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Paul Longley Arthur

Fake History, Trauma, and Memory

> Time itself conspires with truth. With time, any old imposture comes to be regarded as truth.[1]
>
> At stake is precisely the 'guardianship' of a traumatic personal and generational past.[2]

This paper considers two very different cases of intergenerational trauma caused by forced displacement of communities from homelands based on their ethnicity.[3] One relates to the Ukrainian diaspora in Australia, with which I have a connection through my mother and her side of the family in Adelaide and Perth, and the other to the Aboriginal "diaspora" of displaced First Nations people across Australia.[4] Both have a history of communal loss on a massive scale, and in both cases the long-term effects of this history have been intensified by the extraordinary success and resilience of systematic official policies of denial, obliteration, or falsification in official historical records and narratives of the cataclysmic events that forced their displacement.[5] The trauma is thereby rendered invisible to the wider community, causing a second layer of dispossession within the diaspora through the killing of the story of loss and replacing it with a fake story – or silence – or a combination of them working together to establish a widely believed and accepted yet fake history. But within families and across the diaspora, the memories live on – of traumatic events that tell a completely different story. They are passed down in a process described as the "guardianship" within diasporas of "a traumatic personal and generational past with which some of us have a 'living connection'".[6]

It is in this spirit that I recall my grandfather's memories in this paper. My broader purpose in focussing on two examples of diaspora that demonstrate the resilience of memory in contexts of entrenched denial is to consider how digital

1 Jean Baudrillard: Fragments, p. 8.
2 Eva Hoffman's concept of 'guardianship' as cited in Marianne Hirsch: The Generation of Postmemory, p. 104. The full sentence is, "At stake is precisely the 'guardianship' of a traumatic personal and generational past with which some of us have a 'living connection' and that past's passing into history".
3 The author of this paper is from a Ukrainian family. He is not Indigenous. He acknowledges that entering the worlds of other people's memories is a privilege, and he has his family's permission to draw upon family memories and diaries. Marianne Hirsch's notion of "guardianship" of generational trauma is relevant here (ibid., p. 103).
4 See Rodney Harrison: The Archaeology of "Lost Places", p. 18. James Clifford has also discussed the relevance of the term *diaspora* to dispossessed and displaced Indigenous communities (Diasporas, pp. 307 ff.).
5 The traumatic historical events may have led indirectly to the displacement of the people concerned, as in the case of my mother's family and the Holodomor.
6 "Postmemory describes the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right" (Marianne Hirsch: The Generation of Postmemory, p. 103).

technologies have recently been playing a powerful role in breaking open circles of silence and secrecy. In the current "posttruth" era, successes in this arena are especially significant because they run against the grain of the global proliferation of fake news, whose ascendancy has been aided and abetted by the same digital communication technologies. Named the Oxford English Dictionary's word of the year in November 2016, *posttruth* is a term that seems to "capture the times".[7]

The examples that I consider in this paper raise the idea that diasporas, by their very nature as "dwelling-in-displacement"[8] communities (as James Clifford used the term in his 1994 essay "Diasporas"), are particularly well positioned to play a strong role in guarding memories of traumatic events against threats posed by historical denial or other posttruth strategies. This is because diasporas provide dispersed havens for memory outside of the primary danger zone – that is, the home country where fake histories are generated, embedded, and perpetuated. Diaspora is "a culture without a country" (as Baarken and Shelton put it in their 1998 book 'Borders, Exiles, Diasporas').[9]

Stories gain a measure of protection in diasporas because they exist at a distance, in a different geographical space, a different social space – and a different temporal dimension. In diasporas, as James Clifford described them, "here" is imbued with "there", and the present is "constantly shadowed by a past that is also a desired but obstructed future".[10]

It is recognised that diaspora and trauma are linked concepts. In his essay "The Diasporic Imaginary", Vijay Mishra considers how "diasporas renegotiate their perceived moment of trauma and how, in the artistic domain, the trauma works itself out".[11] Marianne Hirsch's work on diasporas is centrally concerned with the passing down and maintenance of traumatic stories through the generations. She describes this process in terms of

> mourning for a lost world, the impulse to repair the loss and to heal those who have suffered it, anger about the absence of public recognition [...] in short, the inheritance of a trauma that survives the survivors, overwhelming the present and hijacking the future.[12]

In an interview in 2015, Hirsch talks about how denial of historical events "solidifies bonds rather than loosening them" and "how people in the third generation have gotten even more attached to ancestral histories".[13] The commitment to these histories is, as she reiterates, "a form of care for people and stories that would otherwise fall out of history".[14] In a diaspora, the motivation to protect such stories

7 Lee McIntyre: Post-Truth, p. 1.
8 James Clifford used the hyphenated form *dwelling-in-displacement* in his essay Diasporas (p. 310). Vijay Mishra used the term "diasporic imaginary" to refer to "any ethnic enclave in a nation-state that defines itself, consciously, unconsciously [...] as a group that lives in displacement" (The Diasporic Imaginary, p. 423).
9 Elazar Baarkan, Marie-Denis Shelton: Borders, p. 5.
10 See James Clifford: Diasporas, p. 318.
11 Vijay Mishra: The Diasporic Imaginary, p. 442.
12 Marianne Hirsch: Debts, p. 221.
13 Ayşe Gül Altınay, Andrea Pető: Gender, p. 393.
14 Ibid., p. 392.

is likely to be strengthened rather than undermined by all that threatens them – denial, distance, and time.

There is no doubt that for many diasporic communities the responsibility to safeguard intergenerational stories has been given a boost by digital technologies. Because they are making it easier to collect and curate evidence of historical experiences, digital communication technologies are reconfiguring histories that have been subject to decades or centuries of denial. By forging digital communities, they are also building solidarity across diasporas in ways that have never yet been possible.[15] Most importantly, in doing so they are providing an extendible digital infrastructure for the guardianship and growth of memory repositories for future generations. In fact, the concept of diaspora has been stretched and expanded with the rise of "digital diasporas", which have increased transnational opportunities for practical action in political, economic, and social terms.[16]

Over several decades the term *diaspora*, which in the past referred primarily to the dispersion of Jewish people, has come to be used in relation to almost any community that can be described as "dwelling-in-displacement".[17] Such diasporas are created out of loss, and at the core of the idea of diaspora, as it is used here, is the memory of trauma.

The two examples that I focus on in this paper have in common the fact that both are concerned with violent histories that have been described in terms of genocide. In both cases the long-term suppression of the histories has not extinguished the memories of the catastrophic events that led to banishment or escape from home. Guarded and protected by the displaced individuals, families, and communities, the memories of the violent events create a substratum of circulating histories where unresolved pain and anger accumulate.

It is remarkable how strongly such memories are retained in diasporas, often aided by photographs, letters, diaries, and objects from home.[18] But as we enter the third decade of this century, we are witnessing the extinction of many of these kinds of objects in an increasingly virtual and "thingless" digital memory world. Diasporas are themselves at a transitional moment as they face the losses – and reap the benefits – of digital transformation.

15 Hirsch describes this as "forging a digital community of what Eva Hoffman has termed the 'postgenerations'. That community shares the many dimensions of postmemory I've myself experienced and analyzed in the art and writing of those who came 'after'" (Debts, p. 221).

16 See Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff: Digital Diasporas.

17 See James Clifford: Diasporas, pp. 245, 254; see also Elazar Baarkan, Marie-Denis Shelton: Borders, p. 5; Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff: Digital Diasporas, p. 3.

18 Janet Hoskins: Biographical Objects. Describing her ethnographic work, she writes, "I could not collect the histories of objects and the life histories of persons separately. People and the things they valued were so complexly intertwined they could not be disentangled" (ibid., p. 2).

Holodomor and the Ukrainian Diaspora

> We learned to live quietly, accept that we had to give up our food when necessary, accept that everything can change, moment by moment. We trusted no one and lived in fear.[19]

I want to now turn to my family's experience of an event in the 1930s that inflicted trauma on a massive scale in Ukraine and marked the beginning of the sequence of events that led eventually to their resettlement in Australia. My late grandfather Petro Olijnyk was born in Ukraine in 1911, six years before the Bolshevik Revolution, and lived there until forced to leave during World War II. In 1949 he came to Adelaide, South Australia, as a Displaced Person and postwar refugee with his wife, Nadia, their three children, and his mother-in-law. He was thirty-eight years old, and his youngest child – my mother, Kateryna – was five years old. From the time of my childhood, whenever I visited my Ukrainian grandparents' home, he would tell and retell his stories of life in Ukraine under Stalin and then in wartime of the forced labour camps in Hitlerite Germany where he was a prisoner. There were countless times, over a period of twenty-five years, when I would sit at the kitchen table with my mother in the small family house in a suburb of Adelaide, listening to these stories. They were delivered emphatically, with passion and drama, often with reference to a small collection of old documents and photographs. Sometimes my grandfather's narrative would break down under the weight of the emotional experience of remembering and retelling. Only in the final years, towards the time of his death in 2005, did I recognise that these narratives were driven not only by a desire to protect and pass on an endangered history but also by deep posttraumatic stress.

The most painful to recall for him were the stories of his family's experience of the great famine (Holodomor) of 1932-1933 that was engineered by Stalin across Ukraine and that has now been recognised by many countries as an act of genocide against the Ukrainian people. He and his family experienced it directly in rural Rublivka where he spent his childhood. What distressed him as much as the memories themselves were the silence and international denial that had wiped out these cataclysmic events from world history.[20] It is not surprising then that in social situations Petro Olijnyk, who was a highly qualified engineer, was laughed at and dismissed as ignorant and crazy when he tried to inform colleagues in the workplace even in the most superficial way about the Holodomor. According to the Australian Government it simply did not happen. And so, engulfed by his traumatic memories, my grandfather was driven to recount them compulsively to his family.

Although this act was deeply personal, in telling the stories he was going through a process of testimony that had implications far beyond personal

19 Petro Olijnyk, excerpt from my mother's simultaneous translation and transcription of his memories of village life in Rublivka, Ukraine, as told to her at his home in Adelaide, South Australia, 4 July 1995, recorded in Kateryna Olijnyk Longley's green notebook labelled Mum and Tato Stories 1990-1995.

20 See Lesa Melnyczuk: Silent Memories.

necessity and can be seen to apply in the contexts of other silenced histories that have been kept alive within diasporas.[21] My grandfather was actively protecting a threatened history by embedding his memories in an oral family narrative in the hope that it might be passed down in the absence of any public acknowledgement of the communal trauma. In the relative political safety of Australia, he was also putting life into a political history that was enveloped in a worldwide blanket of silence and whose best chance of survival seemed to be via the diaspora. At the same time, telling his stories served his psychological need to narrate the past so that he could give shape to his own life and provide it with meaning. "Self-narration", writes Paul John Eakin, "is the defining act of the human subject".[22] Regardless of how many times he delivered the same stories, it was clear to me that while the process did not provide closure for him, it was undoubtedly cathartic.[23]

At a 1990 conference on Ukrainian settlement in Australia, where the importance of the oral tradition among displaced refugees in Australia was highlighted, narratives of this kind were described as

> private stories of intense suffering, humiliation, exclusion from all possible worlds, stories so painful that they may be untellable even now except in the security of immediate family or deeply trusted friends. They have not yet been transformed into acceptable fictions. To tell them is almost to relive them.[24]

In retrospect, I can see that the pain of reliving the stories that related to the Holodomor was made especially intense because they were not believed in the host country. My grandfather's memories were pitched against what is now known to be an enormous cover-up, generated by the Soviet Union but accepted and maintained across the world for decades despite the vast numbers of survivors who were victims or witnesses. It seems remarkable now that such a massive event – causing many millions of deaths[25] – could be kept hidden for so long. How was that possible? How could it have been forgotten even though outside of Ukraine it had been well publicised and well known at the time?[26] How could the world so quickly forget?[27] Numerous answers to this question have been offered,[28] but

21 See Marianne Hirsch's comments in Ayşe Gül Altınay, Andrea Pető: Gender, Memory and Connective Genocide Scholarship, p. 388: "I do believe that the Holocaust has provided an enormously powerful template and point of reference in the field of genocide studies and to the work of memory and forgetting of other kinds of atrocities".

22 Paul John Eakin: How Our Lives Become Stories, p. 21.

23 As Boris Drožđek explains in Voices of Trauma, "Feeling relieved after verbally expressing the distress due to traumatic experiences seems to be a universal phenomenon" (The Rebirth of Contextual Thinking in Psychotraumatology, p. 17).

24 Kateryna Olijnyk Longley quoted in Marko Pavlyshyn: Ukrainian Settlement in Australia, pp. 129 f.

25 Estimates vary between losses of 1.8 million and 15 million people, and the true total seems impossible to know. See, for example, the discussion at Gennadiy Yefimenko, So How Many Ukrainians Died in the Holodomor?

26 Numerous newspaper articles from the time leave no doubt that the West was fully aware.

27 In 1954 George Orwell drew attention to this extraordinary phenomenon of mass forgetting in his essay Notes on Nationalism: "Huge events like the Ukraine famine of 1933, involving the deaths of millions of people, have actually escaped the attention of the majority of English Russophiles"(England Your England, pp. 52 f.).

28 See, for example, Nicole Loroff, Jordan Vincent, Valentina Kuryliw: 'Holodomor – Denial and Silences: "There are numerous reasons that help explain the lack of awareness by the

the primary one is "outright denial", involving cover-ups and what we would now call "fake news".[29]

Because the story of the famine had no official existence, it was routinely dismissed as fantasy by listeners who had no connection with the original events. This amounted to a second layer of killing – the killing of the *story* of the killing. All around the world Ukrainians were individually remembering and retelling in shreds and fragments a history that was pitted against the power of worldwide official silence and denial. In the diaspora, notably through the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada, recognition grew.[30] More than eighty years after it happened, the Holodomor had been recognised as an act of genocide by many countries, and by the United Nations.[31] Digital communication technologies have facilitated this recognition, enabling transnational solidarity across the global Ukrainian diaspora. They have hugely enhanced the speed, efficiency, and scope of the collecting and recording of evidence. They have also provided an open-ended space for memories to enter and to interact with other people's memories. In 2014 the Holodomor Research and Education Consortium was established as a project of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies. Memorials are being built – physical and digital – around which communities of remembering are growing. I am now able to look online at images of my grandfather's hometown, see photographs taken by journalists at the time, and hear accounts of the Holodomor as it is remembered by the children of people he may have known. The silence has been broken, and this buried history has become mainstream.

However, denial still goes on, as this extract from an article in the Russian 'Sputnik News' from 2015 attests. Its heading is "Josef Stalin Holodomor Hoax", and the text reads,

> A monument to the so-called Ukrainian "Holodomor", one of the 20th century's most famous myths and vitriolic pieces of anti-Soviet Propaganda, has been erected in the US capital [...]. Alas, even repeated a thousand times a lie will never become the truth.[32]

Ironically, this last sentence could serve as the Ukrainian diaspora's own motto in its battle against fake history.

public of the Holodomor and why this genocidal famine remained relatively unknown and unacknowledged until the late 1980s".

29 "The Soviet government refused offers of international aid [to Ukraine] from the Red Cross and other groups on the grounds that there was no Famine. Soviet foreign minister, Maxim Litvinov, publicly denied the existence of Famine in the USSR in 1933. Discussion of Famine, or its causes were forbidden in the Soviet press, and once the Famine was over no references were made to it in Soviet historical accounts. Moreover, citizens of the USSR were forced into silence on this issue for over half a century. "Disinformation: by camouflaging the extent of the Ukrainian Famine as just 'food difficulties', Soviet authorities mixed small amounts of truth into their denial, thus making it more difficult to figure out what was actually happening" (ibid., p. 1).

30 See Serge Cipko: Holodomor and Canada's Response.

31 Holodomor Museum: Worldwide Recognition of the Holodomor as Genocide.

32 The article, written by Ekaterina Blinova, continues with: "Although the 'Holodomor' myth was never based upon credible evidence and there are enough authentic sources to prove that it is a hoax, it is simply taken for granted. Unsurprisingly, Washington supports the myth as a part of its recent Cold War-style anti-Russian campaign. Alas, even repeated a thousand times a lie will never become the truth".

Denial, despite a wealth of irrefutable evidence and worldwide testimony, is a prevalent feature of contemporary historical reconstruction and of media reporting more generally. It continues in relation to events, including, for example, China's long-term denial of the Tiananmen Square massacre of over thirty years ago,[33] and in the recent Facebook-fuelled genocide in Myanmar.[34] Battles between opposing versions of history continue to be played out around the world.

Aboriginal Counter-Histories

> This is how Australia makes us feel. Estranged from the land of our ancestors, marooned by the tides of history.[35]

This section focuses on my second example, where the trauma inflicted on a mass scale on First Nations Australians has also been compounded by denial. In his groundbreaking Boyer Lectures of 1968,[36] a year after the 1967 referendum that allowed Aboriginal people to be recognised as citizens of Australia for the first time, anthropologist W. E. H. Stanner coined the phrase "the great Australian Silence". His key message was that Aboriginal people were almost entirely absent from Australian historical narratives, and that *their* histories needed to be written to tell the other side of the story. He refers to Peter Coleman's book 'Australian Civilization', published in 1962, as just one example among many he had examined of a scholarly historical text where there is "total silence on all matters aboriginal". Further,

> [a] partial survey is enough to let me make the point that inattention on such a scale cannot possibly be explained by absent-mindedness. It is a structural matter, a view from a window which has been carefully placed to exclude a whole quadrant of the landscape.[37]

Stanner used the influential platform of the Boyer Lectures to attempt to break that pattern by drawing upon Aboriginal memories and perspectives to develop a counter-history. Over subsequent decades there was a rising wave of interest in "the other side of the story" and signs that a cultural shift was occurring – but this was happening more in the areas of academic research, education, and artistic production than in the general community.[38] The entrenched, deeply racist colonial narrative held its ground. It appeared to be unshaken by counter-histories that called its most basic premises into question. As recently as 2015 at an Australian Rules football match, an incident occurred that brought this dramatically

33 See ABC TV Four Corners program on the thirtieth anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre, 3 June 2019.
34 See Paul Mozur: A Genocide Incited on Facebook.
35 Stan Grant: Talking to My Country, pp. 216 f.
36 Willam E. H. Stanner: 1968 Boyer Lectures. Robert Manne referred to one of the lectures, The Great Australian Silence, as the "most consequential lecture ever broadcast on the ABC". See Robert Manne: Introduction, p. 1.
37 Willam E. H. Stanner: 1968 Boyer Lectures, pp. 24 f.
38 As well as formal histories, there were novels, reports, story collections, biographies, and autobiographies, as well as films, plays, academic articles, and books focussing on Aboriginal experience – and universities began to offer Aboriginal studies courses.

into the open.[39] Aboriginal journalist and writer Stan Grant talked about it a year later in his now-famous 'Australian Dream' speech:

> Thousands of voices rose to hound an Indigenous man. A man who was told he wasn't Australian. A man who was told he wasn't Australian of the Year. And they hounded that man into submission.
>
> I can't speak for what lay in the hearts of the people who booed Adam Goodes. But I can tell you what we heard when we heard those boos. We heard a sound that was very familiar to us. We heard a howl. We heard a howl of humiliation that echoes across two centuries of dispossession, injustice, suffering and survival. We heard the howl of the Australian Dream, and it said to us again: you're not welcome.[40]

Aboriginal people across Australia can be considered in the same terms as other kinds of diaspora because they are dwelling-in-displacement in communities that are as dispersed and fractured and removed from home as any group that has relocated to a foreign country. Indigeneity and diaspora have been linked in the past, and it is particularly useful to do so in the context of historical denial.[41] Obviously there are fundamental differences and complexities, including the fact that there were more than 250 Indigenous languages spoken in Australia representing over 500 clan groups or "nations".[42] My intention is not to conflate the very different experiences of historical dispossession discussed in this paper, and yet the parallels in terms of dual histories are real and significant in the broader context of diaspora and trauma.

In Australia there continue to be two distinct narratives of colonial settlement that exist antagonistically side by side. They represent clashing and irreconcilable versions of Australia's history. Every day in newspapers, on television, in parliamentary debates, in conversations, this clash of stories is plain to see.

Standing in the most heavily used public park in my home city of Fremantle is a statue that provides a stunning visual expression of this clash. On the face of its traditional stone pedestal, there are two plaques, one above the other. The first plaque was installed in 1913 as a memorial to three white explorers (apparently) "murdered" in 1864 by "treacherous natives" and to honour the pastoralist who was the "intrepid leader" of the subsequent "search and punitive party":

> This monument was erected [...] as a [...] tribute to the memories of Painter, Harding and Goldwyer. Earliest explorers after Grey and Gregory of this "terra incognita". Attacked at night by the treacherous natives they were murdered at Boola Boola near La Grange Bay on the 13th November 1864.[43]

39 For an account of the incident see Michael Safi: AFL Great Adam Goodes Is Being Booed across Australia.

40 Stan Grant: The Australian Dream, p. 2.

41 Writing in the American context about First Nation peoples in terms of diaspora, James Clifford made the point that "dispersed tribal peoples, those who have been dispossessed of their lands [...] may claim diasporic identities" (Diasporas, p. 253). It is in this sense that I use the term in relation to Indigenous people in Australia.

42 See https://info.australia.gov.au/about-australia/our-country/our-people.

43 The full text reads, "This monument was erected by CJ Brockman as a fellow bush wanderer's tribute to the memories of Painter, Harding and Goldwyer. Earliest explorers after Grey and Gregory of this 'terra incognita'. Attacked at night by the treacherous natives they were murdered at Boola Boola near La Grange Bay on the 13th November 1864. Also, as an appreciative token of remembrance of Maitland Brown one of the pioneer pastoralists and a premier politician of this state. Intrepid leader of the government search and punitive party. His remains together with the sad relics of the ill fated three recovered with great

The second plaque installed eighty-one years later in 1994 is a memorial to "around twenty" Aboriginal people who died at the same event but were not mentioned in the first account:[44]

> This plaque was erected by people who found the monument before you offensive. The monument describes the events at La Grange from one perspective only, the view point of the white "settlers". No mention is made of the right of Aboriginal people to defend their land or of the history of provocation which led to the explorers' deaths. The "punitive party" mentioned here ended in the deaths of somewhere around twenty Aboriginal people. The whites were well-armed and equipped. Lest We Forget Mapa Jarriya Nyalaku.[45]

This duality is also being played out at many other locations, including the site of the Pinjarra massacre near Perth, also known as the Battle of Pinjarra. In 1834, Governor Stirling led an attack that resulted in the deaths of fifteen to seventy Aboriginal people. The nature of the still-unresolved clash between the two histories of this event is encapsulated in the two competing terms: "massacre" and "battle". In her essay "Memorials and Trauma: Pinjarra, 1834", Jennifer Harris comments,

> For the descendants of the 1834 Binjareb people and their supporters, the event could not be further from a battle. It is a place known through oral history as an infamous "massacre" site in which, in the historically debated absence of the young Binjareb warriors [...] mostly women, children and the old died in a disgraceful ambush which all but destroyed their society and has carried intergenerational trauma.[46]

At a gathering that marked the 180th anniversary in 2014, the comments of local Indigenous people were reported by the ABC News, including those of senior elder Harry Nannup, who said, "There was no battle. It was just plain murder [...]. Our people were cut down with high-powered rifles".[47] Two plaques at the memorial site have been vandalised, which has been attributed to underlying tensions in the Pinjarra community arising from these conflicting Indigenous and non-Indigenous versions of history. A commemorative monument stands nearby – without a plaque – because the local government could not agree on which terminology to use. Attitudes have only slowly started to change in the past year.[48]

risk and danger from lone wilds repose under a public monument in the East Perth Cemetery. Lest We Forget".

44 See Vanessa Mills, Ben Collins: The Controversial Statue That Was Added To.

45 The coexistence of the two plaques on the same monument has also been commented on positively as evidence of reconciliation.

46 Jennifer Harris: Memorials and Trauma, p. 2.

47 Laura Gartry: Noongar Community Opens Cultural Centre.

48 In 2008 Jennifer Harris wrote, "So very far are some parts of the Pinjarra population from confronting the past that in December 1998 the Shire of Murray took the extraordinary step of voting on a motion which was carried eight to two stating that the Council does not recognise the word 'massacre' and that the area must be known as 'Battle of Pinjarra Memorial Area'". Despite protests, at the time of writing the Council had not rescinded the resolution. However, as reported in The West Australian in 2020, it appears that attitudes are finally changing. Shire of Murray Council president David Bolt said, "Council acknowledges the region's dark history, recognising Pinjarra Massacre as the correct and appropriate reference to the site and will continue to support the Bindjareb people and First Australians with undertakings that assist their spiritual healing" (Steve Butler: Bush Legends).

Hundreds of places across Australia are known to be sites of mass killings of the original inhabitants. In his "Australian Dream" speech, Stan Grant describes the experience of his own antecedents:

> I came from a people west of the Blue Mountains – the Wiradjuri people – where in the 1820s the soldiers and settlers waged a war of extermination against my people.
>
> Yes, a war of extermination! This was the language used at the time [...]. Martial law was declared and my people could be shot on sight. Those rugged mountain ranges – my people, women, and children, were herded over those ranges to their deaths.
>
> The Australian Dream
>
> [...] Captain Arthur Phillip, a man of enlightenment, a man who was instructed to make peace with the so-called natives, in a matter of years, was sending out raiding parties with the instruction, "Bring back the severed heads of the black troublemakers". [...]
>
> Every time we are lured into the light, we are mugged by the darkness of this country's history.[49]

It is well known that the concept of 'terra nullius' and the consequent lack of any negotiation or treaty with the Aboriginal inhabitants gave licence to the colonisers to take their land, rob them of their human rights, and exclude them for almost two centuries from the basic privileges of citizenship. But until recently it has not been well known that settlers carried out mass killings of Aboriginal people at hundreds of sites across the land.

A remarkable and groundbreaking interactive digital research project – the Colonial Frontier Massacres Map[50] – is now bringing this history finally into full view and enabling a wealth of information about mass colonial killings to become easily accessible to the public. Launched by the University of Newcastle, Australia, in 2017, it continues to be added to with new sites and evidence. A subset of data from this project has been incorporated into a digital display covering Western Australia in the newly opened WA Museum Boola Bardip.[51] The effect of this Australia-wide project, which is still growing and unfolding, is to validate neglected Aboriginal histories, site by site, by uncovering and incorporating evidence that disrupts and unravels the settlers' story of colonisation. The project does this by building a different composite story. The fact that this story is being generated in another space – that of the internet – gives it a different character from any other form of Aboriginal history. It thereby effectively bypasses ideological deadlocks and head-on collisions – of the kind exemplified by the Fremantle or the Pinjarra memorials – by enabling any number of stories to coexist and to be shared across interconnected, reconfigured diasporas. Its wide reach across vast spaces, through past generations and into living communities, promises to make this project one of the most extensive and disruptive counter-histories produced in Australia.[52] Memories that descendants of

49 Stan Grant: The Australian Dream, pp. 2 f.

50 See Centre for 21st-Century Humanities: Colonial Frontier Massacres, Australia, 1780 to 1930. The yellow dots show the location of killings of Aboriginal people, and the blue dots show where non-Indigenous people were killed.

51 Opened in late 2020, see https://visit.museum.wa.gov.au/boolabardip/.

52 See Bridget Brennan: Map of Indigenous Massacres Grows to Include More Sites. As historian Lyndall Ryan, who has been working on mapping massacre sites, explains in Brennan's article, "The oral sources are very important because they can identify the names of

Aboriginal massacre victims and witnesses have held and protected through successive generations now have a receptive, communal place to reside. The massacre map is not a formal structure for truth-telling of the kind that the "Uluru Statement from the Heart" asks for – a set of proposals delivered to the Australian Government by a group of Indigenous leaders in 2017, which ended with a call for Australia's First Nations peoples to be heard and for "truth-telling about our history":

> We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.
>
> In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard.[53]

Nor does it address the exclusion of Aboriginal people from the Australian constitution, but there is much that it can do. The map has the capacity to draw "Australians all" into a fresh space, where the storytelling playing field is levelled and where stories and fragments of stories can enter safely – one by one, voice by voice, site by site – to generate a composite historical narrative. While its structure allows it to accommodate multiple perspectives, the massacre map publishes hard evidence in the form of numbers, names, and remembered details, protecting the stories against outright denial.

The massacre map provides a repository, but it is also a new and powerful kind of storyteller that has the potential to build solidarity across the diverse Indigenous diaspora – following the pattern established by digital technologies of linking diasporas across geographical, cultural, and linguistic borders – around the globe.[54] The map appears to have provided a significant boost to one dimension of that process of truth-telling by providing a safe public space for sharing and validating traumatic histories that have been maintained in the past through private storytelling rituals within families and small groups. Yet, as with all digital innovation, the benefits also bring dangers. The digital tools that boost truth-telling are the same as those on which fake news thrives. Nevertheless, large-scale digital repositories of the stories of a diaspora have immensely more power to expose historical distortions and deletions than do private memories, no matter how carefully kept and preserved. This is largely because they exist in a nonhuman space, yet their integrity is totally dependent on human factors: on the individuals and policies that guard the gates of each archive and on the source of funding that assures its maintenance and survival.

Further, like the outsourcing of memory to digital photographs, emails, and social media, digital collection and storage *elsewhere* is a mixed blessing. It is acknowledged that the treasured personal objects of the predigital world – photographs, letters, things – carried memories and meaning in ways that any amount of digital abundance cannot match. And so, as I acknowledge the crucial role that digital technologies have played in the two examples I have talked about here,

people who were the particular perpetrators, they can identify the particular groups that were the victims of the massacre, they can give us more information about the actual site".

53 Uluru Statement: The Uluru Statement from the Heart.

54 Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff makes the point, "As a tool for communication and community building among dispersed populations, the Internet is ideally suited for connecting diasporans who are geographically scattered and removed from their homeland" (Digital Diasporas, p. 12).

I think of my Ukrainian family's tradition of oral storytelling about their home country and my mother's treasure trove of old, messy handwritten notebooks filled with scraps of transcribed memories – and feel that the enormity of the losses is something that we are only just beginning to grasp. A digital miracle of our era is the capacity we have to create, keep, and share simulacra of personal treasures via the now taken-for-granted tools on our phones: WhatsApp, Skype, Facebook, Instagram, and others. My mother chats via Skype with young relatives in Ukraine, but she says there is less and less to chat about. The stories that were kept alive in the diaspora may well be dead or irrelevant in the home country.

Diasporas have been defined by distance and separation from home. But with the revolution in global communication and travel, distance has been compressed and reimagined. The online space of the internet swallows up diasporas into one gargantuan new "home". Diaspora* is now the name of an alternative social media platform.[55] When everything and everyone can be anywhere, and place and space as we knew them have been transformed or abolished, then the idea of diaspora is in danger of being either negated or absorbed by the internet itself. In this way, for all the positive promise they hold, it may be that the digital technologies that have empowered and come to the aid of diasporas in the ways that I have described in this paper are also diminishing the capacity of diasporas to act as distant safe havens for the guardianship of memories and histories in a posttruth world.

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55 See Diaspora*: https://diasporafoundation.org.

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