



RETROSPECT: A TOPONYMIST'S OBSERVATIONS ON MEMORY

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All my life I have simply believed that what is once done can never be undone and that, in fact, everything remains forever. In short, Being has a memory. Václav Havel, To the Castle and Back, 2008; Chapter 7.

Abstract: *It is axiomatic to state that many of the problems associated with political and cultural toponymy have the events of history as their root cause. From the South Atlantic to the North Pacific, via the endonym/exonym dilemmas of Europe, history has left us a legacy of ongoing toponymic disputes and problems. Yet although history provides the origin of these difficulties, it does not tell the whole story. There is a more proximate cause of our present-day problems, namely the lenses and filters we have applied in our approach to that history. By means of these modifying influences, which are principally perception and perspective, we come to store history in our memory in a particular way. And whereas the facts of history cannot be altered, we are able – if we wish – to modify or reappraise our perceptions and perspective, and accordingly our memory. Memory is therefore a crucial component in toponymy, one which a toponymist can usefully study for its own sake, both in broad brush and in close detail. In this paper I have attempted to provide my own highly personal observations on memory, writing as a toponymist. The result is therefore not a conventional paper on ‘toponymy and memory’, but rather a journey exploring memory in its own right, with appropriate nods and acknowledgements to toponymy along the way. The paper ranges in time from the French Revolution to the present-day economic difficulties in Greece, and geographically from Europe through the Middle East to the Pacific Rim.¹*

Key words: *memory, history, perception, perspective, toponymist*



1. INTRODUCTION

The past is always with us. Past geological activity has bequeathed to us our geomorphology, which has subsequently been modified by our own human activity into the landscapes as we know them today. Past events that have taken place in both the physical and the human calendar have shaped the way we think about our present world. We build statues, monuments and other constructions designed to commemorate the events of the past. Certain dates in particular are etched into our minds: the Gregorian or Western calendar is specifically geared to reminding millions of the birth of Christ, while in Britain the year 1066 can be cited by all schoolchildren as the last occasion on which their island was successfully invaded.

To consider the past we need certain tools, two of which will no doubt spring quickly to mind. First of all we need the discipline that we label as 'History', a subject which in Britain is pigeon-holed within the domain of the Arts but which is in reality a *Wissenschaft* in the sense that it constitutes a rigorously constituted body of organised knowledge. The second tool involves what we know as 'Memory', the faculty or capacity that we each possess for the recall and processing of information from the past. But the relationship between these two tools is complex, and connecting them involves a certain process which the following section will endeavour to explain.

2. DEFINITIONS AND PROCESS

Arriving at a wholly satisfactory and agreed definition of history has over the years proved to be an elusive task. The twentieth century witnessed several English-language works on the subject, in particular *The Idea of History* (COLLINGWOOD, 1946) and *What is History?* (CARR, 1961). Notable philosopher-historians of that same era, including Hannah Arendt and Isaiah Berlin, also had their say on the matter at various junctures. More recent works include *In Defence of History* (EVANS, 1997) and *The Uses and Abuses of History* (MACMILLAN, 2010). Given the complexities that even these expert writers have encountered and noted, it seems sensible to adopt a simple and straightforward working definition for the purposes of this present paper, one which defines history as both (a) the sum of past events, and also – within that all-encompassing parameter – (b) each single event in the past.

This working definition of history is designed to be objective. However, for better or worse, it is not possible for complete objectivity to take us any further. Events of the past – especially those which are of the greatest significance – are of course very often recorded at the time, which is after all how we of the present era come to know of them. Such events are then also written about at later dates. This initial recording and later writing of history is termed historiography, and it is at this early juncture in the study of history that the question of subjectivity enters the equation.

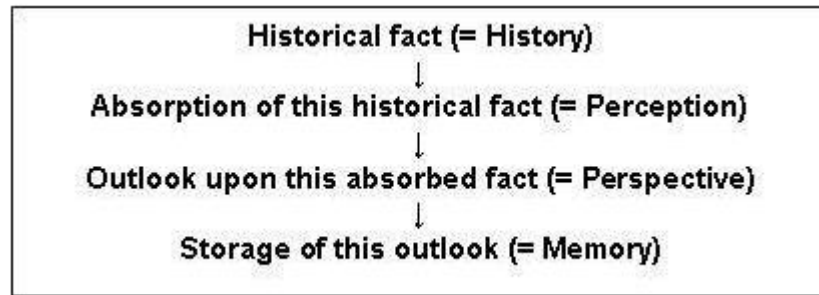
A dilemma is encountered; it is impossible to deal with the events of the past without speaking or writing about them, but it is well-nigh impossible to speak or write about them – at least in an interesting, informative and worthwhile manner – without introducing some degree of subjectivity. An example from the Cold War will serve to illustrate this point. In 1961, a wall of concrete, reinforced by metal and supplemented by several devices aimed at deterrence, was erected across the city of Berlin. That is a

matter of history; an indisputable fact. But how we proceed from that fact – how we choose to define this wall in our speech and writings – is a matter of historiography, of interpretation. Should it be considered a gross and iniquitous obstacle to freedom, or a legitimate tool designed for protection from fascist invasion? Thus subjectivity immediately comes into play, and the manner in which we address such issues inevitably involves us in considering differing points of view: did the persecution of Armenians in Anatolia in 1915 constitute a ‘massacre’ or a ‘genocide’; did the events of 1937 in Nanjing amount to an ‘incident’ or a ‘rape’?

Of course, there is nothing inherently inappropriate about historiography. In fact, it is a requirement. We cannot simply leave the facts of history bare and untouched, without comment or interpretation, for that would take us nowhere, just as knowing that a certain chromatic reality is represented by a particular wavelength of light does not tell us anything about the nature of that light. In the same way that light requires interpretation into the vocabulary of colour for the chromatic reality to be rendered useful, so historical fact needs interpretation into the realms of its context for sense to be made of it. And just as the vocabulary of colour differs culturally from society to society, and indeed even personally among individuals, so the interpretation of historical fact likewise varies too.

There are two elements involved in the interpretation process described above. These elements are perception and perspective – two oft-confused capabilities which are in fact quite distinct from each other. Perception is an inward process of absorption that enables us to identify, interpret and understand the objects that we encounter. This process may prove problematic, should different societies or individuals have differences in their understanding and interpretation. Perspective, on the other hand, is an outward process, whereby we form a view – literal or figurative – on some object that we encounter. We might here usefully consider a mountain. From an early age, we come to understand that if we can see a tall and rocky landform, with steep sides rising to a snow-capped summit, we are in all probability looking at something called a mountain. This is our (inward) perception at work. But if we always view a particular mountain from the same valley, our (outward) perspective on it will be limited, for we will not be grasping the full three-dimensional and multi-faceted totality of the feature. To see the feature in its entirety, we need to explore the perspectives from all its surrounding valleys.

Historical fact is in many respects similar to our mountain. As a rule we begin with some (perhaps incontrovertible) fact, which we then inwardly perceive or absorb, enabling each of us to come to our own individual outward perspective on that fact. But many societies and individuals are likely to come to differing and limited views regarding the fact, because they look at it from a less than complete perspective. To be aware of and overcome this limitation, and gain a complete picture of some problematic historical fact, it is not sufficient simply to discuss it with those in the same ‘valley’ as ourselves, because they are likely to have the same perspective as we do. We need to discuss the problem with people in the ‘valleys’ on the other side, who will have a different perspective on it. The sequential process involving perception and perspective can be illustrated as follows:



As the diagram suggests, for most of us, unless we are very young schoolchildren who simply learn a historical fact by rote and do not think further about it, it is not the fact itself that is stored in the memory. Instead, our memory storage is of our perspective on the fact, which in turn is based on our perception of it. The process can be simplified in the following manner:

History → Perception → Perspective → Memory

We can now move on to considering memory itself. It is certainly a complicated faculty, but for the purposes of this present paper we can largely set aside its psychological aspects and divide it instead into two straightforward types: personal and collective. Personal memory is simply the store of memories that each individual carries with them, based on the events that they have experienced in their own lives (though it is not entirely internal, in that it is formed of events that frequently involve interaction with others). By definition, someone's personal memory cannot outlast their own individual lifetime. Collective memory on the other hand is a more social affair, whereby the memories of individuals within a society or section of society fuse together to form an agreed narrative which that grouping can accept as being a true reflection of its past. Collective memory can and does endure over lengthy periods, and – unlike history – it is “concerned not with the past as such, but only with the past as it is remembered” (ASSMANN, 1998: p. 9). And the past as it is remembered is the product of society's desire to find a “usable past” (WINTER, 2006: p. 66), one which can be utilised, mobilised and if necessary adapted to meet current (frequently political) requirements. Collective memory was an integral part of the formation of national identities in Europe in the so-called Age of Nationalism during the nineteenth century, and it appeared again in the twentieth century as a vital component of mythologised nationalist drives in for example the former Yugoslavia. Today, that same fashion is still with us; we are constantly being encouraged – even exhorted – to *remember*; we are assured that this is beneficial and cathartic for us, both on a personal and a collective level. But memory is not history; our storage is of historical facts that we have subjected to the processes of perception and perspective.

Located somewhere between personal and collective memory, and combining features of both, is a phenomenon denoted by the oft-used expression ‘living memory’, which relates to the shared memory of the present generation. And interestingly, collective memory is not simply the sum of a society's multitude of personal memories. There is some common ground, of course; they possess connections of belief, sentiment

and understanding. But whereas personal memory is by definition intensely individual, collective memory – as we shall see in a later section – can result from a top→down approach that has been influenced or even dictated by authorities. The historian Jonathan Vance considers that the notion of collective or shared memory involves a certain and particular proprietary attitude by a society towards events in its past:

A shared memory is one of the cornerstones of a society as we understand it. Individuals who constitute any social order share a common vision of history that locates the community in time and space, giving it an appreciation of its own past as well as a sense of its future (VANCE, 1997: p. 9).

As with the definition of history, so the connections between history and memory have also been under frequent consideration (see for example CUBITT, 2007; OLICK, 2011; BELL, 2006; ZERUBAVEL, 2003). The important point to note here, again, is that history and memory are not at all one and the same. If, as suggested above, the processes of historiography, perception and perspective take history a step towards the realms of subjectivity, then memory risks leading us even further along that same path.

3. MEMORY AND CONFABULATION

The cinematic musical *Gigi*, which premièred in 1958 to audiences in New York, became one of the most successful films of its era. It famously featured the song ‘*I remember it well*’, sung by Maurice Chevalier and Hermione Gingold, in their roles as Honoré and Mamita respectively. The lyrics of this song, a duet which still enjoys a certain popularity today, begin as follows:

Honoré:	We met at nine
Mamita:	We met at eight;
Honoré:	I was on time
Mamita:	No, you were late;
Honoré:	Ah yes, I remember it well.
Honoré:	We dined with friends
Mamita:	We dined alone;
Honoré:	A tenor sang
Mamita:	A baritone;
Honoré:	Ah yes, I remember it well.

The duet continues for several further verses in the same vein, splendidly illustrating the potential imperfections of personal memory. Two people meet for dinner at some point in time, and both have good romantic reason to remember the occasion accurately. Yet the two recollections turn out to be diametrically opposed. The film is of course a work of fiction, but the sense underlying these lyrics – that memory is fallible – has been shown time and again to have legitimacy behind it. Such unintended and inadvertent alterations to ‘fact’ amount to a phenomenon known in

psychology as confabulation. The cognitive psychologist Elizabeth Loftus has recently tried to explain this in today's terms:

[M]any people believe that memory works like a recording device. You just record the information, then you call it up and play it back when you want to answer questions or identify images. But decades of work in psychology has shown that this just isn't true. Our memories are constructive. They're reconstructive. Memory works a little bit more like a Wikipedia page. You can go in there and change it, but so can other people (LOFTUS, 2013).

Loftus is here echoing the thoughts of the Italian writer and Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi, writing originally in Italian in the mid-1980s and seen here in a later translation:

Human memory is a marvellous but fallacious instrument. This is a threadbare truth known not only to psychologists but also to anyone who has paid attention to the behaviour of those who surround him, or even to his own behaviour. The memories which lie within us are not carved in stone; not only do they tend to become erased as the years go by, but often they change, or even grow, by incorporating extraneous features (LEVI, 2013: p. 15).

Loftus and Levi speak in generalised terminology. The historian Catherine Merridale, on the other hand, relates her personal experience of encountering this phenomenon while researching her classic work on the role of memory in today's Russia:

The evidence that I collected is often contradictory – people can contradict themselves in a single breath – and many would say different things if I interviewed them a second time, or found someone to talk to them later in a different way (MERRIDALE, 2000: p. 413).

Geographers, too, have made very similar comments about the vagaries of memory, as David Lowenthal has written:

The subjective nature of memory makes it both a sure and a dubious guide to the past. We know when we have a memory...[but]...particular memories often do turn out to be wrong or even invented...[and]... the unreliability of recall is a matter of common experience (LOWENTHAL, 1985: p. 200).

There is an important point to note here; that memory is a coin of two sides. There is not merely the obverse facet of remembering or misremembering, but also a reverse facet which involves forgetting. The sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel writes as follows:

As we very well know, not everything that happens is preserved in our memory, as many past events are actually cast into oblivion. Even what we conventionally consider 'history' and thereby include in our history textbooks is not a truly comprehensive record of everything that ever happened, but only a small part of it that we have come to preserve as public memory (ZERUBAVEL, 2003: p. 2).

The simple process of the passage of time can induce forgetfulness (CONNERTON, 2009), and indeed time is often cited as being a 'great healer' in that it allows us to forget as part of a therapeutic process.

4. MEMORY, MANIPULATION AND DISSENT

Not all distortions of the past are the result of confabulation; they can also result from manipulation. For whereas memory can be created out of history, it can also be manipulated by current political and societal pressures which can fall at any of a number of points on a spectrum ranging from innocent interpretation to malign travesty. And here we return to the vagaries of historiography. If it is not possible to be absolutely objective about the past, then whose interpretation of that past should hold sway? The political scientist Zoltán Dujisin has neatly and succinctly remarked that collective memories are:

...a narrative of the past through which memory-makers, such as public intellectuals, historians, journalists and politicians, select what should be remembered, how this should be done and why we should remember (see SHAFIR, 2014: p. 955).

Academics and other experts can and do of course debate such matters among themselves, but the opinion of the general public as a whole is largely influenced by politicians and journalists, who accordingly wield great influence and possess huge potential for manipulative power in the formation of collective memory. Politicians especially play a crucial role in the cultivation of memory – and sometimes indeed of myth. The German author and diarist Friedrich Reck, a dissident under the Nazi regime who was to perish in its clutches, noted in 1942 how people forcibly subjected to only one single interpretation of events “believe everything they are told...[I]literally everything is believed today, if it is printed or broadcast, or publicly proclaimed under official auspices” (RECK, 2013: p. 56).

The historian Gregor Thum has shown how the post-war communist authorities in Poland endeavoured to create a memory narrative of traditional Polishness in their newly acquired western territories, downplaying the rich Germanic heritage by using commemorative monuments and plaques, toponymic changes, textbooks and terminology such as 'Recovered Territories' to convince their inhabitants (and maybe also themselves) that this territory “was and will be Polish” (THUM, 2011: p. 268). Only since the downfall of communism have the German and Polish traditions of this territory finally been permitted to find their proper equilibrium.

In 1989, Serbian president Slobodan Milošević exhorted his fellow-countrymen to ultra-nationalistic fervour on the occasion of the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo Polje – a battle which their Serbian forefathers are generally considered by neutral observers actually to have lost rather than won. This was an example of one single consistent collective memory being amplified and taken to excess. But collective memory can also be changed, or even wholly reversed. In 2014, Russian president Vladimir Putin publicly rehabilitated the 1939 Treaty of Non-Aggression between the Soviet Union and Germany (the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact), thus reverting to the Soviet-

era view that the treaty had been a necessary *démarche* to buy more mobilisation time for protecting the Soviet Union from Fascist invasion. In doing this, Putin blithely reversed the post-Soviet interpretation of the treaty as a straightforward and cynical dismemberment of Poland. To a large extent, especially in countries where the media is government-controlled, public opinion appears to follow such re-interpretations of history as if they amounted to unquestionable fact.

Frequently, as with Serbia in 1989, it is the 'losers' who hold on to their collective memory more steadfastly than the 'victors'. The writer and activist Rebecca Solnit has captured this point well:

Memory is often the spoils of the defeated, and amnesia may sometimes be the price of victory ... most vanquished can think of themselves as wronged, and being wronged is all too fine a foundation for identity (SOLNIT, 2006: p. 20).

The economic and financial difficulties faced by Greece in current times have also seen this same point raised by Gesine Schwan, a German academic and politician:

"We should make a financial approach to victims and their families", said Gesine Schwan, a respected member of the Social Democrat party (SPD), who share power with Merkel's conservatives. "It would be good for us Germans to sweep up after ourselves in terms of our history", she told Spiegel Online. "Victims and descendants have longer memories than perpetrators and descendants." (GUARDIAN, 2015B).

Schwan's final sentence in particular brings up in turn the question of victimhood, a state of mind which the writer and historian Ian Buruma has likened to a 'pseudoreligion' (BURUMA, 1999). It can be fashionable and even potentially rewarding for a society on the receiving end of one of history's slights to make victim status the centrepiece of its collective memory. The French philosopher Paul Ricoeur seems indeed to encourage this:

We need, therefore, a kind of parallel history of, let us say, victimisation, which would counter the history of success and victory. To memorise the victims of history – the sufferers, the humiliated, the forgotten – should be a task for all of us (RICOEUR, 1999: p. 10-11).

Calls for victimhood can amount to little more than an excuse for justifying the perpetuation of hatreds. The 9.18 Historical Museum in Shenyang, the capital of Liaoning province in north-eastern China, has as its motto the words 'Do Not Forget Our Nation's Humiliation' (*wuwang guochi*), a reference to the Japanese occupation that began on September 18th 1931 (SHENYANG, 2015). The exhortation always to remember humiliation in this way encourages an ongoing dislike – even a hatred – of the perpetrators of that humiliation, in this instance Japan. Yet the promotion of humiliation and victimhood cannot be the answer to the grievances of history. Whilst it is legitimate and even proper to pass on to younger generations the lessons of history, it

is surely reprehensible to pass on to those same generations any associated hatreds. Ultimately, it is only:

[w]hen society has become sufficiently open and free to look back, from the point of view neither of the victim nor of the criminal, but of the critic, only then will the ghosts be laid to rest (BURUMA, 1995: p. 249).

It is also worthwhile contemplating here the concept of 'collective guilt'; whether it is appropriate to tarnish all members of a particular nation with a single accusation of guilt. The Czech writer, dissident and politician Václav Havel, who lived through the dark days of his country's communist history, was adamant on this question. Having pondered long and hard the question of the post-1945 expulsion of the Sudeten Germans from his country, he had become convinced that guilt was essentially a personal matter; that the concept of 'collective guilt' was in fact a fallacy (ŽANTOVSKÝ, 2014: p. 332).

As with confabulation, the act of forgetting is an important part of the manipulation of memory too. Indeed, forgetting has been a common theme within authoritarian states in particular. The virtual abolition of traditional *hanja* characters in North Korea, leaving *hangeul* script as the only approved mechanism of writing, was a classic act of intentional forgetting, of rendering the past inaccessible, as was the implementation in the same country of a new calendar based on the birth-year of its first leader, Kim Il-Sung. The imposition in 1940 of Cyrillic script across the languages of the Soviet Union deprived the population of Turkic-speaking areas of the country of their literary heritage. The introduction of a new calendar, beginning with Year Zero, during the period of Khmer Rouge terror in the Cambodia of the 1970s was enacted with similar intentions. The common factor in all these instances was the controlling authority of communist regimes, which is not surprising since communism was purposefully designed to "create people without a memory", in the apt words of the website of the Romanian Memorial of the Victims of Communism and of the Resistance (MVCR 2009).

Dissenters from the collective memory of the day can design ingenious methods for preserving their own narrative. When the Nazis assumed power in Germany, they placed Einstein on the list of those of whom they disapproved, and ordered that every bust and statue of this Jewish physicist be destroyed. However, staff at the Einstein Tower, an observatory in Potsdam, had other ideas. They dutifully removed the statue of Einstein from the grounds of their institute, but instead of destroying it, they hid it (successfully) for the duration of the Reich. And as a mark of defiance they went further; on the bare plinth, where the statue had stood, they ensured that one small stone – *ein Stein* – was always present. Thus, for those in the know, the memory of Einstein was successfully preserved (WIKI, 2015A).

We can see, then, that both the assertion and the manifestation of collective memory depend on who has the authority to determine what 'collective memory' should be. In other words it is selective, and those who do not share the received common vision of the past, and who find themselves with opinions outside the accepted parameters of this collective memory, often cannot comfortably – or even safely – display their own memories, except perhaps subversively (where for example graffiti may play a role). This is, to say the least, unfortunate, for why should each individual within a society be expected to conform to an identical view of the past; an identical

historiography and memory? Collective memory can lead dangerously towards coercion, something which is evident in many societies today. One thinks here of the forced ceremonies and conscripted extravaganzas that are the hallmark of totalitarian regimes – compulsory participation in or attendance at Soviet May Day parades and the choreographed mass games of the Arirang Festival in North Korea come to mind.

But coercion exists to a lesser degree in other societies too; in deferential societies such as that of Japan, and even in less constrictive societies such as exist in Europe. There is for example a tradition for individuals in Britain to wear a commemorative replica poppy in the lapel, to mark the annual anniversary of the November 11th 1918 armistice which ended the First World War. Each year, the pressure to wear this poppy earlier and earlier seems to increase, especially on figures in the public eye, and there is now almost an unacknowledged race to be the first to be seen with this symbol in the lapel – perhaps as early as mid-October. Certainly, in the so-called Western World it is becoming difficult for those with genuine doubts about the wisdom of a single unanimous collective memory to register their dissent, as witness the disapproving eyebrows raised at those declining to demonstrate their support for the ‘*Je suis Charlie*’ campaign that arose in the aftermath of the Paris murders of *Charlie Hebdo* journalists in January 2015.

5. MEMORY AND REAPPRAISAL

Manipulation is not the only way in which the past can be ‘altered’. It is also possible for the past to be genuinely re-interpreted and re-evaluated – indeed, at times it is necessary for us to undertake such reappraisals. As David Lowenthal has written:

Memories are also altered by revision. Contrary to the stereotype of the remembered past as immutably fixed, recollections are malleable and flexible; what seems to have happened undergoes continual change. Heightening certain events in recall, we then reinterpret them in the light of subsequent experience and present need (LOWENTHAL, 1985: p. 206).

The historian John Dower has related how a “heroic American narrative” surrounded the detonation of the atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the final throes of the Second World War, and that “[b]y contrast, commentary about the human consequences of the bombs on the largely civilian populations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is generally shunned, for this undermines the heroic narrative” (DOWER, 2012: pp. 162-3). Yet Dower quite properly urges us not to regard this version as other than an immediate and simplistic response, telling us that if we wish to be considered serious thinkers we must:

...draw on new perspectives and data to reconsider and rethink received wisdom.....the passage of time, the discovery of new information, the posing of new questions all may lead to revised understanding and reconstruction of past events (DOWER, 2012: p. 181).

Several decades on from the event, we now know much more of the context of the bomb: the political and military pros and cons; the human cost (including to non-Japanese personnel such as Korean hard labour conscripts); documentary accounts, and so on; and we must take all these points into consideration in defining or re-defining our own interpretations. Other events of great importance, such as the role of the Vichy government in early 1940s France, require similar frequent reappraisal and re-evaluation in the light of exactly the same criteria that Dower mentions in relation to Japan (see for example MOOREHEAD, 2014). And Paul Ricoeur, despite his promotion of victimhood recognition, leaves us in no doubt that we have a responsibility to keep our memories as impartial as possible, as our duty to the future (RICOEUR, 1999: p. 10).

Germany has managed to balance the appraisal of its twentieth-century past remarkably well. As the journalist and author Andrew Cohen has noted, there is no shortage in Germany of tangible memorials to the Nazi past. Most notable in Berlin is the Holocaust Memorial (properly the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe: *Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas*), but there are other pointed statements too, such as the conversion of the Wannsee villa – where Jewish extermination policies were agreed by the Nazis in 1942 – into a venue for the presentation of Holocaust history. The German Historical Museum, which tells visitors of two thousand years of history, unflinchingly includes an honest assessment of the Nazi period within that story (COHEN, 2008). It is true that in recent years there has been a diversification of memory, so that for instance the victims of Allied bombing raids on German cities can be remembered too, but this has not invalidated the major thrust of German collective memory, which was succinctly reaffirmed by President Joachim Gauck in a January 2015 speech marking the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp: “There is no German identity without Auschwitz” (GAUCK, 2015). All in all, we can agree with the historian Geoffrey Cubitt when he writes that “[t]he past is flexible ... [c]ollective pasts are fluid imaginative constructions” (CUBITT, 2007: p. 203) – an assertion which perhaps calls to mind the well-known Soviet joke that ‘the future is certain; it is only the past that is unpredictable’.

6. TIME AND PLACE

The events of Hiroshima on that fateful day in August 1945 were clearly destined even at the time to be of historic significance, no matter how historiography and memory might come to treat them. But not every item of the past – not every ‘piece of history’ – that ultimately acquires historic status is necessarily quite so obvious at the time it takes place. Often it is only retrospectively that we can identify the crucial watershed moments. The Italian scholar and writer Claudio Magris has written about this in his cultural exploration of the river Danube:

In the pure present, the only dimension, however, in which we live, there is no history. At no single instant is there such a thing as the Fascist period or the October Revolution...it is not the succession of these moments-without-history which creates history, but rather the correlations and additions brought to them by the writing of history. (MAGRIS, 2001: pp. 40-1).

Not until sometime afterwards can we “confer on an event its role and its importance” (MAGRIS 2001: p.40). The precise juncture at which this appraisal becomes possible is variable and difficult to judge, for time itself is slippery and elusive:

Time thins out, lengthens, contracts[u]nits of time ... are mysterious and difficult to measure ... The great historians, such as Braudel, have dwelt above all upon this mysterious aspect of duration (MAGRIS, 2001: p. 39).

We endeavour to bring some order to the chaos of history timelines by speaking of ‘centuries’ and ‘decades’, but these neat boxes are of course artificial constructs and they rarely function satisfactorily in considering the past. We cannot study nineteenth century European history, for example, without beginning at or around the time of the French revolution in 1789, and then spilling over into the first years of the twentieth century, and in recognising this, historians have customarily been forced to speak of ‘the long nineteenth century’. Nor can we easily judge where we are at the moment, now several years into what we have termed the twenty-first century. Hannah Arendt remarked that the activity of the mind always creates for itself *un présent qui dure*, a ‘gap between past and future’, where the chain of ‘nows’ rolls on relentlessly, so that the present is understood as precariously binding past and future together. The moment we try to pin it down, she continued, it is either a ‘no more’ or a ‘not yet.’ (ARENDR 1978). There is indeed a certain continuity in life, from the past through the present to the future, a continuity on which Eviatar Zerubavel remarks as follows:

Despite the conventional grammatical distinction between the past and present tenses, the past and the present are not entirely separate entities. The notion that we could actually identify a point prior to which everything is ‘then’ and subsequent to which everything is ‘now’ is an illusion (ZERUBAVEL 2003: p. 37).

One might in fact say that memory forms a continuum of experience. The danger, of course, is that one unjustifiably reads into this a certain inevitability of events – a certain teleology – whereas in reality (and contrary to that old Soviet joke) we cannot of course know what the future may bring. Here is Magris again:

Life, said Kierkegaard, can be understood only by looking backwards, even if it has to be lived looking forwards – that is, towards something that does not exist (MAGRIS 2001: p. 41).

The Canadian writer and broadcaster Chris Brookes has also written on this subject, again with the emphasis on looking backwards rather than forwards. Using the analogy of rowers who, because they face away from the direction of travel, can see the past from which they have come but cannot see the future to which they are headed, he writes:

I have a small rowboat in the bay near my house, and when you’re rowing a boat, of course you’re facing the other way. To get to your destination, it is very inefficient to keep stopping and looking over your shoulder. You’re sure

to find that you've been rowing a bit off course, and you'll correct that, but you'll keep having a zigzag kind of a journey. On the other hand, if you keep your eye on the shore where you set off from, from your place of embarkation – from the past, in other words – and keep your course from that, you'll get to where you're going – to the future – directly (BROOKES 2014).

Time and place fuse together in memory into one single image and remembrance (MALPAS 1999: p.176). As the Belgian literary critic Georges Poulet has remarked:

Beings surround themselves with the places where they find themselves, the way one wraps oneself up in a garment that is at one and the same time a disguise and a characterization. Without places, beings would be only abstractions. It is places that make their image precise and that give them the necessary support thanks to which we can assign them a place in our mental space, dream of them, and remember them (POULET, 1977: p. 26-7).

The social anthropologist Paul Connerton notes that in fact the identification of place with memory goes back through and beyond mediaeval times to the Classical era:

That memory is dependent on topography is an ancient insight. The so-called 'art of memory' was located within the great system of rhetoric that dominated classical culture, was reborn in the Middle Ages, flourished during the Renaissance, and only entered upon its demise during the period from the invention of printing to the turn of the eighteenth century. Cicero gave a succinct statement of its operative principle. 'Persons desiring to train this faculty of memory', he writes, 'must select places and form mental images of the things they wish to remember and store those images in the places, so that the order of the places will preserve the order of the things.' (CONNERTON, 2009: pp4-5).

We still find this association of time and place with memory today, of course. Writing about the state of Perak, in northern Malaysia, the geographer Hamzah Bin Muzaini notes how the most powerful memories often emerge in relation to local sites and landmarks that were of significance during the period of Japanese occupation during the Second World War. Passing these landmarks (such as for instance a school which had operated as a torture chamber) can trigger unpleasant memories even today, seventy years afterwards, and as a result people may still avoid passing such places (MUZAINI, 2015). The journalist Sarah Birke has recounted a still more recent association of time and place with memory when writing of life under the heel of Islamist militancy in the devastated Syria of today:

Residents said they were terrified of the group's horrific punishments. In a central square in Raqqa, heads are posted on spikes with a sign above them indicating what transgression was involved. The square used to be called Sahat al-Naem, or paradise, but is now called Sahat al-Jaheem, or hell; the doctor I met told me she took a route to work that took three times as long just to avoid it (BIRKE, 2015).

And a newspaper article by the journalist Martin Chulov, in relation to present-day northern Iraq, conveys very similar sentiments:

One Mosul local, who refuses to give his name, says: "I saw the destruction of the Prophet Jonah mosque, which is built on one of the oldest hills in Mosul. Isis called people and asked them to come and watch the destruction. It happened at 5.30pm on 24 July [2014]. They wanted to spread fear and agony in our hearts. It was the hardest thing to witness. After that, when I hear about the destruction of any other old mosques, I avoid going to that neighbourhood." (GUARDIAN, 2015C).

One could go on; the vacant niches left after the 2001 destruction of the sixth-century Buddhas of Bamiyan in Afghanistan also spring to mind as a locus at the intersection of time, place and memory. But although the above examples focus for the most part on associations of misery and despair, there are of course many happy associations of time, place and memory, too. And sometimes we decide that, after decades of grief, we positively need to revive some symbolic feature that provokes recall of a traumatic event in the past; the resurrection, seventy years after the event, of an original 1945 blue-and-grey tram to run along one of today's public transport routes in Hiroshima is a good example of this phenomenon (ASH, 2015).

In the radio broadcast mentioned earlier in this paper, Chris Brookes uses the former fishing grounds off Newfoundland to illustrate how places and toponyms from past times, which no longer retain their original validity today, nevertheless remain as memories that are still actively deployed:

The cod fishery, that sustained this place where I live for 500 years, was over-fished and suddenly, catastrophically, collapsed two decades ago. The cod haven't come back. Yet certain places down there underneath my boat, ledges and shoals, have names; ancient names; never written, but passed down by word of mouth through generations of fishermen. Tinkers, Little Hannover, The Frig; centuries-old names of fishing spots. They used to mean 'here's where to drop your line'; 'here's where the codfish are likely to be'. The fishery collapsed, but the names are still there. What do those names mean now, when the fish have gone and taken meaning with them? ... One of my close neighbours is a retired inshore fisherman, still remembering all those names, still setting his compass by them. The cod fishery was his home, his Promised Land. ... He remembers these like a refugee now from the Promised Land, like a dream (BROOKES, 2014).

This litany of place names amounts to a veritable toponymy of the past tense, and informs us again that memory involves both time and place. It does not have to be of the distant past; it can just as significantly haunt or delight us, and influence our behaviour, if it is recent or even contemporaneous.

7. VALUING AND COMMEMORATION

David Lowenthal has provided several reasons why we should – and indeed do – value our past (LOWENTHAL 1985: chapter 2). Among these reasons he includes familiarity, reaffirmation and validation, identity, guidance and enrichment. He also notes that "[r]emembering the past is crucial for our sense of identity...to know what we

were confirms that we are.” (LOWENTHAL, 1985: p. 197). How exactly do we go about making this remembrance; in what ways do we acknowledge memory and commemorate the past? In an interesting paper on memory and identity in the former Yugoslavia, the political scientist Sabrina Ramet notes that collective memory is only part of a wider story which also includes collective forgetting (*i.e.* selective judgement as to what is remembered and how it is remembered), collective trauma, collective neurosis and collective paranoia. Out of these phenomena, she regards collective trauma in particular as the “prism through which we so often approach the past” (RAMET, 2013: p. 871).

Ramet proceeds to examine the sources for this ‘memory’. She observes that they are not necessarily always in harmony with one another, and can in fact provide mutually exclusive accounts of history. Furthermore, argues Ramet, they are not immutable, but are capable of change through time, under various influences. The memory sources that she lists are as follows (RAMET, 2013: p. 873-4):

- School textbooks
- Government commissions
- Literature
- Public monuments
- Public commemorations
- Television
- Art
- Museums
- Court decisions
- Street names

Regarding government commissions, Ramet gives as an example the 2006 Romanian presidential commission, known informally as the Tismăneanu commission, which attempted to seek justice for the official misdemeanours of the communist era. But government commissions are not necessarily wholly benign. The lustration initiatives pursued in Poland during the Kaczyński presidency, *circa* 2007, also involved an avowed quest for justice, yet some felt that an element of revenge also seemed to be in evidence. As for museums, Ramet rightly points out that memory can be influenced not just by the existence of a museum, but also in finer detail by the sequences and connections made between and among the objects on display within a particular museum. One might cite here the Yushukan war museum at the Yasukuni Shrine in Japan, where the connections and narrative on view amount, in the opinion of many, to a perverse and distorted reading of history (O'DWYER, 2010).

Public commemorations in Ramet's list include anniversary celebrations and parades. Literature would encompass poems, songs and sagas (such as the epic oral saga *Manas*, reputed to incorporate the entire collective memory of the Kyrgyz people). In addition to television, one might wish to add other mediums of transmission such as radio and cinema. Art would of course include music, which includes a repertoire of passionate pieces devoted to memory, notable among which are national anthems. These totems of statehood and patriotism are in their own right a source of memory, and for that reason they may be controversial. Replacing the Soviet national anthem with a new Russian anthem in the Yeltsin years following the collapse of communism did not satisfy the later Putin administration, which has reverted nostalgically to the Soviet melody, albeit with new Russian lyrics. Since the end of the Second World War, the

first verse of the German national anthem has not been sung on public occasions. This is not so much because that verse contains the words *Deutschland über Alles* ('Germany above All') – originally a straightforward mid-nineteenth century call for a unified Germany – but rather because it contains reference to a Germany defined by geographical limits now considered unacceptable; eastwards to Lithuania and southwards to Italy's South Tyrol (*Alto Adige*). The notion of a Germany expanded in such a manner is not approved of today.

There is perhaps a case for adding banknotes to Ramet's list of sources. Governments take great care over the selection of the representations to be portrayed on their banknotes. They frequently choose a set of iconic images which are designed to cement a country's identity in the minds of its people, who of course handle banknotes on a daily basis and so will subconsciously absorb the intended message. Yet this determination to project identity may actually prove to be a projection of memory instead. The Armenian 100-dram banknote of 1993 proudly displays the emblematic Mount Ararat in the background, in order to link that feature with Armenian identity, yet the mountain is of course presently located within Turkey, Armenia's neighbour and nemesis, and so its depiction on the banknote may unintentionally invoke memory and even loss. The Bosnia and Herzegovina 50-dinar banknote of 1995 is designed to celebrate the world-famous sixteenth-century Ottoman bridge over the river Neretva in the city of Mostar as part of the country's identity, but this bridge had in fact been destroyed in wartime hostilities two years previously. As with the Armenian example, it is thus memory and loss which may unintentionally be invoked by the banknote image.

This brings us to the question of street names and public monuments, both also included in Ramet's list of memory sources. Much has been written on this subject in recent years (see for example BERG & VUOLTEENAHO 2009; DIENER & HAGEN 2013; JORDAN & WOODMAN, 2016), particularly on the subject of street names (odonyms) and their signage. One point worth noting here is the contrast between streets, public squares and railway stations on the one hand, and monuments and statues on the other. The former category comprises features which have their own necessary functional status and so would exist with or without a name (indeed, in some societies streets are not named at all). On the other hand, features such as war memorials and statues of lauded national heroes exist solely for their own unique commemorative qualities, and they possess no other intrinsic function. They are constructed in order to act as tangible and enduring focal points for collective memory. So if a society's collective memory should reach a stage of reappraisal, or manipulation, it is a relatively straightforward matter to change the name of a street, public square, or railway station, since the name is simply an appendage to the feature. But each memorial and statue is highly specific, created for and devoted to one single purpose, and so the name it carries cannot easily be changed.

However, one rare instance of a memorial statue wholly changed from its original commemorative intention can be found in Tehran, where the Light of Aryan Imperial Memory Tower (*Borj-e Shāhyād Āryāmehr*), built in 1971 by the Pahlavi dynasty, metamorphosed smoothly into the Freedom Tower (*Borj-e Āzādī*) when that dynasty came to an end at the time of the Iranian revolution in 1979. A less radical adaptation of a memorial has taken place over the years in Berlin, where an early nineteenth-century statue commonly known as *Neue Wache* was originally dedicated as

the 'Memorial of the Prussian State Government'. After the Second World War, the statue was renamed by the German Democratic Republic authorities, in whose territory it lay, as the 'Memorial to the Victims of Fascism and Militarism'. Since the reunification of Germany, it has once again been re-dedicated, this time with the name 'Central Memorial of the Federal Republic of Germany for the Victims of War and Dictatorship'. This ongoing fluidity of purpose has been possible only because public interpretation of the statue at the heart of the monument, showing a mother holding her dead son, has been sufficiently malleable to be satisfied with all three of these functions at various junctures in time (WIKI, 2015B).

We must remember, though, that although each memorial normally has just one specific purpose, the individual memories associated with that memorial may be manifold. The First World War was a fact; the resulting graves and cemeteries in France and Belgium are a fact; but those graves contain over half a million headstones each representing a personal history, and those who visit those memorials today have their own personal and maybe conflicting memories. The majority of the dead were British, but others were from very different parts of the world, such as the Asian sub-continent, and there may in reality be almost as many differing memories as there are headstones.

8. AMBIVALENCE AND CONTRADICTION

So far we have rather treated collective memory as a single unifying force, which brings together a nation and from which there may be only a relatively small pool of dissenters. However, some societies are considerably more internally conflicted than this. We have already mentioned the Yushukan war museum in Japan, considered by many to be an egregious exemplar of a Japanese national narrative that claims the country to have been as much a victim as a perpetrator of criminal activity in the mid-twentieth century. This narrative speaks of circumstances beyond Japan's control combining to inflict grievous pain on the country, and it is a story grounded in an unwillingness to accept that any patriotic enterprise undertaken in the name of the emperor could have been inherently immoral (to believe otherwise would be to accept the unthinkable; that Japanese war deaths had been pointless). But this version of Japan today is simplistic and inadequate. It is true that Japan remains a largely deferential society – Ian Buruma has pointed out the disproportionately low number of practising lawyers, a result of a belief that it is “almost a form of subversion to defend a person who stands accused in court” (BURUMA, 1995: p. 61) – yet it is by no means an isolated or unsophisticated society, and views contrary to the standard national narrative do exist. Such views have even been expressed by senior Japanese politicians, notably in 1994 by the then prime minister Tomiichi Murayama, who quite remarkably acknowledged that:

“Japan ... through its colonial rule and aggression, caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries ... I regard, in a spirit of humility, these irrefutable facts of history, and express here once again my feelings of deep remorse and state my heartfelt apology” (see BERGER, 2012: p. 182).

The Murayama apology has unfortunately been substantially undermined by the statements of later politicians, who have reiterated the trope of denial and victimhood, yet it reflects a current that continues to be present within Japanese society. John Dower has noted a real discrepancy between politicians and public in Japan: a 1994 poll showed that 80% of Japanese felt their government had not done sufficient to compensate neighbours for the war (DOWER, 2012: p. 134) and although many foreigners latch swiftly on to inflammatory political statements, assuming them to be representative of Japanese society as a whole, in reality most individual Japanese acknowledge the war to have been one of aggression (DOWER, 2012: p. 110). This example illustrates well the danger of second-guessing public opinion from the statements of politicians.

One particular and recurring ambivalence of approach concerns the controversial Yasukuni Shrine, already mentioned in this paper. This Shinto shrine is dedicated to the spirits of the millions who have died for the emperor in the past 150 years or so. However, these millions include certain politicians and military chiefs who were executed as Class A war criminals after 1945. So whereas it is not unreasonable for senior politicians in any country to wish to commemorate their war dead, Japanese politicians cannot visit Yasukuni without appearing to honour war criminals, or at least to provide an opportunity for others to place that inference on their visit. Each such visit appears to cast doubt on the sincerity of the visitor in wishing for reconciliation. Yet it has proved possible elsewhere in the world to avoid a conflation of commemorative intentions; for example the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. is very careful to honour the fallen soldier, not the controversial war itself (SPIRN, 1998: p. 60).

In the sphere of education, Japanese textbooks are often thought to be little more than political tools, yet even twenty years ago it was possible to demonstrate that the question of textbook content reflected an internal debate within society, pitting historians against government administrations (BURUMA, 1995: pp. 189-201). In a recent and highly informative study, the sociologist Akiko Hashimoto has demonstrated that, on close analysis, Japanese textbooks in reality show marked variations in their approach to twentieth-century history (HASHIMOTO, 2015: chapter 4). And individual Japanese educators can display a refreshing awareness, as a recent newspaper article in relation to today's territorial issues has shown:

[A] teacher of a public middle school in Tokyo said: 'In classes at my school, there are Korean permanent residents, too. So if we teach only the Japanese positions on these situations, human relations at the school could be damaged.' Masaru Ikei, a professor emeritus of Keio University who is an expert on the history of Japanese diplomacy, said: 'We should not emphasize only Japan's stance. It's important to let students consider how the situations can be peacefully resolved by teaching other countries' opinions of the situation as well' (TJN, 2015).

Hashimoto informs us that newspaper editorials can also be scathingly honest about Japan's wartime behaviour. And indeed, having considered the many variations in thought within Japanese society, she comes to the following quite dramatic conclusion:

Japan's war memories are not only deeply encoded in the everyday culture but are also much more varied than the single, caricatured images of 'amnesia' depicted by Western media. I suggest that there is no 'collective' memory in Japan; rather, multiple memories of war and defeat with different moral frames coexist and vie for legitimacy (HASHIMOTO, 2015: p. 4).

On the other side of the world, in Spain, there remain many irreconcilable myths about the catastrophic civil war which that country endured in the 1930s, and Spanish society remains divided to this day over the memory of that dark period of its history. Ambivalences have abounded throughout the decades. The Franco era that followed the civil war developed a "mythologised official memory" that involved the deployment of various means of propaganda by both the state and also the Catholic Church (HANCOX 2015). After Franco's death in 1975, an attempt was made to draw a final line under the past, and an Amnesty Law passed in 1977 forbade any trials, inquiries or apologies in relation to the civil war. Yet Spain was in those years undergoing a marked cultural and societal transformation, and total banishment of the past inevitably became an untenable proposition. Indeed, by 2007 the political climate had changed to the extent that a ground-breaking Historical Memory Law was enacted, which completely reversed previous approaches by granting rights to the victims of the civil war and to their descendants. Yet, despite this *volte face*, the Valley of the Fallen (*Valle de los Caídos*) – the grandiose memorial to Francoism which also contains the dictator's tomb – continues to stand tall in its dubious splendour and on certain anniversaries still magnetically attracts to it those of a certain nostalgic persuasion. Spain today is truly a country with a confused collective recall, much of it in effect "related to a politically manipulated, culturally amnesiac obsession with 'memory'" (TREGLOWN, 2014: p. 9).

Returning to Asia, an extraordinary instance of ambivalent memory can be witnessed while travelling on the KTX express train service that links Seoul and Busan in South Korea. A continuously screened loop of film clips and advertisements is provided for the traveller, interspersed at appropriate junctures with announcements noting the train's imminent arrival at a station along the route. The arrival announcements are helpfully given in four languages – Korean, English, Japanese and Chinese – imparting a cosmopolitan flavour which is obviously of great convenience to passengers. Yet among the short clips featured in the film loop, and viewable every hour or so, is a feature with footage from the Second World War, showing Japanese navy warships, bedecked with Rising Sun flags, energetically shelling their wartime adversaries – all to the accompaniment of a strident Korean commentary. One wonders what message the Japanese traveller will take away from this journey; perhaps that Japanese are welcome as tourists but that Koreans have no intention of letting them forget their militaristic past. This train journey across South Korea provides an oddly contradictory message, one which acknowledges modern-day reality yet at the same time gratuitously perpetuates an anachronism, and if any particular significance can be inferred from this duality of approach, it is perhaps that it is indicative of an inherent uncertainty within Korea itself as to how to approach its own twentieth-century history.

9. MEMORY AND RECONCILIATION

In his comparative study of how Germany, Austria and Japan have struggled with their respective legacies of the Second World War, the international relations expert Thomas Berger has identified certain key conditions which need to be met for what he terms a “successful reconciliation strategy”. Berger’s conditions for reconciliation can be simplified and summarised as follows (BERGER, 2012: p. 248-9):

- the political leadership of countries with problematic legacies must have a powerful interest in seeking reconciliation, and should demonstrate genuine contrition;
- there must be consistency across the official narrative; *e.g.* among politicians;
- there should be coherence between government and people; *i.e.* the reconciliation effort must be bottom→up as well as top→down;
- a degree of reciprocity is required; the designated victims must demonstrate a willingness to accept the efforts and apologies that are made in their direction.

Berger also remarks that ample time should be allowed for the fulfilment of these conditions. By way of a conclusion to this paper, it might be useful to consider Berger’s conditions in more detail, in relation to the ongoing formidable and complex difficulties experienced by the countries of north-eastern Asia, where the historical problems associated with memory are compounded by the existence of current and ongoing twenty-first century disputes. This entanglement of past and present significantly complicates the possibility of meeting Berger’s first condition. Political administrations in Tokyo, Seoul and Beijing all find they have some interest in maintaining present disputes in order to meet the more nationalist demands of their populations, and in turn this weakens their incentive to resolve past disputes. Nevertheless, there are signs of progress should one seek them out. Japan has for example now established a Commission on a Framework for the Twenty-First Century, which is designed to reconsider twentieth-century history and face the tricky task of seeking steps towards reconciliation in Asia; in a positive move, the commission consists of academics as well as politicians (EAF, 2015). Berger’s first condition also includes the need for genuine contrition. One might in this context hope for a reaffirmation of the Murayama statement of 1994. Certainly an unambiguous apology would be welcomed by neighbouring countries. And in reality, as Akiko Hashimoto points out, an apology is in fact an act of courage, not of weakness:

...rapprochement ultimately presupposes a compelling apology, an admission of wrong-doing, to achieve a common sense of justice. In this approach, an apology is an ennobling act that enhances the public’s perception of the apologizer for the profound courage to admit one’s evildoing (HASHIMOTO, 2015: p. 132).

However, there is one further important point to be made, which is that apologies must originate from the heart of the guilty. For some reason, victims seem triumphant when they succeed in extracting apologies from their former oppressors. Yet there is surely no reason to assume that apologies issued under the duress of demands from the victim are necessarily heartfelt or genuine.

The second condition for reconciliation calls for consistency across the official narrative. Akiko Hashimoto is generally optimistic on this score. Whilst acknowledging that the annual August 15th commemoration of the end of the Second World War might remain ambivalent in tone, she remarks that on the whole the influence of past totems is on the wane:

The Yasukuni Shrine, historically a critical social device to legitimate the war dead and national sacrifice, no longer has the symbolic power to turn the next generations into believers of dying for the fatherland or the Emperor (HASHIMOTO, 2015: p. 60).

The third condition calls for coherence between government and people. It is self-evidently important that individuals, groups and societies come together to meet, debate, and generally interweave their lives. Animosity is much harder to sustain among people who have come to know one another personally. Work such as that undertaken by the annual Korea-Japan Forum and similar bodies is vital in this regard, as are educational exchange visits. Undertakings such as these serve to soften the hardline perceptions and perspectives which so frequently form the basis for memory at the current time. And the common ground established by such means needs to be communicated to government. The vital role of the population was fully recognised by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, in a question-and-answer session for journalists during a visit she made to Japan in March 2015. Asked for her opinion as to the starting point for reconciliation, Merkel responded that it cannot simply derive from governments but “has to come out of a process in society” (GUARDIAN, 2015A).

The fourth condition notes the importance of reciprocity in the quest for reconciliation. Efforts and apologies made by perpetrators must be welcomed and acknowledged by victims, who should not be seeking to preserve their victim status in such a situation. Chancellor Merkel touched on this too in the same March 2015 question-and-answer session in Japan, when she suggested that:

Japan's neighbours would also have to enter into the spirit of reconciliation. Germany's rehabilitation, she said, had only been possible because its former enemies were willing to accept that it had confronted its past. ‘Without these generous gestures of our neighbours this would not have been possible’ she said (GUARDIAN, 2015A).

Here one might remark that circumstances in Europe have made it easier for Germany and her wartime opponents to come to terms with one another, because there has existed a wider European framework within which reconciliation could take place. From its incipient days as the European Coal and Steel Community, the organisation which has subsequently grown into the European Union has provided an umbrella forum the like of which unfortunately does not exist in north-eastern Asia. The result is in its own way extraordinary. In June 2015 Queen Elizabeth II, the United Kingdom Head of State, visited Germany and paid homage to the memory of German war dead, laying a commemorative wreath at Berlin's *Neue Wache* memorial. Looking at this event from outside, it may be a moot point as to which is its more remarkable aspect; the fact that it took place at all, or the fact that it was considered sufficiently banal as to engender

scarcely any media comment. Yet in reality this small commemoration is simply indicative of the degree of reconciliation that has taken place between these former wartime protagonists, and it illustrates how memory can become a mechanism not for the perpetuation of hatreds, but instead for the establishment of mutual understanding.

Notes

1. This paper was completed in July 2015.

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