

How are displacement, loss and exile reconciled across the generations?

Dislocation, loss and exile can occur globally in a number of ways for a variety of reasons including violence and persecution, development projects, and it can be voluntary. The different ways this is dealt with by groups and individuals depends on the situation they have moved to, rather than just the actual location. For instance an indigenous group who are forcibly resettled in an urban area may have more opportunities open to them, but their old way of life has been disrupted to a very high degree. They may be left landless and without social capital (Turton, 2003), therefore have no way of producing food or maintaining a steady income within social networks. With all the problems caused by moving for all displaced or separated people, it is natural to want to remember the past.

According to Paul Connerton in 'How Societies Remember' (1989), there are four main ways in which people make up for separation or dislocation; commemorative ceremonies, sites or object of memory, pilgrimage, and cultural performances. Throughout this essay I will be EXAMINING how these reconciliation techniques are used and their meanings using texts on Alltown in Lancashire, and particularly Scotland, as well as my own personal experiences.

Acts of commemoration, such as Remembrance Day or The Royal Coronation ceremonies, are used as a way for a group to remember past events and people, Paul Connerton (1989) argues that through such commemorative ceremonies 'a community is reminded of its identity'. Without Remembrance Day, it would be easy for future generations to forget the sacrifices made by those in the army and civilians at the time of the First World War and how it has had an effect on their lives. The respect shown to members in the armed forces and civilians who were lost during the war is seen as a way to reconcile the past, to make sure the people who lost their lives are repaid being remembered by generations after them.

Religious ceremonies, although not focused on specifically on commemorating, do act as a way of remembering the past. This is particularly true of religious ceremonies conducted outside where they originated, such as an Indian wedding taking place in London. The ways of conducting an Indian wedding have effectively been passed down the generations by Indians who were displaced from their homeland. The clothes, decorations, the structure and order of events are a means to hold on to a culture they have left behind.

Sites and objects of memory, including museums, buildings, landscapes, towns etc. are a common way to reconcile separation from where a person believes they belong. As with acts of commemoration, sites and objects of memory often revolve around religion, particularly religious buildings and symbols. One such example of a site of memory is Museum Africa in Johannesburg, which seeks to research, preserve and celebrate the history of Africa and its people. The museum presents an image of 'cultural history' in Africa, with which generations of Africans who may have never truly experienced their roots can identify and understand.

Jeanette Edwards (1998) writes about the people of Alltown in her article 'The need for a 'bit of history'', in which she describes how the people of Alltown have had their community disrupted and challenged by emigration of young locals and immigration

of middle-class commuters, but have maintained a sense of belonging through 'The Alltown Natural History Society', or the Nat, which was founded in 1873 and houses collections of objects from Alltown's past.

The town, rather than being preserved as it is, is being planned and developed to recreate its past image of the Victorian era. This reflects the residents' desire to conserve Alltown on an aesthetic level where it is not possible to stop the people changing as a result of in-migration and out-migration, and subsequent social change within the town. Heritage sites such as the old cotton mill are highly valued and are associated with 'good times', whereas in reality it was likely workers in the mill were under very poor conditions with low wages. In this way, the residents who see themselves as 'Alltown born and bred' may be 'romanticising' the past rather than giving a realistic account.

Similarly, the reconstruction of Tajikistan, following the civil war that ended in June 1979, included the idea of building areas to reflect the past. Although in this case the building was as a result of damage rather than development. A number of museums have also been created as 'shrines for culture', containing paintings and objects depicting Tajik culture and society (Gross, 2005).

An article about Scottish migration, *Hunting Down Home*, by Paul Basu (2001), explains some of the reasons people of Scottish descent feel they have to visit Scotland even generations ahead of the individual to have experienced the move. Part of his explanation includes the idea that a person may want to 'search for the self among the sites of memory'. He then goes on to point out that this is an example of the typical individualistic culture of the West, which is characterised by a 'preoccupation with the self, knowing oneself, understanding oneself, improving oneself, discovering 'the truth' of oneself, testing oneself', or in other words, a concern with reconciling the loss of their past.

I think one of the most interesting things brought up in the article, and which I can identify with, is that not only do the people who have migrated from Scotland feel drawn towards their homeland, but also their future relatives who have never been to Scotland themselves. Being quarter Greek Cypriot, but never having visited Cyprus, I experience an appeal to, and interest in Cyprus in much the same way that the Scottish people described in Basu's (2001) article experience the need to go to Scotland. However, I have never been part of anything considered 'Greek', I don't speak the language and have never been inside an Orthodox Church, and as a result I feel the phrase 'you can't miss what you never had' reflects my view on how I think about Cyprus – even though I would like to go at some point in my life, I don't feel it is essential in order to me to understand my identity. Because of my personal experiences involving the idea of revisiting my 'homeland' country, I initially thought Basu's article used exaggerated examples of people who felt drawn to Scotland far more than the average person of Scottish descent. But having thought about the people I know whose family has been dislocated in the past, I realise that most people feel a far stronger connection to their 'homeland' than myself.

Another method of reconciliation is creativity through cultural performances, music, song, poetry and dance. Thinking of commemorative creativity, particularly poetry, I am reminded of the poem 'Island Man' by Grace Nichols, who was born in Guyana

but moved to Britain at the age of 27. Many of her poems are characterised by her use of Guyanese rhythms and culture, but 'Island Man' in particular emphasises the differences between Guyana (in the first half of the poem) and London (in the second). She talks of how the 'island' man in the poem imagines being back in his 'small emerald island' and then 'groggily' comes back to the vision of London. Overall, the poem is about Nichols leaving a native land in search of a better life, but struggling with the sense of disconnection and trying to somehow reconcile her loss through writing about her past life in the Caribbean.

Basu (2001) talks about how some places in the 'United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are ironically described as 'more Scottish than Scotland' because Scottish cultural traditions including highland dance, language and music survived in some of these areas, whereas in Scottish Highlands, where these traditions first originated, they had died out for a period of time. An explanation of this could be that Scots residing in their homeland do not feel the need to maintain traditions in the same way as displaced Scots as they are surrounded by reminders of their heritage in Scotland. Scots living outside Scotland, for example in Nova Scotia on the east Canadian coast, continued to practice the traditions to preserve their connection to the homeland, with which they could only otherwise connect to with 'imagined' memories and knowledge.

One method of remembering the past that Paul Connerton doesn't include is tracing family trees and general ancestry research. In an article about ancestry in Alltown, Jeanette Edwards (2009) points out that researching family history has become a 'new national obsession', made obvious by the amount of media concentrated on this area. I believe this is largely down to the ease of finding out information on the past using the internet, better technology and communication. People are able to realise their past and define their own identity without having to visit the places their ancestors came from.

This year, the Scottish government launched 'Homecoming Scotland' as a way to encourage people of Scottish descent back to Scotland to celebrate their heritage through a number of festivals and events in various towns and cities in Scotland, including Edinburgh, Glasgow and St Andrews. The project serves as a good example of how dislocation, loss, and particularly exile in the case of the Scots, are reconciled through the generations. Events held were effectively acts of commemoration, such as the *Sonet Lumiere* at the St Andrews cathedral, which showed a story of St Andrews' past, focusing on the fishing trade which started around in 1400. The landscape of Scotland itself is considered a site of memory, the highlands, Arthurs Seat and Edinburgh Castle are a few examples, along with the various museums and libraries full of artefacts and documents pertaining to Scottish heritage. A number of cultural performances including highland dances and bagpipes performances were organised throughout the homecoming project with the aim to reconnect and welcome people back with traditions they may not be aware of or have not seen. The events were successful in encouraging re-visiting, and were successful in welcoming back a number of Scots from around the world as well as renewing the memories of those who never left.

In conclusion, the methods of reconciliation used globally mainly seek to conserve memories of the past, both in actual objects and buildings etc., as well as physically

going to their homeland, but also through less visible methods; stories, music and traditions. Although it may be most important for dislocated or exiled individuals to keep a sense of their rootedness in the homeland, remembrance of the past is also plays a significant role in individuals who have not moved and who aim to keep their identity intact despite changes within the society they live in.

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