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Representing Genocide: The Holocaust as Paradigm?

Abstract

This lecture will explore the ways in which representations of the Holocaust have influenced how other genocides are understood and represented in the West. It will take as examples the four canonical cases of genocide in the twentieth century – Armenia, Cambodia, Bosnia, and Rwanda – and explore how they have been represented in film, literature, photography, and memorialisation. It will argue that most 'mainstream' representations of genocide largely replicate the mainstream representational frameworkof the Holocaust – including the way in which the latter resists recognising the rationality, instrumentality, and normality of genocide, preferring instead to present genocide as an aberrant, exceptional event in human history. The lecture will conclude by discussing a contrasting series of more nuanced, engaged representations of genocide: these tend to revolve precisely around the ordinariness of genocide and the structures and situations common to human societies, which can become the crucible for genocidal violence.

Introduction

In his 2008 book, *Identity Politics in the Age of Genocide*, David B. MacDonald wrote:

> "[T]he Holocaust has become the pre-eminent symbol of evil in the modern world, encouraging other groups to copy its vocabulary and imagery, while sometimes contesting its significance […]
> Representation of the past and present can thus become a contest […] In so doing, they trivialize the Holocaust and the unique suffering of the group they represent."[1]

A year later, Michael Rothberg argued in his well-known book *Multidirectional Memory* that

> "far from blocking other historical memories from view in a competitive struggle for recognition, the emergence of Holocaust memory on a global scale has contributed to the articulation of other histories […] Ultimately, memory is not a zero-sum game."[2]

These two quotations demonstrate that as well as the memory battles being fought *within* the arena of Holocaust memory – over what should be remembered, by whom, and how – battle is also being done over the place of Holocaust memory within wider memory cultures, between groups who refer to the Holocaust when they tell their own histories of oppression and suffering, and others who would jealously guard

1 David B. MacDonald, Identity Politics in the Age of Genocide. The Holocaust and Historical Representation, Abingdon 2008, 15, 196.

2 Michael Rothberg, Multidirectional Memory. Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization, Stanford 2009, 6, 11.

against this sort of 'plagiarism'. MacDonald is evidently one of the latter.[3] In *Identity Politics in the Age of Genocide*, he was largely concerned with listing and criticising those groups whom he accused of "copying" the vocabulary of the Holocaust, or of "cloaking" and "framing" their own suffering in the "vestments of the Holocaust", in order to gain recognition for their own histories of oppression. He used the examples of Armenians, indigenous groups in Australia, America, and New Zealand, and the various ethnic groups in the former Yugoslavia.[4] It is true that explicit references to the Holocaust are sometimes made by activists and artists in their work on other genocides: Relatively crude equations between Hitler and other genocidal leaders are not uncommon – such as a poster which places quotes from Talaat Pasha and Hitler alongside one another, or references to Pol Pot or Milošević as an "Asian" or "Balkan" Hitler respectively.[5] Other authors have written of a "Rwandan Nazism", and the Armenian American writer Peter Balakian has described his childhood on a "very Jewish" road in the suburbs of New York, feeling, he says, like an "Armenian Jew" before he later came to understand "the real kinship Armenians and Jews shared".[6] So MacDonald and other scholars who take this approach are correct: This kind of Holocaust-referencing does happen. But what is often implicit, if not explicit, within their critiques is a form of border patrol, an indignation at the 'appropriation' of the Holocaust as a strategy of identity politics. For MacDonald, such plagiarism risks trivialising and minimising the Holocaust and its uniqueness.

I would like to follow the spirit of Michael Rothberg's *Multidirectional Memory*, however, and take a more open (and less moralising) approach to these overlaps and intersections between representations of the Holocaust and representations of other genocides. Rothberg's book explored the interaction of memories of the Holocaust, decolonisation, and racism, but I am primarily interested in representations of other genocides. The scholarly literature on comparative genocide studies has over the past couple of decades been debating the "conceptual constraints" of using the Holocaust as the "paradigm" of genocide and the conceptual distortions and silences that this analytical position can produce.[7] Likewise, in the last few decades we have seen an outpouring of scholarly analyses of Holocaust literature, films, memorials, and graphic novels, but few scholars have explored where and how these theories and

3 MacDonald was largely writing about the memory cultures of the 1990s and early 2000s, when "Holocaust consciousness" had reached new heights, and – not unconnected – more histories of oppression were being articulated in an international context far more sensitive to human rights abuses and personal histories of suffering. At the same time, the genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia gave renewed relevance to these discussions of Holocaust memory.

4 MacDonald, Identity Politics in the Age of Genocide, 17. Other scholars who have taken this approach, though in a more measured fashion, include Angi Buettner, Holocaust Images and Picturing Catastrophe. The Cultural Politics of Seeing, Farnham 2011, and Alan E. Steinweis, The Auschwitz Analogy. Holocaust Memory and American Debates over Intervention in Kosovo and Bosnia in the 1990s, in: Holocaust and Genocide Studies 19 (2005) 2, 276-289. An early, thoughtful exploration was offered by Arlene Stein, Whose Memories? Whose Victimhood? Contests for the Holocaust Frame in Recent Social Movement Discourse, in: Sociological Perspectives 41 (1998) 3, 519-540.

5 See the poster 'Modus Operandi' by Karen Vrtanesyan, available at https://www.armeniangenocideposters.org/ (4 August 2018); for further discursive examples, see MacDonald, Identity Politics in the Age of Genocide.

6 Gil Courtemanche, A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali, Edinburgh 2004, 210, 252; Peter Balakian, Black Dog of Fate. A Memoir, New York 1998, 38-44.

7 David Moshman, Conceptual Constraints on Thinking about Genocide, in: Journal of Genocide Research 3 (2001) 3, 431-50; A. Dirk Moses, Conceptual Blockages and Definitional Dilemmas in the "Racial Century". Genocides of Indigenous Peoples and the Holocaust, in: Patterns of Prejudice 36 (2002) 4, 7-36; Dan Stone, The Historiography of Genocide. Beyond "Uniqueness" and Ethnic Competition, in: Rethinking History 8 (2004) 1, 127-42.

analyses might also be applied to other genocides.[8] My aim is therefore to bring these two analytical positions together and to explore how representations of other genocides have been constructed, and might be received, when the Holocaust is taken as such a cultural benchmark.

I will focus here on the Armenian, Cambodian, Bosnian, and Rwandan genocides, and explore how they are represented in film, literature, memorialisation, and photography. These four cases are perhaps the best known genocides after the Holocaust, almost a canon in themselves. My intention here is to decode how their representation has contributed to their canonisation, and at the same time to provide a critique of this canonisation. I focus on these four media – film, literature, photography, and memorialisation – in part because they are usually created some time after the event, unlike the news media's instant responses, and as such they also remain in the public domain for much longer. They also give us insights into both the intentions of the artists and the dissemination of ideas throughout Western society, given that filmmakers, writers, and so on are hoping to chime or interact with the public's understandings of genocide. My core questions are: How, and how far, has the Holocaust and its representation influenced the representation of other genocides, especially in the past few decades? How might Westerners respond to these representations, given that Western memory cultures have largely internalised the Holocaust as an essential part of European memory?

Of course, to speak of 'Westerners' and 'the West' is to speak of a vast number of people, divisible many times over by nation, cultural background, religion, gender, generation, education, politics, and so on. The sheer range of this divisibility suggests that the nation is not the only prism through which to view culture and representation, even though national histories and, for example, cinematic or literary traditions do strongly influence individual works. Yet representations are never produced in cultural isolation, and as Sharon Macdonald has argued in relation to museums, they are also refracted through concepts and debates from elsewhere, often "undertaken in awareness of a potential international – and judgemental – gaze".[9] So while Holocaust memory may not be exactly "globalised", I think that Westerners do largely share a basic understanding of how the Holocaust unfolded, and this surely informs responses to other genocides.[10]

Throughout this paper, I will make an analytical distinction between what I call mainstream representations of genocide and more engaged representations of genocide. Mainstream genocide representations appeal to (and have appeal for) a wide popular audience and, I will argue, largely replicate the representational framework of the Holocaust. They follow mainstream Holocaust representations in portraying

8 However, this is beginning to change. See Robert Eaglestone, "You Would Not Add to My Suffering If You Knew What I Had Seen". Holocaust Testimony and Contemporary African Trauma Literature, in: Studies in the Novel 40 (2008) 1/2, 72-85; Axel Bangert/Robert S.C. Gordon/Libby Saxton (ed.), Holocaust Intersections. Genocide and Visual Culture at the New Millennium, London 2013; Joanne Pettitt, Memory and Genocide in Graphic Novels. The Holocaust as Paradigm, in: Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics (forthcoming, see https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21504857.2017.1355824, 4 August 2018).

9 Sharon Macdonald, Difficult Heritage. Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond, London 2009, 7.

10 The issue of globalisation is an established debate. See Daniel Levy/Natan Sznaider, Memory Unbound. The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory, in: European Journal of Social Theory 5 (2002) 1, 87-106; Daniel Levy, Changing Temporalities and the Internationalization of Memory Cultures, in: Yifat Gutman/Adam D. Brown/Amy Sodaro (ed.), Memory and the Future. Transnational Politics, Ethics and Society, Basingstoke 2010, 15-30, and in the same volume Ross Poole, Misremembering the Holocaust. Universal Symbol, Nationalist Icon or Moral Kitsch?, 31-49. See also Wulf Kansteiner, Sold Globally – Remembered Locally. Holocaust Cinema and the Construction of Collective Identities in Europe and the US, in Stefan Berger/Linas Eriksonas/Andrew Mycock (ed.), Narrating the Nation. Representations in History, Media and the Arts, New York 2008, 153-180, and Duncan Bell (ed.), Memory, Trauma, and World Politics, Basingstoke 2006.

genocide as a fundamentally exceptional, abnormal event. By contrast, the more engaged representations I discuss engage precisely with the ordinariness of genocide. They often, but not always, originate in the countries that have experienced genocide. By following ordinary peoples' lives and experiences, they show that genocide is a process that arises from a conjunction of ordinary factors common to, or possible in, any society: social conflicts, economic difficulties, exclusivist politics, real or perceived crises, and tensions. In this way, more engaged representations also decentre the Holocaust as the paradigmatic genocide. I am thus also concerned throughout with the ways in which genocide is distanced from, or brought closer to, 'normal' Western society.

I will begin by exploring Western public understandings of the Holocaust before turning to mainstream representations of the Armenian, Cambodian, Bosnian, and Rwandan genocides. My argument is that the influence of the Holocaust on representations of other genocides is not really to be found at the level of explicit references to or comparisons with it. Instead, its influence is to be found in the deeper, structural similarities that shape and define many representations of genocide, and thus also Western understandings of genocide. In mainstream representations of genocide, these deeper, structural similarities are to be found in the representation of perpetrators, victims, the process of genocide, and its aftermath – what I call the genocide 'script'. I will then draw some conclusions about what this means for the public understanding of genocide and what the canonisation of these four cases means for other cases that do not 'fit' this script. Finally, I will conclude by showing how more engaged representations of genocide disrupt this framework of representation. Instead of depicting genocide as separate from normal Western lives, they show genocide to be far more ordinary, and far closer, than might be expected.

I

Public understandings of the Holocaust have, of course, evolved since 1945. It is equally obvious that the descendants of perpetrators, collaborators, victims, and 'bystanders' will negotiate the *meaning* of the Holocaust very differently. However, amongst the infinite personal and national variations, I argue that a common understanding of the "basic scenario" of the Holocaust has emerged, with relatively set ideas about the perpetrators, victims, process, and aftermath of genocide.[11]

Scholars describing the public's basic idea of the Holocaust often equate it with the film *Schindler's List* (1993) – not without good reason, given the film's phenomenal popularity. While there certainly are overlaps, the public's understanding of the Holocaust is not, however, reducible to *Schindler's List*.[12] Viewers are aware that this story is not the entirety of the Holocaust, even if the deportations, ghettoisation, and the hellish landscape of Auschwitz, which loom around the edges of the Schindler Jews' experiences, has been constructed in order to narrate a seemingly 'typical' Holocaust story. As Christoph Classen has argued, part of the success of *Schindler's*

11 This phrase, which I will come back to below, is taken from Andrew Strathern/Pamela J. Stewart, Introduction, in: Andrew Strathern/Pamela J. Stewart/Neil L. Whitehead (ed.), Terror and Violence. Imagination and the Unimaginable, London 2006, 1-39, here 2.

12 Even if, as Yosefa Loshitsky noted: "As the first studio film to deal directly with the enormity of the Holocaust, one made by the most commercially successful director in movie history, Schindler's List attempts to provide the popular imagination with a master narrative about the Holocaust." Yosefa Loshitsky, Introduction, in: Yosefa Loshitsky (ed.), Spielberg's Holocaust. Critical Perspectives on Schindler's List, Bloomington 1997, 2.

List is due to the way it invokes our imagination of the Holocaust. Its 'documentary' aesthetic and, importantly, the inclusion of various scenes and stereotypes of haggling Jews, Germans mockingly shearing the beards and locks of orthodox Jews, or piles of bodies create an "atmosphere of familiarity".[13] Classen wrote:

> "[T]hese stereotypes in aesthetics and content trigger effects of recognition; at the same time they are recombined, and their associations are put into the context of the narrative, thus helping to stage those images of the film that could not be made available by documentary material that had been passed down. In doing so the film uses the collective memory (of images) that it helps to consolidate and rewrite at the same time."[14]

Schindler's List is thus in conversation with Holocaust memory, rather than constituting it. As Classen noted, the iconic scenes and images that Spielberg deployed so effectively do in fact "recall associations, myths, and metanarratives that relate to the extermination of the Jews in the broadest sense".[15]

In such scenes and images, the perpetrators are typically crisply uniformed and efficient Nazis, and they display either the cold detachment of a committed ideologue, or the brutality of thuggish murderers. Or both: Spielberg's Amon Goeth does indeed personify both stereotypes. Scott Montgomery remarked that, as "the embodiment of evil", these perpetrators are somehow "faceless" – they are infinitely interchangeable (which is part of the horror).[16] This phrase nicely encapsulates one key aspect of the mainstream representation of the Holocaust: that Nazis are often presented as 'stock characters', necessary within the context of the narrative, but rarely explored in any real depth as historical agents, with motives and psychologies. This is gradually becoming less true – there are some interesting recent examples of museums and films exploring perpetrators in more depth.[17] Nevertheless, this general 'facelessness' persists in other representations and, crucially, continues to contrast with the humanising representation of the victims. Here, we are shown the histories and fates of individuals and encouraged to identify with their suffering as a way of understanding the impact of the genocide. These victims are also depicted as a largely helpless, innocent, and passive community, swept up in the Nazis' plans for extermination.

Alongside this basic and binary understanding of the perpetrators and victims of the Holocaust, a string of extremely recognisable, iconic scenes document the unfolding of the Holocaust. Most chronologically structured narrative books, museum exhibitions, and films begin with the Nazi rallies, propaganda posters, the November Pogrom, and familiar scenes of the degradation of Jews forced to scrub the streets and wear yellow stars, and run through to starvation in the ghettos, the deportation trains and, almost inevitably, the gates, barbed wire, and barracks of the camps, SS officers, striped uniforms, and the gas chambers. Perhaps the most iconic images, those that have most shaped the postwar visualisation of the Holocaust, are the photographs of the mounds of bodies discovered by the liberators of the camps, the crumbling remains of the camps themselves, and the piles of shoes, suitcases, hair,

13 Christoph Classen, Balanced Truth. Steven Spielberg's Schindler's List among History, Memory, and Popular Culture, in: History and Theory 48 (2009) 2, 77-102, here 91.

14 Ibid.

15 Classen, Balanced Truth, 90.

16 Scott L. Montgomery, What Kind of Memory? Reflections on Images of the Holocaust, in: Contention 5 (1995) 1, 71-104, here 81.

17 For example the museum *Topographie des Terrors* in Berlin; Jonathan Littell's novel The Kindly Ones, translated by Charlotte Mandell, London 2009; or Bernhard Schlink's novel The Reader, translated by Carol Brown Janeway, London 2011, and its 2008 film adaptation by Stephen Daldry.

and ashes. These icons, of course, are not just visual – the deportation trains, for example, are familiar from films, survivor testimonies, and also as physical artefacts in some museums.[18] But what I want to suggest here is that these icons have also helped to create an understanding of how the Holocaust unfolded as a process. In a way, if strung together, these iconic scenes do in fact narrate the Holocaust by themselves, charting a rough chronology from discrimination to extermination. The icons function as familiar staging posts, anchoring narrations of the Holocaust within an expected pattern, and this pattern means that they can be recalled by association even if they do not appear in a particular film, or novel, and so on.[19] In this retrospective view, the Holocaust appears as an inevitable progression through successive stages towards total annihilation. It implies a preconceived plan for genocide, rather than encouraging any reflection on the "twisted road to Auschwitz".[20] And because it does not tend to explore the perpetrators in much depth, it also usually 'explains' the Holocaust through reference to the Nazis' *actions*, rather than their motives.

These, then, are the expected scenes and scenarios of the perpetrators, victims, process, and aftermath of the Holocaust. The recycling of these familiar elements in established formats and conventions means that the Holocaust is instantly "recognisable".[21] In Reinhart Koselleck's phrase, these conventions of narrative, form, and content have produced certain "horizons of expectation" which structure how audiences interpret cultural representations of the Holocaust.[22] Indeed, as Hans Kellner noted, any representation of the Holocaust will have an intended audience that is expected to grasp the author's intended meaning, but that in turn has expectations. Kellner wrote: "We expect to see perpetrators and victims differentiated, atrocities linked together, concepts defined and exemplified. We expect that certain events will not be made comic or absurd: we object when certain events are made tragic."[23] As he argued, for Holocaust representations to be accepted *as* Holocaust representations, they have to be presented according to current social codes, protocols, and conventions of readability: "Genre, *topoi*, and emplotment are the traditional formal devices of rhetoric that are supposed to secure the adherence of a reader to a vision of the subject […] Use of the old, the expected, secures the creation of the new by making its novelty nevertheless recognisable."[24]

18 See Oren Baruch Stier, Committed to Memory. Cultural Mediations of the Holocaust, Amherst 2003, chapter 2.

19 For an elucidation of this in the case of the Nazi Party Rally Grounds in Nuremberg, see Macdonald, Difficult Heritage, 155.

20 Karl A. Schleunes, The Twisted Road to Auschwitz. Nazi Policy toward German Jews, 1933–1939, Urbana 1990.

21 Scholars who work within reception studies emphasise that individuals do not passively receive the intended meanings of a film, photograph, or museum, but instead actively negotiate with the information and interpretations. A person's prior knowledge, personal and biographical circumstances, and socio-cultural context will influence how they respond to a representation – and individuals also often dismiss aspects of representations which do not match their preconceptions. See Stuart Hall, Encoding/Decoding, in: Simon During (ed.), The Cultural Studies Reader, London 2007, 507-517; John H. Falk/Lynn D. Dierking/Marianna Adams, Living in a Learning Society. Museums and Free-Choice Theory, in: Sharon MacDonald (ed.), A Companion to Museum Studies, Oxford 2006, 323-39, and in the same volume Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, Studying Visitors, 362-376.

22 Reinhart Koselleck, Futures Past. On the Semantics of Historical Time, translated by Keith Tribe, New York, originally published 1979, this edition 2004.

23 Hans Kellner, "Never Again" is Now, in: History and Theory 33 (1994) 2, 127-144, here 140.

24 Ibid.

II

Thus, we turn to the question of other genocides: How far are they only recognisable *as genocide* through recycling the "expected scenes and scenery" of the Holocaust? As I have indicated, most of the scholarship that discusses the relationship between representations of the Holocaust and other genocides has focussed entirely on examples where images and texts directly appeal to the Holocaust or strongly 'echo' it, either verbally or visually. While the "shock of recognition" produced by such similarities is powerful, this is not the only way in which the Holocaust has influenced the representation of other genocides.[25] As anthropologists Andrew Strathern and Pamela Stewart have suggested, films, literature, and other representations resonate with us "not only by presenting visual images […] but by appealing to, and conforming with, basic scenarios in people's minds, mental habitus in the terms of Pierre Bourdieu, connected to cosmic schemes of 'good versus evil' and 'the lessons of history'".[26] Here I argue that Western understandings of other genocides are rooted in the Holocaust because of deeper, structural correlations in their representation. Mainstream genocide representations largely follow the 'basic scenario' of the Holocaust, centering on how the perpetrators, victims, process, and aftermath of genocide are portrayed. These four representational elements recur across films, exhibitions, photographs, and literature about genocide. There are, of course, some differences, such as a stronger focus on sexual violence in representations of the Armenian, Bosnian, and Rwandan genocides than one would expect with the Holocaust, or UN peacekeepers' failure to intervene in more recent genocides. However, because audiences are generally far less familiar with the basic historical facts of other genocides, replicating this 'script' means that the case study is still 'culturally legible' or 'recognisable' *as* genocide (and here I am extending Hans Kellner's argument). Moreover, repeating this 'plot' or script, where perpetrators are specifically coded as planning and pursuing the total annihilation of an innocent victim group, is also what distinguishes the representation of genocide from the representation of other atrocities or tragedies. As I will discuss later, this relatively narrow conception of genocide therefore excludes some cases of genocide which fall outside the audience's horizons of expectation.

In mainstream genocide representations, the perpetrators of genocide – like most Holocaust perpetrators – are depicted in highly stereotypical terms, as unambiguously 'evil'. This representation tends to serve as an *explanation* for their actions: Here, too, they are rarely explored in any real depth. As such, perpetrators remain distanced from the audience, driving the genocidal process without a proper explanation of *why*.

Across films, literature, museum exhibitions, and photography, the leaders are demonised. The names of Talaat, Enver, and Djemal Pashas, or Pol Pot, Nuon Chea, and "Comrade Duch", or Slobodan Milošević, Radovan Karadžić, and Ratko Mladić become the anchors of the process.[27] They are given names like "the Butcher of Bosnia"[28] or "Master of the Forges of Hell",[29] and they are depicted as driven, cold, and

25 This phrase was used by *Time* in its response to the images of "skeletal figures behind barbed wire" in Omarska. Cited in Jeffrey Shandler, While America Watches. Televising the Holocaust, New York 1999, 242.

26 Strathern/Stewart, Introduction, 2.

27 Interestingly, the names of the leaders of the Rwandan genocide seem not to form a part of the imaginary of Rwanda in the same way that the leaders of other genocides have.

28 Julian Borger, The Butcher's Trail. How the Search for Balkan War Criminals Became the World's Most Successful Manhunt, New York 2016.

29 Rithy Panh (dir.), Le Maitre des Forges de L'Enfer (2012).

uncompromising. In books and museums, they are often accompanied by police mug shots, framing them as criminals visually as well as rhetorically. Atom Egoyan, in his 2003 film *Ararat* about the Armenian genocide, went one step further: In one scene, a venomous Turkish governor who is preparing to have two young Armenian boys tortured is seated at his desk, framed by the flickering fireplace behind him.

The genocidal footsoldiers and collaborators – often unnamed and de-individualised Young Turks, Khmer Rouge, Hutu, or Bosnian Serbs – appear as passive, faceless agents of an unseen and powerful organisation. In Roland Joffé's landmark 1981 film *The Killing Fields*, the Khmer Rouge cadre appear as automata, passive machines following orders. In one scene, the Khmer Rouge children who the main character, Dith Pran, has witnessed being indoctrinated, tear up the tiny garden he is trying to use to stay alive. Haing S. Ngor, the actor who played Dith Pran, later commented that the young girl's expression, without her knowing it, was so true to the behaviour of the real Khmer Rouge children that it triggered traumatic memories in him.[30] The same faceless machinery is true of the Young Turks depicted in Atom Egoyan's *Ararat* and in Terry George's film *The Promise* (2016), who direct the Armenian women and children to their destinations in the Syrian desert. The same is true again of the Bosnian Serb military commanders described by Western journalists in their memoirs of the wars in the former Yugoslavia. The BBC journalist Jeremy Bowen, recalling his time in Bosnia, wrote about the frequent roadblocks and checkpoints at which journalists would receive rough treatment. One day, Bowen recalled, they attempted to reach the UN Safe Area of Goražde:

> "Many times I would turn up at a Serb checkpoint or in a village to be faced with huge hostility and pointed guns. [… T]he men were often big, physically intimidating and heavily armed. Our progress through eastern Bosnia to Goražde was slow. At the last checkpoint before Goražde, the Serbs came up with all sorts of reasons why we could not continue. There were mines ahead, there was shooting around the corner. My notebook says they were 'big men – big boots, big guns, beards, looking tough […] One very angry man with grey hair shouts "nix" at the camera'."[31]

Similar scenes show up in films about the Balkan wars, for example in Michael Winterbottom's 1997 film *Welcome to Sarajevo,* in which huge, bearded, heavily armed Četniks board a bus which is transporting Sarajevan orphans to safety, and haul all the children with Serb-sounding names off the bus, to keep them with their 'own people'.

Perpetrators often appear in menacing crowds, as at these Bosnian Serb checkpoints, or the gangs of drunk, whistle-blowing Hutu gathered around roadblocks or churches in Rwanda, or the Turkish mob depicted in Terry George's *The Promise.* A similar effect is produced by the structure of one of the best known non-fiction books about Rwanda, Jean Hatzfeld's *A Time for Machetes* (2005).[32] Hatzfeld spent quite some time in Rwanda, interviewing former perpetrators; in his book, the perpetrators' words are organised into thematic chapters, and he has more or less completely removed his own voice as interviewer. As the scholar of Rwanda Lee Ann Fujii has remarked, "the

30 See https://www.nytimes.com/1984/10/28/movies/in-the-killing-fields-a-cambodian-actor-relives-his-nation-s-ordeal.html (14 February 2018). On other Cambodian survivors' perceptions of Khmer Rouge children, see David Chandler, "The Killing Fields" and Perceptions of Cambodian History, in: Pacific Affairs 59 (1986) 1, 92-97, here 95.

31 Jeremy Bowen, War Stories, London 2006, 154, 153. "Nix" is not a word in Serbo-Croat; presumably Bowen misheard "ništa" ("no").

32 Jean Hatzfeld, A Time for Machetes. The Rwandan Genocide: The Killers Speak, translated by Linda Coverdale, London 2005.

killers' words therefore seem to spring from a spontaneous and ongoing monologue. This sense of streaming monologue, in turn, helps to render these men as cold-blooded monsters. Once they become monsters, however, they are easy to dismiss as aberrant individuals who would never remind us of ourselve."[33] The same could be said of the portrayal of most génocidaires in mainstream genocide representations.

These perpetrators are further distanced from us by detailed testimonial descriptions by victims of sadistic tortures, cruel beatings, and indiscriminate killings. The Bosnian survivor Kemal Pervanić, who spent time in the concentration camp of Omarska, recalls in his memoir how "the guards at Omarska very quickly turned into beasts, of two breeds": The first would immediately jump on and crush their victims, while the second would toy with and keep their victims alive until the next day.[34] Egoyan's *Ararat* includes scenes where young women are stripped and forced to dance while being doused with petrol and burnt alive. Indeed, we seem to expect such behaviour of perpetrators. The French-Canadian UN General Roméo Dallaire, who oversaw the peacekeeping mission in Rwanda and did everything he could do get a mandate for action, recalled in his memoir his first meeting with the leaders of the *Interahamwe*, a militia group which was instrumental in the genocide. He wrote:

> "I had made my way to the Diplomates, jostling through the ubiquitous roadblocks, drunken and downright mad militiamen, and hundreds of children jumping around, all excited among today's kills. These kids were being egged on to throw stones at our vehicles and yell at us as we stopped for the militiamen to open the gate […] Arriving at the hotel, I took the bullets out of my pistol just in case the temptation to shoot them was too extreme, and went inside.
>
> The three young men Bagosora introduced me to had no particularly distinguishing features. I think I was expecting frothing at the mouth, but the meeting would be with humans."[35]

Dallaire is not alone in his confusion at expecting monsters but meeting humans. Indeed, it mirrors the common idea of Holocaust perpetrators as "cultured demons", as the Auschwitz *Sonderkommando* member Zalman Gradowksi put it. The author Slavenka Drakulić, who as a writer I otherwise find very sensitive and insightful, reproduced this dichotomy in her coverage of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia at The Hague. On the one hand, she insisted that the perpetrators in the dock really were ordinary people who could be found (or made) in any society. On the other hand, her style of writing created a strong aura of dangerousness and deviance around them. She frequently expressed surprise that the perpetrators *looked* ordinary: About one, she wrote that "Kovač really looked like somebody you could trust to give your daughter a lift to the hospital"; about another, Jesilić, she said that he "looks like your best friend, your ideal son-in-law". But she could not understand how "this nice fisherman", Jesilić, "ended up executing Muslim prisoners", and then pointed out that fishing "is not quite the innocent sport it seems. Fish have to be killed […] The fish would appear from the water, wriggling helplessly on the hook. I can imagine him unhooking the fish and throwing it on the grass. Then watching it gasp for air."[36]

33 Lee Ann Fujii, Machete Season. The Killers in Rwanda Speak (review), in: African Studies Review 50 (2007) 1, 155-156, here 155
34 Kemal Pervanić, The Killing Days. My Journey through the Bosnian War, London 1999, 74.
35 Roméo Dallaire, Shake Hands with the Devil. The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda, London 2004, 345-346.
36 Slavenka Drakulić, They Would Never Hurt a Fly. War Criminals on Trial in The Hague, London 2004, 48, 59, 67, 64.

In all of these representations, the perpetrators are portrayed as deviant. Because their motives are rarely explored, audiences have to rely on notions of 'evil' or 'ancient hatreds' against minority groups to explain the genocide. Despite the differences between these five cases, there does seem to be a basic similarity in the way that the Holocaust and the other genocides are understood to unfold. Perhaps one of the more peculiar aspects of watching films, reading books, or visiting exhibitions about genocide is that we 'already know' the 'plot', how it will end, and also how we are likely to respond to the narratives and images we are presented with. Most representations either follow or imply the same basic 'plot': Pre-existing tensions in a society deteriorate, more or less rapidly, and those in power – who usually only just came to power – plan and then execute a genocidal scheme which targets part of the population for death, usually an ethnic or religious minority. This understanding of genocide is what I elsewhere called a "closed narrative".[37] It explains genocide by magnifying 'domestic' factors – the perpetrators themselves, their political ideologies and fanaticism, and some supposed tendency to violence in society – and by *ignoring* the international context for genocide, which could be shifts in global power, regional conflict, or the very modern goal of ethnically homogenous nation states. In fact, even their coverage of domestic factors is limited, since there is rarely much discussion of the impact of economic crises, social divisions, political legitimacy, and so on. The effect is to close off genocide, to distance it from anything which happens in 'normal' Western democracies. This, of course, follows the 'intentionalist' interpretation of genocide (and the common representation of the Holocaust), rather than allowing consideration of the structural factors and elements common to all societies which can be radicalised into genocide.[38]

As with the representation of the Holocaust, agency and causation are often embodied in the perpetrators. Guilt is nationalised or extended to the entire perpetrator group of Turks, Khmer Rouge, Hutu, or Serbs – concealing any differences within groups (such as politically moderate Hutu, or Bosnian Serbs who did not identify with 'mother Serbia'). It also conceals any collaboration by other groups, and most obviously the sheer diversity of participants, their motives, and their levels of involvement – all of which would make the ways in which ordinary people become killers more intelligible. The dynamic is reduced to a familiar binary of one clear perpetrator and one clear victim – which means that other victim groups are often left out of the story. For example, the conflict in the former Yugoslavia is often reduced to one-way violence by Serbs against Bosnians, ignoring the Croats (and all other hyphenated ethnicities and political identities) and the wider violence of the civil wars.

These horizons of expectation – particularly of the premeditated plan – are confirmed by the use of foreshadowing in some representations, usually as a device which heightens the sense of foreboding and emphasises genocidal intent. For example, in her 2008 novel *Skylark Farm*, Antonia Arslan adopted the voice of an omniscient narrator. In the middle of her discussion of an Armenian family who were preparing for Easter in 1915, she interrupted to say: "Holy Saturday. The patient trap, agleam with barbed wire and congealed blood, is about to be sprung."[39] In two of the films about Rwanda, a scene is re-enacted where Romeo Dallaire is given informa-

37 Rebecca Jinks, Representing Genocide. The Holocaust as Paradigm?, London 2016, chapter 2.

38 See for example Mark Levene, Genocide in the Age of the Nation-State, Vol. I. The Meaning of Genocide, London 2005, and James Kaye/Bo Stråth, Enlightenment and Genocide, Contradictions of Modernity, Oxford 2000.

39 Antonia Arslan, Skylark Farm. A Novel, London 2008, 57; see also 31, 73, 96-97.

tion about the plans for genocide by a secret informant, well before the plane crash that killed the president in 1994.[40] Dallaire's own account makes heavy use of foreshadowing, and in the 2004 documentary *Ghosts of Rwanda*, an aid worker who was in Rwanda before the genocide said: "we all knew things were going to blow".[41]

In these films, books, and exhibitions, genocide appears as an inevitable, planned event. Just as the explanatory focus is geographically circumscribed (emphasising domestic factors), so too is the temporality of genocide circumscribed into a period with a very clear start and end point. This is reflected in the use of "1915" to speak of the Armenian genocide, or the phrase used in many Cambodian testimonies that the "Pol Pot time" lasted "three years, eight months, and twenty days", or the "100 days" of genocide in Rwanda.[42] There is usually no sense of the 'stages of deliberation', and the gradual escalation, which produces genocide. Some films and literature, and most photographic works, open *in media res* – with the downing of the president's plane in Rwanda or the clearing of the cities in Cambodia – leaving little chance to explore the backstory.

Similarly, the representation of the space and place of genocide – as in Holocaust representations – also tends to focus on bounded, closed-off spaces. By and large, mainstream Holocaust representations have focussed on the "concentrationary universe"[43] – camps, ghettos, barbed wire, and tight spaces of entrapment like cattle cars, or hiding spaces under floorboards or in sewers. In their own ways, many representations of other genocides – and the physical sites themselves – echo this spatial representation of the Holocaust. The deportation columns of the Armenian genocide have been called a "concentration camp in perpetual movement";[44] the destination of the Syrian desert becomes the concentrationary location of killing. Most representations of Cambodia take the interrogation prison of Tuol Sleng as their subject, not the dispersed, everyday life and death in the Cambodian countryside.[45] Representations of Rwanda focus on the churches, schools, hospitals, and sports stadiums that became sites of mass murder. With Bosnia, most focus on either the experiences of the concentration camps, on the feeling of encirclement and entrapment in Sarajevo, surrounded by Bosnian Serb snipers, or on the other so-called UN Safe Areas like Srebrenica or Goražde. The similarities to the Holocaust are quite clear: In each case, the actual spaces of violence are reduced to spaces of entrapment, and genocide is firmly located and caged within these bounded – and distant – spaces. This telescoping of genocide also focusses attention on the spaces that, because of the stark victim/perpetrator dynamic, offer the clearest moral position. Together, these mainstream representations of genocide tend to give us "the most expected image of the

40 Terry George (dir.), Hotel Rwanda (2004); Roger Spottiswoode (dir.), Shake Hands with the Devil (2007).

41 Carl Wilkens, in Ghosts of Rwanda (2004). Transcript available at www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ghosts/etc/script.html (4 August 2018).

42 Overt genocidal violence against various groups continued in Ottoman Turkey until at least 1923. Some Armenian testimonies cover this, too, including Bertha Nakshian Ketchian, In the Shadow of the Fortress. The Genocide Remembered, edited by Sonia I. Ketchian, Cambridge, MA 1988; Euphronia Halebian Meymarian, Housher. My Life in the Aftermath of the Armenian Genocide, London 2004. In general, though, '1915' is the cipher for the genocide; a longer periodization would presumably disturb the simplicity of '1915' and also call attention to other groups' victimisation. For each of these genocides, these periodisations – like the Dayton Accords in representations of the breakup of the former Yugoslavia – posit a clear ending (as well as beginning) to genocide, which occludes the ways in which the structures of violence within a society that helped *produce* genocide often persist in the aftermath.

43 This is a translation of the title of David Rousset's *L'Univers concentrationnaire*, Paris 1946.

44 Balakian, Black Dog of Fate, 197.

45 On the latter, see Thet Sambath and Rob Lemkin's excellent documentary *Enemies of the People* (2010).

'unimaginable'".[46] They tend not to confront audiences with ambiguous situations, instead positioning the audience as a horrified witness whose conclusions about the violence have already been made for them.

The representation of the victims of genocide tends to heighten this sense of moral clarity. As with representations of the Holocaust, the core focus and narrative drive of many genocide representations is the suffering of the victims, rather than the motives of the perpetrators.[47] A common format, as with Holocaust representations, is to portray the experiences of a few individuals as an emotive way of explaining the story – whether in feature films and documentaries, in museums, in novels and witness accounts, or, obviously, in survivor testimonies. These individual stories are recounted against the backdrop of whole families and communities being deported, massacred, incarcerated, or forced into manual labour. The display at Tuol Sleng is a particularly effective example of this: Each room has board after board of photographs of victims, and the visitor quickly gains the sense of scale of killing at Tuol Sleng while being encouraged to study individual faces and emotions. The museum at Srebrenica has selected fifteen representative Bosnian Muslim boys and men of the 8000 who died, and displays a short biography of each together with a personal item found with them in a mass grave.[48] Here, the aesthetics, colour palette, and display techniques are very familiar from Holocaust exhibitions. In general, this oscillation between the individual and the collective is familiar as a way of communicating the enormity of the event. It is also a way of emphasising the scope and extent of the killings – something which can also permit them to be recognised as genocide.

In most of these representations, the victims are shown as helpless, innocent, and vulnerable, with little or no agency – unless they are heroised and valorised as resisters, as in Franz Werfel's novel *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* (1933) or through the figure of Paul Rusesabagina in the film *Hotel Rwanda*. This general depiction of a one-sided affair is meant to chime with the public's understanding of genocide in terms of 'good and evil'. The representation of *survivors* after the genocide compounds this dichotomy. Most representations draw on a standard set of strategies for presenting loss, trauma, and devastation, inviting intense emotional reactions. The survivors are described as the "surviving remnant", the "leftovers of the sword", and "remnants of the killing field"; they are "lost" or "demoralised, outcast, 'demolished'".[49] Each of these terms connotes brokenness, burden, and sorrow. The survivors' words reinforce this feeling, and they could just as well be Holocaust survivors' words. In the first paragraph of his 2005 testimony of surviving Srebrenica, *Postcards from the*

46 Amos Goldberg, The Victim's Voice and Melodramatic Aesthetics in History, in: History and Theory 48 (2009), 220-237, here 229.

47 This focus on the victims' experiences – the death of many and the struggles of those who survived – fulfils a vital ethical function; it also helps create sympathy amongst Western audiences and thus to mark genocide as a matter of concern for the international community. I would argue, however, that a *complementary* exploration of the motives of the perpetrators and their collaborators, as well as the multiplicity of factors which lead to genocide, is needed in order to fulfil the different – but no less important – function of demystifying and demythologising the origins of such violence.

48 See Suzanne Bardgett, Remembering Srebrenica, in: History Today 57 (2007), 52-53.

49 The Hebrew term *she'erit hapleta* (the surviving remnant) was employed to describe Holocaust survivors, especially in the European Displaced Persons (DP) camps. "Leftovers of the sword" was used to describe Armenian survivors; see Fethiye Çetin, My Grandmother. A Memoir, translated by Maureen Freely, London 2008, 102. "Khmer are viewed as remnants of the killing fields"; see May M. Ebihara/Carol A. Mortland/Judy Ledgerwood, Introduction, in: May M. Ebihara/Carol A. Mortland/Judy Ledgerwood (ed.), Cambodian Culture Since 1975. Homeland and Exile, Ithaca/London 1994, 1-26, here 4. "[T]he women of Srebrenica are lost", Irfanka Pašagić, quoted in Eric Stover/Gilles Peress, The Graves. Srebrenica and Vukovar, Zurich 1998, 193; see also Jean Hatzfeld, Into the Quick of Life. The Rwandan Genocide: The Survivors Speak, translated by Gerry Feehily, London 2005, viii.

Grave, Emir Suljagić wrote: "I survived and many did not; I lived on in the same way that they died. There is no difference between their death and my survival, for I remained to live in a world that has been permanently and irreversibly marked by their death."[50] Along with the sense of 'living death', there is the evidence of trauma. The Cambodian survivor Haing Ngor, who played the lead role in Joffé's film *The Killing Fields*, wrote:

> "If I thought too much in the daytime about what had happened, I had dreams that night. Huoy died in my arms over and over and over. I saw my father tied to the tree and trying to tell me something, but afraid to speak. It didn't take much to set off my nightmares – the sound of water dripping from the faucet was enough."[51]

This overpowering sense of trauma and grief is reinforced by the aesthetics often used to portray survivors. One visual convention is instantly recognisable: the portrait of a survivor in a kind of mute sorrow, with downcast eyes and head turned slightly to one side.[52] Alternatively, survivors are shown in extreme states of distress: Many films and images about Srebrenica feature Bosnian Muslim widows weeping as they wait for news or visit their loved ones' coffins before burial.[53] These, too, are relatively well-worn conventions of representing victims and survivors within Holocaust representations.

The question of how survivors are portrayed, finally, leads me on to the question of the portrayal of the aftermath of genocides and its overlaps with the Holocaust. Beyond the focus on survivors, there are often iconic images and descriptions of the physical remnants – piles of skulls and bones, personal possessions, and discarded weapons, in the same way that the "icons of extermination" seem to dominate the representation of the aftermath of the Holocaust.[54] With Rwanda and Cambodia, we are shown ordered rows of skulls and bones in the churches and schools of Rwanda and the memorial stupas across Cambodia. We see the exhumations of twisted corpses in the mass graves of Bosnia and Croatia and the bodies of Armenians laid out by the roadside. These often photographic representations are central, I think, because they seem to depict the essence of genocide, and indeed to serve as evidence for it. As I indicated with the Srebrenica museum, most genocide museums (and literature and photography) now also focus on the personal possessions the victims left behind: clothes, bunches of keys, a toy, identification papers. In the Kigali Memorial Centre, a few sets of clothing have been washed and hung in glass cases, dramatically backlit in an otherwise dark room, and at Murambi, a line of clothes hangs in an empty room. In Tuol Sleng, a glass cabinet holds neatly folded clothes of victims. In each of these museums, the personal possessions are displayed separately from any analytical sections: The displays are intended to communicate the enormity of loss, and to facilitate identification with the victims, and visitors are invited to contemplate and to mourn the lives that were lost. This focus on the remnants of genocide is one of the closest points of convergence between Holocaust and genocide representations.

Thus, although the audiences of mainstream representations of genocide may be unfamiliar with the basic history of the events at hand, they are nevertheless quickly

50 Emir Suljagić, Postcards from the Grave, translated by Lejla Haverić, London 2005, 11.
51 Haing S. Ngor, Survival in the Killing Fields, with Roger Warner, New York 2003, 472.
52 See the front covers of Yolanda Mukagasana/Alain Kazinierakis, Les Blessures du Silence [The Wound of Silence], Arles 2001, and Hatzfeld, *Into the Quick of Life*.
53 See for example the opening scenes of Leslie Woodhead (dir.), A Cry from the Grave (1999), an edited and expanded version of which is also shown in the Srebrenica Potočari Memorial Museum.
54 Cornelia Brink, Secular Icons. Looking at Photographs from Nazi Concentration Camps, in: History and Memory 12 (2000) 2, 135-150, here 138.

familiarised through the use of the 'basic scenario' of the Holocaust. The visual conventions associated with Holocaust representations reappear in genocide representations; and in depictions of the process of genocide, the perpetrators' agency is emphasised over broader structural contexts. As with the Holocaust, these representations all narrate genocide as 'exceptional', as 'extraordinary': In this way, genocide is neutralised, literally 'domesticated'.

III

All of this, I would suggest, has three main outcomes. The first is that by distancing genocide (and the Holocaust) from Western liberal democracies, these mainstream representations repeat and consolidate the central Western interpretation of genocide: that genocide is the product of extraordinary people and politics, in faraway places, and not something which requires any introspection about our own societal or political norms.

Second, and linked to this, are the implications for genocide prevention. In my book, I demonstrated that most of these representations at some level situate themselves as a call to arms against genocide ever happening again.[55] Whether a film or a survivor testimony or a museum, most express hope that by raising awareness of genocide, we can better recognise and prevent it in the future. These are entirely genuine and heartfelt hopes, and the audiences of films, readers of books, and visitors to museums often respond in kind. Indeed, in the visitor books of museums in Rwanda, Cambodia, Bosnia, and Armenia, the phrases "never again" and "never forget!" appear almost everywhere. So this normative framework of responses to the Holocaust has been extended to shape how Westerners respond to other genocides too. However, we must ask whether these representations actually facilitate 'never again' becoming a reality, and my argument is that they often do not. This is because, as I discussed above, they tend to sidestep questions of how and why genocide happens – and thus how prevention might be possible. It is also because representations encourage emotional responses from their audiences – of horror, sorrow, loss, shock, sympathy – without channelling those emotions into a critique of the roots of genocide.

Third, these deeper, structural overlaps between the representation of the Holocaust and the representation of the Armenian, Cambodian, Bosnian, and Rwandan genocides have helped to make a canon out of the latter, and to crystallise a Western understanding of the basic scenario or script of genocide. But this makes it much harder to recognise those other genocides *as* genocide which do not 'fit' this scenario. Thus, if the violence shown is sporadic and drawn-out, is dispersed over a wide geography, or does not necessarily result in mass death, it is even less likely to be recognised as genocide. This is true, for example, of the on-going genocidal violence in Darfur or in Myanmar against the Rohingya today, where "slow-burning genocide" is cast as interethnic violence and as a "refugee crisis", rather than as genocide.[56]

55 Jinks, Representing Genocide, chapter 5.

56 On labelling and conceptualising the events in Darfur as genocide, see Scott Straus, Darfur and the Genocide Debate, in: Foreign Affairs 84 (2005) 1, 123-133, and Julie Flint/Alex de Waal, Darfur. A New History of a Long War, London 2008. On labelling and conceptualising the events in Myanmar as genocide, see Zarni Maung/Alice Cowley, The Slow-Burning Genocide of Myanmar's Rohingya, in: Pacific Rim Law & Policy Journal 23 (2014) 3, 683-754; Azeem Ibrahim, The Rohingyas. Inside Myanmar's Hidden Genocide, Oxford 2016; Penny Green/Thomas MacManus/Alicia de la Cour Venning, Countdown to Annihilation. Genocide in Myanmar, London 2015 (available at www.statecrime.org/data/2015/10/ISCI-Rohingya-Report-PUBLISHED-VERSION.pdf, 4 August 2018).

It is also true for the settler-colonial genocides in North America and Australia, or in cases where children are forcibly removed from their parents and transferred to another group. Certainly, I think films like Philip Noyce's *Rabbit Proof Fence* (2002), which follows the fate of three "mixed-race" Aboriginal children in Australia, would struggle to be recognised as a genocide film. In this film, set in the 1930s, three girls are removed from their Aboriginal family and transported thousands of miles to a boarding school, where they are to learn to assimilate into White culture and society and ultimately be biologically and culturally absorbed into Australian society. The film focusses on the girls' escape and daring efforts to walk home, pursued by police and an Aboriginal tracker, along the eponymous Rabbit Proof Fence. Although the practice of transferring children from one group to another – here, biological and cultural assimilation – is squarely recognised in the UN Genocide Convention as genocide, the fate of the "stolen generations", as they are known, does not easily fit into the paradigmatic 'basic scenario' of the Holocaust: The removals are geographically and temporally spread out, there is no mass killing, and indeed the perpetrators claim they are removing the children to give them a 'better' life.[57] *Rabbit Proof Fence* rightly focusses on the girls' resistance to these plans – and as such fits rather more into the genre of films about determined escapes through the wilderness than in the 'genocide' genre. In this way, the representational framework which takes the Holocaust as paradigm, while permitting (some) representations of genocide to be recognised *as* genocide, has simultaneously helped create a canon and helped exclude other cases from recognition.

However, to end I want to discuss some of the 'more engaged' representations of genocide. There are many of these, and they reshape audience understandings of genocide in subtly different ways: by presenting survivors differently, by presenting perpetrators differently, or by encouraging us to see how the structures of violence which produced genocide in the first place often lingered past 1915, 1979, 1994, or 1999. I will focus on a few examples where authors unsettle the usual representation of perpetrators, since it is here that more engaged representations diverge most clearly from the mainstream paradigm.

Instead of demonising the perpetrators, these representations show that perpetrators are ordinary people making choices and decisions who are often not unknown to the victims: Indeed, they are sometimes even the victims' friends and neighbours. I believe the literature and films coming out of the former Yugoslavia are often the most successful at portraying this intimate element. They often focus on neighbourly violence and the way that ethnicity suddenly wrenched apart friendships. Semezdin Mehmedinović's 1998 book *Sarajevo Blues* portrays the sharp break that occurred on the first night of the war. On his way home on the tram in Sarajevo after football practice, he wrote,

> "[a] bunch of guys with stockings over their heads and Kalashnikovs aimed at us stopped the trolley. As I got out, I took a look at this motley crew only to recognize the guy from my team who hadn't shown up. I was so taken by surprise that I had to repeat my question twice: 'Šljuka, is that you?' Embarrassed, he kept quiet behind his stocking.
> My confusion lasted for a while. Instead of a guy I was supposed to hang out with over a few beers after a game, I found myself facing a real terrorist occupying the very trolley I happened to be riding in. I couldn't figure out how

57 On the stolen generations, see A. Dirk Moses (ed.), Genocide and Settler Society. Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History, New York 2004.

to explain this to myself, this fundamental physiognomic change. But when the number of people began to multiply – the number of people who, like Šljuka, started wearing stockings on their heads instead of their feet – I was no longer confused."[58]

Mehmedinović here portrayed the sharp, disorienting break of the first night of the war through this story of broken friendship. Srđan Dragojević used a similar technique in his 1996 film *Lepa sela, lepo gore* (Pretty Village, Pretty Flame). The story follows Milan and Halil, two best friends whose friendship and history is annihilated by the war. Dragojević chose to explore not the war but the people involved in it, using flashbacks to show how the Serb soldiers (including Milan) trapped in a tunnel by Muslim forces (Halil amongst them) came to leave their former lives to fight due to a variety of explicable but not excusable reasons. There are two ignorant nationalists convinced of the necessity of war by propaganda and political myth. There is a dubious salesman who goes to war instead of his conscripted nerdy younger brother (who clearly would not last a minute at the front). There is a professor of literature, a former army colonel, and a drug addict who (quite literally) falls into soldiering. Between these stories, Dragojević offered a potentially authentic account of "how people get drawn into events and are changed by them", rather than providing us with 'faceless', unexplored perpetrators.[59]

Danis Tanović's 2001 film *Ničija Zemlja* (No Man's Land) also used the tropes of friendship, neighbourliness, and dark humour. The two main protagonists are Nino, a Serb, and Čiki, a Bosnian Muslim. They are thrown together by chance: In the middle of the war, both sides try to take a trench overnight in no man's land, between Serbian and Muslim front lines. It all goes wrong and as the sun comes up – trapping them – they have to wait for UN help, along with a third man, Cera, who is lying on top of a mine. Nino and Čiki fight about who started the war – there is only one gun, and the one with possession of it at each point forces the other to agree that his 'side' started it – but Nino is not the usual demonised Serb, and Čiki is a wiry, resourceful adversary. Tanović ridicules the supposed differences between them: They speak the same language, come from the same region, and even know the same girl back at home, and they end up sharing cigarettes. In this way, both *No Man's Land* and *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame* are a far more intimate portrait of the conflict, which fully confronts the ordinariness of the perpetrators.

Cambodia is another case study for which there are numerous more complex, engaged films and books, each of which attempts to humanise and to explain the perpetrators. François Bizot has written two books about Duch, the leader of the prison and interrogation centre at Tuol Sleng (who was labelled "Master of the Forges of Hell" by Rithy Panh). Bizot is a French anthropologist who was captured by the Khmer Rouge before they took power in 1975 and was interrogated by Duch before – extraordinarily – being released. Both of his books humanise, and attempt to understand, Duch. In his first book, Bizot insisted that Duch was not "a monster from the abyss but a human being […] his masters employed him as a cog in a vast timepiece beyond his comprehension".[60] The second book, *Facing the Torturer*, is an extended reflection on Duch since he was put on trial in Cambodia: Bizot carefully pulled apart the choreography of the trial, showing how its central role was to demonise, not to understand, the perpetrator, in order to sustain our comforting illusions

58 Semezdin Mehmedinović, Sarajevo Blues, translated by Ammiel Alcalay, San Francisco 1998, 14.

59 Milena Michalski/James Gow, War, Image and Legitimacy. Viewing Contemporary Conflict, Abingdon 2007, 36.

60 François Bizot, The Gate, translated by Euan Cameron, London 2004, 115.

about the extraordinariness of perpetrators. "Of course", he wrote, "every major trial resorts to these sorts of confirmations, especially when the psychological evaluation has provided no reassuring conclusions; in the present case, the results were even so ordinary, so discouraging, that Duch's evaluation was the sort of thing that might be a cause of alarm for each and every one of us."[61] Through frank reflections, Bizot asked his readers to look beyond myth and stereotype – and paradigmatic representations – to understand perpetrators differently.

Similarly, Rob Lemkin and Thet Sambath's 2010 documentary *Enemies of the People* wove together interviews with a number of Khmer Rouge perpetrators. The film's main informants, who were both village leaders, were candid in their explanations of why and how they came to kill. They described how their killing affected them in the present day, and while the film does not encourage us to empathise with these perpetrators, their unsettled memories help to humanise them. There are also interviews with mid-level leaders, and with 'Brother Number Two', Nuon Chea. Chea was careful with his words, but occasionally showed real emotion – anger – when he described the need to eliminate the party's enemies. Viewers are therefore left with a realistic sense of how the killing was possible, and indeed understood as necessary, throughout the hierarchy of perpetrators.

These are just a few examples of more engaged representations which disrupt 'mainstream' ideas about perpetrators. What is striking about the engaged representations I discuss in my book is that they are almost all concerned with ordinary people and experiences. They tend to use a close individual perspective, or microhistory, to expose the diversity of experiences, to show how social and political conditions influence choices, and the way that identity is enveloped by war and genocide. Crucially, they do not tell their audiences what to think or encourage a horrified denunciation of the perpetrators: They leave their audiences to negotiate the issues of responsibility and guilt for themselves. Thus, while mainstream genocide representations follow the Holocaust paradigm in shielding their western audiences from understanding genocide as a process which involves very ordinary people, and very common factors, more engaged representations of genocide aim to unsettle that familiar, but problematic, paradigm.

61 François Bizot, Facing the Torturer. Inside the Mind of a War Criminal, translated by Charlotte Mandell and Antoine Audouard, London 2011, 121.

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