
GLOBAL CRISIS IN MEMORY

Introduction

From Populism to Decolonisation: How We Remember in the Twenty-First Century

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This article introduces, and contextualises, the contributions to the collection *The global crisis in memory*. Since the 1980s, the idea of ‘coming to terms with the past’, shaped by the values of neoliberal economics and liberal politics, became part of a globally-powerful consensus over how societies should overcome violent and traumatic experiences. In the 2010s, in the context of the global rise of populist nationalisms, political hostility linked to global migration, and increasingly vocal criticisms of a neoliberal order, this consensus was powerfully challenged. Rather than rejecting memory politics, new political formations have in fact embraced them. The white resentment embodied in the ‘History Wars’ controversy in Australia; legislation such as the Polish ‘Holocaust Bill’; the growing scepticism of African states towards the International Criminal Court; or the rewriting of the histories of Indian independence by Hindu nationalists all reveal the ways in which diverse movements critiqued and reworked previous memory tropes. At the same time, attempts to decolonise western memory have engaged actively with previous manifestations of memory around which apparent consensus had been constructed. Moreover, these various new memory practices increasingly have their own alternative internationalisms too, reaching across or beyond regions in new transnational formations.

1. Overview

Across the world, what many commentators have called a liberal and universal(ist) model of ‘coming to terms with the past’ has come under attack. While various attempts to reckon with traumatic history date from the end of the Second World War, the present-day crisis in endeavours to ‘come to terms’ with difficult pasts is mostly associated with the momentous geopolitical changes of the last decades of the twentieth century. This paradigm crystallised in the so-called memory boom as the Cold War came to a close: the fall of military regimes in Latin America and the end of communist dictatorships in Europe and Africa, the post-Yugoslav wars, the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda alongside various African civil wars were all followed by the emergence of fledgling democracies frequently built on the debris of traumatic memories. These new socio-political contexts inevitably brought a renewed need to

consider how to make sense of the atrocities and injustice stretching across the past century and how to ensure the continuation of peace into the new millennium.

These processes had many national specificities, but as a powerful ideal they were also linked between countries and regions by a common idea that the defence of civic and human rights, and thus of liberal citizenship, required that we remember past atrocities and state violence. Sometimes this was based around the transnational memory of the Holocaust, summoned up regularly in remembrance to ensure *nie wieder* ('never again'). The terminology that dominated during the memory boom – *coming to terms* in English, *devoir de mémoire* ('duty of memory') in French (see Ledoux; Rousso, *Face au passé*) or *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* ('mastering the past') in German¹ – suggested that populations could overcome the legacies of violence through memory. Recently, those who promote liberal memory work have become more critical of the idea of *mastering* the past; only by ensuring that memory retains its power to unsettle in the present might societies, they reckon, really ensure peace and democracy (Frost and Watanabe; Grosescu, Baby and Neumayer 307–8). German state policy adopted the term *Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit* (working through the past) to emphasise the open-ended and ongoing nature of the process, necessary lest populations become desensitised to threats from anti-democratic forces (Finch).

Critics of this liberal paradigm have existed ever since it emerged and assumed a hegemonic position in the 1980s; yet, as many of the contributors document here, the 2010s witnessed a significant expansion in this challenge, both geographically and ideologically. On one side, new populist authoritarians – from Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil to Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines – attacked those who sought justice for past atrocities, and rejected a set of late twentieth-century judicial and social practices that aimed to tackle the experience of dictatorship, genocide and violence. On another, critics from Eastern Europe to Africa framed such cosmopolitan memory cultures as fundamentally colonial impositions of a model of remembering that had never captured local experiences or was unsuited to addressing transnational structures of imperial violence whose legacies lasted into the present. On yet another, various forces on the left, from Latin America to Southern Africa, criticised what they saw as a Western-led depoliticisation of the past. They cast the memory boom as bourgeois ideological ballast for an unequal, neoliberal world, and as such incapable of sustaining a public historical culture that could keep the radical right at bay. The alternatives these groups proposed were various, from the simple erasure of the past and the re-establishment of cultures of impunity, to the discovery of new forms of justice that arose out of local traditions and cultures, to calls for more radical histories, public cultures and trials to deal with structural and economic injustices that had been left untouched at the end of dictatorships and wars.²

In order to understand these contemporary challenges, first we historicise the growth of this liberal memory paradigm. It was shaped by the moment of its birth in the late 1970s, when the global anticolonial project in its various manifestations, including tricontinentalism – the transnational attempt to link the liberation movements of Africa, Asia and South America (Mahler) – was losing its appeal, and Western-led neoliberal globalisation began on its road to dominance. In adopting this broader perspective, we can more easily observe how this eventually hegemonic framework was shaped by a set of individualising and Eurocentric

¹ By 1959 President Theodor Heuss was calling 'die unbewältigte Vergangenheit' (the unresolved past) a 'Schlagwort' (buzzword); the verbal forms 'die Vergangenheit bewältigen', 'unbewältigte Vergangenheit' mutated into the compound noun *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* by the mid-1960s (Eitz and Stötzl, 608–9). Thanks to Chloe Paver for this information.

² For a recent work that seeks to explore the move away from individual notions of responsibility to address how societies are more deeply implicated, see Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject*.

assumptions about what was significant in dealing with violent pasts. In the second part, we examine the rise of right-wing populist counter-memory. Right-wing populists were both anti-elitist and anti-pluralist, and based their legitimacy on the claim that only *they* could genuinely represent the will of the people (Müller). Memory politics have been crucial for many such projects. In appropriating the right to speak for a popular unity, populists imagine themselves as the true founders of democracies or nations (Bull); as the only ones able genuinely to represent the nation's suffering in war or under persecution; or position themselves in direct succession to former patriotic authoritarian strongmen. In so doing, they present their movements as the protectors of national community from what they identify as the emasculating effects of shame, guilt and repentance at the core of cosmopolitan liberal internationalism and its memory practices. Such populist movements have been adept at employing both social media and popular culture, through cartoons, songs, festivals or religious ceremonies, to embed these new historical narratives (Kockel *et al.*; Wodak and Forchtner). In the third part, we explore the critiques of cosmopolitan liberal memory and justice as neo-colonial from the perspective of the global South, most notably in sub-Saharan Africa and South America. In addition, we assess the decolonial responses that challenged the propensity of Western liberal memory practices to reproduce hierarchical civilisational orders. These critics often sought to show the interconnections in histories of suffering, in ways that might elicit empathy and undercut exclusivist ethno-populism and racism: such interventions came from historians, memory studies scholars and in public memory work. Others questioned outright the usefulness of memory based upon suffering and victimhood. Finally, we explore why there was resistance to this decolonial turn, mostly in the West, and the prospects for change.

This collection brings together scholars working on these various manifestations of memory politics from all corners of the globe, deploying their expertise from most world regions: from Brazil to Japan, South Africa to Austria. The articles are drawn from a conference that took place in London in February 2019, funded by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) in the context of its 'Care for the Future' and 'Translating Cultures' strategic themes. As such, it highlights the need to historicise the present while adopting approaches to memory that are comparative, transnational and linguistically sensitive. The event became a first stage for discussions about the possible links between these global shifts in memory politics, generating debates that illustrated the inevitable co-dependency of these movements across the globe. This initiative develops this discussion further through an extended collection of papers that cover a broad range of both geographical areas and arenas for memory politics: from museums and war memorials to comic books and street paintings.

2. Emergence of a Paradigm

The contributions here from Cercel and David explore how memory studies has too often tended to neglect its relationship to historical change – an important task in order to understand the ideology of the 'memory boom' that is currently under fire. Outlining ideas central to her 2020 book *The Past Can't Heal Us: The Dangers of Mandating Memory in the Name of Human Rights*, David presents the irruption from the 1980s onwards of a victim-centred memorial culture as a cumulative accretion of rights culture since the Second World War – from the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which gradually 'force[d] states to face, and be held accountable for, past human rights abuses'. Yet this was not a smooth journey. The 'coming to terms' paradigm also had its roots in the late 1950s, in a western European postwar generation's sense of the failure to confront societies properly about their role in violence and the genocide against European Jews. Institutions such as the International Military Tribunals at Nuremberg and Tokyo – established not only to prosecute war criminals but also to help societies acknowledge

and remember the atrocities of the Second World War – had been sidelined. This had partly occurred because of the onset of Cold War confrontation, which undermined the possibility of a shared understanding of wartime violence. Other venues such as the UN War Crimes Commission (1943–48) were shut down due to the reluctance of Western powers to face justice for, or even acknowledge colonial crimes. Moreover, these institutions were accused of being more concerned with judging and delegitimising wars of aggression than publicising or seeking justice for the Holocaust. In both the liberal West and the communist East, albeit in very different ideological registers, the crimes of fascism were blamed on *elites* – often at the expense of confronting society as a whole. Only a few intellectuals, such as Hannah Arendt, resisted this framing.

It was the violence of the accelerating processes of decolonisation in the late 1950s that led to the first postwar memory boom. Certainly, an emerging Western New Left played a large role. They connected the violence of a now hastening end to European empire in the late 1950s to the broader failures of Western civilisation to work properly through the remnants of fascism and wartime violence (Clifford, Gildea and Mark; Kundnani; Shepard). In France, young activists connected the brutality with which their elites suppressed the Algerian independence movement to the unresolved legacies of the Second World War, notably the failure to prosecute collaborators who would go on to torture and kill in North Africa (Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*). The sheer violence of Algerian decolonisation was in that sense fundamental to the evolution and contestation of postcolonial memory; it became *the* test case through which a new generation established an equivalence between the unresolved legacies of the Second World War and the ongoing, neocolonial violence of the West. For this reason, parts of the right in Germany and France have ever since argued that it would be unbalanced to grant to Algeria this representative status for the whole of the colonial experience (“Was weiß der Postkolonialismus vom Kolonialismus?”). The 1950s and 1960s was the period, too, when the Holocaust was becoming more widely discussed, even if in mainstream culture it was not yet remembered, as it later would be, as an evil above all others. Nevertheless, such framings had already been long apparent in the thought of non-European anticolonial intellectuals: In his 1950 *Discourse on Colonialism*, Afro-Caribbean poet and politician Aimé Césaire, like many other advocates of decolonisation, encouraged Europeans to see the Holocaust as a result of their own colonial practices coming home – in other words, as a genocidal tragedy which could only be vested with greater meaning by connecting it to episodes of colonial violence. The Russell Tribunal, a private People’s Tribunal established in 1966 by leftist intellectuals Bertrand Russell and Jean-Paul Sartre to try US crimes in Vietnam, tied its mission to its forebear at Nuremberg. In their view, remembering the Holocaust was crucial for the fight against the ongoing crimes of Western imperialist capitalism (Molden; on the importance of alternative anti-fascist Holocaust internationalisms before liberal human rights, see Rothberg, “The Witness as ‘World’ Traveler”).

Many rejected – or did not even consider – such connections. The 1950s French debates over Algeria aside, the postwar political cultures of present or former European colonial powers – namely Britain, Germany, Belgium, Portugal and the Netherlands – did not witness significant public debate about the association between imperial violence and the brutality of fascism in Europe. The haunting memory of victimisation in the Netherlands and France during the Second World War had the effect of rendering the colonial violence that had forced the end of their empires in the war’s aftermath all but invisible (Foray). Even the French survivors of concentration camps were not able to conceive of the brutal violence meted out by their own state in internment camps in North Africa in the 1950s as in any way equivalent to their own experience (Kuby). Horrific episodes outside Europe could still be understood by many as irrational aberrations (King and Stone 4).

The revival in the late 1940s of the idea of totalitarianism – which equated the state violence of fascism and communism as the outcomes of similar historical processes – also served to ensure that the debate over the origins of modern genocide became a very Eurocentric one. In this view, it was necessary only to have to explain ‘eruptions of barbarity’ in the place that white Europeans considered most civilised and thus least expect it to happen – that is, on their own continent (Moses 8–9). It should be noted that Hannah Arendt, who published one of the most influential postwar works on this topic, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), did connect the European use of racialised violence, from population transfer to genocide, to underpin her account of the brutalisation of European politics back home. However, her earlier desire to write primarily about Nazi racism and imperialism had been replaced by the late 1940s, and the onset of the Cold War, with a greater emphasis on the twin threats of fascism and Soviet communism – ideologies that both aimed at ‘total domination’. Her contemporary defence of Western civilisation in the face of the contemporaneous Soviet threat served in part to sideline her earlier stringent attacks on racist imperialism’s perversion of Western civilisation. She thus later came to emphasise the British Empire as having been the last bulwark against Nazi barbarism, and rejected the critiques of its violence from anticolonial intellectuals such as Frantz Fanon and Césaire himself (Moses 4–5). Indeed, the smaller part of *Origins* that did address connections between imperial violence and Europe’s destruction in the 1930s and 1940s was soon forgotten in the reception of her work. It was only after the collapse of the communist threat that this interpretation became prominent once again: her boomerang thesis came to the fore in the 2000s in the work of postcolonial scholars such as Paul Gilroy.

Others questioned the seemingly excessive focus on *victims* of the Second World War. In both the ‘Second’ and ‘Third Worlds’, anti-imperialists made the connection between European fascism and empire primarily through the lens of resistance. It was a political imperative to connect the anti-fascist struggle of the Second World War with the anticolonial struggle for liberation in the present – not the memory of suffering. When the North Vietnamese military visited communist-led Poland in the late 1960s to gain support for their struggle against the United States, they wanted to see the inspiring sites of the Polish national struggle from the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. A supposed overemphasis on victims from a particular ethnic-religious group was dismissed in some quarters too, especially in those Eastern European communist states where the Holocaust had taken place but antisemitism persisted. One Czech communist dismissed the heightened recognition of the Holocaust in the West as merely an ‘epidemic of Jewish literature on concentration camps’ (Kolár).

The so-called coming to terms paradigm that developed in the 1970s and 1980s – culminating in the explosion of memory practices after the Cold War – marginalised the connection of violence between the European and colonial worlds, which had been one aspect of the first postwar memory boom. Both Cercel and David here explore how, as the global anticolonial project weakened in the 1970s, the use of memory to bolster *resistance* and *struggle* was gradually replaced by a newly dominant paradigm that highlighted the *suffering of victims* of genocide and criminal dictatorships. Cercel draws on a longer-term left critique of this new memory culture. The focus on individual victims and criminality bolstered a Western system that reasserted individual rights and the market economy and, in doing so, depoliticised the past, defanging history as a resource to claim social justice or economic equality (Traverso). Remembering victims became a way to stabilise the ‘transitions’ to a politically liberal democratic and neoliberal economic order that took place across Southern Europe, Latin America, Eastern Europe and then South Africa between the mid-1970s and mid-1990s (Miles). Cercel argues that it was no coincidence that the rise of memory occurred at this juncture: it was closely linked to the ‘transnational stabilization of a neoliberal consensus [...]

the abandonment of the politics of redistribution, the erosion of social and economic rights, deregulation and privatization'. Here, he connects the rise of a new economics to newly triumphant conceptions of rights. Dominant Western powers successfully saw off the radical claims of the South for real self-determination, greater equality in the world economic system and socio-economic justice (Richardson-Little, Dietz and Mark). These were replaced by more individualistic conceptions that emphasised protecting the citizen from dictatorship, political repression and restrictions on mobility (Eckel and Moyn; Iriye, Goedde and Hitchcock). A concern with redress for political or moral wrongs perpetrated on the individual agent displaced collective struggles for justice (Copello; Slaughter; Whyte).

The victim had replaced the resister. In this sense, this liberal paradigm aimed at erasing the opposition between colonialism and anticolonialism as a central guiding struggle of politics, replacing it with the opposition between dictatorship (of whatever hue) on one side and liberal democracy on the other. Post-dictatorial sites of memory in the late twentieth century were generally constructed at places of violence or imprisonment in Europe, Latin America, and East and Southeast Asia, where a compelling account of the transformation from suffering to freedom could be narrated (Druliolle, "Remembering and Its Places"; Hughes; Mark; Schumacher). The victim of dictatorship became central to the imaginations of these democratising states. Legal compensation, or declarations of regret, were offered to them after trials or research at secret police archives – processes that also often served as public performances designed to inculcate new civic values (Apor, Horváth and Mark; Osiel; Traverso 29). Yet these definitions often excluded those who did not conform to a model of the individual victim of state brutality: victimhood built around the claims of structural violence, notably on the basis of gender, or economic exclusion and poverty, usually received scant attention (Roht-Arriaza).

These memory practices were placed in national containers too. This was part of a wider ideological apparatus that removed a consciousness of structural interconnected violence from countries whose modernisation had been attempted by dictatorships (notably in Eastern Europe and Latin America), replacing them with an account of strictly national trajectories from an iniquitous criminal past to a liberal democratic present. This is readily discernible in the first judicial mechanisms after third-wave democratisations: they focused on the overbearing authoritarian nation-state as a source of criminality and usually ignored, or provided no mechanisms through which to scrutinise or prosecute, businesses or transnational corporations that had committed human rights abuses (Koposov 52–8; Pietropaoli vii).

At the heart of this emerging paradigm was a belief that memory could be used to achieve 'social reconciliation'; in the context of the late Cold War, this meant the deradicalisation of the Marxist left, and a commitment from the authoritarian right to democracy. This notion of the ritualised reconciliation of enemies as ultimately a good had emerged in the international sphere in the context of East–West détente from the late 1960s; its values would soon find concrete national form in the 'consenso' transition after the fall of the Franco dictatorship in Spain from the mid-1970s. Representatives of the authoritarian regime and its opposition sought ways to enable compromise in order to avoid violence, often in return for a *collective amnesty* and a degree of continuation in the institutions and personnel of the previous regime. In Spain, amnesia reigned, in the name of achieving social peace and preventing a return to the social divisions that had led to civil war (Aguilar). Yet elsewhere, first in Latin America and then South Africa, the idea of the History Commissions emerged, used to acknowledge suffering and violence, but also in the hope of crafting new shared historical narratives to ensure social cohesion through a sense of shared overcoming of past trauma (Moon).

The extent of the universality of this paradigm – and its capacity to travel – has long been an important question. This 'cosmopolitan memory', a term coined by Levy and Sznajder in

their key work on the subject, was supposed to ‘transcend [...] ethnic and national boundaries’ through a globally shared consciousness of victimhood (Levy and Sznajder 88), with the Holocaust serving as global model from which all others might learn. Traumatic pasts could be addressed in similar ways across the world – a transnational synchronised ‘politics of regret’ commemorating the ‘innocent victim’ as the agent of remembrance par excellence across Europe, Latin America, and East and Southeast Asia (Jager and Mitter; Lim; Mark; Olick) was seen as central to the processes of democratisation and social stability, and a guard against the return of the far right across the world (Assmann and Conrad; Grosescu, Baby and Neumayer 309; Mudde 114). Accelerating further after the end of the Cold War, the growth of an international human rights system, culminating in the establishment of the International Criminal Court in 2002, was also of great significance in propagating this cosmopolitan memory culture (Biedendorf).

At the centre of these remembrance frameworks stood the memory of the Holocaust: it became such a powerful and lasting symbol of the ultimate failure of reason and justice that it was transformed into a frame of reference, a yardstick by which to measure all crimes against humanity. As the fundamental narrative of the victory of good against evil, Holocaust memory was able to penetrate geographic, religious or linguistic boundaries, and became so generalised that it could be channelled regardless of personal relationships to the events (Baer and Sznajder; Eder; Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*). From the 1990s, it was promoted for memorialisation by the European Union as a key element of a common European identity based on facing the continent’s dark past. A recognition for the other victims of Nazi genocide – notably Roma and homosexuals – slowly developed under the pressure of activism. A transnational ‘duty to remember’ was challenging for Southern and Eastern Europeans, whose memory cultures were initially resistant (Bottici and Challand; Litzo-Monnet). Nevertheless, this particular idea of genocide helped create a ‘convergence in “languages of commemoration”’ (De Cesari and Rigney 12) and eventually became the framework in which human rights abuses under Latin American dictatorships, Franco’s violence in Spain and communist crimes in Eastern Europe could be understood (Baer; Crenzel; Mark; von Lingen). Japanese peace activists in the later stages of the Cold War drew inspiration from the German model of reconciliation and deployed it against the militarism of their own political right. Holocaust memory served to bolster the attempted globalisation of this paradigm, not only as it became viewed as a transnational duty, but also because it provided a template to narrate other atrocities through which those occupying less powerful positions on a global media stage could make their claims for justice to audiences across the world. It should be noted that recently some have questioned how global this paradigm really was, noting that in many places – from India to Latin America – Holocaust memory hardly featured (Confino). Some sceptics thus question the reach of the memory boom, deeming it to reflect the limitations of a Eurocentric memory studies that paid excessive attention to the universalisation of its Western forms, and which failed to address how globally powerful paradigms and vocabularies emerged from other regional and local traditions of memory (Grosescu, Baby and Neumayer 309). Hence, emerging projects are attempting to ‘globalize national memories of the South as well as to provincialize the Eurocentric memory regime’.³

The idea of the Holocaust that underpinned these new memory cultures became detached from colonial violence and came to be considered as *the* evil that stood above all others (Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject* 175–9). This was already apparent in the early 1960s, as its exposure on television through the Eichmann Trial lent it a media visibility beyond other violence (Levy and Sznajder; Novick; Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject*). Some Jewish writers,

³ See the Palgrave Macmillan book series ‘Entangled Memories in the Global South’.

such as Elie Wiesel, emphatically placed the Holocaust as part of a specific and separate two-thousand-year history of Christian anti-Jewish persecution: the stress on modern imperial violence as the key to understanding the Holocaust threatened to undermine the crucial role that its memory as a unique genocide played as bulwark against the return of antisemitic forces (Tollerton). The idea of the singularity of the Holocaust accelerated still more in the late Cold War, as it became the pre-eminent illustration of the necessity of society's to commit to a liberal tolerant order in which such an atrocity could 'never again' take place. The exclusions concomitant with remembering it, particularly in Europe, were further cemented by the collapse of the Eastern Bloc in 1989–91. Remembering imperial violence was thereafter associated with a demonised socialist internationalism in the continent's east, where new anti-communist elites claimed, in any case, that their countries were free of colonial guilt as their states had never held empires. Meanwhile, Eastern European conservatives' successful advocacy for a recognition of the Gulag alongside the Holocaust as constitutive of the memory of a post-Cold War European culture further reinforced the importance of the suffering of Europeans over those who had been the victims of European imperialism.

Since the very beginnings of a postwar liberal memory culture, its advocates have been anxious about its vulnerabilities. Some agonised that remembrance might become routinised in ways that no longer inspired societies to defend their democracies. Neuhäuser here discusses German philosopher Theodor Adorno's early fears in 1959, in his essay "Was bedeutet Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit", that memory might become just a defence mechanism to keep responsibility at a safe distance. Such memory work would have to be deemed a failure if it did not elicit 'inner unrest' in either the individual or in society. In Germany, some Jewish survivors did not support *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, as it suggested the possible settlement of matters too forcibly and thus repressed rather than continued to keep open and raw the processes of reconciling with the past (Finch). Such a 'settling of the past' might be just as dangerous as silence, as analysts of the rise of the radical right argued (Mudde 114). Thus, an ongoing, disquieting and ever vigilant *Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit* ('working through the past') was preferable.

A number of the contributors here note the contemporary challenges to sustaining politically and socially meaningful cultures of memory, and are themselves involved in important institutional projects and political activism to address them. Hansen and Bull explore the non-antagonistic nature of many state-endorsed memory practices that focus solely on a particular form of victimhood and leave the wider context of grievances unacknowledged. Such forms of remembrance, they argue, sought superficial narratives of healing without confronting the conflicting memories that lie beneath, and thus failed to resist the rise of 'antagonistic' nationalist memory cultures. Rather, they advocate a 'radical multiperspectivism' and a 'conflictual consensus' in which the multiple subject positions of victims and perpetrators can be argued over – rather than shown as simple illustrations of good and evil (Bull and Hansen). Others address the fact that the idea of resolution embedded in 'coming to terms' can be too easily mobilised for impunity; they contend, rather, that memory practices should be designed to enable ongoing engagement with, and management of, social and political conflict (Druliolle, "H.I.J.O.S. and the Spectacular Denunciation of Impunity"; Opotow). The role of artistic (and often 'agonistic') interventions in such processes of maintaining continually unsettling engagement is beginning to attract the attention it merits (Bull and Clarke). Vaisman's contribution posits that the abstract idea of unity after violence is often more attractive than the hard and ongoing work of reconciliation; rather, she contends, the voices of survivors who seek the truth about the past have for this reason frequently been obscured and censored. In her examination of the recurrence of disappearances in modern-day Argentina, she raises questions about the extent to which a 'facing the past' paradigm can really alter society and state institutions sufficiently to prevent the recrudescence of violence.

3. New Right, New Populisms: Challenging the Liberal Paradigm

One of the first challenges to this liberal paradigm emerged from the New Right in the 1980s. Neuhäuser suggests here that such voices anticipated the arguments of populists critical of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* almost thirty years later. He notes the case of Kurt Waldheim, soon to be president of Austria, who, in 1986, against the background of revelations of his Nazi past, became one of the first *causes célèbres* that the right defended. Some in the conservative Austrian People's Party were already denigrating the media, employing cries of 'fake news', while promoting Waldheim as the real victim and accusing Jewish groups of coordinating a global media conspiracy against him. And elsewhere in the 1980s, the remembrance of victims was not invoked to support the construction of a cosmopolitan empathetic culture of 'never again', but rather to give form to nationalist victimhood. In Germany, Ernst Nolte triggered the *Historikerstreit* ('Historians' Dispute') of 1986 and 1987 by using atrocities under Stalin as a diversion from Nazi violence. Reformist Chinese elites around Deng Xiaoping increasingly invoked wartime suffering during this decade, employing nationalist appeals to preserve legitimacy (Hillenbrand). Stories of the victimisation of China by Japan in the Second World War were used to bolster his reformist movement and divert attention away from the domestic violence of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution (Frost, Vickers and Schumacher). A major national site emblematic of this approach – the Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders – was opened in 1985.

It was in the 2010s, however, that the challenges to these liberal hegemonic forms of remembering attained an even wider political and geographical reach. Many of these contestations thrived in a new global climate in which convergence with Western liberal democracy no longer appeared inevitable or desired. The global financial crisis of 2008 inaugurated a decade of widespread unemployment, housing market crises, failure of businesses and decline in consumer wealth: this was used by populist elites to further fuel the need to blame 'others', and to promote an increased scepticism regarding liberal Western political and social models. The collapse of consensus that followed created space for the expansion of an ethno-nationalist populism, built largely on anti-globalism, protectionism, nativism and often opposition to Islam, immigration and gender politics (Kaya; Mudde; Wodak). And as Subotić argues here, history was the 'handmaiden of populism': legislation such as the Polish 'Holocaust Bill' (Ray and Kapralski), commemorations of dictatorial pasts in Latin America and the reignited 'History Wars' controversy in Australia (Attwood; Taylor), are but a few of the most visible examples.

A number of contributions here explore how the very rise of such populism was connected to the failure to entrench a liberal culture of memory, whether in Eastern Europe, Latin America or East Asia. Indeed, Schneider, in her essay on the ascent of President Bolsonaro, and McKay on that of his equivalent, Duterte, explicitly link their rise to the failure to sustain a human rights paradigm in both Brazil and the Philippines respectively, demonstrating how it is possible to revive the memory of past dictatorships as the true protectors of nation. Crenzel, in addressing the case of Argentina under President Macri (2015–19), demonstrates that even in the Latin American country most committed to a culture of human rights and anti-impunity, populists will attempt to undermine transnational rights systems and justice – and use deeply embedded domestic human rights law to consolidate immunity for previous abusers.

While these movements appeared to be independent from one another in their particularist focus on national and local histories, they were invariably connected through a shared determination to overturn the previously established liberal and would-be universalist human rights approaches to coming to terms with the past, seeing them as a political bedrock for a global liberal order. They sought to protect the nation from the perceived threat posed by globalisation, of which such memory practices were seen as part, the culture of the nation

supposedly undermined by the constant requirement to embrace post-imperial self-flagellation or post-Holocaust mourning. They desired to replace this with their own particular brand of victim-centred identity politics, which portrayed themselves as the true representatives of the nation's history and – often – its suffering (Bull; Kochanski). In Germany, where 'pluralism in the content of public memory overall' is matched by 'a lack of pluralism when it comes to the regulatory framework of remembrance' (Wüstenberg, "Pluralism, Governance, and the New Right" 90), the right-wing populist Alternative for Germany (AfD) party increasingly exploited disquiet at the perceived lack of representation of certain memories of victimisation. In particular, they highlighted the suffering of so-called 'ordinary Germans' during the Second World War, a history they now employed in defence of a nation now supposedly threatened by the rise of immigration. In a speech in 2017, Björn Höcke, AfD's state leader in Thuringia, alluded to the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe by claiming: 'Germans are the only people in the world who plant a monument of shame in the heart of the capital' (Bochum). Neuhäuser here highlights how the House of Austrian History, opened in Vienna in 2018, was attacked by the far right, who regarded it, as they already did the memorials at Mauthausen and Auschwitz, as a 'cult space' for an education in liberal guilt.

The cosmopolitan memory of the Holocaust was a particular target for populists, who viewed its widespread dissemination as part of a global liberal conspiracy. In Eastern Europe, for instance, the stress on the uniqueness of the Holocaust in the internationalist 'never again' pan-European culture of memory was, following accession to the European Union, countered by transnational networks of conservative politicians, activists and institutions. Having suffered under both communism and fascism, they argued against a marginalisation of their own nations' demands to be recognised as victims (Mälksoo; Mark; Neumayer, *The Criminalisation of Communism*; Neumayer, "Integrating the Central European Past"; Radonić, *The Holocaust/Genocide Template*; Subotić). Where Holocaust memory threatened to stifle such claims, it was attacked: in 2018, Polish president Andrzej Duda vocally supported the country's Holocaust Bill, exempting the 'Polish nation' from any complicity in the Holocaust and other Nazi atrocities. In this collection, Subotić explores how the displacement of the Holocaust with the idea of 'communist genocide' in Eastern European nationalist memory cultures was connected to a right-wing programme to weaken a liberal idea of a post-national Europe of 'unity in diversity'. At the same time, the memory of the Holocaust has also provided populists with a powerful template of suffering. Indeed, they used this transnationally recognised paradigm to promote their own nationalist histories of victimization (David, *Against Standardization of Memory*). In this sense, Holocaust memory was appropriated by those with ethno-nationalist agendas to undermine the very cosmopolitanism it had been employed to build. The German sponsorship of memorials to sites of Jewish and other atrocities in Eastern Europe was in some cases exploited by local anti-communist activists who align such sites with their local cultures of suffering and resentment (Bekus). In China, communists instrumentalised the memory of the Holocaust mainly to highlight atrocities committed under Japanese occupation (Confino).

The defence of nationhood was also gendered. Cosmopolitan memory was sometimes blamed for instilling progressive support for feminism and LGBTQ politics that these populist detractors saw as undermining the foundations of national cultures. Populists often drew on historical narratives that cast the nation as a masculine, heterosexual, potent force able to project power on the international stage. Sawkins here explores why Russia's first embrace of the memory of the Holocaust in the 2010s – after many decades of downplaying its distinctiveness in an otherwise powerful culture of Great Patriotic War memory – occurred in the context of the country's invasion of Crimea and conflict with the West. An emergent Holocaust memory enabled President Putin, in the context of his own expansionist geopolitical project, to project an assertive masculine Russia as the saviour of Jews, to claim the

passivity of feminised Europeans in the face of genocide and to highlight the Nazi collaborationism of the former Soviet republics such as Ukraine. Steele likewise offers here a gendered reading of the importance of the maintenance of the memory of the lost Southern struggle in the American Civil War. He locates it in a culture of a right-wing Southern masculinity in crisis, fuelled by sexual anxiety and a fear of violation by migrants. He sees in the defence of the Lost Cause and its monuments a reassertion of white masculinist supremacy, a project grounded in the fear that the United States was becoming feminised, so much so that it could no longer lead the defence of the West.

In some countries, these new victim-centred memory cultures became tied to culturally and racially exclusive modes of belonging preoccupied with the protection of nation, especially in the context of the 'threat' of migration (Bull; De Cesari and Kaya). Following the European 'migrant crisis' (or, more accurately, the crisis of political will and hospitality) of 2015, a wave of anti-immigration sentiment emerged across the continent. Eastern European conservatives in particular made the argument that a liberal human rights-based, Holocaust-centred memory culture had left vulnerable to 'Islamic infiltration' a continent that was 'overly tolerant' and too ready to open its borders (Kalmar; Mark, Iacob, Rupprecht and Spaskovska; Sayyid). Such fears were apparent in India too, where attempts to exclude Islamic migrants from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh from Indian citizenship in the late 2010s were accompanied by a memory politics that retold the story of Indian independence as a violent struggle to build a Hindu nation.

In post-imperial European nations, populists looked to defend a national culture – often coded as white - based on an older nostalgic vision of European empire. This was enabled by, as Paul Gilroy puts it (referring to the UK), a 'postcolonial melancholia': in this view, the Empire was a source of discomfort and many of the violent aspects of its 'unsettling history' silenced (Gilroy). And according to David, the 'coming to terms' paradigm was also in part responsible for this quietening. It had attempted to create a 'standardisation of memory' which was fundamentally Eurocentric, neo-imperialist and had paid too little heed to cultural variation. It also only sought to address those extraordinary circumstances that followed violent dictatorship or war: hence, ongoing structural violence inherited from colonialism, such as the treatment of Aboriginal peoples in Australia or Native Americans in North America, despite much activism and memory work, did not become mainstream at the height of the memory boom (Orford). Forged in the Western celebration of victory over dictatorship in the late Cold War, it became a framework that allowed a liberal world to celebrate its achievements less encumbered by the burdens of its colonial past.

Conjunctures did arise through which interconnections between these forms of violence could be made visible in Western cultures; but often the opportunities for transformation they threw up were as swiftly closed down. In France, for instance, the trial of Maurice Papon in 1997 offered one such moment. Papon was a French colonial official who had served in Morocco and Algeria, suppressing the Sétif uprising of 8 May 1945, and who, subsequently, as chief of police in Paris, oversaw the massacre of peaceful North African immigrant families protesting in the city on 17 October 1961. Although he was charged with crimes against humanity as a result of his complicity in the deportation and murder of French Jews as a senior civil servant during World War Two, the trial entangled this wartime atrocity with a heightened awareness of the huge death toll of the Algerian War of Independence. Momentary national consciousness of these interconnections rapidly subsided, however, as memories of Vichy collaboration, historically untangled from questions of colonial complicity, again took centre stage. The country's 'Vichy syndrome' (Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome*) eclipsed what others have dubbed its 'Algeria syndrome' (Donadey). Likewise, in Britain, the public revelation of the use of detention camps, violence and torture by the authorities against the Mau Mau during Kenya's decolonisation, and the prominent court case on behalf of three of its victims

in British courts from 2011, did not fundamentally unsettle a broad national consensus on the benevolence of the Empire (Brown; Elkins).

The incapacity of the 'coming to terms' paradigm to attribute a similar gravity to the crimes of colonialism as it did the Holocaust or communist violence has had important consequences. Gordon, Morin and Noussis all address how this relativising amnesia, disavowal or silencing have enabled positive memories of British Empire or the so-called French presence overseas to come back into the mainstream in the 2000s. Indeed, French president Nicolas Sarkozy claimed that an excessive guilt and drive for repentance or reparation for colonialism were a malady that undermined French national identity (Bruckner; Lefeuvre). Natalya Vince's work, which highlights the great divergence between Algerian and French views of the conflict, is instructive here. In French debates, the *devoir de mémoire* was often criticised as a liberal identity project of self-flagellation in the domestic sphere, rather than an attempt to address seriously the long-term effects in North Africa. In Algeria, by contrast, memory was not about reconciliation or healing, but rather concerned the question of who could claim to be authentic fighters in the anticolonial struggle. Only elite Algerian memory actors in well-connected cities used the international idiom of genocide to promote their memorialisation or film projects on a world stage. Algerian and French debates were kept within their national containers (Vince). French memory could not readily be unsettled by Algerian voices. Yet slowly in the 2000s, through social media, the activism of both Caribbean French politicians and hard left figures such as Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the issue of colonial crimes, slavery and violence returned. This broader shift set the scene for President Emmanuel Macron, as Noussis explores, to call the colonisation of Algeria a crime against humanity and to recognise the barbarity of the French state during the former's struggle for independence.

As Gordon argues in this collection, underlying sentimental attachments to British Empire were never challenged either by a 'coming to terms' paradigm that focused on the Holocaust, or a national story that repeatedly recalled having fought the 'good war' between 1939 and 1945. A contemporary soft imperial nostalgia might incorporate an awareness of the Empire's dark underbelly; nevertheless, such memories were often relativized in 'balance sheets' of good and bad, in ways that allowed a comforting memory of British imperial power still to be deployed to great political effect (Ward and Rasch). Gordon demonstrates how readily the Brexit campaign was able cleverly to mix aspects of colonial and anticolonial histories, uncritically invoking the glories of the Empire to highlight the potential of 'global Britain' that would bestride the world economically after the country's 'liberation' from its own supposed colonisation by the European Union (O'Toole).

Some populists mobilised an imperial longing in defence of a white anti-multicultural identity. The AfD party, for example, attempted to build political capital through celebrating the 'positive' sides of the country's colonialism, as a counterbalance to what it considered liberal self-flagellation. Germany, in the AfD account, was absolved of colonial guilt and was under no obligation to rename streets or pull down statues. The AfD's leaders in fact recognised episodes of violence such as the Herero and Nama genocide (1904–8), but downplayed their significance as not structurally core to the German colonial project, and as outweighed by the large amount of development aid given to Namibia since independence (Melber). Morin explores in this collection the French right and far right's attempts to revive positive memories of Algerian colonisation and its defence in order to inspire a new struggle against an imagined '*grand remplacement*' or 'reverse colonisation' by Muslim immigrants. Similar examples can be seen in Italy, where populists such as Matteo Salvini targeted positive memories of fascist empire in Africa in the 1930s and the Abyssinian invasion, especially vis-à-vis the diaspora. Such a defence of whiteness can also be discerned in the widespread 'Irish

slavery myth'. This misleading memory enables those of Irish heritage across the world to draw on the memory of African slavery, building a community identity around an imagined white victimisation under a multiculturalism which, they imagine, threatens their privilege. It cites a one-sided history of Irish suffering under British colonialism, while forgetting the role that Irish people played as beneficiaries of colonialism in the Caribbean and North America (Hogan, McAtackney and Reilly).⁴

In some places, where populists took power, governments have sought to reshape their country's spaces of memory. Museums were a particular target in Central-Eastern Europe. PiS and Fidesz governments removed politically unsympathetic directors at the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw and at the Holocaust Memorial Centre in Budapest respectively. They also established the processes to create new (as yet unopened) museums such as the House of Fates in Hungary (which, as Sawkins shows here, will be used to articulate the politics of the Christian nation as protector of its Jewish community from a contemporary Islamic threat) or the Warsaw Ghetto Museum, which will privilege the role of the Polish nation as rescuer over its complicity in antisemitic violence (Segal; Radonić '*Our*' vs. '*Inherited*' Museums). Structures once used to propagate a liberal memory culture can be taken over too: more and more, the transnational networks enabled by European Union funding are used to connect those radical right groups across the continent who seek to create their own memory politics based on racially exclusive readings of national heritage (Kaya; Pasieka).

In India, Hindutva-inspired populist BJP (Indian People's Party) state governments targeted statues. Memorials to post-independence leaders such as Gandhi or the Dalit leader B.R. Ambedkar, and other socio-religious reformers denounced as cultural traitors, were defaced or removed. Many Lenin statues had endured despite the country's liberalisation; but after President Modi's party took power, they were widely attacked – most notably in West Bengal and Tripura. Claims to be the only true founders of nation was often key to populist memory: this was particularly challenging for Modi's BJP as they had no major figures of the independence era as part of their political tradition. So, they revived figures such as revolutionary Hindu Shyamji Krishna Varma, who founded the India Home Rule Society in London and died in 1930. Modi brought his ashes back to India from Geneva in 2005 when he was chief minister of Gujarat – almost a decade before he became prime minister. Since then, the Hindutva populists have crafted his image as a 'masculine and pugnacious anti-Gandhi', prepared to use violence to force change, and whose struggle anticipated their own project to transform India. His recrafted biography as a key mover for independence, and its invented connections to the present, provided a vital alternative independence myth for the populist right (Fischer-Tiné). As India marked the 150th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth in 2019, Narendra Modi's Hindutva movement worked to marginalise the legacies of his non-violence and even revived the memory of the anti-Islamic struggles of the British Empire.

In other cases, the practitioners of right-wing memory politics were skilled at promoting anti-liberal memory in spaces where populist historical effusions were still frowned upon – or could not obtain an institutional hold. The contribution from Takeda here explores the politics of translation in this regard, showing how speeches by the Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe concerning his country's wartime atrocities committed in East Asia were transformed into a 'language of regret' for an international audience. The original Japanese, by contrast, avoided the appearance of apology so as to be acceptable to a nativist right at home. The scale of these populist, far right or neo-nationalist movements, and their similarities,

⁴ Similar recognition of complicity in transatlantic slavery is increasingly emerging regarding Scotland (Mullen) and Wales (Evans).

mean that it is vital to consider the intersections and borrowings that inform them and the media that connect them. Many of these new memory practices increasingly have their own alternative internationalisms, reaching across or beyond nations and regions in new transnational formations, even as they have reversed the earlier 'cosmopolitan' functions of memorialisation. Several Eastern European right-wing populist governments cooperate with both the US and Israeli right in the creation of nationalist versions of Holocaust memory – as Sawkins explores here.

A number of contributors also highlight the importance of social media – an area that has become one of the strongest and most recognisable channels for a politics that subverts the traditional cosmopolitan model of remembering (Fielitz and Thurston; Guhl, Ebner and Rau). The lack of editorial control, relative cost-effectiveness and the rapidity with which concepts and information can spread across the virtual world, as well as the opportunity to host discussions and share posts in order to create whole new networks of readers, make social media one of the most popular arenas for these new memory groups (Zucker and Simon). The absence of official sanction also becomes an asset for campaigners who question the integrity of public authorities and see themselves as excluded from the institutions of official memory politics. The subversive nature of these challenges to memory practices appears always at the edge of seriousness, eternally playful and disruptive, thus appealing to those disillusioned by the status quo. The sheer scale of some social media platforms makes it nearly impossible to prevent extremist ideas from spreading, and several recent elections won by populist candidates have demonstrated the full capacity for social media to sway voters' preferences. Schneider considers here how Jair Bolsonaro's victory in Brazil is widely accredited to an aggressive campaign via WhatsApp messaging, while Indonesia's 2014 and the Philippines' 2016 presidential campaigns actively used Facebook to fight political opponents with considerable success. Perhaps nothing represents the power of social media to influence world politics at the highest level more strikingly than does the Twitter account of the US president Donald Trump. Furthermore, as the examples from this volume show, the unique outreach of social media now intersects with memory politics. McKay analyses in this collection how the Filipino president Rodrigo Duterte recast the memory of the Marcos dictatorship on Facebook and similar platforms when targeting the vote of diaspora communities in multiple election campaigns.

While the examples mentioned in this brief overview touch on only some of the most prominent and publicised instances of these new memory politics, they serve to illustrate both their truly global impact and the similarities in their methods and patterns of development. However, despite their widespread reach and the clear links discernible between them, an interconnected globally aware account of this shift in memory politics remains elusive. There is still a need for research that charts networks and circulations underpinning these new memory paradigms across a range of political, cultural and linguistic contexts, and to explore the methodological approaches with which these can be captured from a global perspective. We recognise that there is increasing scholarly attention paid to memory beyond the national frames to which it has been traditionally limited (Bond, Craps and Vermeulen; Buchinger, Gantet and Vogel; de Cesari and Rigney; Erll and Rigney), not least in its state-endorsed forms (much of this work has been concentrated around the journal *Memory Studies*, founded in 2008). The twenty-first century has witnessed a clear 'tension between the production of remembrance through transnational processes and its grounding in concrete locations' (Wüstenberg, "Locating Transnational Memory" 371), and new paradigms – such as 'travelling memory' (Erll) – allow us to understand better the reworking of stories as they are transmitted across borders into new cultural spaces. Most of the articles in this collection remain national, however, although some do point to the new networks of authoritarians

and right-wing populists who share approaches to memory politics, or to forms of media. However, detailed studies that would trace the connections and networks behind these seemingly unconnected contemporary movements are still urgently required – to chart the ideological origins and growth of contemporary memory practices in transnational terms, to address the ways in which they draw on techniques and tropes from earlier paradigms, and to analyse their relationship to new ideological formations based on race, nationalism and gender. The current collection exposes the possible systemic structures that underpin these developments across the globe, while trying to answer the question of whether the liberal ‘coming to terms with the past’ paradigm is indeed undergoing a (worldwide) crisis. Its intention is to encourage the formulation of further case studies, but more importantly the identification – as we suggest in the following section – of new memorial dynamics evident in theory and practice.

4. From the Neocolonial to the Decolonial: Alternatives to the Liberal Memory Paradigm

The essentially colonial nature of the liberal memory paradigm has been central to many of its detractors’ and opponents’ objections; yet the arguments over the nature of that coloniality, and the alternative projects established to supersede it, have taken many different forms. As we saw above, new populists drew on what has been termed a right-wing postcolonialism, which sought to bolster the pride of the white or Hindu nation. In the West, this was pitched against the perceived threat from globally powerful, colonising, multicultural and ‘shaming’ liberal discourses about the past. Yet there also developed critiques of the neocolonialism of contemporary judicial practices from across the global South and calls for new decolonial approaches that might supersede what their proponents consider to be the provincialism of memory practices within the West.

The argument that cosmopolitan forms of memory and justice were essentially neocolonial powerfully returned in the 2010s. The International Criminal Court (ICC), established in the Netherlands in 2002 to prosecute individuals for genocide and crimes against humanity, increasingly became targeted as an instrument of the West and its justice as culturally inappropriate (Kaleck). South Africa and the Gambia threatened to leave, with Burundi (2017) and the Philippines (2019) actually taking that step. Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni, his Kenyan counterpart Uhuru Kenyatta and Rwandan president Paul Kagame, all criticised the court – the latter claiming it was never about justice ‘but politics disguised as international justice’ (Taulbee, 340). Many in the African Union pointed to the West’s hypocrisy in failing to prosecute crimes committed during the Iraq War of 2003. Here Maingi’s contribution examines how the arguments that African elites employed about Western neocolonialism were in fact critiqued and ridiculed in popular culture. He examines the visual culture of resistance to Kenyan politicians’ recent attempts to obtain impunity from the ICC. His close reading of a rich culture of political cartoons and paintings shows how the strategic use by national elites of neocolonial discourses to avoid a judicial reckoning for political violence became vivid material for local artists who viewed their leaders’ appeals as hypocritical and ripe for satire.

Liberal paradigms were also considered to be colonising in that they aimed to depoliticise memory, thus robbing progressive movements of the tools for constructing a historical consciousness that could inspire resistance to neoliberal globalisation and its domestic supporters. Its memory culture, in this view, was only fit for an age that aimed at social deradicalisation and no longer had ambitions for structural economic transformation. In this critique, the fight against global injustice had been displaced by the veneration of the historical victims of authoritarian states whose suffering was instrumentalised to underpin a series

of national, liberal settlements based on limited claims to justice, equality and rights.⁵ As Roberts explores here, recent critiques from a second post-apartheid generation of radicals from the African National Congress contend that the collective struggle to transform the society and economy of South Africa was sacrificed to the memory politics of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which valued national reconciliation and stability (so as to attract foreign investment) over economic justice (similarly on Liberia, see Glucksam). The TRC, he argues, was part of a much longer genealogy of colonial population management in Africa, and a 'conceptually simplistic' local accommodation to the global discourse of transitional justice which mainly served the purpose of further integrating South Africa into a neoliberal global economy. The promotion of the TRC across the world as a model for overcoming difficult pasts should, in this view, be understood as a neocolonial reproduction of control at the global periphery. Salt's contribution also addresses such failures of our present memory politics, noting how their past effacement of colonialism partly explains the incapacity of dominant models of memory to critique a neoliberal system which is still in essence neocolonial; without this acknowledgement, she contends, it is not possible to open up political spaces for alternative postcolonial futures.

Thus, alternatives were developed. In the 2010s, in both Africa and Latin America, anti-neoliberal legal networks fought what they view as the 'soft justice' that had followed late twentieth-century democratic transitions. They were critical of approaches that had restricted the definition of criminality to exclude economic suffering and began to fight for the recognition of those who had endured socio-economic violence under dictatorship (Nagy 287). Judicial campaigns on behalf of victims moved away from an individualised framework to set the crimes of dictatorship in the context of collective struggle against not only their local dictatorial elites but also transnational corporations that had helped to sustain them. They were critical of nationalised memory paradigms that erased historical awareness of the structural and connected nature of violence within the global system (Grosescu; Lai; Pietropaoli; Verbitsky and Bohoslavsky).

Histories told at sites of memory began to change too. In Latin America, leftist populist memory activists began to occupy those places of atrocity and former prisons which had been the preferred spaces for liberal human rights advocates to create their 'never again' memory. At sites such as Londres 38 in Santiago, Chile, they sought to politicise more explicitly their histories, placing a greater emphasis on stories of struggle alongside suffering (Bădescu, *Beyond the Bare Walls*). Working to bolster a new struggle against an authoritarian populist right that was no longer clearly committed to preserving democratic values, they framed the history of the violence of the left in ways that were no longer aimed at deradicalisation and political accommodation (Bădescu, *Transnational place-making*).

There were also calls to 'decolonise' both memory studies and public cultures of memory of western countries. Such approaches usually critique both the Eurocentric, provincialised forms of remembering they observe in the liberal paradigm, and the remembrance practices of new ethno-nationalist populisms which justify exclusivist nationalisms or white supremacy. Very often, such works were written by, or sought to incorporate the views of, those from the global South or, in the West, from minority communities. These often attempted to give public visibility to those who lack it, and encourage an understanding of the importance of the West's imperial violence – alongside the Holocaust or Gulag – in the making of the modern world. In so doing, they have sometimes developed paradigms that refuse competition between different types of historical suffering and exclusion, and instead encourage cultures that recognise the interconnections and encourage empathy between them. In other cases,

⁵ Sometimes this is extended to a claim about the co-production of human rights and neoliberalism. See Whyte.

practitioners have constructed approaches that question whether the memory of suffering actually serves any purpose.

These innovations need to be situated in the context of a conservative turn within the academy, particularly in response to active attempts to 'decolonise' memory. Pierre Nora, one of the most important founding figures of studies of contemporary memory, associated himself in 2018 with efforts to counteract the perceived threats of decoloniality in contemporary France on the grounds of their 'détournement indigne des valeurs de liberté, d'égalité et de fraternité qui fondent notre démocratie' ('shameful hijacking of the values of liberty, equality and fraternity on which our democracy is built') ('Le "décolonialisme", une stratégie hégémonique'). He opposed radical efforts, evident also in the work of memory studies in the English-speaking world (see Rothberg, Sanyal and Silverman on *noeuds de mémoire* [knots of memory]), to 'come to terms with the past' that destabilise conveniently coherent and often introverted narratives of national memory. This was in fact nothing new: the rapid growth of the discipline of memory studies in the 1980s – which he played a large role in shaping – had been nationalist, Eurocentric and anti-anticolonial. This was very evident in a key term of the emerging discipline, *lieux de mémoire*: 'sites' or 'realms of memory' (Nora). The field has often failed to carry out the rigorous contextualisation and historicisation that concepts of this sort require. The idea of the *lieu de mémoire* itself emerged from a specific ideological niche associated with the bicentenary of the French Revolution and the fin-de-siècle crisis in French republican identity. Methodologically nationalist in conception, the term 'realms of memory' has now been deployed in universal ways; these often omit to recognise how Nora's original collection failed to engage with the colonial past (Achille, Forsdick and Moudileno), but may also be seen – as 'neither an oversight nor blindness' (Stoler 161) – as being rooted in wider efforts to avoid any association of official French memorial practices with that past. Ann Laura Stoler has highlighted the importance of Nora's initial research in the 1960s on the *peuple noir* population of Algeria, detecting in his first book, *Les Français d'Algérie*, a barely veiled disdain for his subjects, not least because they are seen to diverge from a benchmark of authentic Frenchness.

It was this methodological nationalism and Eurocentrism to which Nora's work contributed that practitioners in memory studies have recently attempted to critique. Huyssen has described the risks of such 'cultural fortressing', a phenomenon that many scholars and practitioners have sought to transcend. They have instead looked to interconnected paradigms as alternatives to hierarchical and competitive memory cultures. The work of Michael Rothberg on multidirectional memory, in particular, has foregrounded the need to situate memories of the Holocaust in relation to that of other historical traumas, not least slavery and colonialism (Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*), and a number of other scholars have entered into dialogue with this approach (Rothberg, Sanyal and Silverman; Sanyal; Silverman). Problematics associated with multidirectional or interconnected memories are now increasingly visible in memory studies, with this work also underpinned by recent shifts in historiography. Historians of Germany have, for instance, shed light on the links between colonial violence and the Holocaust (Kim; Madley; Mazower; Olusoga and Erichsen; Zimmerer).

As is often the case, literature and the creative arts have had a vanguard function in the emergence of such work at historical intersections, providing a space for experimentation immune to the threats of intellectual censorship or legal intervention. The aesthetics and poetics of memory literature have played a key role in illustrating and generating such multidirectionality. Rothberg drew on literature and film in developing his original concept, studying works such as Didier Daeninckx's 1984 detective novel *Meurtres pour mémoire* (Death in Memoriam) and Michael Hanneke's 2005 film thriller *Caché* (Hidden) to reflect on the links between the Holocaust and the Algerian War of Independence (Rothberg, *Multidirectional*

Memory). The Swedish author Sven Lindqvist explored in his *Utrota varenda jävel* (Exterminate All the Brutes) the interconnections of colonial brutalities and the Shoah. Lindqvist reveals the ways in which the barrier between memories of the Holocaust and of imperial genocides has been a site of great cultural tension. Similar approaches were evident in the visual, plastic and performance arts, where important work revealed 'artistic memory practices in which the European and the non-European are indissolubly folded into each other' (Huysen 1).

However, applying new models – primarily the multidirectional and decolonial – in approaches to public memory was very difficult to achieve. The interconnections between different moments of extreme violence that were established in critical memory theory were not well represented in public praxis, especially when this was state-endorsed. Holocaust Memorial Days were established in most European countries in the early 2000s. These were increasingly used to mark other genocides too, such as that against the Tutsi, but this approach invariably focussed on questions of difference rather than any interconnective paradigm. They could sometimes be connected to contemporary racisms against Black, Jewish and Roma communities in Europe in the name of 'never again' (Kushner), but nevertheless seldom linked the phenomenon of the Holocaust itself to the longer-term development of European racial violence linked to colonialism. In other cases, such days were in fact used to reassert national virtue and exceptionalism, as in Turkey and Hungary (Karakaya and Baer).

So, despite substantial *historical* research, and some popular pressure, there has been considerable resistance to the incorporation of a consciousness of Europe's colonial violence alongside the story of the Holocaust and Gulag – either in national debates or within EU public memory projects (Lawson; Sierp). This is particularly the case in Germany, where misreadings of the work of Achille Mbembe led to the philosopher being accused of relativising memories of the Holocaust and colonialism, whereas his work is much more about multidirectionality than competition (Rothberg, "The Specters of Comparison"; Khanna). Indeed, Mbembe's writings may be seen as an indictment of how Germany's privileging of Holocaust memory contributes to the 'refusal to acknowledge the practice of German colonialism and countenance the consequences' (Melber and Kössler). A major new museum in Berlin, the Humboldt Forum, due to open in 2020, also brought these issues of Germany's relationship to its colonial history to the fore. The housing of ethnographic collections in a rebuilt Prussian palace; the physical separation of 'primitive art' from the histories of European cultural progress told on nearby Museum Island; accusations of relative incuriosity concerning the relationship between colonialism and the collections themselves; and opposition from minority groups who felt their perspective was excluded from an institution that first and foremost celebrated German Enlightenment humanism, all rendered it a controversial project (El-Tayeb; Pelz; Steckenbiller).

Nevertheless, to a limited degree, there had been signs of a shift to acknowledge the dark sides of colonialism within specific national debates. In Belgium, as early as the 2000s, the question of whether the colonial practices of the Congo Free State where, from 1885 to 1908, an estimated 10–15 million Africans had died, constituted genocide, was publicly debated. Pressure started to be exerted on museums that addressed this colonial period, and demands to remove statues of Léopold II, sovereign of the Congo Free State, became audible (Hasian and Wood). In the Netherlands too, the Amsterdam Tropenmuseum, one of a number of imperial foundations grappling actively with the legacies of this colonial past, started first tentative steps of decolonisation of the institution (van Huis) with a temporary exhibition in 2003, 'Oostwärts! Kunst, cultuur en kolonialisme' (Eastwards! Art, culture and colonialism). This is now integrated into the museum's permanent collections and continues in recent displays such as 'Heden van het slavernijverleden' (Afterlives of Slavery). Efforts elsewhere were less successful, with the long-awaited refurbishment of displays in the Royal Museum for

Central Africa at Tervuren being met with widespread disappointment and major criticism at the perceived failure of an opportunity to address the institution's complicity in the excesses of Belgium's colonial past (Hassett).

A number of contributors to the current collection – notably Noussis on France, and Arens on Belgium – highlight how challenges to colonial memory are no longer contained within only national debates. The increasing transnational power of right-wing memory politics produced a counter-reaction, a growing realisation among the liberal left that colonialism's legacies need to be challenged in the realm of memory, leading to a much more assertive case for a decolonised public sphere across many Western countries.⁶ Such processes are evident in the museum and heritage sector, where groups such as Museum Detox in the UK have held heritage institutions to account regarding the attention they pay to deconstructing systems of inequality across their operations. Some historians and memory activists, most notably on the left and within minority communities, are therefore trying to break down such barriers, and use an understanding of violence now widely socially embedded through Holocaust memory to encourage their societies to face up to the brutality of their own imperial pasts. Initiatives are both state endorsed and community led, and although there are inevitable tensions between these approaches, complementarities are evident too.

This is very apparent vis-à-vis the memory of transatlantic slavery, which is relatively marginalised in the wider field of memory studies. Growing activism in this area is complemented by an emerging institutional activity that increasingly avoids the one-sided and often deeply insensitive emphases on abolitionism – evident at the commemorations of the 150th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in France in 1998, and the 200th anniversary in Britain in 2007. Indeed, the very choices of these dates centred the role of European powers as saviours, marginalising the experience of the enslaved as both oppressed and liberators. Avoiding past controversies around competing understandings of victimhood and the uniqueness of historical traumas (Burzlaff; Zierler), more recent work has also sought constructively to bring together study of the ways in which transatlantic slavery and the Shoah have been commemorated (Katz). In *Learning From the Germans*, Susan Neiman suggests, for instance, that any stress on 'comparative evil' should be replaced by attention to 'comparative redemption', allowing a focus on how communities have reacted to and processed their memories of difficult pasts. Increasingly, Germany's postwar confrontation with Nazism was publicly promoted as a model in the United States for its reckoning with slavery.

Recent public commemorations of transatlantic slavery have often been coordinated from the top down, although there is a pressing need to acknowledge the importance of the voices of the Black activists and politicians who have, often for decades, fought for such histories to gain greater visibility within state institutions. The advocacy of French Guianese politician Christiane Taubira and Martiniquan writer Édouard Glissant was crucial in the passing of the Taubira law in 2001, recognising historical slavery as a crime against humanity. The French state developed a major commemorative apparatus in this area, focused around annual events on 10 May, the National Day of Remembrance of the Slave Trade, Slavery and their Abolition, and culminating in the establishment in 2019 of the *Fondation pour la mémoire de l'esclavage*. Arguably a means of forging a unified 'duty of memory' in an area where – unlike that of the Algerian War of Independence – relative consensus exists, this nevertheless represents a state-endorsed process of 'coming to the terms with the past' that regularly attracts criticism from the far right. Marine Le Pen, leader of the *Rassemblement national* (National Rally), formerly the *Front national* (National Front), has repeatedly called for a 'rebalancing' of school curricula in this area (Sessions). Elsewhere, responding to the international reparations

⁶ See for example: the Horizon2020 CoHERE project, <https://research.ncl.ac.uk/cohere/>.

movement, major initiatives such as Universities Studying Slavery have seen higher education institutions in the United States and the United Kingdom addressing the direct and indirect place of slavery and its legacies in their histories. A report and series of recommendations produced by the University of Glasgow in 2018 (Mullen and Newman) has triggered parallel responses in other universities, suggesting various ways in which 'coming to the terms with the past' continues to benefit from a degree of institutional traction in relation to reparative memory practices in the twenty-first century. As such, they resonate with the 'Rhodes Must Fall' movement, a campaign launched in March 2015 against a statue commemorating Cecil Rhodes on the campus of the University of Cape Town, which has become a global movement advocating the 'decolonisation' of education.

That challenges to Western memory of colonialism and slavery are now part of transnational movements, and no longer confined to national debates, was made clear in the global impact of Black Lives Matter in the summer of 2020. This movement started in the United States in response to the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, and saw protests across the country that connected a populist president, contemporary state violence and the militarisation of the police with much longer histories of racial injustice. A striking aspect of the movement was its recourse to historical memory. Its insistence on understanding the long-term history of white supremacy as key to the struggle against contemporary racial injustice rapidly led to the targeting of buildings and monuments that represented this ideology and the survival of which embodied its persistent power. Waves of defacement, crowd-driven toppling and state-sanctioned removal of statues linked to the Civil War-era Southern slave-owning Confederacy spread across the United States. Steele's contribution to this special collection shows how a recent white memory politics that grew out of a feeling of decline in the United States' status as a great power – based on a sense that the Afghan and Iraqi conflicts were eventually lost – turned to memory politics. As the whiteness of a US populist right was rendered fragile, so its leaders revalorised the early twentieth-century 'Lost Cause' monuments – such as the Robert E. Lee statue in Richmond, Virginia – which evoked an earlier era of racial supremacy. It was partly the fact of this revival that made them such a focus for removal by protesters in 2020.

The Black Lives Matter movement soon inspired other acts of iconoclasm, particularly in post-imperial Western Europe. It was the consciousness of shared political objectives across Black communities in the United States and Europe that was crucial in creating a transnational challenge to the way in which imperialism and slavery were remembered. In Britain, attacks on monuments to those who had been complicit in the slave trade accelerated following the toppling of the late nineteenth-century statue to Bristol slaver and philanthropist Edward Colston in June 2020. In Belgium, monuments to Léopold II were defaced and removed. The movement spread well beyond Black communities on both sides of the Atlantic; this may have been due in part to the fact that the historical consciousness it brought to light provided a compelling counter-agenda to the ethno-populist visions of nation, identity and memory that had intensified over the previous decade. Yet entry into the mainstream of the idea that slavery and colonial violence were part of a system of racialised global supremacy that had potent legacies in the present quickly became a challenge to a Eurocentric memory culture. It placed under question a European tradition of using concern over racial injustice in the United States as a displacement tactic to evade confrontation with the continent's history of colonial violence (Younge; Wekker): questions of racism past and present were now brought straight to Europe's shores. And so there was also resistance and ambivalence. In Germany, an insistence on the singularity of Holocaust memory had to be restated, although a process leading to an apology for the Namibian genocide was accelerated (Melber). British opponents of the sudden, unplanned removal of statues often connected attacks on monuments that

commemorated slavery with a mostly invented fear that war memorials were to be next – to enable more effectively an argument, through conflation, that such attacks constituted an assault on national identity and indeed history itself. As they attempted to contain this street-level reckoning, they also responded by invoking, by way of contrast, the measured, state-sanctioned nature of German memory culture. In Eastern Europe, all this inspired a small Roma Lives Matter movement, and led to marches in solidarity with Black Lives Matters in various capitals; nonetheless, rightist populists pointed to its lack of relevance, drawing on well-established (and contested) arguments that the region had not participated in European colonialism.

Such appropriation is also to be read in the light of an established critique of any contemporary overemphasis on remembering history in terms of victims, trauma, melancholia and loss – a tendency mirrored in the approach to memory analysed by many of our contributors. It is the presence of such approaches in cultures of public memory that has, it is argued, fostered countervailing grievance cultures. Similarly, the dominant focus of memory studies has often been – as this collection demonstrates – on past violence, trauma and processes of ‘working through’, reconciliation and transitional justice. Thus, more recently, there have been sustained critiques of this paradigm, in an attempt to move memory beyond its exclusive focus on violence and victimisation (see Arnold-de Simone; Kansteiner; LaCapra; Radstone; Rigney).

As stated at the outset, this collection sits at the intersection of two AHRC research themes: ‘Care for the Future’ and ‘Translating Cultures’. The first of these seeks to historicise the contemporary; the second to foster comparative and transnational understandings, rooted in a sensitivity to linguistic and cultural variation, that challenge the universalisation of the particular. Responding to these agendas, the articles gathered here are an attempt to launch a wider debate regarding the perceived crisis in public memory practices in ‘coming to terms with the past’. As this introduction has demonstrated, they represent at the same time a critique of memory studies, an indication of the risks incurred by virtue of the field’s Eurocentrism and the need for more active internationalisation and accompanying decolonisation. As such, the essays that follow call for attention to a wider range of contexts and paradigms that will permit us to grasp the re-politicisation of memory in the twenty-first century – and the urgent need for the elaboration of new paradigms to allow us to understand such shifts.

5. Structure of the Collection

The contributions in this volume are organised around six main themes. The first centres on the tensions in contemporary forms of cosmopolitan memory, starting with Cristian Cercel’s piece which finds parallels between the recent boom in memory politics and the global rise of neoliberalism. Cercel follows the origins of both phenomena as they developed through the 1980s and 1990s, describes their spread through their mutual entanglement and ultimately demonstrates how their interconnected paths led to the current crisis of both liberal democracy and cosmopolitan memory. These connections generate questions about how best to use such memories for the future, and whether it is the future, rather than the past, with which we need to come to terms.

The paper by Lea David adopts a critical approach to the global ‘coming to terms with the past’ agenda and questions the purported universality and superiority of this model of transnational remembering, synonymous as it is with the preservation of human rights. She exposes some of the inconsistencies and paradoxes of its design, including the incongruity of applying patterns of dealing with trauma drawn from human psychology to something as heterogeneous as a whole nation, and reveals how the victim-centric focus of these memory politics creates destructive forms of societal competition and hierarchies of victimhood.

The following two articles build on the lessons learnt from these tensions and imagine different pathways that could lead out of the crisis of memory. The study by Anna Cento Bull and Hans Lauge Hansen is based on their results from the UNREST project, an EU-wide endeavour that explores the possibilities for a transnational remembering that is neither cosmopolitan nor antagonistic. This so-called agonistic mode of memory, drawing on the work of Chantal Mouffe, embraces conflict instead of 'coming to terms' with it and deliberately avoids attaching labels such as 'good' and 'evil' to groups or movements. The empirical evidence from Bull and Hansen's case studies, collected from various European museums and other heritage institutions, shows the real possibilities that flow from the effective application of these alternative memory pathways.

Adopting an approach inspired by postcolonial studies, Karen Salt reimagines Derek Walcott's concept of twilight zone in the context of the present-day crisis in memory politics. Her piece looks for different pathways to lead us out of this twilight of remembering and into a future that might leave the darkness of the past behind. Salt also stresses, however, that the way out lies in a continual process of becoming, rather than in aiming to reach a horizon point where that history is wholly forgotten.

The second theme revisits what became the fundamental 'never again' moment of European history, the memory of the Holocaust. The papers in this section trace the varied local manifestations of this supposedly global, or pan-European, memory and expose the frequent appropriation of these narratives into local populist movements.

Jelena Subotić explores how this universalist notion of the Holocaust as the ultimate symbol of the failure of human rights is frequently compared with the crimes of the communist regimes in Europe's former Eastern Bloc. Drawing on examples from various museums and commemorative practices, she follows the genesis of these developments, dating back to the acceptance of these countries into the shared memory space of the European Union, and then details how this creation of apparently seamless parallels between Nazi and communist victimhood feeds into nascent nationalist and populist narratives which consciously militate against the model of cosmopolitan memory.

Isabel Sawkins's article maps the development of Russia's memory of the Holocaust under Putin. Previously, the specificity of Jewish suffering was not emphasised over the wider national narrative of the Second World War. Yet as a Holocaust memory has emerged there for the first time, it has served Russian nationalist aims rather than become part of the liberal cosmopolitan version. Using the example of a celebrated film centred around a Soviet leader of a revolt in an extermination camp in Poland, Sawkins demonstrates how the Putin government uses stories of Russian Jewish heroism in order to emphasise the country's central position on the Eurasian stage, as its depiction intentionally shifts from ambivalence over the suffering of Russian Jews during the Second World War towards the glorification of heroes of the resistance in more recent years.

Stephan Neuhäuser illustrates Austria's complicated relationship with its involvement in the Second World War through the arduous process of opening the country's first national history museum. His contribution traces the complications and controversies surrounding the attempts to build the House of Austrian History in central Vienna, details the various methods through which its opponents tried to forestall its opening and discredit its aims, and finally links these movements with a nationwide reluctance to 'come to terms with' – or work through – the country's past.

The third theme leaves the European realm behind and traces the connections between new populist memory practices and the rise of right-wing authoritarianism across the globe. It starts with two South American examples. Nina Schneider scrutinises Jair Bolsonaro's rise to power in Brazil while asking whether the election of a president openly supporting

right-wing dictatorships and other human rights violations can be ascribed to a 'failure' of memory politics. Her detailed overview of the Brazilian attempts – or the lack thereof – to 'come to terms with' the country's violent past on both ends of the political spectrum reveals ample scope for unintentional forgetting, and she indicates how these cases of seemingly nationwide amnesia are frequently exploited and deepened as part of Bolsonaro's politics.

Emilio Crenzel's article looks back at the three and a half decades since the fall of Argentina's dictatorial regime, contemplating how the transitional justice structures, and in particular, the country's pronounced emphasis on incorporating human rights into the judicial system, has influenced memory narratives. Through detailed analysis of four present-day judicial trials that took place under the current Macri administration, Crenzel demonstrates how a gradual erosion of the human rights paradigm has been justified through reinterpretations of the country's own history of dictatorship, and how the inter-American system for the protection and defence of human rights was undermined in right-wing attempts to return justice to the national sphere. He also explores the strength of the backlash against these tendencies from those liberals and progressives who refuse to equate 'coming to terms with the past' with political impunity.

Across the Pacific, Deirdre McKay uses examples from recent Filipino history to investigate one of the newest and as yet rarely explored agents of the present-day memory crisis: social media. Through her study of Rodrigo Duterte's presidential campaign and his depiction of the national memory of the Martial Law Era of the 1980s, McKay demonstrates how Facebook and other platforms were deliberately used to create alternative interpretations of history, and how the global reach of these media allowed for their spread far beyond the country's official borders. Her study reveals just how important it is to include such material in any discussions on memory politics, given an increasingly globalised world that uses social media as its primary means of communication, while also emphasising the new challenges associated with the archiving and evaluation of these sources.

Lastly, Brent Steele's chapter addresses the United States under Donald Trump as the president seeks parallels between the military politics of his administration and the memory of the American Civil War in the Southern states. By juxtaposing the reinterpretation of Civil War memory through the Lost Cause mythology and the erection of memorials in the South against the trauma of military defeats following the War on Terror of the 2000s, Steele discovers how the concept of national loss may precipitate the rise of populist memory politics within a wider context of socio-political and economic crises. During the demonstrations in the United States in May and June 2020 that followed the killing of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis, those monuments to the Confederacy that had been revalorised by a recrudescing white populism, such as the Robert E. Lee statue and the Daughters of the Confederacy building in Richmond, were targeted by protesters.

The fourth theme traces the pathways of right-wing populist memories in European countries that were once colonisers. It starts with two French case studies. Paul Max Morin's chapter demonstrates how the unchallenged coexistence of conflicting memories, aiming to appease all sides while not asking any uneasy questions about the past, can easily feed into the rise of extremisms present in Europe since the turn of the millennium. Using examples from the discourses surrounding the Algerian War of Independence in France, Morin shows how an allegedly peaceful method of remembrance devoid of critical reflections – as currently pursued by the French president Emmanuel Macron – leaves scope for easy appropriation of these national memories by groups on both sides of the political spectrum, and how the lack of a clear national narrative can result in a reversal of the victim–perpetrator dynamic, fuelled by nationwide insecurities and frustrations.

Giorgos Noussis then explores how the different presidencies of the past two decades have addressed the topic of national memory. He focuses on the French activist Maurice

Audin, whose death in Algeria under French military torture became a symbol of the anticolonial struggle. By juxtaposing Nicolas Sarkozy's anti-repentance approach with Emmanuel Macron's ostentatiously public apology to Audin's widow, Noussis positions each of these stances in their respective socio-political contexts, reveals the motives underpinning the different approaches to national memories and links these with the difficult transformation of a living memory into a cultural one.

Britain's memory politics vis-à-vis the country's colonial past is recounted by Michelle Gordon, who demonstrates how the concept of British 'exceptionalism' helped crystallise a mythological image of a less violent colonial past within the context of recent Brexit debates. These narratives continue resurfacing in political as well as in public discussions, and Gordon demonstrates the dangerous potential of such partial depictions of the past when used as a tool in legitimising exclusionist practices. She suggests that both the core of the problem and its solution can be found in the communication channels between historians and the wider public, and calls for a greater contextualisation of Britain's colonial past within the broader discourse of national history.

Sarah Arens considers the role of visual cultures in the complex web of memories tied to the colonial past in Africa through an analysis centred around a comic book set during the First World War in Belgian Congo. Behind the story of an unlikely friendship between a Belgian colonial officer and a native soldier, Arens traces patterns of preconceptions that resonate in Belgian society to this day and demonstrates that the frequently underestimated medium of comic books or graphic novels can provide a nuanced depiction of competing national memories while remaining accessible to a wide range of audiences.

The fifth theme addresses left-wing responses to these new memory politics, examining the recurring patterns of the violent past(s) and questioning the echoes and limitations of reconciliation practices. Noa Vaisman's article, centred on the disappeared Argentinian activist Santiago Maldonado, follows the ripples of the country's dictatorial regime awakened through the actions and discourses surrounding this disappearance. She explores how the conflicting narratives of a violent history can help to recover these patterns despite the claims that the past has already been dealt with, and ultimately highlights the limits of such practices within the broader context of the transitional justice movements in Latin America.

Ronald Suresh Roberts draws on his personal involvement with South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the 1990s and reflects on how its approach has been considered and reconsidered in the three decades following its conception. He reveals how the frameworks of 'transitional justice' came to eclipse the original aims of the African National Congress government, and how the anticolonial and anti-apartheid aims that were at the core of the ANC's agenda developed under the influence of global philanthropists into a recycled version of an older colonial ideology.

Finally, the sixth theme goes beyond strictly local case studies and looks at ways in which populism and memory negotiate increasingly international spaces. Donald Maingi offers an insight into the work of Kenyan artists who used art to process their country's history in the aftermath of the violent Kenyan post-election crisis of 2007–2008, as well as their country's shifting international position. Through political satire that combines global populism with local memories of the failings in Kenya's transitional justice process, the artists create vivid connections between the errors of the past and the present-day neoliberal crisis in memory politics. Maingi's use of examples from various artistic media, including paintings, political cartoons and puppet show posters, highlights the potential for art to be a compelling unifier and powerful stage for scrutinising a community's relationship with its past.

Lastly, Kayoko Takeda's research combines memory studies with translation studies in a project analysing the English versions of speeches from Japan's prime minister, Shinzo Abe, relating to various points of the country's contested war history. Focusing on frequently debated keywords such as 'comfort women' and 'forced labour', her comparison demonstrates that the past can be strategically adapted and manipulated in the process of interpreting to suit the expectations of target audiences, showing the crucial role of translation in producing transnational memories.

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