Introducing Difficult Pasts and Narratives

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The relationship between museums and difficult pasts, between museological discourse and individual or collective sentiment, is of particular relevance to the highly topical issue of the link between history and memory. The panorama of ties between memory and heritage that research in the field has been establishing over the last generation is most revealing. Both terms have benefitted from nearly unprecedented success, echoed by the growing field of study that has consecrated their usage, and which appears in a sense to be taking over the interest that was formerly dedicated to the writing of history. Much like the way in which the ideas of Michel de Certeau had provided essential intellectual anchors in the 1970s, centred on the metaphor of historical practice as a funeral rite, and on the sharp critique of the division of academic work and research strategies, it was the configurations of history through memory and heritage that left the greatest mark on the decades of 1980 to 2000. The first apparent paradox in this new context, is the idea of bringing together notions related to processes of heritage and objects or places linked to memories of suffering and trauma.

From the Art of Memory to the Force of Memory

The establishment of memory as a field of enquiry in the social sciences is largely due to the work of the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) and more particularly to his work on collective memory from *The Social Framework of Memory* (1925) to *The Legendary Topography of the Gospels in the Holy Land* (1941) (Halbwachs, 1997). By collective memory, Maurice Halbwachs was referring to the shared memory of different social groups or families, as a means of maintaining their identity. Individual memory develops accordingly, in interaction with social memory, through social networks that change over time together with the entire range of representations of the past. (Marcel, Mucchielli, 1999). On memories themselves, Halbwachs writes that "there is no point seeking out where they are kept in my brain, in some other hidden part of my mind, to which only I have access, as they are recalled to me from the outside, and the groups that I'm part of, constantly offer the means to rebuild them, as long as I look to them and adopt at least temporarily their way of thinking. [...] It is in this way that one can speak of the existence of a collective memory and the social frameworks of memory, and it is because our individual thoughts are framed by and participate in this memory that we are capable of remembering" (Halbwachs, 1994: VI). The epistemological choices of the sociologist were always clear on this issue as can be seen from the notes that he made of visits for his election campaign at the *Collège de France*, and a chair that he baptised *collective psychology*. The defenders of hermeneutics, literary or artistic, were against him, whilst the "real" scholars of society supported him in his perspectives for a new interpretation of collective psychology (Halbwachs, 1999).

These ideas can be observed in the formulation of Pierre Nora's introduction to the *Lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1984) entitled "Between Memory and History". The historian considers most

particularly the sociological constructions dealing with the contemporary break with traditional societies: "The silent memory of a group that it unites, which is the same as to say, as Halbwachs did, that there are as many memories as there are groups: that memory is by nature multiple and multipliable, a collective, plural and individualised. History, on the contrary, belongs to all and no one, this gives it a universal vocation". This strict division between memory and history has several consequences. One is that 'real' or 'true' memory has taken refuge in the body's knowledge (Nora, 1984: XXV) - an idea, which revealingly, was already evoked in the precedent collection *Making History* an unthought-of, an unthinkable condition of history – "in gestures and habits" (Revel, Peter, 1974). The other consequence is that history began to block out memory, erasing it for the benefit of academic knowledge, certainly rigorous and critical, but devoid of life and closed up in archives, museums, collections and libraries. Thus, tradition was lost, the experience of it dissolved, provoking a flood of words: one only speaks so much of memories because there are (hardly) any of them left. Memory acquired in this way "the beauty of death", to borrow an expression of the time (Certeau et al., 1970) as the result of a process that combined long and short time.

The first aspect of this affirmation was the place that memory and its most traditional instruments held in a long history of a battle against forgetting. In his grand history of forgetting in the West (Léthè, 2004), Harald Weinrich demonstrated the progressive disappearance of the tradition of the art of memory (Yates, 1966). From the Enlightenment onwards, the capacity to remember took a step back behind the faculty of reasoning, it even came to be seen as a secondary faculty, if not disdainful, it was no longer shameful to admit to lacking in it. In the rapidly declining reality of memory, the development of critical history, as defined by Reinhart Koselleck, played its part, by privileging theoretical analysis to the detriment of the experience of actors and witnesses, giving rise to a professionalization of history based on the archives – that is to say on the collection of verifiable and stable information. In a certain philosophical history of historicism, in which Nietzsche's famous considerations played a major role, the progress of scholarly erudition came to represent the burden of a past that weighed limitlessly on the present.

But in the course of the 1980s, the notion of 'memory' suddenly came to occupy an important place in the different social sciences, tied to changes in contemporary history and particularly to what some designated as a crisis of the future of school and academic history, and what was known as a "breakdown in transmission"; but also related to certain repressed issues and the crisis of national memories. In the years 2000 it was the turn of the archive to occupy the forefront of social science discourse: the successive works of Jacques Derrida and the remarkable echo they received illustrates these new representations. The notion of 'cultural' memory appeared as central, coinciding logically with of a kind of hegemony of cultural history in the study of contemporary issues. One of the principal interpreters of this turn, Aleida Assmann, observed that the study of memory is based on three principals: its volatile, malleable nature, irreducible to a closed or determined archive; a past that only bears on society through the representations that it gives rise to as elaborated and received in specific contexts; lastly memories are characterised by their heterogeneity, or rather their incompatibility, establishing a memorial landscape that is being constantly reconfigured. In accordance with these three aspects, cultural memory, supported by some classic frames (monuments, museums and archives) but also by the artifices of contemporary media related to an age of technical reproducibility, plays a role of

unprecedented importance in the public sphere, fuelled by claims that lead to new memorial obligations. Thus the diagnosis of the German historian seems to contradict Pierre Nora's evocation of a disappearance of memory for the benefit of history.

Both however actually share the same analyses, which sees a new kind of memory taking over from a form of living memory. Aleida Assmann evokes a memory of daily communication whose temporal horizon is about three generations long and which is strongly affected by those who lived at the time of the events in question. On the contrary, after about eighty years, cultural memory is made up of a corpus of texts and images that may be considered as objectified or institutionalised. It is, in other words, a kind of institutionalisation of culture that leads to a potentially usable and updatable kind of memory. According to Assmann, this force of memory was able to follow on from the "art of memory" that was effaced around 1800, and it is a response to several factors of transformation. The first is the passage of time, determined to deal with the change from an intergenerational memory to a purely mediatised form of memory that no longer bears any direct relation to the past. The second element of transformation is linked to changes in political life that can bring about a selection of necessary memorial references, or traumatic events that require a form of therapy that leads to the re-emergence of specific memories. Such social contexts as generational change when no privileged witnesses gain legitimate status, provoke the disappearance of older experiences and lead to the erasure of memories. Lastly media can of course dramatically change the content of cultural memory as proven by the appearance of a North American cultural memory through the series *Holocaust* in 1978.

Similar attempts to consider the emergence and the transformation of memory can be found in the writings of other historians but often with the accompanying effort to establish a clear demarcation line between the intellectual responsibility of scholarly critique and the cultural production of 'memory' invented and cultivated by the media of any period, in order to better distinguish between scholarly curiosity and more common uses of the past. Paul Veyne thus distinguishes in his own terms between 'historical knowledge', or 'scholarly' history and a more polymorph reality, "the collective memory of the national past, commemorations, stories, monuments and ritual of great political and religious events, legendary or authentic and that are dear to the society in question" (Veyne, 1987). It is in fact foreign to the past, which is destined to be forgotten, purely and simply: "collective memory is just a metaphor; national memories and the radical historicity of men are two separate things. Those memories are merely representations, more institutional than spontaneous, but supported by education; far from authentic memories, they are more or less tendentious truths. In contrast to individual memory, communities instantly forget their past, except when an institution takes on the task of conserving them and of elaborating some selected bible, destined for an interested usage". The author sums up his inventory as "radical historicity", "individual memorisation", the "(generally forgotten) past of society", "institutionalised souvenirs and legends", "finally, historical knowledge (…) a small and autonomous phenomenon". Whilst this thesis is voluntarily provocative, it tells us of the common aspiration of contemporary historiography to detach itself absolutely from the grasp of memory, and from any kind of assimilation with heritage.

From the classic age of heritage to the idea of historical criminality

However, and quite paradoxically so, the study of memory-heritage in contemporary cultural life has become a central issue and a topic for methodological experimentation. In trying to grasp the part of heritage in history, it is necessary to ask oneself about the frames and divisions that exist. Material temporality, that which Bernard Lepetit (1999: 137) called "solidified time" in reference to urban landscape, acquires value in the name of attachments, convictions but also scholarly rationalisations and political gestures. Heritage studies (or 'patrimoine' in French), offer a privileged field for the evocation of three principal issues: that of the construction of history through works of art and material objects; that of citizenship in liberal *bourgeois* societies of nineteenth century (and the forms of appropriation and the figures of exemplarity and adhesion that it produced); finally that of an exchange of perception and knowledge that such historians as Michelet bear witness to.

Discourse on heritage began as a kind of celebratory discourse specific to artistic literature in the form of an "exaltation of the city and the nation as its works and traditions" as summed up by André Chastel, from Julius von Schlosser (1984). In modern times antiquarian writing undertook to establish lists of works and collections of the histories of town [1] : such as the work of cavalier Jaucourt with his geographic entries in the Encyclopaedia. Such is the classic definition of heritage whose long history is rooted in a desire to illustrate the glories of the city – of Rome with the Capitole and its historical humanist collections. In the eighteenth century the antiquarian tradition was built on different historical specialities that constructed their curiosity thanks to such "museums" of utensils, cut gems, costumes etc. such as the museum of epigraphical monuments in Verona established by the Marquis Maffei (1675-1755) that presented antique inscriptions in chronological order from the origins of the Barbarians, as material for the *studiosi*.

If one assumes the idea that the birth of modern history came about through the "fusion of the antiquarian and the historian" (Momigliano, 1983), then in practice this can be observed in the progressive articulation of a relationship between objects that represent the everyday life of the past, so dear to the antiquarian of the *Ancien Régime* and then to the archaeologist, or works of art that occupy the connoisseur and history as established by scholarly literature. The first museum of history was the *Musée des monuments français*, founded by the French Revolution and which Michelet identified as the *incipit* of his vocation, characterising it as a resurrection of the past (Michelet, 1879: 39).

From this emblematic episode onwards, the museography of history was defined by its capacity to make the past reappear faithfully in the present – whilst guaranteeing at the same time scholarly truth. But of special importance in this episode in the configuration of the principle of heritage (*patrimoine*) was the struggle against "vandalism", which we won't develop here. However, it allows us to understand that the definition of heritage is not purely cognitive, but also very much related to the affirmation of responsibilities, and from a normative position in relation to future generations.

In the French case, the erasure of the *Ancien Régime* from objects of memory was accompanied by a reconfiguration of the notion of the collective in the nineteenth century. The relationship between conservation and the nation becomes obvious when most monuments, whose "beauty belongs to everyone" to quote Victory Hugo, became the incarnation of a new imagined

community in its making (Anderson, 1991). One of the most spectacular manifestations of this are the interventions that emerged to form a set of conservation and restoration practices of historical monuments applied in the name of a culture of national transmission (Thomas, 1980 and 1998). It became a civic act to consider and tour the local objects of the "petite patrie" (Chanet, 1999), establishing a set of practices, popular and scholarly cultural forms that brought aesthetics and politics, sublime and nostalgia, into resonance with each other (Marchand, 1996). Archaeology in particular, provides the expression of the value of *in situ* and of the homeland, used in multiple demonstrations of traditionalisms and revivals (Hutchinson, 2001 and Gossiaux, 1995).

In opposition to the multiplicity of interests that drive collectors of material heritage, and the general perspective of science, the heritage process itself stakes its claim on a narration of origins, when the nation began to become "conscious of itself as a nation" (Pierre Nora). Heritage materials provided a frame for the future, at once an archive and a laboratory for the auxiliary sciences of history – as was the case of the Museum of the national archive that opened in Paris in 1867. This work ideal is accompanied by a growing sense of pedagogical responsibility: the museum visit contributes, in parallel to mandatory education, the growing diffusion of newspapers etc. to the establishment of "imagined communities". Certain history museums came to include libraries and research centres, they edited and distributed manuals, as was the case of the Germanisches Nationalmuseum of Nuremberg (1852) or the Ossolineum of Lvov (1817) – driven by a progressist and cumulative idea of the past, in the service of a patriotic enterprise. It is the high point of the marriage between heritage and history-memory.

The possibility of being *transported* into the past that haunts the visitor is proof of the efficiency of modernity's artifices in the valorisation of living spaces, but also of the effects of the collective experience of the history tale or novel, from Guizot to Walter Scott. The concept of the "chronotope" developed by Mikhaïl Bakhtine (1978: 384), that is to say a space-time, a human universe that simultaneously determines a period and a spatial configuration, underlines the power of place, the monument, the castle etc. in historic experience[2]. Following on from this, Universal Exhibitions, cultivated a retrospective ambition, providing an impetus for many an historic exhibit; building whole "streets" of nations, or "ethnographic villages" where one could make the lived experience of a lost world, heightened by accompanying folkloristic activities. Identically reproducing the life that has been lived appeared as the response to the Rankien ideal of restitution "that which really happened" as one overview. In the museum, this process brought about a naturalisation of history, that is to say a *mythologisation* (as defined by Roland Barthes), using more and more elaborate artifices. The consolidation of the Nation-State coincided with an increasing consummation of invented traditions, in the service of a consolidation of "imagined communities". The colonial world, and the unprecedented situations of governance that it generated, also provided a privileged theatre for the invention of traditions, as exercises in innovative and efficient social engineering.

The first articulations between history, memory and heritage in the nineteenth century can be exemplified by an episode in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. In her essay on "Places for history" Arlette Farge shows how Flaubert's two heroes experimented three different ways of attaining knowledge of the past: "first they tried to make themselves and their home appear as something from the past through the appropriation of old things, visible traces, visiting monuments, grasping feverishly

for anything that had lived before. This first form of knowledge quickly led them to recognise their total ignorance of the facts of the past". From there, they tried to establish and notably to interrogate the memories of the last witnesses. Then finally, they set about writing history themselves, that of the Duke of Angoulême. So, the three stages envisaged all three elements, heritage, memory and history. We can see that Flaubert in his time identifies heritage with archaeology and museums, which appears as totally legitimate ("they had become archaeologists, and their house resembled a museum") – it was the first, insufficient step towards historical consciousness. By bringing together what Flaubert called the « quincaillerie », translatable as hardware or junk, he provides an evocation of the practices of the antiquarian of the *Ancien Régime*, anxious to dominate history with one overview of his collection, as Arlette Farge asks: "what historian does not dream of seeing it all laid out before him?", like Pécuchet, who, from his bed, can perceive the view of all of his objects united. To this one should add the visit to monuments, "in order to see history live, in public space". One might develop a much more detailed reading to show all the different characteristics that Flaubert attributed to this episode in his novel – the mortuary, even deathly aspect of this collection in the eyes of certain visitors.

With *The Modern Cult of Monuments*, written in 1903, Aloïs Riegl (1858-1905) invented a new subject, at a time when he was himself in charge of monument conservation: the process of heritage in its relationship to art history. Riegl distinguishes three possible forms of memorial value in a monument: the initial intentional commemorative value, historic value - which appeared with the Renaissance (Forero-Mendoza, 2002) but that was stabilised in the nineteenth century through the institution of conservation-restoration devoted to maintaining an original state - and lastly the age value, which one might also think about as the value for the future, and whose relation to restoration is eminently problematic.

The essay identifies the democratic instantaneity of the relationship to ancient monuments as the principle that explains the further extension of the meaning of heritage in an age of the masses, which he believes will be dominated by sentiment – *stimmung* – and not but the idea of erudition up until then tied up with the historical monument (Gubser, 2005). In fact, once it is the passage of time that confers its value upon the monument, any kind of artefact, trace from the past becomes capable of taking on a monumental significance, no matter what its original status may have been. In the course of the twentieth century, the distinction between high art and the art of the masses, between the artwork and the artefact, will disappear leaving only the added value that might be attributed to any kind of trace. The interest in the intentional monument can only decline, as the aim of such a monument is always to put the past into the present, to make it at every moment pertinent and topical. It is the distance, on the contrary that is at the heart of the modern interest for the non-intentional monument, as it refuses absolutely to partake in a past-present, to work in a memorial way, to erase its age. Better still its ruinous appearance or signs of ageing are its principle, it is a monument of the past exclusively dedicated to time elapsed.

The demonstration puts emphasis on the necessity of envisaging different temporalities – that is to say distinguishing between age in itself, objectively inscribed on the monument as patina, as the accidents or even as the partial ruin of the structure, historicity and finally original intentionality, the memory of which can be maintained by faithfulness to tradition. The resolute opposition to essentialism that is manifest in the *Cult* places the accent on the values of relations and associations in heritage terms: age, position in a temporal sequence, its belonging to a

"rhythm" or to a development, historical meanings appear as determinant of a history that is always open. In this sense, his approach opens up a new era in the appreciation of the monument and its relation to time. On the one hand the "time" of the ancient monument is not the scholarly time of historian, it is perhaps that of the archaeologist as envisaged by George Kubler (1973), as the form of time, in any case it is a new kind of time. On the other hand, the generalisation of the 'ancient' monument as "any human creation provided it bears evidence of having been subjected to the trials of time" is major change of scale.

In the mid-twentieth century, the propositions of Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History* written in 1940, shortly before his suicide in Port-Bou brought in a new mutation. Henceforth, it becomes necessary to write history "against the grain", that is to say from the point of view of the defeated, against the historicist tradition of writing history from the point of view of the victors. If Benjamin is referring to class war, influence by Nietzsche and by Marxism, the formula may be applied more widely to a large part of the twentieth century situation in terms of the relationship between heritage and history writing. According to him "whoever dominates always holds the heritage of the victors. (…) All those who have claimed victory participate in this triumphal procession where today's masters walk on the bodies of those to this day vanquished. As has always been customary, it is to this triumphal procession that the booty belongs; that one might define as cultural property. There is no document of culture that is not also a document of barbarism. And the same barbarism that they partake of, also partakes in the process of their transmission from one hand to another." (Benjamin, 1971-1983). Most subsequent criticism of heritage processes build on this formulation, as do indeed the possibilities of a counter-heritage, that we see and partake of today, either *in situ* or in the museum[3].

Preservation as the Duty of Remembrance

Taken in the classic sense, the heritage process tends to preserve the past through its material traces: its intention is to valorise rather that criticize, at least up until recently and in the vast majority of cases. Heritage is the sanction of a judgement of value bearing on the quality of the pieces, whilst history adopts more voluntarily an archaeological principle, attaching itself to banal things, happily sharing the opinions of ethnographers who have shown interest in debris since Marcel Mauss. Such a heritage making process can only clash with historical practice, which, on the contrary, is dedicated to not being selective in its sources and its objects in terms of their quality. Reduced to its most basic points, this opposition might be assimilated to the great divide between historians and art historians, the latter of course accusing historians of neglecting to take into account the aesthetic quality of their documents.

The recent development of the meaning of heritage today has been intimately related to professional as well as amateur historical practice that intend to make the results of academic research accessible to the public, but also to accompany more general historical knowledge with the familiarity of a relationship to the local, the *petite patrie* in order to better cultivate a sense of national community. The movement for the preservation of historical monuments, sites, archaeological finds but also more minor and marginal objects, forms of *bric-à-brac,* can thus be directly related to a provincial writing of scholarly history but are also related to popular uses of history and the inventions of memory. Competition for recognition and legitimacy has always characterised the relations between the historian and the heritage specialist. The challenge of

sharing scholarly authority became all the more crucial as the heritage process from "the ground up" was legitimated by the interest of populations, and the persistence or renewal of attachments was no longer the exclusive capacity of outside expertise, representing some specific scholarly discipline.

The range of activities and interventions related to archaeology, whether monumental or not, and on museums largely constitutes what one has come to call since the 1970s in the Anglo-Saxon world, *public history*. It is in the course of that decade that in North America particularly, new professionals whose role became defined as the promotion and the diffusion of academic knowledge, for the public, for specific communities, began to establish themselves. Due to their academic training, they are however also capable of criticising the institutions and practices of historical vulgarisation itself. In Europe, in a more or less regular way, and following a similar inspiration, consideration of the public usage of history has been on-going, as much in terms of critical approaches to the former notion of heritage and its newer perspectives – with, for example, the new museology movement. This preoccupation with heritage was not however absent from the earlier experiences of historians, if we think about the "public" aspect of the historian's work, of his relationship to familial, religious, community heritage, material as well as immaterial and more generally to the attention given to the inscription of the past through the forms of towns, the features of buildings or of monuments. In the historian's work, the perspective of heritage represents a sentimental claim or political belonging, or at the very least a desire to figure in a specific continuity of language, style, region.

In the course of the last decades, his incorporation of heritage has lead the historian to undergo an examination of conscience, and to produce historical work that goes beyond the recording of objects of heritage. The considerable success of "heritage" in public discourse and collective practice has lead certain historians of contemporary times to diagnose a quashing of historical references. Since his 1985 book, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, David Lowenthal has assimilated heritage conscience with a representation of the past appropriated by a community to exclusively instrumentalised ends, dedicated to promoting a local or identity driven past that is hardly occupied with authenticity and even less with truth but rather devoted to glorifying a voluntarily mythicized memory. Heritage is no longer considered as a social accessory or as a means of popularising history, but as a foil: it incarnates a false conscience of the past, and its relationship to the duty of memory has become suspicious.

Through the introduction of new museographical practices, witness narratives, virtual and real environments etc., museums today intend to use the experience of each visitor to develop his or her individual capacity to interpret history. The aim is to provoke and promote a more active interaction between the visitor and the museum. The museum wants to develop an historical culture that is transmitted through the acquisition of analytic tools: less that of reading a narrative, and rather related to the analysis of documents, contexts, collecting practices, staged in a suitable way. Simultaneously, unprecedented attention is given to the political and public uses of the past and history, leading museums to question the provenance of their collections, and historical reconstitutions based on a process of selection and choice, selective omissions, to become more aware of the responsibility inherent to practices of exhibition.

Indeed, the most recent generation of establishments can be characterised by its call on family and personal memories, that seek to incarnate the utopia of democratically shared research and

historical writing, or at least to establish a general call to all to contribute in bearing witness to history. The practice of collecting memories in museums dedicated to the Holocaust, or to terror, genocide or more generally speaking difficult memories is a major manifestation of this phenomenon. These museographies relate of course to different national cultural policies but also to historical cultures that are more or less tolerant, promoting alternative models to the academic writing of history, complementary to classical erudition. They can help renew the professional's perspective, but they also carry the risk of the instrumentalisation of historical knowledge by defending specific interests and perspectives that up until now were denied or held as negligible. In certain cases, the museum becomes a forum where public discussion on issues of memory and history can take place. Relying on the collaboration of social and political movements, such museums promote particular memorial points of view and values that are present in civic and political debates. The past is conjugated in the present according to the discontinuous, particularised rhythm of commemorations and exhibitions that run in parallel to such events. This is most obviously the case when it comes to evoking traumatic stories.

Tanya M. Luhrmann (2010) perhaps best summed up the current situation in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, "Trauma is the great psychiatric narrative of our era. There are two ways to tell the story of the discovery of the importance of trauma. One is the long and difficult struggle for the recognition of the suffering and the rights of victims. In this version of the story, the relationship between the event and the injury is real, and the surprise is the slow awakening of the clinical observers to see what is so clearly to be seen. The other way to tell the story is as a shift in representation, from one moral accounting to another, a change in ethical vision rather than scientific knowledge. Here the relationship between the injuring event and the sustained hurt is not illusory, but it is much more complex." Indeed, Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman, respectively a doctor/sociologist and a psychiatrist-anthropologist have attempted to establish a global anthropology of traumatism (Fassin, Rechtman, 2009). Whilst their case studies look at particular disasters and specific crimes, they all have a global character. The Universalization of these diverse situations, notably in relation to the notion of the victim, is the object of much debate and criticism. There are, they say, three consequences of the emphasis on the trauma of individuals as a perspective on world events: personalization, psychologizing, and the production of emotion. They argue that it becomes difficult for the humanitarian to see the politics on the ground without the haze of emotionality through which the individual stories are filtered. The very insistence on the emotional specificity of the story means that all trauma stories sound similar: they are histories without history. "Both before and after the tsunami, the survivors in Aceh were already victims of political domination, military repression, and economic marginalization. Both before and after Hurricane Katrina, the people of New Orleans were already victims of poverty and the discrimination that reinforced class inequalities through racial distinctions. Trauma is not only silent on these realities; it actually obscures them." (Fassin, Rechtman, 2009: 281)

The recognition of the global character of these traumatic events is so widespread as to seem banal, and is examined in the university courses and research centres, academic journals throughout the world dedicated to such issues as genocide but also in the network of specialised museums and memorial sites[4]. One theme is central to the issue of the future of memory in the production of museums and memorials and in the studies dedicated to them: the values of

memorial representations of such crimes as terrorist attacks, genocide and massacres develop, as the duty of memory and its relations to universal human rights.

This increasingly dynamic conception of memory is the most convenient way to think about the usefulness of memorials and museums - often accepted as a given. Jay Winter recently provided a reflexion on transitions, entitled "Remembrance as a Human Right". "The transitions, he wrote, in which human rights figure are multiple. The first is the transition from war to peace. The second is the transition from dictatorship to democracy. The third is the transition of the status of victims of violence from that of passive sufferers to active participants in the redress of the crimes from which they suffered. The fourth is a perennial matter. It refers to the transition from norm to practice, from rhetoric to material justice, in the on-going history of human rights abuses we all share. (...) And yet while we cannot forget human rights, we must respect the human right to forget. For there are different strategies of transition, some entailing moving away from dwelling on the pasts, others reconfiguring stories about the past so that they can stand as sentinels, as reminders of what we must never do again" (Winter, 2011: X).

Of course, it is a known fact that visits to sites of historical atrocities are not of an obvious pedagogical efficiency, and that on the contrary they may even provide incitement for others. For example, Timothy Mc Veigh, the author of the 1995 bombing of Oklahoma City Murrah Building that killed 168 people, visited the Waco site in Texas after the disaster (80 members of the Branch Davidian sect were killed by a fire after a police raid). "Witnessing actual events and their consequences caused something of a transformation in his mentality. The fact that Mc Veigh himself had been a visitor to a disaster site is not mere irony" (Blasi, 2002: 172-173).

But beyond the well known debate surrounding the effects of these visits, the aim of the papers of the Brussels Conference edited here is to examine how memory studies are related to an intellectual form of deconstruction on the one side but also (and notwithstanding the fact that this has been observed to be an irritating effect of such visits) to the recognition of the value of trauma studies in accentuating the importance of processes of affective mediation. The opposite effect however also remains to be measured, that is to say, the force of resistance in responding to such tragic events, and also quite simply the fact that visits to museums and memorials are not always experienced in a 'memorial' way but are also part of an entertainment industry. In an era of dematerialisation, the memorial museum opposes the force of the place, if not of the monument, the museum as a place that incarnates a singular time. As Aleida Assmann wrote, about such cases, one must give attention "to a problem that confronts all visitors to a place that is at one and the same time a museum, a crime scene, and a memorial" (Assmann, 2011: 365).

Debris has been transformed into relics and the weight of material culture is manifest in the visitor practices that in certain contexts recall religious pilgrimage. Curators and academics are confronted in these contexts with a form of melancholy that is a state that the former need to take into account and that the later consider sometimes as being part of the foundation of their discipline, as Michael Ann Holly (2002) eloquently suggested was the case of art history[5].

Can heritage practices be a critical tool in examining the past?

Three issues are principally addressed in this report. The first section deals with cases related to conflicting representations of "natural" and ethnic communities. With a focus on the Mediterranean, the papers examine museum policies in dealing with conflicts related to displaced

communities, in the borderlands between Italy and the ex-Yugoslavia or the case of the contested religious heritage of Greek Cypriots.

Andrzej Jakubowski uses two recent cases to show the paradox of appropriation and territorialisation in relation to heritage protection: the exchange of a certain number of medieval paintings between national museums of Czech Republic and Slovakia (1994) and the on-going dispute between Italy and Slovenia about 'the negotiation of difficult pasts' (the artworks evacuated by the Italian administration in 1940 from Istria, nowadays known as the Slovenian Littoral). It explores how the recent post-Cold War wave of state succession in Europe has affected the integrity of state art collections. It considers the different points of view - heritage focused, historical, and legal – that can be adopted in relation to the allocation of cultural property in cases of state succession. One can observe to what an extent "two interconnected, though often conflicting, principles: territorial provenance (origin) of cultural assets and human linkage with such material" (A. Jakubowski) interplay reflecting two well known and opposing theories of nation building and its principles. More fundamentally, such episodes illustrate how easily the principles of heritage protection, established since the nineteenth century in the context of the identification of the classical notion of the territorial nation state, can be questioned when territorial relations are reconfigured to form new "imagined communities".

Ilaria Porciani has looked at a case that is even more revealing in terms of Italian identity, that of Fiume as "a synecdoche for Italian nationalism". She has provided us with a fascinating description of the activities of the Istrian and Dalmatian communities after World War II and the birth of the Fiume museum deeply connected with the violent memory of war and the victims of political violence. In 2004 a day for the memory of the *Foibe* victims was established to provide an official frame for commemoration whilst the museum archive itself has become involved in a scientific dialogue that benefits from the emergence of a new generation of Slovenian and Croat community counterparts.

In the last case study in this section, in which Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert and Alexandra Bounia present the fascinating case of museums as spaces where a threshold effect, to use an expression by Victor Turner, expresses the disappearance of a former community along with the symbols that were part of its identity, in the face of a new emerging community. Museum foundations that have been the consequence of modern revolutions used to desacralize past identities are a well-known phenomenon. This case study looks at the division of Cyprus and the question of religion, but also the propaganda aspect of heritage conservation and the mutual accusations in terms of destruction. This analysis shows that in the context of a difficult coexistence, such institutions bring issues of ownership and restitution of cultural property to the forefront, at the same time as religious and national representation.

The second section focuses on the role that national museums play in handling historical issues that are socially and politically sensitive. Soviet rule in Estonia provides an example of the manipulation of museum policies in the context of dictatorial regime changes. A comparative study of the representation of the Holocaust in contemporary Germany and Britain and question of the Gulag Museums in Russia provide examples of the problems inherent to representing such traumatic events.

An obvious part of the history of museographical propaganda has been totalitarian museum instrumentalisation. Kristin Kutma's article demonstrates the Stalinist construction of

museographical narratives in Estonia and their fate up until the 1987 exhibition piloted by the communist party. In the most recent incarnation, the national narrative of the museum has, since 1990, shown the Estonian nation and national sovereignty as having been threatened by two enemies (the Red Russia and Nazi Germany). This "narrative of national history (…) focus(es) on ethnic Estonian experience, and (shows a) relative incapacity of any form of more inclusive representation of a shared history with other groups or communities".

Using themes addressed by Benedict Anderson, Silke Walther has undertaken a comparative analysis of the representation of the Holocaust in Berlin and London. This approach remains marginal in the field of heritage studies, very much dominated by monographical subject treatment. However the interpretative gain through comparison is obvious, particularly in this case as it allows for a parallel between two ways of according the narrative of Jewish genocide to specific and very different national contexts and its mobilisation in relation to the memory of their respective communities. Simultaneously, the reference to the Washington museum and more generally to North American museography allows her to introduce a third comparative element, opening up a perspective on the transatlantic acculturation of museum models and architectures.

Paul Williams, well know as the author of one of the first overview books dealing with memorial museums, has provided a study of the Perm-36 and the Gulag museum in Moscow, describing a museology that is attentive to the architectural project and interior design and their communication possibilities. His expert opinion provides a review of the conditions necessary for the possible success of such museums, related as much to their location, geography and authenticity as to the available content or "story," and social and political support. The aim is to take measure of how such museums can reach the status of legitimacy and play the same role as other well-established international memorial museum models that attract a sizable and increasing audience for what has been called "dark tourism."

The question of what these conditions for success might be is also implicit to Rossitza Guentcheva's study of the museum of socialist art that opened on the 19th of September, 2011 in Sofia, however it remains impossible to answer as the museum itself has not yet clearly defined its purpose. This case represents a fascinating laboratory type situation, in terms of its national and institutional context, the necessary representation of the socialist history of the country, in the wake of the disappearance of all references to this past from public space. As analysed by the author it is related to a set of "three different problems", those being: "the image of socialism represented in a new art museum", "the nature of socialist realism in art", and of creating new museum environments that would speak to a global audience". But the solutions are far from being established, and expectations cannot be satisfied by a unique focus on totalitarian Stalinist art at the expense of other forms of artistic representation from the decades 1960-1980.

In all of the cases envisaged in this section, as stated by Paul Williams, "national memorials that document disturbing pasts can be geared towards both political reconciliation and social reawakening" but they must also go beyond the emotional reactions that they provoke: "unexpected social passion might result from it, as evidence and stories (...) might flow into the expression of other public dissatisfactions". In the case of museums in former communist Europe, the difficulty is to attain a form of generality, based on the western model of the global museum, and not to remain entrenched in its interior history and its debates, at the risk of not

being able to overcome the difficulties related to the restitution of an historical context. The question of how a genuine museum of communism should look, remains difficult to solve, as has been shown by the Bulgarian case caught between "the role of the Second World War and the place of the communist party as vanguard in the fight against fascism, the role of the Holocaust and the memory thereof in the establishment of a tradition of remembering communism, as well as of the role of museums in contemporary society in general" (Rossitza Guentcheva).

The third section of this report deals with cases related to the restitution of anthropological remains and cultural assets. This area of research related to the postcolonial critic, is tackled from a theoretical point of view through case studies coming from Northern Europe. By going beyond the legal aspects of restitution issues, these studies examine the historical significance of using objects from the past as expressions of collective identity. Fredrik Svanberg looks at a question that is drawing increasing interest in museums of anatomy and physical anthropology (after having been the object of general discomfort, leading to dissimulation and silence) and that is the policy to be adopted in the matter of collections of human remains. Numerous research projects have been undertaken to provide interesting new historical knowledge in this field, fuelled by new debates on contested heritage and repatriation issues. For Svanberg: "Anatomical collecting may illustrate better than in most other instances the re-contextualisation and situating of objects that museums achieve". In particular the disappearance of personal elements of information in favour of the use of the body in the classification and demonstration of diseases or racial features, reveals the museums formidable capacity to radically recontextualize material of all kinds.

Eva Silvén has focused on the case of Sami pieces from three Swedish national museums in Stockholm: the Nordiska Museet (cultural history), the National Historical Museum (history/archaeology) and the Museum of Ethnography (third/fourth/non-Western world). By looking at two specific kinds of objects, she follows "the shifting fate of objects (...) as actors in social networks". This contribution to the social life of things sheds light on the power relations between people and institutions. Lill Eilertsen concentrates on the administrative structure of the Sami museum networks and the project called Recalling Ancestral Voices – Repatriation of Sámi Cultural Heritage. The slow pace of the repatriation procedure is explained by the complexity of the administrative and political structures and by the differences between Norwegian and Danish, the latter dealing with their imperial history, and developing a particular culture of negotiation, which though it was a long process, has given rise to very concrete results.

All of these contributions illustrate the coexistence of different object statuses and regimes of value, situated at the crossroads of the private and public sphere, of life experience exhibited but also of the narrative written in parallel to these. Behind the glass box, exhibited along a trajectory that goes from the singular biography to great narrative of the nation, collections especially assembled for the museum constitute a corpus of singular objects. Presented as belonging to a space, transformed or no longer existant, these objects appear at once as the witnesses of an original culture and as the fruit of the museum's selection process. Their former use value, its relation to the body, to the real conditions of their acquisition, etc., generally disappears behind categories of classification and exhibition. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to claim that the museum depoliticizes or dehistoricizes history, as many interpretors of its role have done over recent years. The objects that can be found there are part of regimes of production, of historicity and different technologies, all of which feed new regimes of memory. The success of war

museums, or museums dealing with conflicts is a phenomenon that historians, aware of the civic implications of their discipline, should greet as positive rather than deplore. As Jay Winter wrote at the beginning of the twenty-first century in his reflections on the "Memory Boom": "In our profession, we should be grateful that history sells; one reason that it is such a popular and moneymaking trade is because it locates family stories in bigger, more universal narratives. One way to understand the huge growth and financial viability of museums and fiction set in the wars of the twentieth century is to see them as places where family stories are situated in a wider, at times universal context." (Winter, 2001)

Museums have always been caught in the tension between the display of a collective self-presentation, and the embarrassment of a self-knowledge of collective failures, however today they may represent shame as well as images of glory, as a political means of enhancing the present greatness of the country (Poulot, 2008). The glory or the shame of a community as displayed in museums can be used to emphasise the authority of tradition, provoke various emotions in people, and expose these emotions to a contest of values. Glory and humiliation may be regarded as complex social processes in which the value of events and people is determined by developing a broad set of agreements concerning symbolic and social meanings.

Notes

[1] Relatively unexamined in the French case, these questions have been considered in England, see Rosemary Sweet, *The Writing of Urban Histories in Eighteenth-Century England*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997.

[2] "le chronotope détermine l'unité artistique d'une oeuvre littéraire dans ses rapports avec la réalité [...] En art et en littérature, toutes les définitions spatio-temporelles sont inséparables les unes des autres et comportent toujours une valeur émotionnelle [...] l'art et la littérature sont imprégnés de valeurs chronotopiques, à divers degrés et dimensions. Tout motif, tout élément privilégié d'une oeuvre d'art, se présente comme l'une de ses valeurs".

[3] A contemporary version of this position was expressed by Valdimar Hafstein in a keynote of the first congress of the Critical Heritage Association, asking "when and under what conditions is the protection of heritage not a means of dispossession", quoted by Laurajane Smith, (2012) *International Journal of Heritage Research,* 18, 6: 539.

[4] http://www.sitesofconscience.org/: « Sites of Conscience use the past to engage people in making a difference in the present. Nearly 300 museums, memorials, historic sites and initiatives in 47 countries have joined our network to date ».

[5] "The 'rhetoric of mourning' that has engendered and connected so many late 20th-century studies in the humanities is one devoted to the incomplete and the missing: fragments, allegories, ruins, retreats from definitive meanings. Yet the practice of art history provides an interesting twist on this characterization. The very materiality of the objects with which we deal presents historians of art with an interpretative paradox absent in other historical inquiries, for the works are both lost and found, both present and past, at the same time".

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