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Working on the thresholds of memory and silence: reflections on the praxis of the Legacies of Apartheid Wars Project

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Just as stories about the past are constructed in particular ways, so too are silences about historical events. Silences about what happened in the past are catalysed by a range of factors including expedience, fear, perceptions of threat, a need to protect, political amnesia, trauma and moral injury. Historical silences are constructed within social spaces and in people's own accounts of their personal histories and identities. Silences are thus both personal and relational constructs that do not remain static, but rather shift and evolve, and can be disrupted. This article reflects on work conducted by the Legacies of Apartheid Wars Project between 2012 and 2014 at Rhodes University. The aim of these reflections is to explore the theoretical implications of work that sought to intervene in realms of silence and constrained memory, and invite public dialogical engagements with the past. The aim of these engagements was to acknowledge the complexities of apartheid's legacies and some of the silences enfolded in those complexities, cognisant of the dynamic relationship between speaking and silence in how work of this nature engages with contested political, social and cultural terrains. The work of the Legacies of Apartheid Wars Project could, therefore, be said to comprise memory activism in the midst of ongoing contestation regarding how to make meaning of both the past and the present in the Southern African context.

The Legacies of Apartheid Wars Project (LAWs Project) was established to acknowledge the ongoing effects of apartheid-era wars for those who were caught up in this period of history.[1] Its work could be described as a form of memory activism (Ben-Ze'ev et al. 2010: 8), in which spaces for compassionate acknowledgement of contested and sometimes silenced accounts of the past and their contemporary legacies were facilitated and encouraged. The LAWs Project's particular form of memory activism used the concept of compassionate conversations between people from different sides of this history as a mechanism to invite contrasting, sometimes conflicting, accounts and perspectives on the past's relationship with the present. In doing so, the intention was to shift the '*laagered*' ways, in which this history has often been described and analysed (Edlmann 2012), and to disrupt pervasive apartheid-era notions of othering that have continued to pervade South African understandings of this history.

As the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission's work has demonstrated, attempts to acknowledge events of the past have the potential to address injustices and to allow for acknowledgement and healing.[2] However, there is also a shadow side to work of this nature, particularly in how representations and narratives become ossified and universalised. Inevitably, revelations and acknowledgements of some aspects of the past potentially create new realms of silence. Memory activism works in complex personal, social, cultural and political terrains, in which the outcomes of well-intentioned initiatives cannot be certain. This is partly because of the way in which work of this nature sits on the cusp of memories that can and cannot be spoken.

The reasons for, and roles of social and personal silences, therefore, need to be considered when creating narrative-based spaces for compassionate conversations, as does the wisdom and appropriateness of assuming that shifting and breaking silences is always helpful in work of this nature.

1 The term 'apartheid-era wars' warrants some clarification. The term was developed during the consultations that gave rise to the establishment of the LAWs Project. The intention behind the term was to highlight the scale and levels of violence with which the Project's work would be engaging. The extent to which the violence of the apartheid era in Southern Africa can justifiably be called a 'war' has been the subject of some contestation. However, given the name, positioning and ethos of the LAWs Project for the short period that it was in existence, the terminology of the Project's work will be used for the purposes of this article.

2 Some publications that reflect on the complex legacies of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission include Villa-Vicencio & Verwoerd (eds) 2000, James & Van De Vijver (eds) 2001, Posel & Simpson (eds) 2002, Bethlehem 2010.

Silences about the legacies of violence and war are as complex as the histories they cannot name. They are precipitated by a complex array of dynamics, which might include expedience, fear, perceptions of threat, a need to protect, political amnesia, trauma, and moral injury. These silences need to be understood as both personal and social, each shaping and being shaped by the other. They are constructs that do not remain static, but rather shift and evolve, and can be disrupted or shifted over time. The work of the LAWs Project was established to provide spaces in which silences could shift and be disrupted, where appropriate, through compassionate conversations and dialogical approaches.

This article will outline the origins of the LAWs Project and provide some examples of its work. The emerging praxis of the Project's methods will then be outlined by reflecting on theoretical framings of narrative work, memory fields, trauma and moral injury as they relate to the memory activism undertaken by the LAWs Project.

1. Background to the Legacies of Apartheid Wars Project

The Project was established in 2011 in response to growing public debate about the current implications of apartheid-era conflicts.

The two primary catalysts for this initiative were the 2009 End Conscription Campaign's 25th anniversary celebrations (ECC25) and Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town Thabo Makgoba's public call in 2010 to address the dehumanising effects of conscription. Silences that had surrounded the complexities and unacknowledged legacies of South African Defence Force (SADF) conscripts' experiences were, therefore, the starting point of the Project's work.

A series of consultative engagements provided both the organisational framework and the key focus areas of the project, which began its work in 2012. A key issue, which became something of a conceptual pivot for the operation of the organisation's work, was the fact that addressing the silences surrounding the legacies of conscription could only be achieved in the context of addressing related silences and legacies. Making sense of any one aspect of the apartheid wars required making sense of the broader social and political context of which conscription was a part. The consultations highlighted the necessity of embracing the contested and often contrasting ways in which those caught up in the conflicts of the apartheid era accounted for what happened in the past and their legacies in post-apartheid South Africa. Shifting silences about conscription, therefore, also required shifting silences about who else conscripts shared their history and

context with. This could be described as shifting the memory fields within which the legacies of the apartheid wars are narrated.[3]

In realising these aims, certain key principles emerged:

- This work used a narrative-based approach in understanding the relationships between the past and the present, i.e. that stories are important as ways of understanding how people perceive themselves, their past and the contemporary world in which they live.
- The focus of the work was twofold: first, shifting silences and, secondly, inviting conversations between people who held different views and experiences of history and its legacies, documenting the outcomes of these conversations and researching their effect.
- A rigorous engagement with the legacies of the apartheid wars required that the work shift beyond being only a South African conversation. The Project's frame of reference, therefore, expanded to include Southern Africa, particularly Namibia.

Activities undertaken during the life of the Project included facilitated public dialogues, seminars, a conference in 2013, the development of photographic and video works that enabled dialogue, and the publication of texts that constituted juxtapositions and interactions between different views and perspectives. There was a strong oral history component to this work, in the sense that people's accounts of what happened in the past and how those experiences have influenced their later lives, were the primary focus.[4] The accuracy or veracity of what people said was never questioned. The emphasis was rather on creating as safe a space as possible for contrasting histories to be heard, using diverse cultural approaches to storytelling and conversations, and emphasising a practice of listening-based dialogue rather than debate.

The following section of this article outlines three examples of work in which the LAWs Project was involved. This will be followed by a discussion of the narrative approaches that informed these cases.

3 The term 'memory fields' draws on Lomsky-Feder's (2004, 2009) research with Israeli conscripts.

4 For a useful discussion of the role of oral history within memory work related to contested histories, see Hodgkin & Radstone 2003.

2. Memory activism and constructions of silence

2.1 SADF conscripts

The layers of silence that have shaped both conscripts' experiences of their service in the South African Defence Force (SADF)[5] and the legacies of these experiences have been increasingly acknowledged in recent times.[6]

Recognising and creating space for articulations of the complexities of conscripts' experiences as both agents and victims of the apartheid system was a key dimension of the LAWs Project's work. However, from its inception, the LAWs Project worked to shift the "discursive *laagers*" that have shaped much recent engagement with the legacies of conscription (Edlmann 2012). One of the key consequences of the constrained memory fields that have shaped both conscripts' memoirs and research about conscription has been a silence about the positioning and narratives of people who were perceived as the "enemy" of the SADF. The experiences of people who fought against the apartheid state and the SADF, in particular, are often obfuscated in this literature – and yet their lives were equally intensely shaped by the same conflicts in which conscripts took part.

University of the Western Cape academic, Patricia Hayes, made an important statement in this regard in *Bush of ghosts*, which she co-authored with John Liebenberg:

> In recent memoirs and war accounts, whether Afrikaans or English, the Border War is a concept – even a trigger – that usually opens a space for self-referentiality, whether individual or collective. These accounts constitute a genre, with its own borders. One could argue that behind this trend is an even bigger structural and ideological state failure in South Africa to acknowledge both colonisation and decolonisation. While many former conscripts remember it simply as a time of bonding with their peers, others would like to hold their former government to account for what they saw and did in this "far-off place". Most accounts convey a sense of loss, and of experience that is all but incomprehensible to families and communities back home. But nearly all of them appear to forget that this "white hell" always belonged to someone else, and that the war involved many other

5 These conscripts were part of a system of compulsory national military service imposed on all school-leaving white men by the apartheid state from 1968 until 1994.

6 For further discussion of recent research and literature about conscription, see Edlmann 2014: 162-83.

> people whose lives were deeply marked by their presence over very long years (Liebenberg & Hayes 2010: 11).[7]

While Hayes is referring specifically to the border between Angola and Namibia in this excerpt, her statements are equally true of conscripts' experiences when serving along the racially demarcated borders of South African townships during various states of emergency.

This "self-referentiality" is the norm, but is not universal. Increasingly, there are initiatives in which conscripts are seeking ways to engage with people on "the other side", in order to shift boundaries of understanding and memory-making. Paul Morris's (2014) memoir about his bicycle trip through the battle sites of Angola and his experiences of meeting people, who would have been his enemies during the apartheid era, also represent an important shift in the SADF conscript genre of South African literature.

The LAWs Project has sought to engage in memory activism in challenging how conscripts' memories have been constructed and narrated by facilitating public dialogues between conscripts and those who would have been regarded as their enemies during the apartheid era, including supporting Paul Morris in his journey.

The discursive *laagers* that shape memory-work about the legacies of apartheid-era violence are not unique to conscripts. The following sections of this article provide two other examples of ways in which the LAWs Project sought to support initiatives aimed at shifting lacunae of understanding and listening as part of its memory activism.

2.2 Amabutho of Nelson Mandela Bay

The Amabutho are a self-organised group of activists who were at the forefront of anti-apartheid-related unrest in Port Elizabeth and its surrounds in the 1980s.[8] They were important role players in the consumer boycotts of the time, as well as in activities aimed at targeting alleged collaborators with the apartheid state. Ongoing violent conflicts with the police and the SADF were a regular occurrence during this time.

While they saw themselves as comprising the internal wing of Mkhonto weSizwe (MK), the African National Congress's (ANC) military wing, they never received formal recognition as combatants and, therefore, do not qualify for

7 Liebenberg & Hayes (2010) cite the introduction to Batley's *Secret burden* (2007: 35) with regard to the term 'white hell'.

8 Amabutho means warrior or member of a regiment.

membership of the MK Military Veterans' Association (MVA) (Cherry 2013). In their efforts to obtain recognition, access financial support and seek ways to address the levels of psychological trauma they live with, they have established a membership-based structure called Amabutho of Nelson Mandela Bay.

The LAWs Project partnered with Amabutho members and Nelson Mandela Metropole University's (NMMU) academic and anti-apartheid activist, Janet Cherry, in their efforts to bring to light this lack of acknowledgement. This memory activism was about both supporting Amabutho members themselves and developing an historical record of key role players in events that proved to be important catalysts in the gradual erosion of the National Party's (NP) power in South Africa.

In terms of Amabutho members themselves, these young people of the 1980s, who left school to form part of the anti-apartheid resistance movement feel that they have been silenced and left unacknowledged by the political structures of the ANC, the MK MVA and their communities. This has had financial, social and psychological consequences, as Amabutho do not qualify for sustainable jobs, nor do they receive military pensions. Many members live in poverty as a result.

Secondly, there is a lack of public awareness about historical events that took place in the Eastern Cape, especially during the states of emergency in the 1980s. Members of Amabutho hold unique knowledge about this history, which is only now being recorded and documented.[9]

Finally, Amabutho themselves have identified high levels of trauma as being a significant factor in their lives. This trauma has affected their psychological and social well-being, rendering their experiences difficult to articulate and make sense of. The trauma of the violence they experienced during the 1980s has been compounded by ongoing experiences of violence and crime in recent years, as well as the personal and familial shocks and stresses to which poverty leaves people and communities vulnerable.

The LAWs Project's primary work with Amabutho, in partnership with Janet Cherry, was to support a series of oral history workshops that documented this history. This information was then used as the basis for the production of a video documentary. In addition, a series of dialogues took the form of a discussion with two men who were called up to serve in the SADF, a workshop in which Amabutho members and Wilhelm Verwoerd shared their experiences of the apartheid era and their legacies, and a panel discussion at the 2013 National Arts Festival's Think!Fest, in which Amabutho shared their history with members of the public.

9 For the first time the history of Amabutho of Nelson Mandela Bay was documented, see Cherry 2010.

The work undertaken in the course of this partnership has gone some way towards creating spaces for Amabutho to begin articulating their history and the impact of its violence on their lives. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the acknowledgement this has enabled has been meaningful for members of Amabutho. However, it has not yet played any role in shifting the poverty that many members still endure. While the methods used and work undertaken in this partnership would seem to have played some role in shifting silences about the legacies of apartheid-era violence, the short period of the LAWs Project's existence has been inadequate to see through the possibilities of this partnership. The complexity and intractability of this history and its legacies require far greater reflection and theoretical understanding than has been possible thus far.

2.3 Engaging with experiences and voices of Namibians

Early on in the life of the LAWs Project, a public dialogue was held in Cape Town in which people who had been part of MK, APLA and the SADF shared their experiences.[10] In the discussion that followed the panel members' accounts of their experiences, Christian Williams challenged the LAWs Project about the way in which the experiences and stories of Namibians had not been included in the way the event had been set up.[11] This was an important catalyst for what became an important strategic shift in the Project's life.

Soon afterwards, photographers and artists Christo Doherty and John Liebenberg proposed that the LAWs Project support them to travel to Namibia in order to gather stories and photographic images for what has now become the Mekhonjo! exhibition.[12] The aim of their exhibition was to shift the memory fields within which South Africans and conscripts, in particular, have talked about, and made sense of what is commonly referred to as the Border War. Both Doherty and Liebenberg were conscripted by the apartheid regime, but were choosing through

10 APLA refers to the Azanian People's Liberation Army, the military wing of the Pan Africanist Congress.

11 At the time that he attended this meeting, Williams (2009) was working on his doctoral research into anti-apartheid movements' liberation camps.

12 Christo Doherty, a conscript himself and a lecturer in the University of the Witwatersrand Fine Art Department, held an exhibition in 2011 entitled *BOS*. Doherty used constructed photographs of people, based on images from the media coverage of the time, to explore the effect on the South African national psyche of the apartheid-era border wars. See <http://www.artthrob.co.za/Artists/Christo-Doherty.aspx>. Photographer John Liebenberg is best known for his photographic journalism during the wars in Namibia and Angola, which played an important role in exposing atrocities. He has held numerous exhibitions nationally and internationally. He has also recently co-published a book of his photographs with accompanying text by Hayes. See Liebenberg & Hayes 2010.

this form of memory activism to exercise agency in inviting Namibian voices into South African conversations about the apartheid-era wars.

Doherty and Liebenberg travelled to Namibia in April 2013 to meet with as wide a range of Namibians as possible, listening to their stories and documenting photographic images of the legacies of the apartheid wars in their lives. Thanks to John Liebenberg's courageous photographic work in Namibia during the 1980s, and the extraordinary respect and affection Namibians have for him, a wide range of people, who had at various stages been involved in the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), were willing to be part of this initiative. They included human rights activists, a parliamentarian, a survivor of the SADF attack on Cassinga, and members of the internal wing of SWAPO. The *Mekhonjo!* exhibition formed part of the 2013 National Arts Festival in Grahamstown. Two Namibians were also invited to participate in a panel discussion with John Liebenberg as part of the National Arts Festival's Think!Fest, hosted by the LAWs Project, and to be present for the subsequent LAWs conference.

Both the exhibition and the way in which Namibian voices, spaces and perspectives were woven into the three-day LAWs conference proved a dynamic and galvanising element to the event. Key to the vibrancy and energy of the process was the emotional affect for those present of meeting people who would have been enemies in the past, and hearing their perspective on shared historical events and their legacies. The stories that were told became more than just one person's story – they gained greater traction and perspective when placed alongside very different stories that helped shift silences that had prevailed in previous tellings.

This initiative has faced similar limitations to the LAWs Project's partnership with Amabutho. The brief time period of the Project's work means that both the possibilities and limitations of addressing the paucity of Namibian voices in narrating the legacies of the apartheid wars have not yet been fully realised.

These three examples of memory activism with conscripts, Amabutho and Namibian perspectives provide a very brief sense of the ethos and approach adopted by the LAWs Project in the short time that it has been in existence. The final section of this article will reflect on theoretical framings that have played a role in understanding and articulating the role and nature of silence in this work.

3. Understanding constructions of silence

Dealing with contested histories related to the historical and structural violence of the apartheid era, and engaging in memory activism about the legacies of this

period, inevitably requires understanding, engaging with and recognising the role and place of silence in memory work.

Silences function as constructed spaces in the way in which stories about the past are narrated. Far from being spaces of forgetting, silences are often potent arenas in which experiences, emotions and dynamics that are unsayable, beyond the realm of the spoken, reside (Winter 2010: 4). Sometimes, this is because the challenge of translating and narrating experiences of conflict and violence into language that others will understand is an overwhelming task. Other times, it is because the nature and purposes of silences change over time – especially when there are dramatic political changes such as those South Africa has witnessed in the past twenty years.

In many cases, silences defy claims that talking about experiences will result in healing and positive change. In a context as complex as post-apartheid South Africa, simple assumptions about what is said and what is silenced are inappropriate. This is not least because any one account needs to be understood in context, and in relationship to other potentially conflicting accounts of the same periods of history. Shifting silences is a complex process, because individual stories are both valid in their own right, and bring with them the potential to silence others' voices and stories.

When working in these complex spaces of contested histories that are both personal and relational, narrative psychology – and narrative theory, more broadly – provide some useful conceptual and theoretical scaffolding around which to build memory activism and research.

In developing the ethos and conceptual scaffolding of the LAWs Project, narrative theory has been one of the theoretical frameworks that has enriched and deepened understandings of historical and contemporary accounts of the apartheid-era wars. However, understanding stories as narrations that comprise a process of meaning-making also require engaging with what constrains the telling of those stories. As Edna Lomsky-Feder's work has articulated, these constraints are often as much about the context within which narratives are constructed as they are about individual people who are telling their stories.

3.1 Memory fields and narrative theory

In outlining how accounts of military experiences are both personal and socially constructed, Lomsky-Feder's description of the way in which Israeli conscripts remember and account for their experiences of war applies equally in the South African context:

> The personal memory of war is not homogenous but, rather, multicoloured: Some remember the war as a traumatic experience and others as an heroic event; some recall it as an experience that obstructs personal development, and others as an empowering and fortifying one. War veterans, even from the same social group, remember the war in different ways, but all reminiscences are shaped within a memory field that is socially constructed (Lomsky-Feder 2010: 82).

This social construction of memories is regulated by the cultural models that frame these memories, whether they are traumatic, normalising or heroic, resulting in a level of social control of the meaning given to personal recollections. Accessibility to "models of memory" are determined by what Lomsky-Feder (2004: 83) calls "distributive criteria" that determine what is remembered, and who is entitled to remember. In the context of Lomsky-Feder's work, remembering takes place in mnemonic communities such as families, local communities or among comrades.[13] These communities may be shaped by generational changes or organisational recollections by military structures. Mnemonic communities and the memory fields they construct are also shaped by, but different from what Lomsky-Feder (2004: 84) calls "national memory", which is used in the service of national and political metanarratives and is often hegemonic – although these hegemonies can shift over time.

Thus, Lomsky-Feder argues, a personal account of war requires an individual to "converse" with a range of cultural models in order to create his/her own version. This may require adopting, rejecting or creating alternatives to cultural models and memory fields. A narrator is thus an agent of his/her own story in creating an account of the past that consists of both a unique structuring of experiences, events and meaning, while also being embedded in time, place and culture (Lomsky-Feder 2004: 85). She argues that a soldier's accounts of war are a "cultural text" that weaves personal experiences and the collective representations that constitute the memory fields of a particular war.

When describing their part in a complex history and current socio-political context such as South Africa's, people are constantly mediating different – sometimes conflicting – memory fields, depending on the space, group and context within which stories are being narrated. The adoption of a particular cultural model in how a story is narrated inevitably results in an editing process, with some elements of a story being included and others rendered silent and

13 For some background to the nature and role of cyberspace networks for conscripts, in particular, see Baines 2008. In the Southern African context, the media and online or cyberspace communities should be added to this list.

invisible. Accounts of the legacies of the apartheid wars that may be narrated within the work of the LAWs Project will therefore inevitably be folded, shifting and unpredictable. Each person's contribution to a conversation requires a complex negotiation of both personal imperatives and socio-politically constructed memory fields, resulting in varying and variable elements of a story being brought into the light or hidden within the folds of their narrative at any time.

The implications of this dynamic for narrative-based work are that conversations need to be viewed as a process which can only ever bring some, often partial or fragmented, elements of a person's life and insights to the surface. The richness of bringing different perspectives and subject positions to a conversation is that the tensions and contradictions within a group can help highlight the gaps and hidden aspects of stories, enabling a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of an issue than the memory fields of a more hegemonic group would allow for. Thus, when SADF conscripts', Amabutho or SWAPO members' accounts of their experiences are told alongside each other using dialogical approaches and compassionate conversations, stories enrich, push up against and sometimes contradict each other. Social and personal memory fields specific to each group are shifted amid a reconstructing of previously familiar narratives and framing of events and their legacies.

However, within these stories and processes, there are inevitably events and dimensions to narratives that cannot be spoken. The role of trauma in the way these silences are constructed needs to form part of the theoretical framing and narrative approaches to memory activist work of this nature.

3.2 Silence and trauma

Trauma is an inevitable legacy of violent political and social conflicts such as those that occurred during the apartheid era. It is therefore one of the key issues around which the LAWs Project has needed to build its theoretical scaffolding.

While trauma studies have become a vast and complex field, narrative theorists have developed ways of framing trauma that allow for important insights into the way memories are constructed, and how silences inevitably form part of the narration of memories.

Crossley (2000: 56) describes narrations of experience as usually striving for a degree of coherence, but that trying to describe experiences of trauma can also result in "narrative wreckage", in which the coherence of a person's story and identity become dissipated. Andrews (2007: 12-3) takes narrative theory further in claiming that there are realms of experience for which there are no words or possibilities of narrative coherence. Translating traumatic experience into spoken

word is unattainable, a challenge that needs to be engaged with and understood in work that depends on people's abilities to articulate experience. Understanding silence as part of the way in which a traumatic narrative is constructed provides important insights into the way in which work such as that of the LAWs Project needs to be undertaken. Acknowledging silence within memory activism requires time, space and a level of critical engagement with methods that privilege the spoken word.

As Andrews (2010: 161) points out, the silences in a spoken (or written) narrative are as much part of the narrative as the spoken word; they are a threshold between the spoken word and the "unsayable and unsaid". This challenges ideas about narrative that assume that talking about experiences is always beneficial and will bring closure to traumatic memories. Stories of trauma take place in a permeable space, in which spoken and unspoken dimensions of an experience are constantly being negotiated. Expecting a coherent narrative with a story that has structure in terms of temporality, events, characters and resolution is potentially damaging to the fragile space a speaker or group of people occupies when taking on the role of storyteller. It also ignores the fact that linear time and trauma time are very different. Linear time has a structure, whereas trauma time is constantly in the present (Andrews 2010: 155). However, as Andrew goes on to explain, the "present" of trauma time in personal narrations (and silences) is "locked in the past" and the domain of memories.[14] The historical and current South African context are significantly characterised by violence, meaning that both soldiers and civilians are highly likely to have had potentially traumatic experiences over a period of time, and across generations (Kaminer & Eagle 2010: 48, 49). The sensitivity and complexity of narrating the legacies of this violence need to be constantly borne in mind when listening to people's accounts and stories.

In the South African context, the shifting thresholds of silence that are negotiated in any account of an historical event are complex and convoluted. They are inevitably shaped by a shifting combination of hegemonic and hierarchical memory fields formed by both the colonial and apartheid past and the post-apartheid present. Personal efforts at narrative coherence within any account of the legacies of the past require a negotiation of each person's life story, the contextual positioning of that story within historical and contemporary memory fields, as well as thresholds of personal and socio-political silence that memories of trauma may have induced.

While narrative approaches certainly have the potential to act as a bridge between the private and public worlds (Andrews 2010: 164), the complexities of

14 For more on this issue, see Edkins 2003: 230.

the relationships between silences that represent the ineffable and the process of talking should always be borne in mind in memory activism. There is a risk that attempts at public dialogue using traditional narrative approaches potentially (and unintentionally) compromise efforts to shift silences imposed by violence and trauma, because they require that people speak the unspeakable. Memory activism within the field of trauma enters into both contested and contradictory terrain in which traumatic experiences "defy and demand" witness, while paradoxically remaining inherently latent (Caruth 1996: 5). Sensitivity and a willingness to be led by what a person, group or context defines as being possible are therefore important elements of memory activists' work. Research time frames and work schedules need to remain of secondary consideration.

The contextual and communal nature of trauma also needs to be understood. While her work sits outside of narrative theory, Herman's (2001: 242) statements in this regard are worthy of note:

> In many countries that have recently emerged from dictatorship or civil war, it has become apparent that putting an immediate stop to the violence and attending to basic survival needs of the affected populations are necessary but not sufficient conditions for social healing. In the aftermath of systemic political violence, entire communities can display symptoms of PTSD, trapped in alternating cycles of numbing and intrusion, silence and re-enactment. Recovery requires remembrance and mourning [...] Like traumatised individuals, traumatised countries need to remember, grieve and atone for their wrongs in order to avoid reliving them.

The work of the LAWs Project has been set up as a mechanism to enable spaces for remembering, grieving and atonement. However, as highlighted in this discussion, this is complex work and should remain constantly cognisant of the effects of trauma that those caught up in the apartheid wars continue to live with. This trauma needs to be understood both as traumatic stress and as a form of moral injury.

3.3 Moral injury and moral repair

Moral injury and moral repair are the third form of theoretical scaffolding that informed the work of the LAWs Project. The concept of moral injury has emerged in work relating to the legacies of the American wars in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. First arising in Jonathan Shay's work, it was developed as a way of explaining combat-related trauma that can act as a model for healing for soldiers.

In the opening sections of Achilles in Vietnam, Shay (1994: 6) says the following:

> Any army, ancient or modern, is a social construction defined by shared expectations and values [...] All together, these form a moral world that most of the participants most of the time regard as legitimate, "natural" and personally binding. The moral power of an army is so great that it can motivate men to get up out of a trench and step into enemy machine-gun fire [...] When a leader destroys the legitimacy of the army's moral order by betraying "what's right," he inflicts manifold injuries on his men.

A few years later, in 1981, Marin published an essay called "Living in moral pain", in which he outlines the particularity of military veterans' trauma and the need to "see through" the moral journey they began in Vietnam. What has followed is a wide-ranging field of research and literature, in which understanding the moral dimensions of war is regarded as key to shifting silences imposed by trauma, because it creates space for the subjective moral and psychological process of a military experience. In the context of the LAWs Project, definitions of moral injury were extended to include all those caught up in cycles of violence during the apartheid-era conflicts.

Briefly, current thinking about moral injury is a nexus of three aspects. Firstly, the individual is seen as an agent of the betrayal of their own moral codes through their actions under military orders or in contexts of political violence. Secondly, the overwhelmingly physical and emotional nature of the military or political context in which this betrayal takes place needs to be acknowledged. Thirdly, there is a need to recognise the way in which society fails to provide people with adequate moral "schemas" to deal with experiences of moral injury.

This framework for addressing the legacies of political and military violence resonates with the emerging practice of the LAWs Project in two key ways. First, it provides a mechanism for articulating and addressing the personal choices made while serving in military structures or participating in political activism. This allows for an ownership of stories about the past and the present, and a celebration of narratives of resilience and healing. Secondly, it also provides a more accessible framework for working with trauma than complex diagnoses of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can necessarily provide. This is particularly helpful in work that aims to embrace a diversity of voices, perspectives and interpretations of history, rather than imposing models of understanding that potentially act as hegemonic memory fields, or a form of discursive *laager*.

4. Conclusion

In their book about the post-war silences of the twentieth century, Ben-Ze'ev et al. (2010: 8) explore the ways in which social silences rest in constructed spaces

that sit somewhere between remembering and forgetting. Both silence and speaking are shaped by cultural codes that shift and change over time. When the time comes to disrupt silent spaces, it is possible for people to become "memory agents" in narrating their own experiences and influencing the memory fields that have previously silenced and marginalised them in some way. In acting as memory agents regarding apartheid-era violence, the LAWs Project has used narrative-based, dialogical approaches to facilitate compassionate conversations.

This approach has sought to disrupt the ways in which much public discourse about apartheid-era history ends up conflating and reinforcing discursive *laagers* generated and imposed by the apartheid regime. By bringing together people with contrasting and sometimes conflicting ideas of what their memory activism might achieve, the LAWs Project hopes to promote a form of memory activism that shifts silences in ways that celebrate agency and resilience. While the risks of imposing new silences and reinforcing historical silences is always present in work of this nature, the story of the LAWs Project thus far suggests that these approaches warrant further development. Inviting dissonant and contrasting memories to stand alongside each other gives permission for the complexities of both silences and memories of violence to be embraced, acknowledged and respected.

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