

From ‘without the camp’ to ‘within the (concentration) camp’

– a little history of othering –

*Omni tempore quo leprosus est et immundus, solus habitabit
extra castra. (All the time that he is a leper and unclean, he
shall dwell alone without the camp.)*

Leviticus 13:46 Vulgate Bible (Douay-Rheims translation)

The “leper” – an overloaded image

Among the definitions that appear if you look up “leper” online are “a person shunned for moral or social reasons” (Mirriam-Webster), “a person who is ignored or despised” (Collins), “a person who is disliked and avoided by other people” (Britannica). Of course another, literal sense of the word is also given – a person suffering from leprosy – but with the caveat that this use of the word is now considered offensive. Then is the metaphorical sense inoffensive?

The typically modern metaphorical use of “leper” is found in Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s “a moral leper, I, / To whom none spake” from his 1847 poem *The Princess*. But the association of leprosy with moral fault goes back many centuries before this; for example, “Even as he was a leper of his body, so are we lepers of our souls” from Hugh Latimer’s 1552 Sermon for the third Sunday after Epiphany. This, however, like other early instances, is subtly different. Latimer explains the analogy as follows: “He was unclean in his body, and we are unclean in our souls” – indeed ‘uncleanness’ is the true metaphor here. Latimer recognises that the leper in Matthew would have been shunned because he was ‘filthy’ in body (“this leper, whom all men abhorred, because of his filthiness and uncleanness”), but while the notion of uncleanness is carried over to a person’s spiritual or moral state, there is no suggestion that such analogous uncleanness of soul would or might result in social exclusion. Differently, Tennyson invokes the idea that a person may be shunned purely for reason of moral transgression. In

this, the underlying idea of uncleanness is subtly written out, oddly ‘sanitising’ the metaphor.

Because of the continuing stigma attached to the disease, it is now sometimes argued that the term “leprosy” itself is best avoided, “Hansen’s disease” being the preferred medical name. For “leprosy” too has long been burdened with metaphorical connotations. Both Pope Francis and President Macron were criticised for using “leprosy” in a metaphorical sense, the former in 2013 and again in 2014 when, in the first instance, he described careerism among priests and, in the second instance, paedophilia as a “leprosy” within the church, and the latter in 2018 when he referred to the “nationalist leprosy” threatening Europe. Such use of the word, though metaphorical, serves to reinforce the stigma still attached to its literal, medical sense. People in such positions should know better – yet if you enter the search term ‘leprosy as metaphor’ online you will find Christian sources unashamedly claiming, for example, that

leprosy is a perfect metaphor for sin. It starts as an invisible infection and then slowly dominates one’s life. It is invisible to start with, but eventually the person becomes deformed and ugly. Furthermore, the body becomes numb. Sin makes us numb to the abundance of life and we become dull and unfeeling. Sin also isolates us from others. Selfishness cuts us off from others and we end up alone with our addiction, alone with our sin, alone with our poor selves.

(<https://www.ncregister.com/blog/leprosy-is-a-perfect-metaphor-for-sin>)

Some other diseases have a secondary life as metaphors, as of course do broad medical terms like ‘infection’ and ‘virus’, all resting upon or originating in an underlying *health versus disease* metaphor which is itself closely related to the metaphorical expansion of *cleanness versus uncleanness*. The obvious instance is cancer; for example, “The cancer in Europe today is a mixture of nationalism and populism” – Felipe González, former Prime Minister of Spain, in 2018. Here too it has been argued by Susan Sontag that such usage indirectly harms those suffering the disease, implying that they suffer

not only from a disease but also from something more insidious, more personally destructive for more morally tainted. But the metaphorical use of cancer does not usually connote the need for the exclusion of *people* (although a drastic action is implied, for such “cancers” have to be “cut out” to restore the health of the social body). Nor is cancer backed up by a specific word demarcating the sufferer and distinguishing her from others, which then becomes the locus of a further metaphorical loading – a word like “leper”.

For via the word “leper” the sufferer *becomes* the disease, wholly *embodying* it rather than simply suffering it.

When a person contracts a dangerous, communicable disease they may be quarantined. Shunned – in a sense. Obviously it is not possible to isolate the pathogens that might be communicated to others without isolating the person who carries them. But it is understood that the disease is not the person, hence that the isolation of the person is a ‘necessary evil’. This is the logic that seems to break down in the image of the “leper” and this in turn gives rise to the extended metaphoric scope of the term.

The “leper” *is* the disease, but by the same token the “leper” is *more than* the disease (or more than the *illness*), for in the western cultural legacy leprosy is not ‘just an illness’ (one that can be reduced entirely to its biomedical description) precisely insofar as it can be *embodied* in this way.

In western culture “leprosy” is an iconography; it is this that the “leper” embodies, both as the *corrupted body* and as the *shunned body*. Notably we have an alternative word, “pariah,” for the exclusionary sense, but coming originally from a different cultural context it remains too abstract, lacking the necessary image – the embodiment – for it to take such strong hold of our imagination.

It is striking that the names given to other diseases do not tend to give rise to cognate labels for those who suffer them. AIDS, tuberculosis, SARS, Ebola, pneumonia, Covid-19, cholera, jaundice, RSV, measles, polio . . . where any of these, and many more, are referred to (say as X), then we must speak of X-sufferers or X-victims. The same is true of non-communicable

diseases such as cancer, Alzheimer's, muscular dystrophy In some other cases we can 'clip' the adjective to refer, for example, to an asthmatic, an anorexic, a schizophrenic, a syphilitic . . . but "leper" is not like that, for we cannot add the word "person" to it and preserve good grammar. The field of disabilities, both physical and cognitive or 'mental,' offers closer analogies such as "cripple" or "lunatic," along with a range of (even more) offensively derogatory labels. Such terms are also used metaphorically. Indeed the 'once metaphorical' (or loosely used) can become the 'now literal,' as with the term "moron" coined by American eugenicist Henry Goddard to denote what he held to be an especially dangerous class among the "feeble-minded," who never surpassed a mental age of 8 to 12 years and who might easily be mistaken as 'normal'. The objects of such terms may not be seen as to be segregated (though often they are, such as in 'asylums' or in 'special schools'), but they are generally shunned or marginalised as *deviations from the norm*.

The "leper" too is physically deviant – as well as dangerous.

I stress that I am not referring here to real people suffering from Hansen's disease, now or in earlier times. I am referring to the way the word's metaphorical loading, or *overloading*, arises, which forms a feedback loop distorting its literal sense. In what follows I will refer to leprosy sufferers or leprosy victims whenever real people suffering the disease are meant.

Revising the image of the medieval "leper"

How – and when – was the image of the "leper" constructed? Before answering this, we need to take a step back.

In the western iconography of leprosy the "leper" tends to remain a medieval figure, much as in Cooper's watercolour, even though Hansen's disease continues to affect parts of the world today. But how rooted in historical reality is this still commonplace image of the medieval European "leper"?

Back in 1909 Rotha Mary Clay could conclude the chapter on "lepers" in her *The Medieval Hospitals of England* like this:

After separation the fate of the outcast is irrevocably sealed. Remembering the exhortation,

he must not frequent places of public resort, nor eat and drink with the sound; he must not speak to them unless they are on the windward side, nor may he touch infants or young folk. Henceforth his signal is the clapper, by which he gives warning of his approach and draws attention to his request [for alms]. [. . .] In England a bell was often substituted for this dismal rattle. Stow and Holinshed refer to the “clapping of dishes and the ringing of bells” by the leper. His piteous cry is “Sum good, my gentyll mayster, for God’s sake”. [. . .]

Compelled to leave home and friends, many a leper thus haunted the highway – his only shelter a dilapidated hovel, his meagre fare the scraps put in his dish. To others, the lines fell in more pleasant places, for in the hospital pain and privation were softened by kindness.

Although it is tempered by the writer’s compassion, this is a picture of one who is necessarily shunned. But it is also a picture that has since been redrawn in significant ways, especially over the past few decades.

A fairly recent ‘revisionist’ tendency among historians of medieval leprosy, well represented by Carole Rawcliffe and Timothy S. Miller, has tended to downplay the extent to which leprosy sufferers were segregated from others and to emphasise that the *leprosaria* (commonly called ‘leper hospitals’) were more truly charitable institutions than means of incarceration and separation. While both canon and common law provided for separation, this was only sporadically enforced and in many places leprosy sufferers continued to mingle with the wider community, at least in the period before the Black Death, an event which brought cruelly into focus the frightening reality of infectiousness. In England the ecclesiastical rituals of separation were rarely if ever practised and writs of *de leproso amovendo* to enforce the confinement of alleged leprosy sufferers (which had been an available recourse in English law from 1100) were rarely sought or issued. Nonetheless R. I. Moore’s thesis that the period 950-1250 saw the formation of a ‘persecuting society’ in which hostility to leprosy sufferers increased in tandem with

repression of heretics, Jews, prostitutes and male homosexuals may still be valid in the way it shifts focus onto the persecutors rather than the persecuted. Historical truth is complex.

Without going into the details of this debate, let's assume for the sake of the argument that the 'revisionist' position is broadly correct, not just a temporary swing of an academic pendulum: the medieval leprosy sufferer was *not* after all so greatly shunned or segregated, except at times and here and there. Then the question arises, how and why did the distorted image take such strong root?

The late nineteenth century western 're-discovery' of leprosy

From the sixteenth century there was little leprosy in Europe, although it persisted in remote parts of the Nordic region. It had ceased to be seen as a serious problem. This changed in the second half of the nineteenth century, not because leprosy returned to Europe but because a panic arose that it might. The context of this was imperialism and especially the large scale movement of people it had given rise to. In the 1860s, leprosy took hold in Hawaii, the first case there having been diagnosed in 1848. At the time leprosy was thought of as a hereditary, non-transmissible disease. However this presumption began to be undermined not only by the Hawaiian example in which the disease spread quite quickly but also by the discovery in 1874 of the *mycobacterium leprae* by Gerhard Armauer Hansen. When Father Damien, the Belgian priest who had cared for leprosy sufferers in Hawaii, died from the disease in 1889, it was widely publicised in Europe and in the United States.

Although Hawaii was annexed by the USA only later in 1898, it was already subject to western influence in the 1860s; in particular its Board of Health was dominated by westerners. As a result, in 1865 an Act to Prevent the Spread of Leprosy was passed requiring the compulsory isolation of those with the disease on the remote peninsula of Kalaupapa, which became in effect a prison camp. This, the draconian 'Hawaiian model' of segregation, rather than the 'Norwegian model' in which, from 1877, sufferers were also isolated but within a more liberal regime, was to become the predominant response to leprosy in many parts of the colonised world.

By the 1880s both the concept and the process of contagion had become established science. Partly as a result, in 1897 the First International Leprosy Conference resolved that "isolation is the best means of preventing the disease" and assumed that to all intents and purposes leprosy was incurable. Through the 1880s and 1890s more and more cases were reported in the colonies, alarming the imperial powers. Wage labourers from China, along with natives of and migrants from the Indian Subcontinent, Sub-Saharan Africans and those from the Caribbean, became thought of as sources of leprosy and agents of its spread, putting European colonial administrators and colonists at risk. The resulting fear of a pandemic thus had a *racialised* basis, as is clearly reflected in contemporary writings. In 1890 Sir Morell MacKenzie wrote: "The facts . . . represent an unspeakable amount of suffering to many races whose destinies we have taken into our keeping, but besides this they indicate a possible danger to ourselves. Leprosy has before now overrun Europe and invaded England, without respecting the 'silver streak' which keeps off other enemies; and it is perfectly conceivable that, under certain circumstances, it might do so again." In more alarmist vein, in his *Leprosy: an Imperial Danger* of 1889, H. P. Wright wrote that unless the right measures were taken, leprosy "will invade our colonies" and then become again "a common scourge throughout Europe". He also proclaimed that, "In leper lands, that which produces leprosy is not the soil, as in malaria; nor water, as with so many infectious maladies; nor decaying food; nor destitution, as in lathyrism, pellagra, &c. It is the leper," and that, "The invasion of a country by leprosy has always coincided with the introduction of lepers into that country; and races which have avoided intercourse with leprous people have remained intact."

In this context it is no surprise that it was claimed that leprosy in medieval Europe had been eradicated by policies of enforced segregation. Note that when Rotha Mary Clay wrote about leprosy sufferers in medieval England, in 1909, the panic was still in process, though no longer at its height. Cooper painted his medieval "leper" at much the same time.

Arguably, then, the received image of the medieval "leper" is as much a product of the 'pollution' anxieties generated by the

first stage of enforced globalisation and its attendant racism as it is of selective emphasis on aspects of the historical evidence. The image expresses the self-consciously 'modern' world's horror at the possibility of a *return of the 'medieval'*, with all the dirt and disease this was believed to imply.

The wider context: racism and 'camp-thinking'

Although the nature of disease transmission became better understood in the late 19th century in a way that contributed to the panic at that time, there were some who observed that leprosy is only mildly contagious, hence no serious danger. Panics are not given to rational or considered reflection, of course, but Ron Amundson, writing about leprosy in nineteenth century Hawaii in *Disability Studies Quarterly* suggests that brutal policies of segregation were not after all rooted in fear of contagion. What was to be shunned was not the potential contagiousness of the infected person but their bodily *loathsomeness*, as this provoked what was believed to be a wholly *natural* horror (at least in the 'superior' white race). As illustration, he quotes from a 1916 book by Arthur Mouritz about leprosy in Hawaii, "Apart from its limitedly contagious properties, the disfiguring repulsiveness of leprosy alone demands its segregation," and from an editorial in the *New York Times* of 1894, "Consumption and cancer are contagious to perhaps a greater degree than leprosy, but their ravages do not disgust the mind through the eye as leprosy does. For this reason these classes of patients are not segregated, . . . But leprosy is a repulsive disease, and isolation is suggested as a precautionary measure." Amundson is clear that this is not an innate human response but culturally conditioned, for the Hawaiian people themselves were not repulsed by their diseased fellows – a fact that was turned against them, being treated as evidence of their racial inferiority.

Out of sight, out of mind? Up to a point, yes, but it is more than that. What is the threat from 'loathsomeness'? How is 'loathsomeness' also a kind of 'pollution'?

One explanation of this response to 'loathsomeness' as a sort of pollution lies in its relation to racism, for it builds upon the

manner in which the racial Other is deemed inferior not just culturally (that is, as ‘savage’ or ‘primitive’) but also physically, hence as representing *the possibility of ‘degeneration’* – which is not quite the same thing as ‘contamination’. Where this attitude is strong, moreover, it engenders also a need to purge one’s own population of the malformed and the physically or mentally deficient, as enacted in the Nazis’ Aktion T4 “euthanasia” programme. Involuntary euthanasia, as a ‘logical extension’ of eugenics, was not just supported (far more broadly than in Nazi Germany) as a way of eliminating ‘bad breeding stock’ but would serve to purge the race aesthetically by denying any possibility of visibility to the defective.

It is worth noting that it was not until 2014 that a monument was erected in Berlin to the memory of the 300,000 disabled, physically or mentally ill, or socially deviant individuals deemed “unfit to live” and murdered by “euthanasia” in Germany and the occupied territories between 1939 and 1945. Families of the victims were never compensated. The equality clause in the constitution of the new Federal Republic did not initially refer to disability. Exclusion can take many forms.

In relation to the late nineteenth century panic, horror at loathsomeness was arguably the keystone in an architecture designed to protect imaginary ‘purity’ from the danger of physical, cultural or moral ‘degeneration’. The key to the whole story thus may lie in this wider historical context and especially in the fact, stressed by Rod Edmond in his *Leprosy and Empire*, that the isolated “leper colonies” that were constructed at this time in several parts of the world were not unique. Compulsory physical segregation became a ‘solution’ in the case of other ‘problem’ populations and groups, where the problem in question might sometimes have been but was far from necessarily one of potential infection – the Native American reservations, Native Australian reservations, British concentration camps in South Africa during the second Boer War, smallpox isolation ships, and many more . . . through to, in our own day, the attempt to isolate asylum seekers on the “Bibby Stockholm” barge in Portland harbour or in the EU funded “Closed Controlled Access Centre” in Samos . . . by way, in the mid-twentieth century, of the Nazi death camps. The degree of cruelty in the ways such ‘camp-thinking’ was put into

practice was very variable, but as Edmond notes all its victims were and are condemned to some degree of ‘social death’.

In sociology the term ‘social death’ does not refer only to the effects of arbitrarily imposed limits as to what a person can access or do in the context of social life but more fundamentally to a denial or erasure of their personhood. For ‘social death’ includes *a denial or restriction of rights*, which in turn implies a less than fully human status. (On one level it echoes the injunction in the medieval ritual of separation, “Be dead to the world,” for that too involved a loss of what we now think of as rights. But there is nothing that corresponds to the subsequent “Be living again unto God,” which served to *re-acknowledge* personhood, if on another plane.)

Concerning leprosy and human rights . . .

“In the latter half of the twentieth century, leprosy gained recognition as a human rights issue amid the global human rights movement. Advocates highlighted systematic violations of the rights of affected individuals, leading to increased attention to their plight. In 2010, the General Assembly adopted resolution 65/215, on the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members, marking a significant step. The rights of those affected by leprosy have since been integrated into the protective frameworks of international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.”

From paragraph 13 of the Report of the Special Rapporteur on the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy (Hansen’s disease) and their family members, Beatriz Miranda-Galarza, to the fifty-sixth session of the Human Rights Council of the United Nations, 18 June – 12 July 2024.

In its specific forms, 'camp-practice' is conceived as *practical*, almost by definition. But less consciously it is also a *symbolic practice*. A line – in the form of a wall or fence or a natural feature such as the sea – is 'drawn' by being constructed or put to use to enclose the 'problem' group, not simply because members of this group are (imagined as) a danger to the 'purity' of the dominant group *but also in order to define them as such*. Thus the line comes not merely to represent but *to enact – to bring into being* – the 'reality' that it supposedly defends against. It is a symbolic practice in this sense.

But without any accompanying ritual. In fact the very absence of ritual becomes part of its meaning on the symbolic level – a kind of *taking its cruelty for granted* (which, after all, is one of the ways power expresses itself as power).

As Edmond sums the matter up in specific relation to leprosy, in the modern colonial period the supposed danger from those afflicted with leprosy was not avoided by exiling them *without the camp* (in the well-known phrase from Leviticus), but by putting them *within the camps* in which they could be concentrated.

The extended field of social exclusion

As noted, those affected by leprosy were not alone in being forcibly segregated in camps or colonies. But such extended 'camp practice' and the 'camp-thinking' behind it belong to a more general exclusionary mentality that came to dominate through the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries and beyond, as *nation*, and with it *ethnicity*, supplanted *locality* as the ground of our supposed true identity. For lines can be drawn dividing and segregating groups one from another without confining one of the groups to and concentrating them within a specific territorial area or camp. The so-called 'Jim Crow Laws' in the Southern United States are an obvious example. These had been effectively overturned by 1965, although recent racially targeted restrictions on voting rights in some States are their descendants. Another obvious example is the framework of laws that made up the Apartheid system in South Africa from 1948 until 1991. Notably, in 1970 all black South Africans were stripped of citizenship and declared

residents of the Bantustans, although many were needed as cheap labour in South Africa outside the supposedly autonomous ‘homelands’. With this, a hybrid system was created that combined ‘classical’ camp-practice, i.e. confinement to closed areas, with the extended form, which we might simply call ‘segregation-practice’.

‘Whites only’ buses, schools, drinking fountains, toilets etc. as in the segregated Southern States and under South African Apartheid are demarcated *physical* spaces. But segregation, entailing social exclusion, can take other, less open forms – with serious effects nonetheless. This can occur without needing to tap directly or even implicitly into fears of contamination. So-called *red-lining* is the practice of restricting or denying access to financial services such as loans and insurance to already marginalised and disadvantaged groups, serving to marginalise and disadvantage these groups even more. Here too an exclusionary *line* is drawn around certain people, as its very name suggests. It is not in any open way the exclusion of ‘impurity’ but of supposed *risk*, which, however, is ultimately a risk not to financial institutions but to the imaginary ‘wholesomeness’ of the social order.

The main examples of segregation-practice cited above – the Jim Crow Laws and the South African Apartheid system – are from the twentieth century. Such exclusionary practices and others analogous to them continue today, whether in open violation of international law, as in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (the 19/7/2024 ICJ Advisory Opinion found a raft of Israeli policies in the West Bank to be in breach of Article 3 of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, where Article 3 specifically condemns racial segregation and apartheid), or, more and more widely in Europe, in compliance with specially enacted domestic laws. Such laws serve to distinguish and to separate citizens from *non-citizens*, who may be legally resident, and above all from ‘*anti-citizens*,’ a concept that covers non-status residents (commonly labelled “illegal immigrants” or, more neutrally but with emphasis starkly on their transitory state, “irregular migrants”) along with any others perceived as risks to an extended and homogenised concept of social order. The segregation that follows is not necessarily or not only

segregation in physical space but in a range of ‘social spaces’ such as access to jobs and services.

Such exclusionary practices are increasingly being digitalised. On the one hand this involves extensive biometric data collection with which what is now called *alienage* can be more efficiently imposed and tracked (which entails the ever-increasing surveillance of non-alien too, supposedly to facilitate their ironically named ‘free movement’). Such tracking occurs not only at so-called ‘smart borders’ but increasingly in the streets of ‘smart cities’. On the other hand it involves the algorithms which the state increasingly relies on to deliver (or not) its services, with their built-in biases that function to further marginalise certain groups.

As such practices – with the “hostile environment” they promote – become more and more extensive, and as the technology on which their efficiency relies becomes more pervasive, it seems that the underlying metaphorical antithesis – *health versus disease*, either explicitly or in its broader inflections, *purity versus pollution* and *loathsomeness versus wholesomeness* – has been fading increasingly into the background. It is as though the question that the technology itself is designed to answer and therefore *serves to frame* is not, Leviticus-style, whether a person is “clean” or “unclean,” but whether a person is *in place* or *out of place*.

Why should this be? Perhaps it is an index of the *normalisation* of such policies and practices in today’s highly controlled societies. Over recent years a different metaphor has become foregrounded, especially concerning refugees and other migrants – *invasion*. This metaphor takes otherness for granted as not in need of saying or describing, as too ‘obvious’ a threat. And it focuses on the threatened *border*, not the threatened *body* – although it is commonly associated with supposed criminality as a potential threat not only to the safety of the citizen and their property but also to their orderly ‘way of life’.

The metaphoric undertow of *health versus disease* re-surfaces here and there in some accompanying discourses, not surprisingly, but its most striking return to (near) explicit status lies in the name now commonly given to a vicious kind

of exclusionary practice, not in the form of the isolation of 'deviant' individuals but that of the forced displacement of large groups or populations. This term – a new name for an old practice – appeared and quickly became commonplace in western media in the 1990s in the wake of the violent break-up of Yugoslavia.

The term '*ethnic cleansing*'.

A 'hygienic' practice, at least in name.

'Hygiene' – from the Greek for healthy or wholesome.

There is no defined crime of 'ethnic cleansing' in international law. Yet what we have come to call 'ethnic cleansing' is a crime; at the very least it constitutes the crime against humanity of "deportation or forcible transfer of population" (Article 7(1)(d) of the Rome Statute of the ICC) – which, importantly, includes forcible *internal* transfer. Does the term 'ethnic cleansing' add anything to this? Perhaps only that the implicit goal of 'ethnic cleansing' is not simply the removal of a 'problem' or 'undesirable' population, but the creation of an ethnically homogeneous resident population.

With the general acceptance of the term 'ethnic cleansing,' the question 'are you in place or are you out of place?' is set back in a context with the deepest of metaphorical roots. For as Mary Douglas wrote in 1966 in her groundbreaking *Purity and Danger: an Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, 'dirt' is nothing other than disorder. There is no *essential* dirt, **dirt is only the state of some things being 'out of place'**. Dirt *offends* against order.

Order, then, must be a kind of cleanness.

The same for homogeneity.

But the problem, surely, is that 'cleansing' is the *perpetrators'* word, the *racists'* word – if only in a way that many have learnt to keep to themselves. Today, with 'ethnic cleansing' once again in the news, it is those opposed to it who call it by this name, not those who would put it into effect (with a few openly 'extremist' exceptions). But how can those who condemn the practice take on this word, a word which taps into a deep and disturbing root system of metaphor?

Gregory Stanton, Founding President of Genocide Watch, has argued that the term 'ethnic cleansing' has become widespread because it is a 'useful' euphemism, a way of *avoiding* the word genocide – for under Article 1 of the 1948 Genocide Convention all signatories are contracted to *prevent* genocide, but there is no corresponding legal obligation to act to prevent what is identified as 'ethnic cleansing'. This may be true in part, but it does not explain the ease with which the problematic language of cleanness versus uncleanness has been adopted.

When we use the term 'ethnic cleansing' to identify and to condemn the practice, do we overlook, or ignore, that deep and disturbing root system of metaphor? Do we unconsciously validate that underlying frame of reference? Or do we use the term with mental inverted commas around the 'cleansing,' a kind of cognitive filing of it under '*the racists' own word and as such the very symptom of the perversity of the practice*'? Or is it that the spread and the normalisation of exclusionary practices has resulted in burying the underlying metaphor to such an extent that, when it resurfaces like this, we no longer even notice it?

All of which brings me back to the context in which this book is published, an exhibition in the Cambridge 'Leper Chapel' entitled *Out of Place*. As Maria Pasma makes clear in her personal account at the start of the book, episodes of ethnic cleansing from before her birth filtered through to her and helped to form her – firstly from during and after the 1912-13 Balkan Wars, which transformed Thessaloniki from a multicultural, multi-ethnic city to a much more ethnically homogeneous one, a process 'completed' in 1943 as part of the Nazi genocide against the Jews of Europe when the city's mainly Sephardic Jews were transported to concentration camps, and secondly from what Greeks know as the Asia Minor Catastrophe of 1922 when the cosmopolitan city of Smyrna (Izmir) was ethnically 'cleansed' following the deliberate destruction by fire of its Greek and Armenian quarters.

Her key point in relation to this past is worth repeating here. In her own words: "*A city and its buildings never forget its missing people, their sudden, abrupt, unchosen absence lingers, like ghosts.*"

Where violence of whatever sort is the means, the process of physical exclusion may be successfully accomplished but the process of *erasure* can never be complete.

Not even in genocide.

Gregory Stanton's model of genocide identifies ten stages. These are not simply linear stages, steps in a process, but tend to coalesce as the genocide progresses. The first four constitute *Othering*. These are: Classification (an initial division of the world into Us and Them); Symbolisation; Discrimination; Dehumanisation – the stage at which disease or animal imagery (often disease-carrying animals such as rats or cockroaches) is introduced. The next five stages are more instrumental, even 'practical'. They are: Organisation; Polarisation; Preparation; Persecution; Extermination. The tenth stage is *Denial*, which Stanton sees as a continuation of the genocide, an ongoing attempt to deny even the memory of their murders to the victims.

For as long as denial occurs, a wound remains gaping in the fabric of history, the pain of which is felt in the present.

To help close that wound, James Waller identifies three essential pillars of a process that may have to continue through generations: Justice (both retributive and reparative), Truth, and Memory. Memory is how Truth is communicated in an ongoing way; among its modes some may be artistic, such as storytelling, songs, performances, exhibitions.

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In what sense is the past also present?

Not only in the form of repetitions, or of 'variations on a theme' (though these ask to be seen as such).

In Walter Benjamin's image of the *angel of history* ("On the Concept of History," 1940, Section IX), the angel is looking towards the past. But where we see a chain of events, the angel sees a single catastrophe, *its wreckage accumulating in front of his feet*.

A *presence*, in that sense.

The angel, says Benjamin, would like to awaken the dead and make whole what has been smashed. He cannot, for he is driven backwards into the future by the wind we call 'progress'.

Benjamin makes a closely related point when he says that the motivation to make a better world is nourished on the image of enslaved forebears, not of emancipated heirs (XII).

Then to the word "enslaved" surely we should add *cast out, excluded, shut away, discriminated against, persecuted, segregated, displaced, deported, transported . . .*

MAIN SOURCES

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