

***Exhuming Passions: The Pressure of the Past in Ireland and Australia* edited by Katie Holmes and Stuart Ward (UWA Publishing, 2011)**

Exhuming Passions is a collection of essays about memory and remembrance in Australia and Ireland as seen comparatively and in a global environment. The collection is based on a series of workshops held in Canberra and Dublin six months apart. Associate Professor Katie Holmes from La Trobe University, Melbourne, and Professor Stuart Ward from the University of Copenhagen were tasked with bringing these workshop papers into essay form to represent chapters in a book. Their introduction to the book offers a rationale for the comparative approach to memory and remembrance in citing Yale University Professor of History Jay Winter's concern for 'the distorting effects of a narrowly national approach' (8). Transnational rather than national studies are more appropriate in a global world.

Comparative studies of any subject matter offer a broader perspective than a single focus and can make for very satisfying reading when they work. One problem with adapting workshop papers to essay form instead of commissioning book chapters from the outset is the variation in the degree of comparison and the need to honour the originating source: the seminar or workshop series, or the conference. The editors of *Exhuming Passions* have worked hard to mitigate this, from inserting frequent comparative references such as 'elsewhere in this volume' to formatting the chapters into two parts with equal numbers of chapters in each. The first part is titled 'Legacies of Loss' and the second 'Legacies of Empire'. The rationale for this division is discussed in Holmes and Ward's introduction when they discuss Winter's theory of the 'memory boom', one of which occurred from the 1880s to the end of the First World War and another from the 1970s. During these times, memories of the Holocaust and the Second World War were related with a new emphasis on trauma, the collective memory, and morality.

First time readers of *Exhuming Passions* are more likely to look for the promised comparative approach and may feel restless if the comparison is not immediately apparent or is spurious or strained. Chapter one's 'It is not possible for history to be truthful...' by Anne Dolan sets out to challenge our judgement about victims of violence with a story about Doris Hunt who seemed to have been traumatised by witnessing her father's murder by IRA 'lads'. He was an officer in the Auxiliary Division of the Royal Irish Constabulary known colloquially as the Black and Tans. This revisionist approach to who is entitled to be called a victim of violence is challenging and stimulating, but the Australian comparison is hardly there other than as a brief mention of the 'history wars'. Chapter four, 'Apologizing to the Stolen Generations', is another one that strains to make a comparison between the apology to the stolen generations in Australia and the Irish Taoiseach's apology for child neglect and abuse in Ireland's industrial schools. The majority of this chapter is about Australia, and the comparative approach is at times tentative, almost an afterthought: 'There is perhaps a parallel here with Ireland' (83). In another setting (and certainly in the original workshop setting) Judith Brett's account of the apology to the stolen generations would be well-received.

More successful is Christina Twomey's 'Wounded Minds: Testifying to Traumatic Events in Ireland and Australia'. Twomey compares Australian survivor testimonies from Japanese prison camps in World War Two and eyewitnesses from Ireland's 'Bloody Sunday' in Derry in 1992. This unlikely comparison is made feasible in the authors' early comment

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that in 'both cases the British Army had not fulfilled its mandate to protect' (36). Australians became prisoners of war because Britain allowed Singapore to fall into enemy hands. Citizens of Derry became victims of the British Army that had been charged with protecting the people of both sides. Although the events are more than fifty years apart, the 'language of trauma' had changed in the latter half of the twentieth century to recognise war survivors as suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

The first chapter of part two (Legacies of Empire) is Roisín Higgins' comparative study of Anzac Day and the Easter Rising celebrations, 'The Changing Fortunes of National Myths'. Higgins points out that both events were military failures but yet defined the respective nations as having developed out of a blood sacrifice. The renewed interest in Anzac Day since the 1980s is compared with the struggle to extricate the Easter Rising celebrations since 1966 from the modern day 'Troubles'. Both events have central male figures with Christian resonances: Simpson and his donkey and Patrick Pearse in after life have become 'emblems for societies that want to promote religion and family life as their bedrock' (151).

Dominic Bryan and Stuart Ward's 'The "Deficit of Remembrance": The Great War Revival in Australia and Ireland' is another comparative study that works well. How World War One celebrations are providing a new and less controversial outlet for Unionist parades in Northern Ireland is nicely compared with Anzac Day celebrations that allow Australians to 'kiss the ground at Gallipoli without watching their backs for signs of indigenous protest' (182). The final chapter of *Exhuming Passions*, John Coakley and Mark McKenna's 'Whatever happened to Republicanism?' Changing Images of the Monarchy in Ireland and Australia', is bookended with anecdotes of statues to Queen Victoria in Ireland and Australia. The authors acknowledge the difficulty in comparing the two countries' colonial experiences which somewhat mitigates contestable claims such as 'Whereas Irish republicans fought to throw off what they defined as British occupations, a great majority of Australians preferred to see themselves as British subjects' (275).

Exhuming Passions has found many points of comparison between Australia and Ireland in how both countries remember past events in the light of existing social and political agendas. It asks such questions as: Whose story is worth remembering? What is the role of the historian? To what extent were the people complicit in state abuse of children? How can art speak for us? How do capital cities tell the national story? It draws on art, literature and the cinema as well as politics, history, and current affairs to make these connections. This comparative approach, although not always successful, is justified by the rich transnational pickings in this volume.

Dymphna Lonergan