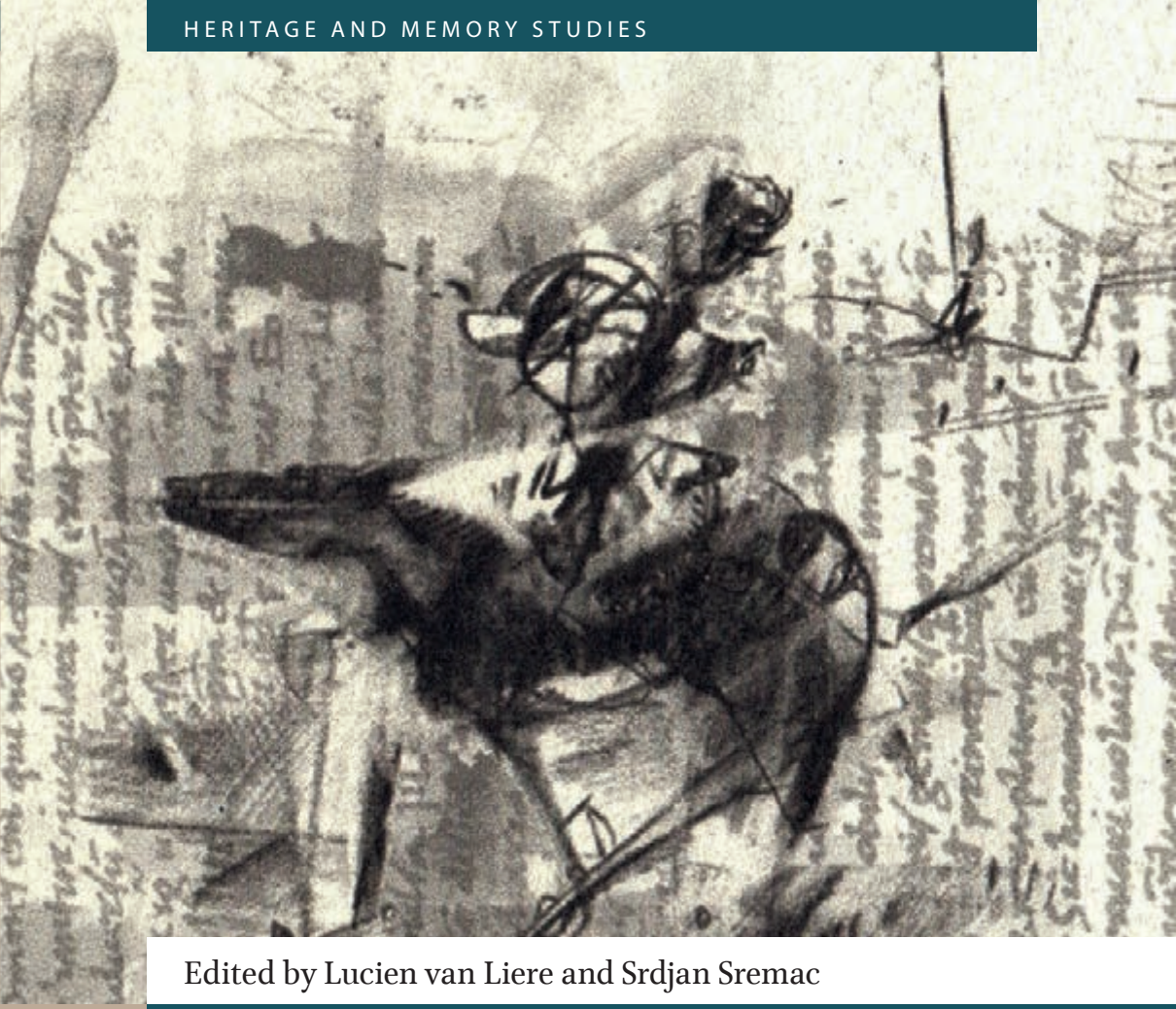
HERITAGE AND MEMORY STUDIES



Edited by Lucien van Liere and Srdjan Sremac

Trauma and Nostalgia

Practices in Memory and Identity

Amsterdam
University
Press

Trauma and Nostalgia

Heritage and Memory Studies

This ground-breaking series examines the dynamics of heritage and memory from transnational, interdisciplinary and integrated approaches. Monographs or edited volumes critically interrogate the politics of heritage and dynamics of memory, as well as the theoretical implications of landscapes and mass violence, nationalism and ethnicity, heritage preservation and conservation, archaeology and (dark) tourism, diaspora and postcolonial memory, the power of aesthetics and the art of absence and forgetting, mourning and performative re-enactments in the present.

Trauma and Nostalgia

Practices in Memory and Identity

Edited by
Lucien van Liere
and Srdjan Sremac

Amsterdam University Press

Cover illustration: Danilo Vuksanović, *Don Quichot*

Cover design: Coördesign, Leiden
Lay-out: Crius Group, Hulshout

ISBN 9789048559220
e-ISBN 9789048559237 (pdf)
DOI 10.5117/9789048559220
NUR 694

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations and Tables

Notes on Contributors

Dan Arav is the dean of the School of Media Studies at the College of Management Academic Studies (Colman) and a lecturer at the Steve Tisch School of Film and Television at Tel Aviv University. His research is focused on ideological dimensions of popular culture, television, and national memory in Israel.

Jan Grimell is a senior lecturer in sociology at Umeå University and a research fellow at the Amsterdam Centre for the Study of Lived Religion, Vrije Universiteit, and Linnaeus University. His current research addresses identity, moral injury, PTSD, and spiritual care among service members and veterans.

Joshua Hollmann is associate professor of systematic theology at Concordia University, St. Paul, Minnesota. He earned a PhD from McGill University. His research interests include popular culture and theology, Christian-Muslim relations, and medieval theology and philosophy.

M. Paula O'Donohoe holds a BA in social and cultural anthropology and an Erasmus Mundus MA in European studies. She is finalizing her PhD on transgenerational transmission of memories of the Spanish Civil War and Franco Regime across four generations at Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

Mario Panico is a lecturer and postdoctoral fellow at the University of Amsterdam and member of the Amsterdam School of Heritage, Memory and Material Culture (AHM). His research interests include difficult heritage, memory spaces, nostalgia, and representations of perpetrators at trauma sites and in museums in Europe and South America.

Mathijs Peters is assistant professor at the Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society. He is interested in a wide range of fields, from political philosophy to film studies, and from aesthetics to cultural analysis.

Srdjan Sremac is assistant professor at the Faculty of Religion and Theology at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and co-director of the Amsterdam Center for the Study of Lived Religion. His focus is on (visual) lived religion from theoretical and ethnographic perspectives, and on theory and methodology in the study of religion.

Mariecke van den Berg is endowed professor of feminism and Christianity at Radboud University in Nijmegen and associate professor of religion and gender at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Her work is often situated at the crossroads of religious studies and theology.

Lucien van Liere is associate professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at the Faculty of Humanities at Utrecht University. His research interests are in material and discursive representations of violent conflict as well as in micro-situational analyses of violence.

Bram Verhagen is currently pursuing graduate studies at Lund University and the University of Hong Kong. He holds a BSc in political science and a BSc in sociology both from the University of Amsterdam. Verhagen's research explores the intersections between migration, global politics of knowledge, and East-West dichotomies.

1 Time Will Bury in Oblivion

An Introduction to Trauma and Nostalgia

Srdjan Sremac and Lucien van Liere

Feelings unspoken are unforgettable.
Andrei Gorchakov in *Nostalghia* (1983, Andrei Tarkovsky)

Abstract
This chapter introduces the intertwined concepts of trauma and nostalgia, and their relationship with memory. Nostalgia encompasses individual and collective memory, longing for the past, reflections on the present, and political restoration efforts. Trauma is depicted as an enduring wound. The chapter argues that in societies, collective traumas and nostalgic memories can be invoked to bolster the identity of ethnic, racial, and religious groups. The way atrocities are remembered, whether as traumatic or not, depends on the dominant narrative shaped by sociocultural representations. Therefore, the chapter also discusses portrayals of trauma and nostalgia in film, media, and material objects, setting the stage for the volume's contributions and suggesting future research directions.

Keywords: memory; material culture; narratives; representation; film

Introduction

The past few decades have seen the emergence of the research fields of both *trauma* and *nostalgia*. This volume explores the implications of bringing the two together. If we acknowledge the important developments in studying the disruptive power of traumatic experiences, a profound reflection on the meaning of nostalgic longing and world-making for collective and individual identity is indispensable. To understand processes through

Van Liere, L. & Sremac, S. (eds), *Trauma and Nostalgia: Practices in Memory and Identity*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2024
DOI: 10.5117/9789048559220_CH01

which *trauma* and *nostalgia* become intertwined, how they are constructed and transfigured in this process and shape individual as well as collective identities, it is necessary to focus on the experiences, interests, and needs of the different actors involved. An interdisciplinary approach to *trauma* and *nostalgia* allows for both a wide and precise interpretation and provides an opportunity for a better understanding of the integration of trauma in nostalgic sentiments and its impact on the construction of identities, intergenerational transmissions of the past, practices of memorialization, the cultural politics of memory construction, and spiritualities. In this volume, we understand "interdisciplinarity" with Laura Evis as "integrated inputs from multiple, distinct disciplines to seek a resolution to, or an understanding of, one key issue" (2021, 121). These disciplines in this volume include media studies, anthropology, philosophy, religion studies, and social sciences. They are recognized in their distinctive methods, traditions, and philosophies as they contribute to reflections on the integration of trauma into nostalgic memories, with keen attention to their interaction in public spaces, patriotic symbolisms and rituals, popular cultures, and cinematography. Modern technologies of mass culture play an important role in circulating images and narratives about traumatic and nostalgic pasts. In these processes, the linguistic/discursive and the physical/spatial/aesthetic dimensions of cultural, political, and religious narratives are inextricably intertwined. Therefore, this demands an approach in which the relationship between trauma and nostalgia is considered from different angles. Politics, the culture industry, schoolbooks, religious symbolisms, and media can all, as will be shown by the authors in this volume, be important entry points for studying the "blending" of trauma representations and nostalgic ways of remembering. The contributors of this volume show how certain social (cultural, political, religious) modes of trauma are mediated by nostalgic ways of remembering. Thus, the volume has a wide methodological range, while the focus remains sharply on the often intense blends of trauma and nostalgia.

Relations between trauma and nostalgia are all but straightforward and clear for many theorists. Therefore, we will explore in this introduction pathways to understand how nostalgic longing and imaginaries relate to the idea of trauma, defined as the remembrance of an irrecoverable past (Thorpe 2015). We take a first step in encouraging further research and bringing scholars who theorize trauma and nostalgia closer together by examining how both subjects are entangled. The leading questions in this effort are: How do nostalgia and trauma influence the fallibility and subjectivity of individual and collective memories? How do nostalgic

imaginaries and representations idealize or romanticize traumatic past experiences? In what ways can traumatic and nostalgic memories serve as coping mechanisms for remembering the past? How do these memories impact, shape, and integrate present events into individual and cultural memories and identities?

The Intersection between Trauma and Nostalgia

The emphasis of this volume is on understanding the *interplay* between trauma and nostalgia. This introduction explores where we can situate this interplay and how we can study it. How can (fragments of) traumatic memory become a part of nostalgia and how can nostalgia affect the memory and representation of traumatic events? Traumatic archives and nostalgic practices can be seen as both positive (for example, in the sense of post-traumatic growth or reflection) and negative representations of the past and thus as positive and negative contributors to the cultural production of (individual or collective) world-making. Escaping from the horror and suffering of the past into nostalgic sentiments becomes visible, for example, in post-conflict or postcolonial contexts where many nostalgic fabrications are present in traumatic memories of war, despair, terror, and oppression, followed by a mediating redemptive narrative of hope for a just and better society (Hamber 2012, 279). Nostalgic longing is also recognized in post-totalitarian or rapidly changing societies where the present uncertainties are contrasted with the clear structures and relative happiness of days gone by (Sztompka 2004, 180–81; Bartmanski 2011). However, an equally important and related question for us here is how the political nostalgic filtering of the traumatic past can erode and transform this past that is then contrasted with the unsatisfactory or disappointing present. Can nostalgia construct what Michael Kammen (1991) calls a "history without guilt," in which the broader society becomes unable to deny or critically reflect on the collective memory of an unresolved trauma, notably through its normalization and denial? This question ties in well with the idea of the normalization or sterilization of a traumatic event. A violent past may then start to function as an episode of a collective past and may become articulated as an ongoing process that still contributes to the social realm, to how social relations need to be understood, and to how social responsibilities should precisely be articulated. In such contexts, this traumatic layer can also be mobilized if the past is represented as a past in the present. Nostalgic sentiments can be activated around current cultural and political representations of what once

was, presenting that past as a recurrent trauma that should be dealt with in the present. This comes close to what Jeffrey Alexander calls a "cultural trauma," that is: "a claim to some fundamental injury, an exclamation of the terrifying profanation of some sacred value, a narrative about a horribly destructive social process, and demand for emotional, institutional, and symbolic reparation and reconstitution" (2012, 16). In Alexander's view, all trauma is cultural and depends on social processes of meaning-making. As a result, cultural traumas point to how people look at what goes on in the present by referring to a past. Nostalgia then may function as a negative or positive way of bonding with that past, a material or discursive fusion of what is with what once was and what, in a sense, never really ended.

This process can deeply affect *individual* experiences of past violence. Jenny Edkins (2003) has pointed to processes in which private grief over loss is transformed into ritualized and material structures of national mourning. Traumatic events are, for example, streamlined according to what serves the construction of national identities. As such, collective trauma as a sociopolitical construction may modify or even imprison survivors' narratives in the socially encouraged and accepted discourse and symbolism through which the state celebrates its victories and nostalgically remembers its fallen heroes. At the same time, as several contributors in this volume point out, not only the state but also countercultures gaining more influence through the internet and social media articulate nostalgic pathways to a modified past with denials or trivializations of victimhood and re-articulations of heroism and strong leadership. In these trajectories, nostalgia plays a significant role in the making of the present. In such contexts, trauma and nostalgia are intimately linked, and a past violence may implode in the discursive representations of present issues. This way, a nostalgic iconizing of the past may unite people in vicarious mourning and shape political agendas.

As we will show, nostalgia can refer to a yearning for a different time that is shared among social groups and reenforces the social cohesion of these groups. It can, on the other hand, also refer to a feeling of loss and dissatisfaction opposite mainstream representations in the present. Defined by its etymological roots in the pain (*algos*) of longing for home (*nostos*), nostalgia carries with it an idea of a "sentimental longing for the past" (Wildschut et al. 2010, 573) caused by current changes in social structures. The term was first used in 1688 by Johannes Hofer, a student of medicine who diagnosed the anxieties of Swiss mercenaries who were fighting away from home with "nostalgia" as a translation of the German *Heimweh* (from *Heim*, home, and *Weh*, pain) (Fuentenebro de Diego and Ots 2014). Since the

term was first used in medicine and later in psychiatry, it contributed to the emergence of a diagnostic language and medical epistemology. The lack of available research on the topic of trauma *and* nostalgia that we see today is in part due to this history of the term; it referred to a medical disease that was sometimes considered life-threatening and often even required hospitalization (Nikelly 2004, 183). However, the twentieth century saw a broader evolution of the term as a yearning for a lost past, a yearning for persons, places, spheres, and symbols. In film and literary analysis, nostalgia became an instrument to analyze a longing for a past that is no more, a time before the violent event, before the crisis, when everything was still uncluttered, a time represented in words, colors, forms, and localities (for example, see "titostalgia" in Velikonja 2017 or "Ostalgie" in Bartmanski 2011). Fred Davis (1979) saw nostalgia functioning this way when he wrote in *Yearning for Yesterday* about the "nostalgic sentiment" that drives on the idea of the superiority of what was over what is. In his opinion, this sentiment is a response to disruptive events and episodes of anxiety. The nostalgic sentiment, he writes, partakes in the great dialectical process that produces culture and marks the ceaseless and unruly tension between change and stability, innovation and reaffirmation, new and old, utopia and the golden age. In this way, Davis recognizes nostalgia as a key to understanding how people individually and collectively construct their "identities" (Davis 1979). Susannah Radstone, among many others, understands nostalgia as a response to identity threats that are posed by rapid social changes (Radstone 2007, 113). Many approaches to nostalgia centralize a longing for clearness and oversight, a longing that is triggered by current circumstances and crises. This means that nostalgia has a strong imaginary dimension that involves aspects of the present projected into a past. In a similar vein, David Lowenthal understands the appeal of nostalgia as related to the "longing for an ordered clarity contrasting with the chaos or imprecision of our own times" (Lowenthal 1989, 30). Nostalgia reveals something (discontent, fear, unease) about the present in which it appears. The Russian war on Ukraine, for example, has been understood by some analysts as a response to Russia's uncertain status as a great power that began under Boris Yeltsin's administration. Being a great power (*derzhavnost*) is part of Russia's narrative and symbolic official traditions and rituals. It is communicated with strong nostalgic overtones and—according to E. Wayne Merry in 2016—has lately been raised "almost to the level of a secular religion" (Merry 2016, 29; see also Nikolayenko 2008; Privalov 2022). The "special operation" against the "Nazis" in Ukraine also tries to evoke the nostalgic sentiments surrounding the Soviet Union as a nation defeating

the Nazis and saving Europe, a cultural-historic trajectory that has been reactivated many times in propaganda, movies, and the arts.

This time-related binary of what was and is is also a perspective on nostalgia found in Svetlana Boym's influential book *The Future of Nostalgia*, quoted by almost all authors in this volume. Boym understands nostalgia as a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy. Nostalgic love can only survive in a long-distance relationship, she contends. Distance also resounds in cinematic images of nostalgia. These nostalgic images have a double exposure, or a superimposition of two images—of home and abroad, past and present, dream and everyday life. The moment we try to force it into a single image, it breaks the frame or burns the surface (Boym 2001, xiii–xiv). Nostalgia, thus understood, relates discontent to absence and to an imaginary presence in the past. Such perspectives describe nostalgia in terms of deficit and wantage. On the other hand, however, nostalgia is acknowledged as a constructive social force that brings group attitudes into unison and has a stimulating influence on feelings of cohesion. Nostalgia then encourages positive attitudes within social groups. Rehabilitating nostalgia from its negative connotations, Tim Wildschut and his colleagues (2014) argue, using the results of several quantitative studies, that sharing nostalgic narratives about a common event contributes to group solidarity and positive feelings among group members. In their research, they focus on what they call "collective nostalgia," which they define as "nostalgic reverie … that is contingent upon thinking of oneself in terms of a particular social identity or as a member of a particular group" (845). In their view, nostalgia should not be defined in terms of loss, but if understood in the context of social groups, it serves as an important reflection that precipitates positive evaluations among group members. Collective nostalgia is an important group-level emotion that is crucial for understanding the dynamics and cohesion of social groups. This acknowledgment is important not only for taking nostalgia seriously as more than a yearning for what is gone but also for understanding nostalgia as an important instrument for analyzing social emotions, the re-narration of shared and socially accepted stories, the ritualization of the memory of past events, and the construction of a shared focus on the (imagined) past. Nostalgia fosters social connectedness and togetherness, which in turn heightens self-continuity and strengthens meaning-making processes that are relevant for communities to develop and flourish (Van Tilburg et al., 2019). Furthermore, Delisle adds that a certain politics of nostalgia is crucial for the formation of identities; it is how we integrate our past, present, and

future selves, "it helps us salvage a self from the chaos of raw unmediated experience" (2006, 392). To understand one's place within a community, relate to others, share memories, or make plans all requires a sense of nostalgic longing that binds imaginary pasts and futures to a place in a shared present. Because of this, nostalgia can also create political identities, pit certain identities against others, create bold interpretations of a glorified past, or emphasize the role of current groups as the true heirs of a heroic struggle. Nostalgia is at play where groups understand themselves as special. It influenced the Brexit discussions in the UK (Campanella and Dassù 2019) and played a role in the rise of Donald Trump in the US (Bonikowski and Stuhler 2022). However, the impact of nostalgic repertoires during elections should also not be overestimated and requires careful study and contextual explanation, as demonstrated by Gabriella Szabó and Balázs Kiss (2022) in their analysis of Facebook posts and responses during the 2019 European Parliament election involving Hungarian politicians.

Thus, nostalgia as a yearning for a past is complex and multilayered and includes political, social, and personal modes and linkages. Although nostalgia often appears in literature as related to social dynamics, it does of course also have a strong personal component. In the writings of Caroline O'Donoghue (Thorpe 2015, 65), nostalgia is understood more individually as a constructive way to deal with a difficult past, and it even takes on a liturgical character. Here nostalgia is related to a process of mourning. She describes a journey into an inner landscape of emptiness as both terrifying and humanizing, where a special kind of happiness or joy is mixed with pain. The nostalgic world-making in this liturgical sense is a sacred silence linked with a traumatic past, where pilgrims gain access to the past in the present. But it is "sacred," which means for her that it is never fixed, cannot be grasped, and is always in motion (Thorpe 2015, 66). Martijn Meeter (2016, 344) similarly points out that people who suffer trauma rarely have a choice to live a life where the trauma is simply denied and forgotten and thus argues that for many people, nostalgia is a means of giving trauma a meaningful place in their life narrative (see also Edkins 2003, above). Meeter also raises the question of whether our interpretation or way of making sense of that past narrative needs to be truthful. Or should we encourage fabricated narratives as long as traumatic events are given a place? A nostalgic register in this sense gains existential meaning or value, and even more so when nostalgia is shared collectively by a community. In this context, giving a place to traumatic events depends on whether the discourses and symbolisms of communities are allowed to "narrate" and thus acknowledge these events. Jennifer Delisle (2006, 294) notes that nostalgia is not only a means to affirm

the survival of a past trauma but also a means to cope with the present. We would postulate that survivors of trauma, especially of prolonged periods of trauma, create sensible structures and frameworks of meaning that normalize that period of their lives, and thus the post-traumatic experience can in a very real sense become a newly modeled trauma to navigate where these former structures and sensibilities no longer hold true. The idealized past then can be seen as a utopia or phantasm to be longed for. Nostalgia, as we have made clear, is by no means only negative. Nor is it only positive. It is there as an essential part of how we (re)construct our memories and how we look at how and who we are now, both as a collectivity and as individuals (people who might influence, affirm, or contradict one another).

Addressing trauma and nostalgia as we do in this volume raises the question how the memory of trauma steers nostalgia and becomes even a part of it, but also the other way around: how nostalgia can become part of trauma, impact traumatic memories, and co-construct traumatic identities. Therefore, we are interested in nostalgia as a complex representation of, and desire for, an imagined and (re)constructed *traumatic* past that is discursively, materially, ritually, and socially located in the present where it plays an important role in the construction of meaning. As Daniela Agostinho, Elisa Antz, and Cátia Ferreira argue, "nostalgic representations of the past have become one of the most significant mechanisms for dealing with problematic legacies, the contingent demands of the present and the challenges of an uncertain future" (2012, 3). In this volume, we confine ourselves mostly to nostalgic modifications of larger sociopolitical and cultural traumas, as these offer the best documented insights into the entanglement of trauma and nostalgia.

Nostalgic Repertoires, Memories, and Traumas

In most literature, trauma is related to representations of a past violence that reshuffles the present. Violence and trauma shatter our cognitive assumptions about the self and the world; trauma hits and pierces our entire horizon of meaning, giving "a shock which dissolves the link between truth and meaning, a truth so traumatic that it resists being integrated into the universe of meaning" (Žižek and Gunjević 2012, 155). Nostalgic epistemic orders in turn might help to counter this meaning-devouring "truth" by privileging the positive aspects of the past, by not allowing the trauma to overshadow the present—the nostalgic in this sense refuses victimhood (Delisle 2006, 393) or remodels victimhood. The epistemes of nostalgic repertoires can be broadly categorized into two sub-categories,

namely that of *reflective* and *restorative* nostalgias (see Boym 2001, 41–59). We use Boym's distinction as a fruitful perspective, although the lines between the two may sometimes become vague, as some chapters in this volume show. Boym understands *restorative* nostalgia as being at the core of national and religious revivals. It is a form of "theological" nostalgia that often embraces symbols and restores rituals. It wants to "return" and is open to conspiracies. *Reflective* nostalgia, on the other hand, does not follow a single truth or idea but is about grasping the multiple dimensions of an always fleeing presence. The distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia allows Boym to distinguish between "national memory," which embraces and constantly ritually reproduces a single version of national or collective identity, and "social memory," which relates to active, collective frameworks that do not define but only "mark" the individual's memory (Boym 2001, xviii). According to Derek Hook (2012, 227), interpreting Boym, *restorative* nostalgia emphasizes a transhistorical reconstruction of the past and projects the truth, while *reflective* nostalgia, which emphasizes the longing itself, embraces contradiction and calls truth into doubt. In a way, reflective nostalgia can destabilize restorative nostalgia. However, without reflective nostalgia, the longing itself, restorative nostalgia would not be able to "reconstruct" anything in a meaningful manner.

It is this interaction between reflective and restorative nostalgia that interests us most, accepting the complex trajectories in and through which different modalities of nostalgia interact. Reflective nostalgia is of special interest in that it cherishes shattered fragments of memory and nostalgic fabrications. Nostalgia then can, in a sense, become like a compass, a means of direction amid the uncertainties and predicaments of the present and future (Hook 2012, 228), a means of recovering (fabricated, imagined) narratives to give meaning to the here and now. As noted above, the nostalgic memory is always only a partial recollection of a past, as nostalgia makes connections, revises fragmented memories, and construes a growing set of links between past and present. Hook (2012, 228) refers to this as the reinvention and the fashioning of new, rather than received or recovered, meanings. The traumatic past in this sense becomes a static utopia, irretrievably lost. Rooted in perspectives on the present, nostalgia can encourage positive memories and practices of a traumatic period whilst mitigating or even neglecting the painful and destructive experiences of that selfsame period. A possible way to counter this is by continuously moving between reflective and restorative nostalgia to give memories a meaningful context. An example from the history of apartheid is to counter the reflective nostalgia and master narrative of black dispossession with a more restorative one that

nuances apartheid as a "world of moral ambivalence and ambiguity in which people can be both resisters and collaborators at the same time" (Hook 2012, 229), and by so doing reveal the multiple ethnic, gender, and class divisions within black communities. Lived subjectivities, however, continuously show that the latter does not fit within the prevailing post-apartheid sensibilities.

Does *fetishism* help to superimpose a positive narrative over the traumatic past and make it more palatable? Hook (2012, 231) argues that nostalgia is indeed a kind of fetishism, a love relation to a version of the past that is often recalled and takes on a cherished status and a protective function. Nelson Mandela and the struggle narrative here serve as an example. The complexities of the struggle run the risk of being reduced to the triumph of one man's moral will. It is a narrative that makes the past trauma more agreeable. These forms of nostalgic glorification and fabrication are superimposed and permit identity to be maintained. This narrative functions to manage anxiety and sometimes even a type of longing to return to the past. This can become very powerful and operates against the obligation to remember our traumatic historical narratives fittingly.

Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela (2012) offers an important insight when arguing that this kind of nostalgic longing belongs not only to the victims but also to the perpetrators. She argues that perpetrators employ a defense mechanism in a different way, demonstrating a kind of nostalgic idealization of the good elements of the traumatic period, which allows perpetrators to disassociate themselves from their complicity. The movie *The Act of Killing* by Joshua Oppenheimer about the Indonesian mass slaughters of communists and communist sympathizers (1965–66) is a case in point. Oppenheimer interviews perpetrators of the mass killings. In the interviews, these perpetrators brag about what they did together and use nostalgic memories to bring back the "good old days" of killing. Although Oppenheimer's movie is not unproblematic, he succeeds in showcasing nostalgic ways of longing for an extremely violent period that raise feelings of unease among the viewers. The nostalgia shown in *The Act of Killing* seems to be the result of the acknowledgment and heroization of the perpetrators' anti-communist purges by the Indonesian government after the mass killings. Interestingly, being heralded by a dominant politicized culture of remembering and feared by people in the neighborhood created nostalgic heroes out of perpetrators of extreme violence. Eventually the individual memory of one of the killers breaks through the thick narrative and symbolic layers of the nation and recalls the killings, but this time as a traumatic event, as if this event took place in another time outside the nation's timeline. The man runs out of words and cannot help but to vomit (Van Liere 2018). David Anderson gives

yet another example of perpetrator nostalgia when he uses nostalgia as a phenomenon that fortifies identity as an instrument to study the American post–Civil War construction of the so-called "Lost Cause" and shows how people built a "meaningful space for southern white males in the aftermath of defeat." Anderson shows how nostalgia functioned as an instrument to restore honor and manhood among confederate veterans (Anderson 2013).

Nostalgia draws the impossible return to current representations of an idealized or traumatic/traumatized past. It can have its (vague) focus on the restoration of a sense of continuity, community, and identity, ultimately with the aim to integrate our past, present, and future selves (Gobodo-Madikizela 2012, 255; Sedikides et al. 2008). Returning to nostalgia in the liturgical sense, these traumatic memories open up the present not as a frozen image of the past but rather as living images in the present; the past and present become contemporaries (Thorpe 2015). Our nostalgic reflections and means of mourning become our continual present, thus the basis for present meaning-making. Related to this, nostalgic glorifications of the past are also an important way of envisioning the future—a continual reflection and awareness of the past, a meticulous way of the "working through of the past" toward the future. Nostalgic idealizations and imaginaries can then also be adopted as a counter-narrative in the present, which then provides language, imagery, symbolism, and rituals to challenge present and even future narratives and contribute to a shared feeling of unity. Returning to its original root and to the medical context in which the term first appeared, nostalgia can be read as a critical term to analyze people's affective relations toward their present and to the smaller and larger groups they belong to. Nostalgia is indeed about the present and forms the cracks and bumps of the present through a sense of longing.

Screening Trauma and Nostalgia

Visual media are a crucial resource for understanding how societies approach traumatic pasts. Films and series are especially powerful in encouraging nostalgic ways of collective remembering. The fact that filmmaking is also an aspect of the entertainment industry makes it even more interesting to analyze how violent pasts are represented as glorified or mourned and how nostalgia reflects current relations projected to these pasts. In *Screening the Past*, Pam Cook (2005) understands nostalgia not only as an important force for filmmaking but also as a major impulse of viewing films (see also Dika 2003; Davis 1979, 82). Nostalgia is both a way to make and to watch movies.

Streaming services like Netflix and Disney use nostalgia as one of the main features to sell new films and series. Kathryn Pallister writes that Netflix as creator and distributor of media texts "takes great advantage of a wide variety of audience nostalgic responses, banking on attracting audiences who seek out nostalgic content that takes them back in time, as well as new audiences who discover 'old' and reimagined content" (Pallister 2019, 3). But what kind of nostalgia is this? Can nostalgia deliberately be evoked by filters, colors, forms, and stories? And does this form of visual nostalgia that is used to make films and series "successful" assume a "real" event to which the audience can relate, a historical focal point for sharing nostalgic feelings? Or are the feelings without specific pasts? Are these nostalgic feelings just feelings without a past? Is it possible to assume that representations of trauma in films and series intensify feelings of nostalgia by creating lost imaginary pasts of social bonds in tense times? Today, Giulia Taurino contends, nostalgia is not so much about memory as it is about media and the media industry (Taurino 2019, 10). Visualities and filters in filmmaking create sensations and experiences of loss and longing that are related to cultural sources and shared representations. Nostalgic ways of screening the past suggest that this past is dialectically in relation to the present (the site of *algia*). Nostalgia in this way signifies complex entanglements between traumatic pasts, politics of remembrance and forgetting, and sensations of form, sound, and color. "Music and sound, in more general terms, are both powerful cinematic devices to express traumatic events or to re-invoke traumatic episodes," write Michael Baumgartner and Ewelina Boczkowska (2020). Like Taurino, Nick Hodgin (2011) also comments, while writing about nostalgia and cinema, that nostalgia differs from memory in that nostalgia has no focal point in history. It is thus always inaccurate, vague, undefined, unfocused. Filmic nostalgia is not about memory but suggests memory, and even creates it. It can build imaginary homes in the past and evoke longing for what never really was. Films can thus prompt nostalgia even among those who have no clear picture of the events to which the visuals refer. A longing for a past that never was, or a longing for deep and clear national, political, or religious communal relations that are projected on both the past and a possible future, is at the core of nostalgic visual narratives. This complicates the relationship between nostalgia and trauma, since violent events portrayed in films occupy current memory, often shared by generations that have no direct relationship to the event itself and are mainly interested in identifying themes like bravery, suffering, vengeance, survival, or endurance, to name just a few elements that contribute to the popularity of films and series. Nostalgia then functions as a decor for visual

micro-narratives. While nostalgia in films and series prompts a look back in history and promises to take the viewer back to some past, active stereotypes and dominant forms of remembering dominate in filmic representations and their emphases. Since the relationships and entanglements between trauma and nostalgia in cinematic representations like images, sounds, and forms are complex, the cinematic past is always the present of filmmaking.

Alexander (2012) writes about cultural traumas as primarily social constructs that do not depend on the seriousness of the violent event itself but on the way in which people in networks and groups fail to link the suffering and death of victims to the meaning they attach to it. Meaning-making is in this sense only an attempt: diffuse, disputed, and incomplete. As a result, representations of trauma become part of the collective self-positioning of groups and might become, according to Alexander, a recipe for conflict (117). In this context, nostalgias may allow for social self-understanding of contemporary groups, who can reinvent the past as disturbingly traumatic and revel in the idea of being the cultural or political heirs of those who perished. In this sense, nostalgia in popular film can contribute to cultural, political, or religious self-constructions by drawing contrasts between, for example, perpetrators and victims, cowards and heroes, and aggressors and martyrs, thus suggesting clear patterns of identification. As such, nostalgia and trauma become dialectic partners. Violent past events such as wars and conflicts, whether expressed or implied through nostalgia, are often presented in a selective manner that shapes their reconstruction and remembrance. Restorative nostalgia in visual culture can be a way of fitting some past into the present, reinscribing the present in the past, and plays an important role in articulating the (re)invented past as part of a collectively experienced trauma or glory. On the other hand, however, as also becomes clear in this volume, films may also suggest alternative routes to a difficult past, away from dominant and popular interpretations of trauma and glory, and represent the past in a way that allows viewers to come home in their own histories, even when that is not necessarily comfortable or convenient (Van den Berg and Grimell, this volume). These visual representations do not escape the critical remarks on nostalgia and memory we made above. However, such films and series could be seen as allowing reflective nostalgia (see Boym 2008, 78, 79) to enter, embracing longing itself with no hope of restoring some past. What is left is contradiction, unease, discomfort, and a heterogeneous account of unstable fragments of history, devoid of any restoration, let alone glory (see Peters, this volume). The past is "there" in color, form, voice, and music but not reified, reinvented, remembered, or glorified. It is not the present projected onto a past but the past mirrored in

a multifaceted present, serving as a question mark to what we have become. Reflective nostalgia puts the longing itself at the center but provides no clear trajectories for understanding this longing—only questions.

Nostalgic Matters

In memory studies, anthropology, and religious studies, materiality plays a significant role in analyzing social constructions of bonding and meaning-making. These developments encourage us to include a material perspective on trauma and nostalgia. How do things relate to trauma and nostalgia? When examined closely, Laurel Ulrich et al. (2015, 164) contend, a thing can be a link between the past and the present and has the "potential to convey information—and in some cases, they even convey viewers to another world or state of being." Indeed, things as linking objects can bring the past to the present and arouse narratives and (collective) memories. Things are, in a sense, per definition bridges between what was and is, between hands that have touched and that touch, eyes that have seen and that see, between attention that was given and that is given. Things mark relationships and as such can also be at the center of dispute, conflict, and rivalry. Some things are "set apart" to specifically bind certain mnemonic communities (social, national, religious) together around special narrative understandings of the past and present. In museums things can be exhibited to construct nostalgic ways of (national) identity-making, sometimes inviting visitors to come near traumatic pasts that are part of the nation. Elizabeth Jelin and Susana Kaufman describe "monuments, museums, and memorials" as "materiality with a political, collective, public meaning" and as a "physical reminder of a collective political past" (qtd. in Alexander 2004, 8). Through ritual performances, materialities can also function as memory stones to bond communities and strengthen links with transcendence (see, for example, Van Liere 2020; Morgan, 2021; Van Liere and Meinema 2022). This happens not only in religious communities, where linking objects refer to concentrated narratives of social religious memory, but also around monuments that represent narrative and ideological pasts in the present. Nostalgic pathways can be opened through things that link current ideas and feelings back to certain pasts that are evoked through scripted and ritualized ways of remembering. Through ritualization of memory around consecrated things, groups can relate to actors in the past and see themselves as heirs of a traumatized community or of a victorious community. Ritualizations around monuments and (other) "sacred things" allow for arousing feelings

of nostalgia by directing shared sensations into trajectories of the past. Special sites can also evoke and streamline memories of past violence against categorized communities and create a strong sense of bonding among the attendees, who can identify with the victims. In this way, things are not only linking objects for group bonding but also located memory that can refer to a shared past, a shared history, and, as a result, a shared present. As Eviatar Zerubavel argues, people "build different types of bridges—physical, iconic, discursive—in an effort to connect the past and the present." As a result of this bridging, materiality may become iconized, and icons may be further materialized as monuments, relics, and souvenirs, allowing communities to experience the past as a continuity (Zerubavel 2003, 7). In a similar vein, Dominik Bartmanski sees "icons as quotes of the past life-world that link it to the present everyday life" (Bartmanski 2011, 217). Clearly, materiality plays an important role in recreating and imagining the past in the present. Thus, "things" cannot be forgotten when studying how people create nostalgic links between what is present and the imagery of what once was.

Nostalgia and Memory

In *Memory, Trauma, and Identity*, Ron Eyerman complains that "sociologists seldom speak about memory, except perhaps disparagingly as nostalgia" (2019, 24). Be that as it may, memory is all but sociologically tedious, and in cultural studies and historiography, memory in relation to violence and the construction of social and political identities represents a well-studied field of inquiry (for example: Miguez Macho 2016; Nikro and Hegasy 2017; Zucker and Simon 2020). Case studies on violent conflict, for example, often include memory as a driving force in current representations of friends and foes. Max Bergholz's detailed study on the multiethnic community in the Kulen Vakuf region of Bosnia shows, for example, how political silencing moved memory to the private space after the atrocities in 1941 (2016, 264, 286, 290). Bergholz shows how memory depends on social transmitters, including political power and imageries of belonging. How and what is remembered depends on the symbolic context that characterizes a current community through discourse, visuality, and materiality. In a similar vein, case studies on the Indonesian democide of 1965–66 also show the social impact of a government that legitimizes its power by allowing just one narrative to be told after the mass slaughter of political adversaries (Robinson 2018, 264–313). The winners often determine the culture of remembrance. In this sense, memory, power, and the formation or affirmation of social identities should

be studied together. The memory of past atrocities is therefore primarily shaped by the ideological, political, and religious narratives that give symbolic significance to the violence. Alexander (2012) highlights this question by comparing Shoah (he writes "Holocaust") representations in the US and Israel to the approach taken toward the atrocities in Nanking (1937) in China and Japan. While in the US (and in many European countries) the Shoah has become part of a dark universalism showing what humans are capable of, and in Israel the Shoah has become part of a particularized identity (Alexander 2012, 31–118; see also Arav, this volume), the atrocities in Nanking could not be part of any political or cultural narrative and are therefore "forgotten" (118–36). This means that transgenerational collective remembering and forgetting do not depend on the atrocities that are remembered or forgotten but rather on dominant narratives, visual media culture, and material objects like museums or monuments that are able to integrate these atrocities into a larger set of meanings. Cultural traumas depend on these narratives. Parallel to this, personal traumatic memories may become private and silenced (see Edkins 2003, 4, 104, 169), sometimes ridiculed, or they may become articulated and even heroized, depending on the symbolic function ascribed to trauma within the larger cultural and political narrative (see O'Donohoe, this volume). In this context, nostalgia plays an interesting role in co-constructing a narrative of belonging that includes trajectories of collective memory. Nostalgia is thus not free from politicized sets of meaning. Nostalgia in the sense described above, as a longing for an imagined or "real" past, has been used to "restore" collective imageries of home, beyond the individual's private traumatic memories of a violent past, as the contributions by Panico and O'Donohoe show in this volume in their discussions of discursive and material commemoration cultures in Italy and Spain, respectively. These imageries can be presented as true memories, as is sometimes the case in tense contexts of regulation or bureaucratization. In such contexts, nostalgic imageries are produced and embraced by populist parties and protest groups as representations of a past that was not yet so complex and rapidly moving. In such contexts, restorative nostalgia pops up as a longing for an (imagined) past of local autonomy with less governmental interference, as we see, for example, in the Netherlands, where nostalgic longing for rural autonomy converge with dissatisfaction about national policies on migration.

In post-conflict societies, collective traumas and nostalgic memories can be invoked to reinforce the identity of ethnic, racial, and religious (sub) groups. Monuments and memorials are potential material flashpoints for re-invoking clear lines between perpetrators and victims and between their

current heirs (see, for example, Perica 2002, 237–38). However, cultural and national memories, identities, and practices do not flow simply from one generation to the next; they move paradoxically in both directions (Landsberg 2004). Unhealed collective traumas of frozen conflicts can be transmitted and perpetuated into future generations—or into what Marianne Hirsch (2012) calls "the generation of postmemory"— evoking intolerance and extremism. This received memory of trauma (mostly evoked by imaginative projection such as narratives, images, monuments, etc.) can form collective nostalgic memories that structure the identity of "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991) with their "invented traditions" (Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983). From this perspective, ethnic-religious violence can be seen as a dramatic expression of nostalgia, grief, and unmet needs. The narratives of the nostalgic past can thus function as narrowing devices for repeated violence in the future. Indeed, bringing trauma and nostalgia together sharpens our focus on modes of memory-making and representations of conflict.

In this volume, several authors deal with the question of how nostalgia and memory are intermingled. Within cultural studies, neither memory nor nostalgia are clear concepts, so there are many ways in which nostalgia and memory relate to one another. As we have argued above, how an atrocity is remembered as a traumatic past (or not remembered at all), privately or collectively, depends on the narrative that becomes dominant after the atrocity, on the sociocultural representations of perpetrators and victims as well as winners and losers, and on the material and visual culture. Indeed, memory and nostalgia are both about the present: the presence of objects and narratives, situations and politics that can trigger, evoke, affirm, deny, or silence atrocities as traumatic pasts.

Trauma and Nostalgia between Belonging and Longing

How does nostalgia intermingle with individual and collective memories? How do nostalgic sentiments romanticize traumatic pasts for present purposes? How does longing for imagined pasts reveal current social structures of belonging? And how does nostalgia affect, shape, and integrate individual and cultural identities?

The chapters in this volume move between restorative and reflective nostalgia. They include governmental policies of remembering but also forms of social memory, and they study how nostalgia fuses with different representations, practices, narratives, and rituals that denote a traumatic/

traumatized past. The authors agree that nostalgia interprets and reflects present relations rather than bringing some past back to life. What is interesting, however, is that nostalgia links the present to imageries of a past in such ways that the past becomes part of a politics of the future, a longing for future worlds or an assessment of moral relations that projects imageries of the past into present contestations. In the chapters that follow, nostalgia is enforced by imagined or real tensions between social groups, the changing of sociocultural contexts, and the disorder of political representations. These efforts articulate and evoke living spirits that soar in the memories of the past. In this sense, both trauma and nostalgia relate to the question of agency, of who we are with the other, how we are rooted in our histories, and how we have become. The chapters combine the general perspectives we discussed above.

In the first chapter, Dan Arav studies how media plays a central role in the analysis of television productions of the First Gulf War (1991) in Israel. By analyzing various television programs and how they uniquely reflect on wartime occurrences, Arav shows how trauma and nostalgia become, under the auspices of the television experience, adjacent forms that correspond frequently. Arav points out how television speeds up the transformation of traumatic memory into a type of melancholic nostalgia. The Gulf War becomes a strange episode evoking discourses on a sequence of wars befalling Israel and acts as a catalyst for evoking memories of the Shoah. During the Gulf War, television incorporated trauma within everyday life. Arav shows how nostalgia in this context is not so much about the longing for a particular good in the past but about a focus on how wartime memory is preserved or represented through television. The Gulf War had a dual nature: while it was experienced on the home front through television, the war itself took place elsewhere. It was, Arav writes, "tangible and virtual" at the same time. The feelings of anxiety, stress, and closure contradict with war as a global, virtual, and technological event. Israeli television constructed war as self-evident and, because of its mediated dual character, as a realm of nostalgia in which entertainment, humor, and bitter memories could reside. Arav raises interesting questions on how trauma is defined and reenacted and how humor as a form of stress relief and criticism shapes nostalgic trajectories.

Mario Panico studies nostalgia as a form of cultural filtering. The positioning of nostalgia as a filter places it within the realm of reflective nostalgia, where it is asserted that nostalgia "reinvents" trauma within the social boundaries of the present. The key focus in the article is on how cultural representations of trauma are affected by nostalgia. According to Panico,

nostalgia can be understood as a form of filtering or of sifting the past in the present. This can erode the traumatic elements of the past. In other words, filtered nostalgia looks back at the past, but only recalling the positive aspects of that selfsame period and using this as a comparative measure for problems in the present. How historical narratives are represented has symbolic and semantic characteristics with specific communicative intentions, Panico shows. Nostalgia can function as a medium to re-invoke the past by means of repetition. This is, however, often also a filtering of the traumatic past into a more desirable or even romanticized past. Panico illustrates this in a thorough study of representations in post-Mussolini Italy. Interestingly, in this context he raises the idea of "communication risk," which is inherent to this kind of nostalgia. The filtering serves a particular communicative purpose. In the example of post-Mussolini commemoration, the risk or even danger is that the traumatic and unjust nature of the past can become completely overlooked and even normalized as being not so bad, or even romanticized. This is what Panico calls "nostalgic glorification." Toward the end of the chapter, he pays attention to irony and satire as a means of countering and subverting this nostalgic glorification. He shows how irony has the means of transforming the semantic field of reference not by destroying the phrase or image but by relegating it to the background and letting it lose its power or by changing its expressiveness in public discourse.

Paula O'Donohoe addresses the construction of nostalgia in the context of cross-generational traumas in Spain. She shows how feelings of a nostalgic past are idealized or romanticized, particularly when compared with present circumstances. An interesting dissonance between representing the periods of the (Second Spanish) Republic (1931–1939) and the time of Francoist rule (1939–1975) becomes visible, and different generations develop nostalgic trajectories to relate to this difficult Spanish past. O'Donohoe raises the issue of "time-delayed and negotiated recollection." By studying how temporal distance affects transgenerational ways of remembrance, she shows how memories are reconstructed, put in the time frame of the present, and still activate political change. She points to the consequences when histories and memories are denounced, neglected, or reframed. O'Donohoe explores this theme among different generations, showing how memories are regulated by their transmission in the family home. Interestingly, she argues that conflict memory in the family home is often reduced to their material presence, such as photographs of missing family members. These memories are almost devoid of context, which leads the next generations with a vague material inheritance and nostalgic allusions. However, some traumatic trajectories also gain a public presence, for example in the exhumations of victims of the

Franco regime. At the same time, however, public performances of younger generations take place showing strong ritualized nostalgic references to the Franco period. A tension appears between those mourning at the mass graves and those who mourn the death of Franco. These public performances negotiate the Spanish past as a nostalgic presence for some while still a painful memory for others. By addressing a lack of attention to the civil war in the Spanish educational curriculum, O'Donohoe points out that dialogue about this period is lacking among the generations, allowing for different narratives to occupy different social spaces. Those in power leave the questions of the violent past generally unanswered, which results in a memory vacuum and in diverse groups creating their own sacred spaces for nostalgic reflection. As a result, people "remember" in narrative bubbles or groups that reinforce their own nostalgic idealization.

In their chapter on wartime films, Mariecke van den Berg and Jan Grimell relate trauma and nostalgia to redemption by focusing on the experiences of veterans with moral injury or PTSD and developing a critical reflection on the homecoming film as a genre that perpetuates and challenges notions of nostalgia. The chapter explores nostalgia and moral injury and raises the idea of a spiritual dimension of post-traumatic growth, recovery, wellbeing, and health. The authors show how reflective and counter-nostalgia are reproduced in particular popular films. In homecoming films, nostalgic routes are explored that can be critical of the reasons for a particular conflict while at the same time upholding patriotic sentiments, such as images of the American flag as a material representation of national identity. The chapter introduces an intriguing reflection on how media has transformed traumatic events on the field and back home, creating a shared reality but also a major dissonance in the actual lived experience of veterans. The reflections on redemption as explored by the authors are provisional, unfinished, and incomplete, which goes against the image of the hegemonic hero.

Bram Verhagen and Srdjan Sremac trace the recent history of the Afghanistan National Museum in Kabul as an effort to inscribe Afghan history into Western nostalgic perspectives on progression and development. They understand the museum as a nostalgic memory site that mirrors US-led reconstruction efforts of the war-ravaged country. Since their beginnings in the nineteenth century, museums have contributed to the construction of national identities by emphasizing nostalgic trajectories of national identity-making, and the Afghanistan National Museum was constructed primarily in this image by Western museologists and policymakers. Verhagen and Sremac argue that these reconstruction efforts, based on ideas of development and identity construction, failed to build a new Afghan

identity accessible to all Afghanis. Instead, the museum catered primarily the desires of Western aid workers and a Kabul-centered elite. They conclude that the process of nostalgic production through material culture entails a form of imagining statehood that filters the traumatic past of political violence through a more desirable, even romanticized, past. This process streamlines traumatic events through nostalgic material representations, shaping favorable modes of nationhood.

The final two articles trace nostalgia in television series that foreground national traumatic events. In his article "Fighting against the Dying of the Present," Mathijs Peters reflects critically on Hartmut Rosa's concept of resonance and how this concept is critically related to acceleration and forgetting in modernity. Resonance is strongly connected to relationships and ideas that make one feel "at home" in the world. Peters offers a fascinating contribution to the discussion of nostalgia by introducing this theme. Resonance contains nostalgic elements, but also an idea of "Heimat." Peters shows that resonance in Rosa's work is both normative and descriptive, as it not only describes what we long for but also prescribes what we should long for. Resonant relationships can be seen as an ideal or normative yardstick for embeddedness but are not automatically reflective. Using Boym's assessment of nostalgia, Peters distinguishes between reflective and restorative resonance to preserve resonance as a critical concept. Peters sharpens his analysis through a reflection on the film series *Heimat* (dir. Edgar Reitz, first series released in 1984, covering German history between 1919 and 1982 from the perspective of a village). The film series is built around memories of experiences and contains strong nostalgic dimensions that in turn create resonance among its viewers, who recall their own fragmented memories of the very same history. Resonance is uniquely idealized in that viewers and scenes are connected through a shared history. This is, Peters argues, a historical resonance that plays a key role in the social construction of desire and longing.

In his chapter on the American series *Mad Men* (dir. Matthew Weiner, released between 2007 and 2015, covering American history between 1960 and 1970), Joshua Hollmann elaborates on four types of nostalgia as presented in the series: utopic, collective, reflective, and reconciliatory. Incisively analyzing scenes of *Mad Men* in parallel to American society, Hollmann identifies authenticity and affluence as elements of the American dream as played out by the protagonist Don Draper in the series. Nostalgia is expressed as a longing for a moment in time where one belongs, regardless of how fleeting this may seem. In this sense, the series is a quest for moments to remain, a search for meaning and belonging. However, the series also

shows a reflection on unrealized possibilities and demonstrates that the idealized past is itself not ideal, which points to the recognition that we cannot ignore past traumas/injustices through idealization in such a way that it mitigates the injustices of the present. In the concluding section of his chapter, Hollmann explores the concept of reconciliatory nostalgia, highlighting that traumatic memory encompasses both the past and the present. The focus lies on the perpetual awareness of seeking purpose and connection, with the belief that this nostalgic awareness holds the potential for present healing.

Through case studies, reflections on theoretical frameworks, and perspectives from different disciplines, the chapters in this volume delve into the fascinating interplay between trauma and nostalgia, shedding light on their complex expressions in social and political contexts. The perspectives explored in this volume show how this interplay is always current and shapes our social and political present. Feelings of social unity around narrative identities are often shaped by nostalgic pasts and traumatic memories. This past is always filtered and imagined and can result in a politics of forgetting (see the contributions by Panico and O'Donohoe), but it can also function as a way to deal with the present (see the contributions by Arav, Hollmann, and Peters). These processes of filtering and imagination significantly influence the creation of cultural productions that depict traumatic pasts while also providing guidance on how a group or nation should engage with these historical events. This volume therefore also examines filmic portrayals of nostalgia, for example in homecoming movies, which depict a disconnect between the nostalgic notions of "home" that war veterans yearn for and the realities of their PTSD-induced suffering (as explored in the contribution by Van den Berg and Grimell). In the series *Heimat* and *Mad Men*, German and US histories, respectively, resonate at the local levels of a community and a biography (see the contributions by Peters and Hollmann). Trauma as the remembrance of a painful irrevocable past scatters in different modalities of culture, politics, and religion and contributes to new forms of longing and belonging. In this process, nostalgia is a powerful vehicle to (re)present painful pasts in the present while mobilizing hybrid forms of identity and counter-identity.

There are still lingering unanswered questions. For instance, how does nostalgia manifest on social media platforms where users post memes that humorously ridicule the past? Arav and Panico both point to humor as a way to deal with the present past. How does this kind of humor relate to power balances between specific groups in modern societies, raise tensions

and social discontent, but also promote feelings of unity and cohesion? And what impact do narrative traumas have on strategic identifications of others that are excluded from traumatic narratives and nostalgic longing? Finally, as these contributions focus on nostalgic representations in the exchange between social actors in the public realm or in the production of culture, it is equally important to understand how political leaders use (collective) trauma and nostalgia to justify certain politics.

These questions encourage further examination of the intricate intertwining of trauma and nostalgia. What becomes evident in this volume is the profound connection between trauma and nostalgia within the realm of memory, emphasizing the necessity of considering nostalgia seriously when addressing trauma. It highlights that nostalgia is an inherent component of memory and underscores the importance of exploring different perspectives on trauma and nostalgia to comprehend how longing and belonging play pivotal roles in the construction of social and national identities.

Works Cited

Agostinho, Daniela, Elisa Antz, and Cátia Ferreira. 2012. "Introduction." In *Panic and Mourning: The Cultural Work of Trauma*, edited by Daniela Agostinho, Elisa Antz, and Cátia Ferreira. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.

Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2004. "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma." In *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, edited bu Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka, 1–30. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2012. *Trauma: A Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso.

Anderson, David. 2013. "Confederate Defeat and the Construction of Lost Cause Nostalgia." In *Men after War*, edited by Stephen McVeigh and Nicola Cooper, 52–78. London: Routledge.

Bartmanski, Dominik. 2011. "Successful Icons of Failed Time: Rethinking Post-Communist Nostalgia." *Acta Sociologica* 54, no. 3: 213–31. https://doi.org/10.1177/0001699311412625.

Batcho, Krystine Irene. 2013. "Nostalgia: Retreat or Support in Difficult Times?" *American Journal of Psychology* 126, no. 3: 355–67.

Baumgartner, Michael, and Ewelina Boczkowska. 2020. "Introduction." In *Music, Collective Memory, Trauma, and Nostalgia in European Cinema after the Second World War*, edited by Michael Baumgartner and Ewelina Boczkowska. New York: Routledge.

Bergholz, Max. 2016. *Violence as a Generative Force. Identity, Nationalism, and Memory in a Balkan Community.* Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press.

Bonikowski, Bart, and Oscar Stuhler. 2022. "Reclaiming the Past to Transcend the Present: Nostalgic Appeals in U.S. Presidential Elections." *Sociological Forum* 37, no. 1: S1263–93.

Boym, Svetlana. 2008. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books.

Browne, D. 1997. "Film, Movies and Meanings." In *Explorations in Theology and Film: Movies and Meaning*, edited by Clive Marsh and Gaye Ortiz. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Campanella, Edoardo, and Marta Dassù. 2019. "Brexit and Nostalgia." *Survival* 61, no. 3: 103–11. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00396338.2019.1614781.

Cook, Pam. 2005. *Screening the Past: Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema*. London/New York: Routledge.

Davis, Fred. 1979. *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia*. New York: Free Press.

Delisle, Jennifer. 2006. "Finding the Future in the Past: Nostalgia and Community-Building in Mhlope's *Have you Seen Zandile?*" *Journal of South African Studies* 32, no. 2: 387–401.

Dika, Vera. 2003. *Recycled Culture in Contemporary Art and Film: The Uses of Nostalgia. Cambridge Studies in Film.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Edkins, Jenny. 2003. *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Enns, Diane. 2012. *The Violence of Victimhood*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Evis, Laura H. 2021. "A Critical Appraisal of Interdisciplinary Research and Education in British Higher Education Institutions: A Path Forward?" *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 21, no. 2: 119–38. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F14740222211026251.

Eyerman, Ron. 2019. *Memory, Trauma, and Identity*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fuentenebro de Diego, Filiberto, and Carmen Valiente Ots. 2014. "Nostalgia: A Conceptual History." *History of Psychiatry* 25, no. 4: 404–11. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957154X14545290.

Gobodo-Madikizela, Pumla. 2012. "Remembering the Past: Nostalgia, Traumatic Memory, and the Legacy of Apartheid." *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 18, no. 3: 252–67.

Hamber, Brandon. 2012. "Conflict Museums, Nostalgia, and Dreaming of Never Again." *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 18, no. 3: 268–81.

Hirsch, Marianne. 2012. *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Hobsbawn, Eric, and Terence Ranger. 1983. *The Invention of Tradition.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hodgin, Nick. 2011. *Screening the East: Heimat, Memory and Nostalgia in German Film Since 1989*. New York: Berghahn Books.

Hook, Derek. 2012. "Screened History: Nostalgia as Defensive Formation." *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 18, no. 3: 225–39.

Kammen, Michael. 1991. *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*. New York: Knopf.

Landsberg, Alison. 2004. *Prosthetic Memory. The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Lowenthal, David. 1989. "Nostalgia Tells It Like It Wasn't." In *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia*, edited by Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw, 18–32. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Meeter, Martijn. 2016. "Trauma and the Truth." In *Memory in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by S. Goes, 343–46. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Merry, E. Wayne. 2016. "The Origins of Russia's War in Ukraine. The Clash of Russian and European 'Civilizational Choices' for Ukraine." In *Roots of Russia's War in Ukraine*, edited by Elizabet A. Wood et al., 27–50. New York: Columbia University Press.

Miguez Macho, Antonio. 2016. *The Genocidal Genealogy of Francois: Violence, Memory and Impunity*. The Cañada Blanch/Sussex Academic Studies on Contemporary Spain. Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press.

Morgan, David. 2021. *The Thing About Religion: An Introduction to the Material Study of Religions*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

Nikelly, Arthur G. 2004. "The Anatomy of Nostalgia: From Pathology to Normality." *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies* 1, no. 2: 182–99.

Nikolayenko, Olena. 2008. "Contextual Effects on Historical Memory: Soviet Nostalgia among Post-Soviet Adolescents." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 41, no. 2: 243–59. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2008.03.001.

Nikro, Norman Saadi, and Sonja Hegasy, eds. 2017. *The Social Life of Memory: Violence, Trauma, and Testimony in Lebanon and Morocco*. Palgrave Studies in Cultural Heritage and Conflict. Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-66622-8.

Pallister, Kathryn. 2019. "Introduction." In *Netflix Nostalgia: Streaming the Past on Demand*, edited by Kathryn Pallister, 1–8. Blue Ridge Summit: Lexington Books.

Perica, Vjekoslav. 2002. *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Privalov, Roman. 2022. "Through the Thorns to Where? The Politics of Alternative Appropriations of Soviet Space Culture in Contemporary Russia." *Space Policy* 61. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.spacepol.2022.101488.

Radstone, Susannah. 2007. *The Sexual Politics of Time. Confession, Nostalgia, Memory*. London: Routledge.

Robinson, Geoffrey B. 2018. *The Killing Season: A History of the Indonesian Massacres, 1965–66*. Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Rosbrow, Thomas. 2019. "On Grief, Guilt, Shame, and Nostalgia. Discussion of 'Who Has the Right to Mourn? Relational Deference and the Ranking of Grief.'" *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 29, no. 4: 501–6.

Sedikides, Constantine, Tim Wildschut, Jamie Arndt, and Clay Routledge. 2008. "Nostalgia: Past, Present, and Future." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 17, no. 5: 304–7.

Szabó, Gabriella, and Balázs Kiss. 2022. "Sharing Political Nostalgia in Hungary. Is Yearning for the Past Successful on Social Media? Innovation." *The European Journal of Social Science Research* 35, no. 1: 150–71. https://doi.org/10.1080/13511610.2021.1995332.

Sztompka, Pjotr. 2004. "The Trauma of Social Change: A Case of Postcommunist Societies." In *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, edited by Jeffrey C. Alexander et al., 155–95. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press.

Taurino, Giulia. 2019. "Crossing Eras: Exploring Nostalgic Reconfigurations in Media Franchises." In *Netflix Nostalgia: Streaming the Past on Demand*, edited by Kathryn Pallister, 9–23. Blue Ridge Summit: Lexington Books.

Thorpe, Julie. 2015. "Nostalgic Histories of War." In *Beyond Memory: Silence and the Aesthetics of* Remembrance, edited by Alexandre Dessingué and Jay M. Winter. London/New York: Routledge.

Ulrich, Laurel Thatcher, Ivan Gaskell, Sara J. Schechner, Sarah Anne Carter, and Samantha S. B. van Gerbig. 2015. *Tangible Things: Making History through Objects*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Van Liere, Lucien. 2018. "The Banality of Ghosts: Searching for Humanity with Joshua Oppenheimer in The Act of Killing." *Journal for Religion, Film and Media* 4, no. 1: 15–34. https://doi.org/10.25364/05.4:2018.1.2.

Van Liere, Lucien. 2020. "The Image of Violence and the Study of Material Religion, an Introduction." *Religions* 11, no. 7: 370. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11070370.

Van Liere, Lucien, and Erik Meinema. 2022. "Material Religion, Conflict, and Violence." In *Material Perspectives on Religion, Conflict, and Violence*, edited by Lucien van Liere and Erik Meinema, 1–36. Leiden: Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004523791_002.

Van Tilburg, Wijnand A. P., Constantine Sedikides, Tim Wildschut, and Ad J. J. M. Vingerhoets. 2019. "How Nostalgia Infuses Life with Meaning: From Social Connectedness to Self-Continuity." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 49, no. 3: 521–32.

Velikonja, Mitja. 2017. *Titostalgia: A Study of Nostalgia for Josip Broz*. Saarbrucken: Lap Lambert Academic Publishing.

Wildschut, Tim, Martin Bruder, Sara Robertson, Wijnand A. P. van Tilburg, and Constantine Sedikides. 2014. "Collective Nostalgia: A Group-Level Emotion That Confers Unique Benefits on the Group." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 107, no. 5, 844–63.

Wildschut, Tim, Constantine Sedikides, Clay Routledge, Jamie Arndt, and Filippo Cordaro. 2010. "Nostalgia as a Repository of Social Connectedness: The Role of Attachment-Related Avoidance." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 98, no. 4: 573–86.

Zerubavel, Eviatar. 2003. *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Žižek, Slavoj, and Boris Gunjevic. 2012. *God in Pain: Inversions of Apocalypse*. New York: Seven Stories Press.

Zucker, Eve Monique, and David John Simon, eds. 2020. *Mass Violence and Memory in the Digital Age: Memorialization Unmoored.* Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

2 Trauma and Nostalgia in the Israeli Televised Memory of the First Gulf War

Dan Arav

Abstract
Israeli television has constructed the memory of war as a paradoxical experience of trauma and nostalgia, reflecting the cultural landscape shaped by television. This medium blurs the lines between these phenomena. Television aims to portray reality as intense and conflict-ridden, evoking both personal and collective trauma while also attempting to facilitate the processing of trauma. This chapter employs cultural and psychoanalytical approaches to analyze this connection within televised representations. Using the Israeli memory of the First Gulf War (1991) as a case study, it explores how this war, marked by missile attacks on the Israeli home front, brought forth the trauma of the Holocaust. The memory of this war remains a mixture of traumatic recollections, repression, horror, nostalgia, and entertainment.

Keywords: television; war; Israel; home; Holocaust

Introduction

In January 1991, Israeli society experienced one of the strangest moments in its history: a chain of events that began with the invasion of Iraqi military forces into Kuwait, which led to an American attack on Iraq and later to the launching of thirty-nine Iraqi missiles on Israel. After three weeks, the Israeli chapter in the war ended. The memory of that war experience remains paradoxical and strange: nostalgia, repression, horror, and entertainment are used interchangeably.

For the Israelis, the Gulf War was a new kind of war, almost different from anything they had known in the past. This was the first war in which the

Van Liere, L. & Sremac, S. (eds), *Trauma and Nostalgia: Practices in Memory and Identity*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2024
DOI: 10.5117/9789048559220_CH02

battlefield was the home front, the sealed room. As historian and journalist Tom Segev has stated, "Never before had so many Israelis shared so Jewish an experience" (Segev 2000, 507).[1] A central component of the war experience was the television medium. Television had become the main source of information and guidance; an anxiety-relieving device and a unifying factor. And yet it appears that the power of television during this war was not only evident in the massive presence of the medium in the arena and in its key role in mediation. The role of television in the Gulf War could also be seen in the radical influence of the medium on the perception of war in real time and on the construction of the experience of war in the common consciousness of Israelis: a complete mix between inside and outside, intimate and global, trauma and entertainment.

Television relies on a dual mode of operation. On the one hand, its logic is premised on the constant promise of development and renewal: "the next thing" is presented as new, unusual, and therefore worthy of the viewer's attention. On the other hand—as a medium entrenched deep within popular culture, and subject to regulated conventions of form, content, and genre—the unusual, the subversive and the deviant, or the very notion of "the next thing" in its deeper sense are entirely foreign to it. In practice, the medium is irrevocably rooted in cyclicality and repetition: return to the familiar and the safe, back to what we have already seen: the regular, "The Obvious."

It seems that this tension, between the one-time and the mundane,[2] the dramatic and the routine, the unusual and the stormy, and the conformist and the stable, is often embodied in the connection between the traumatic and the nostalgic. Trauma and nostalgia, which usually seem like distant phenomena, become, under the auspices of the television experience,

1 "Like all previous wars, this one too brought the Holocaust to the forefront of public consciousness," writes Segev, adding that "[t]he anxiety that pervaded Israel at the outbreak of the war was real, and for the first time since the country was founded, it was an anxiety provoked by a sense of threat not to collective existence but to individual citizens, their families, and their property.... even though everyone was facing the same external danger and was gripped by the same fear at the very same moments, those air-raid sirens, rising and falling in a blood-freezing wail, split society into its components, each person for himself and his family, in his sealed room, isolated within his gas mask. Thousands of Tel Avivers abandoned their homes, seeking refuge in more secure areas of the country.... Those who remained at home huddled together, helplessly expecting the worst" (2000, 505–7).

2 In his discussion of television, media, and culture, researcher Roger Silverstone points to the centrality of media in shaping the everyday. He writes, "We move between the familiar and the strange. We move from the secure to the threatening and from the shared to the solitary. We are at home or away. We cross thresholds and glimpse horizons. We all do all these things constantly, and in none of them, not one of them, are we ever without our media, as physical or symbolic objects" (1999, 30).

adjacent forms that correspond frequently.[3] In fact, one can see how, under the auspices of the medium, a radical process of conversion takes place to the point of presenting the trauma in nostalgic attire.

The Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek sees the "passion for the Real" as the primary characteristic of the latter half of the twentieth century but points at the fundamental paradox of it: "It culminates in its apparent opposite…. The passion for the Real ends up in the pure semblance of the Spectacular *effect of the Real*" (Žižek 2002, 9–10). Žižek emphasizes the process of virtualizing reality, a cultural process that causes us to experience the "real reality" itself as a virtual entity.[4] He writes, "The Real which returns (to our lives) has a status of a(nother) semblance: *precisely because it is real, that is, on account of its traumatic / excessive character, we are unable to integrate it into* (*what we experience as*) *our reality, and are therefore compelled to experience it as a nightmarish apparition*" (Žižek 2002, 19). For him, television, as the best representative of the cultural undercurrents of society, can only understand reality twice: first as a trauma and a second time as a description of the same trauma (of the collapse of order), using familiar and worn-out terms.

Against the background of Žižek's conception, it is possible to point out how nostalgia is used as a sophisticated means of normalizing horror. It confirms the existing and makes it routine. Thus, through the mechanisms of ritual repetition over a limited collection of images, television accelerates and fixes the (same) nostalgic memory. This becomes possible through a double action: on the one hand, strengthening the memory while fixing several images within it; on the other hand, sterilizing the image out of its context. Television seems to erase or sterilize memory while turning it into another "meat" ground in the grinder of images operating in a competitive environment.

It is common to claim that the self-perception of Israeli society—as it is expressed daily in the systems of politics, education, and the media in Israel—is that of a post-traumatic society (Alberstein, Davidovitch, and Zalashik 2016). Recognizing the centrality of nostalgic sentiment in Israeli culture and everyday discourse is also not new. In Israeli television, which can be seen as a central arena of social debate, this connection between trauma and nostalgia is realized in a variety of ways and forms.

3 See Arav (2017).

4 For example, in his opinion, most of the public experiences the World Trade Center disaster as a "TV" event. Repeatedly watching images of horror has served as a reminder of the spectacular films of Hollywood creators (Žižek 2002, 11). It should be noted, however, that there are quite a few studies that claim that watching the WTC disaster through television was traumatic (Eth 2002; Putnam 2002).

Television: Trauma and Nostalgia

The extensive blending of the private and the public, repetition and reconstruction, and eyewitness reports and the commercialization of testimony penetrates and influences the content and form of collective memory (see Arav 2016, 39–49).

Currently the place occupied by trauma seems to have been taken over by nostalgic sentiment. The pattern of acting out, as described above, that is derived from the inability to provide a representation of the object (in this case, the traumatic experience) and is based on the element of repetition is found in the sense of nostalgia located in the repetition of what is known, a fitting framework for its operation. If acting out aims at an excess sense of vitality that denies the wound and the unprocessed pain, nostalgia transforms the reality of the past into something alive in the present. Like acting out, nostalgia also refuses to work through the past to transform it into a meaningful memory. The mechanism of nostalgia is focused on excess activity, an ever-repeating and virtual activity that takes place in the present and that replaces the ability to remember an event. The nostalgic image produces a sentimental substitute whose entire mission is to deny the fact that this is a matter belonging to the past. Addiction to nostalgia creates a sense of "excess vitality" and, with respect to reality, thus withholds from the individual any thoughts of denial or criticism.

The notion that television speeds up the transformation of traumatic memory into a type of melancholic nostalgia certainly has major psychopolitical significance. The repeated and nostalgic representation of war through the ritual of fixed media images can be seen as a process of denial that operates continually and efficiently to blur the factor generating the collective trauma, i.e., the state of ongoing war. It may be that the disturbing association between traumatic experience and an exhibitionist, nostalgic television culture instills within us dangerous illusions because of the idea that the discourse of trauma will lead us to redemption and serenity. It is precisely the popularization of using the concept of trauma that obscures the condition of political helplessness and despair.

The Gulf War: Holocaust, Media, and the State

The memory of the Holocaust has often been perceived as a constitutive trauma in Israel, and its connection to the consciousness of destruction has been repeated over the years. Naturally, this linkage is growing in the public

discourse in Israel in times of severe distress, especially during wars and terrorist attacks. Hence, it was no surprise that the next threat to Israel—less than nine years after the start of the First Lebanon War (1982) and ten years after the bombing of the Iraqi reactor—would also encounter a rhetoric and system of images drawn from the Holocaust. This time, however, a new, seemingly alternative set of images was created. Responsible for this was television, which more than any other factor reshaped the collective trauma within the memory of the Gulf War. Television not only intensified the link between Holocaust trauma and war but also created a new connection to trauma: entertainment. Macabre humor, cynicism, and escapism found expression in a variety of ways and in different television formats.

It seems that the Gulf War served as a catalyst in the processes of dealing with the Holocaust in Israeli society. For the cultural researcher Moshe Zimmerman, the Gulf War was integrated into the process of "updating" attitudes toward the Holocaust in art and cinema, with confusion and ambiguity taking the place of confessions and justification (Zimmerman 2002, 327). Zimmerman refers mainly to cinema, but his words are also valid in relation to television (in the Gulf War, television preceded cinema, which by nature responds later and more substantially to events). Historian Shlomo Sand sees the Gulf War as a milestone in the process of changing the cultural power relations between classical intellectuals and licensed memory agents and between the moving picture and electronic communications networks. The Gulf War produced "an array of impressive audio-visual representations, which weakened not only the flow and filtering of information, but also the very shaping of the immediate moral attitude towards it" (Sand 1999, 205).

The television coverage of the Gulf War and its place in public memory must be examined against the background of the profound changes in Israeli society at that time. It should be remembered that for the Israeli media, the early 1990s marked a period of transition. If until the 1980s the Israeli media, including state television, functioned as a monolithic body, largely expressing the position of the leadership or elite, then by the 1990s this status had already cracked. The sociopolitical changes that took place with the right-wing Likud's rise to power in 1977 ended, at least explicitly, the Ashkenazi hegemony[5] based on the values of the labor movement and

5 Israeli society has always been shaken by ethnic discourse. It is claimed that the founders of the state, mostly immigrants from Eastern European countries (Ashkenazim), founded the state on Western foundations while ignoring the tradition and worldview of a significant portion of the Jewish people from Middle Eastern and North African countries (Sephardic, Mizrahim). Some see the results of the 1977 elections as the end of Ashkenazi hegemony and the rise of the

accelerated the trend of decentralization, speeding up the entry of cable channels (1989) and the establishment of a second, commercial, television channel (1993). These changes have been integrated into global trends that started to gain a local foothold: the increased Americanization of daily life in Israel intensified, and the brand began to play an important role. Technology was also improving miraculously: color television, VCRs, and then cable systems that broadcast live events from the wider world. New words were heard, like satellite, CNN, and MTV. The wider world was within reach. Globalization was knocking at the door.

During these years, there was also a profound mental change in Israeli society resulting from a growing concern about "the righteousness of the way" and general fatigue from the ongoing state of war. Thus, a decade after the signing of the peace agreement with Egypt—in which, for the first time, in exchange for complete and stable peace, Israel gave up territory—there was a growing recognition that peace is not an abstract concept but a real possibility. The consciousness of the collective siege was cracked. The precedence given in the media to security issues and the constant attempt to present a broad consensus on key questions were loosening. At the same time, the 1982 Lebanon War, which was seen as the first war that was wanted, cracked this consensus. Many war veterans were losing faith in the country's leadership. They turned inward, preferring nihilism and avoidance. Some turned to anarchic humor. The first intifada that broke out in 1987 accelerated these feelings of disintegration and despair.

In January 1991, one state television channel operated in Israel on an educational television station that broadcast current affairs and children's programs at certain hours of the day. An experimental Channel Two was intended to broadcast on the future frequency of the commercial channel and was managed by the Ministry of Communications. This channel, which until then had broadcast only five hours a day, moved with the outbreak of the war to a continuous broadcast of eighteen hours. "Israel's television history is full of wars.... We flourished in the Gulf War," said Uri Shinar, who was the channel's content director in this experimental format.[6] Despite the emergency laws, which perpetuated the media in favor of the state, it seems that in practice during the war, state control and supervision greatly loosened.

Mizrahi voice in politics, media, and culture. However, the ethnic question continues to occupy Israeli society to this day.

6 In an interview on the occasion of the nineteenth anniversary of the first broadcast day of Channel Two in its experimental format (Shiloni 2005).

The Gulf War seemed to be tailored to the dimensions of the television medium: virtual in nature, distant and non-threatening. This was completely different from any war in which Israel had been involved until then. For the Israeli public, the war took place mostly around the small home screen. Paradoxically, this was not an "ordinary" war, since it was not perceived as a war for the existence of Israel itself, but on the other hand, it was seen as a real risk to the normal course of life at the home front. This was also not an ordinary war in terms of national solidarity. In the past, criticism was often silenced in the face of an external threat, but this time one could discern a certain level of skepticism and uncertainty regarding the conduct of leadership. In broad circles, the lack of response to the Iraqi attacks on the Israeli home front was perceived as an expression of intelligence failure, and especially as a sign of the weakness of the Israeli leadership in the face of the United States and its allies. The change in the experience of war was also evident in television: when the home front becomes the front, so does television. The family home—the destination of the message of television—has now become the scene of drama. This drama took place in a sealed room, in an intimate and private space. The home video cameras that were common technology by then allowed for documentation from inside this sealed room, usually of the alarm and the subsequent practice of wearing a mask. Such images have been tirelessly broadcast on various television channels in Israel and around the world. They have made active spectators out of Israelis, watching themselves. The fusion/confusion of home front and front line aligned with the technological innovations that similarly merged the local and the global. Connected to CNN and other satellite channels, to the telephone, and even to the internet, which was taking its first steps at the time, Israelis watched in their living rooms another war live, the one taking place on Iraqi soil, the war that was the reason for being locked up in this sealed room.

With the outbreak of the war, the Israeli public encountered a wealth of questions and dilemmas. The main one was: Whose war is this anyway? If this is "our" war, how can we not respond to these missile attacks? If it is not "ours," then why do missiles fall on our territory? But other questions came also to the fore: What should be done in case of a missile attack? Is the sealed room a safe shelter or, as has been argued, is the sealed room a death trap? Will the Iraqis use gas against us? It soon became clear that these doubts were also shared by government members and that the leaders were also influenced by media sources such as CNN. As a result, a profound feeling arose among the public that there was no one in the leadership who really knew. The choice of whom to listen to ranged from the prime minister, who

did not speak, to publicists warning of the danger of Hitler and politicians accusing Germany of helping Iraq, to psychologists, to military commentators repeatedly making mistakes, to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) spokesman, who constantly recommended calming down and drinking water.

Anthropologist and sociologist Haim Hazan argues that this situation, in which "psychologists took the place of politicians, and instead of generals on the battlefield, a well-publicized military spokesman accompanied by bewildered broadcasters appeared … posed a threat to the imaginary community and the validity and issuance of collective memory" (Hazan 1997, 163). Like Hazan, Nurith Gertz argues that although Israel played a passive role in the war, the political language of the leadership sought to glorify the war and Israel's role in it. The problem for the country was trying to recreate, without correction or adjustment, the narrative and elements of previous wars, while in reality there was a large gap between this war and its predecessors.[7] Gertz argues that the establishment itself expressed two conflicting perceptions: "One was to intensify the crisis, to highlight national drama and thus to express the right-wing ideological narrative and the other was to swallow the crisis, minimize the drama to reassure the public" (Gertz 1995, 150). According to her, the result was that the right-wing narrative, based on national and heroic images, faced criticism that weakened it at the expense of reinforcing other narratives, including the personal, uninvolved narrative.

It is possible that the tension between the two perceptions to which Gertz points is one of the sources for the construction of the Gulf War in the collective memory as a surrealist vision. It seems that the abundance of hallucinatory moments summoned by the war (for example, Israelis who spoke with their relatives abroad were updated on the phone in real time about a missile falling in their city and the extent of the damage done) and the satirical and dramatic potential, inherent in the inability to reconcile the conflicting narratives, formed the material from which the most televised moments of the war were created. The presentation of these paradoxes, sometimes in full ridicule, intensified them and later instilled them as the important memory of the war.

7 Gertz states that the popular narrative by which the American media understood the Gulf War is this: "Evil, monstrous forces driven by the pursuit of evil violate the existing order, and those responsible for this order, after deliberations and hesitations, are forced to come out and defend it" (1995, 135). The narrative managed to unite the American people but did not survive after the war. The reason: the elimination of the tyrant and the restoration of order did not occur.

One of these surreal moments recorded on television cameras took place in a Jerusalem concert hall. Following an alarm, the great violinist Isaac Stern stopped playing and encouraged his audience to wear a mask. Holding a mask in his hand, Stern continued to play. This event was presented as a link in a chain of performances given in Israel at the front and rear during wars since the War of Independence (1948). The fact that the event took place in Jerusalem, which was not under threat at the time, does not diminish the power of the image. It is the apparent contrast between the images of war and the sound of classical music that explains the power of this eternal image and its role in the ideological system, whose purpose it is to prove and point to war—any war—as a war of no choice that is imposed on civilians. The phrases "The people are the front" and "We must continue to play" have become a commonplace over the years in this context. Most of all, in this we can see the essence of an absurd concept that took root in those days in Israel, an "Emergency Routine." This surrealist dimension seems to be closely related to what has been called the virtualization of war. Following Jean Baudrillard and others, the Gulf War has often been presented as a simulation (Baudrillard 1995). The main argument was about building the war in real time as a kind of computer game: a distant, very clean war, based mainly on advanced technology, seen as an advertisement for sophisticated weapons and, above all, a war in which the enemy is not present (Katz 1998). Those images, representing the war as bizarre, greatly encouraged the surrealistic construction of the Gulf War. The surrealist statement, which is reflected in the concept of the "Emergency Routine," has a dual role. First, it functions as an instrument for dealing with and repelling terror. In addition, it functions as a catalyst in the process of dismantling and updating the Israeli ethos which, until the Gulf War, relied on a substantive and traditional view of the war.

The Gulf War: A Televised Memory

The question of the televised memory of war is greatly strengthened in the Gulf War. For example, the experience of watching TV, as for example in the humor and slapstick shows *Zehu Ze* (This is it!) and the *Ha-Olam ha-Erev* (The world tonight), is a central part of the memory of that war. And in the archive of texts associated with this war, these programs have a central place. *Zehu Ze in the Gulf*, says Hazan, "supposedly tattooed the foundations of the Israeli collective self. Rabbis and 'spiritual leaders' were portrayed as fools and charlatans, the glorious IDF generals as clueless and helpless, leaders

as lost and frustrated and the people seeking to escape wherever possible, the public is plagued by hysteria and panic and the media as someone who has completely lost her mind" (Hazan 1997, 163).

The role of humor as a central component in this memory requires explanation. The common explanation would suggest seeing humor programs as a kind of repression and refuge, a natural need in times of war.[8] Hence, for example, the DVD of *Zehu Ze* became one of the representations of the collective memory of the Gulf War. From this point of view, the status of *Zehu Ze* as a central component in the memory of the war would imply that this need has not yet been satisfied. Another, complementary explanation connects the experience of watching the show with understanding the Gulf War as a media event combining reality and simulation. Thus, the commercial success of the VHS cassette and then of the DVD of this program, Hazan claims, depends on the power of the program to cancel "the validity of the event as it occurred at a time and place of data" (163). For him, the cancellation of the event and its non-event took place on three levels: First, the tape is marketed as part of a routine of consumption of audiovisual products that are not conditioned in any context; they are forever detached from the "thing itself." Second, the event is presented as part of the fatalistic myth of Jewish existence, as an event belonging to the mythical collective memory, and echoing the images of the Megillah[9] and Purim,[10] that is when the war ended. The third level is that "the war is

8 The notion of humor as a defense mechanism is well described by Sigmund Freud and others. Freud claimed that people use humor in situations that provoke their fear and anxiety, through which they gain a new perspective on the situation that helps them to avoid experiencing negative emotions (Freud 1990; originally published 1922). Liat Steir-Livny emphasizes that humor "helps individuals alleviate stress, cope with negative feelings and tough situations, mitigate suffering, dissipate feelings of anxiety—at least for a certain time—and grant them some sense of power and control in situations of helplessness" (2015, 203). Jaqueline Garrick finds that "[t]he crux of a victim's sense of humor is in the nuances of irony and satire that can be healthily exploited for the purpose of survival. Although humor can be used to facilitate therapeutic gains, one's inappropriate use of humor or affect generally indicates that one is trying to avoid one's true feelings. If a client is smiling and joking while reporting a particularly painful childhood memory, it is likely that the client is not sure how close s/he wants to get to the memory and is attempting to obtain distance from the associated emotional pain. This distancing is similar to denial in that it provides for a comfort zone" (2006, 176–77).

9 The Megillah, or the Book of Esther, narrates the story of a Hebrew woman in Persia who becomes queen of Persia and thwarts a genocide of her people. The story forms the core of the Jewish festival of Purim, during which it is read aloud twice: once in the evening and again the following morning.

10 Purim is a Jewish holiday that commemorates the saving of the Jewish people from Haman, an Achaemenid Persian Empire official who was planning to kill all the Jews in the empire, as recounted in the Book of Esther.

identified with a self-employed media event and is conducted according to the cryptography of its own language. The embarrassment and madness of the systems is communicative and unrealistic" (Hazan 1997, 164). According to Hazan, what survived and was included on the tape was what did not launch into the collective memory, what did not threaten to penetrate the memory and undermine it. For this reason, sketches dealing with Saddam Hussein's Doppelgängers or the integrity of people using gas masks were not included on the tape. Such a sketch, he argued, could have made the imaginary situation real and threatening.

Like *Zehu Ze in the Gulf, Ha-Olam ha-Erev* also breathed an alternative spirit of nonsense into television broadcasts. The show, which aired as part of Channel Two's trial broadcasts, did well to outline the contours of the hallucinatory confrontation. Among other things, the actors played the characters of Saddam Hussein and "Bassam Aziz, Iraq's ambassador to Israel." The enemy has often been portrayed as sophisticated and sympathetic. At the same time, what was emphasized was the incompetence of the defense establishment and the Israeli leadership in understanding the conflict, responding to it, and mediating it for the public.

After the war, several documentaries were made. The film *Shaanan Sy*[11] was presented as a sleepwalking trip to Tel Aviv during the war, combining interviews while documenting the atmosphere at various relevant sites such as public shelters during the war. The film excelled as a parody moving between patriotic promises, anxiety, and terror. The film presented the Gulf War as a link in the chain of the Israeli wars. Thus, for example, a monologue was interwoven in the film about the sequence of wars held by the grandmother of one of the directors. The interviews incorporated in the film also excelled in mocking the symbols of the state and drawing a clear line between state rhetoric, as it resonated in the media, and the distrust and cynicism of a growing part of the population. This is how one of the interviewees puts it: "The war is a chain of humiliations … that suddenly you have to trust the IDF. Or listen to the IDF spokesman. Or trust the army, which is an institution I have been skeptical about all my life.… Nachman Shai [IDF spokesman] reassures me very much. That is what humiliates it. It robs us of our freedom."

Another film completed near the end of the war was *The French Initiative*.[12] The film consists of photographs that an Israeli photographer was asked to take for a French production company. The film, says Gertz, organizes

11 *Shaanan Sy* (documentary). Directors: Ari Folman and Ori Sivan, 1991.

12 *The French Initiative* (documentary). Directors: Eitan Dotan and Ron Katzenelson, 1992.

parodies concerning the framework of the struggle between the citizen and the authorities, between the personal and the national. Gertz claims that in both films (*Shaanan Sy* and *The French Initiative*), anxiety and terror are not repressed in a stable and calming structure, nor do they lead to national catharsis. It turns out that the films only contain a recurring motif. "The films do not try to cure the anxiety, nor to present it as a step beyond some redemption but only to describe it from a personal, human angle … they present anxiety without release, fear of disaster without redemption, detached episodes without an organizing story and 'comforting'" (Gertz 1995, 162). Both films rely on "details of events, looks, objects that do not organize in a frame story, rehearsals that do not advance any purpose, footage that does not build a complete picture. They do not tell a cohesive historical story but present life details that break the historical story" (Gertz 1995, 165).

In contrast to *Shaanan Sy* and *The French Initiative*, which were independent personal productions, shortly after the Gulf War, the Israel Broadcasting Authority also produced a concluding film about the war, called *Viper Snake*.[13] This documentary portrayed the Gulf War as "a series of crises and reversals, each of which contains the threat of destruction and the hope of resurrection. This takes place in the form of a power struggle between the forces of light and the forces of darkness, between an isolated but united nation and a broad hostile front" (Gertz 1995, 144). Gertz sees *Viper Snake* as a drama that serves the ideological narrative of the Israeli leadership: the apocalyptic, rightist-Jewish narrative—the horror and the celebration, the destruction and the redemption are mixed with each other at the opening and end of the film. Sharp and surprising transitions take place in the film. The transitions are usually from photographs of peace and routine (children at home, family, discussions in the Knesset, a choir singing) to the alarms and destructive images that "penetrate" them unexpectedly. The rapid cutting from state to state is also accompanied by a sharp transition from day to night, from darkness to light, or vice versa, and this further enhances the dramatic effect (Gertz 1995, 144).

In David Ofek's mockumentary *Beit*,[14] members of an Israeli family of Iraqi descent watch television that is broadcasting American airstrikes on Baghdad. Under the threat of missiles, hidden in the living room of their home in Ramat Gan, the adults want to locate their forgotten home in the broadcasted footage and in this way convey to the younger generation part of their own childhood. The surrealist scene, which involves nostalgia and

13 *Viper Snake* (Nachash Tzefa) (documentary). Director: Yarin Kimor, 1991.

14 *Beit* [Home] (mockumentary). Director: David Ofek, 1994.

war, exemplifies the overall style of the film disguised as truth. The sense of complete blurring between truth and falsehood, between documentation and fiction, reflects a basic state of uncertainty involved in deciphering the experience of the Gulf War in memory and in real time.

The later representations of the Gulf War are not many. In television these are usually minor and unsystematic references. Thus, in the documentary series *TEKUMA*,[15] the Gulf War is mentioned only as a comment and in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict:

> When the Gulf War broke out in January 1991, and rocket fire was fired from Iraq, Israeli residents wore protective masks and locked themselves in sealed rooms, and the Palestinians did not hide their joy.... A new Holocaust. The Shamir government did not respond. When the Iraqi army was defeated, there was a calm atmosphere. Not a sense of victory. The miserable end of the mother of all wars in the United States victory and the disintegration of the Soviet Union gave birth to what they then called a new world order. A strong American demand to renew the peace initiative left the Shamir government with no choice but to flex its positions. This is how the Madrid Peace Conference was born.

This narration comes against the backdrop of the archival, familiar image series of that war. In the series *In the Jewish State*,[16] which deals with the history of Hebrew humor, the Gulf War is presented as a "war of nonsense." Its unique characteristics, so it was claimed, encouraged the wave of television nonsense that flourished at the time. In the drama series *Bnot Brown*,[17] the war is a distant episode that is seen from the TV screen of a country home, far from the missile launch sites. The war serves as a background for the protagonists' behavior and is a dramatic pretext for a reunion between family members whose paths have parted, but now, under the shadow of the war, they seek each other's closeness. Here, too, war is presented in a pastoral context. At the end, one of the characters says, "It's a pity the war is over." In the series *Shishim*,[18] the Gulf War receives a single mention. In her memoirs about those days, one of the interviewees shares with the viewer, "[It was]

15 *TEKUMA* [Resurrection] (historical documentary series, 22 episodes). Editor-in-chief: Gideon Drori; episode 21: "The Stone and the Olive Branch," director: Danny Waxman, 1998.

16 *In the Jewish State* (historical documentary series, 11 episodes). Creators: Modi Bar-On and Anat Zeltzer, 2003–4.

17 *Bnot Brown* (drama series). Creator: Irit linur; directors: Rani Carmeli and Irit Linur, 2002.

18 *Shishim* [Sixty] (historical documentary series, 6 episodes). Episode no. 5: 1988–1998, director: Anat Zeltzer, 2008.

the funniest period of mourning. *Shiva*[19] with Gaz masks." As demonstrated above, it seems that the Gulf War is accepted as a war that is legitimate to indulge in; one can long for its unique and mostly positive experiences.[20] One can expose the nostalgic passion for war, since the Gulf War is seemingly not a "real war." It is a virtual war, ostensibly with no casualties. This is a war that is easy, pleasant, and comfortable to embrace in memory.

Conclusion

More than any other war in the past, the visual memory of the Gulf War and the discourse about it clearly express the fascinating connection between trauma and nostalgia. The dual nature of this war—as it was experienced in the Israeli home front but actually took place thousands of miles away, both tangible and virtual—evokes feelings of anxiety, stress, and closure and at the same time opens up to the global, technological space. This dual character is the main designer of this war memory and the reason for blurring the boundaries between trauma and entertainment, which has taken place in the memory of this war. It should be noted that the memory of the Gulf War seems to have had an impact on later representations of earlier wars, such as the First Lebanon War. However, such an intertextual analysis goes beyond the limits of this chapter.

The most significant television texts associated with the war present it as a hallucination, a dream, or a nightmare, but not as a horror. The terrible dimension of war (any war) does not get proper expression. The television memory of the war prefers to reinforce two positions during the war: one is a closed, forced connection with the trauma of the Holocaust, and the second is marked as a "non-existent" war, a virtual war, in which Israelis engage in a series of puzzling actions, where their connection to war in its usual sense is questionable (confinement in an sealed room, wrapping in plastic sheets, drinking water, etc.).

The representation of the war in the hallucinatory, and therefore entertaining, dimension is supported from various directions. On the genre level, television humor and satirical programs seem to be an integral part

19 Shiva is the week-long mourning period in Judaism for first-degree relatives.

20 The positive aspects of the war are clear: the war led to rapprochement and family reunion. Quite a few separated families reunited under missile fire. Some talked about the fact that the war brought their personal problems into proportion. On the other hand, it is possible that the indulgence in this war stems from its vague nature and the fact that there were not many casualties among the public.

of war memory. The sting of these programs, which in real time have been used simultaneously for criticism and stress relief, has not dulled over the years. As a critical, ironic text that mocks Israelis and their leadership, these programs remain relevant. It is important to mention that television entertainment was created during the war mainly on the fringes of the old media establishment. The most notable programs in this regard have been broadcasted on educational television (*Zehu Ze*) and on the experience broadcasts of the Second Authority (*Ha-Olam ha-Erev*). It was, as mentioned, a war that took place in an era of media change, the significance of which was greatly intensified by that war. For the first time, Israelis were able to consume war-related television content through a channel that was not monolithic, state-run, or outdated. This time "the sky opened up": diverse information and content flowed into the Israeli living room through additional TV channels, and official articles, from Israeli sources but also from international sources such as CNN, provided news alongside independent content based mainly on the relatively new availability of home video cameras.

In March 2003, the images of the Gulf War returned to haunt the collective consciousness of Israelis. At the height of a monthslong process, the coalition armies of the United States, Britain, and their allies invaded Iraq to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime. The war, which lasted about three weeks, conjured up images of the first Gulf War.

In January 2006, the fifteenth anniversary of the outbreak of the war, the war did not receive any mention in the media. An explanation for the absence of images of the war on the screen could be its "low media value." It can be argued that, in media terms, the images of the Gulf War are not powerful enough for a country where a tangible threat to the home front has become a breakthrough vision. Since the Gulf War, the country has undergone major waves of terrorism, making the missile threat sink into oblivion. Another explanation could simply be successful repression. The image of the Gulf War is well immersed in the depths of the collective consciousness and will emerge in the event of a threat with similar characteristics, such as a missile threat to Tel Aviv. Perhaps the Gulf War was not a trauma after all, but a kind of media showcase.

Over time, terror would infiltrate the heart of Israeli cities. The war at home would no longer be delimited by a specific time frame or defined by a title. Israeli existence would become overwhelmed with chaos, confusion, and above all the blurring of boundaries. Out of this condition, a new, more sober perception of Israeli identity would emerge, a perception whose televisual antecedents can be traced back to the Gulf War of 1991.

Works Cited

Alberstein, Michal, Nadav Davidovitch, and Rakefet Zalashik, eds. 2016. *Trauma's Omen: Israeli Studies in Identity, Memory and Representation.* [In Hebrew.] Bnei Brak: Ha-kibbutz Ha- Mehuchad Publishing House and Bar Ilan University.

Arav, Dan. 2016. "Television: A Traumatic Culture." In *Interdisciplinary Book of Trauma and Culture*, edited by Yochai Ataria, David Gurevitz, Haviva Pedaya, and Yuval Neria, 39–49. New York: Springer Publishing.

Arav, Dan. 2017. *Dying to See* (*Metim Li-rott*)*: War, Memory and Television in Israel 1967–1991.* [In Hebrew.] Tel Aviv: Resling.

Bar-On, Modi, and Anat Zeltzer, directors. 2003–4. *In the Jewish State.* Historical documentary series.

Baudrillard, Jean. 1995. *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Carmeli, Rani, and Irit Linur, directors. 2002. *Bnot Brown.* Drama series.

Dotan, Eitan, and Ron Katzenelson. 1992. *The French Initiative.* Documentary.

Eth, Spencer. 2002. "Television Viewing as a Risk Factor." *Psychiatry* 65, no. 4: 301–3.

Folman, Ari, and Ori Sivan, directors. 1991. *Shaanan Sy.* Documentary.

Freud, Sigmund. 1990. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle.* New York: W. W. Norton and Company.

Garrick, Jacqueline. 2006. "The Humor of Trauma Survivors: Its Application in a Therapeutic Milieu." *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma* 12, no. 1–2: 169–82.

Gertz, Nurith. 1995. *Captive of a Dream: National Myths in Israeli Culture.* [In Hebrew.] Tel Aviv: Am-Oved.

Hazan, Haim. 1997. "On Cultural Erasure: A Social Body and Collective Memory in Media Texts." In *Mass Communication and Democracy in Israel*, edited by D. Caspi, 153–70. [In Hebrew.] Jerusalem: The Van Leer Institute and the Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Meuchad Publishing House.

Katz, Eliyahu. 1998. "The End of Journalism? Comments on Watching the War." In *The Mass Media in Israel*, edited by D. Caspi and Y. Limor, 679–86. [In Hebrew.] Tel Aviv: The Open University.

Kimor, Yarin, director. 1991. *Viper Snake* [*Nachash Tzefa*]. Documentary.

Ofek, David, director. 1994. *Beit*. Mockumentary.

Putnam, Frank. 2002. "Televised Trauma and Viewer PTSD: Implications for Prevention." *Psychiatry* 65, no. 4: 310–12.

Sand, Shlomo. 1999. *Intellectuals, Truth and Power: From the Dreyfus Affair to the Gulf War.* [In Hebrew.] Tel Aviv: Am-Oved.

Segev, Tom. 1991. *The Seventh Million: Israelis and the Holocaust.* [In Hebrew.] Jerusalem: Keter.

Segev, Tom. 2000. *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust*. New York: Saint Martin's Press.

Shiloni, Smadar. 2005. "Against All Odds." *Ynet*, 25, no. 11. https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3174348,00.html

Silverstone, Roger. 1999. *Why Study the Media*. London: Sage Press.

Steir-Livny, Liat. 2015. "Holocaust Humor, Satire, and Parody on Israeli Television." *Jewish Film and New Media* 3, no. 2: 193–219.

Waxman, Danny, director. 1998. *TEKUMA*. Historical documentary series.

Zeltzer, Anat, director. 2008. *Shishim*. Historical documentary series.

Zimmerman, Moshe. 2002. *Leave My Holocaust Alone, The Impact of the Holocaust on Israeli Cinema and Society*. [In Hebrew.] Haifa/Lod: University of Haifa and Zmora-Bitan Publishers.

Žižek, Slavoj. 2002. *Welcome to the Desert of the Real: Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates*. London/New York: Verso.

3 Filters, Risks, and Ironies

An Inquiry between Nostalgia and Trauma

Mario Panico

Abstract
This article explores nostalgia as a filtered emotion that can distort the past when used as a political tool to consolidate collective identities. When nostalgia serves as an ideological instrument, it selectively highlights aspects conducive to hegemonic goals while ignoring contradictory elements. This interaction between nostalgic and traumatic memory is evident because the longing for the past inherently seeks an idealized version, often glossing over or transforming traumatic elements. Examining cases related to the reception of former Italian dictator Benito Mussolini and the Fascist past, this chapter investigates three narrative strategies and effects: filtering, communicative risk, and irony.

Keywords: communication risk; sizing; traumatic rehabilitation; Mussolini; fascism

Introduction

The relationship that bonds nostalgia and trauma has been always a tricky theoretical problem for cultural memory studies. Considering the social forms of remembering, how can it possibly be reasonable to connect the pain of a trauma with the nostalgia's essential desire "to go back"?

Several solutions and responses to this critical question have emerged from various scholars with different epistemological backgrounds. This scholarship has examined, for instance, the common dependence on the "impossibility and necessity of repetition" (Végsö 2013, 35); the shared impossibility of a cure (Horowitz 2010); the coping strategies activated by survivors in the process of remembering dramatic events like the Holocaust (Hertz

Van Liere, L. & Sremac, S. (eds), *Trauma and Nostalgia: Practices in Memory and Identity*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2024
DOI: 10.5117/9789048559220_CH03

1990); the recollection and artistic processes of second- and third-generation descendants of trauma victims (Hirsch and Spitzer 2010; Horowitz 2010); the specificities of intergenerational narratives related to conflict and post-conflict contexts (Frankish and Bradbury 2012; Gobodo-Madikizela 2012); and the commodification and touristification of private lives framed by traumatic contexts, as in former East Germany or in the former Eastern Bloc (Bach 2002; Todorova and Gille 2010; Angé and Berliner 2015). This chapter seeks to expand this debate, providing a semiotic perspective on the various modalities through which nostalgia and trauma can interact at the level of narrativity, modifying the logic in which the meanings of memory are constructed and transmitted to us.

Semiotics has always been interested in the function of emotions (or passions) in the texts that are present within cultures (see in particular Greimas and Fontanille 1991; Pezzini 1991; Pezzini 1998; Del Marco and Pezzini 2012). Among these emotions, nostalgia has always played a privileged role within these academic debates, thanks above all to Algirdas Julien Greimas, who in 1986 published an essay that was destined to change reflections on this passion of temporality and memory. That year, the French semiotician published a lexematic analysis of the French word *nostalgie*, considering the various pathological states that are produced in the subject who recognizes his/her positionality in the present and feels regret for something (an experience, a person, an object, etc.) that belongs to the irreversible past. With respect to the research objective of this chapter, Greimas's analysis is particularly important because it highlights the temporal comparison that nostalgia structures between the unappreciated present and the desired past. However, since Greimas provided a lexematic reflection that takes into consideration an individual subject rather than a cultural mechanism or narrative-communicative strategies, it is essential to connect this to work conducted on a collective and cultural level (cf. in particular Boym 2001; Mazzucchelli 2012; Jacobsen 2020a).

As such, nostalgia is considered here not just as an individual emotion or as a collective one with past restorative purposes (Boym 2001), but as a threefold apparatus: (i) a filter through which trauma is "reinvented" in comparison with the present, for ideological or economic reasons, thereby intentionally affecting (Grice 1957) the memory of specific groups predisposed to nostalgia; (ii) a rhetorical risk derived from the normalized banalization of collective trauma; (iii) a phenomenon subverted, with irony, in order to "rehabilitate" the trauma itself, therefore resisting and counteracting any kind of depotentiation of history.

The specificity that underpins these pages is not whether it is possible to feel *nostalgia for a trauma* but rather *how trauma representation can be affected by nostalgia* at the level of the production of meanings in texts. Specifically, I propose a dialogue between the constructivist theory of trauma (Alexander et al. 2004a; Alexander 2012; Eyerman 2019), which considers trauma always as a socially mediated object,[1] and the "memory filtering theory" proposed by Umberto Eco (2014). Doing so, the following discussion emphasizes the ambivalence of nostalgia as an emotion and a narrative tool that, when intersecting with trauma, produces links with imagination, fakeness, banalization, and the critical defense of difficult memories. On the epistemological level, I consider the relations between trauma and nostalgia not from an individual perspective but from a cultural one. Specifically, I consider how the agenda of what is worth remembering is addressed and layered by texts (cf. Demaria 2012; Violi 2017). In other words, the main premise structuring my argument is that the dialogue between trauma-pain and nostalgia-desire is intelligible in culture through texts produced in different institutional, political, and aesthetic arenas (Alexander 2004b, 16–17).

After considering how filters can change the size of a traumatic event, using as an example the case of Italian Fascism and the contemporary reception of the figure of Benito Mussolini (the second and third sections of this chapter), I propose three different perspectives on the relationship between trauma and nostalgia. In "Nostalgia, Filter, and Comparison with the Present," I consider the erosion of trauma when nostalgia is used as an intentional filter, devoted to edulcorating the past but always in comparison with an unsatisfactory present. In the following section, I consider how nostalgia can become a communication risk, as it is evoked by the text itself and "received" by the addressees. In the last part, before the conclusion, I provide a consideration of the role irony can play in the derision of nostalgia and, subsequently, in the reinvigoration and rehabilitation of trauma in narration. These three typologies are not to be considered as separate and exclusive; indeed, they can be found simultaneously in the same text and can overlap. Here I have chosen to examine them separately due to the main goal of the chapter: looking under the microscope at the various narrative interactions that can exist between nostalgia and trauma.

1 I adopt this theory with reference to Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic postulate, according to which reality is always mediated by signs. Thus, the idea of mediation, as it will be understood in the following pages, starts from this precise assumption: we have access to reality through a semiotic process of interpreting signs.

This chapter thus includes theoretical reflections that are supported and expanded via the analysis of case studies relating to popular culture and more ordinary things. In other words, I am less interested in the official texts of Fascism than in the "quotidian" ones we can have in relation to traumatic history. I demonstrate how common things like a political campaign in a peripheral part of Italy, a page of newspaper, a pack of pasta, a comic, or a coloring book can structure our gaze on the past, be it blindly or critically. The idea behind this approach is that cultural memory is not defined only by "high culture" but, on the contrary, is stratified and questioned at the level of the ordinary and infra-ordinary (see Perec 1997), generating "mnemonic communities" that share norms and beliefs about the past.

Filtering and Sizing

Analyzing how nostalgia affects trauma means first considering the filters that a culture uses to define its own memories (Violi 2017b). This can occur in different ways: as a mechanism that (more or less deliberately) erases certain pasts or leaves them in latency, or as one that forces a past to be reshaped or rose-tinted, in order to exist, to be expressed, or perhaps even to be the object of yearning. The concept of filtering, as I use it on this occasion, has a precise tradition that goes back to the work of Umberto Eco (1988; 2013; 2014). In it, filtering is a regulatory mechanism of cultural knowledge that allows for the "rational" assimilation of past events, enabling their coherent transmission in texts. Starting with the assumption that it would be impossible for a culture to remember everything of its own past, filtering serves to rationalize that group's knowledge, without a dangerous "over"-accumulation leading to confusion and anarchy. There are, as Eco always says, "very useful forgettings" (Eco 2014, 85) that serve precisely to organize the information.

The object of Eco's critical attention is thus not a "negative" filter, implying the denial and erasure of a certain historical event for political or ideological reasons, but rather the filters that are necessary in order not to overload "beyond the sustainable collective memory" (2014, 96). As Eco writes, "we need to know about the death of Julius Caesar but nothing about what his widow Calpurnia did after his assassination; it [filtering] provides precious details about the progress of the Battle of Waterloo but does not give us the names of all the participants, and so on and so forth" (2014, 85; see also Violi 2017; Pisanty 2020). This is certainly true at a general level, for an "economy of knowledge," but it is not without ethical problems in contexts

of difficult traumas, as it does not question the *agency* of whoever possesses and controls the "power of past narrativity." While this mechanism favors the assimilation of what has happened and the consolidation of collective identities, it is nonetheless open to forms of manipulation of past events that can deliberately omit substantial parts, fueling the oblivion and erosion of the painful past, not doing justice to the suffering of victims, and risking excessive reductions in the punishment of the perpetrators. This is possible in any context, not just in a post-conflict or post-traumatic situation, even with well-intentioned "carrier groups" (Alexander 2004b, 11).[2] What I call the "power of past narrativity" is not to be understood as a manipulative capacity that addresses only hegemonic and bad discourses in a strict sense, but instead as a capacity of all those subjects or institutions who, in a given historical moment, have a particular symbolic and semantic influence, building the "memorial agenda–setting" of a culture and the memorability of an event. In this regard, the mechanism of filtering is not the result of an apolitical or naïve decision. Even if a memory text is conveyed as "natural" because it is normalized inside a culture, it is the result of a "cultural cut" produced with specific agency. In this sense, filtering is not just about "what is said" but about "what is meant to be said," therefore focusing precisely on communicative intentions that highlight not only what is "remembered," that is, textualized, but also the purpose of that remembering, i.e., the cultural needs behind that choice.

Moreover, the filters "size" the past. They are responsible for a *qualitative evaluation* of the past precisely because the "traumaticity" or the "memorability" of the event is constructed, rewritten, and re-discussed through them. As such, within the process of filtering, it is possible to attribute specific roles and characteristics to all the subjectivities involved: victims, perpetrators, and implicated subjects (see Rothberg 2019, 2020). Filtering thus corresponds to an action of judgment that defines the boundaries between what is bad and what is good, building from that foundation the entire narrative structure that serves to communicate the past episode, moreover attributing its positive or negative features.

2 Following Alexander's definition, carrier groups "are the collective agents of the trauma process.... Carrier groups may be elites, but they may also be denigrated and marginalized classes. They may be prestigious religious leaders or groups whom the majority has designated as spiritual pariahs. A carrier group can be generational, representing the perspectives and interests of a younger generation against an older one. It can be national, pitting one's own nation against a putative enemy. It can be institutional, representing one particular social sector or organization against others in a fragmented and polarized social order" (Alexander 2004b, 11).

Expanding on the case of traumatic memory, Alexander (2004c, 202) suggests that it becomes a dramatic episode within the social-textual environment of a group: "Becoming evil is a matter, first and foremost, of representation. Depending on the nature of representation, a traumatic event may be regarded as ontologically evil, or its badness, its 'evilness' may be conceived as contingent and relative, as something that can be ameliorated and overcome." This idea of "becoming" something is very provoking and challenging, because one must take into consideration the fact that there is no natural meaning of cultural memory; it is always a matter of semantic *arbitrariness* (Alexander 2004c, 202).

Every culture, according to the kind of filter it decides to adopt, has the power to decide who are the "bad guys," whether their responsibility can ultimately be forgivable or if they must stay forever in the pantheon of "evilness," and whether they belong to the filtering culture or if they are from outside. Here, the problem is not the factual correspondence of the text with the reality that it aspires (or claims to aspire) to represent, but how a culture defines and changes the *weight* (Alexander 2004c, 203) of it in a process of self-description. A possible question that could be posed, for example, is to ask whether a so-called evil is presented that way for ulterior motives of self-absolution or self-accusation in order to seek forgiveness or justice.

It is easy to understand how nostalgia can again alter the weight of a memory or a trauma. This process can also occur at the level of popular memory, that is, corresponding to those texts not produced for institutional purposes. This is apparent in the Italian context, for example, where the institutional-level filters that have rightly and legitimately textualized the Fascist dictatorship as a trauma have certainly not prevented the creation of countless re-filtrations of that past in the public sphere. As we will see in the following sections, within these narrations the return of Benito Mussolini and his policies are made desirable "again" in the present. Indeed, as many scholars have attested (see for example Stewart 1984; Boym 2001; Niemeyer 2014; Jacobsen 2020b), nostalgia is a matter of repetition: at a general level, it is the desire to be in connection with some space or time *once again*; at a narrative level, where this yearning is constructed and shared, it becomes an issue of *re*-writing, re-imagining, re-showing, re-enacting, re-enforcing, re-producing. In this replica mechanism, truthfulness takes a back seat while fakeness is made credible, enabling a distortion and filtering of pain to make that particular past desirable. In this *re*-writing, trauma can be edulcorated, banalized, or even reenforced through nostalgia—a nostalgia that is, however, fluid and positioned differently every time according to

the terms of the past's desirability: as a principal objective, as an effect generated by the text, or as an excuse to delegitimate nostalgia itself.

Less Cruel than German Nazis: A Brief Contextualization

Before entering the main part of my account, I would like to outline briefly the coordinates of the relationship between Italian culture and the memory of Fascism.

In the Italian context, the traumaticity of the Fascist dictatorship depends on the arena in which its representation is proposed. At an institutional level (i.e., the memory Italy proposes to itself and to the other countries in official ceremonies, for example), Mussolini and his politics are represented as traumatic. Take, for example, the law of June 20, 1952, no. 645, also known as the "Scelba law," which prohibits the reconstitution of the Fascist Party, or the 1993 "Mancino law," which, complementing the former, should condemn and sanction any kind of gesture or slogan connected with Nazi fascist ideology and aimed at inciting hatred and discrimination. Moreover, April 25, the day of the Italian liberation from Nazi fascist occupation, is a national holiday on the Italian calendar. These are just a handful of many other examples, but what is fundamental for this discussion is that the brutalities of Fascism have been filtered, codified, and made part of Italy's memory norms as events with a negative connotation, with a legal warning that they cannot be repeated in a civilized and democratic society.[3]

This is only the institutional arena, however. Indeed, the mechanisms activated differ, for example, in the political or popular ones, where many crimes committed by Fascist soldiers (in the Western Africa colonies, for example) were silenced for reasons of self-absolution (cf. Del Boca 2005), therefore causing the banalization of the past and the re-sizing of what happened in cultural memory (cf. Gundle 2013, 243). A well-known example of

3 This is not a perfect filter—there is no such thing. Of course, even in this first official version, some elements have been excluded, others underestimated or left latent. It is worth considering, for example, that after World War II, there was no equivalent of the Nuremburg Trials in Italy. In fact, many members of the Fascist Party and the Republic of Salò became members of parliament among the right wing—for example, Giorgio Almirante, who during the Fascist regime was an important exponent of the Fascist government and after the war was the founder of the Movimento Sociale Italiano (a Fascist-inspired conservative political party). Though it is certainly interesting and illustrative of the process described here, to expand further on the problematic and selective "official memory" of Fascism in Italy at a political and historical level would risk detracting from the aims of this chapter. Rather, I refer the reader to Filippo Focardi (2020).

that is represented by the collective stereotype connected to the war period "cattivo tedesco, bravo italiano" (bad German, good Italian) (Focardi 2013), shorthand for the fact that, in the public perception, the crimes committed by Fascist soldiers during WWII were less cruel than those of German Nazis, typically represented as the absolute evil capable of the most terrible actions (Focardi 2013). Prevalent across a variety of media discourses, from cinema to television (Holdaway and Missero 2018, 344–45; Roghi 2013, 258; Gundle 2013, 243, Filippi 2020, 166), this stereotype ultimately became a norm of public memory that continues to feed a form of Italianness built on the cultural acknowledgement that Italy came out of the war as a "victim," dissociating the responsibilities of the Italian people from those of Mussolini and his *camerata*. At a public level, unlike Germany, Italy has generally articulated its Fascist past as a sad and unfortunate parenthesis[4] of its history. This interpretation instead serves a "resistant" narrative of Italians as partisans.

Since the end of the war, this "fascismo all'acqua di rose" (rosewater fascism)—as some scholars have called it (Focardi 2004, 56), referring to its lightened representation—has provided more fuel for revisionism and the alteration of historical facts, thus enabling nostalgic yearnings for a moment that Italy has not yet engaged with properly.

This ambiguous modality of working through the past is also evident in the practices organized by groups of neo-fascist and nostalgic people in the village of Predappio, birthplace of Benito Mussolini (in northern Italy, around seventy kilometers from Bologna). Since 1957, when the dictator's dead body was buried in the town's cemetery, the small village has become a favorite destination for pilgrims who organize parades to honor him three times a year (on the anniversaries of the dictator's birth, death, and the March on Rome; see for example: Serenelli 2013a, 2013b; Heywood 2019; Panico 2020a; Lowe 2020). This is made further problematic by a series of nostalgic souvenir shops along the main street of the village, Via Giacomo Matteotti. These are spaces in which it is possible to buy objects of various kinds and uses that are adorned with Mussolini's face or phrases attributed to him. Just a few of many examples include T-shirts with the words "Molti nemici, molto onore" (Many enemies, much honor), lighters with the image of Mussolini performing a Roman salute, or calendars with monthly photographs of the dictator. In this space, Mussolini is textualized both as a pop star and

4 The reference to Fascism as a parenthesis comes from Benedetto Croce, who in 1944 wrote that the part of Italian history before the dictatorship should not be forgotten and should be respected nonetheless, despite what had happened during Fascism. This declaration of course triggered a lengthy and animated debate in historical and cultural studies.

a saint (Panico 2020b), "rose-tinting" his politics but also fetishizing the image and memory of the dictator.

Nostalgia, Filter, and Comparison with the Present

The philosopher Avishai Margalit (2009, 10–11) has argued that nostalgia

> can distort reality in a morally unpleasant way. It is true that there are *soft forms of distortion* caused by nostalgia. From this point of view, distorting reality by retouching a photograph in which the wrinkles of the person portrayed are removed is a soft form of distortion: it is a harmless way of making someone look a little younger. However, there are *serious forms of distortion caused by nostalgia*, where it is not a question of removing wrinkles but of *removing the rot of a world that has passed away*. (My italics and translation)

Evoking the field of photography and photo editing, Margalit summarizes in just one example nostalgia's capacity to beautify and remove traumatic events. His work engages in detail with what has been termed "Ostalgie," that is, nostalgia for life under East Germany before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. This provides a textbook example of how the yearning for a bygone era—one that was nonetheless also characterized by painful and damaging experiences—can work. From this perspective, nostalgia is a filter that works like a post-production tool, devoted to correcting the imperfections of the past and making any possible conflictual dimensions latent in order to erode the memories of pain and facilitate the possibility of yearning.

As I mentioned before, cultural memory is always the result of filtering: the selection of a particular section of the past events. In this sense, the most glaring difference between the nostalgia filter and any other filter lies in the fact that it proposes a "sifting": not only a semantic evaluation (i.e., a sort of content discrimination determining what of the event should become a text) but also a *present-past quality comparison*. Nostalgia as filter is mainly directed toward a positivization of what will be re-presented as past, stressing the irreversible aspects that are missing in the present that hosts the textualization. Therefore, nostalgia as filter is configured not only as a clipping but also as an emotional "flavor" that is given to texts and discourses.

This mechanism is quite interesting, not only as a means of intercepting those tragic aspects that remain latent but also as an invitation to consider

how the past is magnified, edulcorated, and promoted as the desirable solution for the present. What the nostalgia-as-filter proposes is an erosion of trauma, a blunting or neutralization of the aspects of the past that are not yearned for—the pain of dictatorial persecution, the emotional and economic hardships of war—which are instead overwritten, through an operation of "editing" by "the desirable" and by experiences that the nostalgic can legitimately hope to see reactivated.

The *newly* eroded trauma text created by the action of the nostalgia filter—i.e., the *new* story in its embellished version, stripped of all conflict-generating elements—enters the space of culture by being welcomed by the "predisposed": those who accept the embellished story, for varied reasons linked to political convictions, social conditions, or a lack of information. In doing so, the predisposed activate another level of enthusiasm that is no longer linked to the internal mechanisms of textual construction, but rather to a more grounded, widespread nostalgia in the space of social cognition, transforming that emotion into a norm used to understand the present.

An example of how this mechanism can work at the public level can be illustrated through some forms of Italian everyday discourse. In spoken and digital conversations, there is a commonly used turn of phrase that anticipates the embellished translation of fascism and the figure of Mussolini. It consists of four words that, due to their usage in the last few years in neo- or post-fascist arenas, have been coded and recognized as nostalgic slogans. I am referring to "Quando c'era Lui…" (When He was here…; the "Lui" of course stands for Benito Mussolini), and the words are always followed by the description of a situation that positively compares Fascism to the present moment in which the phrase is uttered. For example: "When he was here, the trains arrived on time." This might be uttered by a neo-fascist militant at the station while he impatiently waits and sees the delay of his train increasing on the departures board. Another example: "When he was here, there was more security on the streets," a statement pronounced each time one reads in the newspapers about an episode of violence in neighborhoods. "When he was here, there were just male and female," a variation uttered by someone who is irritated by the (legitimate) re-conceptualization of the gender spectrum. The iterations continue, one for each type of quotidian issue, large or small, seen as an affront to racist, homophobic, or extremely nationalist people.

At a more general level, this phrase is emblematic due to its capacity to construct new memory norms based on fakeness. Those who nostalgically filter the traumatic past do not generate in their "addressees" (who are often self-appointed) just a desire for the past. Rather, they normalize the erosion of

that past's trauma, legitimizing a false belief, and one that can even become the competing memory of the official and institutional version in which Fascism was a traumatic event. In this sense, the rhetoric of "Quando c'era Lui" proposes the production of "new regimes of truth" (Foucault 1980, 133) that endorse other points of view and make institutional memory just one of many representations, and one that is not faithful to the *new* account (cf. Lorusso, 2020). Furthermore, all this implies the production of new memory skills through which Mussolini is configured as the leader who is most capable of organizing society in the best possible way. And since he is no longer alive, he is to be yearned for and desired again.

This way of talking about Fascism in everyday life deserves to be investigated for more than one reason. Firstly, because it has now become a concrete cultural habit that in recent years has been made to function as a truth device to denounce the malfunctioning of Italian society and/or politics. Secondly, this phrase exemplifies how the filter of nostalgia works in relation to a traumatic event: it turns its gaze to the past, "cleansing" it of its negative aspects and re-functionalizing it as positive, close, and necessary in comparison with the present, within which the discontent that generates the comparison itself is nested.

Conducting meticulous historical research in order to refute the fake news that mythologizes Fascism and the figure of Benito Mussolini, Francesco Filippi (2019, 5–6) writes, "In a time of speed and fluid values, having a safe and quiet place of refuge is refreshing, even if this place is memory, even if this memory is false. Constructing lies about the past also serves, in Mussolini's case, to set up an effective and simple narrative of today, a perspective for which to strive" (my translation).

It is important to underline that "Quando c'era Lui" should not be intended just as a linguistic utterance. It can also be a textual strategy, devoted to the glorification of the former dictator and the Fascist past in relation to the present. To demonstrate this account, I will consider two contemporary political campaign advertisements, one dated from 2017 and the other from 2020. One aspect I would like to emphasize first, however, is that these texts relate to local communities and contexts, so they are not representative of official political communication. This detail is important because it helps to show how, far from the spotlight of the national mainstream political discourse, nostalgia for Mussolini's past and politics manages to reach a different level of explicitness. This does not mean that Mussolini is totally absent from the national political discourse, but rather that there is a sort of "degree of explicitness" that changes when we consider national or local communication. At a national level, Mussolini is evoked more or less only

in an implicit or veiled way (i.e., Matteo Salvini[5] who on Facebook uses phrases like "Many Enemies Much Honor," historically attributed to the former dictator).

The first example is located in Campania, a region in southern Italy. An association close to the right-wing party Noi con Salvini[6] (We with Salvini) publicly affixed a poster (the content is translated into English in Table 1) that demonstrates how the filter of nostalgia acts on the construction of a past-present comparison. The poster graphically divides and semantically opposes two parts: "good fascism" on the left and "bad democracy" on the right. More specifically, the left side includes a half-length photo of Benito Mussolini in military uniform. Beneath this image are listed all the (false) good things accomplished by Fascist policy (i.e., having introduced pensions, council housing for the disadvantaged, work for all). On the right-hand side, under a photo of the politician Matteo Renzi—then secretary of the left-wing Democratic Party and outgoing prime minister—we see a list, opposed to the former, with the same benefits "rewritten" as stolen from Italian citizens using an anti-immigrant rhetoric. The poster reads:

Fascism	**Democracy**
He provided pensions.	He removed pensions.
He provided social housing.	He removes houses from Italians to give them to immigrants.
He made laws to protect the disabled.	He gives subsidies of €1200 per month to immigrants.
He made Italy great.	He makes disabled people pay the IMU (housing tax).
He made everyone work because there should be no parasites in the Homeland.	He is selling off Italy.

Table 1: The English translation of the content of the poster of the group Noi con Salvini (2017)

This is how nostalgia as filter can work practically. It is evident that nostalgic intention of this text constructs Fascism as a luminous period by leveraging nationalism, and then by emphasizing the temporal and qualitative difference between being Italian during the Fascist period and being Italian during

5 At the time of writing, Matteo Salvini is the leader of the right-wing political party Lega.

6 The leader and all the political parties immediately distanced themselves from this episode, with Salvini declaring publicly that he was unaware that the advertisement had been made. A photo of the poster is available at: https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2017/08/09/salerno-noi-con-salvini-espone-in-strada-manifesti-inneggianti-al- fascismo/3785046/ (accessed May 10, 2022).

Figure 1: The political advertising for the Amalfi Airport (photo courtesy of Fabrizio Todisco). The English translation of the message: Promised by De Luca. Realized at the time of Mussolini (1926). The dream airport. Vote social right-wing for the region."

democracy. The aim is not only to propose a historical comparison to understand what has changed but to condemn the present in an inventive way, matching false information about Fascism with xenophobic exaggerations.

This process is further made evident in the second example, concerning another political advertisement erected near Naples in 2020 (Figure 1), on behalf of another right-wing party, Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy). The campaign was a provocation to the then president of the Campania region, Vincenzo De Luca, and the politician's plan to revive the airport on the Amalfi Coast, an area of southern Italy that attracts a large number of tourists from all over the world every year. Indeed, the issue represents a huge economic issue for the local community. The nostalgic opposition between good-past and inconsistent-present is generated with the comparison of the words "promessa" (promise) and "fatto" (realized). What is questioned is the "pragmatism of the past" and the "inconsistency of the present," with the double aim of criticizing the left-wing administration and extolling the figure of Benito Mussolini.

In both of these cases, there is a precise nostalgic intentionality on the part of the "addresser" of the message. This relates not only to the

rewriting of the past but also to the ideological and political comparison of two temporalities: the finite past and the active but unsatisfactory present. With the notion of intentionality, I refer not only to the purely communicative level, i.e., "what is said," but also to a more "ideological" one, linked—as Paul Grice (1957) has observed in speech act theory—to the will and agency of those who produce the message and design a precise and political "meant to say" through the text. In this misleading comparison, it is evident how the explicit references to Benito Mussolini and to the Fascist past are meant to offer (fake) solutions to fake contemporary problems. But what is important, from a semiotic point of view, is not the question of whether they speak the truth, but rather how they fabricate fakeness. Nostalgia as filter adopts a strategy that is present-parasitic: in order to be made something "credible" and "acceptable," the proposed fascist claims use discontent in the present as the basis of argumentation. Mussolini is perceived as a man of providence not because the texts somehow demonstrate his greatness with proof; on the contrary, he is believable as a strong politician because this very rhetoric is built on the exaggeration of a present problem for which Mussolini's past solution is proposed as still relevant and useful.

Nostalgia and Communication Risk

Nostalgia can be present in texts not only as an intentional filter that conveys an explicit and overt desire to annihilate the present but also as a "meaning-effect," caused by an impaired representation of the past in contexts that do not typically belong to the fascist arena, or at least are not recognized as openly close to Mussolini's ideology. In speaking of nostalgia as an "effect," I refer to the nostalgic *impression* produced by a text, as perceived by a recipient subject who meets the proposed representation. This impression is not to be considered a mere personal evaluation linked to the specific tastes of the subject-addressee. It is at the level of manifestation—how the story is proposed in the text—that this evaluation can be generated. Unlike the previous cases, here I am not concerned with the intentions of those who produce the message but with the intentions of the text itself and of those who "receive" it (cf. Eco 1990). In this second typology, nostalgia imposes itself as *communication risk*, which impacts on subjects at the level of reception. I do not investigate the addresser's intentions, because in this case, since there is no comparison with the present (and thus there is no explicitly proposed restoration of the Fascist past), the fascist and nostalgic

agency of those who design the communication is less intelligible from a semiotic point of view.[7]

The first example concerns one of the most important Italian dailies, *Il Corriere della Sera*, which is not considered a neo-fascist or even a right-wing newspaper. On the eve of the anniversary of Italy's liberation from Nazi fascism (the day before April 25) in 2020, the *Corriere* began a new sales initiative, allowing readers to buy a book about the history of Fascism along with the newspaper on the following days. The volume contained essays on history and critiques written by important and highly recognized authors and scholars in Italy. But what is perhaps more interesting is how the initiative was publicized, through a visual promotional campaign (Fig. 2), which generated a wide debate in Italy.[8] The advertisement, inserted between the pages of the newspaper, presents Mussolini looking out from a balcony. The dictator is in military uniform, smiling at a large and festive crowd. The "numerosity" of the people is represented by visually placing people as the background of the image itself. In other words, Mussolini in the image is surrounded by people cheering and inciting him.

The first thing to note is that the scene represented is similar to those used in Fascist propaganda during the *Ventennio* (the two decades of Fascism in Italy) to build an image of Mussolini as "the man of the crowd." Moreover, the image of Mussolini on a balcony specifically is not unproblematic either, since the former dictator often used balconies as a platform to speak to the public. To give just two examples, both connected to painful moments of Italian Fascist history, that provide a measure of the symbolic and political value that this stage/space had for Mussolini: in 1938 he introduced the racial laws from a balcony of the town hall in Trieste, and in 1940 he declared Italy's entry into the war from the balcony of Piazza Venezia in Rome (the same one in the photo).

Most strikingly, the payoff that accompanies the photo reads: "Il Ventennio che ha cambiato l'Italia" (The twenty years that changed Italy). At the bottom of the page, to introduce the details of the books that will make up the collection, we also see: "A series of great essays to know and understand Fascism."

7 It is worth specifying here that, with this statement, I do not exclude the possibility of nostalgic intentionality in the producers of the texts considered here. Rather, I seek merely to make explicit the fact that the Fascist past is not compared to the present in these texts: they lack the "restorative" dynamic and therefore also the intention to communicate a desire to return to the past as it once was.

8 For the reconstruction of this debate, see, for example, the article by the historian Carlo Greppi (2020) "Ma perché siamo ancora fascisti?" (But why are we still fascist?).

Figure 2: The first advertisement for the history of Fascism books, *Corriere della Sera*, 2020
Source: *Corriere della Sera*

Following the release of this advertisement, the editors of the *Corriere della Sera* were accused of softening the Fascist past and communicating a nostalgic notion of the regime. Several factors support this thesis. First, at all levels of the whole visual composition, the traumatic aspect of Fascism is muted. The image of Mussolini smiling at the crowd is a critical reminder of the pre-wartime epoch when the dictator was acclaimed, popular, and loved by the majority of Italians. This image is further romanticized through the definition of the *Ventennio* simply a moment of "change," which semantically does not correspond to a period of pain. Moreover, this ambiguity is also expressed by the description of the material: the books will help to "know and understand" Fascism, which in turn is defined as a "fenomeno politico cruciale" (crucial political phenomenon), once again dodging words like "dictatorship" or "trauma." Of course, to speak of Fascism as a "phenomenon" is not incorrect per se, as it was certainly a political phenomenon. In terms of public communication, though, in the context of contemporary Italy, where admiration for Mussolini is growing every day, this is doubtless troubling insofar as it offers a misleading and banal historical account that risks nostalgic glorification and a legitimizing validation of neo-fascism.

Following numerous complaints, the newspaper changed the tone of its communication, "redesigning" the structure of the visual text (Fig. 3). From my perspective, this change represents an interesting event because it reveals quite precisely the most relevant aspects that generated what I referred

Figure 3: The second advertisement for the history of Fascism books, *Corriere della Sera*, 2020. Source: *Corriere della Sera*

to above as the nostalgia effect. In other words, the very operation of a "nostalgia effect correction," that is, proposing a less glorified representation of the past, illustrates precisely how memory transmission at a cultural level is strongly dependent on the visual and verbal grammar of the text.

To reduce (somewhat[9]) the nostalgia effect of the first case, the second iteration uses "subtraction" and "pejorative rewording." Regarding the first point, the editors eliminate certain visual elements: Mussolini on the second cover is no longer smiling. He is still in uniform but no longer wears a fez, the typical Fascist hat (today one of the most used symbols in neo-fascist contexts). He is still facing the balcony but is not happily leaning out toward the cheering crowd. In the photo, there is no longer an audience, hence erasing the symbolic link to the popularity of the dictator during his dictatorship. On the other hand, the text is reworded by changing the most ambiguous statements to present a less ambiguous judgment and a more negative qualification of the past. In the second case, the nostalgia effect is avoided, as the text takes a clear position on the past; there is no room for the glorification of the dictator, and the period of his domination is condemned as a shocking fact. More specifically still, in the payoff the

9 Though this operation is certainly corrective and reduces many of the risks of the first iteration, some elements remain problematic: in particular, the trauma of Fascism remains unrepresented. Not by chance, it seems to me, the second version still does not use the term dictator(ship).

Ventennio is no longer described as having "changed" Italy, but rather as having "sconvolto" (shocked, upset) the country.

A further instance of this same nostalgia effect, albeit with a different outcome, is found in another quotidian example. At the beginning of 2021, the global pasta company La Molisana made headlines with the description of a pasta shape named "Abissine" (Abyssinians[10]). The description—which originally appeared on the website and on the pasta packaging but has since been officially removed—read as follows: "In the 1930s, Italy celebrated the season of colonialism with new pasta shapes: Tripolitan, Benghazian, Assabian, and Abyssinian. Can semolina pasta become a unifier? Why not! … The name *Abissine Rigate* certainly has a lictorian flavor (sapore littorio[11]), but abroad the name became 'shells.'"[12] The same emphasis is placed on another pasta format that recalls the colonialist endeavors of Fascist Italy, *Tripoline* (Tripolitan, from Tripoli): "the name evokes distant, exotic places and has a colonial flavor."[13]

"Pasta semolina as unifying element," "lictorian flavor," "exotic places," and "colonial flavor" are a group of problematic and revisionist words that elucidate the inconsistency between what should be *memorized* and what is remembered of the past instead. The Italian colonial past, never really thematized at a public level, is textualized here as an adventurous mission with a mythical atmosphere, silencing the violence and abuse of the Ethiopian and Eritrean populations at the hands of Fascist soldiers. Conquered Africa is, even in 2021, categorized as an *exotic* place, an adjective that refers to a semantic field of discovery, adventure, and curiosity and certainly not murderous violence. In addition to these obvious considerations on the unfortunate communication of the pasta company (which was defended

10 During the Italian colonialist campaign in Africa, Italian soldiers occupied the territories of Eritrea and Ethiopia, known at the time by the exonym Abyssinia.

11 The word "littorio," used as an adjective here, refers to the *fascio littorio* ("fasces" in English), which was the symbol used by the Fascist regime (derived from ancient Roman symbolism). During Fascism it became a keyword to refer to all the things that were "purely" Fascist, for example, "gioventù italiana del littorio" (Italian "lictorial" youth, a Fascist youth organization). Moreover, Littoria was the name of a city near Rome founded during Fascism (renamed Latina in 1945).

12 This "new" pasta shape was a (temporary, following criticism) re-release, reinstating the names used, as per the description, in the 1930s. The original description in Italian is as follows: "Negli anni Trenta l'Italia celebra la stagione del colonialismo con nuovi formati di pasta: Tripoline, Bengasine, Assabesi e Abissine. La pasta di semola diventa elemento aggregante? Perché no! … Di sicuro sapore littorio, il nome delle Abissine Rigate all'estero si trasforma in 'shells,' ovvero conchiglie."

13 In the original, "il nome evoca luoghi lontani, esotici e ha un sapore coloniale."

by many anti-fascist associations regarding the immediate accusations of nostalgia), it is also interesting to consider the normalization of the banalized trauma that enables messaging like this.

Given the ordinariness of their contexts, the examples in this section are more infamous than the political and intentional ones, as they represent the symptoms of a diffuse cultural illness that affects the representation of the traumatic past, using nostalgia as form of compensation for not having worked through it. On a theoretical level, these cases demonstrate how dangerous the trivializing reiteration of the filtered trauma can be. The stereotype of Italians as good people, to re-invoke an example cited above, is not only a form of self-representation but also a modality of understanding reality, one of the ways in which a group of people figure and pre-figure its own characteristics, legitimating both the desire to return to a so-called great moment and the unproblematic attitude to a violent past.

Nostalgia, Irony, and Trauma Rehabilitation

In a scene from the film *Le vie del Signore sono finite* (The ways of the Lord are over,1987), directed by and starring Massimo Troisi (who gained international recognition as an actor in *Il postino*/*The Postman* in 1994) and set in the Fascist era, the main character, Camillo, is in a tearoom with Anita, a fervent admirer of Benito Mussolini. Anita praises Mussolini, pointing out that "Since he's been around… trains run on time, and everything works!" The dialogue is a direct critique of and reference to contemporary stereotypes—those that I mentioned in the fourth section of this chapter. Camillo's quick response is: "He makes the trains arrive on time, but you didn't need to make him head of government, it would have been enough to make him station chief." The response nevertheless causes a group of Fascists, alerted by Anita herself who was annoyed by the irony directed at her beloved Duce, to attack Camillo. This brief example is helpful, as it introduces the last narrative strategy mentioned above used in the relationship between nostalgia and trauma: that of irony. In particular, here it becomes clear how irony, on the one hand, succeeds in subverting, ridiculing, and belittling the arguments of those who profess a nostalgic desire or positively recall the years of Fascist dictatorship and, on the other, proposes a simultaneous rehabilitation of trauma as a painful event. From a theoretical perspective, I intend to examine irony here not only as a rhetorical figure based on antiphrasis, i.e., expressing a meaning with the aim of making the opposite understood, but also to emphasize

how it mentions something that has been said before in order to echo it in a distorting way (as proposed by Sperber and Wilson 1981). In my case, the "something said before" corresponds to all the stereotypical sentences and beliefs that link Fascism (and Mussolini) to a positive moment in Italian history.

In Italy, irony—and satire—about the Fascist period, its legacy, and its nostalgia can be considered a full-fledged genre, especially but not exclusively in the field of cinema. Examples of such films include *Vogliamo i colonnelli* (We want the colonels, 1973) by Mario Monicelli, *Quando c'era LUI... caro le*i!*.*[14] (When HE was here, my dear!, 1978) by Giancarlo Santi, *Fascisti su Marte* (Fascists on Mars, 2006) by Corrado Guzzanti and Igor Skofic, or even the more recent *Sono tornato* (I'm back, 2018) by Luca Miniero. Though they have different temporal settings, intentions, and production values, all these films overturn Fascist imagery and ridicule the political conviction of the Fascists and their outdated aesthetics.

Representing Fascist imagery ironically is an operation that aims to reverse the point of view in order to frame the phenomenon from an unprecedented perspective (Cadorna 2009), which can make the actions of those who declare themselves nostalgic for Fascism seem illogical and absurd, therefore unmasking the fragile argumentation underlying their form of memory and their emotional attachment to the past.

Another central feature of these examples is that irony acts as a revealing and disempowering device. By exaggerating the characterization of nostalgic fascists, irony not only highlights their anachronisms but also acts as an instrument of semantic power reduction, making nostalgic people less "fearsome" and less "dangerous" as they become laughable. In this sense, irony both reduces and relaunches as well as reformulates nostalgia as a pure delirium of memory imagination; it adds a contemporary critique of fascism as a harmful ideology.

This kind of mechanism is exemplified by an editorial phenomenon evident in the comic series *Quando c'era Lui* (2017) by Stefano Antonucci, Daniele Fabbri, and Mario Perrotta, which sold more than sixty thousand copies in Italy. The collected volume is composed of four issues that tell the story of Mussolini coming back to Italy in the present, following a Frankenstein-like scientific experiment organized by a group of neo-fascists along with a German scientist who physically resembles Hitler. Surprisingly, however—in one of the more explicit points of irony in the whole series—the

14 The title is an ironic reference of the neo- and post-fascist slogan "Quando c'era lui," as described in the fourth section of this chapter.

resurrection operation causes Mussolini's skin to change color. Though Mussolini is now black, the neo-fascists try everything to hide this detail from the Italian population.

In addition to its representation of systemic racism in Italian culture, there are two elements of the comic book that are particularly relevant here. The first is how the comic mocks those who are nostalgic for the Duce, describing it as a sort of inconsistent fetish and sexual obsession. Second, the volume casts important light on the dramatic and negative aspects of the figure of Mussolini, thematizing, in a sort of parallel line with respect to ironic nostalgia, the rehabilitation of trauma: in spite of the comedy of the volume, the comic insists on the violence of fascism and the figure of Mussolini as a serious problem for society.

With regard to the first point, neo-fascists and nostalgic people are characterized as crazy old folks (i.e., Fig. 4), violent young men of low intelligence (Fig. 5), or politicians (of both genders) who are sexually obsessed with the body of Mussolini (Fig. 6).

Figures 4–6 provide a handful of examples of these characterizations. As the frames of the comic book show, the humor is visual (they are all grotesque caricatures of their "types") but also contextual: for example, in Figure 5 the man auditioning is told "we'll let you know," playing up the general failures in the *DuX Factor*. These characterizations deliberately exaggerate the traits of the subjects, who always seem a little "drunk" and exalted in the presence of the figure of Mussolini. Both before his return and after the experiment, the nostalgic and neo-fascist characters are always represented as immersed in paradoxical situations (for example, Mussolini in white face singing in yet another televised reality contest), as having cognitive detachment from reality or easily believing the conspiracy theories that circulate on social networks (i.e., an anti-Ikea, anti-Swedish tirade), and as behaving in an entirely absurd way. The irony behind these characters emerges from the fact that they are familiar—albeit exaggerated—behaviors, claims, and images that are present in the discourses of real-life nostalgic people in contemporary Italy. By representing these characters in such a grotesque way, however, the volume undermines and blunts their ideologies.

In parallel to these more ironic representations, the comic strip also includes a very clear, negative characterization of the Duce who does not hesitate to brutally kill not only his enemies but also his own subordinates and worshippers—including the German doctor who brought him back to life. I think this is an interesting aspect of the comic, because it highlights yet another possible relationship between the representation of nostalgia

Figures 4, 5, and 6: The auditions for *DuX Factor* in *Quando c'era Lui* (issue 1); neo-fascists working through disappointment with violence (issue 1); a woman desperate to have sex with Mussolini (issue 3).
Images reproduced with the permission of the authors (Ó Stefano Antonucci, Daniele Fabbri, and Mario Perrotta) and the publishing house (Ó Shockdom).

and trauma. The laughter that "weakens" the menace of neo-fascism is also tied to a more direct and explicit reflection on violence, which is not reduced to mere caricature.

In other words, paradoxical scenes, such as when the black Duce raps against gay marriage or gender fluidity, are complemented by parts that emphasize and invite reflection on Mussolini as a ruthless man, in love only with his egoistic project of leading Italy. A clear example of this is the very bloody scene in which Mussolini (at this point having become famous again) shoots an anti-fascist girl in the head, after the young woman had been captured by Fascist militants and brought to the dictator (Fig. 7) because she posted criticism of him online. In this case, the words that Mussolini pronounces before executing the woman are emblematic:

> "Sometimes I feel nostalgic, you know? I liked you better when you were hiding in the mountains and putting notes in bicycle frames."
> "Now you're so predictable."
> "…you fight your battles on social networks, and my hierarchs can easily track you with GPS."
> "Every day you make your opinion public, you know? You practically come to me on your own."
> "There was a time when I would have simply given you castor oil, dear. But I won't be so good to you, you know why?"
> "We villains, unlike you, we study history carefully! Because it helps…"
> "…not to repeat the mistakes of the past."
> "What is that you say?"
> "Bella, ciao!"

Figure 7: The scenes in which Mussolini kills the anti-fascist girl (issue 4).
Images reproduced with the permission of the authors (ÓStefano Antonucci, Daniele Fabbri, and Mario Perrotta) and the publishing house (ÓShockdom).

There are various levels of meaning that demonstrate the rehabilitation of trauma in this narration. The first, the most evident and obvious, corresponds to the representation of Mussolini as a violent murderer and not as idiotic, clumsy, and unintelligent, like his followers. In addition to this first level, it is important to note the way in which Mussolini describes himself as "nostalgic" before killing the anti-fascist woman. The dictator says he is yearning for the bygone times of the war when it was more "exciting" to hunt for partisans and anti-fascists to punish.

In this sense, the nostalgia of those who really lived and experienced Fascism, like Mussolini—who was its advocate and promoter, in a way its number one witness—takes on a tragic meaning, becoming no longer a somewhat naïve yearning, a desire that characterizes the foolish. In this scene, nostalgia for Fascism becomes something truly dangerous for today's context.

Unlike neo-fascist "armchair nostalgia" (Appadurai 1996, 78), that is, the nostalgia of a past historical time felt by those without direct experience of it, Mussolini's indexical nostalgia, based on personal experience, shows how dramatic and horrible the consequences of the restoration of fascism

could be. There would not simply be "trains running on time," but oppression and persecution.

The logical assumption that this final part of issue 4 establishes is that the only *real* nostalgia for fascism is *just* a nostalgia for violence, a nostalgia for trauma. This scene therefore presents one of the examples in the comic in which mockery is paused to make a critical assessment of the desire for fascism: on the surface, it appears to be the stuff of "clowns," while in reality it is structured on violent impulses and violent desires.

To conclude this reflection on the ordinary things that help to elucidate the nuances of the relationship between trauma and nostalgia, I turn to one final example that represents a different kind of irony serving to provide a more light-hearted form of satirical mockery: the coloring book entitled *Ho fatto anche cose buone* (I also did good things; Fig. 8). The coloring book, which, as the subtitle reads, "defeats nostalgia: false myths about Fascism explained to those who still believe in it," contains black and white illustrations of the most famous clichés linked to Mussolini, such as "he introduced pensions," "he defeated the Mafia," "he gave incentives to industry," "he gave a central role to women in society," and so on. Each "good thing" on the right-hand page is accompanied on the left by a sentence that shows how these presumptions are based on false beliefs. On the cover, Benito Mussolini is depicted as a pizza maker, and instead of the Fascist motto "Credere, obbedire, combattere" (Believe, obey, fight), we find "Credere, *colorare*, combattere" (Believe, *color*, fight).

In this case, irony overturns the frame (Goffman 1974) of the semantic and interpretative background of the representation (reworded Fascist phrases, Mussolini as pizza chef) and reexamines the significance of their messages in both the source context and the "ironic" target context. The primary, "fascist" meanings of the words used on the cover are connected to the nostalgic imagery. The secondary meanings, on the other hand, which are transformed through a proposed change at the formal level—Mussolini changes from a good politician to a good *pizzaiolo*—shift the semantic field of reference. In this sense, irony functions as a desecrating rhetorical device that uses a precise system of (political) signs and allows them to take on different nuances, acquires a new meaning, albeit one that does not cancel out the previous one. On the contrary, the latter is exalted through difference: the political context of the phrases and images is not concealed or silenced; it is only pushed into the background, relegated to the space of derision.

In this case, this process provides a way of downsizing the "good things" done by Mussolini, considered of little political or social significance, at most at the level of the political utility of a pizza—so, nothing at all. Again, irony does

Figure 8: The cover of the coloring book *Ho fatto anche cose buone*.
Image reproduced with the permission of the publishing house (ÓMagazzini Salani).

not create a situation of contradiction at the level of enunciation: good things in the culinary context work perfectly at the level of contextual coherence. This is achieved through word play: the adjective "good" functions in Italian to mean both "righteous" (as in Mussolini's supposedly positive contributions

to Italian society) and "delicious." What this irony does achieve is to question the cultural meanings attached to the expressions, refuting the value system of the return of fascism and the "good" politics of Benito Mussolini.

Conclusion

The various examples in this chapter demonstrate how nostalgia and trauma can be considered narrative elements that modify and alter the meaning and discourses of memory. In particular, the fundamental feature that characterizes the relationship between these two terms is linked to the *qualitative evaluation* of the event to be narrated, that is, to the emotional investment and the positive or negative judgment that a group decides to make manifest (or receive) through texts, following its own needs, wishes, and objectives at a specific moment. In this sense, the combination of trauma and nostalgia can produce different "approaches" every time to the translation of an event into text.

As in the examples proposed in this chapter, this can include an intentional nostalgia filter activated through the edulcorating of the traumatic past in a comparison with the present; nostalgia as a communication risk due to the embellishment of trauma; and the re-habilitation of trauma through the adoption of an ironic approach in the representation of nostalgic attitudes.

In this regard, the aim of the researcher interested in the dynamics and logic of memory is to understand *how*, at the level of representation, nostalgia and trauma are used and abused and *what* cultural contingencies allow or enable such textualizations in one direction rather than another. The semiotic gaze therefore operates on a double level of the archaeology of meaning: deconstructing the text, on the one hand, and defining, on the other, the attitudes and memory skills of the context in which it was produced, and those that are generated after its dissemination. In this sense, to look at texts, especially those belonging to the world of the ordinary, means to understand the silent grammars of memory, the ways of "emotional" re-appropriation of the past, and how stereotypes settle into the space of the unsuspected, translating a biased view of the past (more or less attentively and critically) into common sense.

As the case of Italian Fascism demonstrates, texts are devices through which memory is rewritten in the present[15] (Lotman and Uspensky 1978,

15 In this regard, texts represent certain pasts in a specific way from the present, that is, the moment in which the action of externalization is realized. The present is the temporal dimension

213–14), producing specific consequences: the selection of which aspects of the past can belong to a community and which ones are destined or obliged to be excluded. Through the filters of nostalgia, then, a form of passion and emotional coloring is added to this mechanism of choice and evaluation, structuring an evident and problematic comparison between the regretted past and the unsatisfactory present. Investigating the combinations and intersections of trauma and nostalgia at the narrative stage reveals much about the modalities of the collective and cultural acceptance of difficult pasts and the elaboration of culpabilities linked to them.

Works Cited

Alexander, Jeffrey C., Ron Eyerman, Bernard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Priot Sztompka, eds. 2004a. *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press.

Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2004b. "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma." In *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, edited by Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Priot Sztompka, 1–30. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press.

Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2004c. "On the Social Construction of Moral Universals: The 'Holocaust' from War Time to Trauma Drama." In *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, edited by Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Priot Sztompka, 196–263. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press.

Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2012. *Trauma. A Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Angé, Olivia, and Davide Berliner, eds. 2015. *Anthropology and Nostalgia*. New York: Berghahn Books.

Antonucci, Stefano, Daniele Fabbri, and Mario Perrotta. 2017. *Quando c'era Lui*. Brescia: Shockdom.

Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press.

Bach, Jonathan. 2002. "'The Taste Remains': Consumption, (N)ostalgia, and the Production of East Germany." *Public Culture*, 14, no. 3: 545–56.

Boym, Svetlana. 2001. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books.

in which the *memorability* of an event is tested, and the cultural filters are chosen to *memorize* what is potentially *memorable* (Violi 2017a, 200). Following this account, the textualized past can say more of the cultural values of the present in which it is created than of the past events that it aims to represent.

Del Boca, Angelo. 2005. *Italiani Brava Gente?* Vicenza: Neri Pozza.

Del Marco, Vincenza, and Isabella Pezzini, eds. 2012. *Passioni collettive: Culture, politica e società*. Rome: Edizioni Nuova Cultura.

Demaria, Cristina. 2012. *Il trauma, l'archivio e il testimone. La semiotica, il documentario e la rappresentazione del "reale."* Bologna: Bononia University Press.

Eco, Umberto. 1988. "An Ars Oblivionalis? Forget It!" *PMLA/Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 103, no. 3: 254–61.

Eco, Umberto. 1990. *The Limits of Interpretation*. Bloomington/ London: Indiana University Press.

Eco, Umberto. 2013. "Against the Loss of Memory." Lecture at the United Nation headquarters in New York.

Eco, Umberto. 2014. *From the Tree to the Labyrinth. Historical Studies on the Sign and Interpretation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Eyerman, Ron. 2019. *Memory, Trauma, and Identity*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Filippi, Francesco. 2019. *Mussolini ha fatto anche cose buone. Le idiozie che continuano a circolare sul fascismo*. Turin: Bollati Boringhieri.

Filippi, Francesco. 2020. *Perché siamo ancora fascisti? Un conto rimasto aperto*. Turin: Bollati Boringhieri.

Focardi, Filippo. 2004. "La memoria del fascismo e il 'demone dell'analogia.'" *Geschichte und Region/Storia e Regione* 13, no. 2: 55–74.

Focardi, Filippo. 2013. *Il cattivo tedesco e il bravo italiano. La rimozione delle colpe della seconda guerra mondiale*. Rome/Bari: Laterza Editore.

Focardi, Filippo. 2020. *Nel cantiere della memoria. fascismo, Resistenza, Shoah, Foibe*. Rome: Viella.

Foucault, Michel. 1980. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*. New York: Pantheon.

Frankish, Tarryn, and Jill Bradbury. 2012. "Telling Stories for the Next Generation: Trauma and Nostalgia." *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 18, no. 3: 294–306.

Goffman, Erving. 1974. *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. New York: Harper and Row.

Greimas, Algirdas Julien. 1986. "De la nostalgie. Essai de sémantique lexicale." *Actes Sémiotiques – Bulletin* 10, no. 39: 5–11.

Greimas, Algirdas Julien, and Jacques Fontanille. 1991. *Sémiotique des passions: Des états de choses aux états d'âme*. Paris: Seuil.

Greppi, Carlo. 2020. "Ma perché siamo ancora fascisti?" *Doppiozero*, June 3. https://www.doppiozero.com/materiali/ma-perche-siamo-ancora-fascisti.

Grice, Paul. 1957. "Meaning." *The Philosophical Review* 66, no. 3: 377–88.

Gundle, Stephen. 2013. "The Aftermath of the Mussolini Cult: History, Nostalgia and Popular Culture." In *The Cult of the Duce. Mussolini and the Italians*, edited

by Stephen Gundle, Cristopher Duggan, and Giuliana Pieri, 214–56. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Hertz, Dan G. 1990. "Trauma and Nostalgia: New Aspects on the Coping of Aging Holocaust Survivors." *Israel Journal of Psychiatry and Related Sciences* 27, no. 4: 189–98.

Heywood, Paolo. 2019. "Fascism, Uncensored. Legalism and Neo-Fascist Pilgrimage in Predappio." *Terrain Anthropologie and Sciences Humaines*, no. 72: 1–15.

Hirsch, Marianne, and Leo Spitzer. 2010. *Ghost of Home: The Afterlife of Czernowitz in Jewish Memory*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Holdaway, Dominic, and Dalila Missero. 2018. "Re-Reading Marina: Sexuality, Materialism and the Construction of Italy." *Journal of Italian Cinema and Media Studies* 6, no. 3: 343–58.

Horowitz, Sara R. 2010. "Nostalgia and the Holocaust." In *After Representation? The Holocaust, Literature, and Culture*, edited by R. Clifton Spargo and Robert M. Ehrenreich, 41–58. New Brunswick, NJ/London: Rutgers University Press.

Jacobsen, Michael Hviid, ed. 2020a. *Nostalgia Now: Cross-Disciplinary Perspective on the Past in the Present*. New York: Routledge.

Jacobsen, Michael Hviid. 2020b. "Living in Nostalgia: Exploring Expatriate Experiences of Everyday Nostalgia in Pattaya." In *Nostalgia Now: Cross-Disciplinary Perspective on the Past in the Present*, edited by Michael Hviid Jacobsen, 201–25. New York: Routledge.

Lorusso, Anna Maria. 2020. "Between Truth, Legitimacy, and Legality in the Post-Truth Era." *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law* 33: 1005–17.

Lotman, M. Juri, and Boris A. Uspensky. 1978. "On the Semiotic Mechanism of Culture." *New Literary History* 9, no. 2: 211–32.

Lowe, Keith. 2020. *Prisoners of History: What Monuments Tell Us about Our History and Ourselves*. London: William Collins.

Margalit, Avishai. 2009. *Nostalgia*. Modena: Notizie Editrice.

Mazzucchelli, Francesco. 2012. "What Remains of Yugoslavia? From the Geopolitical Space of Yugoslavia to the Virtual Space of the Web Yugosphere." *Social Science Information* 51, no. 4: 631–48.

Niemeyer, Katharina. 2014. "Introduction: Media and Nostalgia." In *Media and Nostalgia Yearning for the Past, Present and Future*, edited by Katharina Niemeyer, 1–23. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Panico, Mario 2020a. "Degrees of Nostalgia: Predappio, a Case Study." *Studi Culturali* 17, no. 1: 51–62.

Panico, Mario. 2020b. "Repetition, Recognition, Remediation. Or Benito Mussolini after Benito Mussolini." *Ocula. Semiotic Eye on Media* 21, no. 22: 61–78.

Perec, Georges. 1997. *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*. London: Penguin Books.

Pezzini, Isabella, ed. 1991. *Semiotica delle passioni*. Bologna: Esculapio.

Pezzini, Isabella. 1998. *Le passioni del lettore. Saggi di semiotica del testo*. Milan: Bompiani.

Pisanty, Valentina. 2020. *I guardiani della memoria: e il ritorno delle destre xenofobe*. Milan: Bompiani.

Roghi, Vanessa. 2013. "Mussolini and the Post-War Television." In *The Cult of the Duce. Mussolini and the Italians*, edited by Stephen Gundle, Cristopher Duggan, and Giuliana Pieri, 257–69. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Rothberg, Michael. 2019. *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Rothberg, Michael. 2020. "Trauma and the Implicated Subject." In *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma*, edited by Colin Davis and Hanna Meretoja, 201–10. London: Routledge.

Russo Cardona, Tommaso. 2009. *Le peripezie dell'ironia. Sull'arte del rovesciamento discorsivo*. Rome: Meltemi.

Serenelli, Sofia. 2013a. "A Town for the Cult of the Duce: Predappio as a Site of Pilgrimage." In *The Cult of the Duce: Mussolini and the Italians*, edited by Stephen Gundle, Cristopher Duggan, and Giuliana Pieri, 93–109. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Serenelli, Sofia. 2013b. "'It Was Like Something That You Have at Home Which Becomes so Familiar That You Don't Even Pay Attention to It': Memories of Mussolini and Fascism in Predappio, 1922–2010." *Modern Italy* 18, no. 2: 157–75.

Sperber, Dan, and Deirdre Wilson. 1981. "Irony and the Use-Mention Distinction." In *Radical Pragmatics*, edited by Peter Cole, 295–318. New York: Academic Press.

Stewart, Susan. 1984. *On Longing: Narratives on the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Todorova, Maria, and Zsuzsa Gille. 2010. *Post-Communist Nostalgia*. New York: Berghahn Books.

Végsö, Ronald. 2013. "Stalin's Boots and the March of History (Post-Communist Memories)." *Cultural Critique* 83: 31–62.

Violi, Patrizia. 2017a. "Identità e memoria nell'epoca di Google." In *Nella rete di Google: Pratiche, strategie e dispositivi del motore di ricerca che ha cambiato la nostra vita*, edited by Isabella Pezzini, and Vincenza Del Marco, 195–216. Milan: Franco Angeli.

Violi, Patrizia. 2017b. *Landscape of Memory: Trauma, Space, History*. Bern: Peter Lang.

4 The Transmission of Nostalgia

Memories of the Spanish Civil War and the Franco Regime

M. Paula O'Donohoe

Abstract
In the 2000s, Spain experienced a memory boom. This culminated in the adoption of the 2007 Law on Historical Memory. This cultural shift prompted a reevaluation of twentieth-century traumatic events like the Civil War and the Francoist regime, providing a voice for their victims. However, amid this remembrance process, a nostalgia for that past also emerged. Surprisingly, even young people who had not experienced the regime participated in commemorations related to Franco's death. They displayed Francoist and nationalistic symbols. How could a generation born in democracy feel nostalgic for an era they never experienced? To explore this, ethnographic interviews with Spaniards from different generations were conducted, focusing on how memories were inherited and transmitted on the narratives of remembrance they perpetuated.

Keywords: trauma; remembrance; narratives; generation Z; commemorations

Introduction

Over the past twenty years, Spain has experienced a significant cultural and political shift that echoed the voices of the victims of the Francoist regime (1939–75). These people had long been silenced and marginalized from public discourse during the forty years of dictatorship and the initial three decades of democracy. During the Francoist dictatorship, the privacy of the domestic household and the family became the privileged space for counter-memory transmission, where non-official narratives and experiences could be told without facing the consequences of public censorship

Van Liere, L. & Sremac, S. (eds), *Trauma and Nostalgia: Practices in Memory and Identity*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2024
DOI: 10.5117/9789048559220_CH04

and repression. Nowadays, however, as the traumatic past of the twentieth century is being revisited, these private narratives are increasingly heard in the public space. Stories of victimhood have come into the spotlight, new laws have been adopted, and the memories that once were only whispered in the domestic environment are now being proclaimed and narrated in the public space. However, this revisiting of memory also allows for old sentiments of nostalgia to appear. The same past that is being questioned and revisited by some is also being commemorated and longed for by others.

It has become customary to commemorate the life of Francisco Franco (1892–1975) every year on November 20, the anniversary of his death. On this date, numerous commemorations occur throughout the country. The most prominent ones are organized at two different places in Madrid: the Valley of the Fallen, where the dictator was buried, and the Plaza de Oriente, in front of the Royal Palace, where his burial was held in 1975. During the last few decades, Franco's grave inside the Basilica of the Valley had become a shrine for pro-Francoist and ultra-right groups and individuals. Because of this, the Spanish government approved moving Franco's remains to the cemetery of Mingorrubio in El Pardo, also within the Madrid region. During the exhumation of the dictator from the Valley of the Fallen in 2019, there was an enraged nostalgic mob at the entrance of the Valley, calling the name of the dictator, fluttering the Francoist flags with the eaglet, and raising their right hand. People were also remembering and celebrating the Blue Division[1] with banners resembling the slogans of the Franco regime, "honor and glory for the fallen" and—with a variation on Donald Trump's 2016 election campaign slogan—"make Spain great again." It was a scene characterized by raised right hands, Celtic crosses, and the Francoist eaglet. But if we pay closer attention to the audience and the speakers at these commemorations and protests, the most striking aspect was their age. Predominantly young Spaniards, millennials and generation Z, were leading the rallies, displaying nostalgic longing for a dictatorship that ended decades before they were born. How can a generation born under democracy be "nostalgic" for a past they did not experience personally? This question relates directly to how the traumatic past of Spain is being transmitted.

1 The División Española de Voluntarios, also known as the Spanish Blue Division, was a unit of volunteers who fought alongside Nazi soldiers on the Eastern Front during the invasion of Russia. The Division was withdrawn from the front after Spanish pressure in October 1943 and returned to Spain soon thereafter. The recruitment began on June 27, 1941, and by July already 18,373 men from the Spanish army and the Falangist movement had volunteered.

Transgenerational transmission of memory is one of the many concerns of memory studies in which the question is raised regarding how we can understand the relationships between post-conflict third and fourth generations. How does a traumatic past influence the ways in which these generations relate? How are those memories transmitted in public and private spaces? What is being said about the past to the younger ones, both in public and private spaces? This article aims to understand how traumatic memories of the Franco regime are being transmitted to a younger generation and what role nostalgia plays in this memory transmission. In this chapter, I want to understand the intergenerational and intragenerational narratives, how four different generations remember the same past in relation to how they communicate: the first generation was born during and in the aftermath of the Civil War (1936–1939) and the first decades of Francoism; the second generation was born during the final decades of the Franco regime; the third generation was born in the first democratic decade (the millennials or generation X); and the fourth generation was born twenty years after the implementation of the democracy (generation Z).

To answer the main question of this chapter, ethnographic interviews were conducted with different generations of Spaniards, paying attention to the *spaces* of transmission like the family, school, friend groups, and other venues. During these interviews, special attention was paid to the possible differences between the public and the private, the role of media in these transmissions, and the memorial narratives that are being reproduced. These interviews were done with people from different generations and switched to an online format in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the participants engaged in conversations from the privacy and comfort of their homes, which enabled them to discuss more intimate and difficult topics such as the Civil War and the Francoist dictatorship.

Besides the interviews, participant observation was conducted in public spaces where specific memorial narratives on the Civil War and the Franco regime are being reproduced and performed and where an intergenerational dialogue is taking place. These places include demonstrations, commemorations, and the installation of memorials, as well as public debates and activities focused on these memories of the Franco years. At some of these places, the victims are commemorated, such as at the civil cemetery of La Almudena in Madrid and the Ronda de la Dignidad, where commemoration ceremonies take place every week in Puerta del Sol. This ceremony is inspired by the Ronda de las Madres de Mayo in Buenos Aires. Commemorations also take place on specific sites around the city where acts of violence took place, like the murder of Arturo Ruiz at a central square. Furthermore,

counter-memorials have been erected in such locations of past violence, such as the installation of a memorial in the empty lot of the former Carabanchel Prison in Madrid. This memorial features a banner displaying the names of former political prisoners who were held at the site, accompanied by a cement model of the prison. While I did not conduct formal interviews during these commemorations, I engaged in conversations with the families of the victims, organizers, and attendees to learn about their motivations and impressions.

A concise theoretical framework that explores traumatic and nostalgic memories and the subjects that engage with these memories is essential to provide a contextual backdrop for my interviews and observations. This will be followed by a historical overview. It is important to note that the focus is not on challenging the historical period itself but rather on examining how we remember past events in the present. The objective is not to critically analyze the Franco regime; rather, this chapter revolves around the memory and commemoration of this regime. Following a brief theoretical introduction and historical contextualization, the second part of the chapter discusses the ethnographic research material.

Brief Theoretical Outline: Trauma, Nostalgia, and Transmissions

Memories are selective reconstructions shaped by complex feelings of guilt and complicity, by expectations and hopes, fears, and projections of the present (Passerini 1992). Every act of remembrance is an act of reconstruction (Halbwachs 1992); "it is the communication of information from one person to another in the absence of the actual event or object concerned" (Le Goff 1992, 52). When we talk about memory, we are talking about social ways of administrating the past (Castillejo 2007); the past is "considered not as a bygone and well-defined period but rather as a social organism in gestation" (Langenbacher, Niven, and Wittlinger 2013) in such a way that memory is traditionally told as narrative and discourse (Hodgkin and Radstone 2003).[2] These memorial narratives can play a "casual role" in influencing people's dispositions or play a "normative role" by establishing

2 Narrative in the sense Roland Barthes understands it: "among the vehicles of narrative are articulated language, whether oral or written, pictures, still or moving, gestures, and an ordered mixture of all those substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fables, tales, short stories, epics, history, tragedy *drame*, comedy, pantomime, paintings.... Moreover, in this infinite variety of forms, it is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; indeed, narrative starts with the very history of mankind" (1975, 237). And discourses as J.R. Martin and Ruth Wodak define it: "discourse

the criteria for models of action (Connerton 2011, 37). However, some memories are transmitted without verbalization (Hodgkin and Radstone 2003), for example "embodied memories" that are carried in the body, such as gestures and physical reactions, which can be transmitted "between bodies and even across generations" (23), and affect memories, feelings, sentiments, and affections conveyed in certain memories, which are then transmitted to others. Other non-textual forms of memories can be dances, images, photographs, gestures, statues, buildings, and films.

Some pasts are saved within collective memories and integrated in more or less conscious attempts to define and reinforce feelings of belonging, but also to interpret differences between groups (Pollak 1989). A "we" is constructed through narrative and coding (Eyerman, Alexander, and Butler 2011). But social constructions of collective identity and models of remembering are never uncontested, as "they are prone to conflicts and subject to public debates" (Alexander et al. 2004, 112). As Elizabeth Jelin writes, when we talk about memory, it "is always about plural memories, in spaces of conflict and struggle" (2011, 556). Following her theory, memory becomes fragmented, non-monolithic, with different voices and experiences, as J.R. Martin and Ruth Wodak write: "there is not one past but many different pasts which are re-constructed by experts and non-specialists according to their interest and values" (2003, 141).

Even though there is a plurality of narratives, one story frequently becomes "hegemonic" and considered true. This story becomes the dominant framework to interpret and recall the past (Montoto 2014). To gain legitimacy, Francoism established a memorial narrative relying on a great propaganda machinery but also employing censorship and repression. Unable to speak about their experiences in the public sphere, the voices of many who lived in the Second Republic (1931–36) and during the Civil War (1936–39) resorted to silence or private spaces such as the family. Thus, the family and the private sphere become the main carriers of memories about the Second Republic and the Civil War, and the main space where memories of resistance and resilience were transmitted.

As Eric Langenbacher, Bill Niven, and Ruth Wittlinger (2013) point out, making sense of the family's past is more relevant and appealing than making sense of the public or national history. These familiar memories comprise fragmented narratives shared by relatives who lived through the Civil War and the subsequent dictatorship. These stories are often recounted in fragments

is socially constitutive as well as socially shaped: it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of a relationship between people and groups of people" (2003, 141).

or brief allusions by older family members who witnessed these events during their childhood. Family memories are "joint processes of (re)constructing episodes from the past" (42); the openness and sometimes the incoherence and vagueness of these narratives allow the listener to fill in the narrative gaps with interpretation. Thus, there is a permanent and ongoing adjustment between narrator and listener to ensure that the story adjusts to the expectations and needs of the present and fulfills the interest of the listeners: "this allows individual family members to maintain what can turn out to be quite different versions of the 'family story'" without threatening the sense of unity within the family—as long as their interpretation fits into the shared normative frame of reference of other family members" (Langenbacher, Niven, and Wittlinger 2013, 42). In this manner, family memories become part of the memorial inventory of its members. They will select from these narratives the ones that make most sense to them. The remembering and re-narration of the family memory will depend on who is speaking and who is listening. If we move through the different family generations,[3] stories can be so altered that they undergo a complete change of meaning (Welzar 2010, 7). Therefore, these narratives are constantly being overwritten in the light of the present.

But family memories are not entirely private. They are inscribed in the collective discourses of the past. Although there can be a plurality of narratives about the same event, the public or national cultures of memory set the interpretative framework for the personal and familiar memories. These "cultures" shape the limits of the sayable and unsayable and define what counts as history and what is worth remembering and telling. They also set the moral and political coordinates for personal and familiar memories. Consequently, collective narratives "define relevant and irrelevant stories, allocate the roles of active and passive subjects of history, and authorize or de-authorize the preferred narrators of the past" (Langenbacher, Niven, and Wittlinger 2013, 47).

To fit in the collective narrative framework, some familiar memories fall silent. This is what Eviatar Zerubavel has defined as conspiracies of silence when a group "tacitly agree to outwardly ignore something of which they

3 Karl Mannheim (1952) defines generations as "constituted by a memory of historical events experienced by those who were at formative ages during the event." This means that members of a generation are close in terms of age and space; as they are exposed to the same events, they become mnemonic communities defined by a reference to a common past (Erll 2014), with a shared destiny and a predisposition to a certain way of thought and experience (Jelin 2003). As Langenbacher, Niven, and Wittlinger write, generations are "carriers of ever-changing and mutually reinforcing formats of social memory and cultural memory" (2013, 16). The term is two-fold: vertically, it means social regeneration through a renewal of generations, and horizontally, the group is formed by members of the same age (Erll 2014).

are all personally aware" (2006, 2). But even in silence, there is a nonverbal and non-cognitive act of transfer (Hirsch 2012) because it is an active stance of consciously avoiding the uncomfortable parts of the past. As Hodgkin and Radstone point out, "there can be memory within silence and memory through silence" (2003, 248). Even when there is silence, there can be an "embodiment of emotions"; the body is under tension. Younger generations may grasp onto these feelings and may learn that these topics are neither spoken of nor discussed in the family.

Because the focus of this chapter is on traumatic and nostalgic memories, it is important to define these concepts and how they have been considered in ethnographic and sociological research. Traumatic memories may depict a specific way of remembrance. As Alexander (2004, 2012) writes, trauma is not something naturally given but rather something constructed by society and historically made: "all facts about trauma are mediated emotionally, cognitively and morally" (2004, 201). Elsewhere, Alexander (2012, 26) explains "experiencing trauma" as a sociological process that "defines a painful injury to the collectivity, establishes the victim, attributes responsibility, and distributes the ideal and material consequences." The agents of trauma are carrier groups that have ideal and material interests and are situated in particular places in a social structure. However, "to transform individual suffering into collective trauma requires speeches, rituals, marches, meetings, plays, movies and storytelling of all kinds" (Eyerman, Alexander, and Butler 2011, xiii). As a cultural construction, "traumatic status is attributed to real or imagined phenomena, not because of their actual harmfulness or their objective abruptness, but because these phenomena are believed to have abruptly, and harmfully affected collective identity" (Alexander 2012, 14). Thus, trauma is not a direct experience but a "time-delayed and negotiated recollection" (Langenbacher, Niven, and Wittlinger 2013, 29).

Apart from traumatic memories, we also deal with nostalgic memories that might draw from the same interpretations of "traumatic events" as collective traumatic memories. Like cultural trauma, nostalgia refers to an active reconstruction of the past, "an active selection of what to remember and how to remember it" (Langenbacher, Niven, and Wittlinger 2013, 299), but it has traditionally been linked to memories of a previous time when "life was better" (Wilson 1999, 297). Nonetheless, its meaning has been broadened to an incurable state of mind, "a signifier of 'absence' and 'loss' that could in effect never be made 'presence' and 'gain' except through memory and the creativity of reconstruction" (Hodgkin and Radstone 2003, 82). It has come to mean a "yearning for a 'lost childhood' or 'irretrievable youth'" (82) but also a way of symbolically escaping a depressing or disorienting present (Wilson 1999).

On a Historical Note: Spain from 1975 to 2021

Following this theoretical note on memory, trauma, and nostalgia, I will turn to the historical context of my research. As I am talking about the Spanish Civil War and the Franco regime, it is essential to explain how these episodes in Spanish history unfolded and how they link to the present.

In 1931 the Republican Party won the Spanish general elections, which many, included king Alfonso XII, took as the end of the monarchy. The king decided to flee the country, and following his flight, on April 14, 1931, the Spanish Second Republic was proclaimed. During its short life, it was one of the most advanced democracies of its time: it protected women's rights in the areas of voting, divorce, and abortion, and it considered workers' rights and focused on the education of Spanish society, opening thousands of schools. However, after some months of social conflict and tension in 1936, a part of the army, still loyal to the king, organized a coup d'état in some major cities around the country. On July 18, 1936, it became clear that the coup failed to achieve its goal, but this also meant the start of a cruel and bloody war that would end on April 1, 1939, with the instauration of general Franco's dictatorship that would control Spain for almost forty years.

From its very beginning to its very end, the Francoist dictatorship forced a particular collective memory through repression, propaganda, memorials, and commemorations. This narrative celebrated the triumphant war against the Republic, whose sympathizers were silenced and isolated from public spaces and public narratives. Along with this, the postwar years were a time of autarchy, creating an economic crisis that lasted decades and fostered the rise of a black market and ration cards. In this context, most Spaniards were solely focused on survival. Exhausted after the war and intimidated by repression, they feared sacrificing the newfound stability. It was a time of political apathy and a retreat to the domestic sphere (Rigby 2000). For the opponents of Francoism, forty years of dictatorship meant a denial of expressing their grief publicly. Remembering their lost relatives and friends and remembering their own experiences, lives, and ideals were taboo. They remained silent to protect their lives and those of their relatives. For many years. there was an unbroken and imposed silence surrounding the past (Connerton 2011). This "retreat to the private" also meant the erasure of Republican memories from the public. The objective was "to extract memory from history and strip it of meaning, put it in the kitchen and nullify its presence from the collective determination" (Vinyes 2016, 374).

The 1960s and 1970s were the last decades of Francoism, also known as late-Francoism, which meant the presence of a gradually more outspoken

opposition that disrupted the ostensible calm. At that time, opposition appeared, formed by socialists, communists, Basque and Catalan nationalists, women and workers' movements, whose demands showed a clean break from Francoism and a plea for a complete amnesty for political prisoners (Rigby 2000). But the 1960s and 1970s were also the years of increasing repression and the presence of terrorist groups. Even though ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, Basque Homeland and Liberty) became the most prominent internationally due to its longevity, many extreme-right terrorist groups such as Los Guerrilleros de Cristo, Batallón Vasco Nacional, Acción Nacional, and GAL followed a "strategy of tension" (Aguilar 2002, 144) to discredit the opposition demands and to support the dictatorship. During the transitional years after Franco's death in 1975 until 1985, when Spain established a democracy and became a tentative member of the European Community, these groups managed to undermine the government and the opposition as the atmosphere of social unrest became so tense that people feared for a second civil war. Through killings and kidnappings, these groups achieved their goal to destabilize political change and caused a real threat of a second civil war. Thus, the opposition gave up their demands for a radical break with the Francoist regime and accepted the Transition with an agreement that the Franco regime's institutions had proposed (Rigby 2000). A narrative of national reconciliation spread rapidly. The main idea was that providing justice to the victims of Francoism meant to stir old wounds that could provoke a new civil war. Moreover, this discourse was accompanied by a discourse of equidistance, as both Republicans and Francoists committed crimes during the Civil War. This discourse proposed that the violence was balanced, so there was no need to take any action on this. These so-called narratives of national reconciliation and equidistance defended by politicians during the Transition (1975–85) spread the message that everything and everyone is praiseworthy and respectable, both the defense of democracy and the defense of Francoism.

These perspectives on the past established what was feasible (Pérez 2004). The memory of the Civil War influenced further political decisions. These discourses entailed negative examples of what should be avoided during the political transition and were understood as a warning about a possible negative outcome (Juliá 2003). This meant that there were no critical assessments of state institutions, politicians, the police force, or the army. The same bureaucracy and politicians remained in power. This also meant that there were no attempts to prosecute or judge the perpetrators of the violence committed by the Francoist administration and that there was no political denunciation of the dictatorship. The

transition to democracy was made through negotiation, compromise, and accommodation instead of rupture and renewal. Change came from the preceding repressive power within the established system of Francoism (Cuesta 2007). National reconciliation now meant oblivion for Francoist perpetrators and amnesia for the victims of the Francoist regime. This was achieved by a reinterpretation of the past. The Civil War turned into a demure, apolitical, and victimless narrative as an inevitable tragedy and as the necessary step from the Republic to the dictatorship (Pérez 2004). The dictatorship itself was reduced to Francoist economic achievements, and the transitional years became a part of the foundational myth of the Spanish democratic system (Pérez 2004), told as a peaceful and exemplary transition while forgetting about the many murders (Macé 2012), terrorist movements, but also the emergence of social movements such as feminism and numerous strikes and demonstrations. When asked about what they learned in school, one young man from Gen Z from the south of Spain, born in 1997, said about his teacher,

> He was a very, very, very, very, very good teacher but you could see what his game was a little bit, you know, when… I don't know, when he talked about the Republicans, they were the bad guys, when he talked about the Nationalists, they were the good guys, so you could see his game a little bit, but he didn't stop teaching what it says in the book that came from the Ministry of Education.

Another young woman from Gen Z from Madrid, born in 1996, recalled the time she studied the Transition at school:

> It is true that they told us that Franco had left everything very tightly tied up and that… so little by little… the king, elections, etc., but the same thing, objective data on political events and little else. But it's also true that as it was the last part of the syllabus, it was the last thing, and there were many times that we didn't even have time or we were told "no, this doesn't fall into the exam." So, of course, you don't pay the same attention, and now I think that… maybe it was me, but I didn't give it the importance it really had, because it really wasn't… I mean, it wasn't so recent that it's not as if you say, okay, how is the reconquest going to affect me? It affects you, but how is it going to affect you? Well, I don't know, like… they didn't… they didn't encourage us to take any interest, it was just to study everything, memorize it and spit it out in the exam if they asked you.

In 1977 the newly formed democratic Congress approved an Amnesty Law[4] (Law 46/1977, of October 15 on Amnesty). In the first article, this law states that amnesty is given to "all acts of political intentionality, whatever their result, classified as crimes and misdemeanors committed before the fifteenth day of December one thousand nine hundred and seventy-six." However, in its second article, paragraph (e), it also gives amnesty to "the offences and misdemeanors that may have been committed by the authorities, officials and law enforcement officers, on the occasion of or in connection with the investigation and prosecution of the acts covered by this Act."[5] Thus, the Amnesty Law pertains both to the perpetrators of state violence and repression as well as to its victims. In the debate on its approval, several deputies from different parties described the law as an attempt to forget and to silence. Xavier Arzalluz from the Partido Nacional Vasco (National Basque Party, PNV) famously declared, "it is a forgetfulness of all for all." Indeed, as had happened during Francoism, the victims were asked to forget their perpetrators in pursuit of a newfound peace and reconciliation of Spanish society. Silence established a "democratic" dialectic between the opposition parties and the heirs of Francoism, including many members of the party Alianza Popular (today known as Partido Popular) who came from the ranks of Franco's regime, from its ministries and the Falangist movement. This made it possible to avoid the politicization of memories (Hodgkin and Radstone 2003). The democracy followed the same manner of the dictatorship, relegating grief to the private household and pretending to ignore the politics of memory that could allow for a public and collective confrontation with the past (Nuckold 2019, 239) like other countries that were facing political transitions were organizing (such as the truth and reconciliation commissions in Argentina, Chile, and South Africa). The political apathy that had appeared in the 1930s seemed to have been reinforced over time. Its primary consequence was a division between official history and the personal memories held by individuals. For example, many of those who had lived under the dictatorship and during the Transition as agents and witnesses of a new period and who had been involved through their political activism or their involvement in the student protests separated

4 This was already the second amnesty law that the newly founded democracy approved. The first was the Royal Decree-Law 10/1976 of July 30 on amnesty. However, this first amnesty law only amnestied acts of political intentionality "as long as they have not endangered or harmed the life or integrity of persons or the economic assets of the Nation." Thus, it left behind many political prisoners who belonged to active anti-Francoist groups, like the ETA or FRAP. This provoked many protests asking for the amnesty of all prisoners irrespective of their crime.

5 For the full law, see https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-1977-24937.

their personal experiences from the official historical record. The family and other private settings were now the only spaces to narrate their experiences.

Although most memories were not spoken of, also not in the family, for many the pain was still present without words. This produced a psychological and affective discomfort that was transmitted to the next generations (Nuckold 2019, 229). There was a widespread feeling of knowing/not knowing and, with it, feelings of grief and confusion. These feelings were also generally shared by new generations, the heirs of the victims, and can be understood as contributing to the construction of a Civil War trauma within Spanish democracy. This became essential for the creation of an associative movement of victims and families in the 2000s, which has been labeled as the memory boom of the recovery of Spanish historical memory (Ciancio 2013; Montoto 2014, Ferrándiz and Baer 2008, Bernecker and Brinkman 2009). The narratives of the victims emerged prominently in the public sphere during this memory boom, serving as a contrasting counterpart to the absence of an official collective memory (Ruiz 2007).

The memory boom started with the first exhumation of a mass grave of victims of the Civil War, known as "the thirteen of Priaranza," a procedure that followed a scientifically approved methodology.[6] The exhumation took place on October 21, 2000, in Priaranza del Bierzo, Castile and León. This exhumation opened a door for more exhumations, and this practice has continued until today. Parallel to this, a movement of victims and families demanding truth, justice, and reparations from the Spanish government gained prominence. The media echoed these processes, and soon new commemorative stories ended up in the public sphere with the production of movies, books, documentaries, and TV specials about the Civil War and the Franco regime. These productions took the views of the victims into account, like the documentary *The Silence of Others*, the fiction movies *La Voz Dormida* and *Las Trece Rosas*, and the book *Episodios de una Guerra Interminable* by Almudena Grandes. Years later, this memory boom entered the political sphere thanks to the so-called Law on Historical Memory of 2007,[7] which continued the privatization of memory. The way in which the Civil War and Francoism are mentioned in this law reveals that this law does not consider them as a collective matter, nor does it address any

6 For a better understanding of the exhumation of the "thirteen of Priaranza," see: Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica, "Los Trece de Priaranza. Mi abuelo también fue un desaparecido." Available at: https://memoriahistorica.org.es/los-trece-de-priaranza/.

7 The real name does not mention memory. It is Law 52/2007, from December 26, by which the rights are recognized and enlarged and measures are established in favor of those who suffered prosecution or violence during the Civil War and dictatorship.

of the state's responsibilities. The violence and repression of Francoism are understood as belonging to the private domain, as it only considers the individual level of the victim instead of the responsibility of the state and the repressive state system as collective and social perpetrators. Thus, this law fails to acknowledge the institutionalization of repression and the responsibility of the state as the heir of Francoism. Consequently, the victim's movement did not mean the end of decades of silence and oblivion but instead initiated a social and cultural process of the revindication of memory, of reintroducing the purged who were incarcerated and killed in the public narrative. Members from the millennial and Gen Z generations talked about how the victims came to their schools and universities to tell their life stories. One millennial young woman from Madrid, born in 1991, said,

> I remember a very emotional day because the teachers on the master's course had been involved in the transition in very left-wing parties that had been persecuted on that day and they sat in front of us and told us their testimony of how they had suffered, how they had been persecuted, how they had even been tortured at the end of Franco's regime, you see, and how they had lived through the process of transition. And that, that was practically the best lesson they could give us.

Nostalgic Youth, How the Transmission of Memories Occurs

> *In darkness we had to listen to the silence of the elderly, sense the unease, guess the fear, wish, in the face of anguish, to know our history.*
> (Siruana 2008)

As already mentioned in the introduction, to know how young generations formed their memories and feel nostalgic for a past that they were not part of, I have conducted ethnographic interviews with different generations of Spaniards and made observations during events. I conducted twenty interviews[8] with members of four different generations. The participants came from different parts of Spain, although most of them were currently living in Madrid. They had different social and professional backgrounds. However, most of the younger participants were either finishing or had just

8 The interviews are part of the author's PhD project, not published to date. Since March 2020 and the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews were done online through video conference tools such as Zoom and Google Meet.

finished university education. The participants were chosen through the snowball method: after contacting a first round of participants, they were asked if they knew someone who could be interested in being interviewed, and so on, until twenty interviews were reached.

During the interviews, different spaces of transmission were discussed: family, education, public, institutional issues, politics, as well as different media, such as objects, sounds, photographs, and films. The interlocutors were from different backgrounds, such as grandparents, parents, professors, or other "agents of memory." These people told their stories, shared their roles, added meaning, and identified heroes, victims, and perpetrators. As the family plays an important role in identity-making (Welzar 2010), it is also important to consider how families identified with the past, whether they identified as victims,[9] perpetrators,[10] witnesses,[11] or implicated subjects.[12] For instance, the family's (narratives on) victimhood and political ideology can influence one's positioning regarding transitional justice and victims' claims (Aguilar, Balcells, and Cebolla 2011).

I talk about implicated subjects and not about bystanders because, as Michael Rothberg explains, "implicated subjects do not fit the model of the 'passive' bystander, either. Although indirect or belated, their actions and inactions help produce and reproduce the positions of victims and perpetrators. In other words, implicated subjects help propagate the legacies

9 The victims are subjects who gain their agency from pain and create a collectivity from this experience, from the broken body and the broken language (Gatti 2011); they inhabit the catastrophe and make it the anchor of their identity (Gatti 2016, 104). Traditionally, they have been considered passive agents, highlighting their innocence and the lack of agency of those who suffered violence (Zamora, Maté, and Maiso 2016). But not all victims are the same. Depending on the victimizing event, they will have a different sense of victimhood; the disappeared and the killed, the tortured and the detained, and the exiled and the expropriated are not (always) the same. Today their voices and narratives have become the center of the so-called memory boom (Vinyes 2018) and are often considered the main actors of the past in the present.

10 The perpetrators have been considered the antagonists of the victim narratives, the ones who commit the victimizing incident creating victims. Their identities have been constructed in a dichotomy in which you can be on one side but not on both: there are no perpetrators who are victims or vice versa. There is, however, a wide range of perpetrators. There are, for example, accomplices of Francoist repression who did not do any physical harm, but they prosecuted, threatened, and expropriated victims.

11 Between the dichotomy of perpetrators and victims, there are many different identities occupied by subjects who did not suffer repression and who did not create victims through their actions. These are the witnesses, those who saw how people turned into victims. Traditionally, they have been considered passive spectators who have no historical agency.

12 Rothberg states, "Implicated subjects occupy a position aligned with power and privilege without being themselves direct agents of harm; they contribute to, inhabit, inherit, or benefit from regimes of domination but do not originate or control such regimes" (2019, 1).

of historical violence and prop up the structures of inequality that mar the present" (2019, 1). Furthermore, I agree with Rothberg when he says that "the innocent, uninvolved bystander is, in most cases, an idealized myth. Many people find themselves 'complexly' implicated: with lines of direct or indirect connection to histories of both victimization and perpetration" (2019, 202).

The interviews were completed with participant observation in public spaces where a specific memorial narrative was being transmitted and performed, during events such as the installation of memorials, the annual commemorations held in memory of the victims or to commemorate the opening of a mass grave, and to protest the government's inaction. Half of these observations were done pre-COVID, thus in-person and without any restrictions, and the rest were done during the pandemic when debates and film screenings moved online; commemorations in public spaces were often smaller and more restricted and followed the necessary measures and precautions. These events were, like the ones just mentioned before in this paragraph, organized by nostalgic groups related to the dictatorship and by associative movements of victims of the Civil War and Francoism and their families.

Today there are two strong and differentiated memorial narratives in the Spanish public space: the stories of victims and relatives mainly articulated through memorial associations, and the nostalgic narratives of the Franco regime that re-use Francoist symbolism in public appearances, like flags and chants. These narratives often share space and time, producing a clash or confrontations. As an example, on December 6, 2020, groups of victims and families organized a protest against the government's interference in memory-related issues and the delay in approving the already drafted Law of Democratic Memory. At the same time and at the same location, there was also a counter-protest organized by far-right groups, instigated by the political party VOX (see below). During the protest, many protesters from the far right walked along the protesters commemorating the victims. They made the Francoist salute, screamed "Viva Franco," and held the Francoist flag. The tensions escalated, and the police were called in to control the situation and separate the groups. They had to form a physical barrier between the two groups of protesters to avoid further clashes. Another example took place on the tenth anniversary of the Ronda de la Dignidad in Puerta del Sol, in May 2021. While the representatives of the victims' associations were reading their statements, an old lady entered the crowd and started screaming "Viva Franco." In response, many attendees started arguing with her and asked her why she interrupted their commemoration. Once again, the police were summoned to maintain control of the situation and, in a sense, act as a barrier between these two conflicting memories.

Another clash in the arena of political and public opinion intertweaves a third memorial narrative: the hegemonic memory based on the mythical experience of a peaceful transition. This is a narrative based on the transitional legislation, the 1978 Constitution and the 1977 Law of Amnesty, often represented by institutional agents like politicians. This clash mainly occurs between the representatives of political institutions and the associations of victims. Victim groups demand that politicians implement transitional principles of justice—like truth, fairness, and reparations. However, this would go against the principles stated in the 1977 Law of Amnesty and against the reconciliatory narrative that was forged during the Transition. The clashing of these troubled memories in the public sphere shows a struggle with, and confrontation of, memories that turn the public space into a boxing ring between the hegemonic memories of the mythical Transition on one side and counter-memories[13] based on claims of victims and the discourses of human rights on the other (Montoto 2014). Thus, while some are fighting for the memories of victims and for human rights, others are arousing Francoist narratives and symbols that were considered to belong to the past by many in the current democracy.

The analysis of the results of my interviews and observations will follow the different spaces of transmission: first, the family as the private space for transmission, and then education, media, and institutions as forms of public transmission.

Due to the transfer of memories since 1939 into the private sphere that was strengthened during the Transition and by the later democratic laws on memory, the family remains the main space of knowledge about the past. In this private transmission of family narratives, several aspects might have an impact on relations with the past. Several of these elements have already been mentioned, such as the family's stance toward Francoism, their political ideology, and the role of the narrator within the family and the place where the family resides. As noted by an interlocutor from the third generation who lives in Madrid but comes from a small village in the north, it is not the same to live in a small, rural town or village where everyone knows everyone, and the stories of violence might have been more public and known than in the anonymity of a bigger city, where stories of

13 Counter-memories are understood according to López (2013, 27) as the remnants that contradict and resist the official versions of historical continuity, as discursive practices that challenge that continuity and rewrite memories and traditions. Those narratives are the ones that the official national memories leave behind and that have traditionally been linked to alienated and minority groups, such as the Republicans during the Franco dictatorship.

victimhood and perpetration can be better hidden. In the small village, you are reminded every day of who you are, while in the big city no one knows you or your family history.

Additionally, it makes a difference if the voice that recounts the memories belongs to someone from a first generation that lived during the entire Civil War and the dictatorship that followed or if the person telling stories belongs to another generation, born for example in the middle of the dictatorship and having experienced their formative years during the politicized and hectic transitional period. Furthermore, the gender of these narrators may also influence the narration; it is not the same to hear a grandmother and a grandfather. Women often tend to "narrate the other" (Jelin 2011, 564); they are witnesses and observers of a historical masculine agency, often denying their life experiences as political agents in the dictatorship, either as opponents or as supporters of the regime (Jelin 2011). For example, some women of the first generation whom I interviewed told me the story of the men in the family, an uncle who fought at the battlefront or a disappeared father, but left out their own stories unless asked directly.

Generally, family transmissions of stories are based on personal experiences of relatives who were alive during the events. When asked to whom they spoke within their families, the participants mentioned how the grandparents would tell stories about the Civil War and the postwar period and how their parents would tell them stories of late Francoism and the transitional years. Memory stories are told by the leading generation of each event.

Even though there are differences, there is a general nostalgic feeling related to a better past or a past where everyone was still alive and present. For those implicated subjects and perpetrators who are still aligned with an ideology from the political right, nostalgia is transmitted subliminally through gestures, comments, songs, and symbols. Due to public disapproval of Francoism, expressions of support for the dictatorship are seldom voiced in public. However, through comments like "with Franco life was better" or "with Franco I had a better job," there is an implied message that the dictatorship was at these points better than today's democracy. Of course, many of these older generations indeed had a better life during the dictatorship. They were forty years younger, in the prime of their lives, had a better health, had more privileges, and felt valued by a regime that protected them. But for the younger generations, these nostalgic feelings of the older generation are understood as a critical and negative feeling toward the present and as a nostalgia for a past they do not fully grasp. One participant from the fourth generation told me a story of how at his family's

business a woman from the first generation had to wait in line and shared some nostalgic statements about Franco. He reported,

> I remember one of them was saying, "This did not happen with Franco." She was waiting in line behind three people. With Franco… because when the war was over in some way, the right, well, those who supported the National side, formed an elite, so I think they benefitted from some privileges that ended years ago but, in their minds, they still think the same. And I think many old women and men in Spain think they are… I don't know… Franco's grandchildren, to put it that way. As if they were the real Spaniards.

This is different in those families that are more aligned with the extreme right, where nostalgic transmission is direct and outspoken, while some of them still vote for Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista (Spanish Traditionalist Phalanx of the Assemblies of National Syndicalist Offensive)[14] or vote for VOX.[15] For example, some of the interlocutors mentioned how in the homes of their families, there are still portraits of Franco hanging on the walls, sometimes together with the Francoist flags with the eaglet. These participants also mentioned that they play old songs such as *Cara el Sol* and do the Roman salute. Once more, there is an embodied transmission of gestures, songs, and symbols. The younger generations are more openly vocal in their defense of Francoism, often mentioning their use of the Roman salute when they gather, sometimes in a joking manner. However, even when done as a joke, it carries a political connotation. Some have adopted the feeling that life was much better with Franco and that they wished they lived under his dictatorship. The most striking example of this was during a demonstration commemorating the Blue Division that took place in Madrid in February 2021. The leader was a young girl from the fourth generation. She was wearing a blue shirt like the Falangists. She also gave the Roman salute and proclaimed antisemitic,

14 Falange Española was the fascist party behind Franco's dictatorship and is still present in today's Spain. It was founded in 1933 by José Antonio Primo de Rivera and united with Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista (JONS) in 1934 under the name of Falange Española de las JONS. In 1937 Franco unified it with the Carlist movement, creating Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las JONS (FET y de las JONS), of which he was the sole leader.

15 VOX is a political party established in 2013. Its leader is Santiago Abascal, and the party is declared an extreme-right party. It has adopted the Francoist and Falangist ideologies, publicly extolled Franco, used Franco's old banners and mottoes, and, in some cases, been very close to neo-Nazi ideologies and associations.

anti-Masonic, and anti-communist statements. Identifying today's Spanish enemies with the enemies of the Franco Regime, she said: "it is our supreme obligation to fight for Spain and for a Europe that is now weak and liquidated by the enemy, the enemy will always be the same, albeit with different masks: the Jew. Because there is nothing more certain than this statement: the Jew is the guilty one." Furthermore, she was surrounded by a group of people holding Francoist flags, wearing blue shirts, and making the Roman salute. Strikingly, none of them looked old enough to have lived under Francoism.

On the opposite side, we have those families who mostly identify with the political left and those who were victims of repression and violence due to their political alliance with anti-Francoist groups and organizations under the dictatorship and during the Civil War. For this group, nostalgia has a different face and is related to the longing for a past when everyone in the family was still alive. For example, stories are told about how a grandfather disappeared during the war, or how a family member was brutally murdered by state agents. If they know the location where that person is buried, then there is also a transmission of memories through places. Three participants from the second generation mentioned that since their childhood, their grandparents and parents would take them to a mass grave to place flowers, pray, and mourn the loss of their relative.

If this lost relative had been politically active before being murdered, political ideology takes a special place in the transmission of memory stories and experiences, often emphasizing political agency and ideology together with an even earlier nostalgia of the Second Republic as a short time of freedom, progress, and cultural creativity. This nostalgic feeling contains a critical view of the present, as the victims and the families feel forgotten and betrayed by the current democratic system and especially by the left-wing parties. Here, too, we find an embodied transmission of gestures, symbols, and songs—for example, when people bring the Republican flag when they go to a public event. The Ronda de la Dignidad in Puerta del Sol is a case in point. It is a big parade of Spanish Republican flags. When those present are listening to speeches and proclamations, they do so with their left fists raised, declaring a "Third Republic." They also often finish the events with political songs from the anti-Francoism movement dating back to the 1970s, like Labordeta's *Canto a la Libertad*.

A conclusion based on my interviews is that the younger generations feel nostalgic for a past they did not live. As mentioned, this does not count only for the third and fourth generations but also for the second generation, because the Second Republic started in 1931 and ended in 1939. These generations transmit the stress and anxiety experienced during the

years of repression together with their political ideology and activism. One woman from the third generation explained how she remembers going to demonstrations with her mother since she was a kid. She mentioned that, whenever her mother saw a policeman, she would walk away without saying a word while clenching her fists. This woman, years later, says that she still feels anxious and unsafe when walking past policemen during a demonstration, even though she has never had a bad encounter with them.

I have already mentioned the transmission of memories by going to places like mass graves (in the case of victims) and demonstrations. For those aligned with the political right, visiting the Valley of the Fallen every year, the mausoleum and basilica where Franco was buried until 2019, was an important event. These visits usually took place on November 20 to commemorate the dictator's date of death. But other places linked to Francoist memories also attracted many people, such as Plaza de Oriente, where his funeral took place, and places that were engraved in Francoist memories, such as the battle of Jarama in Madrid, the Alcazar of Toledo, and the monuments spread around Spain, such as the Cross of the Fallen in Vigo (Galicia), the Victory Angel in Valdepeñas (Castilla-La Mancha), and the monument to Onésimo Redondo in Valladolid (Castilla León). These places are full of symbolism and commemorate fascist leaders and victims. They are still used for demonstrations and commemorations.

Regarding education, there is a void in the transmission of memories. For the first generations, raised during the dictatorship, their education followed the propagandistic ambitions and ideology of Francoism. There was no space for dissident stories, and everything non-Francoist was demonized, criminalized, and forbidden. For the younger generations born during democracy, their education followed the aforementioned privatization of memories. The stories of repression and opposition that are shared within Spanish households are not incorporated into the current school curricula. At the same time, there are no narratives outside the official historical account that uphold the mythical narrative of a peaceful transition as a period of reconciliation. However, this situation may change if the Law of Democratic Memory from 2020 is approved by congress, following a positive review from the judiciary in the summer of 2021.

There is an interesting difference between the third generation, millennials, and Gen Z. The third generation only discussed the Civil War and Francoism in the late weeks of their final history course in high school. These history lessons were often rushed to finish on time. Consequently, over forty years of Spanish history were explained in a couple of hours, and Spanish contemporary history ended with Franco's death in 1975. This is

especially problematic because these generations were not educated in recent Spanish history. As a result, many of this generation nostalgically and fervently defend the Transition as democracy's foundational myth. This generation is thus standing up for something of which they often only have a vague notion. One man from the second generation, born in the 1950s, continuously defended that "we did what we could during the Transition, the risk of doing more would have meant another civil war, but you cannot understand it," which he explained when we were discussing the actual criticism against the transitional years. Other participants, also from the second generation, said that since I am young, I could not understand what was going on back then, and they claimed that "now it is easier to talk about what could have been done but back then, we did the only thing we could."

If education fails, the only open door to knowledge about the past is found in these public comments that break the sealed silence of their households, material symbols that hang on the walls without context, and the songs they sang but never fully understood. Thus, with these broken pieces of information, a fragmented idea of a nostalgic past was created that parents implicitly or explicitly shared with their children.

The fourth generation, Gen Z, has had the opportunity to learn history from a different perspective due to a generational change in teachers and professors and due to the emergence of the associative movements. Even though the history lessons inside the classroom were still more or less the same, rushed toward the end, focused on years and battles without personal names and personal experiences, school students also had the chance to learn about Spain's recent history by leaving the classroom. One of the main objectives of the memorial associative movement of victims and relatives is to promote education. Thus, one of their activities is to visit schools and share their testimonies. Members of associations such as La Barranca in La Rioja, La Comuna and the Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory, ARMH) work all over Spain, breaking the dehumanized narrative of history lessons by sharing their own experiences of suffering and violence. In doing so, they re-politicize and re-humanize the official historical narrative. And since a younger generation of history teachers has now entered the classrooms, some changes have been made. Some of these teachers are part of these associative movements and have some impact on the promotion of education. They encourage their students to talk with their families, watch films, and read books, and they even organize visits to places of memory such as old bunkers from the war, places of repressions like former Francoist jails, and the archaeological remains of battlefronts. Sadly, this is still the minority

of the teachers, and of the five participants from this younger generation whom I interviewed, only two had these experiences.

Finally, there is a transmission of memory in media and culture. Since the 2000s, with the eruption of the memory boom, the memories of the victims and their claims have taken over public media channels. When there is a new exhumation, it is reported in almost every national and regional newspaper. There are often TV specials on and news coverages of the excavation. However, in this media coverage, we can still see divisions between left and right, opponents and supporters. The political stance on memory issues has become part of the political DNA of the parties. Thus, the political left will defend the victims and their counter-memories and promote measures on transitional justice. They are more inclined to break the silence, open mass graves, and install anti-Francoist memorials, whereas the political right will go against such measures and will protect the foundational myth of the Transition and the discourse of national reconciliation and equidistance. Language related to or referring to the Civil War and the Transition is frequently used. There are many examples of politicians making statements that are problematic and unsettling. For example, in March 2021, Isabel Díaz Ayuso, the president of the region of Madrid with the Partido Popular, appeared on national television saying, "When they call you a fascist, you are on the right side of history" (Público 2021). With claims like this, a connection between the current political right and the political and social legacy of the Franco Regime is implied. The symbolic spaces that provide this connection derive from Francoist nostalgic memories that use the same language and symbols to legitimize the political ideology and agenda of the current right.

Regarding culture, all twenty participants mentioned the consumption of memorial culture, meaning cultural products that are related to or based on historical events of the twentieth century: films, series, novels, essays, documentaries, radio shows and podcasts, exhibitions, photography, music, among others. At this point, we can speak of prosthetic memories. It is now

> possible to have an intimate relationship to memories of events through which one did not live … "prosthetic memories" are indeed "personal" memories, as they derive from an engaged and experientially oriented encounter with the mass media's various technologies of memory.… [They] open up the possibility for collective horizons of experience and pave the way for unexpected political alliances. (Landsberg 2003, 148–49)

A consequence of these prosthetic memories may become clear in the responses of participants, indicating that they have learned about the past

from various media sources and have encountered different narratives. As a result, they fill in the gaps left by the educational void. However, this can also provoke or question family narratives and traditions, potentially leading to their disruption or even dissolution. One of my participants, a young man from Madrid, came from a traditional right-wing family, but he became a leftist who now questions his family's ideology and Francoist support. The opposite can of course also happen—that those who come from a traditionally leftist family start to support right-wing ideologies and attitudes.

One of the main problems of media and cultural transmission is the creation of what can be called "bubbles of communication," meaning that we tend to search, read, view, and listen to news and opinions that match our existing views. Thanks to the algorithms used on the internet and social media, many people will only see those posts that align with their preferences. This makes it difficult to break the "bubble." For example, the participants who partook in the movements of recovery of historical memory faced the news of the demonstration to commemorate Franco and the Blue Division with incredulity and surprise. One of them said, "I thought those feelings were left behind, together with Francoism." The participant continued, "I couldn't believe the news, that hundreds of people would still defend that, but anyway it is only a small group of nostalgic supporters."

Final Notes

Memory transmission occurs through many different channels, agents, and spaces. Even though it has been traditionally transmitted through artifacts, rituals, narratives, and discourses, many embodied and affective memories are being transmitted when they are not spoken, in the family or in the schools. Songs, flags, photographs, feelings, and places may thus turn into carriers that convey emotions and memories.

Within the broad scope of agents, the family has been the main site of transmission. Due to the privatization of memory that started with the Franco Regime in 1939 and was only strengthened during the transitional years, Spanish memories have been considered to belong to the private sphere of the household and are remembered as a personal subject by the elders of the family, those who lived the events. There is, however, a transmission of personal and intimate memory stories, typically dissociated from the general historical narrative. The first and second generation became the voice of memory; the former remembers the war and its

aftermath, and the latter remembers the end of the dictatorship and the beginning of democracy. Still, sometimes family transmission fails because the traumatic burden of those memories hinders their remembrance, or because silence was adopted as a survival strategy during the long repressive dictatorship. Thus, some of the younger generations turn to education to find answers about the past, only to find a void and a historical narrative that leaves many parts out. This void is filled by media and culture through cultural products and news reports, creating prosthetic memories and fostering alliances and empathies with the stories they choose to broadcast and echo.

Even when the transmission is silent or whispered, there is a transmission of memories and affect. Young people are leading marches in commemoration of Francoist heroes, holding monarchic flags with the eaglet, or leading demonstrations demanding that the victims are heard as they hold Republican flags. Hence, almost ninety years later, we still find two memorial narratives clashing in the private sphere which can be directly linked to the two sides that fought the Civil War: the nostalgic Francoists and the victims of the dictatorship. Spanish memories are accordingly still divided between Francoists and Republicans, the political right and the political left. The heirs to these memories are young Spaniards who were born years after the death of Franco. The nostalgia that colors the memories of the elders is now transmitted to the youth as a nostalgic longing for a past that they have not lived but that still feels better than the present.

Works Cited

Aguilar, Paloma. 2002. "Justicia, política y memoria: Los legados del Franquismo en la Transición Española." In *Las políticas hacia el pasado. Juicios, depuraciones, perdón y olvido en las nuevas democracias*, edited by Alexandra Barahone, 136–93. Madrid: Ediciones Istmo.

Aguilar, Paloma, Laia Balcells, and Héctor Cebolla. 2011. "Las actitudes de los españoles ante las medidas de justicia transicional relativas a la guerra civil y el franquismo." *Revista Internacional de Sociología* 69, no. 1: 59–90.

Alexander, Jeffrey. 2012. *Trauma: A Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Alexander, Jeffrey, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka. 2004. *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Barthes, Roland, and Lionel Duisit. 1975. "An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative." *New Literary History* 6, no. 2: 237–72.

Bernecker, Walther L., and Sören Brinkman. 2009. *Memorias Divididas: Guerra Civil y Franquismo en la Sociedad y la política españolas 1936–2000.* Madrid: Abada Editores.

Castillejo, Alejandro. 2007. "La globalización del testimonio: historia, silencio endémico y los usos de la palabra." *Antípoda* 4: 76–99.

Ciancio, María Belén. 2013. "Sobre el concepto de posmemoria." Paper presented at the International Conference ¿Las víctimas como precio necesario? Memoria, Justicia y Reconciliación at the CSIC, Madrid, October 29–31.

Connerton, Paul. 2011. *The Spirit of Mourning: History, Memory and the Body.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cuesta, Josefina. 2007. "Recuerdo, silencio y amnistía en la transición y en la democracia Española (1976–2006)." *Studia Histórica*, no. 25: 125–65.

Erll, Astrid. 2014. "Generation in Literary History: Three Constellations of Generationality, Genealogy, and Memory." *New Literary History* 45, no. 3: 385–409.

Eyerman, Ronal, Jeffrey C. Alexander, and Elizabeth Butler. 2011. *Narrating Trauma: On the Impact of Collective Suffering.* New York: Routledge.

Ferrándiz, Francisco, and Alejandro Baer. 2008. "Digital Memory: The Visual Recording of Mass Grave Exhumations in Contemporary Spain." *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 9, no. 3. https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-9.3.1152.

Gatti, Gabriel. 1992. "El misterioso encanto de las víctimas." *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, no. 56: 117–20.

Gatti, Gabriel. 2011. "El lenguaje de las víctimas: silencios (ruidosos) y parodias (serias) para hablar (sin hacerlo) de la desaparición forzada de personas." *Universitas Humanística*, no. 72: 89–109.

Halbwachs, Maurice. 1992. *On Collective Memory.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hirsch, Marianne. 2012. *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Hodgkin, Katharine, and Susannah Radstone. 2003. *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory.* New York/London: Routledge.

Jelin, Elizabeth. 2011. "Subjetividad y esfera pública: el género y los sentido de familia en las memorias de la represión." *Políticas y Sociedad* 48, no. 3: 555–69.

Juliá, Santos. 2003. "Echar al olvido: memoria y amnistía en la transición a la democracia." *Claves de la razón práctica*, no. 243: 248–69.

Landsberg, Allison. 2003. "Prosthetic Memory: The Ethics and Politics of Memory in an Age of Mass Culture." In *Memory and Popular Film*, edited by Paul Grainge, 144–61. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Langenbacher, Eric, Bill Niven, and Ruth Wittlinger. 2013. *Dynamics of Memory and Identity in Contemporary Europe.* Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Le Goff, Jacques. 1996. *History and Memory.* New York: Columbia University Press.

López Alcañiz, Vladimir. 2013. "Contramemoria. Historia, genealogía y ontología en Michel Foucault." *Historiografías*, no. 6: 13–31.

Macé, Jean-François. 2012. "Los conflictos de memoria en la España post-franquista (1975–2010). Entre políticas de la memoria y memorias de la política." *Bulletin Hispanique* 114, no. 2: 749–74.

Mannheim, Karl. 1952. "The Problem of Generation." In *Karl Mannheim: Essays*, edited by Paul Kecskemeti, 276–322. London/New York: Routledge.

Martin, J. R., and Ruth Wodak. 2003. *Re/Reading the Past: Critical and Functional Perspectives on Time and Value*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Montoto, Marina. 2014. "Una mirada a la crisis del relato mítico de la Transición: la 'Querella argentina' contra los crímenes del Franquismo." *Kamchatka*, no. 4: 125–45.

Nuckold, Anthony. 2019. "Narrativas postraumáticas de duelo persistente en la España del siglo XXI." PhD diss., Universitat de Valencia.

Passerini, Luisa, ed. 1992. *Memory and Totalitarianism*. Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Pérez, Julio. 2004. "Experiencia histórica y construcción social de las memorias. La transición Española a la democracia." *Pasado y Memoria. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, no. 3: 93–124.

Pollak, Michael. 1989. "Memoria, olvido, silencio." *Revista Estudios Históricos* 2, no. 3: 3–15.

Público. 2021. "Ayuso, a Ana Rosa: 'Si te llaman fascista estás en el lado bueno de la historia.'" *Público*, March 15, 2021. https://www.publico.es/publico-tv/publico-al-dia/programa/944348/ayuso-a-ana-rosa-si-te-llaman-fascista-estas-en-el-lado-bueno-de-la-historia.

Rigby, Andrew. 2000. "Amnesty and Amnesia in Spain." *Peace Review* 12, no. 1: 73–79.

Rothberg, Michael. 2019. *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Ruiz, Pedro. 2007. "Los discursos de la memoria histórica en España." *Hispania Nova*, no. 7. https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=2245262.

Siruana Zaragoza, Elvira. 2021. "Juana Doña: la alegría es la lucha." January 15, 2021. http://www.nadieseacuerdadenosotras.org/WEB_SECCIONES_14_8_10/CARCELES_FUSILAMIENTOS_EUGE_NINOS_ROBADOS/PDF_SECCION_CARCELES/Juana_Dona_la_alegria_es_la_lucha-Articulos_de_Ciudad_de_Mujeres.pdf.

Vinyes, Ricard. 2016. "The Privatization of Memory in Spain and Its Consequences." In *Past and Power: Public Policies on Memory. Debates, from Global to Local*, edited by Jordi Guixé i Coromines, 118–27. Barcelona: Edicions de la Universitat de Barcelona.

Vinyes, Ricard, ed. 2018. *Diccionario de la memoria colectiva*. Barcelona: Gedisa Editorial.

Welzar, Harald. 2010. "Re-Narrations: How Pasts Change in Conversational Remembering." *Memory Studies* 3, no. 2: 5–17.

Wilson, Janelle. 1999. "'Remember When…' A Consideration of the Concept of Nostalgia." *ETC: A Review of General Semantics* 56, no. 3: 296–304.

Zamora, José, Reyes Mate, and Jordi Maiso. 2016. *Las víctimas como precio necesario*. Madrid: Editorial Trotta.

Zerubavel, Eviatar. 2006. *The Elephant in the Room: Silence and Denial in Everyday Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

5 Trauma, Nostalgia, and Redemption among Veterans in Homecoming Film

Mariecke van den Berg and Jan Grimell

I had things that made sense.
You remember things that made sense?
Before we all got so lost?
Ron Kovic in *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989, Oliver Stone).

Abstract
This chapter uses the concepts of trauma and nostalgia to analyze the portrayal of PTSD in homecoming films. Nostalgia, integral to the study of battle's psychological effects, has evolved in cultural studies to scrutinize power dynamics in depictions of "home." This chapter scrutinizes how films depict the relationship between trauma and home. Drawing from Svetlana Boym's distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia, the former emphasizes national continuity, while the latter acknowledges gaps and inconsistencies in the concept of "home." The chapter contends that reflective nostalgia provides a more realistic representation of people with PTSD and offers a more promising portrayal of their path toward "redemption," wherein veterans navigate their enduring wounds.

Keywords: popular culture; war; PTSD; moral injury; identity, masculinity

Introduction

War and film are closely connected; there has even been, as Ian Roberts has noted, "an almost symbiotic relationship between war and film" (2003, 170). Unsurprisingly, for a long time the representation of armed conflict in popular culture was more concerned with what happens on the battlefield

Van Liere, L. & Sremac, S. (eds), *Trauma and Nostalgia: Practices in Memory and Identity*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2024
DOI: 10.5117/9789048559220_CH05

than with what comes after. Many have read Erich Maria Remarque's World War I classic *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1928) or seen its 1930, 1979, or 2022 film adaptations. Few, however, have read or even heard of its sequel *The Road Back* (1931), which focuses on the homecoming of a group of young German soldiers. Yet over the last decades, in both the US and Europe, there has been a gradual increase of literature and film focusing on processes of "homecoming." Films and TV series try to grasp what happens in the aftermath of battle, and in particular the specifics of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These films consciously move away from a (romanticized) depiction of armed conflict in order to zoom in on its effects on the individuals (servicemen and women) involved. In this chapter, we take an interest in the depiction of the "home" in homecoming film, both as it is remembered from before deployment and as it is experienced upon return. We employ the notions of trauma and nostalgia as entry points into the study of cultural processes of sense-making of violence, transgression, and pain, and the possibilities of growth, repair, and reconciliation, using insights from both the social sciences and cultural studies. The main aim of our analysis is to show that homecoming film can perpetuate, but also challenge, one-sided and simplistic notions of nostalgia and envision more layered and nuanced perspectives on home and belonging instead.

Trauma and nostalgia have been conceptualized with different methods and concerns in the social sciences and in cultural studies. In the social sciences, what has been at stake in studies of PTSD and the newer concept of moral injury (MI)—which both equate to our understanding of trauma in this chapter—is the psychiatric and psychological treatment of veterans, as well as the interests of the military in deciding who is fit for service and who is not. Such a military interest may serve varying purposes, for instance: (a) to make sure that service members who have been deployed in conflict zones can actually continue to serve efficiently within the military, (b) to make sure that veteran service members can handle renewed combat stress amid re-deployment, and (c) to acknowledge PTSD diagnosis that is related to military service because it implicates financial governmental support due to early sickness and retirement/discharge. Therefore, the diagnosis in itself is important both for governments (to regulate who will be granted financial support and treatment) and individuals (to qualify for PTSD in order to get financial support and get treatment paid). The financial and treatment designs due to PTSD may differ among Western governments, but generally speaking, military PTSD today is accepted by armed forces, veteran administrations, and clinicians. In contrast, MI

does not have the clinical diagnostic status as PTSD because the concept of MI is new, which means that MI as such will not make one eligible for financial support and paid treatment from governments. The historic concept of nostalgia can be seen as preceding contemporary notions of PTSD and MI; this concept has been studied in relation to deployment as a coping mechanism to deal with existential struggle caused by the stress of battle and the hardship of being away from home, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

In cultural studies, trauma and nostalgia are studied in their social and political function, with a focus, for instance, on the formation of group identity through shared experiences of trauma and memory. This implies that there is a disciplinary dividing line in studying, on the one hand, the effects of war and battle on individuals and developing the means to assist those who suffer from PTSD and, on the other hand, studying the cultural effects of warfare on identity formation and shared storytelling, in which veterans may play a role but in which they are not necessarily the focus of attention. We argue, however, that both approaches are necessary to understand the politics of trauma and nostalgia, that is, how both concepts are made to work to serve certain interests. This chapter is therefore positioned at the crossroads of narrative psychology, chaplaincy/theology, cultural studies, and gender studies, speaking from and to several fields in order to analyze the complex relations between trauma and nostalgia as they are represented in homecoming film.

In addition to trauma and nostalgia, we take an interest in a third concept: the notion of redemption. Both military/veteran chaplaincy and cultural studies have stakes in exploring nostalgia as a tool for healing and repair: healing souls, healing broken relationships, repairing historical wrongdoings, healing the effects of shrewd power relations, healing the results of enforced (gendered) social roles, healing the pain of transgressions and/or having hurt others. We will expand on this notion at a later moment.

Our overarching research question for this chapter is: In what ways can we advance an understanding of the complex relation between trauma, nostalgia, and redemption in cultural representations of veterans coming home? To answer this question, the chapter continues with a more in-depth interdisciplinary conceptualization of trauma, nostalgia, and redemption as presented within the fields of the social sciences and cultural studies. This is followed by a section in which we explore the production of the figure of the veteran and the representation of homecoming in film. We will then reflect upon the relation between trauma, nostalgia, and redemption in our material.

Trauma, Nostalgia, and Redemption: Connecting Theories of Postwar Disorder

The academic study of nostalgia as a psychological condition has a distinct military background and will first be discussed in this specific context. The last century of warfare among Western countries has involved service members who, amid and in the aftermath of deployments, were diagnosed with post-combat disorders or, rather, postwar disorders. Such disorders have been given various names over the previous centuries. These names have to different degrees reflected both war-specific issues (e.g., trench warfare with heavy artillery bombarding gave rise to the concept of shell shock, a pre-eminent functional disorder of the First World War, characterized by tremor, restricted movement, and nervous exhaustion) and the cultural and medical understandings of such burdens at that specific time (Jones 2006). Although many of these disorders have common symptoms, the explanations attached to them illustrated considerable diversity, often reflected in the labels themselves. Over the years, postwar symptoms have included both psychological dimensions (e.g., exhaustion, combat fatigue, combat stress reaction, and PTSD) and medically unexplained symptoms (e.g., soldier's heart, effort syndrome, shell shock, non-ulcer dyspepsia, effects of Agent Orange, and Gulf War Syndrome). Of specific interest in this chapter is the disorder labeled "nostalgia," which within the military context described and pointed to an undesired and burdensome condition.

This disorder dates back centuries and was described in various Swiss and Spanish accounts in the seventeenth century. In these accounts, nostalgia presented as a state of deep despair found in conscripted troops sent to foreign territories, where they had little chance to go on leave (Rosen 1975). Already in 1688, Johannes Hofer translated the German *Heimweh* (homesickness) into nostalgia to describe the depression that was evident among Swiss mercenaries longing to get home. Cases of nostalgia were also found in French and German eighteenth-century accounts and among sailors of the Royal Navy. During the nineteenth century, it had become a recognized hazard of troops on deployment and was increasingly categorized as a type of melancholy. Nostalgia came to further prominence during the American Civil War (1861–65).

Michael Roper (2011) has advanced and nuanced our understanding of nostalgia during the First World War by analyzing letters from service members, presenting nostalgia as a complex emotional experience. The functions of nostalgia could range from reassurance or momentary relief from boredom and impersonal army routines, through flight from intolerable

anxiety, to survival through the power of love. Although animated by solitude, nostalgia provided a means of communication with loved ones. Its emotional tones varied according to the soldier's age and the nature of his attachments to home. The young soldier's reminiscence of home conveyed not just the comforting past but also the hateful present. Nostalgia, rooted in early memories of care, could be a vehicle for arousing the anxieties of loved ones, especially mothers. Among married men, the desire to return to wives and children could provide a powerful motivation for survival. Roper suggests that such feelings functioned in the service of resilience. Furthermore, he shows that among men of the war generation particularly, disillusionment was not only a postwar construction, an artifact of cultural memory, but also a powerful legacy of the emotional experience of the war itself.

In contrast to nostalgia as a form of homesickness, there is also a type of reversed nostalgia that Stephen Garton (2000) has observed. Focusing on the Australian context, Garton found evidence (in newspapers, letters from home, stories in journals, magazines, and reports) of the widespread nostalgia for the war among returned (First World War) soldiers and suggested that this was a response to discontents of the war itself. Men uprooted from their social circle became suspicious and resentful, their anger fixed on figures of the shirker, profiteer, and unfaithful woman. After the war, the idealization of comradeship was matched in its intensity by a disparagement of civil society and values.

Dated postwar disorders, such as nostalgia, disappeared during the latter part of the twentieth century when the concept of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) was introduced, a mental disorder that today is a well-established and accepted psychiatric diagnostic tool (as stated before, in contrast to moral and spiritual injuries). PTSD is defined in *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), which has been developed over the last decades by the American Psychological Association (APA). In the fifth edition (DSM-5), which was published in 2013, PTSD was moved from the class of anxiety disorders into a new class of trauma and stressor-related disorders, where depression and reoccurrence of panic attacks are experienced as part of PTSD symptoms. Post-traumatic stress disorder can occur when a person has been exposed to actual death or threatened by death through direct exposure, witnessing an assault or transgression or having indirect exposure to aversive details of a traumatic situation. Deployment to war zones and combat is particularly likely to expose veterans to such situations. PTSD becomes manifest as its sufferers persistently re-experience and relive a traumatic event (or events) through unwanted

memories, nightmares, flashbacks, and emotional and physical distress, which are typically stimulated by exposure to traumatic reminders that may seem normal and mundane to the unafflicted. As a result, victims try to avoid trauma-related stimuli/reminders. Additionally, negative thoughts or feelings begin or worsen after a traumatic event, which include, but are not limited to, overly negative thoughts and assumptions about one's self or the world, exaggerated blame of one's self or others for causing the trauma, negative affectivity, decreased interest in activities, and feelings of isolation. Arousal and reactivity also begin or worsen after the trauma and contain irritability or aggression, risky or destructive behavior, hypervigilance, heightened startle response, difficulty concentrating, and difficulty sleeping. Jonathan Shay (2002) suggests that combat PTSD is a war injury, and he makes a distinction between simple PTSD (the persistence in civilian life of adaptations required to survive battle) and complex PTSD (which includes both simple PTSD and the destruction of the capacity for social trust).

Today the complexity of the hidden wounds of war (Shay 2003; Stallinga 2013; Wortmann et al. 2017) and soul repair (Brock and Lettini 2012; Graham 2017) and the difficulties of transitioning from war back to civilian life (Lifton 1992; Shay 2002) have been given new attention and emerging voices from the field of chaplaincy through the concept of moral injury (MI), a term first coined by Shay and James Munroe (1998). Their definition of moral injury has three components, which were based on veterans' narratives of injustice via leadership malpractice: (a) the betrayal of what was considered morally right in the local culture (b) by someone who had been legitimately granted authority within the social system (c) in a high-stakes situation(s). This definition tends to emphasize authorized yet bad command and the implication thereof upon the individual service member. This approach to moral injury is rooted in Shay's groundbreaking works *Achilles in Vietnam* (2003) and *Odysseus in America* (2002), which focus on psychological injury as a result of immoral leadership. Other researchers over recent decades have approached moral injury with a specific focus on the violation of personal moral codes in the line of duty. Such an approach was presented by Brett T. Litz and colleagues (2009) when they offered an understanding of potential experiences of moral injury as implications of "(p)erpetuating, failing to prevent, or bearing witness to, or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations" (Litz et al. 2009, 700). This formulation has gained acceptance in the research literature as a working definition of moral injury, which spans from participation in or witnessing inhumane actions, to failure in preventing them from happening, to even relatively and/or seemingly subtle acts or experiences that later come to be

perceived as violations of a personal moral code. A recent development to the treatment of moral injury among service members and veterans that has gained growing attention is the exploration of the spiritual dimension of post-traumatic growth, recovery, well-being, and health (Brémault-Phillips et al. 2017; Currier et al. 2016; Koenig et al. 2017; Kopacz and Connery 2015; Liebert 2019; Nash and Litz 2013; Smith-MacDonald et al. 2018; Wortmann et al. 2017).

Film, Veterans, and the Cultural Studies Approach to Trauma and Nostalgia

In this chapter, we explore the lived reality of veterans through the lens of film in order to gain insight into the cultural relevance of the veteran as a "character." We want to know how veterans are represented and which perspectives on reality are disclosed by filmmakers' choices.

The veteran has a long history as a particular cultural figure. In the United States, for instance, the decade-long coming-home oeuvre includes films such as *The Best Years of Our Life* (Wyler 1946), *Coming Home* (Ashby 1978), *Welcome Home* (Schaffner 1989), and *The War* (Avnet 1994). Emmett Early (2003) argues that the depiction of veterans in literature and film has always been very dependent upon the political stakes involved in representing veterans in specific ways. In his overview of more than a century of filmic depictions of veterans (in wars in which the United States was involved), Early argues that films about veterans from the Vietnam War (1955–75) form a pivotal moment. From this period onward, a specific genre of homecoming film starts to take shape, which he calls "triptych film." This film consists of three phases: the main character as a boy (although Early also recognizes the existence of female veterans), who in the second phase experiences combat and then, in the third phase, comes home and needs to find a way to deal with his experiences. Later in our chapter, we discuss two of these exemplary movies: *The Deer Hunter* (Cimino 1978) and *Born on the Fourth of July* (Stone 1989). Other examples are *Birdy* (Parker 1984), *Forrest Gump* (Zemeckis 1994), and *Dead Presidents* (Hughens 1995). What brought about the change in the figure of the veteran in this era is likely the difference in the public reception of World War II versus the Vietnam War. While the first was not very controversial and lasted for a relatively short while, the presence of US troops in Vietnam was heavily contested, and the war lasted much longer. The shift in the depiction of veterans seems closely related to this shift in political sensibilities about the war in question. What these films

thus have in common is a rather explicit critical perspective on American involvement in the Vietnam War.

Early published his book at the onset of the war in Afghanistan and right before the 2003 invasion of Iraq. We argue that in the two decades since, aside from the triptych veteran film, another category of veteran film has developed: the perhaps somewhat less political but more educational "awareness-film." Over the past years, attempts have been made to raise public awareness regarding the causes and effects of moral injury among veterans. Film in particular has been a popular means of educating people on PTSD/MI. With financial support of the Dutch Ministry of Defense, for instance, the film *Stella's Oorlog* (Stella's war, Van Rooijen 2009) shows the effects of deployment on a group of friends and the ones remaining at home. In the US, the film *Thank You for Your Service* (Hall 2017) focuses on the difficulties veterans from the war in Iraq encounter when they try to get help in cases of PTSD or moral injury. In *The Hurt Locker* (Bigelow 2008), main character Sergeant First Class William James finds homecoming so unsettling that he instead opts for redeployment. This new interest in homecoming is also introduced in filmic depictions of World War II. For instance, while the immensely popular miniseries *Band of Brothers* (Hanks and Spielberg 2001) ends with the victory of the allied troops, its sequel *The Pacific* (McKenna et al. 2010) includes a final episode that is completely devoted to the homecoming experiences of the main characters. Film can be a means to make the knowledge produced on PTSD available to a larger audience, allowing viewers to empathize with those involved in armed conflict (Hankir and Agius 2012). Stimulating greater awareness and empathy, however, only works when PTSD is shown in a realistic and subtle, not stigmatizing, manner (Shapiro, Tobia, and Aziz 2018).

Different depictions of nostalgia, as we will come to show, play a crucial role in homecoming films, which are often based on picturing a happy "before" that is disrupted by the main character's deployment. It is our assumption that the focus on trauma and nostalgia in these films serves purposes other than just educational ones. As we will argue, the home that the veteran left and returns to is not just the home of this individual; it appeals at the same time to the viewer's understanding of home in, for example, nationalist terms. The belonging of the veteran in some ways is also the belonging of the spectator. Homecoming films, we argue, need to be understood not merely in terms of what they communicate about complicated individual psychological processes but also in terms of what they communicate in terms of the politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2011). In other words, homecoming film enables us to ask critical questions about

how home is perceived and what kinds of community it enables. We therefore turn to perceptions of nostalgia in cultural studies before turning to our discussion of several homecoming films.

Within cultural studies, as Sean Scanlan notes, nostalgia has long been linked to negative notions like kitsch and false memory, and it used to be viewed as "simply bad, bad, bad" (2004, 3). This perspective has recently given way to the study of nostalgia as a much more complex phenomenon. Nostalgia can, for instance, function as the canary in the coalmine: a cultural warning or signpost on the ways in which cultural memory works. The assumption is that when people express feelings of nostalgia, more is going on underneath the surface. As such, it becomes conceivable to view nostalgia as a starting point for a more critical perspective on cultural memory and (be)longing. In our chapter, we emphasize this perspective on nostalgia, building mainly on the work of Svetlana Boym and Jennifer Ladino.

Svetlana Boym (2001; see also the introduction of this volume) distinguishes between two types of nostalgia: restorative and reflective. Restorative nostalgia is the type found in (extreme forms of) nationalist discourse. Emphasizing *nostos*, the return home, it is the longing for a pure and unspoiled national home. Though Boym coined these terms before the presidency of Donald Trump, it is safe to say that restorative nostalgia refers to the type of longing that informs Republican slogans such as "Make America great again," the likes of which can also be found in European nationalist politics (see O'Donohoe, this volume). Restorative nostalgia is dominated by two possible plots: that of the restoration of origins and that of conspiracy theory (Boym 2001, 42). It is based on picturing a "home" about which only one, collective, true story can be told, and on the projection of irrational fears onto an Other who threatens this story. It leaves little room for alternative stories and is interested not in details but in symbols (xviii). Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, stresses *algia*, longing itself, and "delays the homecoming—wistfully, ironically, desperately" (42). This type of nostalgia is the kind of longing and remembering that allows for flexibility. It is not about establishing one type of truth about the past but about accommodating a variety of narratives (53). It is more interested in individual, local forms of remembering and longing, while acknowledging the "shattered fragments of memory" (53).

Building on Boym's typology, Jennifer Ladino (2004) suggests distinguishing between official nostalgia and counter-nostalgia. We find this distinction particularly useful, because Ladino applies it to the ways in which the "return home" is imagined, in her case in literary texts. As in restorative nostalgia, the home that is imagined in official nostalgia is "a pure origin—a

truthful, cohesive site or event constructed by simplifying and romanticizing a complex past" (91). Counter-nostalgia, however, "envisions 'the home' as fractured, fragmented, complicated, and layered; to 'return' to this sort of home is to revisit a dynamic past and to invert or exploit official narratives in ways that challenge dominant histories" (91). Counter-nostalgia is not about returning to an idealized past but about reflecting on that past in critical ways. In our chapter, we are interested specifically in the tension between restorative and reflective, or official and counter-nostalgia, in the homecoming stories of war veterans as told in contemporary film.

Redemption

We now turn to the third and last concept we want to explore before turning to our material: redemption. We are interested in whether and how films present a way out of trauma, and how post-trauma life is envisioned. As authors positioned in the Reformed and Lutheran Christian traditions respectively, we turn to the notion of redemption almost automatically, but we are aware of its strong Christian assumptions and conventions. We see these assumptions reflected in psychologist Dan McAdams's work on narrative identity (2013), where it is suggested that the story of the redemptive self is a cultural narrative that enables the reconstruction of "who I am." The basic plot contains recurring elements (McAdams 2013, xvii). In the beginning of the story, the main character is favored in some way and enjoys a special blessing, advantage, gift, or status that distinguishes this character from others. The character becomes aware of this and cultivates a firm coherent belief system that will provide life guidance for the rest of the story. The character then encounters many obstacles and suffers setbacks. But the character moves forward over time, rises from adversity, recovers from setbacks, and frees the self from oppressive forces. The story ends when the character works to promote the well-being of future generations. A positive legacy is offered that assists people and things in growing and prospering. We expect that we will often encounter the narrative plot of the redemptive self in our selected homecoming films, since the plot has become secularized in the cultural contexts in which the films were produced. We would, however, like to extend the cultural studies critique on simplified notions of nostalgia to the notion of redemption as well. We see in the plot of the redemptive self some possible harmful elements. For instance, the plot suggests a hero who, as an individual, takes control over their own life and takes matters into their own hands. As such, the plot echoes liberal notions

of agency and subjectivity as defined by autonomy and self-fulfillment that, we argue, may do more harm than good in dealing with trauma. Moreover, this plot evokes notions of hegemonic masculinity, where the (male) hero can overcome obstacles and turn them into an advantage. In our analysis, we will be looking for more complex forms of redemption. We argue that redemption, if it is to have a chance of success, should be imagined as a provisional, unfinished, and incomplete process—a process that allows for unclarity and loose ends. It takes place not through individual struggle in solitude but through relation with significant others.

Veterans in Film: Picturing the Home in Homecoming

Selection of Films and TV Series

To analyze the cultural representation of trauma, nostalgia, and redemption, we selected the following films and TV series: *The Deer Hunter* (US, 1978) and *Born on the Fourth of July* (US, 1989) on the Vietnam War; *Warriors* (UK, 1999) on the Yugoslav Wars; and *In the Valley of Elah* (US, 2007), *Stella's Oorlog* (Netherlands, 2009), *Maryland* (France, 2015), and *Thank You for Your Service* (US, 2017) on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is not our intention to be exhaustive in our selection, and we realize that some relevant films were not included in our analysis. However, we decided to discuss a smaller sample of exemplary films more in-depth rather than include a multitude of films or series that we could then analyze only superficially. The selection of films/TV series was made using several criteria. First, they show variation in the responses to different wars; second, they address both US and European (though not non-Western) concerns with veterans, nostalgia, and trauma; and third, they display, as will become clear below, a wide variety in the narrative "use" of trauma and nostalgia.

Methodology

In considering these films, we ask a number of questions. Regarding trauma, we ask: What was the cause of the trauma depicted in the film, how does it manifest itself in the life of the veteran characters, and what kind of "figure" does the veteran subsequently become? Regarding nostalgia, we ask: How are home and homecoming pictured? Which kinds of nostalgia does the film display, and which kind of critique does this use of nostalgia enable or prevent? Regarding redemption, we ask: Which kinds of redemption, repair,

or reconciliation become possible in this film, and how are they related to the particularities of trauma and nostalgia as depicted in the film? We will not systematically discuss these questions in relation to all films but will move from one theme to the next, using scenes, quotes, and plot points as examples to argue that in homecoming films there are some general trends that connect trauma, nostalgia, and redemption in certain ways.

Picturing Complexity: Trauma in Films and TV Series

In some of our material, homecoming and the challenges veterans face are presented as the main subject, while at other times it is merely a feature of a plot that is actually about something else. This distinction proves quite important for how trauma and the figure of the veteran are being portrayed. Films that have a different main concern tend to remain vague about the cause of trauma. In *Maryland*, for instance, which is more of a thriller than a war film, the viewer is presented with the sounds of battle, but there is no actual depiction of life during deployment. Movies that take PTSD as their main theme are more explicit about the cause of trauma. In *The Deer Hunter*, main characters Michael, Nick, and Steven are forced to play Russian roulette when in Vietcong captivity. In *Born on the Fourth of July*, main character Ron finds himself in a situation where his mistake leads to civilians being killed, while he also, in the heat of battle, accidently shoots a comrade—incidences that all illustrate a high potential of being moral injury events. In *Thank You for Your Service*, Adam feels guilty about dropping his buddy Michael, whom he carried after Michael got shot, and believes this to be the cause of him becoming paralyzed, which also serves as an illustration of MI. There are therefore different causes for the juxtaposition of PTSD/MI trauma: having suffered violence and torture by the hands of the enemy, having caused (unnecessary/civilian) suffering, or failing one's battle buddy. Although it is hard to make any overarching statements based on just a handful of films and series, our findings suggest that the more a film falls into the category of "educational awareness," in terms of addressing the poor conditions in which veterans find themselves after deployment (in particular in US films like *Thank You for Your Service* and *Born on the Fourth of July*), the more the trauma is seen to be caused by a veteran who was pressured into making a harmful decision while the veteran had good intentions. This presents a formula for a potential moral conflict leading into an injury. This is different only in *In the Valley of Elah*, where Mike, son of main character Hank, turns out to have been torturing a prisoner of war.

Trauma manifests itself in many ways: The characters in the films display physical symptoms such as nosebleeds, hands that are shaking uncontrollably, or a buzzing in the ears. Some of the veterans are shown to experience flashbacks, sometimes triggered, as in *Born on the Fourth of July* and *Maryland*, by a sound that reminds the main character of a situation during deployment. A recurring way of portraying PTSD is veterans' incapacity to perform sexually and their excessive drinking or drug use. They often want to talk about their experience or confess their mistakes, but they either find that, ultimately, no one wants to hear their confession or find themselves unable to entrust their spouse and can only have meaningful conversations about "over there" with their battle buddies. Veterans are often depicted as becoming increasingly alienated from their family and especially their spouse, behaving in a touchy manner or aggressively, which sometimes results in cases of domestic violence that evoke new feelings of guilt and shortcoming. They sometimes consider suicide, and in several films (*The Deer Hunter*, *Stella's oorlog*, *Thank You for Your Service*), one of the characters actually does commit suicide. Importantly, PTSD is portrayed as an emasculating condition that makes veterans unsuitable as lovers and fathers. For example, Ron, who is injured during the Vietnam war in *Born on the Fourth of July*, exclaims, "I was paralyzed, castrated that day, why?!" In the same movie, it also becomes clear that trauma in homecoming movies is often about belonging, or the loss of a sense of belonging. Ron sighs to another veteran, "I had things that made sense. You remember things that made sense? Before we all got so lost?"

What is striking in respect to the depiction of trauma is a difference in films about "older" wars such as in Vietnam and the Balkans and "recent" wars like those in Iraq and Afghanistan, in terms of the influence of social media. In *Warriors*, for instance, Alan finds that after his return from the Yugoslav wars, people back home in the UK are unable to understand what is happening in a situation of war (*Warriors*, episode 2). Standing dazed and lost in a supermarket after he returns home, he finds that people are more concerned with their choice of groceries than with suffering. There is a clear distinction between what happened "over there" and his life "back home," and only he can bridge this gap, because only he has seen both worlds. In films about more recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, social media blurs these boundaries. Hank, in *In The Valley of Elah*, finds out what has happened to his son because he gets access to short videoclips recorded with his son's cellphone. Stella, main character of *Stella's oorlog*, is sent videoclips recorded on camera by her partner Jur and brother Twan, who are deployed to Afghanistan together. For veterans, this availability of social media seems

to have a double effect. On the one hand, their family and friends get to see a bit of the world they enter upon deployment. On the other hand, as *Stella's oorlog* makes clear, this is also unwelcome when things have happened during deployment for which veterans do not want reminders and which they do not wish to share with their families. Social media makes home enter the world of deployment, and the world of deployment enters the space and sphere of home.

From the depiction of PTSD (and potential MI) in film, a specific figure of the veteran can be constructed that is in many cases problematic, as previous research on the cultural and social representation of veterans has also pointed out. In their introduction to the edited volume *Men After War*, Stephen McVeigh and Nicola Cooper, for instance, have argued that much scholarly work and public debate paints a rather one-sided image of the "figure" of the veteran as "a damaged loner," suffering from all the symptoms mentioned above (2003, 5). The task of researching, making policy, and creating documentaries on PTSD is then to "re-normalize" the veteran into a "re-functioning citizen" (5). Almost without exception, postwar or post-battle films tend to problematize characters suffering from PTSD, emphasizing or even exaggerating the symptoms. Although the intentions are sometimes clearly emancipatory, as when addressing the failure of policies that are supposed to support veterans, there are some troublesome effects of this way of picturing PTSD. The most important effect is that in these films, the veteran either seems to be "stuck" in PTSD forever, with no perspective of things getting better, or that change is possible, but only through a single "magical moment" in which the veteran finally opens up and begins to talk. (This will be discussed further shortly.) Equally troublesome, in our opinion, are films in which PTSD is merely brought up as a plot device to add tension. This seems to be the case in *Maryland*, where veteran Vincent develops some sort of "sixth sense" due to suffering from PTSD, a sixth sense that might help him detect danger on his job as a bodyguard but that may just as well be paranoia, and the viewer is asked to decide which of the two is true. There is hardly any attempt in the film to explore what it means for Vincent to suffer from PTSD or how he may learn to live with its effects in a healthy way. PTSD makes Vincent, as seen in some other films, a one-dimensional character.

Rethinking Home: Nostalgia in Films and TV Series

The story of home is told in different ways in homecoming films. Two dominant storylines can be distinguished. The first is a chronological

narrative that starts at home and then follows the main character(s) into deployment, after which the process of homecoming is shown. Most films follow this timeline. The second storyline starts upon return, when things are already troubled, and "home" can only be imagined through its negative mirror image. Home is, or was, what the present situation is *not*. In the first, chronological set of films, there are some recurring elements that are brought to the fore to picture the "home" that veterans leave behind and hope to return to. Three of the films contain some form of a "last supper scene," a scene in which veterans are surrounded by their friends and family, perhaps because they attend a wedding at which all or most of their community is present (*Deer Hunter*, *Warriors*) or because they are attending their own farewell party (*Stella's oorlog*). These parties often have the function of demonstrating that life before deployment was essentially a good life, and it is interesting to look at the "ingredients" of this good life. In many films, it is a life that is about drinking, hunting, male bonding, and being sexually active. It is about high school sweethearts and sports tournaments. It is a life in which family bonds are strong and no serious relationship problems exist. *In the Valley of Elah*, *Stella's oorlog*, and *The Deer Hunter* include a "photo opportunity" in which all this happiness and belonging is "frozen" into a still: a group photo of the moment when everything was still as it should be. In *Stella's oorlog*, this photo returns in a later scene when veterans, upon return, long for this simple life before deployment. In the second type of film, the spectator must reconstruct the home from the display of its ruins. This type of film shows all that is malfunctioning in the life of veterans and, in doing so, implies that before deployment things were different. The effect is more or less the same: one is presented with a rather sharp contrast between a perfect past and a difficult present.

It is not an easy task to analyze which type of nostalgia exactly is involved in this cinematic picturing of rupture. In terms of service men's personal lives, the strong juxtaposition of an innocent "before" and a disrupted "after" deployment seems to imply that in homecoming film, the emphasis is on restorative nostalgia: the longing for the perfect home that was left. There are, however, many moments in the films that also question such a relatively simple juxtaposition or, in the very least, show the downsides of a belief in blissful pasts. Occasionally films resist the temptation to picture the past as perfect. The best example is perhaps *The Deer Hunter*. Unlike most other homecoming films, the chronologically told *The Deer Hunter* takes its time to picture the past. Its full first hour is spent on sketching the circumstances under which its main characters Mike, Steven, and Nick live before they are drafted to fight in Vietnam. The young men live in a poor community

of immigrants of Russian descent in a small town in Pennsylvania and hold low-skilled jobs in the steel industry. The film makes it implicitly clear that this is also their prospect for the future: to work hard for little money and live simple lives in their small town. The film starts off with the wedding of one of the men and takes its time to show the liturgy, rituals, and dances, inspired by Russian culture, that color the wedding. From these lengthy scenes, the viewer learns at least two things: first, that life in their hometown is far from perfect, as it includes alcohol abuse, domestic violence, social control, and limited prospects in terms of class mobility; second, that these young men's belonging to this imperfect home is without question. The possibility of thinking about imperfection and belonging together in relation to the home is, as will become clear in the next section, crucial in terms of the kind of redemption that can be envisioned, at least in the world of film. Before discussing questions of redemption, however, we would like to point to a second film that shows the cracks of the portrayal of an ideal home. In *In the Valley of Elah*, Joan, mother to the mysteriously disappeared and (as soon becomes clear) murdered soldier Mike, blames her husband, Hank, himself a veteran, for their son's choice to join the military in the first place. Interestingly, she snaps at Hank, "In this house, you have to be in the army to be able to call yourself a man." This is a pivotal remark, because it lays bare some of the conditions under which the ideal home is constructed. We argue that these conditions are highly dependent on ideals of gender and sexuality.

Both *The Deer Hunter* and *In the Valley of Elah*, but also other films, illustrate what we regard as a central point in homecoming film: the elements that made both the "home" and a sense of belonging possible are often also precisely the elements that make it difficult for veterans to deal with their trauma upon return. The home as it is pictured in the films we discussed is constructed out of ideals of hegemonic masculinity: to belong means to be athletic, sexually active, and competitive; have a no-nonsense attitude; and be able to consume large amounts of alcohol. Upon return, many veterans find that they no longer have access to these "building blocks" of male belonging (for instance, because of physical injury, such as in *Born on the Fourth of July*) or that their psychological or spiritual injuries actually require a different set of skills, such being able to talk about one's feelings and desires and being able to relate to those of significant others. Their answer to the discrepancy is often to exaggerate those things that previously made them feel like they belonged, such as excessive drinking or preferring male company and avoiding female company. The filmic representation of the crisis in which veterans find themselves upon homecoming, we argue, needs

to be understood also in terms of gender as instances of failed masculinity and the quest for a new, post-deployment masculinity. The failure to return home, then, is also a failure to reconnect to old structures of masculinity and can sometimes function as an implicit critique of those structures. Moreover, dealing with trauma is not just about dealing with what happened "over there" but also about dealing with the realization that "home" was perhaps never as perfect as one thought and was in fact also limiting one's potential ways of being. In line with the latter, *In the Valley of Elah* and *Born on the Fourth of July* also thematize how these ideals of masculinity are related to nationalistic or patriotic values. This is where moments of official and counter-nostalgia also become part of homecoming films.

Among the films in our sample, a tension arises between official and counter-nostalgia mostly in films from the context of the US that explicitly discuss the failure of policies that are supposed to support veterans. On the one hand, these films tend to be counter-nostalgic in the sense that main characters start asking questions about the purpose of the armed conflict in which they were involved. Ron, in *Born on the Fourth of July*, comes to bitterly denounce "God and country": "There is no God. There is no country." Yet these films simultaneously hold on to the patriotic values the audience may be presumed to share, even if they may be critical about the politics of involvement in a certain conflict. Since the films are clearly directed at gathering support to change veteran policies, too harsh a critique of patriotic values is likely to alienate the public and is therefore not very strategic. Often this tension is solved by being outspoken in a critique of the American government or state policies, while America as an idea or ideal remains untouched, perhaps also because losing this ideal would leave veterans with no ground to stand upon. Hank, in *In the Valley of Elah*, concludes that the America he fought for is different from the America his son fought for. Yet, in the final scene of the film, we see him raise the raggedy American flag that has been in the family for ages. Likewise, in *The Deer Hunter*, the final scene of the film portrays the group of friends (both veterans and the ones who stayed at home) softly singing the anthem together. Ron, in *Born on the Fourth of July*, continues to participate in Independence Day parades, critiquing the war in Vietnam, yet with the American flag attached to his wheelchair. Thus, while we found instances of counter-nostalgia in terms of a critique on American politics, there seems to be hardly any possibility for counter-nostalgia in terms of a critique on the idea or ideal of "America" itself. A more counter-nostalgic critique can, however, be found in films that were not included in our selection due to limits of space or because they do not focus explicitly on veteran life, such

as Oliver Stone's *Platoon* (1986) and *JFK* (1991) (Stone also directed *Born on the Fourth of July*).[1]

Living the Imperfect Life: Redemption in Films and TV Series

Homecoming films often do offer some perspective on figuring out what comes next. How can a veteran be redeemed so that he or she may have a livable life after/with PTSD or MI? First, in *Born on the Fourth of July*, it becomes clear that religion, which might intuitively be a helpful resource, might actually get in the way. Ron needs to rework his previously self-evident relationship to Christianity. In one scene, shortly after he is discharged from the hospital and moves back in with his parents, he has a fit, a display of anger that at that moment is mostly directed toward his mother, whom he perceives as overprotective. "You need help," she says. "No, *you* need help!" shouts Ron. He continues, "With all your God and your bullshit dreams about me!" For Ron, God/the sacred has become entangled with the old home of patriotic values, athletic masculinity, and self-evident belonging to which he can no longer return. It is impossible for him to detach God from this mix as a potential source of strength. Instead, the idea of God is very upsetting to him. Ron must denounce God: "God is as dead as my legs." For religion to be in any way meaningful, then, old religious scripts need to be revised or perhaps (temporarily or indefinitely) discarded. In the films we discuss, we saw examples of religion as estranging and did not see any representations of "renewed" religion, but this might be a topic of interest for theologians.

Second, as noted before, veterans often find that they also cannot experience a sense of home by following the old scripts of hegemonic masculinity that favor physical strength and emotional unavailability and that favor male bonding through drinking and drugs. This means that they sometimes find other, arguably "deeper" ways of connecting to significant others, which often involve the construction of new, unconventional masculinities. Many of the films show how upon homecoming, it becomes possible for men to take care of other men, also physically. A moving scene from *Thank You for Your Service* that captures this new physical proximity occurs when, during a road trip, Adam holds his paralyzed friend Emory who needs to urinate by the side of the road. It is during this moment of unprecedented physical contact that Emory is able to tell Adam: "It [him becoming paralyzed] wasn't your fault." The moment of care for each other's bodies also makes possible to care for each other's souls. A form of caring masculinity also

1 We would like to thank the reviewer for pointing this out.

develops in *Born on the Fourth of July*. After being wounded in Vietnam, Ron is taken to a care facility for veterans in the US. The scenes in the hospital initially show how the institutional care that is provided is impersonal and dehumanizing. "Like we are in a carwash," Ron comments. But over time it becomes clear that this is a place where, in the absence of good quality care and skilled medical personnel, men can take care of men. This is a place where men wash other men's bodies and where this act of washing, while talking and joking, is something that can be done in the face of traumatic experiences in the past and the unsettling, insecure present. Once back home, Ron finds it hard to accept care from his mother, but he will accept care from his father, whom he allows to carry him to bed and replace his catheter. In *Warriors* Lieutenant John Feely is so traumatized by the things he has seen during deployment in Bosnia that once back in the UK and on the military base, he puts a pistol to his temple when alone in his room. In the series, this comes a bit as a surprise: John is often the "strong one," helping, as also befits his rank, others to cope with tragic events and the horrors of warfare (thereby providing a nuanced representation of trauma, showing that it need not be visible through obvious outward signals). Just before he can pull the trigger, two comrades enter the room. No words are spoken. They just hold him tight as he surrenders to their embrace and starts to cry. As an important aspect of this shift from athletic or virile masculinity to caring masculinity, we would like to remark that redemption is an embodied process. It is related to accepting that the body, even when it is injured and/or disabled, is worthy of care and caress—that the value of a body is not necessarily expressed in visual strength and sexual prowess, that it can be valuable not only when it performs but also when it allows others to take care of it. Films like *Born on the Fourth of July*, where disability is an important theme, do raise questions about how this shift can be envisioned without the loss of self-respect. Feeling as if one is a car in a carwash clearly does not help in this.

In our chapter, we refer to these shifts in scripts as "redemptive moments": they are instances when main characters find new ways of being at home in the/their world. Thus, although many of the homecoming films steer toward a moment of "confession," when veterans "finally start to talk," we argue that the confession is not where redemption is truly or solely found. Rather, it is in this capability of finding new ways to connect to significant others in meaningful ways, despite the pressure that trauma can put on relationships and friendships. These connections may differ from before deployment, not just because people change through their experiences but also because old patterns have been reshuffled into the contours of new

ones. Most importantly, redemption can happen when the idea of a perfect home is let go of, to make way for the acceptance of an imperfect home with imperfect family members and friends who are willing to move forward with imperfect veterans. It should not be envisioned as a definitive restoration of a perfect before. Rather, it is the capacity to remember beyond, outside of, or even against the dominant plots of, for instance, the national identity and hegemonic masculinity that structured this "before."

Conclusion

The concept of nostalgia has taken an interesting journey: from a term referring to melancholy and homesickness among soldiers at the front line to a concept that, as part of cultural studies, enables us to ask questions about idealized pasts and the politics of belonging. In our chapter, we have attempted to once again connect nostalgia to combat-related trauma, investigating the representation of veterans in homecoming film.

Our chapter shows that the trauma represented in homecoming film is highly dependent upon the explicit or implicit goal of the filmmakers. In educational cinema, aimed at raising awareness on PTSD/MI or on the lack of support for veterans, trauma runs the risk of being depicted in rather one-dimensional ways, leading to representations of veterans as figures who are (and may always be) stuck in their situation. In these films, directors prefer to portray complex, rather than simple, PTSD. If the focus of the film is explorative or political rather than educational, trauma is often represented in more complex ways, and more time is spent on depicting its causes.

Nostalgia functions in different ways in homecoming film, already evident in the picture of the "before" of deployment. This varies from the exemplary photo opportunity, where the harmony of home is captured in a still, to extensive scenes of the complexities of life before deployment. It is especially in the latter case, where the home is allowed to be flawed, that possibilities of counter-nostalgia arise. However, these also arise when veterans start deconstructing the gendered and nationalistic structures that were underlying their notion of home.

Finally, moments of counter-nostalgia in film offer openings to redemption in terms of rethinking the stifling structures entangling religion and nationalistic values, as well as hegemonic embodied masculinity. These are to be replaced by alternative masculinities and the acceptance of recovery

as an imperfect but valuable form of relation, an alternative model to the individual overcoming obstacles.

We realize that our investigation of trauma, nostalgia, and redemption in homecoming film, while addressing many issues, fails to address other important experiences. In our choice of homecoming film, we have focused on how the experiences of veterans are plotted, rather than of others (civilians) involved in armed conflict. Moreover, our selection of films addresses homecoming in the context of the US and Western Europe, leaving out trauma and nostalgia as they are experienced and represented in the contexts where the conflicts took place (Vietnam, the Balkans, Iraq, and Afghanistan). And since most of the homecoming film focuses on male veterans, we know little about what the cultural representation of trauma among female service members might look like. We hope future research can address these omissions.

Works Cited

American Psychiatric Association. 2013. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. 5th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.

Ashby, Hal, director. 1978. *Coming Home* (film). United Artists.

Avnet, John, director. 1994. *The War* (film). Universal Pictures.

Bigelow, Kathryn, director. 2008. *The Hurt Locker* (film). Voltage Pictures.

Boym, Svetlana. 2008. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books.

Brémault-Phillips, S., H. G. Koenig, K. I. Pargament, T. G. Plante, A. Chirovsky, J. Olson, J. Weis. 2017. "Spiritual Dimensions of Wellbeing, Health and Moral Injury." Paper presented at the Forum of the Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research (CIMVHR), Toronto, September 25–27.

Brock, Gabriella, and Rita Nakashima Lettini. 2012. *Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury after War*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Cimino, Michael, director. 1978. *The Deer Hunter* (film). Universal Pictures and EMI Films.

Currier, Joseph M., Kent D. Drescher, Jason M. Holland, Ross Lisman, and David W. Foy. 2016. "Spirituality, Forgiveness, and Quality of Life: Testing a Mediational Model with Military Veterans with PTSD." *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 26, no. 2: 167–79. https://doi.org/10.1080/10508619.2015.1019793.

Early, Emmett. 2003. *The War Veteran in Film*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers.

Garton, Stephan. 2000. "Longing for War: Nostalgia and Australian Returned Soldiers after the First World War." In *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, edited by T. G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper, 222–40. London: Routledge.

Graham, Larry Kent. 2017. *Moral Injury: Restoring Wounded Souls*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Haggis, Paul, director. 2007. *In the Valley of Elah* (film). Warner Independent Pictures and Summit Entertainment.

Hall, Jason, director. 2017. *Thank You for Your Service* (film). DreamWorks Pictures.

Hankir, Ahmed, and Mark Agius. 2012. "An Exploration of How Film Portrays Psychopathology: The Animated Documentary Film Waltz with Bashir, the Depiction of PTSD and Cultural Perceptions." *Psychiatria Danubina* 24, no. 1: 70–76.

Hanks, Tom, and Steven Spielberg, directors. 2001. *Band of Brothers* (film). Playtone.

Hughes, Albert, and Alan Hughes, directors. 1995. *Dead Presidents* (film). Hollywood Pictures.

Jones, Edgar. 2006. "Historical Approaches to Post-Combat Disorders." *Philosophical Transactions the Royal Society B: Biological Science* 361, no. 1468: 533–42.

Jones, Edgar, Ian Palmer, and Simon Wessely. 2002. "War Pensions (1900–1945): Changing Models of Psychological Understanding." *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, no. 180: 374–79.

Koenig, Harold G., Nathan A. Boucher, John P. Oliver, Nagy Youssef, Scott R. Mooney, Joseph M. Currier, and Michelle Pearce. 2017. "Rationale for Spiritually Oriented Cognitive Processing Therapy for Moral Injury in Active Duty Military and Veterans with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder." *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 205, no. 2: 147–53.

Kopacz, Marek. S., and April L. Connery. 2015. "The Veteran Spiritual Struggle." *Spirituality in Clinical Practice* 2, no. 1: 61–67.

Kosminsky, Peter, director. 1999. *Warriors* (TV series). BBC.

Ladino, Jennifer. 2004. "Longing for Wonderland. Nostalgia for Nature in Post-Frontier America." *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies* 5, no. 1: 88–109.

Liebert, Elisabeth A. 2019. "Accessible Spiritual Practices to Aid in Recovery from Moral Injury." *Pastoral Psychology* 68, no. 1: 41–57.

Lifton, Robert Jay. 1992. *Home from the War: Learning from Vietnam Veterans (with a New Preface and Epilogue on the Gulf War)*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Litz, Brett T., Nathan Stein, Eileen Delaney, Leslie Lebowitz, William P. Nash, Caroline Silva, and Shira Maguen. 2009. "Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans: A Preliminary Model and Intervention Strategy." *Clinical Psychology Review* 29, no. 8: 695–706.

McAdams, Dan P. 2013. *The Redemptive Self: Stories Americans Live By*. New York: Oxford University Press.

McKenna, Bruce, director. 2010. *The Pacific* (film). HBO

McVeigh, Stephen, and Nicola Cooper. 2013. "Introduction: Men after War." In *Men After War*, edited by Stephen McVeigh and Nicola Cooper, 1–17. New York: Routledge.

Nash, William P., and Brett T. Litz. 2013. "Moral Injury: A Mechanism for War-Related Psychological Trauma in Military Family Members." *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review* 16, no. 4: 365–75.

Parker, Alan, director.1984. *Birdy* (film). A&M Films.

Roberts, Ian. 2013. "Trauma in Bosnia: European Film and the Peacekeeper's Dilemma." In *Men After War*, edited by Stephen McVeigh and Nicola Cooper, 170–84. New York: Routledge.

Roper, Michael. 2011. "Nostalgia as an Emotional Experience in the Great War." *The Historical Journal* 54, no. 2: 421–45.

Rosen, George. 1975. "Nostalgia: a 'Forgotten' Psychological Disorder." *Psychological Medicine* 5, no. 4: 346–51.

Scanlan, S. 2004. "Introduction: Nostalgia." *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies* 5, no. 1: 3–9.

Schaffner, Franklin, director. 1989. *Welcome Home* (film). Columbia Pictures.

Shapiro, Periel, Anthony Tobia, and Rehan Aziz. 2018. "Is the Film Unbreakable Really about PTSD with Dissociation?" *Academic Psychiatry* 42, no. 6: 871–72.

Shay, Jonathan. 2002. *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trails of Homecoming*. New York: Scribner.

Shay, Jonathan. 2003. *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*. New York: Scribner.

Shay, Jonathan, and James Munroe. 1998. "Group and Milieu Therapy for Veterans with Complex Posttraumatic Stress Disorder." In *Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: A Comprehensive Text*, edited by Philip A. Saigh, and J. Douglas Bremner, 391–413. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Smith-MacDonald, Lorraine A., Jean-Sébastien Morin, and Suzette Brémault-Phillips. 2018. "Spiritual Dimensions of Moral Injury: Contributions of Mental Health Chaplains in the Canadian Armed Forces." *Frontiers in Psychiatry* 9: 1–7.

Stallinga, Beth A. 2013. "What Spills Blood Wounds Spirit: Chaplains, Spiritual Care, and Operational Stress Injury." *Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry* 33: 13–31.

Stone, Oliver, director. 1986. *Platoon* (film). Orion Pictures.

Stone, Oliver, director. 1989. *Born on the Fourth of July* (film). Universal Pictures.

Stone, Oliver, director. 1991. *JFK* (film). Warner Bros.

Van Rooijen, Diederik, director. 2009. *Stella's Oorlog* (film). Waterland Film and NCRV.

Winocour, Alice, director. 2015. *Maryland* (film). Dharamsala Darius Films.

Wortmann, Jennifer H., Ethan Eisen, Carol Hundert, Alexander H. Jordan, Mark W. Smith, William P. Nash, and Brett T. Litz. 2017. "Spiritual Features of War-Related Moral Injury: A Primer for Clinicians." *Spirituality in Clinical Practice* 4, no. 4: 249–61.

Wyler, William, director. 1946. *The Best Years of Our Lives* (film). RKO Radio Pictures.

Yuval-Davis, Nira. 2011. *The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional Contestations*. London: Sage.

Zemeckis, Robert, director. 1994. *Forest Gump* (film). Wendy Finerman Productions.

6 Nostalgia, Trauma, and Contested Cultural Heritage

The Afghanistan National Museum and Its Attempts and Failures at Imagining Statehood

Bram Verhagen and Srdjan Sremac

Abstract
This chapter delves into the interplay of trauma, nostalgia, and material culture, with a focus on their impact on our comprehension of the past, especially in the context of traumatic histories such as Afghanistan's. It scrutinizes the connection between material culture, specifically the Afghanistan National Museum, and the interwoven elements of nostalgia, traumatic history, cultural heritage, and the shaping of national identity. The authors emphasize how the utilization of material culture to evoke nostalgia involves the construction of an idealized past that filters out violent traumatic experiences. Ultimately, it serves as a cultural and material memorial, facilitating the accentuation of positive aspects from the past and providing a valuable tool for the present

Keywords: development; heritage artifacts; 9/11; Bactrian gold; postcolonial; Taliban; state building

Introduction

The exploration of trauma and nostalgia inevitably involves considering material perspectives. This involves closely examining how cultural objects play a significant role in shaping or reshaping the past and contribute to the nostalgic construction of traumatic histories and identities. The cultural production of nostalgia therefore always requires a presence of material objects (Chase and Shaw 1989, 3). In this way, the nostalgic view of the past results from physical,

Van Liere, L. & Sremac, S. (eds), *Trauma and Nostalgia: Practices in Memory and Identity*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2024
DOI: 10.5117/9789048559220_CH06

spatial, and material production, consumption, and discursive distribution of the historical imagination. A nostalgic register therefore not only affirms the survival of the traumatic past, as we will show in this chapter, but is also a way of coping with the present (Delisle 2006, 294). Nostalgic longing is a process of memory construction, which seeks to share and interpolate a particular understanding of communal imaginaries, nationhood, identity-building, and often traumatic history (Seil 2010). The focus of this chapter is not so much on the display of objects as memorial imaginary markers but rather on traumatic spatial nostalgic visibility and its influence on the process of imagining the state building of Afghanistan. As J. Deurell (2021) rightly points out, museums have "a history of operating as well-oiled machines for building national identities." These material nostalgic fabrications and the legacy of traumatic political violence have become "institutionalized in national and provincial museums, heritage foundations, and urban memorials," with the past literally becoming "heritage" (Boym 2001, 15, cited in Hamber 2012, 270). A nostalgic restorative register embodies a sense of nostalgic longing for traditions and origins, aimed at the transhistorical traumatic reconstruction of the lost past (Boym 2001). A good example of material and cultural traumatic nostalgic fabrication is the war rugs made in Afghanistan since the Soviet invasion in the late 1970s. War rugs can be seen as objects that often embody and reflect the nostalgic view of the past, an expression of identity, lived traumatic experience, and "resistance…, a reflection of political change" (Dedman 2021, 88). In this way, nostalgia represents both the traumatic and the future imaginative nation-building process and can be a powerful force for facing the past. As Brendon Hamber (2012, 273) rightly points out, the materiality of nostalgic collective world-making is "deeply embedded within idealized memories of the past, but it can also operate in a backward-looking and forward-looking manner simultaneously."

Since its invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the United States has spent roughly US $130 billion on reconstruction and development programs in Afghanistan, out of a total US $2.313 trillion spent on the Afghanistan war in total (Crawford 2021, 3). Part of this reconstruction expenditure was spent on cultural endeavors, such as the rebuilding of the Afghanistan National Museum in Kabul. The museum, as well as other art projects, was intended to contribute to forging a new, pluralistic Afghan identity loyal to the central government in a country with tremendous ethnic and cultural diversity. In this chapter, we will analyze the role of the Afghanistan National Museum in the nostalgic imagining of a new national Afghanistan as part of a greater US-led development effort, positioning development within a postcolonial theoretical framework.

We will argue that the museum as a nostalgic "memory site" (Young 1993), like much of the Afghan national government and US-led reconstruction effort, failed in the effort at constructing a new Afghan identity accessible to all Afghanis, catering primarily to the desires of Western aid workers and a Kabul-centered elite. With the continued critical analysis of the role of museums (Hicks 2020) and with the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August of 2021 halting the US-led state-building process, the future role of museums in constructing and imagining an Afghan national identity remains unclear.

Using Museums as a Theoretical Lens: An Exploration of the Afghan Context

Afghanistan proves a contemporary case for analysis in using material heritage for nation-state building. The heritage situation in the country since 2001 displays many of the characteristics of the intersections between modern developmental policy and the maintenance of cultural artifacts. These connections include the positioning of material cultural artifacts in a "future worldmaking", in which the role of historical artifacts does not merely serve an appreciation of the historical but rather promotes the creation of a national Afghan identity along Western lines. This practice is not a recent invention, with art contributing to national identity–building since the creation of European public museums in the nineteenth century. Functioning to "direct the population into activities which would, without the people being aware of it, transform the population into a useful resource" (Hooper-Greenhill 1995, 168), museums instilled the population with the morality of the middle and upper classes. Henriette Lidchi (1997, 159) describes this function of museums as the interplay between motivations: seeking to convert others to a specific worldview and interpretation—safeguarding, cataloguing, and displaying and decoding objects to reify this worldview. Another goal of public museums was to display the benefits of a powerful state by opening previously expensive, inaccessible cultural pursuits to the public, as well as generating popular support for nostalgic imperialist colonial extraction abroad (Duncan 1999, 304). In colonial states, such as South Africa, the role of museums and other exhibition spaces functioned differently, being inaccessible to most of the subaltern population and thus functioning less clearly as a transformational tool for general consciousness; instead, museums acted as an ideological mirror for the settlers, often through the regurgitation of race science and phrenology as "natural history"

(Webb 1994, 20). Furthermore, they served as physical and scientific proof that "there could be no civilization outside of white Euro-America" (Hicks 2020, 45), justifying further colonial violence.

The Colonial Legacy in Development Policy Frameworks

Born out of a recent attempt to retain control over their recently lost colonial holdings, European powers in the mid-twentieth century soon moved to establish a wide array of development organizations, which promised to guide the newly independent states in their growth. Despite critiques from a variety of theorists (Ferguson 1990; Rahnema and Bawtree 1997), thinking and policy on modern development continue to be underpinned by a hierarchical, evolutionary worldview. The nostalgic imagination continues to be a world split in two: one part advanced, progressive, and developed, and the other part underdeveloped and backwards, with both a desire and an obligation to "catch up" with their more advanced counterparts. There is a notion of a universal trajectory, in which certain peoples, places, objects, and ideas are abandoned in favor of adopting a more advanced modernity. The development policy apparatus, with its strategic planning and annual budgetary frameworks, thus functions as what Maia Green calls nostalgic "future-making" (Green et al. 2012, 1644). Important to note is the development industry's origins as an explicitly colonial design that has tended to reproduce the "relationships, perceptions and attitudes of empire" (Kothari 2011, 65), prescribing aspirations for its "beneficiaries" to aspire to while "ignoring the steps and strategies that people use to imagine and realize their own futures" (Kothari 2011, 68–69). Despite changes in terminology—such as "underdeveloped" and "traditional" replacing "savage" and "backwards"—the ideology of development relies on an equation of cultural distance with an evolutionary social pattern. Those peoples of the world receiving development aid are relegated to an earlier state in civilizational development, which the major aid donors—most of whom were once colonial overlords from Europe and North America—have long since surpassed. As such, development relies on a sense of temporal determinism, in which unavoidable trajectories can be sped up through ordered and regulated formal planning and the implementation of a prescribed set of policy instruments (Kothari 2011, 68).

This sense of temporal and nostalgic determinism, with a backwards past inevitably being swept away by the march of progress, is found at the very origins of the fields of museology and anthropology. During the

European colonist's historic "civilizing mission," seeking to uplift "primitive" peoples across the globe, a sense of nostalgia was active for the very cultures and pasts the colonist sought to eradicate. The anticipated oblivion of a romanticized colonial past and its nostalgic imagining characterize one of the most prominent discursive constructions in modern societies, which frame progressive ideologies as obsessed with the future (Velikonja 2017). As such, we find the development of a "discourse of endangerment" in the nineteenth century, through which anthropologists were tasked with salvaging the remains of those cultures in the process of colonial extinction (Basu and Modest 2015, 5). The result was a frantic effort to organize and collect all those artifacts affected by colonial enterprises, including religious material objects, languages, practices, and performances, along with myriad anthropometric data that filled European museums and publications, characterizing late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century anthropology as a discipline (Stocking 1986).

Afghanistan as an Example in Development

A recent example of this link between developmental state building and the role of material heritage artifacts can be seen clearly in the case of reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan following the invasion of Afghanistan by the United States and its allies in 2001. The eagerness to capture Osama bin Laden—architect of the 9/11 terror attacks on the US in September of 2001 and prominent figurehead of the al Qaeda movement—functioned as the initial casus belli for American involvement in Afghanistan following the Taliban's refusal to turn over Bin Laden. This impetus fell apart once Bin Laden dodged capture and fled Afghanistan. Continued American-led military presence in the region became ideologically reliant on a state building effort spearheaded by the Americans and their allies. These efforts were termed "stabilization and reconstruction activities" and were to include "all aspects of improving governance: training civil administrators, improving essential services and public safety, supporting civil society and self-determination, and promoting the rule of law and economic development" (McNerney 2006, 33).

Part of this development effort is the role of heritage and cultural artifacts, primarily in the form of material objects, and their protection and display within Afghanistan itself (Mulholland 2023). Although a relatively minor part of overall reconstruction efforts compared to spending and efforts in areas such as infrastructure, education, and healthcare, the role of heritage is

significant in its ideological nostalgic impact. Afghanistan has always been a country of substantial cultural diversity, functioning as the crossroads of Persian, Greek, Buddhist, Hindu, and Islamic influences between Central and South Asia (Remsen and Tedesco 2015, 96). Beyond the inherent educational and scientific worth of Afghanistan's monuments, historical sites, and living traditions, awareness of the country's myriad histories and peoples is perceived as valuable in creating a unified modern political and social identity for the Afghan nation (Feilden and Jokilehto 1998). Recognizing the myriad cultures and identities of Afghanistan reached specific importance during American-led efforts of reconstruction and state building following the invasion. The stated goal was one of creating a pluralist and democratic state, recognizing the importance of Afghanistan's ethnic and cultural diversity. The new national constitution drafted by the US-installed Afghan government sought to accommodate this reality, with Article 4 stating that "(t)he nation of Afghanistan is comprised of Pushtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkmen, Baluch, Pashai, Nuristani, Aymaq, Arab, Kyrgyz, Qizilbash, Gujar, Brahui, and other ethnic groups," with both Pushtu and Dari functioning as the nation's official languages; the new constitution also guaranteed the right to education in five other languages in the areas in which they are spoken (Rubin 2004, 17). Such acknowledgement of diversity was considered paramount, functioning as a break from the Pashtun-dominated Taliban government that the United States sought to displace (Rubin 2004, 10–12).

An issue put forward by the Americans was the difficulty in preserving existing material cultural artifacts, with Afghanistan's tumultuous legacy of traumatic political violence in recent decades leading to unprecedented challenges in preventing damage to heritage objects and sites. In the words of archaeologist Juliette Van Krieken-Pieters:

> There is probably no country in the world that has fallen victim to so many cultural heritage-related disasters at the same place and time as Afghanistan. … Everything that one tries to prevent nevertheless appeared to take place. (2006, 201)

The looting of objects presents a significant issue in Afghanistan during its traumatic war history, the US invasion, and the subsequent US administration of the country, with estimates suggesting that 70 percent of the heritage artifacts belonging to Afghan museum collections were stolen (Feroozi and Massoudi, 2006), and over 90 percent of Afghan archaeological sites experienced looting, actively continuing under the US administration in areas outside direct military supervision of the United States or its foreign

allies; the Afghan police and army were largely incapable, or unwilling, to defend heritage sites (Wendle 2013). Since most looted artifacts are undocumented and uncategorized, they prove to be persistently difficult to track down and recover, incentivizing sale on the international market to private collectors, predominantly to neighboring countries with poor border control policies (Brodie, Doole, and Renfrew 2001). Furthermore, US officials argue that the sale of looted artifacts is often used to fund terrorist activities (Alderman 2012, 610), following similar routes, and associating with criminal networks that traffic in narcotics, weapons, and humans (Campbell 2013, 113).

In order to stamp out illegal looting and trade that is used to fund activities leading to increased nation-state instability and to recover cultural artifacts that may be used for the ideological purposes of nation building through the creation of nostalgic visual memories and a transgenerational traumatic transfer, the US-led reconstruction efforts channeled resources from both the American government and international NGOs working through UNESCO, focusing on the rebuilding of cultural institutions as well as limited archaeological digs (Remsen and Tedesco 2015, 104). Geographically, these efforts remained largely focused on the capital city of Kabul and a few other major urban areas, as the US-supported government struggled to maintain control outside the major urban centers. This Kabul-centralism echoed in all facets of the stabilization and reconstruction efforts, with American forces and aid workers being unable to offer much support to most of the country's overwhelmingly rural population, leading to a sense of distrust toward the central government and fostering remaining pro-Taliban sentiment, which remained a strong political presence up to the overthrow of the Afghan central government in 2021 (Ibrahimi 2019, 57).

The Afghanistan National Museum as a Conflict Museum

Following increased Taliban activity in 2009–11, the United States decided on a significant surge of activity in Afghanistan, both militarily and in terms of development efforts. This led to increased funding for a variety of cultural heritage activities, with the United States spending an estimate of US $15 million on heritage efforts between 2009 and 2012 (Remsen and Tedesco 2015, 105–6). A significant amount of funding and international attention was given to the rebuilding of the Afghanistan National Museum in Kabul, which had been damaged in the 2001 invasion. In this process, the museum needed to play a role comparable to other conflict museums in

providing an educational component for "the teaching of critical thinking skills and programs that aim to break down stereotypes and perceived truths about the past" (Hamber, Ševčenko, and Naidu 2010). By providing an overview of the material legacies of Afghanistan's many cultures, the museum was to function as a fulcrum in the process of not only confronting and processing Afghanistan's recent traumatic experiences but also contributing to the imagining of a new, national Afghan identity that would transcend previous cultural and linguistic boundaries. In this, the museum embodies a sense of restorative nostalgia, aimed at providing connection to an Afghan past that both precedes and encompasses the newly forming national Afghan identity, but it also demonstrates aspects of reflective nostalgia. This allows for a focus not merely on the nostalgic reestablishment of a monumental past, "but on the meditation on history and the passage of time" (Boym 2001, 49). Belonging is found in the promise that the recent violent political turmoil does not merely lead to a reinstitution of fractured memories; it is also a worthwhile sacrifice that allows for a brighter future for all Afghanis. Restorative nostalgia protects the absolute truth, while reflective nostalgia calls it into doubt, promising renewal (Boym 2001). In this, the political value of investment in the museum by the US-supported Kabul government becomes clear. The 2001 invasion and subsequent removal of the Taliban from government allowed for Afghanistan not only to reevaluate a nostalgia surrounding its complex history but also to work toward a new democratic, egalitarian future, free from the strife that typified its history.

Involvement by Afghan personnel was minimal, with oversight and decision-making almost solely being performed by Americans and their allies. A committee meant to oversee the process, chaired by the former Afghan deputy minister of information and culture, was disbanded in 2013 (Remsen and Tedesco 2015, 109). International cultural organizations related to American allies, such as the Society for the Preservation of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage, the Dutch Center for International Heritage Activities, the University of Vienna, the British Museum, and the Musée Guimet, were involved in the restoration of objects, the salvaging of the catalogue, and the training of staff (Klimburg-Salter 2006, 2010). Since much of the National Museum building was deemed in need of repair and expansion, the decision was made to rebuild significant parts of the complex. An open architectural competition for the design of the new building was sponsored by the Afghan government. Despite several submissions by Afghan architectural firms, the winning design was submitted by a Spanish architectural firm, with the runners-up from Spain and Germany (S.E.E.

Office for Architecture and Design 2012). Signage for exhibitions is usually written in the national language of the primary donor country, such as English, French, or Dutch (a common practice in Afghan museums receiving international funding), and is occasionally, though not always, presented alongside the two national languages, Dari and Pashto. Smaller Afghan languages are typically not used for signage (Remsen and Tedesco 2015, 113). This practice calls in question whether the audience of the museum is the local Afghan population—most of whom struggle to visit the museum in the capital of Kabul due to financial and logistical reasons—or international tourists and donor staff.

Noteworthy as well is the physical absence of some of the most significant objects in the museum's collection from Afghan archaeological history: twenty-thousand objects dating from the second millennium BCE to the first centuries CE known as the "Bactrian gold." Recovered from a north Afghan archaeological dig in 1978, the objects were lost until recovered in a vault at the Afghan Central Bank in 2003 (Hiebert and Cambon 2008). Although legally belonging to the Afghan national government and meant for display in the Afghanistan National Museum in Kabul, the pieces were quickly sent abroad. There they were put on display to Western audiences through an international traveling exhibition titled *Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul*, being shown in twenty-nine museums in thirteen countries between 2010 and the Taliban takeover. The reasons given for their lack of display in Afghanistan were primarily security related and financial, with Afghan cultural institutions deemed incapable of securely displaying the pieces so long as the Taliban remained a serious threat throughout the country during the last two decades; there was also a financial payment of US $4.5 million to the Afghan central government as a compensation for their display abroad (TOLOnews 2021). When the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan occurred in August 2021, a widely held concern by US and allied staff was the presumed immediate looting and destruction of cultural artifacts by the Taliban. Despite these concerns, the Taliban issued a statement in February 2021 promising to avoid and punish art looting, as well as to take steps to preserve Afghanistan's cultural heritage once in power. As of writing in 2023, the Taliban have kept their word: the Afghanistan National Museum remains unlooted and reopened in December 2021 with the collection intact and a continued effort on cataloguing and preventing smuggling (Zazai 2023; Rezvani and Qazizai 2022; Cascone 2021). Despite this, the future of the Bactrian gold collection remains uncertain, with rising fears of its pieces ending up on the black market despite desires for repatriation by the Taliban (Foreman 2022).

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed the case of Afghanistan in the intermingling between nostalgia, traumatic history, cultural heritage, and imagining statehood, primarily through the role of the Afghanistan National Museum. Therefore, the process of nostalgic production through material culture entails a form of imagining statehood, the filtering of the traumatic past of political violence into a more desirable and even romanticized past. The importance of this nostalgic imagining of statehood becomes a cultural memorial production that neutralizes the past of its negative traumatic history and focuses on the positive to become a useful practice of the present. After offering a theoretical explanation of the origins of modern development policy frameworks, which grew from the same colonial mindset that gave birth to modern anthropology and heritage studies, we have shown their application in Afghanistan since the 2001 invasion by the United States through the Afghanistan National Museum's unique position as a conflict museum within an Afghan nostalgic imagining of statehood. Despite significant investment and expertise, the museum became like so many other aspects of the Afghan national government over the past two decades: a Western-designed and controlled institution, inaccessible to all but a privileged Kabul elite. With the takeover of the government by the Taliban in 2021, the future of the museum and other cultural institutions in Afghanistan is uncertain. Time will tell whether the Taliban will attempt to reuse the museum for its recent purpose or leave it to decay. As such, the museum itself may become a nostalgic monument, harkening back to two decades of US control with its promises of democracy and liberalization. This establishes a need for future study of the topic, as well as research into the role of conflict museums in nostalgic state building, including a more specific analysis of the areas in which US policy failed.

Works Cited

Alderman, Kimberly L. 2012. "Honor amongst Thieves: Organized Crime and the Illicit Antiquities Trade." *Indiana Law Review* 45, no. 3: 601–27.

Basu, Paul, and Wayne Modest. 2015. *Museums, Heritage and International Development*. London: Routledge.

Boym, Svetlana. 2001. *The Future of Nostalgia.* New York: Basic Books.

Brodie, Neil, Jennifer Doole, and Colin Renfrew, eds. 2001. *Trade in Illicit Antiquities: The Destruction of the World's Archaeological Heritage.* Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research.

Campbell, Peter B. 2013. "The Illicit Antiquities Trade as a Transnational Criminal Network: Characterizing and Anticipating Trafficking of Cultural Heritage." *International Journal of Cultural Property* 20, no. 2: 113–53.

Cascone, Sarah. 2021. "The Embattled National Museum of Afghanistan has Reopened, with Taliban Security Negotiated by its Director." *Artnet News*, December 9, 2021. https://news.artnet.com/art-world/the-national-museum-of-afghanistan-reopens-2044902.

Chase, Malcolm, and Christopher Shaw. 1989. "The Dimensions of Nostalgia." In *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia*, edited by Christopher Shaw and Malcolm Chase, 1–17. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Crawford, Nancy. 2021. *The US Budgetary Dosts of the Post-9/11 Wars*. Providence: Watson Institute for International & Public Affairs, Brown University.

Dedman, R. 2021. "Unravelling the Provenance of War Rugs." In *Migration: The Journey of Objects*, edited by J. Deurell, 86–88. Gothenburg: Röhsska Museum of Design and Craft.

Deurell, J. 2021. "Migration: The Journey of Objects." In *Migration: The Journey of Objects*, edited by J. Deurell, 19–28. Gothenburg: Röhsska Museum of Design and Craft.

Duncan, Carol. 1999. "From the Princely Gallery to the Public Art Museum: The Louvre Museum and the National Gallery, London." In *Representing the Nation – A Reader: Histories, Heritage, and Museums*, edited by David Boswell and Jessica Evans, 304–31. London: Open University Press.

Feilden, Bernard, and Jukka Jokilehto. 1998. *Management Guidelines for World Cultural Heritage Sites*. Rome: International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property.

Ferguson, James. 1990. *The Anti-Politics Machine: 'Development,' Depoliticization and Bureaucratic Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Feroozi, Abdul Wassey, and Massoudi, Omara Khan. 2006. "The National Museum and Archaeology in Afghanistan: Accomplishments and Current Needs." In *Of the Past, for the Future: Integrating Archaeology and Conservation*, edited by Neville Agnew and Janet Bridgland, 247–50. Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute.

Foreman, L. 2022. "Black market deals raise fears for ancient Afghan jewellery treasures." *Financial Times* April 1. https://www.ft.com/content/efbed10d-fce4-40b3-9f42-e835f5f775ac

Green, Maia, Uma Kothari, Claire Mercer, and Diana Mitlin. 2012. "Saving, Spending and Future Making: Time, Discipline and Money in Development." *Environment and Planning* 44, no. 7: 1641–56.

Hamber, Brendon, Liz Ševčenko, and Ereshnee Naidu. 2010. "Utopian Dreams or Practical Possibilities? The Challenges of Evaluating the Impact of Memorialization

in Societies in Transition." *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 4, no. 3: 397–420. https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijq018.

Hamber, Brandon. 2012. "Conflict Museums, Nostalgia, and Dreaming of Never Again." *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 18, no. 3: 268–81.

Hicks, Dan. 2020. *The Brutish Museums: The Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution*. London: Pluto Press.

Hiebert, Fredrik, and Pierre Cambon, eds. 2008. *Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul*. Washington, DC: National Geographic.

Hooper-Greenhill, Eileen. 1995. *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*. London: Routledge.

Klimburg-Salter, Deborah. 2006. "Twice Buried, Twice Found: Treasures of the Kabul Museum." *Orientations* 31, no. 1: 87–92.

Klimburg-Salter, Deborah. 2010. *Cooperation with the National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul*. Vienna: University of Vienna Center for Interdisciplinary Research and Documentation of Inner and South Asian Cultural History.

Kothari, Uma. 2011. "History, Time and Temporality in Development Discourse." In *History, Historians and Development Policy: A Necessary Dialogue*, edited by C. A. Bayly, Vijayendra Rao, Simon Szreter, and Michael Woolcock, 65–70. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Lidchi, Henrietta. 1997. "The Poetics and Politics of Exhibiting Other Cultures." In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, edited by Stuart Hall, 151–222. London: Sage Publishing.

McNerney, Michael. 2006. "Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Are PRTs a Model or a Muddle?" *US Army War College Quarterly* 35, no. 4: 32–46. https://doi.org/10.55540/0031-1723.2280.

Mulholland, Richard. 2023. "Culture, Education and Conflict: The Relevance of Critical Conservation Pedagogies for Post-conflict Afghanistan." *Studies in Conservation* 68, no. 3: 283–97. https://doi.org/10.1080/00393630.2022.2025706.

Rahnema, Majid, and Victoria Bawtree, eds. 1997. *The Post-Development Reader.* London: Zed Books.

Remsen, William C. S., and Laura Tedesco. 2015. "US Cultural Diplomacy, Cultural Heritage Preservation and Development at the National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul." In *Museums, Heritage and International Development*, edited by P. Basu and W. Modest, 96–122. London: Routledge.

Rezvani, Arezou, and Fazelminallah Qazizai. 2022. "The Taliban Now Guard Afghanistan's National Museum, Where They Once Smashed Objects." *NPR*, September 1, 2022. https://www.npr.org/2022/09/01/1120295517/afghanistan-national-museum-taliban-cultural-heritage.

Rubin, Barnett R. 2004. "Crafting a Constitution for Afghanistan." *Journal of Democracy* 15, no. 3: 5–19. http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/jod.2004.0051.

S.E.E. Office for Architecture and Design. 2012. "International Architectural Ideas Competition, National Museum of Afghanistan." http://www.see.af/ideas_competition_nma.html.

Seil, William. 2010. "'Tito Time,' a Nation's Idealised Past: Collective Memory and Cultural Nostalgia through the Memorialisation of Charismatic Leaders." *Social Science*, Paper 11. http://commons.pacificu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1011&context=cassoc.

Stocking, George W., ed. 1986. O*bjects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

TOLOnews. 2021. "Bactrian Gold Sent Abroad for Display, Safekeeping." February 7, 2021. https://tolonews.com/arts-culture-169577.

Van Krieken-Pieters, Juliette. 2006. "Dilemmas in the Cultural Heritage Field: The Afghan Case and the Lessons for the Future." In *Art and archaeology of Afghanistan: Its Fall and Survival*, edited by Juliette van Krieken-Pieters, 201–25. Leiden: Brill.

Velikonja, Mitja. 2017. *Titostalgia: A Study of Nostalgia for Josip Broz*. Chisinau: Lambert.

Webb, D. A. 1994. "Winds of Change." *Museums Journal* 94, no. 4.

Wendle, John. 2013. "Who's Stealing Afghanistan's Cultural Treasures?" *National Geographic Daily News*. August 1, 2013. http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/whos-stealing-afghanistan-cultural-treasures/.

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

Zazai, N. 2023. "National Museum Catalogues 51,700 Artifacts." *Phjwok Afgan News*, September 20. https://pajhwok.com/2023/09/20/national-museum-catalogues-51700-artifacts/

7 Fighting against the Dying of the Present

On Nostalgia, Resonance, and Edgar Reitz's *Heimat*

Mathijs Peters

Abstract
This chapter examines the interplay between Hartmut Rosa's concept of "resonance" and the ideas of "nostalgia," "Heimat," and "trauma." By scrutinizing Rosa's effort to develop a non-nostalgic interpretation of Heimat, the argument underscores that the concept inherently still contains nostalgic elements. Drawing on Svetlana Boym's distinction between reflective and restorative nostalgia, it asserts that Heimat can embody both reactive and reflective elements, all rooted in nostalgia. This distinction supports the differentiation between restorative and reflective resonance, contra Rosa. To illustrate this, the chapter analyzes the resonance in Edgar Reitz's film series *Heimat*, demonstrating how it engages with viewers and addresses collective traumas, showing that resonance can be both restorative and reflective, and enriching Rosa's theory as a critical theory of modernity.

Keywords: cinema; *Sehnsucht*; resonance; Holocaust; memory; Germany

Introduction: Ghost Strata

In Ben Rivers's 2019 experimental film *Ghost Strata*, Jan Zalasiewicz, a professor in paleobiology well known for his reflections on the notion of the "Anthropocene," is interviewed in the Park Tunnel in Nottingham. Zalasiewicz explains that in the rock face of the walls of the tunnel, which was dug out in 1855, we can discern "lines of strata" that show the dunes that were formed a quarter of a billion years ago. Zalasiewicz observes that we

Van Liere, L. & Sremac, S. (eds), *Trauma and Nostalgia: Practices in Memory and Identity*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2024
DOI: 10.5117/9789048559220_CH07

can imagine how similar strata used to fill the space where he is standing, in between the walls of the tunnel. He refers to these imagined strata as "ghosts" and describes them as "our own imagination of the past." Standing in the tunnel, with the ghost strata being *present* as an *absence* (Botha 2020), Zalasiewicz observes, "The ghost running through me now and running into that wall is the image of." Then the shot ends abruptly, and *Ghost Strata* continues with an exploration of time, history, memory, past, and future, suggesting that the fragmented (moving) images that the spectator sees summon and represent the ghost strata to which the paleobiologist refers, foregrounding the various ways in which humanity has made and continues to make its mark on the earth in the Anthropocene.

The juxtaposition between Zalasiewicz's truncated hauntological observations and the experimental aspects of *Ghost Strata* makes the spectator reflect on the various ways in which we can imagine and represent the past. In this scene, after all, Zalasiewicz is reflecting on the images that geologists shape to create a representation of natural history, using the actually existing strata in the two walls as reference points that, in turn, might provide us an idea of the moment that humanity started to become a dominant influence on the environment. As Svetlana Boym shows in her seminal work *The Future of Nostalgia*, this is often more difficult in the case of cultural representations of social history. One of the reasons is the role that different forms of nostalgia play in our remembrance and representation of times past. On the one hand, Boym observes in this context, there are traditionalist and reactionary forms of what she calls "restorative nostalgia," which "stresses *nostos* (home) and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home" (Boym 2002, xviii). On the other hand, there is the more critical "reflective nostalgia," which "thrives in *algia*, the longing itself, and delays the homecoming—wistfully, ironically, desperately" (Boym 2002, xviii).[1]

In this chapter, I aim to confront Boym's analysis of these two forms of nostalgia with Hartmut Rosa's notion of "resonance." In his 2016 work *Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World*, this German sociologist describes what he calls resonant relationships as making one feel at home again in a world permeated by what he understands as the alienating dimensions of modernity (see also Rosa 2019b, 361–63). In his 2019 article "Heimat als anverwandelter Weltausschnitt: Ein resonanztheoretischer

1 The word "algos" also associates nostalgia with pain. Clay Routledge therefore observes, in his historical analysis of the concept, that nostalgia "as originally construed" in a medical context refers to "the pain caused by the desire to return to the one's native land" (2016, 4).

Versuch," furthermore, Rosa interprets the German notion of "Heimat" through the lens of his resonance theory, arguing that this rather untranslatable word—which signifies "home," "homeland," "native soil," "motherland," "place of origin and belonging," and more (see Santner 1990, 57; see also Costadura, Ries, and Wiesenfeld 2019, 16)—should be given meaning as a term referring to a segment of a world that promises resonance.

Even though the notion of home returns in his descriptions of resonance and of Heimat, and even though he also argues that we can experience resonance with the historical narratives that we tell ourselves (Rosa 2019b, 300), Rosa hardly refers to nostalgia. The editors of the collection in which his text on Heimat is published even characterize his definition as "nostalgia-free" ("Nostalgie-frei"; see Costadura, Ries, and Wiesenfeld 2019, 21) and *therefore* as progressive instead of reactionary. In contrast to Boym's claims, this implicitly suggests that nostalgia itself is uncritical by definition.

In the following, however, I will argue that even though "resonance" adds an insightful experiential dimension to the diagnoses of modernity, it is not convincing to completely "purify" this notion—as well as a new definition of Heimat—by removing its nostalgic traces. Doing this, I will argue with the help of several reflections made by Theodor W. Adorno in his radio talk "The Meaning of Working through the Past," ignores subjective tendencies that permeate the age of modernity and that might be triggered or propelled by collective traumas. Only if we recognize the nostalgic longing that forms the basis of a need for resonance, I will claim, can we critically reflect on it without having to reject it.

I will substantiate this argument using a focus on several aspects of the first installment in Edgar Reitz's film series *Heimat*, titled *Heimat: Eine deutsche Chronik*. In particular, I will analyze Reitz's own claims about this 1984 film and several critical responses to the manner in which it would present traumas that, according to these same responses, continue to permeate the German society in which the film was released. Using *Heimat* as a focal point where the concepts of nostalgia, resonance, and Heimat are confronted with the notion of "trauma," I will eventually argue that instead of defending one understanding of resonance, we should distinguish restorative from reflective resonance.[2] Although this is not the main aim of the chapter,

2 These two forms of resonance, which are inspired by Boym's notions of restorative and reflective nostalgia, can be understood as particular manifestations (revolving specifically around our relation to time and history) of the two more general forms of resonance that I characterize, in *Exploring Hartmut Rosa's Concept of Resonance*, as *affirmationist* and *critical* in nature (see Peters and Majid 2022). The latter characterization is based on the idea of a "spectrum of resonance" on which we can position forms of resonance that range from highly

I also hope to show that Rosa's resonance theory adds an interpretative layer to the many analyses already developed of Reitz's "cine novel" (Moltke 2003, 115).[3] Before arriving at an analysis of *Heimat*, however, I will first discuss those ideas of Boym and Rosa that are relevant for my analysis.

Modernity and Temporality

Boym's discussion of nostalgia and Rosa's theory of resonance were born as diagnoses of modernity. More specifically, both concepts refer to experiences that could, according to them, only arise under specifically modern conditions. Boym claims, for example, that nostalgia is "coeval" with modernity and that it is a "historical emotion" that came into being in modernity's "dislocation in space" and "changing conception of time" (2002, xvi). Processes of modernization resulted, she observes, in a loss of traditional experiences of rootedness and embeddedness, as well as in "the modern conception of unrepeatable and irreversible time" (Boym 2002, 13). These conditions, which are intrinsically tied to modern notions of progress, sparked and continue to spark longing for an imagined pre-modern whole in which time, according to these utopian ghost strata, was not yet linear, in which the future was not yet unpredictable, in which one was rooted in one specific place, and in which the self was not yet thrown into a fragmented and unpredictable world. "Modern nostalgia," Boym concludes, "is a mourning for the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an 'enchanted world' with clear borders and values" (2002, 8).

This mourning, Boym argues, returns in different ways in seminal diagnoses of modernity, in which nostalgia for a "being at home in the world" (2002, 25)

critical and disruptive experiences to experiences that are soothing, uncritical, and mainly *affirm* what we already believe, feel, or embrace (see Peters and Majid 2022, 29–60). Whereas the reflective resonance described in this article can be understood as leaning toward *critical* forms of resonance, restorative resonance is more *affirmationist* in nature, since it revolves around the acceptance of a fixed and mythical notion of the past that resists attempts to change or be critically revised.

3 In a footnote to his article about the role that music plays in *Die zweite Heimat*, Ulrich Schönherr argues that Boym's nuanced analysis of nostalgia presents a theoretical framework that could "help revise the continuous verdict of nostalgia on *Heimat I*" (2010, 122n31). To some extent, this is what I aim to do in this chapter. Another implicit aim is to show how the field of semiotics might contribute to resonance theory, but also to infuse this field with the specific emphasis on experience that characterizes Rosa's approach. More specifically: his approach, I believe, presents us with a fruitful analysis of how phenomena like customs, objects, artworks, or even language might come to resonate with subjects and constitute a meaning that *matters* to them in specific ways.

results in descriptions of a pre-modern and lost form of embeddedness. She describes, for example, how this nostalgia permeates the "primitive communism" of the "prefeudal society" described by Karl Marx, the "enchanted public life" mourned by Max Weber, the "creative sociability" that Georg Simmel describes as threatened by modern individualization processes, the "integrated civilisation of antiquity" that György Lukács contrasts with the "transcendental homelessness" of modernity (see Boym 2002, 24), and Friedrich Nietzsche's references to animal forgetfulness and the eternal return (25).

Boym does not focus extensively on the notion of acceleration in her analysis of modern temporality, although she does mention it several times. For example, she writes the following in observations on the emergence of cyberspace and the "visual global village": "Nostalgia inevitably reappears as a defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals" (Boym 2002, xiv). Similar observations return in her analysis of the acceleration caused by the "economic shock therapy" that Russia went through after the demise of the Soviet Union, which sparked nostalgic longing that materialized in imagined representations—restorative ghost strata—of the Soviet era (Boym 2002, 64), not unlike the *Ostalgie* of post-1989 Germany.

The notion of "acceleration" *does* play a main role in Hartmut Rosa's *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*. Unlike Boym, who mainly discusses acceleration in regard to specific historical developments, Rosa understands this phenomenon as the key denominator of modernity *itself*. His analysis is based on the idea, which returns in Boym as well, that "measurements of time, perceptions of time, and time horizons are highly culturally dependent and change with the social structure of societies" (Rosa 2013b, 5). This emphasis on the constructed character of temporality results in his claim, again similar to Boym's ideas, that with the beginning of the modern era, cyclic or episodic experiences of time were replaced with a temporality understood as an "irreversible line running from the past through the present into the future" (Boym 2002, 5–6).

It is this same linearity that sparked forms of acceleration, Rosa continues: driven by a capitalist concern with growth and accumulation, as well as by the emphasis on progress, renewal, and advancement in the name of the future, the modern era came to be dominated by what he characterizes as the logic of acceleration. Positioning himself in the tradition of critical theory, extensively referring to Lukács, Adorno, Erich Fromm, and Herbert Marcuse, Rosa furthermore argues that this logic eventually turned into an ideology—into "second nature" (2013b, 315)—that permeates "every aspect of life" (2020, 31) and sometimes even gains a totalitarian character: it is

incredibly difficult, he observes, to escape from the need to accelerate or even to critically reflect on this logic in contemporary societies (Rosa 2013a, 61). Paradoxically, acceleration eventually resulted in an experience for which he uses the term "frozen time" (Rosa 2009, 101), as well as a translation of Paul Virilio's notion of a postmodern "'polar inertia' as a 'frenetic standstill'" ("rasender Stillstand"; see Rosa 2013b, 15, 102).[4]

Like Boym, Rosa refers to several seminal diagnoses of modernity (see Rosa 2013a, 13), not only mentioning Nietzsche's reflections on never hearing "the voice of the universe again" (2019b, 265) but also arguing that the notion of "acceleration" should be understood as part of a tradition of sociologists and philosophers who analyzed and critiqued modernity with the help of concepts like rationalization (Weber, Habermas), differentiation (Durkheim, Luhmann), individualization (Simmel, Beck), and commodification (Marx, Horkheimer, Adorno). In *Alienation and Acceleration*, he furthermore employs the early Marxist notion of "alienation" to pinpoint the condition of radical disconnectedness that is, in his view, the result of acceleration processes, arriving at the bold claim that in late modernity "social acceleration is about to pass certain thresholds beyond which human beings necessarily become alienated not just from their actions, the objects they work and live with, nature, the social world and their self, but also from time and space themselves" (Rosa 2013a, 83; see also Rosa 2019b, 164; 2020, 104–5).[5]

In his 2020 book *The Uncontrollability of the World*, Rosa adds another dimension to this critical narrative about modernity: driven by the logic of acceleration, he argues, late modern societies can only "stabilize" themselves "dynamically" and through "escalation," which means that "they are structurally and institutionally compelled to bring more and more of the world under control and within reach" (Rosa 2020, 10). Paradoxically, he claims, the attempt to make the world completely controllable undermines the ability to be touched by it or embedded in it, instead constituting what he calls, with Rahel Jaeggi, a "relation of relationlessness" (Rosa 2020, 27). Again, he embeds these ideas in a critical sociological and philosophical tradition, referring to writings on alienation by the early Marx, Weber's analysis of disenchantment, Georg Simmel's reflections on modern isolation, and Émile Durkheim's concept of "anomie" (Rosa 2020, 20–25). All these theories, he suggests, crystallize in the idea that something happened at the

4 Rosa criticizes Virilio for only focusing on technological acceleration and not also on acceleration of social change and the pace of life (see Rosa 2013b, 56–56).

5 This embeds Rosa in a discourse shaped by a renewed interest in this term; see for example Jaeggi (2016). See also Rosa (2019b, 184) and Felski (2020, 208).

dawn of modernity, something that threw the self into a world that started spinning out of control.

The Promise of Modernity

We have seen that Boym argues that modern forms of temporality resulted and continue to result in a nostalgic longing for "homeliness." As mentioned above, Rosa does not extensively refer to nostalgia (and does not mention Boym) but claims instead that the alienating conditions of modernity trigger a need for experiences that he characterizes as "resonant." Indeed, he opens *Resonance* with the following claim: "If acceleration is the problem, then resonance may well be the solution" (Rosa 2019b, 1). In a helpful footnote, he furthermore cites Steven Luke's observation in *Marxism and Morality* that alienation enters human history "at the point where human beings can no longer successfully understand themselves as in control and at home in the world" (Rosa 2019b, 467n105).[6]

What makes resonant relationships meaningful, according to Rosa, is that they are constituted in a reciprocal relationship between the experiencing self, on the one hand, and that which this self experiences, on the other. Not only is the self-addressed and "called upon" in these relationships, but she also puts something of herself *into* this experienced "Other," *transforming* herself as well as that which is experienced (Rosa 2019b, 184–91). Not unlike Boym's argument that nostalgia and progress form the Jekyll and Hyde, or "alter egos," of modernity (2002, xvi), Rosa also continually emphasizes that resonance cannot be understood without its counterpart, alienation. Resonance is often even made possible by alienation, he claims: modern experiences of a world in which we do not feel at home anymore point negatively to the possibility and importance of connection, embeddedness, and warmth (Rosa 2019b, 188). Furthermore, the disconnecting and alienating aspects of modern processes like individualization often have a *liberating* aspect, he goes on in what Rita Felski calls a "Hegelian move" (2020, 409); this loosens the ties between self and tradition, for example, and in turn triggers longing for a more "mature" and modern form of embeddedness in

6 Rosa argues in *Resonance* that the notion of "autonomy" is able to explain the first aspect but that only resonance captures the latter (see also Rosa 2020, 53). Autonomy, according to Rosa, does not capture the importance of self-transcendence that takes place when the self gives itself over to another (see also Lijster and Celikates 2018, 32). His 2020 book *The Uncontrollability of the World*, however, suggests that the first aspect cannot be captured by the notion of autonomy either; it instead lies in what he calls "semicontrollability."

which the self is "called upon" as an individual being that opens itself up to a transforming experience (Rosa 2019b, 189). Rosa even refers to the process of puberty as substantiating this idea: "puberty … appears as a fundamental transformation of one's resonant relationships…. Without a phase of alienation, we must presume, the process of adaptive transformation, of *making the world resonant* or *making speak*, cannot succeed" (Rosa 2019b, 189).

In several ways, these reflections suggest that resonance embodies the *promise* of modernity, healing the wounds caused by acceleration and enabling the modern self—and modern societies—to go through a phase of puberty and to reach a stage of maturity.[7] In a chapter called "Modernity as the History of Increasing Sensitivity to Resonance," for example, he observes that the "fundamental anxiety of modern society," which is "the fear that the world may fall mute," finds its opposite in a "fundamental *promise*, the great hope of a *singing world*" (Rosa 2019b, 357).[8]

Even though Rosa stresses that resonance should not be understood as a utopian or dogmatic metanarrative that promises salvation and foregrounds its vulnerability instead (see Susen 2019, 20), arguments like these do sketch the contours of a historical narrative that goes through the following three stages: (1) a pre-modern communal embeddedness; (2) modernity's acceleration processes severing ties between self and Other, causing the experiences of alienation described by countless sociologists and philosophers (Rosa 2013a, 82), eventually culminating in a postmodern "frenetic standstill"; and (3) a more mature form of embeddedness in which the self comes to fruition through experiences of resonance that include and absorb *transformative* forms of alienation. "Modernity," in his own words, is therefore not "just a catastrophe of resonance"; to a large extent, it actually "produced certain capacities for resonance in the first place" (Rosa 2019b, 29; see also Felski 2020, 409).

In *The Uncontrollability of the World*, Rosa extends this narrative by enriching the notion of resonance with the idea of *Unverfügbarkeit* (a rather untranslatable word for which the English "uncontrollability" has been chosen; see Rosa 2020, vii–ix). Using this concept, he argues that we should temper our need to control every part of the world. Instead, he argues that we should embrace a form of "semicontrollability," in between the iron cage of the illusion of total control, on the one hand, and an equally disrupting

7 In *Alienation and Acceleration*, Rosa still defines this promise as revolving around autonomy; in *Resonance* he characterizes it as revolving around resonant relationships (see Rosa 2016, 77–83). For an analysis of the role that autonomy plays in Rosa's theory of modernity and acceleration, see Peters (2020).

8 Rosa frequently employs metaphors relating to sound to explain resonance. This concept, after all, finds its origins in the realm of acoustics (see Rosa 2019, 162; Felski 2020, 407).

complete lack of control, on the other.[9] In a statement in which the romantic tendencies of his theory shine, he writes, "I should allow myself to be called" (Rosa 2020, 42).[10]

The Descriptive and the Normative

Whereas Boym is highly critical of forms of nostalgia that are restorative in nature and that, in her view, form the basis of reactionary responses to modernity, Rosa describes resonant relationships as positive and good by definition. Resonance, he argues, presents us with a normative yardstick; with an *ideal* of what good experiences *should* look like (Rosa 2020, 171; Susen 2019, 18–19; Felski 2020, 412; Masquelier 2020, 859). The moment a relationship does not respect the independence of the experiencing self and the value of that in which this self is embedded, and the moment it does not *transform* both the self and the experienced Other, he claims, we cannot talk about resonance anymore (Rosa 2020, 163).

In a detailed evaluation of *Resonance*, Simon Susen criticizes this idea by arguing that it is difficult to really discern problematic forms of embeddedness from the resonance that Rosa defends. Under the header "No reactionary resonance?," he writes,

> One may sympathize with Rosa's contention that genuine resonance is, by definition, emancipatory. It is difficult, however, to ignore the fact that there are *highly problematic* practices that may "resonate" with those performing them. Fascist regimes not only rely on "resonance"-generating techniques and activities, but also provide realms of "resonance" that their supporters experience as "inspiring" and "galvanizing." The same is true of various other reactionary endeavours with which those immersed in them may identify in a resonant fashion. (Susen 2019, 17)

Rosa would argue that those immersed in these "reactionary endeavours" do not truly experience resonance, since even though resonance contains "visceral," "bodily" (Lijster and Celikates 2018, 49), and "uncontrollable" (Rosa 2019b, 183) aspects that partly transcend one's individuality, as well

9 Paradoxes like these return at several places in Rosa's works, such as the aforementioned claim that extreme acceleration results in a standstill.

10 Felski argues that one of the "more provocative theses" of *Resonance* is "Rosa's argument for the contemporaneity of a Romantic sensibility" (2020, 409).

as rational critique and autonomous reflection, he also argues that "you cannot get into a resonance with something you cannot rationally explain as at least potentially valuable" (Lijster and Celikates 2018, 49).

However, at this point, I believe, the confrontation between Boym's analysis of nostalgia and Rosa's theory of resonance indicates that one of the potentially problematic aspects of the latter is that resonance forms both a *normative* yardstick and a *descriptive* concept.[11] After all, Rosa not only aims to describe what we long for and why we desire this experience by diagnosing modern existence from a sociological perspective; his book also tells us what we *should* long for and how this experience *should* come about, shaping a "normative monism" (see Susen 2019, 20) that indicates that *the* good life in modernity is a life of resonance (see also Susen 2019, 18–21). However, the descriptive and the normative do not always overlap, which means that if we want to use the concept of resonance to diagnose and describe modern developments, it becomes very difficult to simultaneously argue that the same concept enables us to *critique* or even *reject* some of these developments for not being resonant, or to argue *how* they *should* be shaped.

To work toward my claim that we should therefore distinguish restorative from reflective forms of resonance, I want to show that a similar problem permeates the notion of Heimat as discussed by Rosa in "Heimat als anverwandelter Weltausschnitt: Ein resonanztheoretischer Versuch." In this text, Rosa claims that his theory of resonance enables us to disconnect the concept of Heimat from the way in which it has been, and still is, employed by different reactionary, conservative, and identitarian movements—such as Pegida in Germany, but he also hints at Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" ideology. These movements shape the mythical idea of a homeland that used to be pure and homogenous in the past and would be threatened by external "Others" in the present, with these "Others" referring to people of color, Islam, refugees, or anyone or anything presented as different from the homogeneous identity linked to the mythical idea of "our Heimat" (Rosa 2019a, 163).[12] Emphasizing the inclusive experience of resonance, during which one truly is touched and transformed by an Other, Rosa argues that

11 For a more extensive discussion of this critical observation, see Peters and Majid (2022, 13–60).

12 The notion of "Heimat" gained different meanings in different historical contexts, meandering between nationalist frameworks and regionalist forms of anti-nationalism. Examples are its connection to a notion of "Germany" shaped within National Socialist discourses, constructions of a "pure" and idyllic home in *Heimatfilme*, representations of an evil isolationist prison in anti-*Heimatfilme*, or the New Regionalism that started gaining momentum in the Germany of the 1970s and positioned the notion of Heimat in opposition to nationalist discourses (see Geisler 1985; Palfreyman 1997, 529).

a resonant concept of Heimat welcomes diversity, difference, and progress instead, resulting in a progressive understanding of a country that, for example, welcomes immigrants and a political system that counters racism and xenophobia. Using his notion of *Unverfügbarkeit*, he argues that we should therefore let go of the mythical idea of a completely *controllable* Heimat that an "Us" would have to protect against the uncontrollable and "impure" forces of a "Them" (Rosa 2020, 44).

It is here, however, that the schism between the normative and the descriptive again becomes problematic, in my view. On a *normative* level, after all, this new understanding of Heimat is "nostalgia-free": it does not revolve around the notion of a *return* to an imagined past but around the creation of *new* places that welcome difference, progress, and *Unverfügbarkeit*, transforming both self and Other (Rosa 2018a, 170). This normative dimension, however, conflicts with the more descriptive aspects of Rosa's discussion of this concept, which *do* contain traces of nostalgia. And since, as Boym shows us, these traces can become restorative, this partly explains why the notion of Heimat has so often been embedded in reactionary ideologies.

This schism can be illustrated with the help of Rosa's quotation of Ernst Bloch's famous observation in *The Principle of Hope* that Heimat is something that "shines into the childhood of all" ("das allen in die Kindheit scheint," qtd. in Rosa 2019a, 168).[13] This is no surprise, Rosa observes, because children by nature would be "resonance-beings" ("Resonanzwezen," Rosa 2019a, 169). Before they learn to speak and before they develop an individual self—even before they are born—they are connected to others and to the world through resonant relationships, he claims (Rosa 2019a, 169). At several places, he uses Merleau-Ponty's notion that we are "always already *au monde*" to conceptualize this same idea (Rosa 2020, 5).

However, if these descriptive statements are *also* part of resonance, and if "Heimat" refers to a place that promises resonance, then it becomes increasingly difficult to argue that this notion does not, in some way or another, contain nostalgic elements that long for a *Heimlichkeit* already experienced in the past and lost in the present, for example by going through puberty. This problem can be illustrated using the following passage in *Resonance*, in which Rosa provides the notion of Heimat with a historical and social dimension:

> It has often been remarked that the German idea of *Heimat*—"home" or "homeland"—"is a specifically modern concept, that it denotes something

13 On Bloch, "Heimat" and *Heimat*, see also Geisler (1985, 28, 26).

> which appears to be always already lost. But *what* it denotes, I would like to claim, is a specific form of reference or relation to a segment of world that has been adaptively transformed—in the classic sense, a place where *things speak to us* and *say something to us*: the trees, the river, our house, or even the gas station, the industrial chimney stacks, and the local fast-food restaurant. (Rosa 2019b, 359)

In *The Uncontrollability of the World*, Rosa uses the above-mentioned notion of semicontrollability to make a similar point:

> My theory of "semicontrollability" may help to explain why *home* [Heimat] only becomes a resonant concept after we have *already lost it*.... [H]ome represents our hope for a segment of world that we can adaptively transform, our desire to find or create a place in the world where things (plants and trees, mountains and streams, bridges and streets, houses and cottages, people and animals) *speak to us*, where they *have something to say to us*. A segment of world loses its resonant quality in this sense if it is completely controllable. Soon enough, it falls silent or bores us. (Rosa 2020, 44–45)

Combined with his claims that children, even embryos, are *Resonanzwesen*, passages like these suggest, contra Rosa's own arguments, that it is very difficult to rob the notion of Heimat as a "modern concept"—and eventually also the notion of resonance itself—from its nostalgic elements. After all, the *descriptive* side of Rosa's theory tells us that the idea of a segment of world that promises resonance includes references to a mythical experience that, even if we have never truly experienced it, appears to be *already* lost because modernity culminated in our tendency to try to *control* and *instrumentalize* the world, robbing this segment of its resonant qualities. This idea conflicts, however, with the *normative* dimension of his discussion, which tells us that Heimat should *not* point at something that rests on the feeling of an "already lost" but instead to a segment of world that *can* and *should* transform us. The notion of "already lost," after all, is different from the notions of "ungraspability" or *Unverfügbarkeit* as conceptualized by Rosa, the difference lying in the presence or absence of nostalgia.

Working through the Past

That the normative and the descriptive, as it were, pull apart the notion of resonance as well as the definition of Heimat that Rosa defends has to do

with the complicated relation that they have with temporality. By trying to make the concept of Heimat nostalgia-free, the normative elements of his theory appear to focus exclusively on constituting an open, resonant Heimat in the *future*. This, in turn, links the descriptive and nostalgic dimensions of these same concepts to the past, as illustrated by Rosa's references to childhood resonance. By constituting this dichotomy, however, Rosa overlooks the idea that past and future do not necessarily have to exclude each other, since nostalgia can permeate both past and future. As Boym writes in *The Future of Nostalgia*, "Nostalgia is not always about the past; it can be retrospective but also prospective. Fantasies of the past determined by needs of the present have a direct impact on realities of the future" (xvi).

This suggests that trying to purify our ideas about the future from the tendencies and desires that shape our imaginings of the past might result in an uncritical understanding of the future that we try to create, and *therefore* in a reactionary form of restorative nostalgia that is uncritical because it does not *recognize* its own nostalgic dimensions. Put differently: Rosa does not acknowledge that the notion of Heimat always already contains nostalgic traces, since his theory does not enable him to argue that there are different forms of nostalgia, some of which can be highly critical and some of which can be problematic. Since Rosa embeds his theory in a tradition shaped by the same authors whom Boym argues offer critical diagnoses of modernity permeated with nostalgia (Marx, Nietzsche, Lukács, Weber, Simmel, and more), it could even be argued that his theory of resonance might *itself* be a nostalgic response—longing for the gone sensibility of Romanticism, for example—to the fragmenting and alienating effects of modernity.

To argue why Rosa's attempt to distinguish Heimat and resonance from nostalgia might be problematic, I want to turn to the 1959 radio talk "The Meaning of Working Through the Past," in which Adorno reflects on attempts to process Germany's past in a present still permeated with the collective traumas of the rise of National Socialism and the Holocaust. Adopting insights from psychoanalysis, he argues that the past should not be "worked through" in such a way that the rise of the National Socialist regime and the horrors of the Holocaust are processed in a "clean" or "hygienic" manner, eventually turning into a "cold forgetting" that reduces them to a sealed-off past (Adorno 1998, 98; see also Hansen 1985, 5). This would naively suggest, after all, that the societal structures and subjective tendencies that made these events come about completely disappeared with the end of World War II and that Fascism will never rise again. Instead, in analyses that also echo through Boym's defense of reflective nostalgia, Adorno stresses the importance of continually reflecting critically on ourselves and on

our societies and of shaping an *awareness* of the needs and desires that constitute our worldviews, our political ideals, our representation of the past, and our imaginings of the future. In his own words, which link this idea to a critical notion of "enlightenment": "a working through of the past understood as enlightenment is essentially such a turn towards the subject, the reinforcement of a person's self-consciousness and hence also of his self" (Adorno 1998, 102).

I follow Adorno's emphasis on working through the past in ways that critically reflect on the idea that the tendencies and desires that resulted in oppressive regimes are still present in our societies and in ourselves, and I want to defend a distinction between restorative and reflective forms of resonance, inspired by Boym's analysis. Following Rosa's descriptive observations that the notion of Heimat does include traces of nostalgia, my suggestion entails that it is neither convincing nor critical to rob it, as well as the concept of resonance, from its nostalgic elements once we present them as normative notions. *Both* concepts, I claim, are built around the longing for a pre-modern and mythical past that is "always already lost" and that finds its echoes on an individual level in childhood experiences. *Restorative* forms of resonance allow this longing to bend these concepts into reactionary and mythological imaginations of the past—into false ghost strata—precisely because they pretend that this experience of resonance is not driven by nostalgic longing and, instead, "stress the homecoming." *Reflective* forms of resonance, my claim goes, *are* aware of the nostalgic longing that permeates the experience of resonance and therefore on the falseness of the "home" that they try to shape. However, they critically reflect on this longing without completely removing it, creating ghost strata that are so fragmentary and elusive that those who experience them will not fall into the illusion that they are brought home and instead are triggered into thought and reflection on themselves and their past while still resonating with that which they experience.

To embed the longing that permeates these forms of resonance in their socio-historical and subjective context, it is crucial to explore an aspect of the same modernity that Rosa aims to diagnose with his resonance theory, but to which he himself does not refer extensively: trauma. This aspect is foregrounded by Adorno in his above-mentioned lecture and concerns the manner in which experiences like resonance or notions like Heimat form responses to collective traumas that make it impossible for the self-seeking resonance to disconnect itself completely from the past. I want to develop this argument by now turning to an analysis of the first film of Reitz's

Heimat, more specifically to the manner in which its resonant imaginings of ghost strata contain traces of nostalgia and trauma.[14]

Triggering Resonances

In an age that Rosa characterizes as permeated with the logic of acceleration, *Heimat* might well provide us with what he calls an "oasis of resonance" (Lijster and Celikates 2018, 49), demanding our attention and encouraging us to slow down and undergo a possibly transformative experience. After all, the whole *Heimat* series currently counts about sixty hours.

The series, which Carole Angier describes as having the "narrative and thematic complexity of a great novel" (1991, 33), currently consists of the following three long films, each divided into chapters: *Heimat: Eine deutsche Chronik* (1984); *Die zweite Heimat: Chronik einer Jugend* (1992); and *Heimat 3: Chronik einer Zeitenwende* (2004). The first film spans the years between 1919 and 1982 and mainly shows the viewer three generations of several families who live in Schabbach. This fictional village is located in the Hunsrück, an existing rural area in southwest Germany in the Rhine borderland, where Reitz himself grew up and which he left at the age of nineteen (Gabriel 2004, 193). The second film mainly revolves around the musical prodigy Hermann, who leaves for Munich (also at the age of nineteen) to study music, experiencing the revolutionary social, political, and artistic climate of the West Germany of the 1960s. The third *Heimat* takes place in the period between 1989 and 2000 and again tells the story of Hermann, who has by then become a world-famous composer and returns to the Hunsrück together with his newfound love, Clarissa. In 2006 Reitz also released a collection of previously unreleased fragments as *Heimat-Fragmente: Die Frauen*, and in 2013 he directed a film called *Die andere Heimat: Chronik einer Sehnsucht*. The latter film shows life in the Hunsrück area as well, this time in the period between 1840 and 1844, and focuses on several ancestors of the family depicted in the first *Heimat* films. It concerns the decisions of many Hunsrückers to migrate to Brazil, particularly showing how images of this country trigger escapist and romantic longing in one of the film's protagonists.

14 In *Exploring Hartmut Rosa's Concept of Resonance*, I analyze Reitz's *Heimat* as well (see Peters and Majid 2022, 79–110). However, this analysis is mainly driven by the aim to translate Rosa's ideas into an aesthetic theory and does not focus on forms of nostalgia and trauma, nor on Boym's theory.

Even though I believe that the concept of resonance can be used to interpret and analyze different aspects of the other films of *Heimat* as well, in the following I will only focus on certain aspects of the first installment, *Heimat: Eine deutsche Chronik*. Reitz himself presented this film as a response to the "personal depression" (Gabriel 2004, 190) he went through after watching Marvin J. Chomsky's 1978 American miniseries *Holocaust*, which he rejected in his essay "Unabhangiger Film nach Holocaust?" for its (in his view) artificial approach to Germany's past (see Santner 1990, 73; Confino 1998, 85–86; Wickham 1991, 36; Hansen 1985, 3–4; Garton Ash 1985). *Holocaust*, according to Reitz, would "steal" the memories of the Germans (Gabriel 2004, 149) and exploit "the horrible crocodile tears of our nation" (qtd. Gabriel 2004, 152).

In contrast to the American series—even presenting a "German antidote" to it (Santner 1990, 73)—he therefore set out to create moving images of the past that would focus on experience, details, and individual human lives as they are embedded in and shaped by one community—focusing on that which Eric Santner, with reference to Walter Benjamin, characterizes as "gelebtes Leben" (1990, 66). Instead of glossing over these details and pushing them into a narrative from a moralistic top-down perspective, as he argued *Holocaust* did by employing "thinking in categories" ("Schubladendenken," see Santner 1990, 74; Elsaesser 1985, 11), and instead of casting judgments (Confino 1998, 194l; Birgel and Reitz 1986, 8), *Heimat* would focus on "little people" (Gabriel 2004, 150) or "common people" (Stern 1987, 10) from a bottom-up point of view (Moltke 2005, 212; see also Moltke 2003, 161; Angier 1991, 38). In this way, he recreated German rural life with an "almost archaeological concern" (Geisler 1985, 26) that shifts "emphasis from the center of history to its echo on the fringe" (28).

This is done in the first film of *Heimat* by rooting individuals, as Eckart Voigts-Virchow observes in his analysis of the film, in the "regional" (2007, 128); in Schabbach. Throughout *Heimat* this fictional village indeed gains an aura of *Heimlichkeit* once we get acquainted with the film's different characters and see them get older, fall in love, get married, and experience historical changes. We are continually shown how deeply the characters are rooted in the specific locational, cultural, and traditional space of Schabbach: the Heimat that the film shapes is presented as a close-knit community, revolving around local traditions and customs. Furthermore, the film is mainly spoken in Hunsrück dialect[15] and stars not only professional but

15 The strong link between language and experience (as manifested in untranslatable words like "Heimat" and "Sehnsucht," which returns in the subtitle of *Die andere Heimat*) is emphasized

also amateur actors who grew up in the Hunsrück area, contributing to its aura of authenticity and its feeling of locality (see Garton Ash 1985; Birgel and Reitz 1986, 3).

Importantly, Reitz explicitly claimed that the first *Heimat*—in contrast with the external and top-down perspective adopted, in his view, by *Holocaust*—was built around *memories* of experiences ("Erlebnisse," Santner 1990, 75; see also Wickham 1991, 36), stressing its nostalgic dimensions. In a Dutch interview with the author Arnon Grunberg, for example, he responded as follows to the question of whether film is "a way of remembering":

> Yes, because one has to watch one's own experiences. They lie in our memory like a heap of fragments, and, when we consciously remember, we take them and put them together again in memory and make a second life with them. The camera portrays the time again, it describes it in a way that lasts, and when I make a film, I make the past permanent, the fragments can't disappear any longer. The art of film is a victory over time and in some ways a victory over death. Time is always this dying of the present. (VPRO Documentary, my translation)

In the same interview, Reitz adds to these claims that film shapes "images of times in the past that are still important for us" (VPRO Documentary, my translation).

These reflections, I want to argue, not only emphasize the nostalgic character of *Heimat* but also provide a steppingstone to the idea that the film constitutes resonant relationships with its viewers. In *Resonance* Rosa describes how, during aesthetic experiences, the consumer of art can be pulled in by an "irresistible force," a "pre- or extra-subjective" power that overcomes her and demands something from her (Rosa 2019b, 281; see also Rosa 2019, 166).[16] We can link these romantic descriptions of art to Rosa's explanation of his above-cited statement on "the German idea of *Heimat*" as a "place where things speak to us": "They speak because they trigger

by the word "Geheischnis." Santner writes that this "Hunsrücker word" signifies "the trust, security, and warmth one feels amongst the members of a small, tight-knit community" (1990, 176). The word was the original title of *Heimat* and plays an important role in the last chapter of the first film (see Geisler 1985, 42; Costadura, Ries, and Wiesenfeld 2019, 19). I would argue that this word refers to a specific experience of resonance with one's community and natural environment, containing elements of restorative and reflective resonance and leaning toward the former.

16 Reitz makes similar observations on the nature of "longing" and the ungraspable nature of a Heimat (see Geisler 1987, 5; Gabriel 2004, 160–61).

resonances in our own biographical memory and the people with whom we are connected by a shared history" (Rosa 2019b, 359).[17] Rosa elaborates this notion of a "biographical memory" further in reflections on what he calls "historical resonance": "Because human beings are storytelling creatures who must constantly assure themselves of their identity through narratives," he writes, historical and biographical resonances "are always already built into the reservoir of interpretation that they draw on in order to make sense of themselves and the world" (2019, 300).

Heimat, I argue, presents us with such a narrative, which means that the film "triggers resonances" in the biographical memories of its viewers, pulling these viewers in and providing them with the feeling of being embedded in the past shaped on screen. Indeed, Thomas Elsaesser observes in his review of the film that "for a German audience, there must be literally hundreds of details and scores of incidents that feel absolutely 'right,' that spark off personal memories, and allow an audience to recognize themselves in the guise of the 'other' up there on the screen or right there in the living" (Elsaesser 1985, 11).[18]

However, I believe that the resonance that *Heimat* constitutes transgresses borders and does not only concern German viewers. Once the viewer has watched several chapters, she indeed comes to feel that she has become part of the "home" of Schabbach herself, knowing who lives "where" and how to get to which part of the village, entangling the past watched on screen with memories of her own past, even developing "memories" about events that happened earlier in *Heimat*. Throughout the film, these experiences are encouraged by the camera, which often lingers for a long time on the landscape in which Schabbach is embedded or explores the different objects, interiors, and exteriors in which the lives of the protagonists come about (Santner 1990, 69).

With the help of Rosa, we can argue that *Heimat* "triggers resonances" by embedding viewers in the past as it is shaped on screen by Reitz, entwining this past with their own biographical memories and feeding on their nostalgia. This is the aspect that I have linked to the *descriptive* dimension of Rosa's

17 I do not want to suggest that this is the only way in which art can trigger resonances: Rosa himself also observes that experiences of the sublime or shock moments can be resonant (see Lijster and Celikates 2018, 51). Furthermore, he argues with the help of Christoph Menke's *The Power of Art* and Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* that art should be understood as an "Other" that challenges and transforms the self (see Rosa 2019b, 283). However, my claim is that his theory also enables us to argue that, in the case of artwork like *Heimat*, resonances are triggered in a different and more uncritical manner.

18 For a detailed analysis of *Heimat*'s reception and the way in which the process of "mainstreaming" might have eventually buried its more critical elements, see Geisler (1985, 50–59).

theory, a dimension that contains nostalgic traces. I have also argued above that the *normative* dimensions of Rosa's theory, especially his writings on a new definition of Heimat, suggest that nostalgia is by definition reactionary and backwards, an idea that conflicts with his more descriptive claims. I want to argue in the next section that *Heimat* can help to demonstrate how this is not the case, and an exploration of secondary literature shows that the film meanders between restorative and reflective nostalgia, and therefore between the triggering of restorative and reflective resonances.

Restorative Elements

The scope of this chapter does not allow me to delve into the details of the many extensive analyses developed of the film. Key to my argument is the way in which the nostalgia that permeates *Heimat*, as well as the question of whether this nostalgia is restorative or reflective, is discussed in many of these analyses in the context of two different traumas: the trauma of modernity and the trauma of the Holocaust.

The first trauma is extensively explored by Eric L. Santner, who argues in *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany* that *Heimat* performs a form of what Freud called *Trauerarbeit* or "work of mourning" (1990, xiii; see also Geisler 1985, 46). *Heimat*, according to this reading, mourns the traumatic loss of a pre-modern world, a world in which people were still firmly rooted not only in their communities, language, customs, and traditions but also in what Santner characterizes, with reference to Walter Benjamin, as a predictable and cyclic *Naturgeschichte* in which birth and death followed each other like the seasons, rooting the individual's existence in a predictable larger whole. Santner writes, "It is a nostalgia for a particular relation to time, a nostalgia for that passage of time which inscribes itself on artifacts, objects of everyday use, even including the words used in daily discourse" (1990, 99). This *Naturgeschichte*, Santner goes on, is presented by *Heimat* as eventually unable to absorb "the fitful accelerations and decelerations of political history as well as what in Western societies is generally called progress" (65), causing the traumatic loss that *Heimat*, by both representing this process and showing *what* has been lost (Schabbach), tries to mourn.

Referring to Reitz's well-documented critique of the *Wegwerfgesellschaft* (throwaway society, see Santner 1990, 68),[19] for example, Santner writes a passage that could refer to Rosa's musings on the way in which "our

19 On the "trauma of modernity" and film, see also Elsaesser (1989, 254).

relationship to the object-world is significantly transformed by the increasing speed-rates of modernity" as well (2013a, 45; see also 85–87): "Contemporary Western society represents for Reitz a world in which people have learned to separate painlessly from everything, where what has been lost leaves no scars, no traces, in the psyches and physiognomies of the survivors" (Santner 1990, 67).

Santner eventually concludes that this diagnosis turns into an uncritical form of nostalgia, because Reitz contrasts the present that he critiques with the Schabbach that he creates on screen, making the latter into an idyllic place that is *restored* in order to *escape* from the present. Put within Rosa's framework distilled above from his reflections on modernity: *Heimat* remains stuck in the second "stage" of modernity and is unable to move toward a third stage—that of a mature form of embeddedness and resonance. Instead, the film suggests, the only way out is a way back, a return to the pre-modern home of Schabbach.

This conclusion seems to be substantiated by several claims made by Reitz himself. The German director argued, for example, that while making *Heimat*, he was driven by a "Tarkovsky-like desire to return to the womb" (qtd. in Gabriel 2004, 190). In Utz Kastenholz's documentary *Schabbach ist Überall*, he states,

> In Schabbach people still know where things come from, and how they are connected. They still know who likes who and who does not like who. That contains a certain human clarity. They care about and for the place and time in which they live. And I actually do not see that anywhere else. In that sense, I understand Schabbach as a utopia. Schabbach is nowhere. (Kastenholtz 2007)

In reflections that echo aforementioned observations made by Hartmut Rosa, Reitz furthermore observes that the notion of Heimat evokes the feeling of "something lost or very far away" and that "if one would go closer and closer to it, one would discover that at the moment of arrival it is gone," concluding that "one can arrive there only in poetry, and I include film in poetry" (cited in Birgel and Reitz 1986, 5). Passages like these, in which Reitz explicitly refers to the tradition of German Romanticism as embodying this idea (5), suggest that *Heimat* "triggers resonances" by shaping a utopian, non-existing Schabbach. Instead of "delaying the homecoming" and reflecting on the longing itself, to use Boym's descriptions, *Heimat* brings us—the viewer, but also Reitz himself—home (again) by materializing otherwise ungraspable

memories and by recalling an otherwise disappeared past—by restoring the lost *nostos* in Schabbach.

Reflective Elements

Even though several of Reitz's own observations seem to strengthen this conclusion, many scholars actually argue that an analysis of the film itself shows that it contains different elements that continually make the viewer aware of its nostalgic nature and thus of the falseness of the idyll that it presents. In a statement that conflicts with Reitz's above-cited reflections, for example, Michael E. Geisler observes that "Reitz makes it clear that Schabbach has absolutely no claim to utopia" (1985, 44). In other words, statements like these result in the idea that *Heimat*'s nostalgia is *reflective* in nature.

Most of these analyses are developed in the context of *Heimat*'s response to the trauma of the rise of National Socialism and the Holocaust. Christopher J. Wickham, for example, observes that the mythical "bed of roses" shaped by *Heimat* is continually shown to "have its thorns" (1999, 36), and Rachel Palfreyman argues that the film presents a "deconstructive reading" of the concept of Heimat (1997, 543). Even though he does eventually resist the latter conclusion, Santner argues, with the help of Jacques Derrida's analysis of the purifying expulsion procedures inherent to the construction of a social order (1990, 77–79), that the film contains several "irritants" or "remainders" that threaten to disrupt the idyll of Schabbach and are therefore shown to be expelled from its representation (1990, 87).[20] Barbara Gabriel refers in a similar way to "abject" and "uncanny" elements—hallucinations of ghosts, dead bodies, a severed finger, scars, and more—that would make the viewer aware of the Freudian idea that the apparent *Heimlichkeit* of Schabbach's premodern community inhibits forms of *Unheimlichkeit* (see also Geisler 1985, 44–45). These elements after all suggest that the mythical images we shape of the past are haunted by pain and by traumas that must be repressed to create these same images (2004, 157).

20 The word "remainder" reminds one of Adorno's reflections on a "physical remainder" or *das Hinzutredende*, which are elements that in his view cannot fully be translated into theory (see Adorno 2000, 97). Geisler uses the word "irritants" as well to emphasize similar elements (1985, 52). For an analysis of the notion of Heimat and Otherness through the lens of Derrida's understanding of *différance*, see Palfreyman (1997, 532–53).

The reflective aspects of the nostalgia that permeates *Heimat* are also emphasized by those who argue that the film, in different ways, emphasizes its own *constructed* nature and, in turn, the falseness of the idyll of Schabbach. The film, for example, continually shows photographic equipment and even lets a character, using photographs made by another character, summarize what has happened up to that point in the beginning of each episode, sometimes telling stories differently or using different photos (Elsaesser 1985, 21). Furthermore, the film is mostly shot in black and white, but certain shots are in full color or sepia (Geisler 1985, 53; Hansen 1985, 6; Klimek 1999, 231; Garton Ash 1985). Referring to the alienating techniques of the Russian formalists, Anton Kaes argues that these scenes make the viewer aware of the fact that she is watching a construct (1987, 188–89).

Famously, several authors have ultimately argued that, despite these elements, which would provide the film with a (*self-*)*critical* dimension, *Heimat* still *uncritically* presents the 1930s as a "golden age of prosperity and excitement in the German countryside" (Garton 1985; see also Koch 1985). This suggests that the film is eventually driven by restorative forms of nostalgia. The above-mentioned Santner, for example, argues that Reitz's unsuccessful attempt to work through the trauma of modernity eventually obliterates the traumas of the Holocaust and of the rise of National Socialism (1990, 99). My main aim, however, is not to determine whether *Heimat*'s nostalgic tendencies are ultimately restorative or reflective in nature. The different analyses of *Heimat* are far too complex, diverse, and extensive to explore this question within the scope of this chapter.

Instead, I hope that my brief overview has illustrated the following three ideas: Firstly, I have explored the idea that even if we acknowledge that both the notion of resonance and the notion of Heimat contain nostalgic traces, this does not necessarily make them reactionary or conservative. After all, these traces can still be reflective in nature, as many authors argue about *Heimat* by foregrounding its more self-critical and reflecting elements. Secondly, I have illustrated the idea that presenting these notions as "nostalgia-free" precisely makes them vulnerable to reactionary ideologies, since this makes it impossible to reflect critically on the desires and longing that permeate them. Thirdly, I have presented the idea that we might therefore prevent this from happening by acknowledging that these notions are responses to different traumas that, by causing radical disconnectedness and uprootedness in the past, sparked longing for embeddedness and for resonance in the present.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued in favor of a distinction between *restorative* and *reflective* experiences of resonance, which should be understood as particular manifestations of that which I have previously characterized as *affirmationist* and *critical* forms of resonance (Peters and Majid 2022). Both are permeated with traces of nostalgia, but each responds to these traces in different ways. This distinction is not only inspired by Boym's reflections on nostalgia but also by Adorno's emphasis on a "turn towards the subject," which critically reflects on the different tendencies and desires that still shape the modern self. It is also based on a critique of Rosa's implicitly Hegelian emphasis on the intertwining of the descriptive and the normative, which suggests that historical developments, by going through the dialectics between communal embeddedness and alienation, eventually present the normative yardstick, resonance, to judge the experiences constituted by these *same* developments. Even though the notion of resonance does add a fruitful dimension to the many diagnoses of modernity already developed by the authors to whom Rosa refers, it is only by distinguishing the restorative from the reflective that, in my view, its critical dimensions can be preserved (and separated, more generally, from affirmationist forms of resonance). After all, in a modernity permeated with different traumas, as Adorno forcefully suggested by turning Hegel's "whole that is true" into a "whole that is false" (1974, 50), the normative and the descriptive do not always overlap. As a critical theory of modernity, a theory of resonance should therefore be able to recognize these traumas as they still ripple through our societies and permeate the different desires and longing of the modern self. And these include our longing for resonance and our imaginings of ghost strata, such as the film series *Heimat*.

Works Cited

Adorno, Theodor W. 1973. *Negative Dialectics*. New York: Continuum.

Adorno, Theodor W. 1974. *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*. London: Verso.

Adorno, Theodor W. 1998. "The Meaning of Working through the Past." In *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, translated by Henry W. Pickford, 89–104. New York: Columbia University Press.

Adorno, Theodor W. 2000. *Problems of Moral Philosophy: Lectures 1963*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Angier, Carole. 1991. "Edgar Reitz." *Sight and Sound* 60, no. 1: 33–40.

Barkin, Kenneth. 1991. "Review of Heimat: Eine Deutsche Chronik." *American Historical Review* 96, no. 4: 1124–26.

Birgel, Franz A., and Ed Reitz. 1986. "You Can Go Home Again: An Interview with Edgar Reitz." *Film Quarterly* 39, no. 4: 2–10.

Botha, Rachel. 2020. "Critique: Ben Rivers' Ghost Strata." *The Visual Artists' News Sheet Online*. https://visualartistsireland.com/critique-ben-rivers-ghost-strata.

Boym, Svetlana. 2002. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books.

Confino, Alon. 1998. "Edgar Reitz's Heimat and German Nationhood: Film, Memory, and Understandings of the Past." *German History* 16, no. 2: 185–208.

Costadura, Edoardo, Klaur Ries, and Christiane Wiesenfeldt. 2019. "Heimat global: Einleitung." In *Heimat global Modelle, Praxen und Medien der Heimatkonstruktion*, edited by Edoardo Costadura, Klaus Ries and Christiane Wiesenfeldt, 11–44. Bielefeld: Transcript.

Elsaesser, Thomas. 1985. "Memory, Home and Hollywood." Special issue on *Heimat*, edited by Miriam Hansen, *New German Critique* 36 (Autumn): 11–13.

Elsaesser, Thomas. 1989. *New German Cinema: A History*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Englén, Pehr. 2012. "Memory of Everyday Life: A Study of Edgar Reitz's Heimat." *Dandelion Postgraduate Arts Journal and Research Net*work 2, no. 2. https://doi.org/10.16995/ddl.251.

Felski, Rita. 2020. "Good Vibrations." *American Literary History* 32, no. 2: 405–15.

Gabriel, Barbara. 2004. "The Unbearable Strangeness of Being; Edgar Reitz's Heimat and the Ethics of the Unheimlich." In *Postmodernism and the Ethical Subject*, edited by Barbara Gabriel and Susan Ilcan, 149–202. Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Garton Ash, Timothy. 1985. "The Life of Death." *The New Yorker*, December 19, 1985.

Geisler, Michael E. 1985. "'Heimat' and the German Left: The Anamnesis of a Trauma." *New German Critique* 36 (Autumn): 25–66.

Hansen, Miriam, ed. 1985. "Dossier Heimat." Special issue on *Heimat*, *New German Critique* 36 (Autumn): 3–24.

Hoberman, J. 1985. "Once in a Reich Time." *New German Critique* 36 (Autumn): 9–11.

Jaeggi, Rahel. 2016. *Alienation*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Jeffries, Stuart. 2005. "The Nazis, Communism and Everything." *The Guardian*, May 4, 2005.

Kaes, Anton. 1987. *Deutschlandbilder: Die Wiederkehr der Geschichte als Film*. Munich: Edition Text und Kritik.

Kastenholtz, Utz, director. 2007. *Schabbach ist Überall* (film). Lumière.

Klimek, Julia F. 1999. "Elusive Images of Women, Home, and History: Deconstructing the Use of Film and Photography in Edgar Reitz's Heimat." *Women in German Yearbook* 15: 227–46.

Koch, Gertrud. 1985. "How Much Naivete Can We Afford? The New *Heimat* Feeling." *New German Critique* 36 (Autumn): 13–16.

Lijster, Thijs, and Robin Celikates. 2018. "Beyond the Echo Chamber: An Interview with Hartmut Rosa on Resonance and Alienation." In *The Future of the New: Artistic Innovation in Times of Social Acceleration*, edited by Thijs Lijster, 23–54. Amsterdam: Valiz.

Markham, James M. 1987. "Uneasy West Germans: Yearnings Despite Plenty." *New York Times*, August 2.

Masquelier, Charles. 2020. "Book Review: Hartmut Rosa, *Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World*." *Sociology* 54, no. 4: 858–60.

Moltke, Johannes von. 2003. "Home Again: Revisiting the New German Cinema in Edgar Reitz's *Die Zweite Heimat* (1993)." In *Cinema Journal* 42, no. 3: 114–43.

Moltke, Johannes von. 2005. *No Place Like Home: Locations of Heimat in German Cinema*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Palfreyman, Rachel. 1997. "Reflections of the 'Heimat' Genre: Intertextual Reference in Reitz's *Heimat*." *German Life and Letters* 504 (October): 529–43.

Peters, Mathijs. 2020. "Reification and the Duty to Work Through the Past: On Critical Theory and Temporality." *New German Critique* 47, no. 2: 107–38.

Peters, Mathijs, and Bareez Majid. 2022. *Exploring Hartmut Rosa's Concept of Resonance*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Peterson, Brian. 1987. "The Hunsrück in the Pre-Nazi Era: Film and Reality." *Film and History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies* 17, no. 1: 17–24.

Reitz, Edgar, director. 1984. *Heimat: Eine Deutsche Chronik* (film). Lumière.

Reitz, Edgar, director. 1992. *Die Zweite Heimat: Chronik Einer Jugend* (film). Lumière.

Reitz, Edgar, director. 2004. *Heimat 3: Chronik Einer Zeitenwende* (film). Lumière.

Reitz, Edgar, director. 2013. *Die Andere Heimat: Chronik Einer Sehnsucht* (film). Lumière.

Rivers, Ben, director. 2019. *Ghost Strata* (film). Mubi.

Rosa, Hartmut. 2009. "Social Acceleration: Ethical and Political Consequences of a Desynchronized High-Speed Society." In *High-Speed Society: Social Acceleration, Power and Modernity*, edited by Hartmut Rosa and William E. Scheuerman, 77–112. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Rosa, Hartmut. 2013a. *Alienation and Acceleration: Towards a Critical Theory of Late/Modernity Temporality*. Aarhus: NSU Press.

Rosa, Hartmut. 2013b. *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Rosa, Hartmut. 2019a. "Heimat als anverwandelter Weltausschnitt: Ein resonanztheoretischer Versuch." In *Heimat global Modelle, Praxen und Medien der Heimatkonstruktion*, edited by Edoardo Costadura, Klaus Ries, and Christiane Wiesenfelldt, 153–72. Bielefeld: Transcript.

Rosa, Hartmut. 2019b. *Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Rosa, Hartmut. 2020. *The Uncontrollability of the World*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Routledge, Clay. 2016. *Nostalgia: A Psychological Resource.* New York: Routledge.

Santner, Eric L. 1990. *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Schönherr, Ulrich. 2010. "Out of Tune: Music, Postwar Politics, and Edgar Reitz's *Die zweite Heimat*." *New German Critique* 37, no. 2: 107–24.

Skrimshire, Angela. 2012. *Heimat of Memory, Imagination and Choice: An Appreciation of Edgar Reitz' Heimat Films*. Self-published.

Stern, Dagmar C. 1987. "A German History Lesson: Edgar Reitz's *Heimat*." *Film and History* 17, no. 1: 9–16.

Susen, Simon. 2019. "The Resonance of Resonance: Critical Theory as a Sociology of World-Relations?" *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 33: 309–34.

Voigts-Virchow, Eckart. 2007. "Heritage and Literature on Screen: *Heimat* and Heritage." In *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*, edited by Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Wehelan, 121–37. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

VPRO Documentary. 2004. *Over Heimat*. VPRO Heimat123.net.

Wickham, Christopher J. 1991. "Representation and Mediation in Edgar Reitz's Heimat." *The German Quarterly* 64, no. 1: 35–45.

Witte, Karsten. 1985. "Of the Greatness of the Small People: The Rehabilitation of a Genre." *New German Critique* 36.

8 The 1960s and America's Haunted Present

Ghosts, Trauma, and Nostalgia in *Mad Men*

Joshua Hollmann

Abstract
The TV series *Mad Men* (2007–15) by Matthew Weiner reimagines 1960s America, intertwining trauma and nostalgia. The show explores contemporary issues like gender, race, politics, economics, and authenticity of this era, framing individual and societal identities. *Mad Men* serves as a cultural expression of 1960s trauma filtered through American nostalgia, seeking a "home" linked to the American dream. It subverts this dream through advertising's illusions and reimagines the era's disruptions in today's context. The series reflects intergenerational ennui and the desire to reconcile past and present through mass media. It also presents the aesthetic dimensions of trauma and nostalgia. This chapter examines *Mad Men*'s troubled nostalgia and the politics of memory in a fragmented America.

Keywords: media; pop culture; catharsis; sensibility; film

Coincidentia Oppositorum: The 1960s and *Mad Men*

The 1960s was a phantasmal epoch in American society. The decade began with the hopeful ascendancy of John F. Kennedy in 1960, the youngest elected president in American history, only to be marred by the national tragedy of his assassination in 1963.[1] From the Cuban missile crisis to the

1 The presidential election of 1960 is featured on *Mad Men*, season 1, episode 12, "Nixon vs. Kennedy." The assassination of President Kennedy occurs in season 3, episode 12, "The Grown Ups."

Van Liere, L. & Sremac, S. (eds), *Trauma and Nostalgia: Practices in Memory and Identity*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2024
DOI: 10.5117/9789048559220_CH08

Space Race and landing on the moon in 1969, the 1960s marked the anxiety and ambition of postwar America.[2] The turbulent decade saw the escalation of American military entanglement in Vietnam and the force and fervor of the antiwar movement and counterculture, white flight from cities and the dominance of suburban life, and the struggle for civil rights and the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968 followed by urban riots.[3] The conflicts and crises of the 1960s continue to haunt the psyche of American cultural consciousness.

Sixty years later, the cataclysms of the 1960s have resurfaced in contemporary America. American society is again marked by racial injustice and societal unrest. The fight for gender equality persists. Technological advancement both alienates and inspires in the peril and promise of virtual reality and the dawn of commercial space flight. Echoing the Vietnam era, public jadedness of an endless war on terror is juxtaposed with politicians campaigning to make America great again. The current political polarization and proliferating countercultures affecting seemingly all aspects of public and private life are vigorously expressed online and, in the summer of 2020, on the streets. American society today suffers the trauma of the distressing and disturbing collective cultural experiences of the 1960s.

The celebrated television series *Mad Men* captures the zeitgeist of this cultural collision of the crises of the 1960s and today. *Mad Men* is a drama created by the writer-producer Matthew Weiner that aired on the American cable network AMC for seven seasons from 2007 to 2015 and included ninety-two episodes, which cover the timeframe of March 1960 to November 1970. The series is renowned for its meticulous attention to historical detail and authenticity. The term "Mad men" was coined in the late 1950s to describe the advertising executives of Madison Avenue in New York City.[4] The drama

2 The Cuban missile crisis occurs in *Mad Men*, season 2, episode 13, "Meditations in an Emergency," while the Apollo 11 moon landing is in season 7, episode 7, "Waterloo."

3 America's military involvement in Vietnam appears mainly on *Mad Men* in the character and story of the military doctor Greg Harris, played by actor Sam Page, who serves in Vietnam (especially season 5), while its affect on America is seen in the counterculture represented by the character Stan Rizzo, played by Jay R. Ferguson (notably, season 6, episode 8, "The Crash," which shows how current events have collided in the altered lives of the characters on *Mad Men*). The civil rights moment, while not featured prominently on *Mad Men*, appears mainly in seasons 5–6, and a noteworthy episode is season 5, episode 4, "Mystery Date." *Mad Men* is mostly told from the perspective of its white, privileged characters. The assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is central to the interconnected stories of season 6, episode 5, "The Flood," where various characters in *Mad Men* react to his murder.

4 Season 1, episode 1, "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," written by Matthew Weiner, begins with this definition of Mad men.

focuses on Donald Draper, played by actor Jon Hamm, an enigmatic and self-made advertising auteur, and his journey through the upheavals of the 1960s. Don Draper and his gang of advertisers tread in the same smarmy alcohol-fueled waters as films like *The Apartment* (1960) and *The Graduate* (1967), as well as the celluloid and real-life exploits of the "Rat Pack" crew, which all provide historical context for how *Mad Men* revels in a hyper-stylized and fictitious 1960s by way of comparison with popular films and the factual mischief of the 1960s.[5]

Mad Men is representative of a new epoch in television that parallels the art of the novel. As Megan Abbot observes, "Creator Matthew Weiner himself has noted that when he first read John Cheever, he thought, *This man sounds like I want to sound: beautiful and sad*" (2015, 9). The winner of numerous Emmys and Golden Globes, *Mad Men* is celebrated as one of the greatest television shows of all time. The film and television critic Matt Zoller Seitz writes that "*Mad Men* is built to last. It is the most richly textured, intricately structured drama I've seen in the nearly twenty years I've been a TV critic" (Seitz 2015, 425). Seitz especially applauds the screenwriting of *Mad Men* "that depicts the complexities and contradictions of the human personality with more insight and empathy than any American series to date" (425). As Seitz observes, *Mad Men* "is a masterpiece of construction" and "a series with an unusually strong affinity for mythology, spirituality, religion, psychoanalysis, pop psychology, literature, poetry, cinema, and all the other means by which human experience is transformed into narrative" (425). *Mad Men* also builds upon previous masterworks of American literature at the nexus of advertising and identity, including: *Babbit* (1922), *The Man Nobody Knows* (1925), *Death of a Salesman* (1949), and *The Bell Jar* (1963). What makes *Mad Men* so appealing and enduring is how the sophisticated series fuses the horizons of past and present, America in the 1960s and America today. To transmit a concept from the late medieval thinker Nicholas of Cusa, *Mad Men* is a *coincidentia oppositorum* of the 1960s and contemporary America through which human experience (past and present) is transformed into a multifaceted narrative of nostalgia.[6]

Mad Men tells and shows the story and images of nostalgia, but also the trauma of how the 1960s haunt America. The series tells this story through phantasmagorias and ghosts. The chapters in this volume examine the

5 Matthew Weiner credits *The Apartment* (1960) as important inspiration and primary source material for *Mad Men*.

6 *Coincidentia oppositorum* is a prominent concept in Nicholas of Cusa's (1401–1464) most famous philosophical and theological treatise *De docta ignorantia* (*On Learned Ignorance*, 1440).

integration of trauma into nostalgic memories. Media and television play an important role in circulating images and narratives of traumatic and nostalgic past. *Mad Men* presents a prime case study for analyzing how media and television disseminate the interplay of trauma and nostalgia in the memories of the 1960s. *Mad Men* is a series that shows trauma through the hauntings of ghosts and nostalgia through its coincidence of opposites of the 1960s and today. Since *Mad Men* has captivated millions of viewers, as well as philosophers and literary critics, this chapter is aimed at an interdisciplinary audience, including those interested in pop culture, nostalgia and trauma studies, television and media studies, literature, psychology, philosophy, and religious studies, or those just wanting to think critically and constructively on how the past still haunts the present.[7] This chapter considers *Mad Men* to be an archetype of how media and mass culture circulate images and narratives about the traumatic and nostalgic past. As Marshal McLuhan famously quipped, "the medium is the message," and the medium of *Mad Men* is the media of nostalgia.

The style and substance of *Mad Men* unpacks the subtle but potent power of nostalgia. *Mad Men* season one, episode six, "Babylon," features a foundational scene on trauma and nostalgia fused into the intoxicating idea of utopia (episode written by Andre Jacquemetton). In the episode, utopia as defined by the ancient Greeks is called "the good place" and "the place that cannot be." The immediate referent to this conversation is the married advertising executive Don Draper's attempt to have an affair with his client Rachel Menken, played by actress Maggie Siff. "The good place" is a lasting place for their love, which due to Don's marriage is also "the place which cannot be." On a meta-level, *Mad Men*'s accurately stylized depiction of the 1960s is "the good place," while at the same time it is "the place which cannot be" because the series itself is not real. *Mad Men* is an artistic invention as seen through the frame of television of a past decade that is no more. The title of the episode, "Babylon," refers both to the biblical place of exile for Israel (remembering the good place that cannot be) but also the apocalyptic polis of evil from Revelation, the final book of the New Testament (the good place gone bad).[8] Thus, nostalgia offers hope, as the ancient exiles of Israel longed for a return to their home of Jerusalem, but also opposition, as the place of exile was the place of reality. In the same way, the narrative of *Mad*

7 For an example of the interdisciplinary appeal of *Mad Men*, see by Carveth and South (2010).

8 For example, Psalm 137, where the exiles of Israel in ancient Babylon weep, remember, and long for Zion (Jerusalem). On Babylon in the New Testament and its association with the immorality of ancient Rome, see Revelation 17; Wright and Bird (2019, 838–39).

Men shows that there is no going back to the 1950s from what happens to America in the 1960s. Furthermore, there is no going back to the 1960s as viewers encounter the series in the present. In commenting on the episode "Babylon," Seitz writes that "a place can be a place but also an idea" (Seitz 2015, 53). As an idea, Babylon signifies both a place of longing for return to what cannot be and a place of temptation and threat, or a place that should not be. In her essay "The Good Place" and "The Place That Cannot Be: Politics, Melodrama and Utopia," Brenda Cromb goes even further and asserts that "[a]ll of the characters (of *Mad Men*) are, ultimately, searching for some kind of meaning in a world that seems meaningless." For Cromb, the meaning of utopia is not found in a "structured, imagined world like Thomas More's, but from the concept of utopia-as-structure-of-feeling." Citing the work of Richard Dryer in "Entertainment and Utopia," Cromb writes that *Mad Men* engages viewers with "what utopia would feel like rather than how it is organized. It thus works at the level of sensibility" (Cromb 2011, 68; Dryer 1992, 19–35). In particular, the nostalgia of *Mad Men* is about the sensibility of utopia that accounts for a haunted present, a place that should not be (present) and yet still is. *Mad Men* presents different aspects of nostalgia: utopic nostalgia, collective nostalgia, reflective nostalgia, and reconciliatory nostalgia. Through these nuances of nostalgia, *Mad Men* explores themes of affluence and the search for authenticity (the search for meaning) and the search for identity in society (the search for a place of belonging) that continue to be causes of traumatic stress in contemporary America. In other words, in a world that seems meaningless, the search for meaning persists for a good place that can be.

This chapter addresses trauma and nostalgia in *Mad Men* by examining how the popular series uses ghosts to revise 1960s America in a present search for meaning and a place of belonging. By ghosts we mean apparitions of deceased characters in the television series that articulate this quest for significance and a space to call home. The ghosts of *Mad Men* point to the pain and promise of nostalgia. *Mad Men* is a pop cultural and cinematographic expression of the trauma of the 1960s as interpreted by the sensibility of American nostalgia. The term "nostalgia" was crafted by the Swiss medical student Johannes Hofer, who combined the Greek words *nostos* (or return to the native land) and *algos* (pain) (Routledge 2016, 4). Or as Don Draper puts it, nostalgia is "the pain of an old wound" (season 1, episode 13, "The Wheel," written by Matthew Weiner and Robin Veith). Trauma is taken directly from the Greek word *trauma*, which originally meant a wound or hurt, and since the late nineteenth century, it has also taken on the psychological sense of an inner wound or any unpleasant

experience that causes stress. The etymology of the word "haunted" is distantly related to the word "home" or the search for a place of belonging.[9] *Mad Men* is a search for home or the good place, a longing for a romanticized American dream or a place that cannot be. The series subversively views the collective nostalgia of the American dream of a good life through the illusion of advertising, which sells utopia, the sensibility of a place or feeling that cannot be. At crucial points in *Mad Men*, the series features ghosts and phantasmagorias that signify how the search for meaning and a place of belonging in the 1960s are really the search for meaning and a place of belonging today. The series displays the aesthetic dimension of trauma and nostalgia in the appearance of ghosts and phantasmagorias. Through the media of pop culture and ghost stories, *Mad Men* projects utopic, collective, reflective, and reconciliatory nostalgia. *Mad Men* opens the dimension for the possibility of not only a coincidence of opposites of the 1960s and today but also a reconciliation of opposites of the past and present. Viewers of *Mad Men* are left hoping for a good place that can be.

This chapter is divided into four parts corresponding to the four aspects of nostalgia in relation to ghosts of *Mad Men*: utopic nostalgia, collective nostalgia, reflective nostalgia, and reconciliatory nostalgia. The ghosts of *Mad Men* and the four shades of nostalgia converge on the search for meaning and a place of belonging. In part one of this chapter, we will examine utopic nostalgia in the appearance of the ghost of Rachel and the trauma caused by the wound of the good place that cannot be. The second part considers collective nostalgia in *Mad Men* and includes hauntings by Bert Cooper, played by actor Robert Alan Morse, and the specter of decadence and decay. Part three looks at reflective nostalgia and the karmic turn of love and loss in search of a place of belonging—the carousel—as coined by Don Draper. The fourth part addresses ghosts, trauma, and nostalgia in two episodes of *Mad Men*: "The Phantom" and "The Suitcase" (season 5, episode 13, "The Phantom," and season 4, episode 7, "The Suitcase"). Through the messages and the meanings of the ghosts of these episodes and the bond of Don and Peggy Olson, played by Elisabeth Moss, this section will also move us from utopic and reflective nostalgia on the good place that cannot be to reconciliatory nostalgia, where past wrongs can be forgiven and there is hope for finding meaning and a place of belonging. Over the course of this chapter, we will analyze all the appearances of ghosts in *Mad Men*. Building

9 The etymology of the word "haunt" also includes the semantic range of meanings: to frequent a place, to bring home, or even to be familiar with and cultivate. Thus, the hauntings of *Mad Men* seek to cultivate a place of belonging.

upon reflective nostalgia, the conclusion of this chapter posits that the hauntings of *Mad Men* point to an application of the Aristotelian concept of catharsis, as aided by Alighieri Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and the discovery of the good place of belonging and meaning.

"You Missed Your Flight": The Ghost of Rachel Menken and Utopic Nostalgia in *Mad Men*

Over the course of its seven-season run, *Mad Men* featured Don seeing several ghosts. Don, a wizard of advertising, is also a *Mad Men* necromancer. He is haunted by the ghosts of Anna Draper, played by Melinda Page Hamilton, Rachel Menken, Bert Copper, and Adam Whitman, played by actor Jay Paulson. In a phantasmagoria, Betty also sees the ghosts of her father and mother, Medgar Evers, as well as a fleeting vision of the day of her funeral (season 3, episode 6, "The Fog," and season 5, episode 3, "Tea Leaves"). Don not only sees ghosts but also phantasmagorias of the death of his mother and father, of his abusive stepmother, and of spending his adolescence living in a house of prostitution. Don is raised by prostitutes, which shapes his views on love and relationships as expressed to Rachel in the very first episode, and arguably his most famous lines: "What you call love was invented by guys like me to sell nylons." Don then broadens this sentiment to encompass the empty essence of existence, "You're born alone and you die alone and this world just drops a bunch of rules on top of you to make you forget those facts, but I never forget. I'm living like there's no tomorrow, because there isn't one" (season 1, episode 1, "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes"). *Mad Men* unfolds Don's nihilistic attempt to break free from what he perceives to be the world's rules and to avoid responsibilities. The ghosts of *Mad Men* reveal to Don just how hollow the world is but also that he is devoid of meaning, a drifter without a home, as vapid in the course of time as the decaying products he pushes. As Susan Owens observes in *The Ghost: A Cultural History*, "ghosts are mirrors of the time. They reflect our preoccupations, moving with the tide of cultural trends and matching the mood of each age" (Owens 2017, 9). In other words, ghosts are not about the dead but the living. The ghosts of *Mad Men* haunt the narrative from the 1960s for the haunting of viewers today. The ghosts of *Mad Men* then are not about characters or stories from the 1960s; rather, they announce current cultural trends and contemporary moods. Thus, the ghosts of *Mad Men* are more about what haunts America today. *Mad Men* mirrors America's attempt to deal with the cultural and social challenges of the present as imagined in the 1960s.

We start by revisiting Don's relationship with Rachel. At the start of "Severance," episode eight of the second half of the final and seventh season of *Mad Men*, Don sees the ghost of Rachel Menken (episode written by Matthew Weiner). Rachel's ghost is an example of utopic nostalgia, or nostalgia as the pain of wanting the good place of belonging that cannot be. Don is haunted by a love that cannot be and feels the pain of past possibility. In Don's fantasy, Rachel is modeling a fur coat. Don's ex-wife, Betty Draper, played by actress January Jones, was also once a fur model (season 4, episode 6, "Waldorf Stories"). While Betty is no longer Don's wife, Rachel, with whom he had an affair in season one, has very recently died. Don asks the ghost, "Rachel?" To which she responds, "I'm supposed to tell you, you missed your flight." In the episode, Don misses a flight, but more importantly, he missed the metaphorical flight into the good place, which for Don is the place that cannot be. Or as television critic Margaret Lyons writes, "His flight is his life, and yeah, he's missing it. Try to catch the next one, Don" (2015, n.p.). After encountering the apparition of Rachel, Don visits her home to pay his respects as her family is sitting shiva. Rachel's sister Barbara, played by actress Rebecca Creskoff, confronts Don, "I'm sorry, I don't know what you're looking for here?" Don responds, "I just wanted to find out what was happening in her life." He also confesses in the brief exchange that he has been through two divorces or two failed attempts to make and sustain a home. Speaking about her sister Rachel, Barbara answers, "She lived the life she wanted to live. She had everything." Don abruptly leaves once the minyan begins, as he is not allowed to participate because he is not Jewish.

The ghost of Rachel in "Severance" harkens back to the primary search in *Mad Men* for the good place, the place of belonging, from the episode "Babylon" in the first season of *Mad Men*. In "Babylon" Rachel and Don discuss utopia and the modern state of Israel, the film *Exodus* (1960), based on the bestselling book of the same name by Leon Uris (1958), and the realization of a Jewish homeland. Rachel observes how "Jews have lived in an exile for a long time: first in Babylon, then all over the world." Of course, Don is initially only interested in Israel because Israel tourism is a potential advertising client, and he is also wooing Rachel. While Rachel, as we are told at her memorial, lived the life she wanted, Don always wants something else. In "Severance" the ghost of Rachel is introduced as "this is another girl." For Don, Rachel was another one of his many lovers. Yet her ghost appears to haunt Don with the good place of lasting love or belonging that he denied. The reason Rachel broke off the affair with Don is that he wanted to abruptly run away with her from his family and obligations in New York to begin a new life like Adam and Eve in California (season 1, episode 13, "The Wheel,"

written by Matthew Weiner). Don, in the exile of Babylon here construed as modern-day New York City, seeks to return to the biblical utopia of the Garden of Eden, a place that now cannot be. Rachel asks him, "What kind of man are you?" In a biblical reference to Adam, which in Hebrew originally means "everyman," Don represents the everyman's search for Eden or utopia. Rachel goes on, "Drop everything, go away, leave your life?" To which Don replies, "People do it every day." Rachel concludes, "You don't want to run away with me, you just want to run away." Or as another jilted lover later exclaims to Don, "You only like the beginnings of things" (season 4, episode 13, "Tomorrowland," written by Jonathan Igla and Matthew Weiner). While his love for Rachel was a "place that cannot be," even as he attempts to pay his respects at her memorial, he is also in a place he cannot be, a minyan, as he is not Jewish. Don is the unwanted son of a prostitute who died in childbirth, and the series includes numerous flashbacks of Don's tragic childhood that function as hauntings.[10] He never knew a stable past or the anchoring solace of traditions. In the book of Jeremiah in the Bible, Rachel signifies sadness and is imagined prophetically in exile weeping for a past that is no more.[11] In "Severance" Rachel's ghost reminds Don that he is lost in perpetual exile and always desiring to be somewhere, anywhere else. He has dallied in numerous affairs, struggled at work, and proven to be a deadbeat dad. Halfway through season seven, Don himself is like a ghost inhabiting a dead colleague's former office (season 7, episode 7, "Waterloo"). Again and again, Don is haunted by what could have been, never at home or at peace. Don's restless wandering represents the severance of the self from the place of meaning and belonging.

Ghosts reveal more about Don than about the dead, just as ghosts mirror our sensibilities and search for meaning and belonging. We have already seen the ghost of Rachel and the sense of exile and ennui in materialistic and consumer-driven American culture, and we will encounter the ghosts of Adam and Anna in the fourth part of this chapter. In the next part, we will consider the two appearances to Don of the ghost of Bert in *Mad Men*, season seven. The focal figure in the hauntings covered in this chapter is none other than the ambiguous Don Draper himself. As noted by Margaret Lyons, Don is "living the life of a dead man given that he has a dead man's

10 See especially *Mad Men*, season 1, episode 8, "Hobo Code," where Don's childhood home with his father and stepmother is marked in hobo code as cursed.

11 Jeremiah 31:15, "Thus says the Lord: A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more" (NRSV). This is also quoted in the New Testament, Matthew 2:18.

identity" (2015, n.p.). Don, whose real name is Dick Whitman, in the fog of war switched identities with his dead commanding officer Don Draper, killed in action in Korea. The events are seen as phantasmagoria: Dick Whitman steals the name Don Draper and returns from Korea to start a new life with a new name only to be haunted by failed tries to kill the memory of Dick Whitman (season 1, episode 3, "Marriage of Figaro," and season 1, episode 12, "Nixon vs. Kennedy"). The necromancer nothingness with the name Don Draper sees ghosts because he is the ghost of a dead man and haunted by his former identity.

"The Best Things in Life Are Free": The Ghost of Bert Cooper and Collective Nostalgia in *Mad Men*

In the ethos of *Mad Men*, advertising represents, like Don Draper himself, an elaborate and empty con, the utopic selling of sensibility, the psychology of profiteering of the good place that cannot be. At the end of *Mad Men*, after six and a half seasons of Don's attempts to sell authenticity, the ghost of Bert appears twice to Don in order to enlighten him about authenticity and finding meaning in life. In the first haunting, Bert gingerly dances with a bevy of young women and sings to Don, "The moon belongs to everyone, the best things in life are free" (season 7, episode 7, "Waterloo," written by Carly Ray and Matthew Weiner). Don has spent his advertising career and much of the series selling what his clients deem to be the best things in life. Bert's song and dance routine confronts Don with the simple truth: you cannot buy or sell what is most important in life. The whimsical dance number fits the playful spontaneity of Bert's message from beyond the grave: meaning in life is free for all to discover and as near and far as the moon above. Bert dies while watching the Apollo 11 moon landing. If the moon is no longer beyond our reach, neither is happiness.

Bert's spritely musical number also speaks to the context of American affluence and the search for authenticity. While the ghost of Bert sings that the best things in life cannot be sold or bought, Americans throughout the course of the last century grew increasingly focused on commercialism and business. Affluence in *Mad Men* is signified by advertising, while the search for authenticity is a theme prevalent in the identities and story lines of many of its main characters, notably that of Don and Peggy. In "The American Century," which refers to the twentieth century, Godfrey Hodgson writes, "The 'default' in American domestic politics has been business hegemony" (2006, 49). But Hogdson observes, "Every generation or so, however, business

is perceived as having failed or overreached itself" (49). The 1960s was one of those eras. Hodgson states, "In the 1950s, as a succession of worried bestsellers warned, a Power Elite led by the Man in Gray Flannel Suit, the Organization Man and his Hidden Persuaders was felt to be trying to impose conformism. In the 1960s, business dominance was challenged by housewives, students, environmentalists, and sexual and racial minorities" (50). This last sentence provides an apt description of *Mad Men*'s narratives of social critique. *Mad Men* ambivalently stylizes advertising and affluence while also critiquing the buying and selling of authenticity. While Bert's first haunting of Don is about the search for meaning in life, Bert's second haunting of Don points to the elusive search for the good place of belonging.

Toward the end of the last season of *Mad Men*, in the episode "Lost Horizon," Don hits the road in a Cadillac on a final and reckless trip out west, only to be transiently joined one last time by the ghost of Bert, who conjures the spirit of the twentieth-century American beat writer Jack Kerouac (season 7, episode 12, "Lost Horizon," written by Semi Chellas and Matthew Weiner). Don has disappeared for weeks out west before.[12] In a pattern of restless wandering, Don again impulsively runs away from his daily life and obligations in New York City. The dead Bert appears in the passenger seat and says to Don, "You like to play the stranger." Bert proceeds to directly quote Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, the quintessential American road trip story, "Whither goest thou, America, in thy shiny car in the night" (Kerouac 1957, part 2, ch. 3). Right before this line in *On the Road*, Kerouac writes, "I mean, man, wither goest thou?" Don is this lost man who represents a restless America searching for a place of belonging, seemingly driving forever and never arriving. Bert's description of Don playing the stranger also evokes *On the Road*, where Kerouac writes, "I was just somebody else, some stranger, and my whole life was a haunted life, the life of a ghost" (Kerouac 1957, part 1, chapter 3). In "Lost Horizon," Don's final journey sums up his whole life as a haunted life, always attempting to reinvent himself and his role in society, recurrently searching for a place of belonging.

Don's final road trip at the end of *Mad Men* represents not only his whole life but also the entire 1960s. Bert's musical number pointed to something deeper about American affluence and the search for authenticity, and here the idea is grander than just Don, encompassing the decadence and generative decay of the 1960s as a whole and how it coincides with today. Bert's hauntings of Don are examples of collective nostalgia, the nostalgia of America as a whole. The seven seasons of *Mad Men* cover the entire

12 See especially *Mad Men*, season 2, episodes 11 and 12, "The Jet Set" and "The Mountain King."

1960s, and Don's last journey marks how the series depicts the close of a decade. *Mad Men* is a fastidious fabrication of the past interpreted in the present. Just as ghosts are mirrors of contemporary culture, *Mad Men* is a mirror of our times. The intricate sets and costumes of *Mad Men* display an overly stylized interpretation of the past and the decadence of nostalgia. In *Decadence: A Very Short Introduction*, David Weir observes that decadence is from the Latin verb to decay, which "it turns out, is oddly generative" (2018, 1, 3). The decadence of America is apparent in the aesthetics of *Mad Men* and in Don's commitment to advertising and selling an American dream that he knows is fake. Don's advertising pitches, like the products he pushes, do not last; they decay. *Mad Men*'s allure is in portraying how nostalgia and decay, the 1960s as mirror of today, are also oddly generative. At the heart of *Mad Men*, beyond all the eye candy and the glitz and glamor of advertising and consumer culture, we see a restless Don, like the America of past and present he represents, who is still searching and holding out hope for meaning and a place of belonging.

"A Twinge in Your Heart": The Haunted Carousel and Reflective Nostalgia in *Mad Men*

Mad Men's search for meaning and a place of belonging and the interplay of nostalgia and trauma synthesize in perhaps the most poignant scene of the series: the carousel (season 1, episode 13, "The Wheel"). Don is hired by Kodak to market a slide projector in the shape of a wheel, which sets up his famous pitch on nostalgia and the karmic turn of what is real and unreal in the human search for a place of belonging. On the allure of nostalgia, Svetlana Boym writes, "The history of nostalgia might allow us to look back at modern history as a search not only for newness and technological progress, but also for unrealized possibilities, unpredictable turns and crossroads" (Boym 2001, n.p.). The wheel is as old as civilization itself. This new technology applied the wheel to projecting photographs. Only Don is not selling technological progress; he is selling unrealized possibilities. It's not the wheel, as Don announces, but the carousel, a name that invokes a feeling of return to the essence of childhood. Don says in the pitch, "Technology is a glittering lure," but he seeks to make a deeper connection with the product through nostalgia: "It's delicate, but potent." Don calls nostalgia "a twinge in your heart far more powerful than memory alone. This device is a time machine. It goes backwards, forwards, it takes us to a place where we ache to go again." As Don projects images of his own wife and children, he continues

to reflect on the allure of nostalgia and the carousel, "It lets us travel the way a child travels, around and around and back home again to a place where we know we are loved." The scene occurs as Don is at a crossroads in his life and he is about to get a karmic kick from his past lies and indiscretions: the discovery of his crime of stealing the identity of a dead man, and the dissolution of his marriage with Betty. This reality is juxtaposed with the slides projecting Don's unreal happy family. Don is haunted by his past and his real identity as Dick Whitman. The Kodak carousel projects images of the lie that is the husband and father Don Draper. Boym contends that there are "two main types of nostalgia: the restorative and the reflective" (2001, n.p.). She writes that "restorative nostalgia returns and rebuilds one's homeland with paranoid determination," while "reflective nostalgia fears return with the same passion" (2001, n.p.). *Mad Men* eschews restorative nostalgia and instead elaborates on reflective nostalgia. Put another way, *Mad Men* is not about making America great again. Rather, the series reflects on how America was never that great.[13] Don is selling the carousel, something he fears to return to, as he repeatedly philanders and cannot bring himself to return to his sham family, just as the America he represents should not bring itself to a sham reimagining of the past that fails to see the injustices of the present. *Mad Men* appeals to a jaded and unjust America precisely because it shows the complexity of nostalgia as the delicate but potent expression of the innate human desire to return to a place where we know we are loved.

"You're in Bad Shape, Dick": The Phantom, the Suitcase, and Reconciliatory Nostalgia in *Mad Men*

While ghosts are more about the living than the dead, trauma is about the present as much as the past. Based on an outpouring of recent research, Richard McNally draws the following conclusion on trauma and memory: "people sometimes do not think about disturbing events for long periods of time, only to be reminded of them later. However, events that are experienced as overwhelmingly traumatic at the time of their occurrence rarely slip from awareness" (2005, 2). In the hauntings of Don by the ghost of Adam Whitman in "The Phantom" in season five, episode thirteen, and by the ghost of Anna Draper in "The Suitcase" in season four, episode seven, we see the search for authenticity and the reinventing of the self in society

13 "Make America Great Again," or MAGA for short, was the 2016 presidential campaign slogan of Donald Trump.

that never slips from Don's awareness. The ghosts of Adam and Anna are obvious signs of this, but this awareness is always there. These hauntings also uncover the existential awareness of the search for meaning and a place of belonging. Yet unlike the previous hauntings of Don, the ghosts of Adam and Anna point to the possibility of reconciliatory nostalgia or the reconciliation of past traumatic awareness and present collective healing as meaningfulness realized through discovering a place of belonging. By the end of its seven-season run, *Mad Men* had an estimated viewership of over three million, and it remained a popular series on Netflix. While visually appealing style, high-quality acting, and solid writing account for the popularity of *Mad Men*, the series also lasts because it uncannily uncovers the awareness that is always there: the nuances of nostalgia and the related trauma from exposing the need for finding meaning and a place of belonging. *Mad Men* ran from 2007 to 2015 and focused on the turbulent decade of the 1960s, when seemingly all aspects of American society were affected by destabilizing social, cultural, intellectual, and political change. With the reflective space of some forty years between 2007 and 2015 and the 1960s, *Mad Men* projects the promise of meaning through belonging, even amidst the collective trauma caused by the disorienting changes of the past that persist in the present.

In "The Phantom," Don, also known as Dick Whitman, sees the ghost of Adam Whitman, who signifies what is wrong with Don but also what can be made right. Adam is Don's half-brother, who commits suicide in season one after Don rebuffs his attempts to restore their relationship. "The Phantom" begins with Don seeing what appears to be the ghost of Adam on the elevator as he arrives at the office. Don says, "Adam?" to no reply. It's a fleeting image but sets the haunted tone of the episode. Later in "The Phantom," Don finds himself gassed and in a dentist's chair. The ghost of Adam appears as the dentist and looks into Don's mouth, but in fact is peering directly into his soul and not liking what he sees. "You're in bad shape, Dick," Adam says to Don, who is really Dick Whitman (episode written by Jonathan Igla and Matthew Weiner). "I'm going to do you a favor and take it out. But it's not your tooth that's rotten." Don pleads, "Don't go, don't leave me." "Don't worry," Adam responds, "I'll hang around. Get it?" Adam's ghost bears the scars on his neck from his hanging.[14] Don, feeling lost and alone, pleads with Adam to stay with him. Adam's ghost points out the obvious fact that Don's real problems are not caused by a bad tooth but a sham life, a meaningless existence predicated on lies. Dick Whitman is more authentic than Don

14 Adam Whitman hanged himself in *Mad Men*, season 1, episode 11, "Indian Summer."

Draper. Dick Whitman is the son of a prostitute; Don Draper is an enigma who sells products but lacks any real sense of meaning or belonging. Don has tried to hide his past life and crime of stealing the identity of a dead man. Adam's ghost haunts Don with the nagging truth: there is no way for Don to ever escape his past. He must confront it by confessing it. As the ghost of Adam says he will remove Don's bad tooth, he also hints at taking out the rotten pain deep inside Don. The ghost of Adam promises to hang around, and his phantom message hangs around as the assurance that Don can indeed "get it" and discover reconciliation with his past by coming to terms with the awareness of his identity.

Adam's ghost characterizes reconciliatory nostalgia, whereby even Don may experience present forgiveness for past wrongs. Don, who at times represents America, here embodies the underside of the American dream of a self-made individual. Don shows that you ultimately cannot manufacture or market real and lasting meaning and belonging. Don moves from selling product after product, just as he has one affair after another, yet he is discontent, adrift of meaning and alone. *Mad Men* reveals that Don, like the America he often epitomizes, will not find meaning and a sense of belonging in materialism or rogue individualism, but only through first confronting past wrongs. Nostalgia for Don, as we have seen with his carousel pitch, is a means to sell feelings, yet the sensibility of the nostalgia of *Mad Men* as a whole points to the profounder feeling that the past pains of old wounds can be healed. Don's fascination with advertising stands for the rabid consumerism of American society; his affairs and the frequently dismissive manner in which he treats women expose the gender inequalities and double standards that persist in contemporary America. Even so, Don, like the America he resembles, is capable of reflection and revision. *Mad Men* continues to appeal precisely because Don's search for meaning and a place of belonging is actually the viewer's search for meaning and a place of belonging.

Don hits rock bottom and subsequently changes for the better, or at least makes progress toward finding meaning and a place of belonging, in "In Care Of," the final episode of season six. Season six, episode one, "The Doorway," begins with Don reciting the opening line of Dante's *Inferno* on the beach in Hawaii: "Midway through our life's journey I went astray from the straight road and woke to find myself alone in a dark wood." Don is lost and alone throughout the course of season six. In season six, episode ten, "A Tale of Two Cities," Don hallucinates on hash and sees the ghost of Private First Class Dinkins, United States Army, killed in Vietnam (played by Patrick Mapel); Don stood in as father of the bride at Dinkins's wedding on the beach in

Hawaii in season six, episode one. The ghost of soldier Dinkins, who lost an arm and his life in Vietnam, says to Don, "Dying doesn't make you whole, you should see what you look like" (season 6, episode 10, "A Tale of Two Cities," written by Janet Leahy and Matthew Weiner). Don proceeds to see himself face down, drowned in a pool, only to be brought back to life. Just as the ghost of Bert's invocation of Kerouac's *On the Road* in "Lost Horizon" reveals that Don is a ghost, in "A Tale of Two Cities," Don sees himself as a ghost dead in the water. Don's downward death spiral crashes in "In Care Of" when during a routine Hershey's chocolate bar presentation, he confesses that he grew up in a brothel. Don recounts how if he stole enough from the clients while they were having sex, a prostitute would buy him a Hershey bar. Don confesses before shocked colleagues and Hershey representatives that it was the "closest I got to feeling wanted" and "it was the only sweet thing in my life" (season 6, episode 13, "In Care Of," written by Carly Wray and Matthew Weiner). The irony is that Don's colleagues should not be scandalized, as they frequent prostitutes with their clients, but Don makes explicit what is implicit and kills the appeal of advertising. The scene ends with Don showing his children the dilapidated brothel, his old home, and telling them that this is where he grew up. Don, who after his chocolate bar confession is put on indefinite leave by his advertising company, finally tells the truth to his children. Even his estranged daughter, Sally, played by Kiernan Shipka, who earlier in season six saw her father sleeping with his neighbor, now gives him an understanding look.[15] In this scene of honesty, there is hope for Don, hope for the real America he often represents, hope for broken families, and hope for those trying to buy happiness. "In Care Of" includes a flashback to Don's past life in the brothel, where the pimp throws out a visiting preacher. The young and impressionable Don hangs in there to hear the pastor's parting words: "The only unpardonable sin is to believe God cannot forgive you" (season 6, episode 13, "In Care Of"). Don, reminiscent of the ghost of Adam's parting words in "The Phantom," hangs in there by going back to the same house years later to confess to his children where he really grew up in the hope of finding forgiveness. Neither Don is beyond forgiveness, nor are the viewers he channels. At the conclusion of season six, just like the conclusion of the *Inferno*, Don, like Dante, begins to see signs of hope once again. At the end of the *Inferno*, Dante beholds the stars once more, while at the end of *Mad Men*, season six, which began with the opening line of the *Inferno*, Don sees his daughter's inquisitive

15 Sally sees her father having sex with his neighbor Sylvia in *Mad Men*, season 6, episode 11, "Favors."

look.[16] Don, like Dante, has been through hell and back, and Sally's smirk, like newly visible stars, signals hope for purification and reconciliation.

"The Suitcase" is another example of reconciliatory nostalgia in *Mad Men*, both between Don's past and present, but also between Don and Peggy (season 4, episode 7, "The Suitcase," written by Matthew Weiner). The episode features the ghost of Anna Draper. Throughout the episode and up until the end, Don evades returning an urgent call to California for news about Anna, who is dying from cancer. Anna is Don's first wife, really the wife of the dead Don Draper, and someone who knew and accepted Don for what he was: a poser and fraud. Their love was platonic, and Anna provided Don with a sense of meaning and belonging. Toward the end of "The Suitcase," the ghost of Anna appears carrying a suitcase, signifying how Don cannot escape the baggage of his past. The ghost of Anna momentarily awakes Don from sleep and looks and smiles at him, only to quickly depart with suitcase in hand. After all, Anna knew Don was a criminal, yet she happily played along, and she takes the baggage of Don's true identity to the grave. After seeing the ghost of Anna with the suitcase and realizing she has died, Don is able to bond with his protégé Peggy. Don breaks down into tears before Peggy and confesses that "someone very important to me died. The only person in the world who really knew me." To this Peggy replies, "That's not true." "The Suitcase" is the tenderest episode of Don's deep friendship with Peggy. Reminiscent of Don's relationship with Anna, Peggy and Don are close friends and not lovers. At the end of "The Suitcase," Don places his hand on Peggy's. In this moment of belonging, both exchange an accepting look, and no words are spoken or needed. Peggy, like Anna, does understand Don. Even though Anna has died, there is hope for Don. While Don, like the America he often represents, finds himself in bad shape amid social and political instability, there is hope for finding meaning and belonging.

"A Clean, Well-Lighted Place": The Sensibility of Catharsis and the Good Place That Can Be in *Mad Men*

Mad Men's final and seventh season gives us a glimpse of the good place that can be for finding meaning and a place of belonging. The final scene

16 *Inferno*, Canto XXXIV: "My guide and I came on that hidden road to make our way back into the bright world; and with no care for any rest, we climbed—he first, I following—until I saw, through a round opening, some of those things of beauty Heaven bears. It was from there that we emerged, to see—once more—the stars" (Dante 1995, 213).

of season seven, episode six, "The Strategy," shows Don, Pete (played by actor Vincent Kartheiser), and Peggy eating dinner together at the fast-food restaurant Burger Chef, their client (season 7, episode 6, "The Strategy," written by Semi Chellas). In determining their advertising campaign for Burger Chef, Peggy decides to shoot the upcoming ad at Burger Chef because, as Peggy realizes, Burger Chef is better than home. Peggy deems it to be "a clean, well-lighted place" (season 7, episode 6, "The Strategy"). "It's about family," Peggy says to Don and Pete, where "every table here is the family table," including their table. Peggy makes a direct reference to Ernest Hemingway's short story "A Clean Well-Lighted Place." Hemingway's story, like the *Mad Men* dinner scene in Burger Chef, is about the need for companionship to ward off nada, the emptiness of existence, by eating together in a sort of secular Eucharistic meal of presence. This is a clean, well-lighted place of belonging, where Don finds what it means not just to work with others but, in a sense, to commune with others. This is the good place that can be, if only for a meal. This promise of participation in a place of mutual understanding is real even amid the ghosts and traumas of the past and present.

Mad Men conveys trauma and nostalgia through the ghosts that haunt the narrative and appear through the medium of television. This chapter surveyed the ghosts and phantasmagorias of *Mad Men* in relation to Don Draper and what these hauntings tell us about the search for meaning and the place of belonging in the context of the nostalgic coinciding of the 1960s and today. In the previous four parts of this chapter, we considered the ghosts of *Mad Men* and the four aspects of nostalgia: utopic nostalgia, collective nostalgia, reflective nostalgia, and reconciliatory nostalgia. We also looked at how this relates to deeper ideas about American society, decadence and decay, and the karmic turn of love and loss in search of a place of belonging. We realized that the haunting of reconciliatory nostalgia also points to the possibility of reconciliatory nostalgia. We conclude this chapter with the possibility opened by *Mad Men* of moving from a coincidence of opposites of past and present to the reconciliation of opposites of past and present, in the possibility of finding meaning and the place of belonging that can be.

Mad Men revels in the nostalgia of the 1960s to conjure up the American Zeitgeist. Zeitgeist means "spirit of the times," or even "ghosts of our time." It takes ghosts to wake up the characters and viewers of *Mad Men* to authentically see themselves. *Mad Men* also includes copious consumption of spirits, and Don's favorite drink is an old fashioned. Drinking an excess of alcohol,

much like the impact of seeing ghosts, blurs the cognition of time. *Mad Men* has been credited with a resurgence in the popularity of traditional cocktails. In a section titled "Reconciliation Doesn't Come in a Bottle," John Elia writes, "We can't live our parents' or grandparents' lives, but neither are we wise to forget them. Thanks to Mad Men, drinking classic cocktails is one of the easiest and best parts of our reconciliation project. Like Don Draper, however, much more difficult negotiations lay ahead" (2010, 184). The drinking of *Mad Men* is a gateway drug to experiencing not the spirit of the past but rather the spirit of our time.

The *Mad Men* reconciliation project reprises Aristotle's theory of catharsis. In *Poetics* Aristotle famously speaks of tragedy arousing pity and fear, "wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions" (Aristotle 1984, 2320). Catharsis, for Aristotle, is often understood as the idea of purgation, yet it also can mean purification. The pity and fear that the ghosts of Don reveal in viewers are about purifying the trauma of the past. Aristotle also writes in *Poetics* that "the poet's function"—or more appropriately, *Mad Men*'s creator and main writer, Matthew Weiner's, function—"is to describe, not the thing that has happened, but a kind of thing that might happen" (Aristotle 1984, 2322). *Mad Men* does not really describe the 1960s or what happened; rather, *Mad Men* conjectures what might happen now. Aristotle later says, "The marvelous is certainly required in tragedy" (Aristotle 1984, 2336). The ghosts of *Mad Men*, the very spirits of our time, arouse the marvelous possibility, even probability, of the *Mad Men* reconciliation project, in which Don and the viewers he mirrors can find meaning and the good place of belonging that can be.

The dinner scene in Burger Chef is *Mad Men*'s adaptation of Dante's earthly paradise atop Mount Purgatory, the antithesis of utopia and the place that can be (Dante 1995, "Purgatory," cantos XXVIII–XXXIII). Don has been through the inferno of the ghosts of his past. He has traversed purgatory through the travails of fighting his way back to his old advertising job. A clean, well-lighted table in Burger Chef marks the place of catharsis or the purification of past perditions. Don finds meaning in the reality that he has a home with his motley crew of coworkers, who, with their broken families, work-life imbalances, and past grievances, still find a momentary space of belonging in even the most prosaic of places. There is hope for reconciling the past with the present. Through the ghosts of Don's recurring cycle of wanting and failing to find meaning and a place of belonging, *Mad Men* beckons us to hang in there, because forgiveness is possible and home is always an episode away.

Works Cited

Abbot, Megan. 2015. "Foreword." In *Mad Men Carousel: The Complete Critical Companion*, edited by Matt Zoller Seitz. New York: Abrams Press.

Aristotle. 1984. *Poetics*. In *The Complete Works of Aristotle*: *The Revised Oxford Translation*, edited by Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Boym, Svetlana. 2001. "Nostalgia." *Atlas of Transformation*. http://monumenttotransformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/html/n/nostalgia/nostalgia-svetlana-boym.html.

Carveth, Rod, and James B. South, eds. 2010. *Mad Men and Philosophy: Nothing Is as It Seems*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2010.

Cromb, Brenda. 2011. "'The Good Place' and 'The Place That Cannot Be': Politics, Melodrama and Utopia." In *Analyzing Mad Men: Critical Essays on the Television Series*, edited by Scott F. Stoddart, 67–78. Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company.

Dante Alighieri. 1995. *The Divine Comedy*, translated by Allen Mandelbaum. New York: Knopf.

Dryer, Richard. 1992. *Only Entertainment*. 2nd edition. New York: Routledge.

Elia, John. 2010. "Don Draper, on How to Make Oneself (Whole Again)." In *Mad Men and Philosophy: Nothing Is as It Seems*, edited by Rod Carveth and James B. South, 168–85. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Hodgson, Godfrey. 2006. "The American Century." In *The Cambridge Companion to Modern American Culture*, edited by Christopher Bigsby, 33–52. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kerouac, Jack. 1957. *On the Road*. New York: Viking Press.

Lyons, Margaret. 2015. "Don Draper Sees Dead People." *Vulture*. April 6, 2015. https://www.vulture.com/2015/04/don-draper-sees-dead-people.html.

McNally, Richard J. 2005. *Remembering Trauma*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap.

Owens, Susan. 2017. *The Ghost: A Cultural History*. London: Tate Publishing.

Routledge, Clay. 2016. *Nostalgia: A Psychological Resource*. New York: Routledge, 2016.

Seitz, Matt Zoller. 2015. *Mad Men Carousel: The Complete Critical Companion*. New York: Abrams Press.

Weiner, Matthew, director. 2007–15. *Mad Men* (TV series). AMC.

Weir, David. 2018. *Decadence: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wright N. T., and Michael F. Bird. 2019. *The New Testament in Its World: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the First Christians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic.

Index