NOTHING EVER DIES

Vietnam and the Memory of War

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Prologue

I WAS BORN IN VIETNAM but made in America. I count myself among those Vietnamese dismayed by America's deeds but tempted to believe in its words. I also count myself among those Americans who often do not know what to make of Vietnam and want to know what to make of it. Americans, as well as many people the world over, tend to mistake Vietnam with the war named in its honor, or dishonor as the case may be. This confusion has no doubt led to some of my own uncertainty about what it means to be a man with two countries, as well as the inheritor of two revolutions.

I have spent much of my life sorting through this confusion, both my own and that of the world, and the most succinct explanation that I have found about the meaning of the war, at least for Americans, comes from Martin Luther King Jr. "If America's soul becomes totally poisoned," he said, "part of the autopsy must read 'Vietnam.' "[1] Americans mostly know King for his dream, but this is his prophecy, and it continues in this manner: "The war in Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit. If we ignore this sobering reality, we will find ourselves organizing 'clergy and laymen concerned' committees for the next generation. They

will be concerned about Guatemala and Peru. They will be concerned about Thailand and Cambodia. They will be concerned about Mozambique and South Africa. We will be marching for these and a dozen other names and attending rallies without end, unless there is a significant and profound change in American life."[2] Exactly one year after uttering these words, he was assassinated.

He did not mention Iraq and Afghanistan, but since his speech, many Americans have raised the relationship between the conflicts there and the war in Vietnam.[3] Even though Vietnam is neither Iraq nor Afghanistan, the analogy keeps returning for Americans. This invocation of Vietnam as quagmire, syndrome, and war speaks neither to Vietnamese reality nor to current difficulties in Iraq and Afghanistan. It speaks to American fear. Americans think defeat in these wars is the worst thing, when winning in Iraq and Afghanistan today only means more of the same tomorrow: Somalia, Pakistan, Yemen, and so on. This is the most important reason for Americans to remember what they call the Vietnam War, the fact that it was one conflict in a long line of horrific wars that came before it and after it. This war's identity—and, indeed, any war's identity—cannot be extricated from the identity of war itself.

For King, "the problem of racism, the problem of economic exploitation, and the problem of war are all tied together."[4] His prophecy does not always roll off the tongue. The language is only occasionally biblical, never uplifting. He asks us not to turn our eyes up to the mountaintop but down to the plain, the factory, the field, the ghetto, the unemployment line, the draft board, the rice paddy, the lotus blossoming in a pond of mud, the Vietnamese landscape that even American soldiers called beautiful, and America, what the Vietnamese call the beautiful country. These are the places where memories of war belong. Most troublesome is the memory of how it was a war that took place not only over there but also over here, because a war is not just about the shooting but about the people who make the bullets and deliver the bullets and, perhaps most importantly,

pay for the bullets, the distracted citizenry complicit in what King calls the "brutal solidarity" of white brother and black.[5]

Although King refers to America, he may as well be gesturing to Vietnam, both revolutionary countries which have not lived up to their revolutions. While the America that was a city upon a hill now exists mostly as a sentimental fantasy, even wartime Vietnam seems far away. This was the country of which the revolutionary Che Guevara could say, "How close and bright would the future appear if two, three, many Vietnams flowered on the face of the globe."[6] He was speaking of the way that the Vietnamese war against American occupation had inspired hope among those who dreamed of liberation and independence in the Americas, Africa, and Asia. Today the Vietnamese and American revolutions manufacture memories only to absolve the hardening of their arteries. For those of us who consider ourselves to be inheritors of one or both of these revolutions, or who have been influenced by them in some way, we have to know how we make memories and how we forget them so that we can beat their hearts back to life. That is the project, or at least the hope, of this book.

Just Memory

THIS IS A BOOK on war, memory, and identity. It proceeds from the idea that all wars are fought twice, the first time on the battlefield, the second time in memory. Any war could prove this claim, but the one that serves personally as a metonym for the problem of war and memory is what some call the Vietnam War and others call the American War. These conflicting names indicate how this war suffers from an identity crisis, by the question of how it shall be known and remembered. The pairing of war and memory is commonplace after the disasters of the twentieth century, with tens of millions of dead who seem to cry out for commemoration, for consecration, and even, if one believes in ghosts, for consolation.[1] The problem of war and memory is therefore first and foremost about how to remember the dead, who cannot speak for themselves. Their unnerving silence compels the living—tainted, perhaps, by a touch or more of survivor's guilt—to speak for them.

Inseparable from this grim and mournful history are more complicated questions. How do we remember the living and what they did during times of war? How do we remember the nation and the people for whom the dead supposedly died? And how do we re-

member war itself, both war in general and the particular war that has shaped us? These questions gesture at how new wars cannot be fought unless a nation has dealt with its old wars, however imperfectly or incompletely. The problem of how to remember war is central to the identity of the nation, itself almost always founded on the violent conquest of territory and the subjugation of people.[2] For citizens, garlands of euphemism and a fog of glorious myth shroud this bloody past. The battles that shaped the nation are most often remembered by the citizenry as defending the country, usually in the service of peace, justice, freedom, or other noble ideas. Dressed in this way, the wars of the past justify the wars of the present for which the citizen is willing to fight or at least pay taxes, wave flags, cast votes, and carry forth all the duties and rituals that affirm her or his identity as being one with the nation's.

There is another identity involved as well, the identity of war, "the genesis of a nation's soul," as novelist Bob Shacochis puts it.[3] Each war has a distinct identity, a face with carefully drawn features, familiar at a glance to the nation's people. The tendency is to remember any given war, to the extent it is remembered at all, for a detail or two. Hence, World War II is the "Good War" for many Americans, while the tragedy in Vietnam is the bad war, a syndrome, a quagmire, a stinging loss in need of healing and recuperation. The inclination is to remember wars like individuals, separate and distinct. Wars become discrete events, clearly demarcated in time and space by declarations of war and ceasefires, by the inscription of dates in history books, news articles, and memorial placards. And yet all wars have murky beginnings and inconclusive endings, oftentimes continuing a preceding war and foreshadowing a later one. These wars often do not take place only in the territories for which they are named, but spill over into neighboring countries; they are also shaped in war rooms and boardrooms distant from the battlefields. Wars are as complex as individuals, but are remembered by names that tell us as little as the names of individuals do. The Philippine-American

War implies symmetry between two nations, yet it was Americans who seized the Philippines and instigated the carnage. The Korean War implies a conflict between Koreans, when China and the United States did more than their fair share of the fighting. In the case of the Vietnam War, Americans invented the name, an odd handcuffing of two nouns that has become normal through constant repetition. So normal, in fact, that even if the name is abbreviated to Vietnam, as it so often is, many people still understand it to mean the war. In response, many have protested that Vietnam is a country, not a war. But long before this cry, some of the Vietnamese (the ones who eventually won) had already begun calling it the American War.[4] Still, if the Vietnam War is an inadequate name in the sense that it misleads us about the war's identity, is the American War any better?

This name excuses the various ways in which Vietnamese of all sides also own the war, from its triumphs and its disasters to its glories and its crimes. Not least the name encourages Vietnamese people to think of themselves as victims of foreign aggression. As victims, they are conveniently stricken with amnesia about what they did to one another and how they extended their war westwards into Cambodia and Laos, countries that a unified Vietnam would strive to influence, dominate, and even invade in the postwar era.[5] These ambivalent meanings of the American War are matched by those found in the Vietnam War. While that name has come to represent American defeat and humiliation, there are also elements of American victory and denial, for the name limits the war's scale in space and time. When it comes to space, either name effaces how more than just Vietnamese or Americans fought this war, and how it was fought both inside and outside of Vietnam. When it comes to time, other American wars preceded it (in the Philippines, the Pacific Islands, and Korea), occurred at the same time (in Cambodia, Laos, and the Dominican Republic), and followed it (in Grenada, Panama, Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan). These wars were part of

a century-long effort by the United States to exert its dominion over the Pacific, Asia, and eventually the Middle East—the Orient, broadly defined.[6] Two landmark years bracketed this century. In 1898, America seized Cuba, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Hawaii, inaugurating an overseas expansion of American interests that ran into unexpected resistance in 2001, with 9/11 and the ensuing conflicts in the Middle East. The real American War was this entire American Century, a long and uneven expansion marked by a few periodic high-intensity conflicts, many low-intensity skirmishes, and the steady drone of a war machine's ever-ongoing preparations. The result is that "wartime has become normal time in America."[7]

To argue over the Vietnam War or the American War is thus to argue over false choices. Each name obscures human losses, financial costs, and capital gains, as well as how the war also blazed through Cambodia and Laos, something both the Vietnamese and the Americans wish neither to acknowledge nor remember. The North Vietnamese sent troops and materiel through Cambodia and Laos, and the U.S. bombing of these efforts, as well as the civil wars that flared up in both countries, killed approximately four hundred thousand in Laos and also seven hundred thousand in Cambodia during what the journalist William Shawcross sarcastically called the "sideshow" to the war. If we count what happened in a bomb-wrecked, politically destabilized Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge regime of 1975–1979 as the postscript to the war, the number of dead would be an additional two million, or close to one-third of the population, although some estimates say the count was only 1.7 million, or about a quarter of the population. The body count in Vietnam for all sides was closer to one-tenth of the population, while the American dead amounted to about 0.035 percent of the population.[8]

In tabulating a war's costs and consequences, postscripts should count as well as sideshows, both of which are erased in the names of the Vietnam War or the American War. They contain the damage

to the years 1965–1975, to the country of Vietnam, to a death toll of about three million. Counting the sideshows in Cambodia and Laos would raise that number to around four million, while adding the postscripts would make the total approximately six million. Refusing the war's given names acknowledges that this war, like most wars, was a messy business not easily or neatly contained by dates and borders. To deny it a name, as I will do by sometimes simply calling it the war, clears a space for reimagining and remembering this war differently. Denying this war its name also acknowledges what everyone who has lived through a war already knows: their war needs no name, for it is always simply *the* war. Referring to another war, her own, the writer Natalia Ginzburg says, "We will never be cured of this war. It is useless. We are people who will never feel at ease, never think and plan and order our lives in peace. Look what has been done to our houses. Look what has been done to us. We can never rest easy again."[9]

This war—admittedly, my war—was not even fought only between the two sides in the two names, American and Vietnamese. In reality, these nations were fractured, the United States into its pro- and antiwar factions and the Vietnamese into north and south as well as communist and anticommunist, ideological positions which did not divide neatly with the geography. The war also had other national participants, Cambodians and Laotians bearing the brunt, but also many South Koreans. To see how they remembered their war and have themselves been remembered, as I will do, is not an attempt at total inclusion and total recall, since I pass over other participants in silence (Australians, New Zealanders, Filipinos, Thai, Russians, North Koreans, Chinese . . .).[10] But expanding the story to include people outside of Vietnam and the United States is my gesture at both the need to remember and the impossibility of total memory, since forgetting is inevitable and every book needs its margins. Still, my desire to remember as many as I can is a reaction to the lack of inclusiveness found in many, and perhaps most, memo-

ries of the war, or at least the ones circulating before the public. What these public memories show is that nations and peoples operate, for the most part, through what I call an ethics of remembering one's own. This ethics has national variations, with the Vietnamese more willing to remember women and civilians than the Americans are, the Americans more willing than the Vietnamese to remember the enemy, and neither side showing any inclination for remembering the southern Vietnamese, who stink of loss, melancholy, bitterness, and rage. At least the United States gave the southern Vietnamese who fled as refugees to American shores the limited opportunity of telling their immigrant story and, by so doing, inserting themselves into the American Dream.[11] The Vietnamese government only offered them reeducation camps, new economic zones, and erasure from memory. Little surprise, then, that the exiled southern Vietnamese also insist, for the most part, on remembering their own.

For both nations and their diverse constituents, including the defeated and exiled Vietnamese, an alternative ethics of remembering others is the exception, not the rule. This ethics of remembering others transforms the more conventional ethics of remembering one's own. It expands the definition of who is on one's own side to include ever more others, thereby erasing the distinction between the near and the dear and the far and the feared. Working from both ends of the ethical spectrum, from remembering one's own to remembering others, I thread together the memories of my war's dramatis personae, men and women, young and old, soldiers and civilians, majorities and minorities, and winners and losers, as well as many of those who would fall in between the binaries, the oppositions, and the categories. War involves so many because war is inseparable from the diverse domestic life of the nation. To think of war solely as combat, and its main protagonist as the soldier, who is primarily imagined as male, stunts the understanding of war's identity and works to the advantage of the war machine.

A more inclusive memory of war is also an outcome of the struggle to build what the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs called *collective memory*, where individual memories are made possible by memories already inherited from the communities to which we belong, which is to say that we remember through others.[12] The critic James Young revises this through his model of *collected memories*, where the memories of different groups can be brought together in the reassuring style of American pluralism.[13] Any potential dissent between these groups and their memories is tamed by a "ritual of consensus" that is the mythical American Way, says scholar Sacvan Bercovitch.[14] Whether we speak of collective memory or collected memories, these models are only credible if they are inclusive of the group by which they are defined, however great or small. So it is that a call for war is usually accompanied by a demand that the citizenry remember a limited sense of identity and a narrow sense of the collective that extends only to family, tribe, and nation. Thus, the inclusiveness of the American Way is, by definition, exclusive of anything not American, which is why, even today, American memories of the war usually forget or obscure the Vietnamese, not to mention the Cambodians and Laotians. Those who are against war call for a broader human identity that would include those we had previously forgotten, hoping that such expansiveness will reduce the chances of conflict.

This desire to include more of one's own or even others runs into problems both personal and political, for neither individual nor collective memory can be completely inclusive. Total memory is neither possible nor practical, for something is always forgotten. We forget despite our best efforts, and we also forget because powerful interests often actively suppress memory, creating what Milan Kundera calls "the desert of organized forgetting."[15] In this desert, memory is as important as water, for memory is a strategic resource in the struggle for power. Wars cannot be fought without control over memory and its inherent opposite, forgetting (which, despite

seeming to be an absence, is an actual resource). Nations cultivate and would monopolize, if they could, both memory and forgetting. They urge their citizens to remember their own and to forget others in order to forge the nationalist spirit crucial for war, a self-centered logic that also circulates through communities of race, ethnicity, and religion. This dominant logic of remembering one's own and forgetting others is so strong that even those who have been forgotten will, when given the chance, forget others. The stories of those that lost in this war show that in the conflict over remembrance, no one is innocent of forgetting.

While the fight between the powerful and less powerful over the strategic resources of memory and forgetting can be fevered and even violent, more often it is a low-intensity conflict where the state and its supporters fight with both conventional and unconventional methods. The authorities control the government, the military, the police, and the security apparatus with its surveillance mechanisms and counterinsurgency techniques. These authorities—politicians, oligarchs, corporate and intellectual elites—also influence much of the media directly or indirectly. They possess tremendous persuasive power over academics, universities, pundits, think tanks, and the educational apparatus. In general, these authorities have firm control of the war machine, with the ethics of remembering one's own being the binary code that makes the machine run, dividing the world into us versus them and good versus bad, the more easily to build alliances and target enemies. Meanwhile, through rituals, parades, speeches, memorials, platitudes, and "true war stories," the citizenry is constantly called to remember the nation's own heroes and dead, which is easier to do when the citizenry also forgets the enemy and their dead.

Those who resist war foreground a different ethics of remembering others. They call for remembering enemies and victims, the weak and the forgotten, the marginalized and the minor, the women and the children, the environment and the animals, the distant and

the demonized, all of whom suffer during war and most of whom are usually forgotten in nationalist memories of war. In the struggles that take place within and between nations over the meanings of war and the justifications for them, those who resist war and remember others fight for the imagination, not for a nation. In the imagination new identities can arise, alternatives to national identities and the identities that nations attribute to their wars. But while remembering others may be admirable to some, this mode of memory can also be dangerous or deceptive, for remembering others can simply be a reversal, a mirror, of remembering one's own, where the other is good and virtuous and we are bad and flawed. These competing ethics of remembering one's own or remembering others are simple ethical models of memory. What I look for and argue for in this book is a complex ethics of memory, a just memory that strives both to remember one's own and others, while at the same time drawing attention to the life cycle of memories and their industrial production, how they are fashioned and forgotten, how they evolve and change.[16]

Art is crucial to this ethical work of just memory. The writing, photography, film, memorials, and monuments that I include in this book are all forms of memory and of witnessing, sometimes of the intimate, the domestic, the ephemeral, and the small, and sometimes of the historical, the public, the enduring, and the epochal. I turn to these works of art because after the official memos and speeches are forgotten, the history books ignored, and the powerful are dust, art remains. Art is the artifact of the imagination, and the imagination is the best manifestation of immortality possessed by the human species, a collective tablet recording both human and inhuman deeds and desires. The powerful fear art's potentially enduring quality and its influence on memory, and thus they seek to dismiss, co-opt, or suppress it. They often succeed, for while art is only sometimes explicitly nationalistic and propagandistic, it is often implicitly so. In this book I examine a spectrum of artistic work on war and

memory, from those who endorse the values of the powerful to those who seek to subvert such values. Even given how many artists are complicit with power, I remain optimistic that in the centuries yet to come, what people will remember of this or any other war will most likely be a handful of outstanding works of art that resist power and war (as well as a history book or two).

Both memory and forgetting are subject not only to the fabrications of art, but also to the commodification of industry, which seeks to capture and domesticate art. An entire memory industry exists, ready to capitalize on history by selling memory to consumers hooked on nostalgia.[17] Capitalism can turn anything into a commodity, including memories and amnesia. Thus, memory amateurs fashion souvenirs and memorabilia; nostalgic hobbyists dress up in period costume and reenact battles; tourists visit battlefields, historical sites, and museums; and television channels air documentaries and entertainments that are visually high definition and mnemonically low resolution. Emotion and ethnocentrism are key to the memory industry as it turns wars and experiences into sacred objects and soldiers into untouchable mascots of memory, as found in the American fetish for the so-called Greatest Generation who fought the so-called Good War. Critics have derided this memory industry, seeing it as evidence that societies remember too much, transforming memories into disposable and forgettable products and experiences while ignoring the difficulties of the present and the possibilities of the future.[18] But this argument misunderstands that the so-called memory industry is merely a symptom of something more pervasive: the industrialization of memory. Industrializing memory proceeds in parallel with how warfare is industrialized as part and parcel of capitalist society, where the actual firepower exercised in a war is matched by the firepower of memory that defines and refines that war's identity.

Thus, the Pentagon's war of attrition in Vietnam was matched by Hollywood's *Apocalypse Now* and its entire celluloid campaign to

refight the Vietnam War on global movie screens. This campaign foreshadows how the "shock and awe" of U.S. bombing during the Gulf War was equaled by the spectacular quality of American media coverage with its global saturation. The American wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have begun to receive the same propagandistic treatment, if the success of films such as *Zero Dark Thirty* and *American Sniper* are any indication. *Zero Dark Thirty* views CIA torture and the killing of Osama Bin Laden through the eyes of a CIA agent, encouraging the viewer to empathize with the CIA, while *American Sniper* is about a soldier who killed 160 Iraqis, an experience seen not only through his eyes but through the scope of his rifle. No matter the horrors that Americans may see on their screens—the beheadings, the suicide bombings, the mass executions, the waves of refugees, the drone's eye view of war—the viewers who are not physically present at those events are anesthetized into resignation, into watching the news as an awful form of entertainment. This, too, is the "society of the spectacle" of which theorist Guy Debord spoke, a society in which all horror is revealed and nothing is done on the part of the average citizen to resist it.

If we look at a spectacular war movie such as *American Sniper* in isolation, it appears to be a part of a memory industry, but if we look at that movie as a part of Hollywood, and Hollywood as a component of the military-industrial complex, then we see an industry of memory in operation. The ultimate goal of this industry is to reproduce power and inequality, as well as to fulfill the needs of the war machine.[19] The technologies of warfare and memory depend on the same military-industrial complex, one intent on seizing every advantage against present and future enemies who also seek to control the territory of memory and forgetting. But a military-industrial complex does so not simply or only through a memory industry based on the selling of baubles, vacations, heritages, or entertainment. The memory industry produces kitsch, sentimentality, and spectacle, but industries of memory exploit memory as a

strategic resource. Recognizing that the memory industry is only one aspect of an industry of memory enables us to see that memories are not simply images we experience as individuals, but are mass-produced fantasies we share with one another. Memories are not only collected or collective, they are also corporate and capitalist. Memories are signs and products of power, and in turn, they service power. Furthermore, just as countries and peoples are not economically at the same level, neither are their memories. As Barbie Zelizer notes, "everyone participates in the production of memory, though not equally."[20] One sign of this inequality is that while the United States lost the war in fact, it won the war in memory on most of the world's cultural fronts outside of Vietnam, dominating as it does moviemaking, book publishing, fine art, and the production of historical archives.

But even identifying the sites of industrial memory is not enough to show how the strong industries of strong countries will find more receptive audiences and consumers than the weak industries of weak countries will. Language itself becomes a circuit through which industrial memories circulate, so that English-language products are more accessible than Vietnamese ones, or at least much more likely to be translated, while American memories are varnished with a kind of coolness that Vietnamese memories do not yet possess. Even Korean memories of the war—South Korea having been America's most important ally—travel more fluidly on the international circuitry of commodification and desirability. Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia are much weaker powers, and as a result, their memories usually have, at best, local and national distribution and impact. When those weaker memories are exported internationally, it is almost always on art circuits that have limited reach, or in the closed worlds of diasporic and exilic communities. Those communities cannot amplify the memories of their homelands, for when they produce memories in their adopted countries, the memories remain mostly invisible, inaudible, and illegible to those outside the

communities. So it is that in a shooting war's mnemonic sequel, smaller nations and weaker peoples are outmatched because the aftermath is not fought only on their territory, where they have some advantages, but throughout the world, where they have many disadvantages.

By drawing attention to how industrial power exploits remembrance, a project such as this does not simply add even more memories to the surfeit of memories. This surfeit occurs often for traumatic events, and it happens not because the past has been worked through too much but because the past has not been worked through enough. A just memory suggests that we must work through the past or else be condemned to act out because of it, as Freud says.[21] But while this is true enough, it is also still not enough. Only sometimes can the past be worked out solely through therapy or individual effort, since the conditions of the past are often beyond the individual, as is the case with war. Given the scale of so many historical traumas, it can only be the case that for many survivors, witnesses, and inheritors, the past can only be worked through together, in collectivity and community, in struggle and solidarity. This effort of a mass approach to memory should involve a confrontation with the present as much as the past, for it is today's material inequalities that help to shape mnemonic inequities.

While revolutions in memory are thus not possible without revolutions in other aspects of social, economic, and political life, and vice versa, some scholars have argued that if we remember too much, we will be mired in the past, unable to move forward. Remembering too much, or remembering the wrong things, is supposedly part of an identity politics, a negative politics motivated by a feeling of victimization, or so the critics claim. For these scholars, identity politics encourages people to believe that they are members of a persecuted group rather than individuals, which incites them to resurrect old histories of grief and resentment that divide a nation from within or separate it from its neighbors. Undermining the na-

tion's identity, identity politics supposedly diverts us from real politics, the kind concerned with economy and class, money and mobility, the things that matter for people, country, and nation.[22] But those who insist that we should forget the past and focus on economic and class inequality do not see that inequality cannot be addressed without a just memory.[23] This kind of memory recognizes that nationalism is the most powerful form of identity politics, armed to the teeth and eager to harness all the nation's resources for war, including memory and the dead.

A just memory opposes this kind of identity politics by recalling the weak, the subjugated, the different, the enemy, and the forgotten. A just memory says that ethically recalling our own is not enough to work through the past, and neither is the less common phenomenon of ethically recalling others. Both ethical approaches are needed, as well as an ethical relationship to forgetting, since forgetting is inevitable. All individuals and groups are invested in strategic forgetting, and we must forget if we are to remember and to live.[24] A just memory constantly tries to recall what might be forgotten, accidentally or deliberately, through self-serving interests, the debilitating effects of trauma, or the distraction offered by excessively remembering something else, such as the heroism of the nation's soldiers. These excessive memories do not point to a just approach to the past, but to an unjust one, defined by what philosopher Paul Ricoeur calls "memory abusively summoned" by those in power.[25]

The response to unjust, repetitive memory is not to cease remembering an event that has been chewed over relentlessly, but to reconsider how we remember that event, who controls the industries of memory, and who abuses memory. A project of just memory indicates two ways of dealing with the problem of excessive memories. The passive route is to recognize that time and mortality offer a solution, for witnesses inevitably pass on. Their hardened memories turn to a handful of dust, fulfilling Nietzsche's claim that "without forgetting, it is quite impossible to *live* at all."[26] The other route to

fulfilling his claim is active, through the struggle to ethically remember conflicted events. Acts of the imagination, the creation of memory works, and the entire artistic enterprise are crucial to this kind of just memory, but just memory can never be fulfilled solely through them. Art and ethical work are never enough to effect change without power. Just memory is only possible when the weak, the poor, the marginalized, the different, and the demonized, or their advocates, can influence or even seize the industries of memory. This struggle for what Ricoeur calls an *enlightened forgetting*, which leads the way to reconciliation and forgiveness, can only be done through an ethical memory that recalls one's own and others.[27]

This ethical practice inevitably questions identities, for if remembering one's own affirms deeply held notions of identity, remembering others challenges those notions. In so far as this work of just memory is done about war, it also challenges war's identity. If we no longer accept the identities of our enemies as provided by the authorities, we might find it difficult to accept the identities of the wars those same authorities give us. Negotiating between remembering one's own and remembering others does not mean that competing memories can be reconciled, only that submitting to only one ethical way of memory, at the exclusion of the other, will never suffice. Still, even a just memory which uses both these ethical approaches will not necessarily make us feel better about ourselves or reconciled with our deeds, our omissions, or our enemies. While just memory might lead to an enlightened forgetting of the horrors and conflicts of the past, it can also lead to a tragic awareness of what is irreconcilable within ourselves and within those near and dear to us. When it comes to war, ethical memory illuminates how war neither emerges from alien territory nor is fought by monsters. War grows on intimate soil, nurtured by friends and neighbors, fought by sons, daughters, wives, and fathers. Our ambivalence about war's identity simply expresses ambivalence about our own identities, which are collectively inseparable from the wars our nations have

fought. These are the wars for which we have paid, from which we have benefitted, by which we are traumatized. Whatever may be noble and heroic in war is found in us, and whatever is evil and horrific in war is also found in us.

When it comes to war, the basic dialectic of memory and amnesia is thus not only about remembering and forgetting certain events or people. The basic dialectic of memory and amnesia is instead more fundamentally about remembering our humanity and forgetting our inhumanity, while conversely remembering the inhumanity of others and forgetting their humanity. A just memory demands instead a final step in the dialectics of ethical memory—not just the movement between an ethics of remembering one's own and remembering others, but also a shift toward an ethics of recognition, of seeing and remembering how the inhuman inhabits the human. Any project of the humanities, such as this one, should thus also be a project of the inhumanities, of how civilizations are built on forgotten barbarism toward others, of how the heart of darkness beats within. No wonder, then, that for Jorge Luis Borges, remembering is a *ghostly verb*.[28] Memory is haunted, not just by ghostly others but by the horrors we have done, seen, and condoned, or by the unspeakable things from which we have profited. The troubling weight of the past is especially evident when we speak of war and our limited ability to recall it. Haunted and haunting, human and inhuman, war remains with us and within us, impossible to forget but difficult to remember.