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Title

Memory Fields

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/38m2854t>

Journal

Ethos, 46(3)

ISSN

0091-2131

Author

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Publication Date

2018-09-01

DOI

10.1111/etho.12208

Peer reviewed

MEMORY FIELDS

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[published in Ethos 46(3):373-396, 2018]

ABSTRACT

George Orwell's novel *1984* raises a key question in the politics of memory: How far can the nation-state reach into minds and reshape personal memories? Addressing it requires a theoretical framework that can encompass public and personal representations of the past. I develop the concept *memory field*, defined as the set of public and personal memories associated with a putatively past event, object, or situation. The memory field associated with the Kent State University massacre of May 4, 1970 exemplifies the diversity of memory, its constructed nature, its political uses, its brute qualities, and its implications for identities. I compare several additional cases drawn from the ethnographic and historical literatures, assessing the impact of the state's memory-control tactics on personal memories. I close with a reflection on the emergent politics of memory in Donald Trump's United States.

Key terms: memory, identity, politics, cognition, history, nationalism

Listen carefully to the voices of the Tiananmen mothers.

- Liu Xiaobo, *No Enemies, No Hatred* (2012)

Events do not end: they leave behind “permanent reverberations,” such as the shell casings and the smell of rust amidst fields of grain in the Somme (Fussell 2009, 81). Among the echoes are memories, hard as iron and intangible as a faint odor in damp air. Often bitter clashes erupt over such memories. Those battles too are matters of life and death.

The despotic Party of George Orwell’s *1984* follows a ruthless strategy: “Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past” (1977, 248). The rulers consolidate power by reshaping or destroying personal memories. Orwell’s dark vision raises the question central to this essay: How far and in what ways can major political actors, above all the nation-state, reach into minds and control the future by dictating the past?

The slippery concept of “memory” has spawned an immense, ill-defined literature. Sometimes the emphasis tilts toward public representation, sometimes toward personal cognition.¹ Works on public memory tend to elide first-person experience. Works on personal memory often pay cursory attention to social communication. Both approaches illuminate much but, as Maurice Bloch (1998, 2012) has noted, leave in darkness the traffic between public and personal memories. That traffic is central to the politics of memory.

Aspects of the link between social and personal memory have been fruitfully addressed by some anthropologists, including Bloch himself (1998, 2012), Jennifer Cole (2001), Marysia Galbraith (2015), Linda Garro (2001), Michael Jackson (2004), and others (see e.g. the

contributions to Holland and Lave 2001 and Birth 2006). They unveil subtle forms and dynamics of memory, often in face-to-face settings and always in sharp ethnographic detail.

The nation-state and the politics of memory shadow many of those studies, but here I place them front and center. My project, large in scope, is conceptual and programmatic. It complements the fine-grained ethnographic research on memory that deals with exegeses of symbols, commemorative rituals, psychological processes, mechanics of transmission, life stories, textures of experience, and mnemonics.

First, I define *memory*, outline memory's close relationship to identity, and discuss the relevance of both for politics. I then describe the Kent State massacre of May 4, 1970, a momentous event in recent U.S. history. The *memory field* associated with Kent State exemplifies the diversity of memory, its constructed nature, its political uses, its brute qualities, and its implications for identities. I compare several additional cases, assessing the impact of state-sponsored memory-control tactics such as *crystallization* and *historicide* on personal memories. I close with a reflection on Donald Trump's disruptive use of both tactics in the emerging politics of memory in today's United States.

The past in the present

Reverberations of the past include material relics, brain alterations, archives, rituals, psychological traumas, languages, myths and histories, expressive culture, buildings and spatial arrangements, culinary traditions, religions, economic regimes, social structures, embodied behaviors, monuments and museums, even mysterious, spectral connections (Marcus 1989). If you hunt for memory in the present, you find its colonies everywhere.

But like all analytic terms, "memory" belongs to the level of maps, not territories (Bateson 1972; Sapir 1949). An analytic term abstracts from an infinitely complex reality for a

specific purpose. To address the politics of memory, I will treat memories not as all reverberations of the past but as its public characterizations and personal understandings. That is, here a *memory* is a symbolic or cognitive representation of some phenomenon attributed to the past. A *memory field*, then, is the set of memories, both public and personal, associated with a putatively past event, object, or situation.

Most of the past is never represented. When a memory does emerge, it provides temporal orientation for actors. More profoundly, it operates directly on actors through its leverage on identity.

The relation between self, identity, and memory is intimate. I take the human self to be a distinctive type of subjectivity with remarkable objectifying faculties, including the reflexive capacity to engage ethnic, kin, gender, racial, religious, and other identities (Linger 2001, 2005). Just as the self can fully and unselfconsciously inhabit an identity, it can also, under some circumstances, turn that identity into an object of contemplation and intervention. Between self and identity lies a reflexive gap that permits a self to shift among a range of identities, rework them, and even, sometimes, generate new ones.

Basic identities, such as ethnicity, are by definition experienced as enduring and definitive (Barth 1969, 13), resistant to reflexive alteration. Not coincidentally, they also are, or become, shot through with memory. One enters the world already situated in a social complex of family, nation, tribe, religious community, and so on, with a set of ascribed identities that gain memory depth as one proceeds through life. The memories that accrue are both autobiographical (one's own experience of living as an X) and semantic (knowledge of others' experiences of living as an X and of group X's history and traditions).² The sense of profound entanglement in

the past in turn engenders distinctive solidarities, outlooks, goals, dilemmas, and emotional investments.

But identities depend on more than memory, and the weight of memory attaching to a basic identity does not always crush the reflexive gap. Identities can change as the self grapples with the “world of urgency and necessity” (Wikan 1995) that is the present. When twentieth-century Bisas migrated from monoethnic rural areas to the multiethnic towns of the Zambian Copperbelt, the significance of Bisa-ness mutated (Mitchell 1956). Novel interactions at urban tribal frontiers summoned forth a Bisa city identity distinct from its unmarked village counterpart. As a result, Bisa identity became foregrounded, or “hypercognized” (Levy 1984, 219), acting as a chief organizing principle of urban relations and expressing itself in newly traditional cultural forms such as the Kalela Dance, unknown in the countryside.

People sometimes go further, adopting different basic identities altogether. Barth (1969, 22) cites examples of Pathans becoming Baluchs in South Asia or agricultural Fur becoming nomadic Baggara in the Sudan. One of the most life-changing, yet common, transformations of basic identity occurs in religious conversion. In such instances, proselytes sometimes amend autobiographical memories, as when Swedish converts to Islam revisit their pre-conversion lives and there discover foreshadowings of and continuities with their present Muslim identities (McGinty 2006). The revised memories cement the freshly minted identities in place.

Identity and memory are a two-way street. Memory change often follows or accompanies a change of identity, as among the new Swedish Muslims, but it can also precede it. A striking case is that of Csanád Szegedi (Blair and Martin 2016; Applebaum 2013).

Growing up mostly in post-socialist times as the son of a father who fancied himself a pure Magyar, Szegedi became a founder in 2007 of the Hungarian Guard, a successor to the

viciously anti-Semitic Arrow Cross movement that collaborated with the Nazis during World War II. He then rose to the position of Vice President of Jobbik, an extreme, nativist right-wing party (Jobbik 2017). In 2009, as a Jobbik candidate, Szegedi was elected a Hungarian representative to the European Parliament, continuing to espouse nationalist, conspiratorial, anti-Roma, anti-Semitic views.

Then in 2010 a rival confronted Szegedi with the accusation that his maternal grandmother was Jewish, hence (according to Jobbik's ethnic reckonings) so was he. After a period of incredulity, denial, indecision, and growing controversy over his continuation in the movement, Szegedi, having verified the story, openly affirmed his Jewish descent. He resigned from Jobbik, commenced the study of Judaism, became circumcised, visited Auschwitz (where his grandmother had been interned), repudiated his own past behavior, and began to speak out publicly against anti-Semitism. His acceptance of a new genetic memory propelled him into a new identity and his political activism took a U-turn.

For Jobbik, Szegedi became a pariah. Sophisticated politicians like the leaders of Jobbik, merchants of national myths of blood and soil, understand the critical importance of memory for sowing identities, creating scapegoats, and thereby establishing shared motivations for action. Having pristine blood roots one in authentic, primordial, Christian Hungary, which means joining with other purebreds to defend the righteous Magyar nation against international Jewish treacheries and the contamination of degraded races. Jobbik's leaders use memory to incite racial divides, thereby forwarding their identity-driven political agenda.

Such "crystallization of difference," as Alexander Hinton terms it, can be put to ghastly ends. The Khmer Rouge's portrayals of Vietnamese as treacherous, greedy, savage historical enemies helped authorize their mass killing during the Cambodian genocide (Hinton 2005).

Similarly, drawing on a centuries-old theme in German culture that associated Jews with disease, Nazi propagandists identified their victims with lice (Raffles 2010:141-161). The Khmer Rouge and Nazi examples are extreme in their imagery and consequences, but the political tactic of *crystallization* is commonplace.

Sharpening difference between groups typically entails erasing difference within them. Jobbik's nativist history simultaneously caricatures racial enemies and underwrites the unitary Magyar identity of its partisans. It reinforces both external division and internal cohesion by muting histories of Hungary that might sustain more complex, ambiguous identities.

Orwell's one-party nation-state of Oceania, a totalitarian ideal type, takes the erasure of internal difference to another plane. Like Jobbik, the Party crystallizes enemies: Oceania is always at war, and the Party claims that the Brotherhood, a shadowy subversive organization, threatens it at home. And like Jobbik, the Party demands adherence to its own story of the past. But the Party *keeps changing the story*. One day the war is, and has always been, against Eurasia; the next day, against Eastasia. Rather than imposing a canonical history, the Ministry of Truth churns out alternative, often fantastic, even contradictory histories. The cumulative result is *historicide*: a scrambling of the past that reduces it to noise. By turning memory protean, the Party unmoors selves in time, leaving them stripped and helpless in an eternal authoritarian present.

To recapitulate: I have defined a memory as a public representation or personal cognition of an aspect of the past. Memories give time-depth and delineation to settings for action and underpin ethnic, kin, religious, and other basic identities that are generally experienced as temporally rooted and permanent. Nevertheless, even basic identities sometimes change. Memories can follow, accompany, buttress, or produce the adoption of a new or revised identity.

Because of its identity effects, politicians often use public memory to try to crystallize difference between followers and enemies. They also try to erase difference among followers, either by insisting on a shared authoritative history or, as in the Orwellian example, by engaging in historicide, thereby rendering the past unusable as a resource for mediating or oppositional identities.

But politicians cannot simply dictate memories. A memory field is the terrain wherein a host of memories, public and personal, accumulate, deteriorate, compete, and change. At this point a concrete example will be useful.

Kent State: “Four dead in Ohio”³

On May 4, 1970, soldiers of the Ohio National Guard, a branch of the U.S. military, shot and killed four students and wounded nine at Kent State University. The Kent State student protest was the most lethal in U.S. history, though elsewhere – Mexico City and Tiananmen Square immediately come to mind – far more brutal massacres have occurred. Kent was no isolated event in the U.S. either. Police killed three African American students at South Carolina State University in Orangeburg in February 1968; a white onlooker during a Berkeley protest on “Bloody Thursday” in May 1969; two African Americans at Mississippi’s Jackson State University, a week and a half after Kent; and three Mexican Americans, students among them, in Los Angeles during a National Chicano Moratorium antiwar march in August 1970.

That the Kent victims were white American college students, one of the most privileged groups on earth, certainly contributed to the intensity and impact of Kent’s media coverage.⁴ But so did the setting and shape of the event, which refigured the green, bucolic heart of the campus as an unequal battleground, a scene of invasion and slaughter. Massed soldiers in heavy gear,

armed with M1 semi-automatic rifles – battlefield weapons dating from World War II and still used in Vietnam – advanced upon and shot down defenseless people in broad daylight.

One could imagine the campus as a besieged village set among rice fields. The Kent State massacre was preadapted for potent representation. No wonder Chris Triffo entitled his 2000 documentary film *Kent State: The Day the War Came Home*.

Kent State, as the shootings became labeled, immediately achieved iconic status as a stark enactment of the split in American society over the war and, more broadly, over American identity. Should one “love it [the United States] or leave it,” as the xenophobic bumper stickers read? Or did loving it mean rejecting a war and leaders judged to be cruel, racist, and immoral? Which was more authentically American, loyalty or dissent? The Kent massacre turned this recurrent national question into a mortal one. It dramatically condensed the animosity of dissidents toward Richard Nixon; the revulsion felt by them at the endless nightmare of the war; and the disgust, voiced by prominent politicians and a huge pro-government segment of the citizenry, toward the protesters, whom they viewed as unpatriotic draft-dodging troublemakers who deserved what they got.

It is easy to cloak the 1960s retrospectively in a psychedelic mantle of peace, love, freedom, and tolerance. But in many ways the country was more bitterly split then than it is today: antiwar protest, the civil rights movement, and the youth counterculture, now taken to be emblematic of those times, were widely reviled. A Newsweek poll conducted shortly after the Kent shootings revealed that 58% of Americans blamed the students, whereas only 11% faulted the National Guard (Goldberg 1995).

What happened to the memory of Kent State?

In 2014, the German diplomat Volker Stanzel and I co-taught an undergraduate course entitled “The Politics of Memory” at the University of California, Santa Cruz. In their generally liberal, activist sympathies today’s UCSC students resemble the 1960s protesters, and they are surprisingly attuned to the alternative cultures of that time. We were therefore curious about their familiarity with the Kent State shootings, since the event was a milestone of the era and in the national history of student protest.

It turned out that most had only a sketchy familiarity with the Kent massacre. Few could recount the details or the events that preceded and followed it. Some seemed never to have heard of Kent State. Others recognized Neil Young’s angry 1970 song “Ohio” or John Filo’s searing photo of Mary Ann Vecchio screaming over the corpse of Jeffrey Miller, but they had associated them generically with “protests of the 1960s.”

All of us have huge gaps in knowledge, and historical awareness usually evaporates quickly. I wasn’t surprised by the lacunae, despite the fact that the fund of public memory of Kent State is immense. To be sure, some of the physical stock resides in the East and Midwest; our mostly Californian students would likely have had no exposure to it. Memorials dot the Kent campus and commemorations are held there annually on May 4. There are other memorials at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Minnesota State University-Mankato, and SUNY-Plattsburgh. Kent State University Library maintains an extensive archive; Yale has another. “Abraham and Isaac,” the controversial George Segal bronze sculpture commissioned by Kent State in 1978 and then rejected by the university, is now installed at Princeton.

But much of the public memory is readily available to anyone anywhere. Kent’s May 4 Archive is web accessible, as are many of the front-page articles published by newspapers across the country and the world. Kent State has been featured in nonfiction books, television

documentaries, magazine pieces, photo collections, and official studies. Recently PBS aired yet another new report entitled *The Day the Sixties Died* (Halperin 2015).

Moreover, Kent State has a continuing presence in both elite art and U.S. popular culture (Seeman, Barbato, Davis, and Lewis 2016). It has been referenced in innumerable works of fiction, theater, poetry, and film. It has been a topic of opera, jazz, and popular music compositions. On the fortieth anniversary of the Kent massacre, *Time* magazine rated “Ohio” the top protest song of all time (Webley 2010); the *Guardian* described it as “not just a classic song but a vital historical document of a time when politics felt like a matter of life and death” (Lynskey 2010). Urban Outfitters, a clothier marketing to young people, recently offered for sale a Kent State sweatshirt with designs suggestive of bullet holes and bloodstains, provoking tremendous outrage and a letter of protest from the university (Ohlheiser 2014).

Yet our informal classroom experiment shows that even an impressive array of public representations may offer only the roughest guide to the presence, diversity, intensity, distribution, and textures of personal memories. The Kent archives bolster this conclusion. The oral histories include conversations with students, National Guardsmen, townspeople, politicians, professors, staff, and others, providing a wealth of first-person accounts of the run-up to May 4, the tragic events of that day, and its varied, often enduring, repercussions in people’s lives. The archives reveal the tip of an iceberg, reminding us that most memories of Kent State, held by millions of people across the U.S. and the world, are beyond documentation.

Such personal memories are largely idiosyncratic, but sometimes they intersect. Those who come of age at a particular time often participate, vicariously at least, in the same big events, albeit from different perspectives. Ambassador Stanzel’s and my recollections of Kent

overlapped even though in 1970 we lived on different continents and had never met. Our joint memories were much richer than those of the students, who of course were not alive then.

Differences in temporal, spatial, generational, and subjective remove from an event naturally explain divergences in memory (Bloch 1998; Cole 2001). But memories are also integrated into particular lives in specific ways. To illustrate the personalization of historical memory, allow me an account of my own associations to the Kent State massacre.

I grew up in Akron, Ohio, a stone's throw from Kent. When I was in high school, I used to wangle my way into Kent's lively student bars. I also had acquaintances who attended or taught at the university. Thus I had a degree of familiarity with the Kent campus.

I left Ohio in 1963. Like millions of others my age, I participated in many protests against the Vietnam War, including the November 1969 March on Washington. And then in spring 1970, having quit the United States to embark on an open-ended hegira, I was hitching rides on trucks along the desolate tracks that crisscross the western Sahara. I felt far removed from the drumbeat of domestic uproar and reports of body counts that I had left behind. I found myself on the evening of May 5 in a dusty Moroccan oasis called Assa-par-Goulimine. My girlfriend and I were overnight guests at the house of a local resident. A friend of his had a short-wave radio. For some days we had had no contact with the world beyond the desert, and so we swept back and forth across the dial seeking a station we could understand. We settled on the BBC.

The World Service was saying that four students had been shot dead during an antiwar rally at a campus called Kent State University in Ohio. The 4000 miles between Kent and Morocco collapsed in an instant. The war, the Sahara, the campus protests, that town with its scruffy palms and whitewashed mosque and earthen houses, my companion, my hosts, my visits to Kent, the recent sting of Washington tear gas, and my youth in Akron fused together in a

stunning moment of grief. This “flashbulb memory” (Brown and Kulik 1977), which blurs autobiographical and semantic memory, surfaces today whenever I think of Kent State.

Decades later, in the 1990s, I visited Kent with my teenage son. I assumed there had to be some kind of monument to the victims. I asked several students where it was. None knew; some seemed puzzled as to what I was talking about. At last I stopped an older man. He instantly pointed us in the direction of one of the several campus memorials. Etched on a granite slab were the familiar names Allison Krause, Jeffrey Miller, Sandra Scheuer, and William Schroeder. The marker simulates a gravestone. Standing there, I relived the moment in North Africa, which now had layered upon it the experiences of mourning and the intergenerational sharing of memory.

In fall 2012 I returned to Ohio to report on the presidential election, hotly contested in that state, for a local California newspaper. I visited the University of Akron, where Barack Obama was to deliver a campaign speech. Owing to Hurricane Sandy, his appearance was postponed. I walked to the basketball arena, the prospective site of the event, to see whether it had been rescheduled. With a shock I saw that the venue was named after James A. Rhodes.

Rhodes was the governor who ordered the Ohio National Guard to the Kent State campus during the May disturbances. “We’re going to eradicate the problem,” he declared, “we’re not going to treat the symptoms.” He denounced the protesters as “worse than the ‘Brown Shirt’ and the communist element... They’re the worst type of people that we harbor in America” (Rhodes 1970).⁵ I felt renewed fury at Rhodes and disappointment that President Obama could address students in a building with his name on it. I wrote about Rhodes in my newspaper column: a personal memory of Kent again became public, now in the context of an election 42 years later.

Strangely, an event that I experienced only through a barely audible radio broadcast at a distance of thousands of miles has intimately and inescapably coalesced with, and has deeply

politicized, my memories of the place where I grew up and which I left long ago. Kent State has become, over my lifetime, one reference point for my own version of American identity and for the way I view U.S. and world politics. It is not accidental that the article you are now reading is anchored in this memory.

Memory fields: key characteristics

With the Kent example in mind, let me offer some summary observations on memory fields.

1) Any memory field is vast, differentiated, and internally dynamic.

The Kent memory field is chock-a-block with every imaginable kind of public representation and with uncountable personal memories that differ in content, intricacy, and emotional depth. The field is never static: memories conflict and vie for attention; monuments are erected, removed, and argued over; stories are told from sundry angles; personal memories multiply, diverge, decay, grow, and shift. Because memories are personalized, there is no royal road from any single public representation, or set of such representations, to the minds of those who remember.

A person occupies a unique perspective within a memory field, though individual viewpoints may partially correspond. Most memories, both public and personal, are unknown to any single observer, even though people often mistakenly assume that others' memories coincide with their own.

While the memory repercussions of the Kent massacre are impressive, many events, of course, have greater long-term impacts than Kent. The war that sparked the Kent demonstration continues to disturb memories in this country, Southeast Asia, and the world. PBS just aired a new 18-hour documentary entitled *The Vietnam War* (Burns and Novick 2017), which features

American and Vietnamese recollections and has itself entered the war's and Kent State's memory fields. As in the Somme, the guns in Vietnam fell silent long ago, but the war is not over.

I will call documentary films and other such public representations *remembrances*. The category includes obvious depictions of the past – narratives (histories, reports, myths, films, stories of all kinds), museums, monuments, archaeological sites, commemorations, artistic references, national imagery – as well as more oblique references given expression in folklore, rituals, and traditions.⁶ Following Bartlett, discussed below, I will use the term *remembering* to refer to personal cognizing of the past.

The cut I am making between public and personal is a rough one that radically simplifies the layered relationships among forms of memory. A further distinction, noted by Bloch, is that between *recollecting*, “consciously recognizing information from the past,” and *recalling*, “expressing the content of this knowledge to others” (2012, 89-90). Bloch emphasizes that representations of the past, whether mental or material, are always transformations, according to different principles, of prior encodings.

My recall above is a written transformation of a set of recollections, themselves invisible cognitive transformations of mental traces presumably inscribed at the moment I heard of the Kent State shootings. Recall formulates personal memory socially, usually in restricted interactional settings. Scenes such as the impromptu ritual moment I shared with my son at the marker on the Kent campus are important both for their dialogic effects on one's own recollection and for the face-to-face propagation of personal memories. Recall therefore typically lies at the boundary of public and personal.

Thinking of memories as occupying a field invites us to explore issues hidden by a focus on observable memorials alone or on this or that personal memory in isolation. What is the range

of memories connected with an event? How are they distributed? How are memories communicated? Which memories win out, and why? How much and in what ways do public representations shape lives?

2) Personal and public memories alike are acts of construction in the present.

When we call up a file from a hard disk or the cloud, we speak of “retrieval.” The retrieval metaphor, which figures memory as an unspoiled store of information, is commonsensical but deceptive, as F. C. Bartlett (1967) showed long ago.

Memory is, ironically, always a work in progress. Bartlett described personal memory as imaginative reconstruction rather than recovery of an intact record. For him, mental traces of the past are something like potsherds or bone fragments of some extinct animal, residues of natural destruction that become grist for restorations. Such mental remnants are winnowed by psychological processes and then serve as fodder for the present act of schema-driven “remembering.” In Bartlett’s most notable experiment, his English subjects read a Canadian Indian story and were then asked, at intervals, to recall it. Their remembering became systematically distorted: certain details progressively fell out, others were added, and the restored narratives increasingly took conventional English forms. Bartlett’s presentist view treats personal memories as changing constructions that build upon mental traces according to preexisting patterns and current goals, impulses, imperatives, and constraints.

Is my own memory of that night in the Sahara the retrieval of an intact record warehoused somewhere in my mind? Surely it is not, although sometimes it feels like it. I am convinced by schema theory on that score. The more closely I inspect my account, the less definite it seems, just as when one recollects a dream the images go fuzzy when you try to zero in on them. Moreover, my memory of the Kent shootings has continued to change and grow in

new directions as it resurfaces. And, finally, I am narrating my recollection here, giving it concrete form and packaging it in certain ways to serve the purposes of this article.

Like rememberings, remembrances are constructions in the present, though the processes that generate them are different. Public memories often target identities by adopting conventional narrative forms and making use of cultural assumptions that render them comprehensible and compelling.

Roxanne Varzi (2006) provides an arresting study of a state-sponsored crystallization that sought to weld Shia religious identity to martial sacrifice during the 1980-88 war between Iran and Iraq. She discusses the promotion by Iranian revolutionary leaders of the memory of the seventh-century Battle of Karbala, which took place in present-day Iraq. During the battle, the revered Shiite Imam Husayn ibn Ali was beheaded on the orders of the caliph Yazid. Husayn's martyrdom is commemorated annually in the passionate celebration of Ashura.

Iraq, then ruled by Saddam Hussein, was an enemy of Khomeini whom the Iranian state rhetorically identified with Yazid. Posters, murals, war memorabilia, tributes to the dead, stories, and films capitalized on the memory of the Imam's martyrdom to inspire Iranian soldiers to holy sacrifice and to impel other Iranians to support the war, which was transformed into a mythical sacred struggle. "It was Ashura every day at the front," an ex-soldier told Varzi (2006, 102). The war, observes Varzi, "institutionalized martyrdom... [L]ike the battle of Karbala, [it] was interpreted as a battle of the righteous against the infidels" (2006, 54).⁷

The battle of Karbala took place long ago, but crystallizing histories sometimes emerge shortly after an event, as happened in the wake of the Kent shootings, in order to frame its memory immediately. Just as at Orangeburg and later at Jackson State (Seeman, Barbato, Davis, and Lewis 2016), a groundless story of a sniper surfaced. Sylvester Del Corso, Adjutant General

of the Ohio National Guard, asserted that the Guardsmen had responded to fire directed at them, presumably by either a student or one of the “outside agitators” that Governor Rhodes had declared were flooding the Kent campus. J. R. Haldeman, one of Nixon’s aides, noted in his contemporaneous journal that the president “issued one ringing command: ‘need to get out story of sniper.’” Though the sniper claim was repudiated by all serious investigations, and was even retracted in short order by Del Corso himself, it continued to circulate for a long time.

Other lurid stories spread of “a girl with a gun,” mysterious figures in gas masks holding pistols, “radical sluts,” “a Black Panther from Chicago” wielding a machete, sinister Weathermen, older rabble-rousers with “thinning hair,” “hippie-type girls” somehow urinating into Pepsi bottles to be used as missiles, a professor instructing his students how to build Molotov cocktails, and the presence of subversives of all stripes and nefarious intentions.⁸

Few of these tales bore any resemblance to reality. Although confusing, emotional events like the Kent shootings often breed bizarre rumors, most of the anecdotes seem calculated to divide supposed enemies of America from supposed patriots and therefore to provide justification for the National Guard’s actions.

Official investigations during the following months came to divergent conclusions (Kasperek 1973). The President’s Commission on Campus Unrest roundly dismissed the sniper claim, describing the shootings as “unnecessary, unwarranted, and inexcusable.” In contrast, the Portage County Grand Jury, convened by Rhodes, predictably exonerated the Guard and issued 25 criminal indictments, solely against demonstrators. These eventuated in only three minor convictions (Garmon n.d.).⁹

The fanciful stories and the grand jury charges worked as identity wedges that widened ideological and lifestyle rifts of the era. They appealed to a dread of anarchy, hostility to protest,

intergenerational divides, Cold War fears, nationalist sentiments, resentments over class privilege, anxieties over gender and sexuality, and racial mistrust. They framed the slayings as acts of righteous self-defense against degenerate traitors rather than as gratuitous state-sponsored killings of vulnerable young citizens exercising their legal right to dissent. They clashed frontally with protesters' descriptions of an unjustified overreaction by the Guard, seen as a tool of pro-war politicians, to a Constitutionally protected demonstration. The challenge issued by both defenders of the Guard and defenders of the students was: Whose side are you on? A subtext read: We are the real Americans.

3) Though responsive to exigencies of the present, memories do not necessarily have any clear function or objective.

Some public memories, such as the invocation of Karbala, clearly serve a political aim. Personal memories may also be self-serving, aiming to deflect blame, defend against hurt, or maintain self-respect. But a presentist approach to memory need not commit us also to an instrumental one. Not all memory construction is goal-oriented or even responds to a recognizable unconscious motivation. Guardsmen at Kent said they felt afraid as they were cursed at and pelted with stones, and a few reported hearing gunshots. No doubt some made that claim in good faith rather than as an invented self-justification.

Memories can be, simply, inadvertently false, especially when incorrect post-event information is conveyed (Loftus and Pickrell 1995). Piaget's vivid recollection of being kidnapped as an infant is a famous example of such a false memory, one that he found hard to discard even when he learned it was a phantom product of a fiction circulated by his nurse (Bringuier 1980, 121). Perhaps ghost memories of a sniper had similar retrospective origins in stories repeated in the aftermath of the Kent shootings.

And memories sometimes have a brute quality: they can erupt unbidden, inflicting renewed pain rather than promoting a goal or providing catharsis. Testimonies of the Holocaust victims cited by Lawrence Langer (1991) are burdened with sorrow, suffering, loss, and a feeling of brokenness. Langer cautions us not to interpret the accounts as tales of heroic survival. “A kind of unshielded truth emerges from them,” he writes. “For the former victims, the Holocaust is a communal wound that cannot heal” (1991, 204).

Even when a remembrance has political dimensions or can be turned to a political purpose, it sometimes seems not fully deliberate. I doubt that the presence of memorials at Kent can be explained entirely by political motivations. Shakespeare reminds us that bloodstains are tenacious. However one regards the students and the Guard, one cannot easily forget that something dire and fateful happened on that campus on a spring afternoon in 1970.

Like the Kent remembrances, Maya Lin’s 1982 Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington has a multivalent, irrepressible quality. Some years ago I visited the site. I had a complicated response to it. Quietly and reverently people were laying flowers and making rubbings from the inscriptions on the wall. Though not a veteran myself, and though I had lost no close family or friends in Vietnam, I was moved by their actions and by the solemnity of the long sunken black granite face with its tens of thousands of incised names. At the same time, I felt anger and despair over what I saw as the meaningless destruction of lives, American and Vietnamese, in a war that should not have been fought. At another level, I knew that expressing my antiwar feelings would likely be taken by many visitors as disrespectful. The Wall is polysemic but because the meanings it evokes are intense and divisive it seems to encourage silence, not debate, over the past. The antagonisms that grew and hardened during the years of the war cut deep, if rarely acknowledged, gashes that persist in our current national memory.

Memory's brute quality seems especially pronounced in cases of calamity. Just as psychological traumas often impose themselves on the present, so do historical ones. Wounds that cannot heal, painful national memories can long endure as unwelcome residues of unresolved and perhaps unresolvable dilemmas.

4) Supposed past events sometimes never happened, even when they are touted as centerpieces of memory; conversely, the memory of actual significant events can be deliberately eroded.

These points are obvious but important. How many of us, like Piaget, know (or tell) family stories that have become conventionalized and highly elaborated but that we suspect were either trifling events or never occurred at all? How many of us have deliberately misrepresented our own past, even to ourselves?

And public, politically motivated misrepresentations of the past, like many of those forwarded in the wake of the Kent shootings, are routine. Sometimes, though, they are well disguised. Barth (1969) and others have emphasized the "boundaries first, memory later" quality of many ethnic projects. For instance, traditions securely ensconced in a nation's memory field may be recent fabrications. The wearing of differentiated tartans to signal clan affiliations is not a hoary Scottish custom but a nineteenth-century improvisation of a few romantics and a weaving firm seeking to boost business (Trevor-Roper 1983). Use of the tartans signifies adherence to tradition and thereby reinforces Highland Scottish and clan identities, but the tradition itself is invented. Similarly, Richard Handler (1988) describes how alleged folklore gives substance to an intrinsically thin Québécois identity. Through a practice Handler calls "cultural objectification," nationalist elites identified certain unmarked, localized, bygone rural forms of dancing and

sociability as enduring symbols of Quebec (1988, Chapter 3). Once firmly bonded to identity, traditions, invented or not, become commonsense memories.

There is no need to belabor the point. Baby Piaget was never kidnapped. Scottish clans had no ancient tradition of distinctive tartans. There was no sniper at Kent State. My Lai was not a military action against National Liberation Front soldiers. The original U.S. Constitution did not guarantee equal rights to all people. Invented memories, from minor to world-changing, are legion.

Just as a fantasized past can be invented, memory of a real past can be eroded through deliberate action. Kent is an instructive counter-example. Recollections of the massacre have faded somewhat, but there has never been a concerted attempt by the U.S. government to erase its public memory. In fact, as I note below, the shootings site has recently received official federal recognition.

Elsewhere, governments have sought to snuff out memories of bigger bloodbaths. Wuer Kaixi, one of the student leaders of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, was invited to the 1990 commemoration at Kent. After sympathetically noting the parallels between the two events, despite the difference in scale – “a massacre is a massacre” – he expressed regret that the hundreds or thousands of murdered Beijing students, unlike the Kent four, cannot be named and publicly mourned in China (1990). Louisa Lim, a National Public Radio correspondent who was a student at Beijing University shortly after Tiananmen, when the event was discussed “in urgent, furtive conversations in public parks and deserted streets,” has traced the increasingly harsh suppression of commemoration and recall in succeeding years. She describes China’s population as “complicit in an act of mass amnesia” (Lim 2015). Perhaps: but the determined smothering of remembrance suggests the persistence of invisible remembering.

Like invented histories, attempts to wipe out the past are common. The success of such efforts is another matter. Destroying, altering, or censoring public records is one thing; dislodging harrowing memories from human minds is another. Ask the Tiananmen mothers.

5) A scholarly account of a memory field automatically enters and changes it.

As Carl Schorske (1998) has emphasized, a scholar's own work occupies a vital place in memory fields. For Schorske, a historian's narratives should inform present objectives, not conform to them. They should provide a platform for reflection and a rationale – not a rationalization – for action. He describes “thinking with history” as “the employment of the materials of the past and the configurations in which we organize and comprehend them to orient ourselves in the living present... If we locate ourselves in history's stream, we can begin to look at ourselves and our mental life, whether personal or collective, as conditioned by the historical present as it defines itself out of – or against – our past” (1998, 3; cf. Trouillot 1995).

Schorske takes a critical, facilitating view of the historian's role. He advocates thinking the present with history. The past does not dictate who we are; we remake ourselves in its refracted light. Authoritarians follow the opposite approach: they seek to think history with the present, bending the past to current objectives. For such cynics, the past has no autonomy, no lesson to impart, no genuine contemporary relevance: history's only purpose is to tell a story that serves power. Memory is only a crude political weapon.

To be sure, truth is perspectival and plural: many responsible characterizations can be made of any event. But it is one thing to explore the past judiciously and carefully, with the knowledge that historical memory has orienting and enabling effects in the present, and quite another to deliberately seek to control those effects by inventing the past or deliberately mutilating it.

This article does not stand apart from the memory fields it describes. I hope the memories of Kent State inscribed and referenced here can contribute to our orientation in the living present, which lies downstream from that event in the flow of American history. I invite readers to make of that connection what they will.

Memory control and its limits

In the U.S., as everywhere in the world, politicians have often sought to disguise or efface disgraceful histories.¹⁰ But however much some tried to impose a self-justifying narrative on the Kent State killings, they failed. In 2016 the Kent State Shootings Site gained recognition as a National Historic Landmark. Commenting on the designation, Laura Davis, founding director of Kent State's May 4 Visitors Center, urged Americans to think the present with history. She remarked: "The shootings at Kent State on May 4, 1970, were a singular, unexpected event... At the same time, they are part of a fabric that includes the Boston Massacre, Wounded Knee, and Edmund Pettus Bridge. The Department of the Interior recognizes such enduring places as National Historic Landmarks *so that people can make meaning during their own times of the broad patterns in U.S. history*" (Anderson 2017, italics mine).

In contrast, the totalitarian states of the twentieth century – the USSR, Nazi Germany, Mao's China – all thought history with the present. For them, maintaining Party hegemony required the ruthless dissemination of tailored views of the past. Through blanket censorship, media control, command of education, use of informers, and the imprisonment, torture, and killing of dissidents they tried to suffocate renegade memories, supplant them, and yoke minds and identities to power.

The domination of a memory field by a totalitarian regime is a central theme of Orwell's *1984*. The novel's ill-fated hero, Winston Smith, is a memory fixer in the Party's Ministry of

Truth. His job is to amend or destroy documents to ensure that existing records always support the Party's current narrative of the past, which constantly changes. He edits some and dispatches others to a "memory hole," where they are incinerated. Smith rebels at the system: he knows that the altered records falsify the past and he cannot accede to the lies. He is eventually arrested and interrogated by a Party official named O'Brien, who asks:

"Does the past exist concretely, in space? Is there somewhere or other a place, a world of solid objects, where the past is still happening?"

"No."

"Then where does the past exist, if at all?"

"In records. It is written down."

"In records. And—?"

"In the mind. In human memories."

"In memory. Very well, then. We, the Party, control all records, and we control all memories. Then we control the past, do we not?"

"But how can you stop people remembering things? ...It is involuntary. It is outside oneself. How can you control memory? You have not controlled mine!"

O'Brien's manner grew stern again...

"On the contrary," he said, "*you* have not controlled it. That is what has brought you here. You are here because you have failed in humility, in self-discipline. You would not make the act of submission which is the price of sanity... Whatever the Party holds to be the truth *is* truth. It is impossible to see reality except by looking through the eyes of the Party" (1977, 248-49, italics in original).

At the novel's end, Winston succumbs, realizing that he has finally "won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother" (1977, 298). Orwell suggests that a totalitarian state not only continually rewrites public memory but can, by severing the self from a legible past, supersede personal memory as well. O'Brien pushes Smith to memory erasure and identity suicide: all that is left for him is dissolution in the abject collectivity.

Orwell is damning the totalitarian states of the twentieth century and issuing an alert for the future. But non-totalitarian states also try to control memory. In *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood* (1997), Anastasia Karakasidou details the ethnic cleansing of memory in Macedonia, a province Greece annexed in the early twentieth century. Through its educational, economic, and

religious institutions, the Greek state attempted to crystallize difference by extinguishing memories of Macedonia's often-harmonious multiethnic past. The story it told through its many channels was that Macedonia was and had always been uniformly Greek.

Karakasidou depicts the state in its most consciously rational mode, manipulating remembrances to promote its own nation-building objectives. Yet her indictment also emphasizes that the state's identity offensive collides with, and to a degree breaks against, the remembering of some citizens. Personal memories, embedded in lives, have a degree of obduracy. The state's victory is substantial but not quite complete.

To prove her charge of memory assassination (Vidal-Naquet 1992), Karakasidou performs an exhumation. She describes a series of interviews she conducted with an old woman of Slavic descent named Paskhalina, a resident of the village of Assiros, Karakasidou's main fieldsite. Paskhalina recounts a 1913 battle between Greeks and Bulgarians. In the beginning, her recall hews to the official Greek line, which portrays Greeks as saviors and Bulgarians as marauding intruders. She tells how Bulgarian soldiers burned down her village and how they abducted her siblings and took them back to Bulgaria. But gradually, tabooed (and, Paskhalina herself acknowledges, more accurate) recollections intrude. By the fourth interview she recalls that it was Greek, not Bulgarian, soldiers who incinerated the houses, and that her Slavic siblings were never kidnapped: they voluntarily left Macedonia.

Karakasidou does not report other interviews in detail, as a person-centered anthropologist might, but clearly Paskhalina is not alone in harboring conflicting memories. Karakasidou identifies a type of narrative, "mundane personal and family histories," which are "regarded as mere recollections of personal experiences... irrelevant to the [invented national] historic record" of the area's eternal Hellenism. In such oral histories, villagers spoke of the

“ancestor who had migrated down from Montenegro,” “of Slavic speaking mothers or grandmothers... who were prevented by their Greek speaking husbands... from using their natal language at home,” “of the local woman who struck up conversations with Bulgarian soldiers during World War II, telling them that the villagers were ‘of the same race’ as the Bulgarians,” and so on. Yet “none expressed any sense that such mundane occurrences were in any way anomalous to the standardized national history they had been taught in school” (1997, 232). Karakasidou observes: “I am certain that at the time of her death [Paskhalina] felt nothing other than Greek. Years of schooling and a lifetime of intimate contact with local Assiriotes... had superscribed a Greek national identity upon her own memories and interpretations of local history” (1997, 235). Here Orwell’s doublethink, the simultaneous belief in contrary ideas, runs more deeply, into doublebeing.

The ethnography earned Karakasidou death threats. Greek critics denounced her in personal terms, labeling her as an ignorant incompetent or a spy (1997, xviii-xix). Pressured by Greek authorities, leaders of Assiros defended their Greekness in an open letter and severed relations with her.

The harsh response brings to mind many Poles’ hostile reception to Jan Gross’s book *Neighbors* (2002). Gross describes the massacre of the 1600 Jews of Jedwabne by their fellow townspeople shortly after the invading Germans, having torn up their pact of convenience with Stalin, moved in. “On one day in July 1941,” Gross tells us, “half the population of a small European town murdered the other half” (2002, xviii). The town’s officials had entered into an arrangement with the Gestapo, which allotted them “a certain amount of time [perhaps eight hours] to do with the Jews as they pleased” (2002, 45). What the authorities and many of the non-Jewish townspeople “pleased” is laid out in horrific detail by Gross. “Had Jedwabne not

been occupied by the Germans,” he writes, “the Jews of Jedwabne would not have been murdered by their neighbors... [But] as to the Germans’ direct participation in the mass murder..., one must admit that it was limited, pretty much, to their taking pictures” (2002, 47).

The Germans, standing to one side, issued a license to kill. The killing itself was done by Poles, “men of all ages and of different professions; entire families on occasion, fathers and sons acting in concert; good citizens, one is tempted to say (if sarcasm were not out of place, given the hideousness of their deeds), who heeded the call of municipal authorities” (2002, 78).

Gross does not see “defending Poland’s good name” (2002, 114) as a legitimate project for a Polish historian wishing to contribute to a forward-looking, authentic national debate. That, he says, requires “unvarnished history” (2002, 116) and a trust in people’s ability to digest and respond soberly and constructively to unwelcome facts.¹¹

Gross’s account, which mines a memory field by drawing on court records, personal journals, and eyewitness testimonies of both survivors and perpetrators, directly challenges the postwar Polish national myth that the Holocaust was always and everywhere the work of the German occupiers. That “big lie” crystallizes the difference between Poles and Germans, corrupting Polish memory with a “fear of discovery” (2002, 113-114). Gross instead asks Poles to think the present with the discomfiting complexity of history. He reclaims from a memory hole recollections of some Poles’ willing collaboration with German genocide.

Shortly after the book’s publication in Poland, Gross expressed his hope that Polish-Jewish relations could now be “revisited with honesty and sadness” (2002, 124). His optimism may have been misplaced. Poland’s current populist right-wing government has proposed to strip Gross of his formerly awarded National Order of Merit for suggesting Poles were guilty of war crimes (Smith 2016), a threat deplored by the many Polish and foreign historians who expressed

support for him (*Gazeta Wyborcza* 2016; Manning 2016). As I write (February 2018), a bill criminalizing claims of Polish complicity in the Holocaust has passed the country's Senate.

In sum, attempts at memory control have varied outcomes. In the case of Kent State, initial efforts by politicians to excuse the shootings and polarize identities drown in a sea of contrary memories, eventually yielding to official recognition of the killing field as a National Historic Landmark. Memories of Kent do not converge on a unitary narrative or underpin a singular American identity. In Orwell's totalitarian apotheosis, the state takes command of the memory field by destroying any stable links between identities and the past. People are left to wander in a timeless present with only Big Brother as a lodestar. In Greek Macedonia, the state tries to erase an inconvenient past but cannot fully evict contrary personal memories, which continue to circulate in intimate interactional realms and experiential interiors beyond the state's reach. In Poland, a bitter battle over the memories of World War II, and thus the identities of Polish citizens and the future of the Polish nation, continues to rage.

Back to the future

Here in the United States, 2017 came in with a whiff of *1984*. Shortly after Donald Trump's inauguration, Orwell's dystopian novel improbably shot to the top of Amazon's best-seller list. Its popularity no doubt reflects unease over Trump's assaults on memory.

American politicians, Hungarian rightists, Iranian ayatollahs, Greek bureaucrats, and Polish leaders have sought, to varying degrees and with varying success, to use public memory to congeal identities into we-they dichotomies. Similarly, Trump's jaunty, nostalgic campaign slogan "Make America Great Again" invites crystallizations of difference. To what paradise, gone with the wind, does the slogan refer? Was America great in the eras of slavery and the so-called Indian Wars? Was it great in the days of segregation and Vietnam? Was it great when

protesters were getting gunned down on campuses? Trump's thinly veiled and sometimes overtly racist rhetoric suggests that the primary divide he is promoting is that between whites and nonwhites. But Trump is an undisciplined politician. He does not follow Hitler's dictum of locating all evil in a single enemy; he crystallizes promiscuously. He sets heartland against coasts, believers against secularists, America Firsters against globalists, straights against gays, men against women, natives against newcomers, and "the people" against educational and cultural "elites."

Trump also flirts with historicide. For example, during a White House ceremony in late 2017 he honored Navajo code talkers beneath a portrait of Andrew Jackson, the author of the brutal ethnic cleansing then termed "Indian removal," and, for good measure, in an aside described a U.S. senator as "Pocahontas." He juxtaposed allusions to Indian savagery with encomia to Indian heroism, symbolically conflated different eras, and insulted as he praised. The messages collide. What is he saying about U.S. history and Native Americans' place in it?

Trump's contradictions, far-fetched speculations, and "alternative facts," as his spokesperson Kellyanne Conway describes them, muddy the waters of memory. Probably his most cynical alternative fact, which he asserted, denied, and then reasserted, is the Birther Fable: the allegation, redolent of white nativism and contradicted by official documents, that Barack Obama was born in Kenya. Trump's blizzard of fictions, from inflations of crowd sizes to denials of recorded conversations to bizarre portrayals of minority groups to wholesale travesties of American history, continues unabated.

Labeling outstanding journalists peddlers of "fake news" is not the same as feeding documents into memory holes, and the U.S. is far from a totalitarian society. But unprincipled media parrot Trump's declarations, and polls say that many Americans who consult such sources

are willing to entertain his manifestly invented or shape-shifting claims. At the very least, Trump's chaotic pronouncements, issued into our contemporary memory fields with the stamp of authority, foster disorientation. As Hannah Arendt conjectures:

[T]he result of a consistent and total substitution of lies for factual truth is not that the lies will now be accepted as truth, and the truth be defamed as lies, but that the sense by which we take our bearings in the real world – and the category of truth vs. falsehood is among the mental means to this end – is being destroyed (2000:568).

If, like Winston Smith and the White Queen, Americans eventually become practiced in believing “six impossible things before breakfast” (Carroll 1960:251), then we go through the looking-glass into a floating, authoritarian Wonderland.

Trump's ascendancy raises such specters, along with a host of crucial empirical questions. How vulnerable in fact are Americans to attempts at memory control and identity crystallization? What versions of American identity emerge from a relentless, if hazy and disingenuous, appeal to imagined past glories or, alternatively, from a massive abuse of memory that threatens to uncouple Americans from credible versions of their history?

It is not our job as anthropologists, any more than it is the historians', to defend the memory-bullies by acceding to their versions of the past. Nor should we assume that others are necessarily their pawns. The memory field concept reminds us that although the past does not speak for itself it is not simply a shiny forgery of ruling parties and presidents. Memory is always under construction, revision, debate, and demolition in a vast landscape, much of which is difficult to access. Our specialty as ethnographers is attending to the disparate, the hidden, the unacknowledged, the invisible. Recollections such as those of Kent students, residents of Assiros, witnesses to the Jedwabne atrocity, survivors of Khmer Rouge genocide, or Tiananmen mothers are not just colorful footnotes to big history or big politics. They deny claims to a

monopoly on memory by those who would use the levers of power to ordain the past, intercede in identities, and thereby direct the future.

But of course there are no guarantees that the bullies will not, despite cross-currents and resistances, ultimately prevail in spinning out a past that will drag us into their desired future.

Postscript: Charlottesville

During the second week of August 2017, Nazis, Ku Klux Klansmen, neo-Confederates, and a hodge-podge of hard-right white nationalists gathered in the college town of Charlottesville, Virginia, ostensibly to protest the planned removal of a statue of Robert E. Lee. That was a pretext. Their “UNITE THE RIGHT” posters displayed images of heroic realism, reminiscent of those in 1930s Nazi propaganda, designed to arouse followers and to provoke opponents. The goal, in short, was not preservation of “heritage” but radical crystallization.

Though the rightists’ swastikas and Confederate battle flags spoke for themselves, one needed a codebook to decipher the other symbols on display: Norse runes, dragon’s eyes, Black Suns, blood drop crosses, arcane number combinations, in short, a profusion of more or less cryptic badges of racist revanchism. On the night of August 11, hundreds of militants chanting Nazi slogans swarmed the center of the University of Virginia campus. It looked like, and undoubtedly was intended to be, a defilement and invasion. This time there was a twist. The invaders were not, as at Kent, U.S. soldiers under orders, marching with rifles, but white supremacists granted license, marching with torches.

The next afternoon, Heather Heyer, a 32-year-old white paralegal who had joined a group demonstrating against the racists, was run down and killed ISIS-style, apparently by a young white man with Nazi sympathies named James Fields, Jr.

I invite you to consider how Heather Heyer, James Fields, and Charlottesville will be remembered and how their memories will affect who Americans think we are and how we move into the future. Like Kent almost a half century ago, Charlottesville distilled bitter antagonisms and conflicting visions into a riveting national tragedy. Heather Heyer was, by all accounts, a generous-minded person who believed in an America of equal rights and racial harmony. James Fields, by all accounts, does not. There is a photo of Fields taken earlier that day. Surrounded by members of the white nationalist group Vanguard America, he is holding a black shield bearing an image of white fasces. Vanguard America's watchword is "Blood and soil," a direct translation of the Nazi slogan "Blut und Boden." The doubly anachronistic, doubly menacing symbolism of the Charlottesville extremists calls to mind D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915) and Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1935). Once again politics feels like a matter of life and death.

As the president winks and dissembles, seeming to deplore the violence at Charlottesville while observing that there were some "very fine people" among the supremacists, old questions return. Like the volley fired by the Ohio National Guard, James Fields Jr.'s Dodge Challenger drove another identity wedge deep into American society. Whose side are you on? What is it to be an American and a human being?

Charlottesville has given rise to a nascent memory field bristling with terrible images, conflicting narratives, and, certainly, widespread and powerful personal resonances. Its memories, public and personal, will multiply and reverberate for some time ahead. Their fate is, in a significant sense, our fate. They are worth tracking.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This article began as a thought piece entitled Memory Fields and Transnational Identities, presented in 2003 at a Wenner-Gren Workshop on Heritage and Politics in Wicklow, Ireland. My thanks to Wenner-Gren and the workshop participants. Suma Ikeuchi, Nelson Lande, Jeff Lesser, Anna Månsson McGinty, Volker Stanzel, Rachael Stryker, Elise Trumbull, and anonymous *Ethos* reviewers commented incisively on various drafts of the present essay. I was unable to address all their suggestions and concerns, but the paper is far better for their interventions.

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NOTES

Frequently cited works on social (or “collective”) aspects of memory are Halbwachs (1992) and Connerton (1989); on psychological aspects, Bartlett (1967) and Freud (1969).

² I follow Bloch’s distinction between the memory of something that happened to oneself and the memory of something that one has learned from others. Clear enough in abstract terms, the distinction is often experientially hazy, as one can inhabit a semantic memory as if one lived it directly (Bloch 1998, Chapter 8).

³ The quotation is the refrain from Neil Young’s song “Ohio.”

⁴ Kent State was not noted either for its student radicalism or for serving an elite population. Whatever the media bias, in its commemorations the university has continuously emphasized its tragic bond with Jackson State and with the African American civil rights movement.

⁵ Others mouthed similarly incendiary rhetoric. Responding in 1970 to continuing protests at Berkeley, Ronald Reagan, then Governor of California, pronounced, “If it takes a bloodbath now [to end the demonstrations] let’s get it over with.” Vice President Spiro Agnew characterized student protesters in disparaging, often dehumanizing, terms; Nixon referred to them as “bums.” See Seeman, Barbato, Davis, and Lewis (2016).

⁶ Whole cityscapes can function as representations of the past. Ladd (1997) explores controversies over Berlin’s buildings, monuments, and public spaces, which are saturated with history, politics, and moral significance. Compare recent and ongoing disputes in the southern U.S. over the removal of monuments to prominent figures of the Confederacy.

⁷ Varzi (2006) suggests, however, that in the longer term the Revolution’s attempt to impose on Iranians the identity of “Islamic subjects” has substantially foundered.

⁸ These sundry testimonial records are reported and annotated in Thomas (n.d.) and in Seeman, Barbato, Davis, and Lewis (2016).

⁹ It took until 1978 for the victims to obtain some minimal satisfaction: a minor out-of-court financial settlement and a statement of regret from Rhodes and 27 Guardsmen (Garmon n.d.).

¹⁰ In particular, there is much to criticize in the public treatment of the U.S. history of African American slavery and Native American genocide (Linger n.d., Waziyatawin 2008).

¹¹ Despite the criticism they inevitably incur, many historians see the recognition of crimes as fundamental to the development of their own nations' mature identity. For Shavit, the ethnic cleansing of Lydda was a shameful event that he nevertheless considers integral to the foundation of the state of Israel (2013). Cunha's description of the 1897 massacre of dark-skinned peasants by the Brazilian army at Canudos (1944) likewise places a crime at the heart of a national history (Linger 1992).