 89.

And one also controls their experience, their knowledge of previous struggles.”² If trauma of war is a special form of memory, registering affects but not meaning, how then do architects negotiate the distinction between intangible memories and more formal acts of collective memorialization?³

Collective memory under siege requires sensitive interpretation of past events and imputed representations, as well as careful negotiations over the future of a nation or people. Never set in stone, it belongs to a field of argumentation located at the heart of modern ethics.

Part I: The rise of the ‘Memory Machine’

‘Memory’ as an intellectual debate was absent from the 1968 *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* published under the direction of David L. Sills; it did not appear in the collective work *Faire de l’histoire* edited in 1974 by Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora; nor was it in 1976 among the Keywords assembled by the cultural historian Raymond Williams.⁴ Since then, however, the word ‘memory’ has become an obsession, diffused across cultural, social and political studies, the humanities and history, architecture and archaeology. But what does the word actually refer to? What kind of memory is at stake? If only individuals remember, then what is collective memory? Perhaps collective memory is a sensitivity instead of an operational concept, but then what does it sensitize us to and what does this imply for the building of memorials and the design of commemorative spaces?

In 1984, Nora described *lieux de mémoire* [realms of memory], to be “an unconscious organization of collective memory” reflecting national, ethnic or group commonalities.⁵ His seven-volume attempt to catalogue every memory site in France reflects a certain nostalgia for a mythical ‘Frenchness’ lost in the process of modernization or eradicated in the uniformity of globalization.

This affirmative albeit backward looking approach to memory has spawned a veritable ‘memory machine’ retrieving and inventing traditions in many dif-

2 Michel Foucault: “Film and Popular Memory.” In: *Foucault Live* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1989), p. 92.

3 E. Ann Kaplan: *Trauma Culture: The politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005).

4 Enzo Traverso: *Le passé, modes d’emploi histoire, mémoire, politique* (Paris : La Fabrique éditions, 2005), p. 10.

5 Pierre Nora: “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire.” In: *Representations* 26 (Spring, 1989), p. 23. See also Pierre Nora (ed.): *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, 7 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1984–1992).

ferent places around the world, remarking on how the past has been remembered or forgotten, how narratives have been constructed and landscapes of memory confabulated.⁶ ‘Memory tourism’ has transformed historic sites into museums, turned the ‘past’ into a consumer object to be recuperated and utilized by commercial interests, and exploited as spectacles in theme parks and the cinema. Nora explains this obsession with memory by claiming that we speak so often of memory because there is so little of it.

As I argue in *The City of Collective Memory*, when a gap in time appears between the memory of an event and its actual experience, attempts are made to write these absent moments down, to preserve all the little known facts as much as possible, to erect monuments and establish commemorative celebrations.⁷ A gap in time enables memory to act as resistance to the acceleration of time, or to be used as a tool in search of moral redemption for past grievances and regrets, or to provide a source of identity in an increasingly alienating and modernizing world. Such a gap in time appeared in the late 20th century, after a century of wars, totalitarian regimes, genocides and crimes against humanity, when the last ‘witnesses’ of these atrocities and their memories were disappearing.⁸ In particular, the Holocaust of WWII has been positioned as the generator of the ‘memory machine’.

Berlin’s New Memory District

Much has been written about Germany’s efforts both to reconcile controversial memories of its National Socialist past and its attempts to transform the center of Berlin into a new memory district with Daniel Libeskind’s design for the Jewish Museum, Peter Eisenman’s Memorial to Murdered Jews of Europe, and Peter Zumthor’s canceled Topography of Terror Documentation Center. In response, Karen Till asks the following question:

If the Holocaust and its memory still stand as a test case for humanist and universalist claims of Western civilization, then one might argue that these place-making processes in Berlin are central symbolic and material sites of the crisis of modernity, uniquely embodying the contra-

6 Jan-Werner Müller: “Introduction.” In: Jan-Werner Müller (ed.): *Memory & Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 18.

7 M. Christine Boyer: *The City of Collective Memory its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1004).

8 James E. Young: *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

dictions and tensions of social memory and national identity in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first."⁹

Such a statement is beset with conceptual and interpretive contradictions and double standards which this essay tries to explore. How have humanist and universalist claims been deployed to keep amnesia not memory alive? What role does Western civilization play in the crisis of modernity, and does memory of the Holocaust act as a symbolic center for proclaimed clashes of civilizations in the Middle East today? If Berlin represents an 'unstable optic identity' of the nation¹⁰, as Till believes, what is the relationship between the eye of the spectator and the logic of governmentality, between individual memory and collective memory, not just in Berlin but in any other memorial site?

Individual/Collective Memory

Since it is difficult to define collective memory, some suggest abandoning its universalizing meaning replacing it with myth, tradition or commemoration. Others want to restrict its application to public discourse about the past or to narratives that speak in the name of collectivities. A third possibility is to limit its reference to mnemonic processes and practices such as memorial sites and public monuments.¹¹

Everyone seems to agree that individual memory, the kind that people carry around in their heads, differs from collective memory. The French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, the founding father of contemporary memory studies, called the first 'autobiographical memory'. He believed, however, that the actual act of remembering, always takes place as group memory. He called this latter process of remembering together 'collective memory'; it operates as a framework limiting and binding intimate acts of individual recall. So, he mused, "the mind reconstructs its memories under the pressure of society."¹²

Jan-Werner Müller points to another problem: the very language with which we discuss collective memory treats it as a 'thing' to be 'shared', 'confiscated', 'repressed', or 'recovered'. Thinking that memory can be excavated or empirically known as a fact leads to instrumental control over its contents. Since it

9 Karen E. Till: *The New Berlin Memory, Politics, Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. 8–9.

10 Ibid., p. 5.

11 See note 1, pp. 33–34.

12 Maurice Halbwachs, in Lewis A. Coser (ed.): *Maurice Halbwachs On Collective Memory* (University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 53.

is individuals, and not collectivities, that remember, unearthing personal memories generates too many therapeutic narrations or souvenirs. On the other hand, over-generalizing attempts to define collective memory as a social fact fail to grasp how ‘memory’ actually is deployed in politics, and how control over individuals’ perception is achieved.¹³

Extending this troubled belief in excavation, a popular metaphor likens memory to a palimpsest: not a velum scraped clean for new use but horizontal strata of ancient texts brought to the surface in the present, revealing their simultaneous co-existence. Transferred to the urban fabric, the users of ‘palimpsest’ assume that lost memories haunt a city’s collective memory, albeit in unsettled arrangements; they are ghosts of a restless past possessing some places.

Constructing places of memory is one way to work through such traumatic remains, to give shape to metaphysically absent but intensively felt fears and desires. It situates memories in place, stops their prowling around. People return to these haunted places, to make contact with their loss, places that contain unwanted presences and past injustices. In these situated places they work through contradictory emotions of shame, guilt, fear, sadness, longing, anxiety and they hope for a better future.¹⁴ Just how an absent, immaterial haunting signifies individual or collective meaning remains a conundrum, however.

Charles Maier claims “the surfeit of memory is a sign not of historical confidence but a retreat from transformative politics.” The past is expected to redeem what the future may not be able to appease.¹⁵ Hence memory may have corrosive effects on political policies.

Part II: National identity and ‘Urbicide’

One of the problems haunting the term ‘collective memory’ is the issue of national identity. More than a hundred years ago, Ernest Renan pointed out that in the formation of national identity, remembrance and forgetting depend on each other, as shared memory and shared forgetting.¹⁶ With the rise of the nation state, certain memories were mobilized while alternatives repressed and

13 See note 6, p. 19.

14 See note 9, pp. 5–15.

15 Charles Maier: “A Surfeit of Memory? Reflections on History, Melancholy and Denial.” In: *History & Memory*, 5, 2 (1993), pp. 136–152. Quoted by Müller: *Memory & Power in Post-War Europe*, p. 16.

16 Ernest Renan: “What is a Nation?” (1920). Quoted by Müller, see note 6, pp. 12, 21, 33.

regional differences assimilated. Official narrations were and are idealized or invented and guarded with care: access to papers and national archives may be limited and allegiance to the hegemonic form of memory tightly controlled. There is no unitary collective mental set for the nation to possess, no ‘pristine memory’ to recall, only selected memory and numbing amnesia to manipulate as an instrument for better or worse by those in power, or those seeking power.¹⁷

Although counter-memory resists such restrictions and over-generalizations of national identity, offering competing pasts and narrating different events, it takes place within the framework of political power. Nor is counter-memory, the recovery of suppressed memory, always liberating. When collective memory is conjoined with inflamed national passions, the memory-power nexus, residing in national and political memory and in civil and individual memory, becomes a highly contested terrain.¹⁸

Bogdan Bogdanovic, the architect, designer of monuments to the peaceful coexistence of different cultures and memories in post-war Yugoslavia, a former mayor of Belgrade, used the term ‘urbicide’ to describe war against cities in the Balkans during the 1990s. The sieges and bombardments of Vukovar, the World Heritage city of Dubrovnik and the historic centers of Sarajevo and Mostar received intentional attacks on their urban fabric because these cities were symbols of multiplicity—shared spaces of ethnic, cultural, religious, and civic values—the antithesis of the Serbian idea.¹⁹

Bogdanovic might also have used the word ‘memoricide’ to describe the murder of the past through the mutilation and eradication of geographical and architectural markers on the land. Memory was literally blown up during the Balkan wars as homes, neighborhoods, monuments, mosques, churches and cultural artifacts were erased, mnemonic devices such as maps redrawn to display an ethnically reconfigured future, and schoolbooks rewritten to tell

17 Ibid., pp. 22, 29–30, 32.

18 Ibid., pp. 1–35.

19 “Urbanity is one of the highest abstractions of the human spirit [Bogdanovic claims]. To me, to be an urban man means to be neither a Serb nor a Croat, and instead to behave as though these distinctions no longer matter, as if they stopped at the gates of the city.” Interview with Bogdan Bogdanovic, Serbian architect *Rencontre européenne* 7 (February, 2008); quotation: 1; “Urbicide’ was used by Marshall Berman to describe the willful use of the bulldozer by Robert Moses in the destruction of the South Bronx in the 1950s and 1960s,” Marshall Berman: *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Verso, 1983); “Urbicide” <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/urbicide>.

official tales.²⁰ Ilana Bet-El claims the words ‘I remember’ and the dark recollections that swirled around different speakers of remembrance in Yugoslavia turned into weapons of hatred, fear and then war, when collected together and carefully manipulated.²¹

‘Urbicide’ is a term that also applies to deliberate strategies of the Israeli army deploying bulldozers to systematically destroy water tanks, roads, electrical generating plants, hospitals, schools, homes, cultural symbols in Ramallah, Hebron, Bethlehem, Jenin and other Palestinian cities, plus the construction of a network of bypass roads to Israeli settlements on the West Bank. Deemed necessary for military self-defense, the elimination of such targets brings death and disease to innocent civilians. The war of the bulldozer is meant to drive Palestinian people away, to deny their collective, individual, cultural and historical rights to the land, to place them in permanent poverty, to seclude them behind a wall and thus eradicate them from sight—an ‘unstable optic’ of national identity at play.²²

‘Urbicide’ can also be applied to the war in Iraq where insurgents quickly understood that the asymmetrical power of U.S. technological superiority might be thwarted, even neutralized, by taking refuge in complex and uncertain urban terrains. They quickly moved the battlefield into Iraq’s sixteen largest cities. The conclusion is simple, as one U.S. military commander has said: “We have seen the future war, and it is urban.” Technological superiority, fighting war at a distance, reflects the U.S. military strategy of zero soldier deaths, while it increases the death of civilians and destruction of their cities as so much collateral damage.²³

20 See note 6, pp. 9, 17.

21 Ilana R. Bet-El: “Unimagined communities: the power of memory and the conflict in the former Yugoslavia.” In: see note 6, pp. 206–222.

22 Christain Salmon: “The Bulldozer War,” (May 20, 2002) <www.counterpunch.org/salm-on0520.htm>; Stephen Graham: “Clean Territory: Urbicide in the West Bank” 7 August 2002, <www.openDemocracy.net>; Rati Segal, Eyal Weizman, et al.: *Territories Islands, Camps and Other States of Utopia* (Berlin: KW – Institute of Contemporary Art, 2003); Sari Hanafi: “Targeting space through bio-politics: The Israeli colonial project” *Palestinian Report* 10, 32 (Feb 18, 2001) www.palestinerepon.ps/article.php?architect=267; Michael Sorkin (ed.): *Against the Wall* (New York, London: The New Press, 2005).

23 Peter W. Wielhouwer: “Preparing for Future Joint Urban Operations: The Role of Simulation and the Urban Resolve Experiment,” Command and Operations Group, USJFCOM/19 (2004). Quoted by M. Christine Boyer: “Urban Operations and Network Centric Warfare.” In: Michael Sorkin (ed.): *Indefensible Space: The Architecture of the National Insecurity State* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 51–78.

The Rhetoric of Memory and the Spectacle of War

The expression ‘heritage terrorism’ is exemplary of the rhetoric of memory. It was coined by Neal Ascherson of *The Observer* (March 2001) during the international outrage over Mullah Mohammad Omar’s wanton destruction of the giant Buddha statues carved into the rock cliffs of Bamiyan in the 2nd century A.D. and it includes the Mullah’s threat to eliminate all ‘offending’ pre-Islamic artefacts left in museums throughout Afghanistan.²⁴ In defense of his decree, Mullah Omah proclaimed that the statues were not part of the beliefs of Afghanistan, for there were no Buddhists left in the country; since they were only part of its history, “all we are breaking are stones.”²⁵

Iconoclastic acts of cultural catharsis are as old as human hatred, and Ascherson claims the Taliban’s acts of vandalism against idols were motivated by religious and nationalistic aims.²⁶ These blind zealots unleashed horrendous acts of ‘heritage terrorism’, he criticized, in order to prove that no other religion but Islam ever held sway in Afghanistan and delivered proof to future generations by eradicating all traces to the contrary. Lynn Meskill labels this ‘negative heritage’, “a conflictual site that becomes the repository of negative memory in the collective imaginary.”²⁷

While the outrage over the Buddha monuments added a new phrase to military skirmishes, the meaning of ‘heritage terrorism’ may be far from clear. ‘Terrorism’ is, after all, a virtually empty signifier, one that can be filled with a variety of actions by non-state insurgents who ‘we’ dislike because ‘they’ violently oppose our way of life, our democracy, our civilization, our modernity, our freedom.²⁸ Applying the adjective ‘heritage’ only reinforces this antagonism—our culture against theirs; two nihilisms at war, the East and the West.

24 Neal Ascherson: “‘Heritage terrorism’ is a way of sticking two fingers to the West,” *The Observer* (Sunday, March 4, 2001); “Buddha Statues Destroyed Completely,” *The News* (March 13, 2001): unpaginated.; Abid Ullah Jan: “Blowing statues vs. Satanic Savagery,” *The Independent Center for Strategic Studies and Analysis* (June 26, 2001); Finbarr Barry Flood: “Between Culture and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum,” in *The Art Bulletin* 84,4 (Dec. 2002), p. 651; Erik Nemeth: “Cultural Security: The Evolving Role of Art in International Security.” In: *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19 (2007), pp. 33–34; Patty Gerstenblith: “From Bamiyan to Baghdad: Warfare and the Preservation of Cultural Heritage at the Beginning of the 21st Century,” in *Georgetown Journal of International Law* (Winter, 2006), pp. 1–58.

25 “All we are breaking are stones” in *AFP* (Feb 27, 2001); unpaginated.

26 See note 24.

27 Lynn Meskill: “Negative Heritage and past mastering in Archaeology.” In: *Anthropological Quarterly* 75 (2002), pp. 557–574, quote: p. 558.

28 Alain Badiou: *Polemics* (London: Verso, 2006), p. 19.

Ignored in this struggle are complicated connections and unresolved ethical arguments in the definition of permissible wars and impermissible terrorism.

Critical remembering is seldom produced by war; instead a spectacular politics is put into play. The San Francisco group Retort argue that “The spectacle is deeply (constantly) a form of violence—a repeated action against real human possibilities, real (meaning flexible, useable, transformable) representation, real attempts at collectivity.”²⁹ The spectacle as image is key to the management of symbolic power, and this image-power nexus is highly concentrated in symbolic sites of memory: places, monuments, icons, logos, signs that rule over the cultural imaginary. Hence these icons are prone to destruction in war and reconstruction in peacetime.³⁰

The visual immediacy of the Twin Towers with smoke billowing from their tops, imploding in real time and then remediated and multiplied through split screens, scrolling headlines, radio feeds and cellphones turned the event into an immediate spectacle. The perpetrators designed their acts as theatrical performances, intentionally selecting the date and images to spellbind their audiences.³¹

‘Shock and awe’ tactics of the retaliatory and retributive Iraq war of 2003 were likewise televised as image-spectacles seared into memory as performances and repetitively looped in an endless war of images.³² The deployment of spectacular imagery, however, leaves vast realms of experience unnarrated and inaccessible to memory, allowing illusions and false options to prevail.

No one thought the World Trade Towers were a site of remembrance until their destruction on 11 September 2001. These cultural icons became the targets of terrorist attacks because they defined the market culture and capitalist ideals of those who created them; they fit the definition of ‘the spectacle’ like a glove.³³ But in the wake of their collapse, the World Trade Towers site was mobilized for spectacular purposes and absorbed into the collective imaginary.

29 Retort (Iain Boal, T.J. Clark, Joseph Matthews and Michael Watts): *Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War* (New York: Verso, 2005), p. 131.

30 The horrors of 9-11 were intentionally visible, marking them as distinct from other aerial attacks. There were no cameras at Dresden, Hamburg, or Hiroshima. Retort, “Afflicted Powers The State, the Spectacle and September 11.” In: *NLR* 27 (May June 2004), pp. 5–21; Samuel Weber: “War, Terrorism, and Spectacle: On Towers and Caves.” In: *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 101, 3 (Summer, 2002), pp. 449–458.

31 For more about the spectacle and the WTTs see Retort *Afflicted Powers*.

32 Richard Grusin: “Remediation and Premediation.” In: *Criticism* 46, 1 (Winter, 2004), pp. 17–40.

33 The spectacle is capital accumulated to such a degree that it becomes an image. Guy Debord: *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black & Red, 1983) unpaginated.

It quickly emerged as a tourist destination with the requisite paraphernalia of souvenirs, memory maps, and architecturally designed viewing stands.

Seven years after 9–11, no one is in control of the site, reconstruction is far behind schedule, and the design plagued with disappointments. The warring parties remain unappeased: families of the dead, business interests, government agencies, the larger community.

Three tall towers designed by the world’s most renowned architects, Lord Norman Foster, Lord Richard Rogers and Fumihiko Maki, accompany those by David Childs’ Freedom Tower and 7 World Trade will stand along two sides of the site. The ensemble promises nothing more than a bland office park. Nor has Michael Arad’s and Peter Walker’s memorial plaza ‘Reflecting Absence’ of 2004 been without criticism. The design is a simple ‘forest grove’ of trees at street level contains two large voids marking the famous footprints. At the center of each void is a recessed pool of water filled by a cascade flowing down its perimeter walls. Surrounding the pool will be a continuous ribbon of names of the dead arranged in no particular order. “Standing there at the water’s edge, looking at a pool of water that is flowing away into an abyss,” Arad and Walker claim, “a visitor to the site can sense that what is beyond this curtain of water and ribbon of names is inaccessible.”³⁴ However, some family members want the memorial to be above ground rather than sunken thirty feet below, while government leaders have placed a cap on cost overruns, causing further design alterations to come. Of course, any attempt to preserve a site necessarily ignores other uses, other engagements with meaning and memory. Arad poignantly remarked as his plans were unveiled: “Every way you find to resolve this satisfies some but causes pain and anguish to others.”³⁵

Part III: Collective Memory and Amnesia

Rwanda

How do countries such as Rwanda remember the brutal and painful history of genocide between 1990 and 1994 that killed nearly a million people, mostly Tutsi, without rekindling divisions that led to the killings? How do Rwandans keep alive an understanding of how and why these killings occurred? Pat Caplan, an anthropologist from the U.K., traveled to Rwanda in search of answers, visiting

34 Michael Arad and Peter Walker: Statement “Reflecting Absence” Lower Manhattan Development Corporation <http://www.wtcsitememorial.org/fin7_mod.html>

35 Michael Arad: “January 14, 2004”. Quoted by Martin C. Pedersen: *Goodbye Memory Foundations, Hello Reflecting Absence*. *Urban Journal* posted January 21, 2004. <<http://sixthcolumn.blogspot.com/2005/06/reflecting-absence-indecency-of-91-1.html>>

four major genocide memorials and many smaller sites of memory.³⁶ She found the Kigali Genocide Memorial typical of many Holocaust museums, done very professionally and movingly.

In addition to the museums, the sites of genocide function as memorials. Since Tutsi death squads lured Hutus to the place of sanctuary in churches and then systematically slaughtered them, these churches became the center of the struggle over the creation and preservation of memory.

To be sure, there are different ways to memorialize genocide. Some advocate excavation of bones and their reburial in order to bring closure for themselves and to publicly blame those responsible; others prefer to allow bones to lie where they have fallen, in order to remember the vast absences that genocide created never to be filled.³⁷

In the context of this investigation, we have to ask if the collapse of collective memory was itself among the reasons why and how ethnicity led to genocide. What if 35 years of amnesia, of memories collectively repressed, gave rise to these atrocities? And what if failure of the international community to intervene to stop the killings makes memory an insufficient tool to guarantee that killing will not reoccur?

The writer Benjamin Sehene believes most Rwandans suffer from a lost collective memory. He blames Christianity for destroying the memory of a civilization rooted in myths and built on hierarchy, a tyranny but one imbued with a sense of restraint. In such an atmosphere things were left unsaid, hatreds were self-censored, and three ethnic groups, the Hutus, Tutsis, and Twas, lived in peace.³⁸ In 1931, however, the Catholic Church deposed Musinga, the Tutsis' last divine-monarch, because he refused to be converted. They tore into shreds all the religious traditions, rituals and myths of the ruling Tutsis—their collective memory and esoteric rights—that were the pillar of Rwandan society.

Just before and after independence in 1962, the Hutus attempted to redress the social balance after centuries of feudal domination. They began a bloody revolt in 1959, massacring 20,000 Tutsis and forcing thousands to flee into Burundi and Uganda. Effecting a transfer of power to a Hutu regime, everything with a Tutsi connotation was banned, including some thousand of words cut from the

36 Pat Caplan: "‘Never Again’: Genocide Memorials in Rwanda," *Anthropology Today* 23, 1 (Feb., 2007), pp. 20–22.

37 Cornelius Holtorf: "Can less be more? Heritage in the Age of Terrorism." In: *Public Archaeology* 5, (2006), pp. 101–109; quotation: p. 103.

38 Benjamin Sehene: "Rwanda's Collective Amnesia," (1999), pp. 1–4. www.unesco.org/courier/1999_12/uk/dossier/txt08.htm



language; a quota system was installed allowing only 9% of all positions in higher education or civil services to be held by Tutsis. Government and military service was restricted as well.

“But a past that is forgotten,” writes Sehene, “is bound to repeat itself because forgetting involves a refusal to admit wrongdoing. In Rwanda, amnesia led to successive pogroms against the Tutsis which began in the 1960s and ended in their genocide.”³⁹ Subtle points lie awake in the deep structure of memory, they rise to the surface time and again, making political power struggles inevitable.

South Africa

In post-conflict societies, it often takes decades to bring individual untold memories back from the past, to reconnect these voices with the present. The memory problem for South Africa in the 1990s rested on how to remember the apartheid period since the regime displayed exemplary techniques of concealment and silencing.

Mbuyisa Nikita Makhubu was captured in a photograph carrying in his arms the body of Hector Pieterse after the South African police shot and killed the 13-year-old boy on 16 June 1976 during the Soweto uprising. This photograph has become an icon of resistance against apartheid. However, his mother told the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) another story in 1997: her son disappeared in 1977, fleeing from police persecution and has never returned. She wanted to know if anyone can bring him back from the silence, from no-place: does anyone know what happened to him, how did he die, when did he die, where did he die?

With these simple questions revealing her 20 years of pain, she—and many other mothers in truth seeking processes—tore the memory of the Soweto uprising and apartheid from the process of symbolization, commemoration, and

³⁹ Ibid., p. 3.

memorialization and from the collusion of acts of violence with silence, secrecy, and lies. She brought memories of the event back into the present by reminding the Commission there were still questions to be answered, memories to be listened to, and stories to be told.

Before any process of memorialization can take effect, silencing has to be undone. There are many silences in South Africa: some caused by the experience of trauma that make words fail, others by complicity and guilt that needs to hide from the truth. When stories are told from memory and in official accounts, they blend together, both marked and manipulated by the experience of violence. How then to start the process of memorialization?

Lebanon

During 16 years of civil war in Lebanon, 1975–1991, oblivion of memory set in, many even questioned whether atrocities happened at all or referred to the period of war as “a series of nightmares”.⁴⁰ After the war, a law of general amnesty made an attempt to wipe the slate clean without attributing the war to any one cause or group; citizens were inhibited from discussing the war less their conversations became incitements to sectarian behavior. They were told to get on with their lives, and forget the war. Eventually an effort was made to ‘look the beast in the eye’ and to deal with the memory of war lest it return to hold them hostage.⁴¹

For some collective amnesia gave way to recall in films, memoirs, novels, poetry, the press, through architectural reconstructions and commemorative ceremonies. Others tired of the war, only wanted to forget. And some, believing there was no shared national history to heal egregious wounds, sought to repress memory absolutely, fearing it would give rise to a renewal of war. So many prohibitions against recall and remembering, require one to ask how

40 Sune Haugbølle: “Looking the beast in the eye: Collective memory of the civil war in Lebanon” (unpublished Master Studies, St. Antony’s Collective, University of Oxford, June 2002). <www.11101.net/Writigns/listingwritings.php?typerawcmd=a+Haugbolle.+T-6k>; quotation from novelist Ghad Al-Samman (1997) in Aseel Sawalha: “Remembering the Old Good Days: The Reconstruction of Urban Space in Postwar Beirut,” (Unpublished Ph.D. The City University of New York, 2002), p. 52.

41 Desmond Tutu seeking truth and reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa explained “None of us have the power to say, ‘Let bygones be bygones’ and, hey presto, they then become bygones. Our common experience in fact is the opposite—that the past, far from disappearing or lying down and being quiet, is embarrassingly persistent, and will return and haunt us unless it has been dealt with adequately. Unless we look the beast in the eye we still find that it returns to hold us hostage.” Quoted by Sune Haugbølle, see note 40, p. 8.

collective memory is being constructed, how the war is actually talked about, and what might be the political and ethical implications of these constructions and words.

In the postwar period, sites of remembrance were quickly lost in the downtown area, once referred to as the ‘center of the country’⁴² as properties were condemned, acquired and leveled, and then reconstructed by a governmental/private company *Société Libanaise pour le développement et la reconstruction du Centre Ville de Beyrouth* (Solidere), spearheaded by the late prime minister Rafiq Hariri.⁴³

Beginning in 1994, Solidere commissioned well-known international architects to give a new face to the city, obliterating more connections to its past. The company’s declared aim is to rebuild Beirut as it was before the war: “Paris of the Mediterranean” and to replan and rebuild the public space where Beirut’s “intercommunal mixing ... Christians and Muslims continued to meet together at official functions and served on the same committees, courts, and mixed tribunals.”⁴⁴ Solidere’s slogan, “Beirut an ancient city of the future,”⁴⁵ means the restoration of only selected buildings, the preservation of some facades while changing the functions, use and street plan of the whole.⁴⁶ Still, living in an urban memory of pastiche architecture is not to everyone’s liking.

Beginning in November 1994, the Lebanese press reported, on a nearly weekly basis, “the wrecking of mosaics, walls, columns, and other archaeological monuments in Beirut. Working around the clock for more than a year, bulldozers dug into the city, filling dump trucks that promptly emptied their loads into the Mediterranean Sea. More than 7 million cubic feet of ancient Beirut have been lost forever.”⁴⁷ In the end Solidere’s bulldozers leveled more structures than did the entire civil war. The archaeological strata and the visible surviving townscape of the late-Ottoman and early-modern French Mandate periods were gone. Some maintain this colonial townscape did not belong to Lebanese national patrimony. Only with the rise of memory studies in the last 20 years, and especially as writers and the media began to lament the hole in

42 ‘wast al-balad’.

43 Sawalha, see note 40, p. 36.

44 Quoted by Kasper Bloch-Jørgensen, Stine Vilby Jensen, Metter Vinggaard: “Achieving Reconciliation in Lebanon?” In: *International Development Studies*, BAS (May 2006), p. 67.

45 “Beirut madina ariqa lil mustaqbal.”

46 Sawalha, see note 40, pp. 73–74.

47 Akbert F. H. Naccache: “The Price of Progress” (1996) www.archaeo1ogy.or/9607/abstracts/beirut.html

memory that Solidere's erasures produced, has any mention of this history and the concept of heritage and patrimony been discussed at all.⁴⁸

Part IV: Conclusions

Clearly 'heritage terrorism', 'urbicide' and 'wars on memory' or 'selected amnesia' are unbalanced reactions—they not only threaten the memory and material artefacts of individuals and specific groups, they are fraught with problematic over-responses when retribution and restitution are provoked.⁴⁹ The anonymous destruction and construction, eradication and preservation, cannot be neatly separated, one gives rise to the other and both transform the sense of the past and places of memory in specific ways.

"Modern memory," Pierre Nora wrote, "is, above all, archival. It relies entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image."⁵⁰ But who has the right to make the final selection of what material artifacts are preserved and what destroyed, whose memories are narrated and whose obliterated? If memory is considered to be the central medium through which identity is formed—individual, group, or national—then has sufficient attention been given to why certain memories are taken up and used at specific times?

Because post-conflict reconstruction and remembering never take place in a vacuum, a builder of places of memory must be aware of lingering resentments, unrecognized privileges, double standards in the treatment of former enemies. In recovering from identity violence, memory can be productive or destructive; it can lead to renewal of war or peace and must be handled with utmost care.

Memories collected in the public sphere represent a multiplicity of arguments: debatable, contestable, suppressible, includable, and transformable. In this contentious complexity, architecture as the archetypal collective memory must ask what its practice obscures, suppresses, transforms, what its icons and symbols are imputed to signify, and how its processes of memorialization are linked to other discourses stored in the archive of memory and time.

48 An essay based on a public lecture presented by Robert Saliba: "Deconstructing Beirut's Reconstruction: 1990–2000 Coming to Terms with the Colonial Heritage" (April 19, 2000). www.Csbe.org/Sa1iba-Diwan/essay .htm

49 See note 37.

50 See note 5, p. 13.