

against violence and politics. Over time, this became part of my inner drive to submit a design to the memorial competition – to see if beauty and certain humane inspirations can still have meaning and existence in society, apart from being mere commercial instruments. In completing the memorial with families and seeing their children grow over the past decade, I now realize that the process was therapeutic not only for the family members, but also for myself, as I regained my ability to move forward again.

## 5

### RESPONSE TO PART I

#### The Relics of Absence

John Gale

The past – whether encountered in rituals, texts, or architectural monuments – always speaks of an absence (de Certeau, 1967). This is powerfully illustrated by the way the authors of the preceding chapters elucidate the ambiguity of what Augustine called *memoria* – both what is remembered, and the act of remembering. For Augustine, *memoria* is more than a storehouse of concepts and fantasies: it has an intimate relationship with the will and the emotions. One of the key dynamic aspects of *memoria* is the ordering of interior experience in a way that approximates the psychoanalytic understanding of the unconscious. Indeed, Augustine considers the process of bringing together things “scattered and unarranged” (*quasi colligere atque animadvertendo*) central to the acquisition of self-awareness (Cary, 2000).

The absence invoked by the past is more than merely an interruption or a fissure, as Assmann suggests in this volume. It is, rather, the foundation of the symbolic (Lacan, 2006) and thus “the very place in which psychoanalysis dwells” (Riccœur, 1977, p. 369).<sup>1</sup> This foundation is mythologized in traces of memory that, as their historicity suggests, have been fabricated as well as reconstructed (Lacan, 2006). Our ability to record and transcribe the past is, of course, limited by the availability of materials and the conditions under which we preserve texts and artifacts. This fact alone immediately calls into question the objective historical status of these *objects*. But it is also called into question by the operation of repression. That is to say, the past as we enshrine it in memorials and in collections in archives, libraries, and museums is never uncontaminated. Rather, it is preconstituted: the result of a condensation and an ellipsis. As such, its relics are redacted and inscribed within a mythology that is dependent on a discordance (*Spaltung*<sup>2</sup>) between the past and

and detracted into the folkloric and seen, deceptively, as somehow “belonging” to the past (Lacan, 1994). Psychoanalysis turns this view of history on its head by recognizing that the relationship between the past and the present is not as one of succession, but one of imbrication and repetition (de Certeau, 1987). We are, as Assmann reminds us, haunted by the past.

But memory is not only constituted by absence: it also veils it (Ricoeur, 2004). This veiling – or sheltering, to use Derrida’s idiom – is a kind of forgetting characteristic of repression (Konstan, this volume). We find this masking of absence even where we least expect it – in Freud’s concept of *Trauerarbeit* (literally, “mourning work”), which functions to eradicate the traces of loss (Ferber, 2006). It is a “work” that belongs not just to individual subjects, but to a particular mentality (Derrida, 1996). Indeed, even Cicero, the “*orator amplissimus*” (Augustine, *De Civitate*), experienced a grief (*dolor*) that was, as he records it in the *De amicitia*, inscribed within the lexicon of a specific culture (*paideia*), as Konstan notes. For precisely at the moment where utterance becomes dependent on a question, under the rubric of intersubjectivity, our history is experienced both as our own and yet at the same time, not our own. For it is the product of a specific place (Ahearne, 1995). In this it signifies a tradition (*paradosis*) in the sheltering of absence. This is one reason why some historical events occupy the forefront of a particular cultural awareness and other equally profound events are forgotten (Gadamer, 1975).

### Archaeologies of grief and depression

Reading Konstan’s study one cannot fail, from the very start, to notice the paradoxical nature of Cicero’s text: On the one hand it is an exercise in recalling the past, and on the other, a written document, through which the author seeks to organize and master that past, and which continues to speak long after its author has died. These factors, and while interwoven, function according to different economies. As literature, the *De amicitia* is inserted into an archaeology of texts and usages. It thus reintroduces what it has sought to expel by a process of detachment (the “return of the repressed”). For this reason, de Certeau (1987) likens texts to tombs, erected by erudition, from which what is expelled ‘re-bites’ (*renient*). This is an archaeology that, in antiquity, amounts to a lexicography of grief, designated in manifold overlapping terms and genres, which discloses a dynamic process, founded on absence, that anticipates the views of Freud. Here, in intersecting private and public spheres, its essential link to death emerges (Liddell & Scott, 1863). This finds its expression in the deep sorrow and remorse (*penitios*, *katanuxis*, *lupē*), in the weeping and mourning that accompanies the loss of a loved one or a friend (Fraisse, 1984). This assailing that accompanies the loss of a loved one or a friend (Fraisse, 1984). This association with death indicates a further connection between grief and various forms of depression (*melancholia*, *akētia*),<sup>3</sup> as well as with the penitential rituals associated with the “mortification of the flesh” as they change from the Middle Ages through

2007). Indeed, we know that Babylonian and Canaanite religious practices involved weeping and mourning rites, elements of which are found in the Old Testament (Huidberg, 1962). Pego (1952) identifies one hundred and twenty uses of the verb *penithō* (Greek, “mourning”) in the Septuagint alone.

The Stoics, through a careful analysis of the emotions, noticed that expressions of grief change over time and may be voluntary or involuntary (Graver, 2007). As Konstan discusses, Seneca observes that only human beings grieve at any real length on the death of a loved one and that this grief, initially characterized by noisy weeping, involuntary sobs, and shaking, changes over time. While the first kind of grief is something natural (*naturalis necessitas*), the second indicates a person’s humanity and will thus, to some extent, be controllable. Importantly, Seneca argued that these tears will be tinged with a certain joy at the memory of the loved one’s kind deeds (Graver, 2007). Real happiness, he maintains in the *Epistulae Morales*, cannot be destroyed by loss, and thus the true friend, while he may shed some tears and feel a certain degree of pain, ought not to grieve when a friend dies: a person has responsibilities toward his family, and it will be of no service to them if that person is “laid low, or shattered, or dependent on the other, or reproachful towards god or humankind” (Graver, 2007, p. 178). Epicurus advises that we should love a child or a friend, remembering that death is a part of life (*Discourses* 3. 24–82ff). Cicero observes that guilt is often felt if happy emotions are experienced during mourning, but his concern is with those who are merely going through the motions of mourning for the sake of appearances (*Tusculan Disputations*, 3. 63–4).

Tears, as an expression of a paradoxical satisfaction (*jouissance*) that the subject derives from grief, become commonplace in the early Eastern Christian tradition of asceticism (Miller, 2000). Here the focus is on compunction (Hansherr, 1944). To weep and mourn is now transposed into a spiritual exercise akin to those of the early Greek philosophers: The Stoics insisted that philosophy was not a question of learning a set of abstract principles, but a therapeutic exercise that causes us to be more fully and makes us better: a conversion that turns one’s entire life upside down, changing the life of those who go through it (Hadot, 1987). For the early Christian ascetics, weeping and feeling remorse was a form of therapy, more than of penitence. Tears – which characterized the spirituality of many of the Byzantine monks – were at the same time painful and pleasurable (Hunt, 2004). Here we see a tight bond emerging between loss (grief) and the death drive (*Todestrieb*), which takes us back, as Assmann shows, to the Pauline exegesis of the Torah. In Lacan’s (1999) words, “without a transgression there is no access to *jouissance*, and, to return to Saint Paul, that that is precisely the function of the Law” (p. 177). But while compunction was a central aim of the ascetic program, natural mourning was discouraged in monasteries: too much emotion toward deceased family members might draw the monk back to secular life. Even in the monk’s prayer, he was discouraged from dwelling on the memory of his dead friends and relatives. Indeed, rather as the Stoic ideal, one of the hallmarks of the spiritual father was his ability to remain

a lack of faith in the resurrection. Thus monks were encouraged to hold in mind simultaneously the day of their own death and the resurrection.

But monks also frequently suffered from what was known as *akēthia*, which indicates a particular form of depression.<sup>4</sup> It is a difficult term to translate; even Cicero (1999) (*Letters to Atticus*, 12.45.1) struggled to find a Latin equivalent, and many modern authors leave it in Greek. In German it is referred to without ambiguity as *Klosterkrankheit* (Geiger, 1882) or *Monchskrankheit* (Flashar, 1966). It was transmitted to the West through the *Institutes* of John Cassian (Chadwick, 1950). Manifested in both somatic and psychological symptoms, such as fatigue, inertia, anxiety, despair, sadness, and boredom, symptoms of *akēthia* persisted well into the Middle Ages (Lampe, 1961). By the sixteenth century, it was more or less replaced by a revival of the ancient term melancholia — driven, to a large extent, by a preoccupation with the need to find a medical diagnosis of demonic possession (Levack, 2013).

Freud began his collection of over two thousand statues, reliefs, busts, and fragments of papyrus in 1896, shortly after the death of his father (Burke, 2006). It was, he thought, a defense against the anguish he experienced at the loss (Maries, 2002): a “game of substitution, in which the objects involved . . . were ‘erotic equivalents,’ items of conquest and desire offering relief, love tokens designed to soothe and heal” (Masson, 1985, p. 110). He had been quite overwhelmed by grief over the death of his father and recalled that it led him into a deep, prolonged period of mourning that was, nevertheless, highly productive (Masson, 1985). It was about this time that Freud first drafted what was the precursor of his deceptively short study, “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917). This essay represented a shift in Freud’s thinking: here he argued persuasively that depression resembles mourning in a number of ways. In both there is a sense in which something had been lost, which leaves the person feeling uprooted.

### The cult of the dead

Early Greek religious activity, Assmann notes, was centered on the tombs of heroes and altars erected there (Wright, 1982).<sup>5</sup> At least from the early seventh century BCE, myths were preserved in the form of iconographic relief, and legends already formed parts of ritualized repetition or liturgy (Coldstream, 1976). For the archaic period (800–500 BCE), we are reliant on Solon’s legislation, which forbade ostentatious funerals, and on iconographic evidence (Boardman, 1955). The body of the deceased was to be laid out in the house so that friends and family could pay their last respects (the *prothesis*), with the burial taking place before sunrise the following day (Humphreys, 1980). The excessive expression of grief was proscribed; women under sixty were not admitted to the *prothesis* or the funeral, unless closely related to the deceased, and were not allowed to lacerate themselves or wail (*kakēchēin*). It was forbidden for anyone to lament for anyone other than the

and nobody was permitted to visit the tombs of non kin, except at the funeral (Ahlberg, 1971). Men and women cut their hair and even the horses had their manes cut as a sign of mourning.

But by the third century BCE, the law of Gambreion suggests that speeches and sacrifices had become more common place both at cremations and at burials, and the friends and relatives of the deceased heaped earth up over the grave and burned offerings nearby (Humphreys, 1980). Now tombs were often grouped in small family enclosures normally holding two to ten graves, and it was common for family members to visit these tomb enclosures (Assmann, this volume). Commemoration was stratified by the Archaic period, and mounds and monuments indicated that those buried there belonged to the elite. The introduction of state funerals for those who had died in battle brought about a change; from then on, monuments and tombs commemorated the domestic virtues of the ordinary citizen. The funeral would end with a feast in the house of the heir and further commemorations were held on the ninth and thirtieth day after death, as well as monthly and annually.

Christians in antiquity largely continued these customs including the *dispositio* in a sepulchre (Adnès, 1980). Certainly there is evidence that from an early date in the post–New Testament period, the bodies of martyrs were venerated. Moreover, the dead were honored by a memorial service (Grigoire & Orgels, 1951), and from very early on in the Christian era, scenes showing Christ’s miracles of healing appeared on sarcophagi as symbols of spiritual healing, a practice that continued in Europe into the early medieval period (Brown, 2000).

Subterranean burial is known to have been practiced in the early Church in North Africa and Asia Minor as well as in Rome where we find the most famous and largest of the catacombs. These were built outside the city and some forty survive to the northeast and to the south. Bodies were set in *loculi* or, for the more important members of the community, in *arcosolia* set into the walls of labyrinthine chambers. We know that the eucharistic liturgy was celebrated on these tombs on the anniversaries of the deaths of the martyrs, at least from the fourth century. Indeed, as Assmann notices, one of the earliest words used to describe the eucharist was *anamnēsis* (“remembrance,” or “memorial”); Cabrol, 1924). Writing to Aurelius in Epistle 22, Augustine describes the deeply rooted African custom of holding banquets for the dead (Solignac, 1996). These *laetitiae*, as they were traditionally known, took place on the *natalitia* (“birthday”) of the martyrdom (Quasten, 1940). Augustine defended the practice of honoring the relics of the martyrs while forbidding feasting at the tombs of the dead (Lancel, 1997); however, grave inscriptions and piles of wine amphorae scattered among graves indicate that these reforms went unnoticed elsewhere (Février, 1977). Early Christian cemeteries in Syria arose because the faithful had chosen to be buried close to the tombs of the early martyrs; they became places of deep veneration and were

they felt they came in contact with their departed relatives, as Assmann describes for the ancient Egyptians.

Christian monasticism, from the fourth to sixth centuries, flourished in an immunity to absence. That is to say, in its hagiographical lexis, the motif of remembrance (*anamnēsis*) was closely interwoven with its development. This is illustrated in the myth of the desert (*erēnos*) – not so much a matter of geography but a trope for a certain kind of distancing and withdrawal from social relationships, particularly marriage (Goehring, 1993). As many of the sources show, absences or silences were embedded in a layered mythology about the past to which its apologists already looked back nostalgically.

We know little of the burial customs of the monks, as the literary and archaeological evidence is limited. But in Egypt, mummification was probably only abandoned gradually (Dumand, 2007). To preserve the body it was sometimes wrapped up in sheets with handfuls of coarse salt and juniper berries placed between the legs and over the trunk. In some of the graves, the bodies were covered with palm matting (Walters, 1974). Most of the inscriptions found at Kellia in Egypt commemorate deceased monks: the term used to describe them is *makarios* (blessed). These inscriptions give the names of the departed monks; their ecclesiastical rank and title, indicating their position within the hermitage; the name of the village or province from which they came; and the date of their death (Guillaumont & Daumas, 1969). The monks kept registers of deaths meticulously, and liturgical remembrances of the departed were common in monasteries (Brown, 1982). And in addition to liturgical and formalized memorials of the dead, individual monks also prayed privately in the tombs of departed members of their community. Thus, the monks continued customs far older than the advent of Christianity, surrounding themselves by the traces of absence. In so doing, the dead could, indeed, be said to haunt the living (de Certeau, 1987).

### The topography of emptiness

As its Latin root indicates, architectural monuments honoring the dead are there to remind us of absence. They are, quite literally, a memorial (*monumentum*) to what has been erased. Architecture articulates this within a distinctive discourse of spatiality that characterizes the lost object. Walls, towers, and roofs wrap around an interior emptiness, creating containment (Ochsner, this volume). Boundaries establish an inside and make possible the bringing-in and preserving and the being in relation to what is, or is commemorated, within. But at the same time, like the sacred space that primitive man delineated with a circle of stones, the architectural space associated with the dead also intimates transcendence, a beyond (Elhade, 1959; also Konstan, this volume). This is what Le Corbusier (1948) famously described as “ineffable space” (p. 9) – or, as Sono (this volume) calls it, a “space for mystery,” with its emphasis on silence. In other words, the

Incubation, or pitching a tent on the graves of departed heroes, was known to have been common among Arab peoples, as well as among the Greeks where it was primarily associated with the cult of Asklepios (Dodds, 1951). This was done for therapeutic reasons, and it has been suggested that this may in some way have foreshadowed psychoanalysis (Meier, 1949; 1989). It was also not uncommon for relatives to have spent some considerable time living in the tomb of departed kin. Kavvadias (1891) argued that in the sanctuaries of Asklepios in the fifth to fourth century BCE, there was practically no medicine or therapy, properly speaking. The cures, he thought, were simply miraculous. However, Lefort (1906) positioned the practice of incubation, as it is found in its later stage, within the discourse of divination. While the link between healing and divination is well attested throughout antiquity, both from the literary and epigraphic evidence, the conflation of the roles of healer (*iattros*) and seer (*mantis*) into *iatronantis* does not appear before Aeschylus (Parker, 1983).

The practice of sleeping in tombs was continued by Christians, and there are examples in the Coptic passions of cures resulting from Christian incubation (Deubner, 1900). The fifth century historian, Theodoret of Cyrillus, tells his readers of a Syrian monk named Peter, who spent his time in a tomb (Theod. *Rel. Hist.* IX:3). This tomb had an upper story and a balcony to which a ladder was attached to admit those who wanted to see him. He remained there for many years. Zeno, a former civil servant, settled in an inaccessible tomb on Mount Sipylos (Theod. *Rel. Hist.* XIII:2). From both Greek and Latin inscriptions, we know that one of the biggest monastic ruins in Northern Mesopotamia was originally a large second century tomb belonging to a local dignitary (Sachau, 1882). When Epiphanius was a young monk, he slept on one of the benches facing the grave of the five Syrian saints who had founded his monastery. In Armenia, too, we find examples of monks founding monasteries near cemeteries; this may have in part been to guard the resting places of their ascetic predecessors. At times the overlap between tomb and cell could be dramatic. Theodosius instructed each of his first disciples to prepare a *nitēion*, which was to be used, initially, as living quarters. These single cells or alcoves could quickly be converted into tombs when their inhabitants died (Hirschfeld, 1992).

In Egypt, the spiritual biography of Antony provided an ideal pattern of monastic life in the early Church. It set out to be an inspiration for others, and here we see the saint, at a key moment in his ascetic journey, lying half dead on the floor of a tomb. There is clear evidence throughout Egypt that monks preferred to adapt and reuse pharaonic tombs and mortuaries at Deir el-Bahri rather than live in former temples (Brooks Hedstrom, 2007). It is unlikely that this was mere practicality as the monks were often adept architects and builders and erected well-designed, solid, and sophisticated residences (Halkin, 1932). That the tomb or cemetery seems to have been thought an ideal place for a monk to live has largely been overlooked, but it is worthy of attention for it illustrates the importance of the cult of the dead

There are interesting parallels to be made here with non-Christian forms of monastic life. For the tantric ascetics living on the famous cremation ground at Tarapith in West Bengal, the factor of place is of great importance for *sādhana* (ritual practices). The sadhus who build their huts on the cremation ground are living above the remains of previous sadhus whose powers filter up to them through the earth (see also Assmann's discussion of the Aboriginal "songlines").

But it would be too narrow to see this as the worship of relics. The sadhus who used to live there, the events that once happened there continue to inhabit the soil, the trees, the atmosphere, the very ambience of a particular spot and give to it its defining qualities. The repetition (*japa*) of a given mantra may be successful in one place, and unsuccessful in another. Only when its vibration coincides with the goddess in her auditory form does she appear to the adept in a vision of light, who becomes thereby a perfected being (*siddha purusa*).<sup>6</sup>

[Candlie, 2013, p. 91]

## Conclusion

The task of psychoanalysis has been described as reminding the patient that what is most essential has always already been forgotten (Lukacher, 1986). Freud had, of course, initially elaborated the concept of repression (*Verdrängung*) through an investigation of forgetfulness as he encountered it in patients suffering from amnesia (Breuer & Freud, 1893–1895). The conflict between forgetting – an action directed against the past (a loss) – and the mnemonic trace, the return of the repressed, is staged in the arena of memory (de Certeau, 1987).

We see this clearly in Cicero's *De amicitia*, which – as Konstan shows in his detailed exegesis – is a treatise about friendship, permeated with absence. The literary context behind this text includes not just Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, on which Cicero overtly draws (*De amicitia* 62), but also, according to the testimony of Diogenes Laertius, a lost work by Theophrastus. While writing about many expressions of grief (*maestitia*), mourning (*maestus*), funeral rites, and questions concerning the immortality of the soul, he mentions – in the first paragraph – the death of his father, and this is followed by frequent references to the deaths of Africanus, of Cato, and of Scipio, particularly in the first four sections of the work. He even mentions the death of Cato's son. Yet as Konstan demonstrates, Cicero's overwhelming grief over the untimely death of his only daughter just eighteen months earlier is apparently unconscious and unnamed. As he entered life before her, so had he expected to leave it before her (*De amicitia* 15), and somehow, despite his conscious wish to elaborate his thoughts on present friendship, his writing is constructed in relation to this loss. As she is

it is disavowed. Thus the text articulates this lack via its enactment – much the same way the Staten Island Memorial commemorates the absence that it frames, and thus symbolizes.

In these studies we see the emergence of a symbolic network of interwoven sets of binary oppositions – past and present, forgetting and remembering, self and Other, pleasure and pain – which permeate the trope of absence (Vecchio, 1994). All of these resonate with the remembrance of death (Assmann, this volume). For the hidden basis of our individual yet shared history – our unconscious, in other words (Lacan, 2006) – is our finitude. In the context of religious responses to death, sickness, dying, and the care of the dead, absence is made present in the relationship between death rituals, and memorials, and the sacred spaces of the hospital, tomb, cemetery, mausoleum, and cenotaph, all of which function ambiguously both as a marker of alterity (*l'Autre*) and of a transcendence. As such, absence is experienced enigmatically as a presence (Lévinas, 1991).

Yet while disclosing death, structures of remembrance bear a double signification, simultaneously camouflaging and veiling absence. That is to say, they reinforce a discourse in which death is an unthinkable and unnameable "elsewhere" (de Certeau, 1988). It is others who have died, their deaths existing in the past, and our own death becomes, right to the very end, something in the future, rather than a simultaneous aspect of present experience. Consequently, when not the object of historical research, the collective structures of remembrance – rituals (funerary and burial rites), monuments and archives (tombs, museums), and texts and inscriptions (necrologies, martyrologies) – often amount to no more than anachronistic dialects and antiquated quasireligious liturgies, empty of the faith that once inhabited them.

Excluded from and repressed by rites of remembrance, death is inscribed almost exclusively within the metaphors of psychoanalysis, where it takes refuge. The clinical encounter with the responses to loss (grief, weeping, depression, anger) reveals the extent to which our experience of life is articulated, precisely, "on the position of the subject with respect to death" (de Certeau, 1988, p. 192).

## Notes

- 1 Lacan distinguishes between *remémoration* (recollection) and *mémoration* (remembering), which he considers symbolic processes, and *réminiscence* (reminiscence) which he considers imaginary.
- 2 Freud adopted the term *Spaltung* following Janet, but linked it to repression rather than seeing it simply as an incapacity for synthesis. On the background to the term discordance and its introduction into French psychiatry in 1912 by P. Chaslin, see the erudite study by Lanéris-Laura and Gros (1992), who demonstrate the origin of the term in Augustine's concept of *discordia*.
- 3 Stolic authors saw melancholia either as a form of insanity (mania) or as something that was often accompanied by insanity. For a discussion of the diagnosis of depression in antiquity,

- 4 Some modern commentators have been keen to emphasize the differences between *akētia* and depression, but their arguments tend to be based on medieval Latin texts, which are heavily reliant on Cassian's translation of *akētia* as *tristitia*.
- 5 The excavations of prehistoric tombs at Prosymna show frequent Late Geometric deposits indicating hero or ancestor worship. In fact, there is evidence of continuous and intentional hero or ancestor worship from the end of the Mycenaean era through the Dark Age.
- 6 *Siddha* literally means boiled but is used metaphorically in the sense of perfected. A *siddhi* is a magical power.

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