Introduction: Violence, Justice and the Work of Memory

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The search for historical justice has become one of the defining features of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. So has the consensus about the need to remember the violence of past injustices and its victims. The search for justice is closely related to a focus on remembrance: the striving for justice relies on memories of injustices, and the public remembering of past wrongs is increasingly considered one crucial means of redressing such wrongs. This focus section brings together authors from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds in the humanities and social sciences, ranging from anthropology to law, and from cultural studies to political science. Focusing on post-conflict societies in Africa (Morocco, Rwanda), Asia (Nepal), Latin America (Argentina, Peru, Uruguay) and the Pacific (Solomon Islands), the papers explore aspects of the work of memory in attempts to redress past wrongs and make the present inhabitable. This introduction also extends some of the themes that connect the seven individual papers.

How do the survivors of human rights violations, and the families of victims, remember those disappeared or murdered? What is the relationship between individual memories and public memorialisation and forgetting? How are memories mobilised in attempts to redress past wrongs? These are among the central questions addressed in this focus section. They are important not least because the search for historical justice – for the retrospective righting of past wrongs – has become one of the defining features of our age.

On 23 April 2014, Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan issued a statement in which he acknowledged the suffering of Armenians in the course of what he called "the events of 1915". According to an "unofficial translation" published by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Erdoğan said: "[W]e wish that the Armenians who lost their lives in the context of the early twentieth century rest in peace, and we convey our condolences to their grandchildren." (Republic of Turkey 2014) The statement was released on the eve of the ninety-ninth anniversary of the first day of mass killings of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. Between 1915 and 1923, up to one and a half million Armenians lost their lives in what is, outside of Turkey, referred to as the Armenian genocide; most of the surviving Armenian population was deported from their ancestral homelands in Asia Minor.

Erdoğan's statement was welcomed as a step in the right direction by the United States government, but met with criticism both in neighbouring Armenia and by Armenian organisations around the world. That was hardly surprising, as it fell well short of an official apology, did not mention the word "genocide", and implied that the suffering of Armenians was no greater than that of other ethnic groups in the dying days of the Ottoman Empire, including Turks, Arabs

and Kurds. According to Armenia's president Serzh Sarkisian, the statement reflected Turkey's "policy of utter denial". He claimed that not only is Turkey the successor of the Ottoman Empire, but the "denial of a crime constitutes the direct continuation of that very crime" (*Guardian*, 24 April 2014).

At the time of writing this introduction, Erdoğan's condolences and the attention they garnered were merely the latest of many recent instances in which attempts to provide redress for past injustices attracted significant international attention. Ninety-nine years after the beginning of the Armenian genocide, calls for symbolic and material redress for the injustices perpetrated against Armenians are increasing, rather than decreasing in volume, and the international support for such calls is growing. These and many similar calls suggestthat the – already formidable – movement for historical justice is only gaining in strength.

Already there is hardly a government that could afford to ignore demands for historical justice, be it because of domestic or because of international pressure. Politicians also increasingly feel compelled to take a stance in relation to historic wrongs that happened elsewhere. Thus, governments and national and state parliaments around the world have officially recognised that the "events of 1915" constituted a genocide. For example, in 1997, the Australian state parliament of New South Wales passed a motion in which it condemned the genocide and designated "24 April in every year hereafter throughout New South Wales as a day of remembrance of the 1.5 million Armenians who fell victim to the first genocide of this century" (Parliament of New South Wales 1997, 7739). Erdoğan was obviously conscious of the international dimensions of his statement, since it was published in nine languages. In fact, it could be argued that his statement was directed neither towards Armenians nor intended for a domestic audience, but was targeted at Europe and constituted a blatant attempt to address reservations about Turkey's bid to join the European Union.

Most of the historic wrongs that prompt calls for justice took place within living memory; but there are increasingly others which, like the Armenian genocide, happened several generations ago. The time lag hardly diminishes the potency of their legacy. At the other end of the spectrum, there are calls for historical justice in instances in which conflicts and associated human rights violations are ongoing. For example, at a time when an end to the civil war in Syria does not seem imminent, international organisations are already positioning themselves to advise a post-Assad government on how best to provide redress for injustices committed since the beginning of the hostilities.[1] Current international discussions about human rights violations in Syria seem to focus as much on how to hold perpetrators to account after the end of the conflict as on how to alleviate the suffering of its victims now.

Today's movement for historical justice has its origins in the aftermath of the Second World War, with the war crimes trials in Nuremberg and Tokyo being the most visible examples of attempts in the second half of the 1940s to hold the perpetrators of historic wrongs accountable, but it did not gain momentum until the early 1980s.[2] It was only from the late 1990s that the movement for historical justice attracted sustained attention from scholars, particularly in political science, law and moral philosophy, with Martha Minow (1998), Elazar Barkan (2000), Gary Bass (2000), Ruti Teitel (2000), Lawrence Douglas (2001), Priscilla Hayner (2002) and Janna Thompson (2002) being the most influential pioneers in the English-speaking world.

The acceleration of the movement for historical justice in the early 1980s was partly due to a growing consensus to publicly remember historical injustices and its victims.

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1 As early as March 2012, the Public International Law and Policy Group released a report to "provide recommendations for measures that an interim Syrian government could take in the days immediately following President Bashar al-Assad's departure" (2012, 1). Similarly, in 2013 the International Center for Transitional Justice released a briefing paper by its vice president, Paul Seils, in which he argues for the creation of a "nationally owned and respected process that embraces and promotes the possibility of engendering a rights-respecting society through truth, justice, reparations, and reform" (Seils 2013, 3–4).

2 In the following, we provide a necessarily potted history of historical justice and the public remembrance of historic wrongs. For detailed accounts, see, for example, Elster 2004; Hazan 2010; Méndez 2011; Sikkink 2011; and Teitel 2011; see also Neumann 2014.

This consensus also had its origins in the second half of the 1940s, and it also slowly developed in stops and starts, before gaining significant momentum in the late 1970s. The insistence that the victims of mass violence and other injustices needed to be remembered soon went hand in hand with demands that perpetrators needed to be held accountable and that victims were entitled to reparations.

In the tradition of the postwar war crimes trials, historical justice was initially synonymous with retributive justice. From the 1980s, however, the focus shifted from the perpetrators to the victims, and from retribution to repair. Governments and civil society actors demanding historical justice also became increasingly concerned to bring at least some of the perpetrators, and, more importantly, the majority of their supporters, back into the fold, as it were, and aimed for reconciliation as well as accountability.

Perpetrators who deny their crimes and refuse to repent could still be prosecuted and convicted, but they cannot be part of a successful process of reconciliation. Reconciliation is premised on an acknowledgment of wrongs. Such an acknowledgment in turn requires ready access to knowledge about the exact nature and extent of the wrong in question. Thus the reparative turn of the movement for historical justice was accompanied by the recognition that the victims of historic wrongs, as well as society at large, have the right to learn the truth about these wrongs. Knowledge of the truth on its own, however, was not considered sufficient either to satisfy the demand for justice or to prevent a recurrence of injustices. Rather, certain aspects of the truth – in particular, the names of the victims and details of their suffering – needed to be permanently, or at least regularly, publicly acknowledged. Commemorations, memorials and museums are means to ensure that a post-conflict rapprochement is underpinned by a lasting acknowledgment of the human cost of the violence. In fact, such an acknowledgment is now widely regarded to be an integral part of the act of repair in post-conflict situations.

Erdoğan's statement was quickly dismissed because he suggested it was possible to separate truth from justice and remembrance, claiming that: "In today's world, deriving enmity from history and creating new antagonisms are neither acceptable nor useful for building a common future" (Republic of Turkey 2014). His statement reflects an anachronistic understanding of the conditions of peace, which had remained largely uncontested until the early twentieth century. In his *De Jure Belli ac Pacis*, Hugo Grotius, one of the fathers of international law, had advised the parties to a conflict to make peace without seeking reparations and dwelling on the roots of the conflict, and by aiming to forget historical enmities: "And the most latent and remote causes are supposed to be included in the most general terms, in treaties of peace, whereby they are sunk in oblivion." (Grotius 2001, 349) However, for Turkish overtures to be accepted by Armenians, they need to be accompanied by reparations (however symbolic these may be) and by a willingness to remember the nature of the violence of 1915. This is not least because Armenians themselves have remembered the "events of 1915" *as a genocide*, and they have done so publicly. Each year, the anniversary on 24 April is a day of remembrance in Armenia, and the occasion of public events in the Armenian diaspora, including marches and ceremonies in places such as Ottawa, Los Angeles and Paris. According to the online Armenian Genocide Memorials Database (http://www.armenian-genocide.org/memorials.html), today there are 166 memorials to the genocide, which are spread over thirty-one countries.

In public discussions about historical justice and memory, the latter is usually associated with official acknowledgements, commemorative rituals, museums, memorials, documentaries and feature films, and artistic and literary representations of the past. Much less attention is paid to how injustices are being remembered individually – by those most directly affected by them, but also by others. Erdoğan's message was ostensibly directed at the grandchildren of Armenians alive in 1915. How do they remember the violence of ninety-nine years ago? Their memories may not so much focus on the unimaginable figure of one and a half million dead, but on a great-aunt who can be named, or on a village community that now only exists in the diasporic imagination.

The authors of the following seven papers are mainly concerned with the impact of violence on individuals, and with

the work of memory performed by them, while at the same time acknowledging that their search for justice and their attempts to remember the dead have to be seen in the context of larger, public discourses. In the next section we give an overview of the themes canvassed in this focus section.

1. Contributions to this Focus Section

Our belonging to and with others determines who we are. Relationships allow us to recognise ourselves, and to be recognised. Whenever a relative, neighbour or friend dies, we reconstitute, however slightly, our selves. Survivors of a genocide, having lost scores of people close to them, face a particularly daunting challenge: not only do the dead have a claim on them – namely to be remembered – but they have lost those upon whom they could ground their claims for recognition and identity. In many ways, this is at the heart of the moral injury experienced by survivors: they lose themselves because they have lost the tacit assumptions about who they are in relation to those around them.

In her contribution to this focus section, *Laura Eramian* (2014) writes about Tutsi survivors of the genocide in the Rwandan town of Butare, who are confronted by a radical devastation of the social economy within which individuals locate their identity. She identifies two means by which survivors respond to that injury: an economy of exchange with the dead based on traditional practices and beliefs about the obligations of the living toward those who have died; and an informal conversational practice of recalling the details of the lost to other members of the community. Both practices buttress socially-constituted identity: the exchange practices through maintaining a limited form of lost identity-constitutive relations; the recall of those lost to others as a means of locating the speaker's belonging to the broader community through a demonstrated competency in plotting its social networks.

Eramian's work differs from that of authors who have studied the politics of memory in post-conflict contexts to account for the role of narratives of the past in the formation of national identity and in peace building. In Rwandan society the political stakes of memory are high. As Eramian notes, the individual self-making practices of a

Butare resident cannot be divorced from the politics of coming to terms with the violent past. However, the memory practices carried out through exchange rituals and the conversational impulse to recount losses are not oriented towards a proximate political goal. Rather, they are compensatory practices aimed at maintaining personhood. By contrast, psycho-social approaches to memory in post-conflict situations focus on the role of therapeutic practices, such as truth-telling, in healing the ongoing effects of mass violence at both an individual and a community level. While the memory practices that Eramian outlines are compensatory and reparative, they differ from therapeutic practices in that they do not aim for catharsis, or a restoration to normal functioning before the moral injury. They are directed at the maintenance or reconstitution of personhood rather than at the healing of injury.

Jill Stockwell (2014), too, is concerned with the effects of violence on those who have lost loved ones. Her article engages with the oral testimonies of two communities of women who remember experiences of violence in the 1970s and 1980s in Argentina. While one group of women has been affected by the state terrorism perpetrated under the military dictatorship (1976–1983), members of the other group mourn loved ones who were killed by leftist guerillas before the military junta came to power.

Argentina pioneered transitional justice mechanisms, including those intended to facilitate reparative memory work. Yet, according to Stockwell, there is little evidence that these mechanisms have fostered national reconciliation or even consensus regarding a narrative of Argentina's violent past. Despite the claims that public memorialisation and the sharing of victims' oral testimony will produce psycho-social healing and political transformation, the two groups of women studied by Stockwell remain, decades after the putative end of the conflict in Argentina, deeply divided and hostile towards one another. Stockwell argues that in Argentina political divisions have become entrenched around different ways of remembering the violent past so that, rather than being reparative, memorial practices are often feeding further conflict. She argues that this failure is the result of inadequate attention to the pre-political dynamics at work in the production, trans-

mission and endurance of memories within different memory communities, and to the role that emotion and affect play in the shaping of shared memory.

For the women in Stockwell's study, the continuing effects of trauma manifest themselves as "deep memory"; a memory triggered by powerful associations with particular sensations. The smell of blood or the accidental sight of an old wedding photo is capable of unpredictably breaking in upon the thought world of a survivor and causing them to relive past suffering. The result is an ongoing instability and vulnerability of the survivors' reconstructed sense of themselves. These deep memories resist the closure proffered by truth-telling: they appear to take the victim back to the experience of the original wrong and therefore prevent the therapeutic effect of re-narration in a new context, which allows for a reversal of the moral import of the injury. Stockwell argues that for survivors of mass violence who live with the continuing trauma of deep memory, the psycho-social emphasis on healing the trauma might inappropriately over-estimate the extent to which closure is possible.

This has crucial implications for the project of reparative memory work in Argentina. Shared affectual relations towards past events (and opposition to alternative ways of remembering) function as pivots around which a communal identity is organised. The groups studied by Stockwell share a particular emotional orientation towards the past and strong negative emotions towards rival communities of memory. Stockwell also identifies a process of affective transmission: emotional orientations are transmitted between members of a community in the process of recalling and sharing their memories.

While Eramian and Stockwell are concerned with the memories and coping strategies of people who have lost loved ones through acts of communal, terrorist or state-sanctioned violence, *Laura Menin* (2014) writes about survivors who try to make sense of and communicate experiences of victimisation – although she also engages with the issue of how political violence affects those close to its direct victims. She focuses on two individuals, Noureddine Saoudi and Fatna El Bouih, former political

prisoners during the so-called Years of Lead in Morocco. Saoudi and El Bouih both experienced forced disappearance and detention in the 1970s and 1980s, and both wrote memoirs about their time in prison. Their texts form part of an emerging "prison literature" in Morocco that attempts to challenge official accounts of the period of oppression during the reign of Morocco's autocratic ruler, Hassan II.

Menin's research shows that for Saoudi and El Bouih the movement from a personal memory of violence to a public testimony has been part of the reassertion of their identities, not least as political activists. Both speak of the pedagogical intent of their memoirs. This intent is clearly not distinct from its therapeutic effect. The process of re-narration invests the experiences with a new meaning, allowing the fresh articulation of memories to also function as a mode of re-asserting their own subjectivity and undoing the effects of attempts to "erase" them in prison (Slyomovics 2005, 132).

Menin interweaves a textual analysis of the prison memoirs with conversations and interviews with Saoudi and El Bouih in order to detect instances in which silence shrouds aspects of their experience. The cultural expectations of masculinity and femininity, and the notions of shame, decency and modesty, modulate the articulation of their memories in ways that can have significant implications for the pursuit of therapeutic or political reparation. These dynamics, particularly in relation to gender and sexual violence, remain submerged but nevertheless lend form to the transformation of memory from perceptual experience to public testimony. In the cases of Saoudi and El Bouih we once again uncover a pursuit of reconstructed identity at the individual level, shaped of course by social norms, but in turn significantly shaping the content and the practice of shared memory carried out at the social and political level.

While the first three papers are concerned with the memory practices of individuals – albeit often in response to public memories or operating within the "social frames" (Halbwachs 1925) of memory – the next two contributions are about the politics of memory at a national or supra-national level. *Maria Chiara Campisi's* (2014) article exam-

ines the jurisprudence underpinning the use of commemoration and memorialisation initiatives in reparation orders imposed under international human rights law. In the past, narrowly targeted forms of reparation focused largely on restitution or the financial compensation of individuals. According to Campisi, in response to therapeutic and community-oriented paradigms, a shift in international human rights jurisprudence has seen the emergence of legal remedies based on practices developed within the field of transitional justice, including court-ordered commemorations and memorialisations.

This shift has been pioneered by two international institutions: the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, whose special rapporteurs Theo van Boven and Mahmoud Cherif Bassiouni championed the adoption of a document setting out a right to the truth, the so-called Van Boven-Bassiouni Principles, by the United Nations General Assembly in 2005 (United Nations 2006; see also Bassiouni 2006 and van Boven 2010); and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, which has imposed commemoration initiatives as part of reparation orders based on an interpretation of the reparative model set out in that document. Campisi suggests that the Inter-American Court has been moving beyond judicial arbitration and sees itself as a catalyst for more widespread reparative memory work.

Campisi pays particular attention to an order the court made in 2006, which required the Peruvian government to publicly acknowledge responsibility for human rights violations perpetrated by its agents against inmates of the Miguel Castro-Castro prison in 1992. Many of the victims were associated with the paramilitary armed group Partido Comunista del Perú (Sendero Luminoso), who were responsible for much of the violence that gripped Peru between 1980 and 2000 and subsequently became the subject of an investigation by a truth and reconciliation commission. The court ordered Peru to commemorate prison inmates killed by the security forces in 1992 by including their names on a monument in Lima, Lika Mutal's El Ojo que Llora ("The Eye that Cries"). This order prompted strong reactions, including a vandalising of the monument. Campisi suggests that the court was somewhat naïve in reasoning that since the prisoners were the victims of state-

sanctioned violence, they too ought to be remembered by inscribing their names on the memorial. As a result, according to Campisi, the court's initiative exacerbated political conflict instead of contributing to social repair.

The details of the Miguel Castro-Castro case and the effects within Peruvian society produced by the court-ordered commemoration have parallels in *Francesca Lessa's* (2014) study of another public acknowledgement ordered by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights: the 2012 Public Act of Acknowledgment of International Responsibility and Recovery of the Memory of María Claudia García de Gelman in Uruguay. Lessa's article bypasses the question of the legal basis or propriety of the court order and focuses instead on the details of the Public Act and its impact on Uruguayan narratives of the violent past.

The case that formed the basis for the court's order to the Uruguayan government began with the forced disappearance of María Claudia García and her husband Marcelo Gelman in 1976. For two decades, Marcelo's father Juan Gelman sought information concerning their fate. His search revealed that María Claudia had given birth while in military detention; that María Claudia and Marcelo Gelman died while imprisoned; and that the baby girl had been given to the family of a police chief. The girl (known as Macarena) was eventually located in Montevideo. Subsequently Macarena and her grandfather Juan Gelman pursued the Uruguayan government for further information about the fate of María Claudia and Marcelo and the location of any remains. When these efforts failed, they took their concerns to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

The Gelmans' story is powerfully entwined with that of a country attempting to come to terms with political violence in its recent past. The Gelman case unsettled official accounts of the nature of the military dictatorship, and a seemingly consensual decision not to hold state actors accountable for human rights violations perpetrated at the time. It brought unresolved memory contests between contemporary actors in Uruguayan society to the surface, ultimately provoking a reconfiguration of the narratives circulating in Uruguay to explain the violent past.

Although the Gelman case was triggered by the attempt of two individuals to appropriately remember close relations and to "reconstitute their personhood", to use the vocabulary employed by Eramian, it resulted in changes to the "social frames" that shape individual memories.

The last two papers take us back to individual coping mechanisms. They address the issue of the interplay between larger national or supra-national projects to bring about historical justice, on the one hand, and the attempts of individuals affected by historical injustices to make their world inhabitable, on the other. *Louise Vella* (2014) provides a critical analysis of the work of the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). She argues that practices of reconciliation in Solomon Islands are shaped by *kastom*, a postcolonial reaffirmation of supposedly traditional cultural practices that is common to contemporary Melanesian societies (see, for example, Forsyth 2009). *Kastom* defines what counts as socially destructive behaviour, the correct mechanisms for social repair, and what can and cannot be said about past violence.

The Solomon Islands TRC was established to deal with the aftermath of a conflict known locally as the Tensions, which pitted people from the island of Guadalcanal against those from Malaita, with state actors also playing a role in the violence. The TRC was set up to promote nation-building and a consensual memory of the events of the Tensions. "Pre-packaged solutions are ill-advised", the United Nations Secretary-General found in 2004 in a report about transitional justice. "Instead, experiences from other places should simply be used as a starting point for local debates and decisions" (United Nations 2004, 7). Vella's work suggests that, at least in Solomon Islands, the Secretary-General's advice was not heeded. Her central contention is that the effectiveness of the TRC was seriously compromised by a failure to adequately adapt seemingly generic transitional justice practices to the local context and to recognise the effects of ideas of *kastom*-based reparative justice on the TRC's work. Vella argues

that the TRC uncritically adopted the assumption (based on global transitional justice discourse) that truth-telling is in itself and on its own reparative and failed to recognise that this assumption does not hold in the context of local reparative justice practice.

The political work of memory in the Solomon Islands, the idea that reparative justice at the national level can be furthered by a consensual memory, and that reparations at the psycho-social level can be furthered by providing victims with an opportunity to tell their stories, is complicated in the Solomon Islands by the expectations of a system of reparative justice in which truth-telling is not seen as beneficial per se. Vella's interviews reveal that the documenting of local memories of violence was perceived as part of a symbolic exchange between local communities and the government. Memories were not offered as contributions to a national peace-building project, or to heal individual or collective trauma, but as tokens in an exchange process. Solomon Islanders perceived the government's failure to release the TRC's final report, and then – when it was leaked – to respond to its recommendations, as a betrayal of the terms of that exchange.

We conclude this focus section with a contribution which once more focuses on the impact violence has on the web of relationships that constitute us as persons. *Simon Robins's* (2014) paper about the work of memory in rural Nepal explores a question also asked by Vella, among others: to what extent are the transitional justice models promoted by international organisations appropriate in culturally specific local contexts? Like Vella, Robins insists that post-conflict justice must be local and attentive to the needs of survivors and victims' families.[3]

Robins's research uncovers a tangle of competing social and political pressures generated by the forced disappearances that took place during Nepal's Maoist insurgency. His study is based on an intervention by the International Committee of the Red Cross in 2010–11, which was

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3   This argument resonates with a growing consensus among scholars writing about redress (see, for example, Vinck and Pham 2014).

designed to promote victim-centred approaches to post-conflict reparation. During the consultations with families of the disappeared about what they would regard as appropriate forms of reparation, it became clear that in the absence of knowing the truth about the fate of their relatives, families wanted the missing to be publicly memorialised. The forms of commemoration chosen by families included the construction of objects in public places that were useful to the community but were also inscribed with the names of people who had been disappeared, and prayer ceremonies involving spiritual, social and political leaders and the local community. These objects and practices record the fact of the disappearance and the ambiguity of the fate of the victim, and they reassert the value of the missing person and their family, thereby undoing some of the moral injury done by the act of disappearance.

The loss of the relationships in which we give and receive our identities becomes particularly difficult to navigate when the nature of that loss is itself ambiguous. In a case of forced disappearances, it is often unknown whether the disappeared is still alive. Is his surviving spouse a widow or a wife? For the surviving relatives, seeking an answer to such a question is part of the challenge of reconstructing a relationally defined identity when the nature of the lost relationship is unclear; the inability to determine the nature of the loss creates an ongoing instability around their identities and social standing.

A society engaged in distancing itself from a period of conflict and violence has a strong interest in settling identities. Reparations, for example, require clearly identifiable victims. In the Nepalese context, the Maoist party has sought to resolve the ambiguity of the fate of the missing by identifying them collectively as martyrs for the Maoist struggle. However, this identification has had two implications for the surviving relatives: first, it has required them to accept the missing person as dead, usually in the absence of tangible evidence or any account of how and when they died; second, this acceptance has led to a redefinition of their social identities within the local community – for a woman, this might mean the change of status from "wife" to "widow" along with significant changes to her living arrangements, autonomy and social standing.

Robins's study highlights the way in which these memorialisations have provided foci for the families of victims to assert their identities in the face of pressures to adopt particular locally or nationally prescribed social roles. In the absence of the victim of forced disappearance, the memorial becomes a substitute presence in the network of social relations, maintaining a testimony to the identity of the missing person within the local community and thus validating the survivors' claims to an identity derived from their relation to the missing. The memorial thus functions as a limited proxy for the personhood of the missing person, a signifier that takes up some of the function of the presence of the person in the trade of social recognition, and helps stabilise the identity of the family of the missing.

2. Outlook

Several conclusions can be drawn from the papers assembled in this focus section. The contributions by Eramian, Stockwell, Menin, Vella and Robins highlight the need to be attentive to the memories – and memory practices – of people directly or indirectly affected by historical injustices. In public debates about historical justice, we too easily assume that local communities, ethnic or religious groups, even states, are actors who remember, as if the fact that individual memories are refracted socially meant that social entities themselves remember. This is of course true in a metaphorical sense, but claims such as that "Turkey" refuses to label "the events of 1915" a genocide, and that "Armenia" and "the Armenian diaspora" demand the recognition and commemoration of the suffering of Armenians massacred in 1915, can easily conceal more than they reveal. Thus in order to understand the legacy of the Armenian genocide, we need to pay closer attention to how particular narratives are mobilised in the service of collective identity formation (for example, Anderson Paul 2000), and how narratives resonate within families: how individuals with relatives who were murdered in 1915 or who were among the killers, respond to the past (for example, Naguib 2008; Azarian-Ceccato 2010; Üngör 2014).

Such attention to individual responses ought to take into account how violence severs relationships and thereby affects the selves of people who lost neighbours, friends and kin and as a result are forced to redefine their place in

the world and thus their personhood. Here, the work of memory plays a crucial role – but not just, as Eramian's contribution reminds us, in the sense that the living strive to retain an albeit tenuous link to the dead by remembering and commemorating them.

The idea that historical injustices need to be redressed and that wrongs and their victims ought to be remembered, has become a *doxa* in Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) sense. Campisi criticises the Inter-American Court of Human Rights for naïvely ignoring the political implications of its decision to order Peru to add the names of victims who were members of Sendero Luminoso to a memorial in Lima. We would like to suggest that naïvety underpinned the court's ruling in a more fundamental sense: in its recent focus on commemoration as a form of reparation, the court has failed to question assumptions about memory's role and efficacy as an antidote that prevents the recurrence of injustice. In their motion condemning the Armenian genocide, the New South Wales parliamentarians recognised "the importance of remembering and learning from such dark chapters in human history to ensure that such crimes against humanity are not allowed to be repeated" (Parliament of New South Wales 1997, 7738). The confidence with which this and numerous similar statements are made is not supported by convincing evidence. In fact the history of the past seventy years strongly suggests that notwithstanding the global effort to remember the Holocaust, state and non-state actors have kept committing atrocities that bear some resemblance to the genocide of the early 1940s. The perpetration of genocides after the Holocaust does not prove that public remembrance is ineffectual, but it should make us wary of the refrain that societies learn from the past by commemorating its injustices.[4]

The papers draw attention to the selectivity of memories of injustice. The perspectives of articulate survivors who are able to frame their testimonies didactically (as Saoudi and El Bouih have done in Morocco) tend to have a dispropor-

tionately large bearing on public memories. Elie Wiesel and Primo Levi, for example, have had a significant influence on how the experience of the Holocaust is understood. Similarly, the disappearance of the Gelmans has shaped the discourse on the military dictatorship in Uruguay not because their case is typical, but because it is exceptional. The families of other *desaparecidos* may have been as persistent in their attempts to establish the truth as Juan Gelman, but they were not able to take their case to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

In 2014, the Turkish prime minister tried to relativise the Armenian genocide by "pay[ing] tribute, with compassion and respect, to all Ottoman citizens who lost their lives in the same period and under similar conditions" (Republic of Turkey 2014). It could perhaps also be argued, however, that the injustices perpetrated against Assyrians, who were also subject to genocidal practices in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War (Gaunt 2006), have been overshadowed by the Armenian genocide. As Stockwell's paper suggests, a consensus about historical justice in relation to particular aspects of a nation's past may stymie the efforts of other victims to be recognised. However, here we quickly enter slippery terrain. Is there a moral obligation to seek historical justice for – and publicly remember – victims of political violence, irrespective of who they were, when they died and whether or not they were victims of state-sponsored crimes? Do Armenians have a more deserving case because there were about five times as many Armenian genocide victims, as there were Assyrian genocide victims? There are no easy answers to these questions. Scholars working with communities who experienced gross human rights violations will, however, need to be aware that their work can be seen to validate the experiences of some over those of others, and that it is usually impossible to remain a neutral observer whose empathies are evenly divided between Hutu and Tutsi, between the victims of leftist terrorists and the victims of state terrorism, or between people from Guadalcanal and

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4   We may also want to stop taking statements about the purpose of memorials, and the motivation to create them, at face value; Laurie Beth Clark has made the compelling argument that "we will continue to build memory sites to past atrocities exactly because we still have 'unrepresentable' ongoing violence" (2011, 69).

Malaitans. We would also like to suggest, however, that the focus on the experiences of individuals, which are often instrumentalised in the interest of sectarian, politically divisive or nationalistic narratives, provides a comparatively secure footing when scholars venture onto such slippery terrain.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasise the value of empirically-grounded studies that engage with the attempts of individuals to make their world habitable after they and their families and communities suffered violence[5] – without, however, wanting to deny the importance of studies that help us understand the broader social and political frameworks within which individual memories operate. Often the work of memory performed by individuals cannot be easily accounted for in narratives that focus on social and public memories, or privilege discourses over experience and affects. Sometimes that work also defies attempts to arrive at generalisations; what is true for Solomon Islands may not be true for Nepal, and conclusions drawn on the basis of research in Rwanda may not help us to understand the dynamics of remembrance and redress in Morocco.[6] Similarly, theoretical models that work well in one, historically and culturally specific, context may have little explanatory value elsewhere. However, we believe the projects featured in this focus section demonstrate how much we can learn from attending closely to the interplay between individual memories and affects, the search for justice, and the politics of the past at a national or international scale.

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5   For a recent exemplary study, see Theidon 2013.

6   This point has been convincingly made in relation to the practices of transitional justice (Shaw and Waldorf 2010; see also Mani 2002, chapter 4).

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