

# **The Roots of Remembrance:**

Tracing the Memory Practices of the Children  
of Far East Prisoners of War

Terry Smyth

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Department of Sociology

University of Essex

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is about the children of former Far East prisoners of war (FEPOWs): their memories of childhood, how they fashioned those memories in adulthood, and the relationship between the two. The FEPOW experience reverberated through postwar family life, and continued to shape the lives of participants across the intervening decades. Although a great deal is now known about the hardships suffered by the men, captivity had a deep and enduring impact on their children, but their history is rarely heard, and poorly understood.

In *Roots of Remembrance* I investigate the lives of these children through in-depth interviews, using a psychosocial approach to both interviews and analysis. By tracing intergenerational transmission through the life course, I show that the memory practices of the children of Far East POWs had psychosocial roots in the captivity experiences of their fathers. For some, childhood was coloured by overt physical or psychological trauma; for others, what passed as a 'normal' upbringing led later to a pressing desire to discover more about their fathers' wartime histories.

My research demonstrates the need for a more nuanced and holistic approach to understanding intergenerational trauma transmission within this particular group. I argue that participants made creative use of memory practices across the course of their lives to revisit, review and reconstruct their relationships with their fathers, in order to reach an accommodation with their childhood memories. Findings include the value of attachment theory in understanding the associations between childhood experience and later memory practices, the role of the body and other implicit means of transmitting trauma, and the need for a greater awareness of the impact of cumulative and complex trauma within these families. Finally, I conclude that the psychosocial methodology enabled me to access areas of subjectivity and intersubjectivity that might otherwise have remained in the shadows.

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Firstly, I wish to thank all those children of Far East POWs who gave their time as participants in this research. Their willingness and enthusiasm to share memories of their fathers pressed home the significance of giving a voice to everyone whose stories might otherwise be pushed to the margins of history.

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Particular thanks go to my many Japanese friends for helping to put my ideas and emotions into a wider context. Keiko Holmes, the founder of *Agape World*, organised both our 'pilgrimages' to Japan, without which this PhD would never have seen the light of day.

Finally, thanks go to my father for braving the challenges of POW life and its enduring consequences, and to my mother for bearing the brunt of the consequences that he was unable to absorb.

## ABBREVIATIONS

APA	American Psychiatric Association
Bdr	Bombardier (rank equivalent to corporal)
COFEPOW	Children of Far East Prisoners of War
CRU	Civil Resettlement Unit
DSM	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders
	Distinguished Service Medal
FEPOW	Far East Prisoner of War
ICD	International Classification of Diseases
ITT	Intergenerational transmission of trauma
IWM	Imperial War Museum
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NMA	National Memorial Arboretum (Alrewas, Staffordshire)
OT	Occupational therapist
PTSD	Posttraumatic stress disorder
RA	Royal Artillery
RAOC	Royal Army Ordnance Corps
RN	Royal Navy
TA	Territorial Army
VE Day	Victory in Europe Day - 8 <sup>th</sup> May 1945.
VJ	Victory in Japan Day - 15 <sup>th</sup> August 1945
WHO	World Health Organization

## **A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY**

I have used the term 'participants' or 'the children' (or 'adult children') for my research subjects, unless the context demanded additional clarification, or where I have quoted other authors.

Although awkward and ungainly, the abbreviations 'FEPOW' (Far East prisoner of war) and 'COFEPOW (child, or children of, Far East prisoner of war) are widely used amongst the ex-Far East prisoners of war and their relatives, and also used as acronyms. To have written them out in full on each occasion would have been tedious for the reader so, on balance, I decided to conform to colloquial usage. 'COFEPOW' is also the abbreviation for the eponymous organisation, but the context will make clear which meaning is intended.

## PREFACE

Personal family experience lies behind this research. In 1942, my father was taken prisoner by the Imperial Japanese Army and spent the next three and a half years as a prisoner of war (POW) in Java and Japan. Up to his death in 1995 he remained deeply affected by this period of his life, and his traumatic wartime experiences have had a profound effect on me and on my family.

After retiring from full time employment in 2003, I began to research my father's time in the Far East. With the generous help of people here and in Japan, I eventually discovered the name and location of the prisoner of war camp in which he had been incarcerated and from where he had made his daily trek to work in the coal mines. Once I had found out where he had lived as a POW, I wanted to visit. And so, in 2010, my wife and I travelled to Japan, as part of a 'pilgrimage' of reconciliation. We visited Japan again in 2014 to attend the unveiling of a memorial to POWs who lost their lives in another of the camps.

In the course of my background work, I met many survivors of the Far East Prisoner of War (FEPOW) camps, and many more of their children. As a result of these meetings, I became intrigued by why it was that so many of the adult children seemed to be gripped by their fathers' captivity, doggedly researching the facts, and regularly participating in remembrance activities. In short, why was it that seven decades after the war, so many children of FEPOWs were still fascinated by what their fathers had gone through? And why did this fascination hold so much emotional charge after all these years? It was to address these questions that I edged my way towards the idea of a PhD. Halfway through the research, I became aware that I had set myself the target of completing it in the same period of time my father had spent as a POW. A coincidence, of course, but one that gave me moments of reflection, and placed the question of time very much in the foreground of my thinking.

Loss lies at the heart of this research: in my decision to embark on this PhD, in the interviews, and in the barbaric realities of war. As a child, I felt I had lost a father. I wasn't quite sure who or what I wanted in his place, but I knew that something important was missing from my life. And I knew, vaguely, that it was somehow connected with his being a prisoner of war. Uncommonly as it turned out, my father was one of those who spoke about his captivity. But that didn't help because, as a young boy, I was in no fit state to listen, to really listen. After a while I shut out all the stories, closed my ears to the arguments, and waited for sixty years to pass.

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about the children of former Far East prisoners of war (FEPOWs): their memories of childhood, how they fashioned those memories in adulthood, and the relationship between the two. Although a great deal is now known about the hardships suffered by the men, captivity had a deep and enduring impact on their children, but their history is rarely heard, and is poorly understood.<sup>1</sup>

In *Roots of Remembrance* I investigate the lives of these children. Through in-depth psychosocial interviews,<sup>2</sup> I examined what they remembered about their childhoods, the relationship they had with their fathers, and how their memory practices as adults were influenced by psychic factors and the wider cultural context. I discuss a number of 'memory practices' in the thesis, including state-sponsored remembrance events, pilgrimages to sites connected with the fathers' captivity, the pursuit of military family history, and domestic memorialization, by which I mean the curation of photographs, mementoes and other artifacts, as well as online activities such as tribute websites and social media settings.

From their childhood experiences, I argue that many participants were left with persistent, and sometimes distressing, psychic needs that through the course of their lives they addressed by engaging with various memory practices. At their core, these needs emanated from the manner and form in which the fathers' traumas were transmitted to the children. By tracing the connections between childhood memories and later memory practices, I show how participants were able to revisit, review and reconstruct their relationships with their fathers.

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<sup>1</sup> The few exceptions include Allport's (2009) *Demobbed*, Summers' (2009) *Stranger in the house*, Turner and Rennell's (1995) *When Daddy came home*. But these do not focus on the children of ex FEPOWs or their efforts to come to terms with their memories.

<sup>2</sup> I conducted thirty-four face-to-face interviews. In addition I also had email responses from seventeen participants. Some of the latter were very detailed, and equivalent in content to the face-to-face interviews, others were more sketchy but could be remarkably insightful.

To understand these processes better, we must take a step back, to the autumn and winter of 1945 when a cohort of nearly forty thousand British servicemen returned to Britain following an incarceration of three and a half years. The repatriated FEPOWs carried the emotional and physical scars of captivity into the home, with ramifications that, at this temporal and socio-cultural distance, we find hard to imagine. The whole experience of being a FEPOW was a major and unusually disruptive life event and severely dislocated the men's material and psychic lives. However, despite conditions differing between the camps, there were certain common features: psychological humiliation, exhausting and dangerous work, inadequate food, little or no contact with home, and the regular threat of tropical diseases. Repatriation failed to bring immediate relief; indeed, for many families, the impact of the men's chronic health problems was felt for decades, and wives and families were expected to pick up the pieces.

The majority of former FEPOWs did not talk openly about their memories, especially within the family. The children often mentioned this 'silence', and also remarked on how they sensed an emotional distance from their fathers. For a few participants, childhood and adolescence were haunted by memories of aggression and even violence at the hands of their fathers, but the fear of social shame and condemnation often persuaded the families to keep such behaviour secret. By enabling these previously 'hidden' facets of postwar family and social life to be voiced, I hope to highlight the intrapsychic, relational, and social struggles of what Hoffman (2004) calls the 'postgeneration'.

Recent decades have seen trauma emerge as a dominant yet rather unwieldy umbrella term capable of clouding as well as clarifying the nature of harm or suffering at personal, social, or societal levels. Jeffrey Prager (2011) describes how trauma began as a term to describe physical harm, then 'migrated' to incorporate major psychological distress and now embraces damage done to society as a whole. The participants in this research have lived through the post-Holocaust and post-Hiroshima decades and

therefore witnessed the radical transformation in our understanding of trauma. Many came to interviews with that conceptual inflation deeply ingrained in their personal and cultural backgrounds. James spoke of trauma in a way that suggested an easy familiarity with its contemporary usage.

‘What I remember is ... is shouting. And I think what was more frightening was when it was in the other room ... It’s a well known thing, isn’t it, where the person not having it done gets a bit more trauma than the one it’s being done to.’

Turning to the state of research into the intergenerational transmission of trauma, we discover that it reflects the sharp theoretical and methodological divisions that underpin the different interpretations of trauma. For example, there is an established strand of quantitative medical research that chases correlations between the symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in children and in fathers. Elsewhere, psychoanalysts endeavour to unravel how psychic and behavioural patterns might be passed between generations, as we see in the work of Bar-On (1995), Felman and Laub (1992) and Rosenthal (1998), and in Fromm’s insightful volume *Lost in Transmission*.<sup>3</sup> Kidron’s (2009) ethnographic fieldwork spotlights the particular potency of unspoken trauma transmission. We can see this in operation in Brenda’s testimony, when she described how her father didn’t talk at all of his captivity but regularly withdrew into the ‘front room’ for several days at a time.<sup>4</sup> From a cultural perspective, Marianne Hirsch explores transmission both within the family and through cultural products, such as paintings, photographs and fiction. In *The Generation of Postmemory* she discusses her influential notion of ‘postmemory’ which is the term she uses to describe the wholesale transferring of memories across generations (Hirsch 2012), the effect of which is to leave the children feeling ‘crowded out’ (p.4).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Fromm, G. M. (ed.) (2012).

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 4 for my discussion of Brenda’s interview.

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 5.

Existing research has tended to compartmentalize the analysis of trauma and intergenerational transmission, being driven on the one hand by disciplines focusing on the 'psyche' (the biographical or psychoanalytic approaches) or the 'social' (the cultural and historical approaches). However, the lives of participants in my research were blind to any separation between the cultural and the biographical; instead, both dimensions intermingled freely across a complex cat's cradle. What has been missing to date is research that draws together these different perspectives in an examination of lived experience across the life course, and explores the psychosocial connections between childhood experiences and adult memory practices.

The marked growth of interest in remembrance has attracted the attention of historians in recent years,<sup>6</sup> who have tended to frame the topic in cultural rather than biographical terms (e.g. Shanken 2015, Schumacher 2015, Winter 2006 and 2014, Young 1993). The children of FEPOWs have participated regularly in remembrance events, taking on activist roles in the COFEPOW community as 'memory entrepreneurs' (e.g. Conway 2008). The 70th anniversary of the end of the war in the Far East ('VJ Day 70'),<sup>7</sup> commemorated on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015, was an occasion marked by major events in London, in Lichfield Cathedral, and at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.<sup>8</sup> Providing much of the energy and expertise for these events were the three principal activist organisations: COFEPOW,<sup>9</sup> the Java Club, and National FEPOW Fellowship Welfare Remembrance Association, each of which was founded or managed by daughters of FEPOWs.<sup>10</sup> Both national and local media increasingly 'personalise'

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<sup>6</sup> The growth of interest in recent war commemorations has been amplified of course by the anniversary events associated with the Great War.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/vj-day-70-plans-announced>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-33936830>

<sup>9</sup> Children of Far East Prisoners of War

<sup>10</sup> The details of websites for these organisations can be found in Appendix 7.

these events by featuring the stories of former FEPOWs.<sup>11</sup> The children's urge to preserve the memory of their fathers remains very strong,<sup>12</sup> with members of the COFEPOW community continuing to instigate new memorials. In the years immediately preceding the 'VJ 70' anniversary, plaques were erected on Liverpool's Pier Head<sup>13</sup> and in Southampton's Town Quay Park<sup>14</sup> to commemorate the repatriation of former FEPOWs and civilian internees. Fundraising for both plaques was initiated by the daughter of a FEPOW.<sup>15</sup>

National remembrance events highlight the clash between cultural and personal memories and attitudes. When participants supported and attended such events, they brought with them their own personal, more intimate memories, but these rarely surfaced because their expression might jar with the public narrative. By default, the media focus on the fathers' stories of captivity has kept the lives of the children in the shadows. As a result, they find themselves in a conflicted position, albeit unconsciously for the most part. They facilitate public events that promote the FEPOW's stories, 'knowing' that their own are being pushed further into the background. Their determination to preserve their own fathers' stories, and the broader tendency to lionize the former prisoners of war, has deflected attention away from their own lives. No doubt for some, this deflection was welcomed (or at least not resisted). By

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<sup>11</sup> 'VJ Day: Amazing story of British PoW who survived having legs sawn off without anaesthetic' <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/vj-day-amazing-story-british-6253954> . VJ Day 70th anniversary: a veteran's story

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/world-war-two/11803402/VJ-Day-70th-anniversary-a-veterans-story.html>

*Villagers prepare to mark the day the Second World War finally ended for Belford*

<http://www.chroniclive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/villagers-prepare-mark-day-second-9832707> ; *York family mark VJ Day with harrowing memoir of dad's time as Japanese POW*

[http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/13590336.York\\_family\\_mark\\_VJ\\_Day\\_with\\_harrowing\\_memoir\\_of\\_dad\\_s\\_time\\_as\\_Japanese\\_POW/](http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/13590336.York_family_mark_VJ_Day_with_harrowing_memoir_of_dad_s_time_as_Japanese_POW/)

<sup>12</sup> We might say they were 'captivated' by their fathers' experiences.

<sup>13</sup> <https://nationalfepowfellowship.org.uk/2011/10/16/unveiling-of-the-fepow-plaque-in-liverpool/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://nationalfepowfellowship.org.uk/2013/10/27/unveiling-the-southampton-fepow-plaque-27th-october-2013/>

<sup>15</sup> Meg Parkes, Chair of the Researching FEPOW History Group. <https://fepowhistory.wordpress.com/>

unconsciously or consciously drawing a veil over traumatic family events, anxieties over tarnishing the family's reputation could be minimized. Under the circumstances, neither the academic nor the popular media has any great incentive to look beyond the stories of the FEPOWs themselves. As a consequence, the general public remains largely ignorant of the strains imposed on families when the FEPOWs returned from the war.

One needs to ask whether there might have been any alternative routes for the expression of the children's stories, such as at COFEPOW events or through online social media sites.<sup>16</sup> However, the culture of memory disclosure in such groups tends to encourage the circulation of narratives that are circumspect and normative. By this I mean that they generally steer away from the subject of childhood traumas or any other memories that might appear to be implicit criticism of the father or his family, or threaten to besmirch the wider FEPOW community. To hear the quieter, transgressive voices we must turn to more intimate, more marginal situations, to what Rosenwein (2010) refers to as 'emotional refuges' (p.22)<sup>17</sup> where the children might speak privately and in confidence. Coffee breaks and the corridors of conferences provide these opportunities, as do research interviews. The official programme of a recent FEPOW conference listed speakers covering historical and cultural topics, many of whom were the children of FEPOWs with in-depth knowledge of a particular historical or cultural niche. But it was in the unofficial, interstitial spaces of the conference that the children came together in twos and threes to share personal memories of their upbringings. Once I had noticed this, and after raising it with one or two other delegates, I became aware that my research might indeed be tapping into a current of unexpected psychic energy. What I might easily have failed to notice, or dismissed as insignificant, emerged instead as an important step in the progress of the research. As

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<sup>16</sup> E.g. *The FEPOW Family (UK)* <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1248087371902974/>

<sup>17</sup> Rosenwein contrasts 'emotional communities' which 'prescribe the dominant norms of emotional life' with 'emotional refuges' that offer 'safe release from prevailing emotional norms' (Rosenwein 2010, p.22).

Andrew Abbott (2007) has noted 'there are places in the social world where the laws of human behaviour rise very near the surface' (p.72).

When it comes to the disclosure of potentially traumatic memories, timing matters. Daniel Bar-On (1995) emphasizes how interviews with three generations of Israeli families, who had suffered in the Holocaust, had to wait until the late 1980s, when 'the need to talk ... became greater than the need to maintain silence' (p.20). Timing also mattered in my research. When I began in 2013, most former FEPOWs had died, and many of their children - themselves well into middle age and beyond - seemed ready to tell their stories. The timing was also propitious because the 'baby boomer' generation, into which most participants fell, was still largely healthy, and was prepared to rethink its attitudes and expectations towards retirement. By and large, baby boomers expected to remain engaged in productive activities.<sup>18</sup> With this 'second-wind', many participants began to discover or rediscover their father's wartime histories. Now social media savvy, many were working hard to preserve the record of their fathers' captivity, thus helping to subtly reshape the memory industry that had grown up around the history of World War Two. These moves were encouraged by the way in which emotional cultures were changing, away from the more restricted codes prevalent during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and towards a culture of greater self expression. The reinvention of trauma also played its part, by allowing the 'unprecedented ability to talk about - and hence to experience - the violence of the world' (Fassin and Rechtman 2009, p.277).

Working at the interface of the cultural and the biographical called for a particular configuration of methodologies. A critical question was how best to address the participants' subjectivities, hovering as they did between distant, but psychologically

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<sup>18</sup> We should recognise the risks of homogenizing the circumstances of the baby boomers. Hamilton and Hamilton (2006) and Sinclair (2015) both remind us that not all 'baby boomers' enjoy high income, and those on low incomes and from deprived areas have fewer options in respect of their retirement prospects. This was clearly seen amongst participants, some of whom could not afford expensive memory practices such as pilgrimages.

active, memories of childhood and forces emanating from wider social structures, such as FEPOW narratives, state discourses and geopolitical legacies. The challenges were both epistemological and methodological, and the theoretical scaffolding had to accommodate an experiential world that was often conflicting, multi-level, and multi-modal. Chapter One describes in detail how I decided upon a psychosocial methodology (Hollway and Jefferson 2013) set within an oral history framework. The particular strength of the psychosocial approach was that it enabled me to bridge the apparent divide between the interior lives of the participants and their historical-social-cultural context.

Although this research places the emphasis on the distinctiveness of individual experience, social research (qualitative or quantitative) is also always looking for 'patterns and relationships' (Ragin and Amoroso 2011, p.37; Abbot 2004). From the data, I identified two genres of memory practice that I explore in particular detail. Firstly, I examine the yearning to discover the fine detail of the father's FEPOW history. In this specific scholarly context, the archival impulse (Boscacci 2015, Steedman 2001) is largely virgin territory. To get a purchase on the subject, I have drawn on a range of theoretical approaches, including research into family history research, psychoanalysis, social practice theory, and literary studies. The other main genre is 'pilgrimage'. Many participants felt a powerful urge to visit the places associated with the father's incarceration. Pilgrimages offered participants new contexts in which to address their memories and the relationship with their fathers.<sup>19</sup> The impact could be momentous. As Kim observed 'I looked around and thought, my goodness, my dad actually saw these sites, that I'm seeing.' While Scates (2013), Kidron (2013, 2015) and Murakami and Middleton (2006) have analysed pilgrimages in specific war-related contexts, none has attempted to integrate pilgrimage with childhood memory and memory practices across the life course, or has adopted a psychosocial approach. Having analysed the

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<sup>19</sup> See Chapter 8.

testimonies, I became gradually aware that there seemed to be a small number of recurring needs underpinning participants' memory practices. While still tentative, I have proposed a heuristic framework that suggests an alignment between memory practices and combinations of underlying needs that cluster around three dimensions: knowledge-based, emotion-based, and values-based.<sup>20</sup>

A brief but remarkable extract from my interview with Gwen captures the essence of this thesis, and the rationale for using a psychosocial approach. One evening in 1994, Gwen was watching a TV documentary that included newsreel footage of returning Far East prisoners of war disembarking. To her amazement, she recognised her own father among them:

And when I saw him being helped ... on that ship, and he looked like a skeleton, with skin on. And he looked like ... he looked like he didn't know what was happening, and he was ... he wasn't old. He was just a young man. And ... he looked dazed. And I wanted to throw my arms around him and hug him, and say, I'm sorry, Dad [hugging gesture, cries]. I'm sorry I was naughty. I'm sorry I didn't ask you, and I'm sorry I didn't appreciate all you went through. But it was too late because he wasn't there.

These words reflect a daughter's raw emotions and powerful feelings of empathy toward her father who had been a prisoner of war on the Thai-Burma railway. They also reveal her inner conflicts, and the feelings of guilt and regret that so frequently inhabit memory and trauma within the family. She is momentarily cast back to childhood, and in doing so conveys how insistently the past clings to the present in her mind. Her gestures and tears also remind us of the need for a holistic approach as we try to unravel complex and sometimes contradictory human emotions and behaviour, recalling what Edward Casey refers to as the 'active immanence of the past in the body' (Casey 2000, p.149).

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<sup>20</sup> See Chapter 6.

By tracing the relationship between memories of childhood, and memory practices over a lifetime, *Roots of Remembrance* makes a unique contribution to the scholarly literature on the children of British FEPOWs and, I believe, adds a new dimension to POW studies and memory studies more generally.

### **Chapter outline**

The structure of the thesis follows the broad trajectory of the participants' life course, and is organized into eight chapters. The review of literature and data extracts are integrated into the chapters as appropriate.

This Introduction set out the broad context of the research, identified significant gaps in the literature, and outlined its principal claims. Chapter One describes the process of establishing a methodology that was sensitive to the issues arising from the fieldwork. Chapter Two provides a theoretical context for understanding how trauma had an impact on participants and their fathers. It examines the core concept of trauma and its ramifications, such as posttraumatic stress disorder. This then unfolds into a discussion of attachment theory as a framework within which to conceptualize how the impact of captivity could unsettle the relationship between fathers and their children, thus leaving the children with unresolved psychic needs. The spectrum of literature on intergenerational transmission is considered next and selects those areas of particular relevance to this thesis.

Chapter Three outlines the historical background to the men's captivity, and highlights those aspects of camp life and repatriation that had a critical bearing on their later behaviours and emotional states. Taken together, Chapters Two and Three provide the theoretical and historical context for Chapter Four in which I present and analyse the 'raw material' of the participants' memories of childhood, and explore the variations in how the 'war was brought into the home'.

I then begin to focus on memory practices, beginning in Chapter Five with a review of the literature on memory, postmemory and remembrance, before turning to the involvement of participants in public remembrance events and in the home. Chapter Six explores the psychic processes by which participants revisited their childhood memories, and reshaped those memories and past relationships into new narratives. The conceptual anchors in this chapter are narrative, turning points, generativity, redemption and reparation. It is here that I set out the heuristic framework to aid thinking about the connections between memory practices and psychic needs. The final two substantive chapters concentrate on specific genres of memory practice. Chapter Seven explores the practices of those participants for whom the most pressing need was to uncover the military history of their fathers' captivity. Chapter Eight addresses the question of why some participants felt compelled to incur the material and emotional costs of travelling to locations that risked reactivating painful childhood memories. In the 'Summary and Conclusion', I recap the key features of the thesis and draw together its major findings and lessons.

Appendices One, Two and Three provide background details of the participants in this research. Appendix One is a grid that sets out summary information of all participants who formed part of the final cohort of forty-seven. Appendix Two is a numerical overview of the cohort, based on sex, marital status, age at interview, social class, and home region; in addition, I provide details of the rank, service and social class of participants' fathers. Appendix Three comprises thumbnail sketches of the twenty-three participants whose stories feature most prominently in the thesis.

I introduce interview data throughout the thesis, including some lengthy extracts that constitute 'mini case studies'. These aim to resist the 'fragmentation of data' (Hollway and Jefferson 2013, p.63). Joanna (Ch. 4), Pete and Jeff (Ch. 7), and Sally (Ch. 8) are cases in point. Some participants feature strongly across several chapters, including Joanna, Deirdre and Derek.



## CHAPTER ONE

### ESTABLISHING THE METHODOLOGY

‘The more one looks, the more one sees. And the more one sees, the better one knows where to look’ (Teilhard de Chardin 1965, p.308).

‘Successful interpretation depends on a passionate engagement with what you see. Use your methodology to discipline your passion, not to deaden it’ (Rose 2012, p.xx).

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I explain why and how I decided upon the research methodology, and discuss the issues that arose in the course of the fieldwork, illustrating these with extracts from transcripts and field notes. I describe how I operationalized the stages of the research design: the recruitment of participants, undertaking the interviews, and the processes of transcribing recordings and analysing the data. I place special emphasis on the ‘research relationship’ because my awareness of its significance grew directly and progressively from the empirical work.

#### **Evolving a methodology**

As someone who might equally well have been a participant, I was aware that the level of intersubjectivity would be heightened from the very start, and the chosen methodology would need to reflect the subtleties of motivation intrinsic to this situation. That being the case, I decided to base my data collection on in-depth interviews, situated within an oral history tradition allied to a psychosocial epistemology and methodology. The oral history tradition ensured I kept a tight grip on ‘broader historical themes’ (K’Meyer and Crothers 2007, p.92), while the psychosocial approach encouraged consideration of psychic processes and their articulation with the social and ‘scenic’ contexts (Hollway 2009, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c and 2013, Hollway and Jefferson 2013), which helped to offset concerns over logocentrism (Kidron 2009).

Ontologically speaking, my starting position was that our actions and beliefs are often the products of unconscious factors. Given that these factors are by definition difficult to discern, I concur with Hollway and Jefferson (2013) that an approach to qualitative research that assumed the 'transparency of language' (p.9), and that tended to fragment data, would not be appropriate. Their psychosocial approach enabled data to be held together, and the interviewee to remain 'whole', while requiring the researcher to remain alert to inconsistencies, silences and gaps in both the explicit and the emotional narrative.

Incorporating emotions and reflexivity into qualitative research as distinct 'ways of knowing' allows a closer approximation to our everyday experience, in which the emotional, the cognitive and the corporeal work hand in hand. By accepting this, we both broaden and complicate the epistemological foundations of qualitative research. Despite the inherent methodological challenges, the literature shows a growing interest in the researcher's own role and subjectivity in the research process (for example Bourdieu 1996, Elliott et al 2012, Ezzy 2010, Kidron 2009, Sparkes and Smith 2012).

Adopting the psychosocial approach enabled me to explore and better understand the life experiences of the participants. In particular, how they traced their past relationships with their fathers, and their memories and 're-memories' of that relationship, their 'postmemories' of their fathers' POW experiences and how they used memory practices to bring together past and present into a liveable integration, accommodation or alignment. In brief, my research exposed how the past can seem to live in the present. Put more elegantly, it set out to show how:

that which appears to be not there is often a seething presence, acting on and often meddling with taken-for-granted realities, the ghost is just the sign, or the empirical evidence...that tells you a haunting is taking place. The ghost is not simply a dead or missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life (Gordon 2008, p.8).

### **The oral history tradition**

Oral history has long been used to investigate war and its multiple consequences.<sup>1</sup> One aim of the thesis was to ‘recover lost histories’ in line with what Summerfield calls the ‘original radical mission of British oral history’ (Summerfield 2016, p.10; see also Abrams 2016). However, my research did not stop at the recovery of history, but adopted a cumulative approach by bringing forward these memories into the present to examine how they contributed to the person’s current psychosocial state, including their expectations, memory practices, and thoughts about the future. Although oral historians often advocate a structured approach to questioning (Thompson 2000, Yow 2015), some recognize the potential of staying ‘alert to the emotional and unconscious aspects’ of their interviews (Thomson 2013):

When oral historians interpret their interviewees’ life stories, we sometimes draw upon ideas from psychoanalysis: about the enduring significance of formative relationships, about unconscious motivations and influences, or about transference in the interview (p.128).

But Thomson is quick to draw a firm demarcation line between oral history and psychoanalysis proper: ‘My interpretation was intimate and historical, but it was not psychoanalytic’ (p.128). Other approaches include Field (2006) who uses psychoanalysis as a ‘sensitizing theory’ (p.34) or Fraser (1984) whose more robust approach embedded psychoanalysis within an autobiographical account of childhood memories. Roper (2003) also uses a psychoanalytic frame to draw attention to the complex motivations of the interviewer who may feel the urge to ameliorate the pain of the participant:

The motivation to want to give back something to people who have in some way experienced oppression or been silenced - the recuperative urge - was and remains a keystone of oral history. In the oral history interview itself, such motivations may take unconscious forms, for example as manic reparation, the

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Abrams (2014), Bennett (2015), Bornat (2010), Cabanes (2013), De Nardi (2014), Field (2006), Parkes (2012), Parr (2007), Roper (2014), Summerfield (2016), and Wessely (2005).

omnipotent desire to want to make good another's past, as if we were capable of effacing the private pain caused by social oppression and exclusion. ... Aggressive and destructive urges - which are always present - may not be given expression, but squirreled away in a desire to encourage what is felt to be a more positive situation, of narrative fluency, warmth and a measure of 'oneness' between interviewer and interviewee (pp.29-30).

Roper's observations resonate with Smith et al (2009) who warn of the situation in which the limits of empathy are not recognised, where sympathy overwhelms empathy to the extent that the research process is effectively closed down. Once I believe I 'understand' the other person's reality, then why continue? The participant is always - and needs to remain - 'other' and dialogue is only sustained if we remain within the 'boundary space' (p.349).

### **The psychosocial approach<sup>2</sup>**

The goal of psychosocial research is to explore ways of understanding that do not reduce to either psychological or social explanations and do not uncritically locate these in "the individual" or "society", or in "internal" and "external" worlds (Hollway and Froggett 2012, unpaginated).

The psychosocial perspective offers the researcher a means of engaging simultaneously with different levels of subjectivity: 'the relationship between the biographical experience and psychic life of the individual human subject and the social formation in which she lives, relates and is formed, with the intertwining of the psychic and the social, of inner and outer worlds' (Roseneil 2013, p.233). From their earliest days, participants were subjected to tacit communications from their parents that were inflected or moulded by war traumas. My research acknowledged therefore the interactions between external personal and public historical events, inner mental conflicts, and parent-child relationships that then were expressed and symbolized through particular genres of memory practice in the individual's present. Memory

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<sup>2</sup> Bar-On's (1995) work with Holocaust survivors and their children - referred to later in the thesis - has been a powerful influence on Hollway and Jefferson's psychosocial method, and acknowledged as such (Hollway and Jefferson 2013). He also allows interviewees to reconstruct their own life stories. In this way, and in the analysis, the reconstructed story is suspended between the subjectivity of the interviewee and the external context of their life history.

practices themselves represent complex integrations of the 'psycho' and the 'social' - the 'intertwining of external and internal worlds' (Volkan 2012, p.79) - and therefore the psychosocial approach aided the understanding of this nexus of linkages between personal micro-histories and public macro-histories (Walkerdine et al 2013).

The 'British School' of psychosocial studies, as exemplified by Hollway and Jefferson (2013) and Roseneil (2014a and 2014b), is 'characterised by ... its explicit inter or trans-disciplinarity',<sup>3</sup> and frequently draws on psychoanalytic concepts, such as transference and countertransference. But this fledgling field of studies remains warmly debated, especially over how far psychoanalysis can be applied outside the consulting room (see Frosh and Baraitser 2008, Holmes 2014, Jefferson 2008, and Taylor 2010).<sup>4</sup> Recent years have witnessed a growing number of academics from different fields willing to explore the dynamic unconscious within research interviews (for example Bondi 2003, 2007, 2014a, 2014b; Lapping 2016; Pile 2010; Proudfoot 2015, and Thomas 2007).<sup>5</sup>

Through a largely unstructured interviewing style, the psychosocial approach enables researchers to reveal memories and psychic processes that have been mediated 'not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation' (Hirsch 2012b, p.5). It also highlights the intersubjectivity within the relationship and uses these responses as assets, essential and active components of the data available for analysis. Analysis in the psychosocial approach is holistic and integrative, and strives to avoid the risk of 'fragmenting qualitative data' that can occur through 'coding' techniques (Hollway and Jefferson 2013, p.63).

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<sup>3</sup> From the website of The Association for Psychosocial Studies <http://www.psychosocial-studies-association.org/about/>

<sup>4</sup> See also Taylor and McAvoy (2015) and Redman (2016) who grapple heroically with the entrenched terminological and conceptual difficulties.

<sup>5</sup> Freud himself was not averse to taking his ideas outside the consulting room and applying them to everyday life and to social and cultural settings (for example, Freud 1914).

By adopting the ‘free association narrative’ method, I encouraged participants to reconstruct their life stories in their own way. Although there were some bumps along the road, participants were able to take the lead over what to include, what to leave out, and the choice of narrative style. As a result, I found that in the immediacy of the interview (and subsequently in the analysis), the emerging story hovered and flitted between the subjectivity of the interviewee (including the context of their life history, and external events impinging on their current life circumstances), and the subjectivity of the researcher. By conducting interviews in this way, I remained open to new themes and areas of concern I might not have predicted at the outset (Yow 2015); the significance of sibling relationships was one such example.

Hollway and Jefferson (2013) argue that the explanatory powers of psychoanalysis can be employed not only to analyse the twists and turns of a participant’s narrated life story, but also to expose unconscious manoeuvres within the interview relationship itself. However, in describing this relationship, they coined the rather unfortunate terms the ‘defended subject’ and the ‘defended researcher’. The hard-edged adjective ‘defended’ - especially when attached to an individual and not merely to an abstract process (as in ‘defence mechanism’) - conveys a fixed, embattled and one-dimensional identity that sees itself ‘on the back foot’ and permanently ‘under attack’, and conflicts with the fluid intersubjectivity they assume elsewhere. Furthermore, it marginalizes the more positive aspects of human nature, such as resilience, courage and forgiveness, that are needed for psychic growth (Akhtar 2002, 2014) and which were revealed in the lives of many participants.

Given the controversies stirred up by the growth of interest in psychosocial studies, I need to clarify how I employed ‘psychoanalytically-informed’<sup>6</sup> concepts in this research. I drew on certain foundational concepts which, over a number of decades,

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<sup>6</sup> This term is Hollway and Jefferson’s suggested qualification to allay concerns that the psychosocial approach is employing psychoanalytic concepts and methods in identical fashion to their application within the clinic.

have helped me - professionally and personally - to understand, and to explain to others, some of the intriguing contradictions inherent in human behaviour.<sup>7</sup> My overall experience of undertaking this research confirmed the empirical worth of these ideas, as filtered through the psychosocial approach. As Hollway and Jefferson (2013) make clear: 'If the concept makes sense of the evidence (as we believe), it aids the use of data and is therefore a valuable idea' (p.153).

Reflecting on my use of psychoanalytic concepts in this thesis, I find that I have made most use of the following: the unconscious, identification, reparation, transference-countertransference, repression, free association, sublimation, internalization, displacement, projection and dissociation. The meaning of these terms becomes clear through their usage in the thesis; as Lapping (2013) observes, psychoanalytic concepts 'are necessarily reiterated and transformed in the process of research and analysis' (p.369).

However, I want to examine transference and countertransference in greater detail at this juncture because they lie at the heart of what makes a relationship 'distinctively psychoanalytic' (Frosh 2010, p.3) and are also associated with wider criticisms of the psychosocial approach. It is easy to see why, because both psychoanalysis and psychosocially-oriented research make claims over similar territory: the nature of human relationships and subjectivity, how psychical phenomena unconsciously 'pass between' people, and what use can be made of that 'exchange' epistemologically. However, the rise to prominence within psychoanalysis of transference and countertransference has bestowed on them a certain mystique that threatens to detract from the everyday nature of the processes themselves (Craib 2001, p.193; Hollway and Jefferson 2013, p.158).

In their original incarnations within psychoanalysis, transference meant the unconscious transferring of emotions embedded in a past relationship (usually with a

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<sup>7</sup> This refers primarily to my background as a psychiatric nurse, and educator in the same field.

significant figure such as a parent) onto the analyst; countertransference indicated 'feelings unconsciously provoked in the analyst in response to material mobilized by the patient' (Ffytche 2016, p.32), that is, to what had been 'transferred'. However, Ffytche claims that 'contemporary concepts of transference' refer more broadly to 'the permeability between conscious life and the strata of emotional conflict perpetually provoking it, or provoked by it' (p.32). This wider conception explains its relevance to psychosocial studies, and for my purposes is expressed in somewhat plainer language by Heimann in her classic paper from 1950: 'I am using the term "counter-transference" to cover all the feelings which the analyst experiences towards his patient' (Heimann 1950, p.81). The assumption is that 'the analyst's unconscious understands that of his patient', and is 'much nearer to the heart of the matter than his reasoning'. It is the analyst's task to 'sustain the feelings which are stirred in him ... in order to subordinate them to the analytic task' (p.82).<sup>8</sup>

Holmes (2014) in a detailed analysis of the topic argues that 'the straightforward mapping of the clinical concept of countertransference onto the research setting is misleading' (p.167). He suggests that this is because qualitative researchers have adopted an overly narrow, rigid and perhaps out-dated definition of countertransference that leans towards positivism. Instead, he argues, they should 'engage with those contemporary, relational and constructivist conceptions of how feelings in the analytic setting can be seen as mutually created' (p.167), and to begin identifying where psychoanalysis and qualitative research overlap.

Following Heimann's lead, I decided to use countertransference as the umbrella term for my responses to the participant. Along with Hollway and Jefferson (2013), my psychosocial research practice convinces me that, compared with psychoanalysis, the

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<sup>8</sup> In a rarely cited paper, Chediak (1979) makes an interesting contribution to this complex field by identifying countertransference as but one in a set of wider 'counter-reactions' that the analyst may have towards the patient. These were the 'general response to the patient as a person', the analyst's transference to the patient', 'the analyst's countertransference' and 'empathic identification with the patient' (p.117).

use of the researcher's countertransference 'will be limited by its methods to transferences much more accessible to thought' (p.159). That said, I suggest that countertransferences in the research relationship can reveal the presence of unconscious issues in the participant and/or the researcher, without necessarily revealing their precise nature or content. By contrast, the psychoanalyst's aim is to interpret 'into' the therapeutic encounter, and to explore deeper psychic levels with the aim of facilitating insight on the part of the patient; researchers 'save their interpretations for outside it' (Hollway and Jefferson 2013, p.72). The validity of the researcher's interpretations is enhanced by supportive data from elsewhere in the research analysis: 'like throwing a stone in a pond, if an interpretation "works" the ripples reverberate through the rest of the analysis' (p.55). In similar vein, Lapping (2011) confirms that social researchers have no interest in offering interpretations to research participants, but use the 'awareness of these [psychoanalytic] ideas' to 'develop sensitivity to material that arises in empirical research' (p.4), and which may indicate that unconscious dynamics are in play. These include inconsistencies in testimony, unexpected 'turns' in the narrative, sudden intrusions of emotion that seem out of keeping, and '... slips of the tongue, confusions of past and present, confusions of identity, momentary lapses of reasoning, prolonged pauses ...' (Fonagy 1999b, p.95).

### **Widening the methodological net**

The qualitative-researcher-as-bricoleur or a maker of quilts uses the aesthetic and material tools of his or her craft, deploying whatever strategies, methods, or empirical materials are at hand ... If new tools or techniques have to be invented or pieced together, then the researcher will do this. The choice of which interpretive practices to employ is not necessarily set in advance (Denzin and Lincoln 2011, p.4).

Working between history, memory, psychic and social worlds, in the context of both the everyday and grand narratives of war, requires some methodological agility. As the fieldwork gradually took shape, I found that I needed to pull in additional

methodological tools.<sup>9</sup> So, while oral history and the psychosocial approach remained the solid core, I began to incorporate ideas from visual ethnography and actor network theory (ANT).

The first indication of the need to widen my methodological net came when I discovered that much of what I was writing in field notes was connected not to the participants' verbal narratives but to contextual features. Froggett et al (2014), Hollway and Froggett (2012) and Hollway (2015) advance the notion of 'scenic composition'<sup>10</sup> as a means of making the data gathering process more holistic, more embodied, by recognizing the significance of the material and social environment and its connections to the 'social and collective' (Bereswill et al 2010, p.224). For me, adopting a 'scenic' approach entailed carefully observing the material and social environment of the interview, including taking photographs,<sup>11</sup> then later writing 'free-association' reflective field notes. The following example is taken from my notes after meeting Esther, and shows the close connections between the physicality of the environment, the psychosocial dynamics of the interview and the relationship being forged between us.

The living room was quite small with little choice over where to sit. We both sat on the single large settee, one at each end, and I had to twist my neck slightly to make reasonable eye contact which, after half an hour or so, began to ache. The tape recorders were on the coffee table in front of the settee. As she turned towards me, the light from the window directly behind her threw her face into deep shadow - an awkward arrangement but one I could do nothing about. My face on the other hand was in full light.

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<sup>9</sup> As Professor Ewa Morawska puts it, 'the field should speak to you' (personal communication).

<sup>10</sup> Here the use of the term 'scenic' derives from Lorenzer's clinical concept of 'scenic understanding' that he used to throw light on the transference-countertransference relationship. In the hands of psychosocial scholars it appears to be a somewhat indeterminate concept, although no less useful because of that. I subscribe to the more tangible and constrained interpretation of scenic understanding adopted by Bereswill et al (2010) and Hollway (2011b). According to Bereswill et al (2010) the 'scenic' is to be 'understood as an ongoing register of affective and embodied experience and meaning [and] does not disappear. Rather, it persists throughout life, infusing, animating and, importantly, resisting what is consciously known (p.226). 'Like a theatrical scene, it taps into a different mode of understanding - scenic understanding - that is more holistic, closer to tacit, unconscious knowing and capable of accessing societal-cultural unconscious knowledge' (Hollway 2011b, p.94).

<sup>11</sup> All participants agreed that I could take their 'portraits' (as a memory aid for me); they also permitted me to photograph their artifacts, images and documents as appropriate.

In this extract, the physical layout of a small room with very few seating options meant that Esther was comfortable while I got a crick in my neck. Her shaded face mirrored the guarded and self-effacing tone at the start of her testimony. As the interview evolved - and as I learnt more about the family through meeting her siblings - I became aware that the seating arrangement was taking on metaphorical qualities. During her childhood, she had been 'kept in the shade' by her father who was a very dominant figure, and with whom communication was invariably one-sided.<sup>12</sup> In the research interview, however, she was able to 'turn the tables' by creating a situation in which she had the upper hand. The seating arrangement enabled her to see my face clearly, whereas the backlight from the window meant I could barely make out hers. In this physical and psychosocial configuration she felt able to talk with greater freedom. This is a further extract from my field notes:

... she described not being able to answer her father back at any point in her life, then towards the end of the interview added 'I don't get the chance to talk about myself very often!' ... On the way home in the car, I was feeling rather tense - a feeling I couldn't really explain. But, once the thought emerged clearly, that what she really wanted was the chance to talk about herself, I suddenly relaxed! I was making no demands on her, neither was I 'crowding her out' with my own concerns or preoccupations. I was just prepared to listen.

This delayed awareness of the transference and countertransference dynamics in the interview raised questions in my mind about what participants might be seeking consciously or unconsciously from these interviews, and also what I might be seeking. Interviews, even those conducted by email, are relational engagements that go far beyond the mere exchange of words. They also entail 'presence' (face to face or by email), emotional tone, and non-verbal behaviours: complex reciprocities that impact the process and outcomes of the research (for example, Dickson-Swift et al 2007, 2009, Ezzy 2010, Pink 2015, Rose 2012, and Sparkes and Smith 2012).

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<sup>12</sup> Her father committed suicide, an act through which he continued to dominate the psychic lives of his children for many decades.

As the interviews progressed, I came to recognise that all parts of my research were elements within a dynamic and interconnected whole that was suffused with 'movement'. Participants possessed memories or fantasies of movement and travel, and the objects and images they showed me often embodied movement. Objects were like partners in dances of remembrance, at times valuable or even sacred like medals and diaries, at others they could become sources of jealousy and arguments between siblings. The artifacts and documents themselves had been on the move, not simply geographically but emotionally, as participants came to 're-see' items they had lost track of, or had forgotten about. The objects had a life 'on the move' that could be traced: in and out of different containers; out of one attic and into another; boxed, bagged and sometimes discarded; strewn across continents and oceans; variously loved, hated, or ignored. But I could not ignore what I was observing and feeling, partly because of its intrinsic intellectual fascination and partly because it resonated so acutely, and accurately, with my own experiences. What I was observing were not static and fixed tableaux (the interview environment, mementoes laid out on a table, nailed-down memories) but transitional resting places, thresholds between different locations and states of mind, held in a web of intersecting spatial and temporal movements. Movement, in both its physical and psychosocial senses, held a special place in the minds and hearts of the children of FEPOWs: the fathers' travels from home to foreign countries, traumatic journeys after incarceration (the 'hell ships'), the return home, and the psychological shifts needed to reintegrate into a changed society.

I realised that I needed some methodological assistance with this growing awareness. The psychosocial approach - and psychoanalytic theory in particular - seem less at ease when faced with aspects of the material world.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, when I

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<sup>13</sup> There are some exceptions. Winnicott's (1991) notions of the 'transitional object' and 'transitional phenomena' are clear and significant exceptions, and move us some way to understanding aspects of culture as a development of 'play' (and the objects related to that). More concretely, in an expansive, even exuberant, essay psychoanalyst Salman Akhtar (2003)

encountered actor network theory it seemed to offer a counterbalance. Its originator, Bruno Latour, was explicit in his aspirations:

What I want to do is to redefine the notion of social by going back to its original meaning and making it able to trace connections again. Then it will be possible to resume the traditional goal of the social sciences but with tools better adjusted to the task (Latour 2007, p.1).

Some object to ANT because it appears to give moral equivalence to objects and humans. However, Williams-Jones and Graham (2003) correct this misinterpretation by clarifying that 'human and non-human ... are treated as epistemologically equivalent for the purpose of critical analysis' (p.272). My response is to treat ANT more heuristically as a means of acknowledging the significance of objects in our social networks, in our lives and memories: that they are 'relational entities' (McGrail 2008).<sup>14</sup>

Many proponents of ANT maintain that is not a theory at all, but an 'intellectual tendency' (Nimmo 2011, p.108), a 'sensitivity' (Law and Singleton 2012, p.2), a 'disparate family of material-semiotic tools' (Law 2009, p.141), a 'diaspora that overlaps with other intellectual traditions' (p.142), or cannot get beyond the question, 'Is it a theory, a method, or something else?' (Baiochi et al 2013, p.335). So in the circumstances, I took advantage of the flexibility on offer.

... the metaphor of heterogeneous network ... lies at the heart of actor-network theory, and is a way of suggesting that society, organisations, agents and machines are all effects generated in patterned networks of diverse (not simply human) materials (Law 2003, p.2).

Through my practice, I concluded that ANT was not in conflict with the psychosocial approach,<sup>15</sup> but complemented it by adding a set of new conceptual tools, a language to

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begins his piece with a dedication 'to my mother's gramophone' and concludes with a parable from the life of Gandhi in which a pin plays the starring role.

<sup>14</sup> In the spirit of reflexivity, I would suggest that an interview transcript is a 'non-human' object which nevertheless is of critical significance and no little agency. As Jackson et al (2013) argue the 'text as the object of analysis should not be considered as a passive artifact. We experienced the narratives that we analyzed as possessing an affective agency wherein the "narrated participant" ... was communicated, was emergent, and was brought into an interactional and dynamic relationship with ourselves' (p.5).

<sup>15</sup> The psychosocial approach and ANT are both antagonistic to unhelpful dualisms (Murdoch 1997).

speak of objects (and other entities) as they existed in relation to people.<sup>16</sup> Rex had a profoundly ambivalent relationship with a collection of family letters:

Rex: There was a set of letters which I ha- ... actually really ha- ... I have not opened. I have not read. That [my mother] had sent to my father before Singapore fell. The good old British post office returned them. They were laid unopened in the same envelope ... After my mother died I opened them, but I haven't ... [lowers voice] I haven't read them.

Terry: You haven't read them.

Rex: It's too ... I'm too rubbish ...

Terry: Really?

Rex: Yeah, it would be [sound of voice cracking, and he starts weeping]

Terry: Do you think you'll ever, kind of ...? [shakes head]. ... No, right. Yeah.

Although he reached this revelation in slow and hesitant fashion, there was also a sense of inexorability about his disclosure. Telling me early in the interview suggested a pressing need to divulge; it seemed like an emotional hurdle to be overcome before further progress could be made. I took his words - 'After my mother died I opened them, but I haven't ... (lowers voice) I haven't read them' - to be a manifest invitation to respond. My mirroring of his words opened the floodgates, and his voice cracked into incoherence for a few seconds. At first, I was quite confused because I thought he was starting to laugh in an embarrassed, self mocking way, but then I saw that he was crying. I felt myself drawn into his emotion, and was left wondering just what he meant by 'I am rubbish'. After this intense episode, he kept his emotions under wraps for the rest of the interview. In ANT language, Rex and the set of letters were 'actants'<sup>17</sup> in a 'network' whose identities are 'defined through their interaction with other actors' (Cressman 2009, p.3). But, as we can see from the above brief analysis, it was the reflexivity and intersubjectivity of the psychosocial approach that allowed me to address the depth and subtleties of the connections between the two actants.

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<sup>16</sup> Fellenor (2015) uses the psychosocial approach alongside actor network theory in his PhD research into the experience of myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME). See Hunter (2008) who also argues for the compatibility between the two approaches in her analysis of the role of documents.

<sup>17</sup> Actor network theory 'does not limit itself to human individual actors, but extends the word actor - or actant - to non-human, non-individual entities' (Latour 1996, p.369).

Although I have focused primarily on actor network theory to raise the profile of artifacts in my research, scholars from other disciplines also address the role of objects (some of whom also draw on ANT). They show how artifacts and other elements in the material world may become entangled in social engagement through mediating emotions and becoming embedded with various social practices. This growing acknowledgement of the role of the material can be seen in anthropology (Ingold 2010, Miller 2008 and 2010), archaeology (Saunders 2005 and 2009),<sup>18</sup> cultural studies (Highmore 2011 and 2016), ethnography (Pink 2015), geography (Allen 2011), sociology (Reckwitz 2012) and social psychology (e.g. Turkle 2007).

### **The research relationship**

‘We are a family with common threads running through our lives’.  
(Rory - writing about what the children of FEPOWs share)

As the fieldwork proceeded, I grew more aware of how the interview was only one element within the wider relationship that I was developing with participants. However, much research literature, especially that emanating from the oral history tradition, focuses rather narrowly on the ‘research interview’, and rarely acknowledges the wider ‘research relationship’.<sup>19</sup> From the start of my fieldwork I had noticed that relationships with individual participants began well before the interview. Indeed, they began from my first awareness of a prospective participant (possibly even before this, in an anticipatory sense): the first email or phone call, a name, an address, then my reply, their language and communication styles. They sometimes mentioned their fathers: he was an officer, he was a private, he was ‘on the railway’, he died in the camp, and so on. From these first moments, unconscious responses based on past relationships came into play, expectations began to bubble under the surface, and these

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<sup>18</sup> A major contributor to the emergent field of ‘conflict archaeology’.

<sup>19</sup> One of the major texts in the field - *The Oral History Reader* (Perks and Thomson 2006) - fails to mention the term ‘relationship’ in the chapter titles or the index.

countertransference reactions continued throughout the relationship. So, for me at least, the research relationship extended from first awareness, through the interview and follow-up emails, and evolved further during the processes of transcription, analysis and write-up. Even now, as I bring this thesis to a formal close, each participant remains for me a dynamic psychic presence.<sup>20</sup>

Prior to the fieldwork, I drew up a list of 'open' questions to be used as prompts that I could use if I felt the participant (or I) was having particular difficulty with the free association method. In the event, I rarely used it. When I did it was towards the end of an interview to ensure that I had not inadvertently closed off any important topics through my own incompetence or anxiety. For some participants, and for me to some extent, the unstructured nature of the free association interview method did provoke some apprehension. Therefore, during the pre-interview phases, my priorities were to establish a working rapport and to ensure that participants had realistic expectations of the interview. My own preparation was important in managing interview anxiety, and included choosing opening questions that stimulated (or at least did not inhibit) the narrative flow. Normally, my first question invited participants to talk about their earliest childhood memories. This first question could carry particular weight. How would participants choose to begin? How much preparation had they undertaken before my arrival, and how might this affect how they chose to begin? Would emotional elements creep in, even at this early stage of the proceedings, or would they be more reticent? Would I be presented with a well-rehearsed script, or would responses be more spontaneous? In practice, some began with a well crafted monologue which evidently needed to be performed before more spontaneous testimony could appear, and a few introduced highly charged traumatic memories almost from the outset.

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<sup>20</sup> On an autobiographical note, in my career as a nurse I had met a number of people ('patients') whose stories stayed with me over many decades. This was especially the case with those who provoked strong countertransferences. Later, as a lecturer, and as a direct result of these early nursing experiences, I developed a module entitled 'The Caring Relationship' in which experienced health care professionals were able to tell their stories of patients who were 'special' to them.

If participants appeared to be struggling to recall something in particular, or when the narrative seemed to be 'drying up', I introduced the 'scenic memory' technique suggested by Rosenthal (1998, p.3): I encouraged them to think themselves back into a physical location, and asked them what they could 'see and hear'. Following what Kidron (2009) learned from her interviewees - that 'the Holocaust was present in my home' (p.5) - I asked about how their father's POW life was present during their childhood, usually indirectly, through questions such as 'What would I have seen or heard if I had been a fly on the wall during your childhood?'

My interviews rarely conformed to a tidy or idealized model of the 'free association narrative interview' (if there is such a thing), but they did nevertheless allow participants the time and freedom to talk about their lives with minimal interference from me. Reflecting on interviews after the event was not always a comfortable experience. The following is from a field note written after my interview with Deirdre:

I realize that I am capable of listening to her account of very harsh physical and psychological treatment by her father with a degree of equanimity ... and I wonder why this is. Looking back, as a child I had to isolate myself from psychological stresses. Later, as a mental health nurse, I had to listen to many bizarre and painful stories, without giving away anything personal. Did this have some effect on my capacity to feel participants' expressions of pain 'in the moment'?

Later, listening to recordings and reading through transcripts, I sometimes felt more emotion than I did when carrying out the interview, an outcome that seemed to contradict Karpf's (2014) criticism of the flattening effects of the transcription process. I experienced some guilt about this: not because I did not express sympathy towards the person, but because I did not seem to 'feel' at the time.

An explicit and significant feature of the research relationship was that I was perceived by participants to be an 'insider', part of their generation. Wiederhold (2015) argues that

a meaningful difference exists between being a member of the same cultural group as your participants and actually sharing a personal history, a social network, and an assumed place-based investment in the future with them - as experienced by those scholars who conduct their research in the places they call home (p.600).

My own position fell somewhere between the two: we shared a biographical fact, and perhaps membership of various rather loose FEPOW organisations, together with some activities that derived from those memberships. But usually very little else.

Agreeing to become a participant in this research provided an opportunity to speak about quite personal and occasionally traumatic experiences to a person they judged trustworthy and 'safe'. I was generally perceived to be 'one of them' because I shared the critical experience of having a father who had been a FEPOW. At the start, this trust was provisional, I was 'on probation', until the interview got underway and they could test out my manner and level of understanding, and check their preconceptions. I passed on something of my own personal experiences if they asked. However, if they wanted more than a quick response - e.g. which camp was your dad in then? - I explained that I would be happy to do this but at the 'end' of the interview. In the few cases where this occurred, I discovered that a modicum of personal disclosure could take the interview to a new - usually deeper - emotional level. There were dangers in this, of course, and to ensure that the thesis emerged as a balanced analysis, rooted in the data, I had to ensure I did not allow my or my father's stories to push aside those of the people I was researching. In the event, the participants' stories proved to be an excellent and powerful corrective to this tendency.

Military rank could be a sensitive subject. Rex asked me outright whether my father had been an officer. In fact, he was a private - a gunner in the Royal Artillery - with a lingering distrust of the officer class. Once revealed, this fact seemed to play a part in how he 'weighed me up'. Much later in the interview, though, he found a way of ameliorating the situation. I told him my father had been a coal miner in Japan:

Rex: It was a coal mine?

Terry: A coal mine.

Rex: Oh, I didn't understand that. Oh, my God. ... Bloody hell! ... Was he fed sufficiently?

It was as if he had been searching for something to validate my father's war time identity and raise his status in both our eyes (and vicariously mine in his). The relationship warmed noticeably from that point and, very soon afterwards, he asked 'Do you want something to drink?'

The 'insider-outsider' dichotomy is both a useful and a confusing construct. Its utility as a heuristic device seems well established in the literature, and proved useful to me in conceptualizing my own position in this research.<sup>21</sup> From my experience, while 'insider' status certainly eased access, there were also countervailing pressures, such as the need to remain alert to what participants were taking for granted, and also what assumptions I might be bringing to the interview. For instance, some participants assumed we shared similar attitudes towards the Japanese or to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Others expected me to be an expert on the history of the war in the Far East<sup>22</sup> or of the politics of FEPOW activism.

### **Planning and implementing the fieldwork**

I was seduced by the notion of fieldwork, the idea of going some place to find a story I wasn't looking for (Behar 2003, p.16).

Interviewing is rather like marriage: everybody knows what it is, an awful lot of people do it, and yet behind each closed front door there is a world of secrets (Oakley 1981, p.31).

The only criterion for recruitment was that participants must have a father who had been a British POW in the Far East during World War Two. I had initially considered restricting the study to children whose fathers had survived the war, but that was until I

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<sup>21</sup> See Hellowell (2006) for a perceptive discussion of these issues, and Paechter (2012) for a summary of the benefits and drawbacks of the insider position.

<sup>22</sup> I have a reasonable working knowledge of the context, but I am not an historian in the sense that some participants expected. As this thesis will show, some participants were self-made historians of considerable expertise, an issue that I address in Chapter 7.

received an email from a man whose father had died in a POW camp. Despite not knowing his father, his life had been scarred by the loss, and had played on his mind throughout his life. I anticipated that other variables might emerge as significant during the analysis, for example the rank of the father, whether the child was born before or after the war, family size and structure, social background and occupation, education, and the age at which the child first became aware of his/her father's ex-POW status and experience. But I did not contemplate using these as selection criteria because I wished to ensure the cohort represented a wide spread of experience, consistent with what Bryman (2012) refers to as a 'maximum variation' sample (p.419).

In January 2014, I posted a request on a Far East Prisoner of War community internet group,<sup>23</sup> giving basic details of who I was, the purpose of my PhD, and inviting expressions of interest (see Appendix 4). In the invitation, I shared the fact that my father had also been a FEPOW, and the responses I received suggested that this disclosure gave readers the confidence to express further interest (Humphrey 2007, Kidron 2004, Paechter 2012, Wiederhold 2015). The online invitation generated a healthy response (eight within the first three hours), and at first I was concerned that this might imply excessive homogeneity in the final sample. However, this proved not to be the case. The FEPOW online group was much more diverse than I had expected and included members who were deeply involved - almost 'professional' in their level of engagement and expertise - but also many others whose interest was sporadic or marginal. I supplemented this purposive sampling (Robinson 2014) with a 'snowball' approach which arose spontaneously in the course of the fieldwork, as existing participants recommended others. Much to my surprise, I also made contact with a family of five siblings after an ex-student of mine, a partner of one of the siblings, chanced upon my University of Essex website profile. At the start of the research, I was oblivious to the possibility of interviewing siblings but, by the end, I had interviewed

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<sup>23</sup> Far East Prisoner of War Community <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/Fepow-Community/info>

siblings from seven different families (a total of nineteen interviews). Although this limited the number of different families involved, it was more than compensated for by the wider range of perspectives. I followed up all online expressions of interest by sending the 'information sheet' for the research (see Appendix 5).

It is important to remain aware of how the sample was constructed and how it might have shaped my findings. The data in Appendix 3 show that middle class participants were over-represented (85% middle class). This is perhaps unsurprising given that I am based in the East of England and needed to manage the project within strict cost and time constraints. Although I used a web-based FEPOW discussion group to recruit the sample, a high proportion of participants (36%) were based in London and the South East, and these are the UK regions with a greater than average middle class population and relatively high income levels.<sup>24</sup> As is clear from the tables in Appendix 2, most participants were in a higher social class than their fathers (49% of fathers were middle class compared with 85% of their children).<sup>25</sup>

The cultural capital that often accompanies a middle class lifestyle may have given prospective participants the confidence to reply to my invitation. However, class is only one variable to consider; I suspect that emotional factors would have been equally or more significant. Assuming that some people read the invitation but decided not to participate, we can only speculate on their reasons. They may have been anxious not to revive painful memories<sup>26</sup> or, alternatively, they may have considered their experiences too mundane to warrant putting themselves forward. In addition, there

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/scale-economic-inequality-uk>

<sup>25</sup> Social changes in the 1960s may have influenced this, especially those relating to education. It was a period of 'low unemployment and relative economic prosperity' during which 'for the first time ever, a British government spent more on education than on defence'. See <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/history/chapter06.html>. Higher education was expanded, and major curriculum changes took place throughout the school system (Marwick 2003).

<sup>26</sup> Deirdre, whose story features prominently in several chapters, was from a working class background. Her current profession as a manager places her firmly in the middle classes. Both she and her twin sister suffered at the hands of their violent father, and Deirdre was unsure about whether or not to participate in the research for fear of 'opening doors that had been shut a long time'. Her sister had also agreed to be interviewed, until she withdrew at the last minute. Deirdre's thoughts on the matter are included at the end of the 'Summary and Conclusions'.

were likely to be significant numbers who were not involved with, or indeed were unaware of, the COFEPOW 'community'. Despite these imponderables, I would argue that the 'maximum variation sample' which finally emerged established broad parameters, within which lay behaviours and emotional circumstances recognisable to many of those in the wider population of children with ex-FEPOW fathers.

My initial target had been to conduct single, face-to-face interviews with 25-30 participants. By the end of the fieldwork, I had carried out face-to-face interviews with 34 participants: 16 women and 18 men. Most interviews lasted between two and three hours. 33 of the interviews took place in the UK, and one in Japan (part of a 'pilgrimage'). 13 participants contributed by email (6 women and 7 men): 5 UK-based participants through choice or because of logistical barriers, and 8 from overseas (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, USA). I undertook a maximum of two face-to-face interviews in any one week, and I completed all interviews by the end of January 2015. See Appendices 1, 2 and 3 for further details of individual participants.

In every case, I asked for the consent form to be completed at the end of the interview, so that participants were aware of what had been covered (see Appendix 6). In two cases, spouses/partners sat in for the whole interview. In one, a partner wanted to support a 'vulnerable' participant through the process; in the other, I interviewed in the evening and it was clear on my arrival that the couple were 'settled' into their normal living room routine. The choice of where to conduct the interview was left in the hands of the participants. My only demands were for a reasonably quiet environment and a nearby surface for my digital recorders.<sup>27</sup> This arrangement worked well and the only recordings I 'lost' were a few on the back-up recorder when the battery or the memory ran out.<sup>28</sup> Although I warned participants that I might take notes, and usually kept a pen and pad discreetly to one side for this purpose, in the event I never did. I had

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<sup>27</sup> A good quality Olympus LS-12 Linear PCM Recorder for the main recording, together with an old Olympus WS-200S Digital Voice Recorder as back-up.

<sup>28</sup> After the first occasion, I always warned participants at the start of the interview what an unexpected 'bleep' would mean.

invited participants to share photographs and artifacts as part of the interview (de Nardi 2014), and all participants did so. Indeed, several went to great lengths to organize materials ready for my arrival. Within 48 hours of every interview, I thanked the participant by email and asked any follow-up questions. This further contact extended the relationship, and frequently brought forth new information.

### **Transcribing and analysing the data**

Initially, my aim had been to fully transcribe each recorded interview as soon as possible after completion. However, I soon realized that I needed to devote myself fully to the interview process over an extended period. As a result, I finished most of the interviews before starting to transcribe. I carried out the transcriptions myself which, for me, was vital role in allowing me to 'relive' the interview and to avoid any 'flattening out' of the emotional content (Scates et al 2014, p.210). At the start, I had envisaged fully transcribing all face-to-face interviews. However, this proved impracticable. After I had fully transcribed seventeen interviews (nine women and eight men), I adopted a more flexible approach and only selectively transcribed the other seventeen. I also kept reflexive field notes on all participants, at all stages of the research. Of course, contributions from the thirteen email participants did not require transcription.

I transcribed the recordings into Word documents, and then carried out an initial thematic analysis using NVivo for Mac, adopting stages 1-3 of the 'Framework Analysis' variant (Ward et al 2013).<sup>29</sup> NVivo was valuable in managing all the written elements of the research: the written transcripts, field notes and academic papers. However, through trial and error (and advice from one of its originators)<sup>30</sup> I soon realised that this form of analysis had serious limitations in handling complex and

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<sup>29</sup> The stages are: 1. Familiarization - through immersion in the data. 2. Developing a theoretical framework by identifying recurrent and important themes. 3. Index and pilot charting. 4. Summarizing data in analytical framework. 5. Synthesizing data by mapping and interpreting. (Ward et al 2013, pp.5-6).

<sup>30</sup> Liz Spencer (e.g. Ritchie, Spencer and O'Connor 2003). Personal communication.

fluctuating themes with origins in different parts of the text. McAdams (2012) makes a similar point:

A psychological theme is not likely to be indicated by any particular word, nor captured fully in a phrase or single sentence. Instead, a theme is typically drawn as an inference from an extended passage of text. In the context of discovery, it is not necessary to specify strict or formal parameters for determining themes. In order to cast the widest possible exploratory net, the researcher needs to read the narrative passages with an open and discerning mind, searching for ideas that strike the ear as especially salient, recurrent, surprising, or potentially revealing of central psychological dynamics and issues ... (p.18).

Although the process of transcription may seem dull in comparison with the inherent vitality of the interviews, I often experienced embodied responses comparable to those described by Andrew Sparkes (Sparkes and Smith 2012):

My stomach churns and I feel a wave of anxiety spread throughout my body. I feel sick and want to block out such thoughts and feelings. I often feel like this when I read part of the interview transcripts. The deep visceral nature of my feelings is as inescapable as it is indescribable (p.60).

Critical to my approach has been the need to re-immense myself in the recordings to re-animate my imagination and recall of the interviews. In preparing the thesis, I have aimed to produce extracts of transcripts that are readable, whilst staying true to the sense of the rhythms and emotions of the spoken word. I have retained hesitations and fragmented grammar when these seemed essential to reflect the emotionality of the narrative. I have also included a number of lengthy extracts where these were needed to preserve narrative and emotional coherence.

In using psychoanalytic concepts as the basis of interpretation, Hollway and Jefferson (2013) are careful to distinguish between the interpretation used in therapy and its deployment in psychosocial research. I aimed to enter into a dialogue with the data gathered from interviews, applying psychoanalytic constructs cautiously to avoid 'wild analysis' - a term used to describe the 'overstretched or implausible use' of such

ideas (p.154).<sup>31</sup> There are also dangers in using psychoanalytic insights reductively, as pointed out by Roper (2009, p.24). Unlike long term psychoanalysis where interpretations are made within a session (Hollway and Jefferson 2013, p.156), my face to face contacts with participants were confined to single interviews, albeit lengthy and often intense. Following Hollway and Jefferson, any interpretative observations I made were limited to post-interview data analysis and I did not discuss these with participants. The fact that interpretation in the hands of a social researcher 'is separate from the participant and has a different audience' (p.72) should negate any serious ethical concerns (see also the paper by Alexandrov 2009). Cultivating a psychoanalytic sensibility encouraged, across the entire research process, but perhaps especially during the analysis, a form of intellectual 'roaming' akin to Ogden's (1997, 2004) idea of 'reverie' through which disparate ideas and experiences can be associated or synthesized.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have discussed how I arrived at my particular methodology, and have explored some of the intricacies of implementation. While I recognise that the psychosocial approach, oral history, visual ethnology and actor network theory may not appear obvious bedfellows, I found that in my research they proved largely compatible and complementary to one another.

However, I want to conclude on a more subjective note. I had anticipated the level of emotional demand, both from the content of the testimony and from the stress entailed in conducting an interview over which one had only loose control. But I was much less well prepared for the cognitive challenge. Reflecting on why this might have been the case, I eventually concluded that much of it resulted from the demands of

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<sup>31</sup> Given my background in mental health work, I had to resist the temptation to 'spot the defence mechanism'. In practice, this was much easier than I had expected, an outcome that I speculated might have been due to my 'insider' role.

handling time (or, more precisely 'times') within the immediacy of the interview. Throughout each interview, I felt I was balancing three temporal dimensions simultaneously: 'physical time' (as measure by my watch), 'biographical time' (the chronologies of both our personal stories - the participants' and mine - including any intersections between the two), and 'historical time' (related to the historical events preceding and running alongside our personal stories, details of the war in the Far East and so on). While the emotional demands of qualitative interviewing have been long recognised (e.g. Bornat 2010, Goldenberg 2002, Hunt 1989, Klemppner 2000, Laub 1992b), these cognitive and temporal aspects of interviewing appear not to have received the same level of attention in the literature.

## CHAPTER TWO

### TRAUMA AND INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION

‘The fathers ate sour grapes, and the children’s teeth were set on edge.’

(Ezekiel 18:1-4)

‘Tightly guarded family secrets, awkward pauses in communication, missing photographs, hidden letters, unexplained tears at the mention of a city far away, phobically avoided television shows, and telling slips of tongue, together constitute the invisible pathway through which traumatic experiences of one generation are passed on to the next.’ (Salman Akhtar)<sup>1</sup>

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I focus on the processes through which the experiences and memories of the FEPOWs influenced and shaped the lives of their children. Core sections examine the nature and impact of trauma, its expression in posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and the complex means by which trauma was transmitted between generations.

Amongst theories of transmission, I argue that attachment theory offers a potent explanation for the unsettled early relationships between many participants and their fathers. The chapter proceeds from a review of selected literature on trauma to research findings on intergenerational transmission, before broadening out to consider the relationship between trauma and history, aesthetic responses to trauma representation, embodied processes of transmission, and finishes by asking whether trauma must always lead to negative outcomes.

#### **FEPOW trauma and the holocaust paradigm**

Given the thin body of research focusing specifically on FEPOWs and intergenerational transmission, I have drawn on cognate literature as a source of relevant constructs and conceptual frameworks, especially the extensive range of studies deriving from the

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<sup>1</sup> From Akhtar’s endorsement of *Lost in Transmission* edited by M. Gerald Fromm (2012).

Holocaust. This deep well of Holocaust research has been regularly drawn upon by scholars in other settings.<sup>2</sup>

Without in any way being drawn into the morally dubious topic of trauma 'ranking', we need to acknowledge the distinct differences between the Holocaust and the circumstances of the FEPOWs. While Holocaust victims were civilians uprooted from their homes and homelands, and their communities dismantled, FEPOWs were overseas military combatants who found themselves, tragically, in the wrong place at the wrong time. Although the Japanese military inflicted widespread brutality, the FEPOWs were not subjected to systematic extermination as a matter of state policy, or affected by the 'cultural transmission' embedded within centuries of anti-Semitism, or the recursive responses to that history.<sup>3</sup> Kellerman (2009) writes of 'a prolonged *chronic horror existence*' to describe this process (p.16, italics in original).

Writing about Holocaust testimonies, LaCapra (2001) debates the challenges implicit in traumatic events like the Holocaust which lie on the edge of human imagination (so-called 'limit events'), and poses questions about the risks of considering these as 'inaccessible, unrepresentable other[s]', likely to provoke 'silent awe' (p.93).

With a degree of passion, he cautions that one 'dubious consequence' might be:

.... a construction of these events in terms of an undifferentiated, rashly generalized, hyperbolic aesthetic of the sublime or even a (positive or negative) sacralization of the event which may prompt a foreclosure, denigration, or inadequate account not only of representation but of the difficult issue of ethically responsible agency both then and now (p.93).

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<sup>2</sup> E.g. Aboriginal trauma in Canada (Bombay et al 2009), the Cambodian genocide (Kidron 2012a), the Rwandan genocide (Roth et al 2014), the Northern Ireland 'troubles' (Burns et al 2010, Dawson 2005), and trauma in both Croatia (Klain and Pavic 2002) and in Ireland (Coll et al 2012).

<sup>3</sup> See Novick (1999) for a wide-ranging discussion of the complexities entailed in the post war transmission of Holocaust experiences where the 'scars do the work of the wound', including the dangers of 'making the Holocaust the emblematic Jewish experience' (p.281). See also Pickering and Keightley's (2012) discussion of cultural memory and 'communities of memory' regarding the Holocaust, and how 'experience derived from others becomes integrated into our own life-stories' (p.115).

LaCapra is warning against seeing human-directed mass trauma as unrepresentable, which could carry the danger of restricting the opportunities for individuals and communities to 'work through' the pain. Society needs to find ways of dealing with these traumas, and historians have a responsibility in facilitating this, and thus 'to give a place in historiography to the voices of victims and survivors' (p.113).

Kellermann (2009) writes of acts of 'merciless cruelty' (p.17) that he argues were seen uniquely in the Holocaust. My reading of the FEPOW situation, based on written accounts, online discussions and participants' testimonies, is that acts of cruelty inflicted by the Imperial Japanese Army were comparable to Holocaust brutality in the depth of their localized depravity; indeed these horrors continue to circulate in the darker recesses of contemporary FEPOW discourse.<sup>4</sup> Massacres, mutilations, medical experiments, hell ships, death marches, and cannibalism all figure powerfully (see for example Tanaka 1998,<sup>5</sup> and Felton 2015). Gwen recounted one of her father's stories:

... one night they [the Japanese] gave them a dinner - the POWs - and then the next day at tenko<sup>6</sup> they said, did you enjoy your Christmas dinner, because it was made with the liver of a POW?

Although Gwen's family background was challenging at many levels, family members communicated freely and were emotionally expressive which may have minimized the risks of 'foreclosure' when faced with images of extreme trauma. I turn now to the notion of trauma itself, and explore its immediate and longer term impact on the psyche.

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<sup>4</sup> On a visit to Japan in 2010, a fellow traveller - the daughter-in-law of a FEPOW - recounted an event her father-in-law had witnessed personally. That is all I can write on the topic. To this day, I cannot bring myself to share her description with anyone else. When the mental images threaten to appear, I actively suppress my own thoughts. I choose not to further inflict this 'deposited representation' (Volkan and Greer 2007).

<sup>5</sup> Professor of History at Hiroshima University, Yuki Tanaka authored the first account, by a Japanese, of Japanese war crimes during WW2.

<sup>6</sup> Tenko is the Japanese word for 'roll call'.

## The nature of trauma

If every age has its symptoms, ours appears to be the age of trauma.  
(Miller and Tougaw 2002, p.1)

The use of the term 'trauma' has become widespread in popular culture as well as scholarly circles - 'inflated in its application' to use the words of Zepf and Zepf (2008, p.331). Jeffrey Prager (2011) sets out the broad parameters:

The concept of trauma has migrated over time. A term first employed to describe a form of bodily or physical harm became a description of an overwhelming psychological experience suffered by an individual. Trauma now can also describe events of a nation's past where prior experiences jeopardize current social solidarity and interfere with members' ability to function freely in the collectivity. The identification of social trauma often serves as a prelude to development of policies of healing, forgiveness, or reconciliation (p.425).

Fassin and Rechtman (2009) also point to the social consequences of trauma's new big identity. From this conceptual remodeling, 'victimhood' emerges as a pervasive status with institutional implications. Lawyers encourage victims of trauma to seek compensation, teams of mental health professionals remain ready to offer 'trauma counselling', and the discipline of 'traumatology' has been newly minted. A possible casualty is the unique experience of the individual, threatening to be swept aside by the 'master status' of trauma victim (Becker 1963). This process has been at work in the FEPOW community: as numbers have dwindled, the status of 'FEPOW' has increased in value, casting these elderly men into the role of minor celebrities. Various vested interests have encouraged this shift, including FEPOW organisations themselves, and state agencies that wish to exploit the ex-FEPOWs at remembrance events.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Zwigenberg (2014) discusses the rise of the 'hero-victim' in relation to Hiroshima. He points to the complexity involved in this 'rise', arguing that it 'is not one of the linear rise of the "victim-hero," but of multiple coalitions that rose and fell. It is a story of contradictions and ambiguities ... messy, multi-directional and open to many interpretations (p.7). I suspect many ex-FEPOWs found their elevation to more parochial hero status equally ambiguous, as well as unpredictable and quite disorientating.

Psychoanalyst, Renos Papadopoulos (2015) picks up on the dilemma engendered by the widespread usage of the term trauma.

But what do we mean by “trauma”? The question is important because today the word “trauma” is used in diverse contexts that cover the widest possible spectrum, from the most debilitating psychiatric conditions to the most innocuous and trivial forms of discomfort. A cursory look at the daily newspapers in every country testifies to this astonishing array of meanings. Yet the idea persists that all of us understand precisely what one means by “trauma.” It is commonly known that trauma, a Greek word, means wound or injury and that it comes from the Greek verb, *titrosko*, meaning “to pierce.” Hence the mark of being pierced or wounded is the injury, the trauma.

Papadopoulos then redirects his discussion into more esoteric territory, and offers an intriguing and evocative psychic twist.

My own etymological research shows that the origin of the verb “to pierce” (*titrosko*) in Greek is the verb *teiro*, “to rub,” and in ancient Greek it had two meanings—to rub in and to rub off, to rub away. When one rubs in something on one’s skin, inevitably that will produce some piercing of the skin and, consequently, a wound. However, rubbing off or rubbing away has a completely different outcome. It would be to erase something, as one rubs off pencil writing on paper using a rubber or an eraser. Accordingly, a devastating experience may indeed break the skin, the protective membrane of our psychological system and cause a psychological injury (a “trauma”). But at the same time, it also has the power to erase previously held and maybe outdated or ill-adapted views and values. People who have suffered calamitous events will experience in addition to psychological injury a powerful sense of reviewing their entire lives. ... “Because I came so close to death, now I see myself, my life, and life in general differently...” And they will add their own experience of this kind of change, for instance they value life more, they do not want to waste their life with inconsequential pursuits, etc. (p.44)

Papadopoulos’s etymological exploration triggers interesting associations. At a theoretical level it resonates with Anzieu’s ideas on the ‘skin-ego’ (Anzieu 2016, Baraitser 2014). Anzieu contends that ‘every psychical function develops by supporting itself upon a bodily function whose workings it transposes on to the mental plane’ (Anzieu 2010 p.478). This close ‘correspondence’ between the ‘organic and the psychical’ is based on the skin and brain’s common embryological origins<sup>8</sup> and goes some way to explaining the complex, and under appreciated, role of the skin in FEPOW

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<sup>8</sup> Embryologically, both the brain and skin derive from the ectoderm.

trauma (a topic that I treat further in Chapters 3 and 4). Papadopoulos's suggestion that trauma may encourage victims to review and re-evaluate their lives was exemplified by the altruism of the ex-FEPOWs who advocated for the war widows in their disputes with the government over entitlement to pensions.<sup>9</sup>

### **The psychic impact of trauma**

Trauma does not impose itself in neat or predictable patterns. Long term trauma is not completely distinguishable from the disruptive impact of 'acute' trauma; the latter can punctuate the former, which itself will wax and wane. Trauma may be revived many years after the initial traumatising event (or series of events) (e.g. Renn 2012). Painful experiences may have been repressed, yet remain ready and active within the unconscious, causing memories of the past to break through into the present. These phenomena come to the fore in Chapter 4. Trauma can be so appalling, so removed from the realms of normal human behaviour, that it seems to lay completely outside the reach of human comprehension or symbolization (e.g. Hutchison and Bleiker 2008).

'Whatever lived inside me was so potent that words crumbled before they could describe' (Epstein 1979, p.9).

As we saw from LaCapra (2001), traumas and social convulsions on a grand scale create conditions that individuals may find it impossible to adequately symbolize (Davoine and Gaudillière 2004, p.25; Laub 2005). The impact of acute trauma is often described in language that alludes to a 'break' of some kind. Levine (2014) summarises succinctly the impact of severe trauma on the psyche:

That which earns the designation trauma is that which outstrips and disrupts the psyche's capacity for representation or mentalization. That which cannot be represented or mentalized—thought about or contained within the mind—cannot enter into one's subjectivity or the reflective view of one's personal history. ... they remain locked within an ahistorical, repetitive process as

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<sup>9</sup> We might see such altruistic behaviour as a positive consequence of 'survivor guilt' (O'Connor et al 2000).

potentials for action, somatization, and projection (p. 219).<sup>10</sup>

A 'shutdown of narrative and symbolisation' is how Dori Laub chooses to frame trauma (Laub 2012, p.31). As Graham put it from a son's perspective,

I can't cope with it. I can't cope with anything to do with what he ... what he experienced... I can't cope with anything like that. I don't like watching it on a television even. And I wouldn't see ... I wouldn't go and see any films that were supposed to take place in any situation like he was in.

Laub (2012) goes on to ask whether massive trauma might also attack and destroy the individual's 'internalized sense of goodness' (Kirshner 1994, p.238).<sup>11</sup> He conjectures that, undisturbed, this loss of the 'good object' may expose the individual's 'death instinct-related voids' (p.51). Put another way, 'the psyche is overwhelmed by external horrors that find their equivalents in the unconscious ... meanings are too threatening to entertain' (Boulanger 2005, p.21). Giving empirical credence to these ideas, I noticed that the testimonies of the most severely traumatised participants often revealed broader themes centred on death, despair and melancholia. Throughout his testimony, James was drawn back to themes of death and loss: his father's severe POW trauma and his domineering and controlling behaviour, culminating in his suicide in 1969. James had suffered with feelings of guilt and ambivalence throughout his life. The suicide 'kinda just blew the family apart, completely. Shattered everything. I thought it was my fault. And I've discovered since that ev-every one of us<sup>12</sup> thought it was their fault ... the immediate reaction [to the suicide] was relief'. James's sister Angie gave her response to the suicide even more starkly: 'After his suicide I was glad that he had done it. ... it straightaway solved a lot of problems for my mother and forever removed his

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<sup>10</sup> The relationship between trauma and recall remains contentious as Bohleber (2007) points out. Some empirical research challenges the 'disruption' model of trauma as far as memory is concerned, suggesting that 'memories of acutely stressful and traumatic events are predominantly highly detailed, extremely constant and, as far as can be judged, also relatively reliable' (p.337).

<sup>11</sup> See also Shay (2014) on 'moral injury'.

<sup>12</sup> There were five siblings.

unfortunate behaviour from our lives. It was years before I began to grieve'.<sup>13</sup> Whether it is necessary to have recourse to a 'death instinct' to explain what is happening psychically in these situations is a moot point (De Masi 2015) but there was no denying the thematic presence of death in several testimonies.

In the course of everyday life, we feel our experiences and sense of self to be integrated, so much so that they simply hum along in the background, in the way our autonomic nervous system quietly takes care of our breathing and heart contractions. But under the strain of severe trauma, disruption can occur, at which point we become conscious that something is wrong, although we may have trouble articulating it clearly. This difficulty is the result of dissociation (Bradfield 2011, Chu 2011), the process by which we unconsciously 'split off and dissociate the affect initially associated with the traumatic event or situation' (Teicholz 2014, (p.365).

For ex-FEPOWs and their families, the longer term impact of trauma presented fundamental challenges to family functioning.

Trauma is the destruction of attachment. Chronic trauma is characterized by the sudden and continued loss of attachment: not just to people and places, but to everything one thought was sacrosanct and untouchable (Alford 2015, p.270).

Alford's quotation provides a helpful segue between trauma and attachment. Many of the accounts given by participants shared a common quality: a sense of disturbance in their early relationships with their fathers that threatened the establishment of a secure 'attachment'. This disturbance could be triggered by either the father's traumatic imposition of raw affect on the child, or by the enforced 'absence' of emotion.

Attachment has shown itself to be a valuable construct for addressing these dynamics (e.g. Alford 2015, Bar-On et al 1998, Bradfield 2011, de Zulueta 2009, Liotti

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<sup>13</sup> My interview with Angie was by email, and it was hard even confusing to read her emotions expressed so bluntly. With James, the 'relief' at his father's death was easier to accommodate and contextualize because it emerged in the course of a face-to-face interview.

2004, Fonagy 1999a, Fonagy and Campbell 2015). Stein et al (2015), in their recent paper on attachment and war captivity, introduce the concept of ‘attachment injuries’ (p.128), said to result from the loss of interpersonal trust created by captivity. The ex-FEPOWs repatriated the ‘injuries’ sustained in the camps into their homes and into the lives of their children.

As Palm (2014) explains ‘the story of attachment theory begins with John Bowlby (1982),<sup>14</sup> who describes attachment as an intense and enduring emotional bond that is rooted in the function of protection of infants from danger’ (p.283).

All of us, from the cradle to the grave, are happiest when life is organized as a series of excursions, long or short, from the secure base provided by our attachment figure(s). (Bowlby 1998, p.61)

Attachment theory has generated a number of influential explanatory concepts that illuminate the early lives and relationships of the participants in this research.

‘Attachment theory is in essence a *spatial* theory: when I am close to my loved one I feel good, when I am far away I am anxious, sad or lonely’ (Holmes 1993, p.67). It is a psychoanalytic theory that values biology and scientific empiricism, which contrasts with the retrospection of traditional psychoanalytic thought. Bowlby’s (1982) own words explain his position:

In creating this body of theory not only Freud but virtually all subsequent analysts have worked from an end-product backwards. Primary data are derived from studying, in the analytic setting, a personality more or less developed and already functioning more or less well; from those data the attempt is made to reconstruct the phases of personality that have preceded what is now seen.

In many respects what is attempted here is the opposite. Using as primary data observations of how very young children behave in defined situations, an attempt is made to describe certain early phases of personality functioning and, from them, to extrapolate forwards. In particular, the aim is to describe certain patterns of response that occur regularly in early childhood and, thence, to trace out how similar patterns of response are to be discerned in the functioning of later personality. The change in perspective is radical (p.28).

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<sup>14</sup> Bowlby was a psychoanalyst much influenced by the work of the early ethologists - an awkward cohabitation in the eyes of many of his colleagues (Fonagy and Campbell 2015, Holmes 1993, Mitchell 1998).

Bowlby suggested that attachment is an autonomous drive for protection and safety evidenced in the young of both humans and animals (Davis 2007). The child seeks a 'secure base' from which to explore the world, in the knowledge that, should danger arise, the attachment figure is still there to offer protection (Bowlby 1998). As a result of its attachment experiences, the child creates an 'internal working model' of itself and others and, if all goes well, develops a secure sense of self. If all does not go well, and a secure base is not established, the internal working model will be based on insecure and traumatic experiences, and 'an internalized sense of danger/inability to cope becomes part of the defining feature of the personality' (Davis 2007, p.181). The way in which attachment patterns unfold during childhood is critical because, once established, they remain broadly stable between infancy and adulthood (Fonagy 1999a, Howe 2011).

Attachment patterns may also be passed between generations (Bretherton and Munholland 2008, Fonagy 1999a, van IJzendoorn 1995) and thus contribute to the ways in which trauma is transmitted in the family. As Fonagy (1999b) argues 'caregivers with unresolved experiences of mourning and trauma appear to cause disorganization in their infants' attachment relationships' (p.95). But the variables involved are considerable. For instance, Bar-On et al (1998) uses attachment theory to explore confounding factors such as whether or not the children were directly exposed to the 'symptoms of parents' trauma - nightmares, psychotic breakdowns, crying depression, preoccupation'; and the presence or otherwise of an attachment figure (e.g. the mother) to 'buffer' the experience of the child ('protective relationships') (p.335).

Following Bowlby's lead,<sup>15</sup> most studies have focused on the mother-child attachment relationship, but recognition of the father's role has grown more in recent decades (Fearon 2010). Palm (2014) investigated how the father's characteristics might

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<sup>15</sup> Roper (2016) speculates on how Bowlby's focus on the mother may have been connected with his own childhood experiences: 'The emphasis that John Bowlby (b. 1907) placed on maternal attachments and the emotional damage caused by separation may not have been unrelated to his father's four year absence as a surgeon-general during the First World War, overseeing the treatment of sometimes horrific wounds on the Western Front, or to the young Bowlby's experience of being among mourning adults' (p.64).

influence attachment. Those factors associated with secure attachment included the father's sensitivity in play (Grossmann et al 2002), his ability to understand how his child is thinking ('mind-mindedness') which enables 'synchronous interaction', his beliefs about his role (Wong et al 2009), and 'paternal state of mind' (Madigan et al 2011). A patchwork quilt of research findings to be sure. But, taken together, they highlight the significance of the father's role, and may act as sensitizing concepts in the analysis of participants' testimonies.

Around one third of FEPOWs are thought to have suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Robson et al 2009). Since 1980, PTSD has had the starring role in the story of trauma and intergenerational transmission. By drawing together 'the symptoms of what had previously been called shell shock, combat stress, delayed stress syndrome, and traumatic neurosis', the American Psychiatric Association (APA) 'finally officially acknowledged the long-recognized but frequently ignored phenomenon under the title of "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder" (PTSD)' (Caruth 1995), and placed it firmly within the province of medical nosology. However, reframing personal distress so firmly within a medical context is not without controversy.

Contemporary trauma psychiatry is dominated by the notion of PTSD, the most clinically significant diagnostic and causative change in the specialty during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, as successful as this diagnosis has been in delineating psychological responses to life threatening events, it may have led to the loss of an older and more inclusive interpretation of distress (Jones and Wessely 2014, p.1713).

Jones and Wessely suggest that the focus on PTSD has narrowed our interpretive frame to the point where we are blinkered to any insights from earlier conceptualizations, such as shell shock and psychosomatic illness more generally. In its latest definition of PTSD, ICD-10<sup>16</sup> places greater emphasis on the severity of the traumatic event rather

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<sup>16</sup> The mental health field works with two classification systems: the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) (managed by WHO with a global remit, and freely distributed), and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) (produced by the APA for use

than the personality of the traumatized person (though it does recognize their interaction). PTSD arises:

... as a delayed or protracted response to a stressful event or situation (of either brief or long duration) of an exceptionally threatening or catastrophic nature, which is likely to cause pervasive distress in almost anyone. Predisposing factors, such as personality traits (e.g. compulsive, asthenic) or previous history of neurotic illness, may lower the threshold for the development of the syndrome or aggravate its course, but they are neither necessary nor sufficient to explain its occurrence.<sup>17</sup>

DSM-5 has tightened the criteria for diagnosis and the emphasis is now firmly on behavioural indicators:<sup>18</sup>

- *Re-experiencing* covers spontaneous memories of the traumatic event, recurrent dreams related to it, flashbacks or other intense or prolonged psychological distress.
- *Avoidance* refers to the 'persistent, effortful avoidance'<sup>19</sup> of distressing memories, thoughts, feelings or external reminders of the event.
- *Negative cognitions and mood* represents myriad feelings, from a persistent and distorted sense of blame of self or others, to estrangement from others or markedly diminished interest in activities, to an inability to remember key aspects of the event.
- Finally, *arousal* is marked by aggressive, reckless or self-destructive behavior, sleep disturbances, hypervigilance or related problems.

As we shall see from later chapters, participants referred to similar indicators when recalling their fathers' behaviour, or when describing their own experiences. The experiential dimension of PTSD is difficult to capture in medical language, especially the awareness of a change in the self (the 'existential transformation') that can occur post-trauma (Yehuda and Bierer 2009, p.427).

What is especially pertinent to families of FEPOWs is that to date the formulation of the PTSD diagnosis has paid too little attention to how individuals respond and adapt to trauma over the long term. Recognising this deficiency,

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mainly by US psychiatrists and the US healthcare system, at a price. However, the DSM provides practical guidance on diagnosis, in addition to setting out a system of classification.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.estss.org/learn-about-trauma/icd10/>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.dsm5.org/Documents/PTSD%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.brainlinemilitary.org/content/2014/06/dsm-v-tr-criteria-for-ptsd.html>

researchers and clinicians have proposed a new diagnosis, viz. 'complex PTSD' (Courtois 2004, Sar 2011) and this may well appear in the next edition of the ICD.<sup>20</sup>

Complex PTSD is typically the result of exposure to repeated or prolonged instances or multiple forms of interpersonal trauma, often occurring under circumstances where escape is not possible due to physical, psychological, maturational, family/environmental or social constraints (Greenberg et al 2015, p.6).

The clinical picture of complex PTSD highlights changes in self-perception and relationships to others creating difficulties with trust and intimacy (Courtois 2004, p.414). Using this yardstick, complex PTSD was a common consequence of captivity in the Far East, and often discernible in participants' testimonies.

### **Intergenerational transmission of trauma**

The second generation is the hinge generation in which received, transferred knowledge of events is being transmuted into history, or into myth. It is also the generation in which we can think about certain questions arising from the Shoah with a sense of living connection (Hoffman 2004, p. xv).

Transmission between generations, be it through behaviours, affects, rituals, predispositions, beliefs, fears or vulnerabilities, is at the core of this thesis, and in this section I review the range of theoretical approaches to the topic. Early psychoanalysts Anna Freud and Dorothy Burlingham had observed during World War Two that anxiety could pass from mother to child (Volkan and Greer 2007); and in the psychiatric field, the phenomenon of 'folie à deux', although rare, is well recognized (e.g. Newman and Harbit 2010, Jolfaei et al 2011). But it is only in recent decades that intergenerational transmission of trauma has come to the fore as a significant subject of research. Although much research into the transmission of trauma has had a quantitative or

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<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that Khan (1963) put forward a precursor version in the notion of 'cumulative trauma'.

medical bias, qualitative researchers are beginning to correct this imbalance, e.g. Bar-on (1995), Hirsch (2012b), and Scates et al (2014).<sup>21</sup>

Dekel and Goldblatt (2008) pose the fundamental question, 'Is there intergenerational transmission of trauma?', and answer it in the affirmative, with the broad assertion that 'clinical observations and empirical research have shown that the consequences of traumatic events are not limited to the persons immediately exposed to the event' (p.281). However, they also acknowledge the results of a series of meta-analyses which failed to find any evidence, in non-clinical<sup>22</sup> Holocaust studies, of parents' trauma affecting their children. Their review focuses on the intergenerational transmission of PTSD between fathers and sons 'in families of war veterans', but excludes prisoners of war. They propose that what is transmitted falls into three categories: 'mental distress, family functioning, and self-esteem' (p.283). They conclude that the impact of PTSD on parenting ('family functioning') suggests that 'emotional numbing, detachment, and avoidance' were particularly influential in 'diminishing the capability to interact with the child and develop a meaningful relationship'(p.284).

To get closer to what might have occurred in FEPOW families, we need to step away from abstract categories. Ancharoff et al (cited in Galovski and Lyons 2004) suggest four relevant mechanisms of transmission.

First, they suggested that silence can promote the process of transmission. The child senses the parents' fragility and keeps silent so as to avoid providing any stimuli that the parent may find upsetting. The silence becomes a barrier between the parent and the child and the child feels unable to seek out help or comfort from the parent.

It was this reciprocal 'silence' between father and child that most participants commented upon. In many fewer cases - my own included - excessive disclosure became

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<sup>21</sup> Other prominent researchers include include Coles (2011), Downes et al (2012), Fromm (2012) and Rosenthal (1998).

<sup>22</sup> Many studies of intergenerational transmission of trauma differentiate between 'clinical' and 'nonclinical' samples. It's a broad distinction, however, and incorporates different permutations in the attempt to isolate critical variables or associations. At its most basic, 'clinical' refers to people who have established trauma symptoms and who are, or have been, in receipt of therapy.

the problem.

Second, they identified overdisclosure as a mechanism of transmission of trauma. This process occurs primarily when a parent attempts to explain the trauma to the child in raw detail. Often, the detail is overwhelming and the child becomes terrified rather than knowledgeable.<sup>23</sup>

Paradoxically, survivors who talked too freely about their traumatic experiences could propagate a 'conspiracy of silence': their children were too young to absorb or to process what they were being told, and were obliged to take on the burden of transmission. Silence and overdisclosure may interact or, as Wiseman et al (2006) put it, there is a tension between 'silence and noise in the lives of sons and daughters' (p.183). The child may repress memories of the father's traumatic overdisclosure, so that only the 'silence' is remembered, memories that screen distressing raw experiences. The 'silences' during childhood also interfered with the normal processes of attachment.

The third mechanism of transmission is termed identification and occurs when the child is constantly exposed to the parents' posttraumatic symptoms. Processes of modeling and identification may cause the child to adopt or mimic the parent's symptoms.

Charles came close to tears at several points during our interview, and indeed tears did break through when speaking of his late wife. Then, after a short pause, and in a voice fraught with emotion, he said 'I have spent most of my life trying not to be like my father'. This statement felt a little out of context at the time but, on reflection, its appearance crystallized the emotions underlying much of his other testimony.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, it was suggested that re-enactment is a mechanism of transmission. This process involves the engagement or inducement of the child to participate in trauma re-enactment. The child may then feel traumatized or feel as if he/she

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<sup>23</sup> My own experience suggests that the disclosure of 'raw detail' is only one factor in the transmission of trauma; perhaps as significant is the sheer accumulated volume and regularity of disclosure that can cause the child to 'split off' these distressing aspects of everyday life.

<sup>24</sup> Charles is the brother of James and Angie whose father committed suicide, and whose testimonies are referred to elsewhere in the thesis. When Charles made this comment his words made an immediate impact on me, and I made a mental note to return to the topic later. After a while I did so but I had lost the moment, and his responses were much more guarded, more 'defended'.

was the perpetrator (Galovski and Lyons 2004, p.489).

The child's behaviours - hypothesized here as being due to the psychoanalytic processes of 'identification' and 're-enactment' - may also be susceptible to social learning mechanisms such as observation and modeling (Bandura 1969). This may be particularly relevant when the father himself has a history of 'family-of-origin' violence (Wareham et al 2009).<sup>25</sup>

Kogan (2012) suggests that two psychodynamic mechanisms lie behind the 'transgenerational' transmission of trauma. 'Primitive identification' occurs when interaction with the parent results in 'introjection and assimilation of the damaged parent's self images ... in an attempt to heal the parent and help him recover' (p.6-7). The identification inhibits the healthy development of the child's sense of self, and blurs the boundary between the child and parent. The second mechanism is 'deposited representation' (Volkan and Greer 2007) which is a variant of identification. In this case, the parent 'actively pushes his or her specific self- and internalized object images into the developing self-representation of the child, ' ... [using] the child, mostly unconsciously, as a reservoir for certain self- and object images that belong to that adult' (Volkan and Greer 2007, unpaginated). These images spark unconscious fantasies that require the children to deal with emotions the father had been unable to reconcile, such as shame, rage, helplessness or guilt. When they later encounter fresh external traumas in their own lives ('life-threatening reality', Kogan 2012, p.7), this 'present-day trauma' can trigger responses related to the earlier traumas (whether transmitted by the father or the children's own traumas from childhood).<sup>26</sup>

Dekel and Goldblatt (2008) also ask how prevailing social and cultural conditions might impact on the father's suffering and on intergenerational transmission,

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<sup>25</sup> 'Family of origin' violence is when the father's own childhood has been scarred by violence.

<sup>26</sup> Kogan illustrates this through case studies in which Holocaust trauma was reactivated by the Intifada in Israel.

for example societal attitudes to the war in question, or the availability of social support for veterans.<sup>27</sup> They also propose that research should be expanded using qualitative methods (also the view of Stein et al 2015). This is a welcome invitation given that much quantitative research into transmission comes across as the pursuit of ever-receding, elaborately interconnected correlations that risks representing trauma victims and their children as tabulated psychopathology.

In his literature review, Kellermann (2001) analysed the findings of 35 Holocaust-based studies published between 1973 and 1999.<sup>28</sup> The review compared both non-clinical and clinical samples. Most studies were of non-clinical populations, and failed to find higher rates of psychopathology in the children. However, Kellermann stands this result alongside the dominant Holocaust discourse which asserts that the children of Holocaust survivors cannot escape psychological damage (associations that continue to be confirmed empirically, e.g. Danieli et al 2016).<sup>29</sup> Four studies found 'evidence of more distress' in non-clinical groups as compared with controls, but Kellermann dismisses these particular findings in the context of his over-riding purpose, which is the search for 'psychopathology'. Nevertheless, I contend that these discounted findings serve to highlight the rich spectrum of 'sub-clinical' responses which deserve recognition and investigation, and can be too easily overlooked. Clinical populations did show 'signs of psychological distress' in the children of Holocaust survivors. Specifically, they displayed 'difficulties in coping with stress and a higher vulnerability to PTSD', a conclusion that aligns with the descriptive reports of clinicians. In his concluding paragraphs he maintains that the offspring most at risk of trauma

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<sup>27</sup> Very pertinent to the post war circumstances of ex-FEPOWs and the low uptake of places in the Civil Resettlement Units.

<sup>28</sup> All the reviewed studies incorporated the use of controls to a greater or lesser extent. The aggregate number of Holocaust offspring featuring in the studies was 3,300.

<sup>29</sup> Danieli and colleagues (2016) are adamant on the topic: 'This study demonstrated empirically that survivors' experiences during and life circumstances after the Holocaust do indeed affect their children—a crucial question that has plagued the field for five decades ... '(p.8).

transmission share ‘any or all’ of the following features, which he deems to be ‘universal’ (p.43):

1. Offspring born early after the parents’ trauma.
2. Only children or first-born.
3. Both parents were survivors.
4. Offspring were ‘replacement’ children for children who had died.
5. Parents had endured extraordinary mental suffering and significant loss and were highly disturbed.
6. Symbiotic relations were dominant between parents and children, and family relations were characterized by enmeshment.<sup>30</sup>
7. The trauma was talked about too little or too much.

Of these features, numbers 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7 are potentially relevant to the children of FEPOWs, and reappear in the testimonies analysed in later chapters.

Daniel Bar-On is a key figure in Holocaust-related trauma transmission, and his work highlights important conceptual areas that figure regularly in the thesis. In *Fear and Hope* (1995), he examines the stories of five Jewish families, employing the concept of ‘working through’ to describe the lengthy process through which survivors dealt with the memories of the Holocaust (p.16). He tracks and contextualizes the use of the concept since Freud’s time, concluding with the observation that its usage has shifted steadily toward a narrower definition in which the aim is to ‘live with’, not ‘let go’, the traumatic content. He goes on to describe how the same concept has been applied to the children and grandchildren of survivors without, however, offering a convincing explanation of the processes involved:

Although these children did not experience the horrors directly, they nevertheless absorbed them, especially if their parents did not talk about these matters in an attempt ‘to protect’ them (p.17).

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<sup>30</sup> “Family patterns that facilitate psychological and emotional fusion among family members, potentially inhibiting the individuation process and the development and maintenance of psychosocial maturity” (Barber and Buehler 1996). The connections between ‘enmeshment’, ‘primitive identification’ (Kogan 2012) and ‘deposited representation’ (Volkan and Greer 2007) seem clear.

The tendency of Holocaust survivors not to speak of the trauma they endured has been widely noted and discussed in the literature. Bar-On (1995) locates this 'conspiracy of silence' in the first four decades after World War Two, arguing that it resulted from pressures within Israeli society 'which blamed the survivors, who went, it has been said, "like sheep to the slaughter"' (p.19). Parallels with the FEPOW situation spring to mind: the convoys of troops sent to the Far East in the autumn of 1941 were obliged to surrender in large numbers, often after only a few days or weeks of combat: hardly the material from which heroes are made in the public mind, and not an event designed to encourage disclosure. Bar-On makes a telling point when he concludes that the adult children are 'the first generation to learn about the extent of these traumatic aftereffects' (p.333). And this learning is increasing apace with the exponential growth of online historical and commemorative material, a development that has also fed the determination of many children of FEPOWs to discover more about their father's captivity (Christensen and Gotved 2015).

Bar-On (1995) contends that the children of Holocaust survivors have difficulties with 'individuation (emotional independence from their parents)', and with expressing anger; he also identifies a 'stronger need for achievement' (p.25). He too remarks on the issue of clinical reports vs. controlled research studies, and their seemingly irreconcilable contradictions. Therapists and researchers work within sharply differing traditions and have quite different aims in mind; these differences need to be understood before the contrasting products of their work can be properly judged. For example, therapists like Bar-On more easily recognize the value of metaphors, because they often use them in their everyday clinical practice. So, when Bar-On cites Wardi (1990)<sup>31</sup> referring to one child in the family fulfilling 'the role of a "memorial candle"' (pp.25-26), we should not expect this to fit neatly with the well-

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<sup>31</sup> Bar-on cites this as follows: "Vardi, D. 1990. *The Memorial Candles: Dialogues with Children of Holocaust Survivors*. Jerusalem: Keter. In Hebrew." The English version uses 'Wardi'. I have included the 1992 edition in the reference list.

operationalised concepts and tight methodologies seen in controlled studies on trauma transmission (such as those reviewed by Kellermann 2001, or Barel et al 2010).

The idea of 'normalization' figures strongly in Bar-On's writing. He argues that survivors wished to return to normality as quickly as possible after the war (also characteristic of repatriated FEPOWs). But that might have been a mixed blessing. It could imply 'hope for a better future' (Bar-On 1995, p.27), but might equally be seen as suppressing the normal, and necessary, processes of mourning (p.26), perhaps triggering a premature 'foreclosure' (LaCapra, 2001, p.93). In response, Bar-On proposes that researchers need to pay closer attention to the narratives of survivors and their children, to adopt "'softer" conceptualizations'. 'Can we recognize traces of fear and hope in the interviewees' biographical reconstructions?' he asks. 'Have their children internalized the parents' normalization strategies?' (p.27). Bar-On goes on to suggest that psychological predispositions can be transmitted, for example suspicion, pain, anger, and fear, together with disruption of the 'continuity of the family framework' and 'feelings of disjunction' (p.332). This kind of family 'disjunction' was reflected in a number of participants who took many years to form settled relationships with partners. Jacqui described the background to her teenage marriage:

Growing up with a ... in a family of a Japanese prisoner of war is ... was difficult ... I don't want to hear all this all the time. I want a life, and a family life. I think I was a bit rebellious and thought, sod dad, I am going to do what I like. ... Promptly went and married a very unsuitable man, aged 18 ... the most unsuitable hippy I could find. With painted toe-nails and a cowboy hat. Which then prompted my dad to turn my photograph to the wall, which he had had on a shelf. But he turned that to the wall and ... disowned me. ... I-I have had three marriages - this is the third one. It's okay!. 25 years of it. Still alright! But the other two were a bit of a disaster, but erm ... so yeah ... It's had a big impact.

Bar-On (1995) identifies four specific processes that affected most Holocaust survivors which, he argues, researchers need to address simultaneously: emigration, immigration, 'specific family structures and process' and 'personal processes' (p.27). While I do not suggest equivalence or strong parallels, I do recognize - perhaps contentiously - that we can identify some resonance between these processes and the circumstances of the

FEPOWs, certainly at the experiential level of young men in their twenties. 'Emigration' is reflected in the mass of troops that departed Britain in 1941 - a 'rapid severance' from their families (p.27). We may recognise 'immigration' in the strain of adapting to an alien Asian culture under hostile circumstances; then, later, in the men's return to a 'new' post-war Britain and the challenges of resettlement. Changes to 'family structures and processes' were clearly recognisable in the dismantling of the hopes and expectations of families, their own internal 'timetables' forever disrupted. Finally, 'personal processes' were evident in how the men were changed in personality, and in their ability to form new relationships.

By drawing tentative comparisons with Bar-On's framework, I aim to carve out greater conceptual space for a more nuanced appreciation of what individual British servicemen went through in the Far East, and the consequences for their families, and minimize the risk of seeing them simply as a homogenized group of military personnel. This 'historical event', as Bar-On describes the Holocaust, 'flooded the frame of the personal life story far beyond its regular family-bounded context' (p.31), and has become an unconscious organizing principle for many family members. In the case of the Holocaust this has had global reach; for FEPOW families, the range was more restricted, but arguably no less profound.

Evidence of transmission may be subtly embodied rather than explicit, as highlighted by the quotation from Salman Akhtar at the start of this chapter. The paper that brought this to my attention most incisively was written by Carol Kidron (2009), and entitled *'Toward an ethnography of silence: the lived presence of the past in the everyday life of Holocaust trauma survivors and their descendants in Israel'*. In it, she addresses intergenerational transmission through the implicit evidence that emerged during interviews. She concentrates on 'the everyday experience of trauma survivors and their descendants' (p.5), and demonstrates the value of a sensitive, qualitative and embodied

approach to the subject. The strength of her approach lies in its challenge to the prevailing discourse that endorses the notion of 'survivor silence' as undesirable, indeed as 'signaling psychopathologized processes of avoidance and repression, socially suspect processes of personal secrecy, or collective processes of political subjugation ... well-being is thought to be contingent on the liberation of voice' (pp.6-7).

Kidron's pivotal insight came while interviewing 'Eve', the daughter of Holocaust survivors. After a series of 'failed' interviews in which interviewees claimed little knowledge of the Holocaust, because their parents did not speak about it, Kidron began to despair of her research. However, after an extended silence, Eve said 'But you know the Holocaust was present in my home' (p.5). Even allowing for some narrative licence, this is a powerful moment at the start of her paper. What interested Kidron in particular was the unemotional, down-to-earth manner of the telling. The paper proceeds to critique the central tenets of Holocaust studies towards silence which, she claims, 'may be seen as a composite of the foundational assumptions of psychological trauma theory and those of the "philosophers of genocide"' (p.7) who are embroiled in the problems of Holocaust representation (e.g. Adorno 1983, LaCapra 2001). Much of her paper is taken up explicating the idea of tacit Holocaust knowledge which she crystallizes in the notion of the family's 'experiential matrix of Holocaust presence' (p.9). Kidron has since broadened the cultural context of her work (Kidron 2011, 2012a, 2012b), most recently examining the implications of family members sharing memories at sites of Holocaust remembrance (Kidron 2013, 2015).

Alford (2015) also challenges inconsistencies in the existing literature. In his analysis of 250 recordings of interviews with Holocaust survivors, he was surprised to discover just how 'narratively competent' many were, despite clear evidence of trauma. But this level of competence was insufficient to 'protect their children from being overwhelmed by their parents' communications'. Alford concluded that 'what matters is

the communication of feeling states' (p.262): narrative competence alone does not mitigate trauma transmission.

In her paper entitled *History Walks in the Door*, Walkerdine et al (2013) draw on the work of psychoanalysts Davoine and Gaudillière (2004) to construct a version of intergenerational transmission that is not confined to family dynamics, but relates 'micro- or family-level transmission to larger historical events' (Alford 2015, p.266). They acknowledge the compromises entailed in using this model in a research rather than a clinical context but their intent is to propose a methodology in which history is integral and 'does not simply serve as a backdrop to the familial relations rendered separately' (Walkerdine et al 2013, p.294).

Davoine and Gaudillière (2004) claim that working with psychotic patients taught them what 'madness' can communicate about history and trauma.<sup>32</sup> They contend that what their patients are unconsciously communicating through their symptoms are the 'buried alive'<sup>33</sup> consequences of past war traumas and conflicts, experiences that were never symbolized, processed into memory or narrativized: personal and social histories that have become 'stuck', and thus victims of a breakage in the 'social links' between generations.

What is particularly relevant to this thesis is how transference relationships enable these consequences to be heard in ways that connect the personal histories of Davoine and Gaudillière with those of their patients. Their patients were unable to 'inscribe the past in art or in poetry. ... These people *are* the memory' (Caruth 2014, p.83) (italics in original); the past is 'actualized here and now, in the work of the transference ... war in the analysis, without metaphor' (Davoine and Gaudillière, p.xxiii). One of Davoine's patients invented the word 'anti-past' - a neologism interpreted as meaning 'The past that does not pass'. Through the countertransference, Françoise

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<sup>32</sup> Their work lies on the borderline of psychoanalysis and history and illustrates yet another elaboration of the 'psychosocial'.

<sup>33</sup> I have borrowed this colloquial expression from Adam Phillips' biography of Freud (2014, p.147). Although he uses it in a different context, it seemed very appropriate here.

Davoine recalled her grandfather: 'my grandfather has transmitted to me an arrested time, which permits me to be in a relationship with people who are, themselves, in an arrested time' (quoted in Caruth 2014, p.85). From this final recollection, and from their use of countertransference in general, it is clear that the processes described by Davoine and Gaudillière are part of the human condition, and not restricted to psychotic patients.

To a greater or a lesser extent, my research participants felt that World War Two was woven into their childhoods and early relationships, its threads reaching into their present lives. For a few this was a relatively benign phenomenon, merely part of the historical context of their upbringing, seemingly devoid of unwelcome psychosocial implications. However, for others, the trauma of the war nagged at them relentlessly. So, for Derek, the whole of his childhood was shaped by his father's POW-related ill-health; and in later years the enduring influence of postmemory was expressed by the frequent sharing of old photographs and other FEPOW information through an online community. This type of 'reactivation' is closer to Volkan's (2012) ideas on 'chosen traumas' (p.83) than it is to Davoine and Gaudillière's theoretical position, though both processes might intertwine. Volkan's starting point is the memories that have been shared across large groups, then drawn on unconsciously ('chosen') to meet needs in the present: 'reactivated shared mental representations of history during which the ancestors felt victimized' (p.83). This process is recognizable in the FEPOW community, and I would argue that the same process operates at the individual ancestor-related level, curated into a library of distinctive family stories.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> To illustrate this from my own family history, the impact of my great uncle Herbert's experience of being gassed in World War One stayed with me long after his death, amplified by the sound of his distressed breathing and the sight of the ubiquitous oxygen cylinder. Going back to the generation before, a more distant relative bled to death at work when he slipped carrying a sheet of plate glass: the glass severed the major artery under his arm. I have been haunted by this imagery throughout my life, and remain very vigilant when handling glass.

Despite the best efforts of researchers pursuing positivist approaches to the intergenerational transmission of trauma, the topic retains a powerful sense of mystery. We have seen this in the work of scholars like Bar-On (1995), Caruth (2014), and Davoine and Gaudillière (2004) who employ evocative metaphors that resonate with the everyday language of the enigmatic. Many authors have felt the need to draw on alternative, more tangential concepts when academic language fails - an inevitability perhaps when we are faced with experiences like 'limit events' that resist representation. 'Haunting' and 'ghosts' (Caruth 1995, Frosh 2013, Gordon 2008) and 'possession' (Caruth 1995) 'crypt', 'shell' and 'kernel' (Abraham and Torok 1994), 'memorial candles' (Wardi 1992), 'psychic holes' (Kogan 2015), and the 'uncanny' (Trigg 2012): each in its own way is redolent of psychic states or processes beyond, or on the cusp of, rational understanding. Within the phenomenological and psychic domains, statistical tables and correlation coefficients count for little, and there can be few scholarly topics in which the reconciliation of different levels and modes of analysis has proved more demanding. As Cathy Caruth (2014) maintains, the reasons for this are partly due to the fact that trauma 'is not a single or systematizable concept but rather an ongoing set of clinical and conceptual discoveries' (p.xiv). Because trauma continually escapes definitional consensus, intergenerational transmission of trauma is destined to suffer the same fate.

However, the ambiguities that enmesh these concepts often provoke creative responses in both published authors and amongst participants as they struggle to convey the interiority of trauma transmission. In *'And the rat laughed'*, Nava Semel (2008) creates an indirect route to representation, mixing stories, poems and diary entries in a flexible temporal framework to address memory of the Holocaust. Similarly motivated, in the series of terse chapters that constitute *'Nightfather'*, Carl Friedman (1994) narrates a child's view of the Holocaust as she interprets her father's account of the war and the concentration camps. Sometimes words are not enough. In *'Maus'*, Art

Spiegelman (2003) employs the techniques of the graphic novel to convey the stark yet insidious impact of the Holocaust on his own family. Through words and pictures the reader/viewer is taken through a compelling psychic journey, one which also has the effect of problematizing the narrative itself. For instance, should we see words and pictures as a unified narrative, or as forming two discrete narrative strands operating on different psychic levels and timescales? (Chute and DeKoven 2006, p.769, Kolar 2013). Aggravating the psychic distress transmitted by his parents' Holocaust memories, Art suffers a 'double' trauma when his mother commits suicide. The impact of repeated traumas is a thread that runs through Spiegelman's life; he also witnessed and has written about 9/11 (Versluys 2006). As becomes apparent through the thesis, James, Joanna, and Deidre in their different ways experienced trails of trauma that shaped their life stories and set in train patterns of memory practices to address various feelings of guilt, confusion and loss.

Louise is a painter who responded to the postmemories of her father's captivity through work that combined images and text (some words taken from her father's diaries). She spoke of 'rediscovering' her father - and herself - after she learned about his POW experiences. In a series of paintings made after her visit to the Thai-Burma railway sites,<sup>35</sup> she used as her 'signature' a symbol that had been 'stamped on a piece of fabric' she found amongst her father's possessions.<sup>36</sup> Simon, a script writer, wrote a short story (and performance piece) that integrated past and present, autobiography and imagination, words and images. It addressed the traumas of FEPOW life by manipulating time, so that he and his father became 'contemporaries' in the POW camp. This narrative device evokes Faimberg's (1988) concept of the 'telescoping of generations' that he construed as a form of identification in which history is 'condensed' (p.105). The semi-fictional form gave Simon the chance to explore emotional aspects of

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<sup>35</sup> These paintings were first exhibited on 11 May 2006, the centenary of his birth.

<sup>36</sup> She has been told the symbol is the Japanese for 'prisoner'.

his relationship with his father within a potent fictional location where he was able to acknowledge his suffering and to 'say' things to his father that had previously been left unsaid. By the end, one is aware that both father and son were prisoners in their own ways. The story also interweaved a series of meetings between the narrator and his relationship counsellor - a reminder of Ronald Fraser's (1984) *In Search of a Past* in which he blends an account of his own psychoanalysis with oral history and reverie. Through their distinctive creative work, both Louise and Simon demonstrated how personal responses to trauma could be communicated in individualized and richly aesthetic forms of memory practice.

### **Must trauma always lead to negative outcomes?**

Soon after the war, Eric Trist, one of the founding psychiatrists of the Civil Resettlement Programme, referred to the European POW camp as 'a society of "creative casualties"' (Wilson et al 1953, p.92):

... people who had coped with pain, confusion and separation from their loved ones without losing hope or the ability to help and encourage their companions in captivity ... men who ... had, by surviving threat and hurt, gained an exceptional new awareness and power. Obviously this development does not depend on having been a POW, although this may sometimes have helped (Curle 2001, p.5).

Europe was not the Far East, of course, but we need not conclude that POW trauma led to exclusively negative outcomes. Findings of 'posttraumatic growth' have now been widely confirmed and elaborated in a range of settings.<sup>37</sup> Incarceration was such an all-encompassing and overwhelming experience that it persuaded many POWs to re-appraise their lives and values, to

'rethink their philosophies and to develop a finer sense of self worth and of life's values, thus turning a malignant and cataclysmic experience into an instrument for growth and emotional maturation' (Segal et al 1976, p.605)

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<sup>37</sup> For example, Boals and Schuettler (2011), Downes et al (2012), Frankl (2006), Sheikh (2008), Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004), Zerach (2014), and Zerach et al (2013b).

Segal et al also argue that the ability to rise above the immediate hardship and pain increased the very chances of survival. However, conflating a finer sense of 'self worth' and of 'life's values' may not be sufficiently discriminating. Conceivably, survivors could still emerge from captivity with a finer sense of life's values but also suffer a fractured sense of self worth.

In a life course context, it is not difficult to find examples of FEPOW trauma acting as catalysts for productive and altruistic activity. Some fathers, or children of FEPOWs, channelled, or sublimated, their experiences into charitable activities, perhaps assisting fellow FEPOWs and widows by establishing or supporting FEPOW organisations. Indeed many FEPOWs went on to receive national honours for their work in this field. We can speculate that, as a result, some children might have avoided the negative consequences engendered by troublesome unsublimated or undisplaced emotions. Over and above that, the children were presented with the opportunity to identify with their fathers' post-war constructive responses, and so internalize positive, altruistic characteristics. Of course, this is only one plausible interpretation. In the case of those participants whose childhoods were replete with absence and loss, later involvement with charitable activities may be better understood as an attempt to satisfy their individual psychic needs through helping ex-FEPOWs and their families.

The negative outcomes of trauma should not be seen in stark opposition to posttraumatic growth, as binaries condemned to follow two distinct empirical pathways. To illustrate the ambiguities, Dekel et al (2016, p.1) emphasise how trauma-related guilt (a 'negative trauma outcome') can also facilitate posttraumatic growth, promoting 'other-oriented empathy', coping and redemptive behaviour (Tangney et al 2007, p.363). As with so many of the complex psychic phenomena explored in this research, conflicting elements frequently co-exist and interact:

we should not try to forget the past, or to rid ourselves of it, once and for all, but that we should look for new ways to live with it – ways that were more conscious, less threatening and self-destructive than our previous attempts (Bar-On and Kesseem 2004, p.293).

Earlier in this chapter, we saw how trauma might damage the formation of secure attachment relationships. Following the theme of posttraumatic growth, Ein-Dor (2015) asks why, in the literature, insecure attachments seem to result only in negative outcomes. He argues that, because most studies focus on 'the domain of social adjustment and subjective well-being', the possible benefits of insecure attachments might have been overlooked, thus neglecting 'the strengths of individuals who have long been viewed as deficient and poorly adapted' (p.115). Ein-Dor notes that attachment security tends to produce individuals who generally have 'high self-esteem, trust other people, and perceive the world as a relatively safe place' (p.113), outcomes based on what Mikulincer et al (2009) refer to as a 'broaden-and-build cycle of attachment security' (p.616). Counter-intuitively, Ein-dor (2015) invites us to consider the adaptive benefits possible from an insecure base, and he suggests that people who score high on 'attachment anxiety' are more 'vigilant in monitoring the environment for threats' (p.113) and are 'more likely to break off an on-going task and take effective action when facing a threat' (p.114). Those scoring highly on 'attachment-related avoidance' are more likely to 'take care of themselves, even if this sometimes occurs at other peoples' expense', and stop a task and take action (p.114). The adaptive benefits of these different behaviours are easy to envisage.<sup>38</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The intergenerational transmission of trauma has been an inexhaustible source of intellectual and emotional fascination for scholars of different persuasions. In this chapter, I have endeavoured to convey a sense of this wide spectrum of academic interests while ensuring that the material has stayed relevant to the experiences and

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<sup>38</sup> I am reminded here of the distinction between 'managers' (whose forte is to maintain the smooth running of an organization) and 'leaders' (whose predilection is to act and bring about change). In the particular circumstances of a POW camp, people who have high levels of 'vigilance' could be a valuable asset.

circumstances of participants. Three specific themes emerge from this chapter which are particularly pertinent to the thesis as a whole.

Firstly, constructs from attachment theory have helped to elucidate how relationships could be destabilized in the post war families of FEPOWs. In particular, how a failure to establish a 'secure base' in those early years could trigger 'internal working models' that had a lasting impact in participants' lives. The sense of 'distance' created between children and fathers - both corporeal and psychic - provided the psychosocial context for later engagement with particular memory practices 'designed' (consciously or unconsciously) to reduce that distance.

Secondly, Kidron's (2009) ethnographic work on tacit communication processes problematizes 'silence' and is important in refocusing attention onto the role of the 'everyday' and what she terms the family's 'experiential matrix' through which trauma can be transmitted between generations.

Finally, the psychosocial methodology I employed in this research is consistent with the approach of Bar-On et al (1998) to the field of intergenerational transmission, and also responds to Dekel and Goldblatt's (2008) appeal for greater use of qualitative methods. In-depth interviews allowed participants 'to explore freely and reflect on the impact of the traumatic experiences on his/her life, and to assist the researcher in making sense of this complex issue' (Bar-On et al 1998, p.333).

## CHAPTER THREE

### LIFE IN THE CAMPS AND REPATRIATION TO BRITAIN

As the bodies burnt they crackled and popped. One raised an arm as the nerves tautened in the heat.

One of the pyre makers waved back.

Have a good one, Jackie. You're out of here now, mate.<sup>1</sup>

'It was not JUST that he was tortured, ... it was the not knowing, the casual dehumanization and lack of any kind of self determination.' (Son of a participant, after watching *The Railway Man*).<sup>2</sup>

#### Introduction

In Chapter Two, I discussed the nature of trauma and how it could be transmitted between generations. My aims in this chapter are more tailored: to examine the psychic and physical consequences of being held captive in the Far East, to consider the process of repatriation, and to get a sense of the physical and psychological condition of the FEPOWs on their return to family and civilian life. I draw the chapter to a close with my claim that the FEPOWs and their children have evolved into a distinct social group.

Understanding how and what might be transmitted between generations depends in large part on our knowledge and understanding of the state of mind, and state of body, of the returning FEPOWs. Incarceration for three to four years affected the psychological self and the 'body-self' (Sparkes 1996) to which we can add a loss of ontological security - a threat to the man's sense of self and identity that might topple him back into an earlier stage of psychic development. Notwithstanding pre-captivity factors (such as variations in personality or social class) and the differences between

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<sup>1</sup> From Richard Flanagan's 2013 novel 'The narrow road to the deep north', p.250, based on his father's war experiences. My father told me similar stories of corpses 'sitting up' in the flames.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2058107/>

conditions in the camps,<sup>3</sup> I argue that these men shared certain core experiences and responses, and that the ramifications would go on to create a traumatic legacy for their families. The men were slaves, with no known end to their incarceration, and no realistic prospects of escape. They had to learn the hard way that survival meant controlling their emotions and behaviour, conforming to the rituals of camp life, and adapting to hunger and the sights and sounds of physical and mental suffering. In short, survival depended on will power and good luck.

### **The impact of captivity**

Levinas reminds us with brutal eloquence just how war invades our very sense of being and normality:<sup>4</sup>

The ontological event that takes form in this black light is a casting into movement of beings hitherto anchored in their identity, a mobilization of absolutes, by an objective order from which there is no escape. The trial by force is the test of the real. But violence does not consist so much in injuring and annihilating persons as in interrupting their continuity, making them play roles in which they no longer recognize themselves, making them betray not only commitments but their own substance, making them carry out actions that will destroy every possibility for action (Levinas 1969, p.21).

The critical point is that war, in addition to ‘injuring and annihilating persons’, brings about a complete existential dislocation and separation from what went before. Or as Barkawi and Brighton (2011) put it, war ‘disrupt(s) wider certitudes and coordinates of human life’ (p.136). Brighton’s commentary (2011) on Levinas consolidates the argument by connecting personal alienation with wider meanings: ‘war forces the unmaking and remaking of social and political meaning in ways which defy prediction. In this regard, the necessity of descriptive, reflective engagement with experience becomes more evident yet.’ (Brighton 2011, p.103).

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<sup>3</sup> See Havers 2003, Norwood and Sheck (1946) and Yap (2012) for a sense of the variation between POW camp locations. The POW Research Network Japan website gives a sense of the spread of camps in Japanese wartime territory - <http://www.powresearch.jp/en/archive/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> Emmanuel Levinas had been personally, and severely, affected by the Holocaust. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/levinas/#LifCar>

For the FEPOWs, the phenomenological shifts suggested by Levinas and others were not sudden, short lived affairs, but had to be borne and lived out over several years. They were unavoidable and uncontrollable: '[war] establishes an order from which no one can keep his distance; nothing henceforth is exterior' (Levinas 1969, p. 21). In the face of such intrusive trauma to the self, it is little wonder that the FEPOW experience wrought deep seated personality changes in so many of the men.

Between December 1941 and March 1942, around 50,000 British troops in the Far East surrendered to the Imperial Japanese Army and became prisoners of war.<sup>5</sup> For many, the experience was extremely disorienting:

'If you see any Japs... don't shoot, the Dutch have capitulated!' With these words, W/Commander Gregson destroyed any illusions of salvation we might still have maintained. My companions and I looked at each other in dismay and disbelief.<sup>6</sup>

Tens of thousands of young British men - many quite 'green' from a military point of view - suddenly found themselves in the hands of a hardened army. Little imagination is needed to summon up how they must have felt at that moment - disoriented, scared, and confused. Many had left Britain in crowded troopships in the winter of 1941, landed in the Far East early in 1942, and in March found themselves prisoners of the Japanese, in whose hands they would remain for the next three to four years. Some had barely engaged with the enemy. With tens of thousands of POWs on their hands, the Japanese military leaders soon discovered that ruthless efficiency in military combat was no

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<sup>5</sup> Hong Kong had fallen on 25 December 1941, Singapore on 15 February 1942. Then, on 9 March 1942, the Dutch East Indies surrendered, leading rapidly to the capture of all the remaining British servicemen. In March and April 1942, the Japanese overran the Philippines resulting in the capture of many thousands of American troops. In all, some 190,000 Allied troops were held as POWs. See <http://www.dutcheastindies.webs.com/> The website created by the late Roger Mansell is the unchallenged source of information about individual FEPOW camps. Now run by Wes Injerd, the content is regularly updated: <http://www.mansell.com/pow-index.html>

<sup>6</sup> Joe Fitzgerald - in Martin (2007).

preparation for these new logistical challenges.<sup>7</sup>

Compared with POW camps in Germany and Italy, conditions in the Far East were very harsh (Curtin 1946, Hastings 2008). The diet was poor, clothing inadequate, and tropical diseases prevalent. The POWs were overworked, subjected to harsh and oppressive discipline,<sup>8</sup> and the Japanese provided little in the way of effective medical treatments, although POW medics performed heroically and with great ingenuity (Dunlop 1990, Parkes and Gill 2015). Robson et al (2009)<sup>9</sup> describe the main physical health problems seen in the camps as dysentery, malaria, tropical ulcers, cholera and nutritional deficiencies, including 'wet beriberi', dysaesthetic neuropathy ('electric feet'), and various ghastly skin diseases (for example, the vividly named 'strawberry balls') (Chalker 2007, Curtin 1946, Dunlop 1990, Gill 1996, Rawlings 2015).

*Strongyloides stercoralis* infection<sup>10</sup> was common amongst POWs on the Thai-Burma railway, and remains a topic of contemporary interest because of its ability to persist in the body over many decades with possibly fatal consequences (Gill et al 2004, and Parkes and Gill 2015). Red Cross support (for example food parcels, and inspections of the camps) was much more sporadic than in European POW camps (Bosch 2012).

Around 27% of FEPOWs died as a result of captivity, compared with approximately 4% in Europe.<sup>11</sup> Death rates were highest amongst the men building the Thai-Burma railway (Daws 1995).

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<sup>7</sup> Utsumi explores Japan's bureaucratic weaknesses in POW management. Utsumi, A. (1999) *The Japanese army and its prisoners: relevant documents and bureaucratic institutions*, Seminar paper, presented February 1999 at the Australian War Memorial. Online <http://ajrp.awm.gov.au/ajrp/ajrp2.nsf/aa9b3f3247a3c8ae4a25676300078dee/d2e5732b8749d2e04a2567a8007b490c?OpenDocument> Accessed 16-10-2016

<sup>8</sup> Japan had signed but not ratified the Geneva Convention, but in any case the stance of the Japanese government towards international agreements was determined by national self-interest (Ursano and Rundell 1995).

<sup>9</sup> These authors were working out of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine which has been associated with treating and researching ex-Far East prisoners of war since 1946. <http://www.captivememories.org.uk/>

<sup>10</sup> Current health advice to FEPOWs continues to highlight this particular problem. Leaflet -7, Notes for Ex-Far East and Korean Prisoners of War, [http://www.veterans-uk.info/pdfs/publications/va\\_leaflets/valeaflet7.pdf](http://www.veterans-uk.info/pdfs/publications/va_leaflets/valeaflet7.pdf) (accessed 24-11-2013).

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/information/prisoners-of-war-of-the-japanese-1939-1945>

When contemplating the FEPOW experience the reader has to reconcile images of brutality with knowledge of the grinding monotony involved in camp life: a 'sentence' with no known end, and little realistic prospect of escape. These men were halfway across the world, immersed in an alien culture whose military ethic derived from the Bushido tradition that demanded absolute compliance from all its soldiers, and that viewed with contempt any form of surrender (Nitobe 1969, Scheipers 2010 pp.145-8, Senatore 2009). However, incarceration for three and a half years in hostile conditions did not mean an automatic slide into emotional or moral submission. In many camps, the FEPOWs summoned the energy, fortitude and ingenuity necessary to organise artistic,<sup>12</sup> sporting, and educational activities which could raise the spirits above the hunger and illness that encased them (Eldredge 2014, Gillies 2011).

'Trauma always implicates the community, language and symbolic order in which it is set' (Edkins 2010, cited by Kalinowska 2012, p.427). But for the FEPOWs - a strange diaspora of dislocated and alienated men - there was no stable backdrop against which to weigh up their traumatic experiences. For many, life had dissolved into a series of disorientating transitions over which they had little or no control: from 'civvy street' to military life as a result of volunteering or conscription, trained as military personnel while under attack by the Germans, then cast onto the ocean headed for the Middle East only to be redirected to the Far East to fight the Japanese.

In the early days of captivity, some young POWs just gave up, especially those from deprived working class backgrounds whose physical reserves had been depleted during the Depression (Hastings 2008, p.351). Added to the personal ill-treatment, POWs were forced to witness bodies bloated by beriberi, the smell of funeral pyres, and the sights and sounds in the 'hell ships'<sup>13</sup> (Lamont-Brown 2002, Michno 2001). The Japanese regularly shipped POWs between the Japanese mainland and its occupied

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<sup>12</sup> See <http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/thdabooks/24/>

<sup>13</sup> Lizzie Oliver explains how a number were sunk by the Allies - <http://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-sinking-of-prisoner-of-war-transport-ships-in-the-far-east>

territories to suit their labour needs. Due to the appalling conditions on board, many lives were lost on these journeys. Along with the Thai-Burma railway, the hell ships have emerged as preeminent symbols of extreme Japanese wartime brutality.<sup>14</sup>

Ships figure strongly in the colonial imaginary (Gilroy 1993) and in the histories of the Allied powers. In both cases, slavery has inscribed journeys by ship with images of oppression and unspeakable cruelty. The FEPOWs found themselves entangled with these symbols of repression and racist superiority, and subjugated by imperialist forces that controlled their daily existence and survival prospects, constricting their freedoms and agency to levels beyond their previous imaginings. Although the FEPOW experience is culturally and historically distant from Gilroy's analysis, his metaphorical use of the ship, which he describes as 'a living, micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion' (p.4), lends a powerful synchronicity to the imagery adopted within much FEPOW discourse.

I want now to consider one particular and less discussed aspect of captivity, but one with many psychic resonances. The skin: the organ whose meaning derives from 'the enfolding of culture, psychological life and embodiment' (Cavanagh et al 2013, p.2).

... rather than talk of bodies, we might instead talk of brain-body-world entanglements (Blackman 2012, p.1).

The fathers' appearance figures in many testimonies, but the implications of this are rarely explored. I suspect one reason for this neglect is that appearance has been so closely woven into popular and medical FEPOW narrative ('he looked like a skeleton') that it is simply taken-for-granted. But these homogenizing representations offer little in the way of insight into the psychic or phenomenological changes implicated in the transformation of young men in good health into prisoners of war suffering from chronic sickness and debilitation. If we do not tackle this experiential level of camp life, we will not adequately understand the sensitivities and sensibilities the men brought

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<sup>14</sup> Production company HLA reflected this by choosing 'the railway' <https://wdrv.it/1wVdn8l> and 'hell ships' <http://hellships.hla.net/> for recent documentary work.

back into family life and that subsequently had an impact on their children.

Life in the camps was etched on the men's skins but, like a palimpsest, deeper psychic layers would demand expression in later years. Jay Prosser (2001) draws our attention to this.

... the look of our skin – both to others and to ourselves – brings to its surface a remembered past. It is a phenomenological function of skin to record. ... Skin's memory is burdened with the unconscious. (p. 52).

Very few FEPOWs returned home with skin intact or appearance unaffected by incarceration.

When she first saw me dad, she burst out crying. Cos he was yellow and ... his uniform which was hanging off him. I mean even though they tried to build them up, he said, he was so underweight ... he was just standing there with his huge uniform and he hadn't really filled out. (Derek)

She says she went to meet him off the train. And she walked past him twice. Didn't recognise him. Because he was so thin. (Jacqui)

Jacqui described the later consequences for her father:

Dad had been diagnosed with some kind of skin cancer, from being staked out in the sun, mum said. Tortured or whatever. You couldn't see the cancer, but his nose was really badly damaged by the sun. Lots of little veins. It was almost raw.

The skin is the place 'from which both external and internal perceptions may spring' (Freud and Freud 2005, p.450). We can locate the close connections between the skin and the development of the ego in early childhood development, during which 'the baby acquires the perception of a bodily surface through the contact with the skin of the mother when he is being cared for by her (e.g. during breast-feeding)' (Lemma 2009, p.756). Anzieu (2016) takes Freud's notion of the 'bodily ego' and uses it as the basis for his 'idea of the Skin-ego' (p.6), which is presented as 'both an organic and imaginary reality' (Benthien 2002, p.8). Although tentative and occasionally opaque, Anzieu's notion of the 'Skin-ego' manages to be both provocative and thought-provoking. As Prosser (2001) says, it is the 'interface between psyche and body, self and others' (p.53) and as such plays a dynamic role in the development of subjectivity (Handcock 2012).

Anzieu (2016) also recognises the skin as integral to attachment theory (pp.24-28), an approach that I argued in Chapter Two is valuable in understanding the relationship between the ex-FEPOW and his children. In a short paper, Bick (1968) also emphasizes 'the primal function of the skin of the baby and of its primal objects in relation to the most primitive binding together of parts of the personality not as yet differentiated from parts of the body' (p.484).

In the POW camps, the skin was the first organ to be subjected to punishment (slapping and hitting were commonplace punishments). Later, it became the canvas on which were displayed the first signs of malnutrition and disease. The appearance of the FEPOWs<sup>15</sup> - like the appalling images of Nazi concentration camp victims - is what lingers in the personal and cultural imaginaries even as the events themselves shift from the realms of memory to those of history. Bick (1968) contends that the skin serves as the baby's most concrete of boundaries, prior to the differentiation and emergence of the personality, and a sense of self. On this basis, the skin holds a special place in our sense of self. Let us imagine the men, at first despairing and self conscious as they begin to lose weight and show the first signs of tropical disease and the effects of malnutrition. It is easy to see why, when the integrity (indeed the life) of the individual was being severely threatened, damage to the skin would feature prominently in the minds and bodies of the FEPOWs. As weight falls away, the skin begins to reveal the skeleton beneath; tropical ulcers appear and suppurate. Sensory changes - ulceration, injury, inflicted pain - quickly come to the fore: the skin, sensed from within, plus the sight of one's own, and others' skins, re-sculpted by malnutrition and disease, skins changing daily, transforming identities, views of the sick body not normally seen. The skin could no longer be relied upon, and was to be added to the growing list of things that had let them down.

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<sup>15</sup> Illustrations by war artists, such as Chalker (2007), Rawlings (2015) and Searle (1986) depict much of this in painfully graphic detail.

Regular communication with home was critical for the mental wellbeing of both the POWs and their families, but letters and parcels between Britain and the Far East were rare. Understandably, families tended to assume that FEPOWs, if still alive, were probably reasonably safe in the camps (Jones and Wessely 2010, pp.10-11). This impression was not contradicted by articles in *The Prisoner of War*, the magazine produced by the Red Cross and St. John War Organisation, and given free to next-of-kin. The front cover of the June 1943 edition shows a group of POWs posing for a group photograph over the caption 'This summer scene was taken at Campo P.G. 73'. Although this is an Italian POW camp, the image creates a general impression of well-being which many wives and families were likely to have latched onto. Later, in the December edition, an unnamed POW in Osaka POW Camp, Amagasaki Sub Camp wrote (his letter dated 10<sup>th</sup> April 1943):

My health is excellent, and I am working each day, except Tuesday, for payment. The work is very suitable, and I have received excellent co-operation from all the factory staff, the group foreman especially.<sup>16</sup>

In August 1943, my mother wrote the following to my father (who was a sign-writer by trade). He had been a POW for eighteen months at this stage. 'I do hope you will soon be able to write me a letter and tell me what sort of work you are doing. I hope it is something you can get on with, and be interested with. Have you tried learning the language yet? I should think the signs would be interesting to you, if you get time to copy them.' In the circumstances of the time, and setting aside the poignancy that comes from knowing the likely true circumstances, it is easy to understand in retrospect why wives and families would wish to believe that all was well.

Paucity of information led to misunderstandings about the nature of captivity in the Far East, and was a critical factor in the failure of the British government and military to properly prepare for the return of the FEPOWs (see Shephard 1996 for a succinct account). Between 1942 and 1944, the British government secured very little

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<sup>16</sup> Editions of *The Prisoner of War* can be viewed on <http://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/>

reliable information about the fate of British FEPOWs, or the conditions in the camps.<sup>17</sup> What they did have was often difficult to interpret. A few anecdotal and disturbing accounts had found their way into government hands but these tended to be conflicting, and the British Government found it hard to paint a clear and comprehensive picture of what was happening on the ground.

By early 1944, because relatives had begun to receive 'reassuring' (but highly censored and misleading) official postcards from the FEPOWs themselves, the Government felt it had no option but to be more transparent with its citizens (Hatley-Broad 2002).<sup>18</sup> Eventually on 28<sup>th</sup> January 1944 in the House of Commons, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Anthony Eden, made the following statement:

I fear I have grave news to give to the House. Members will be aware that a large number of postcards and letters have recently been received in this country from prisoners in the Far East: and that these almost uniformly suggest that the writers are being treated well and are in good health. There is no doubt from what we know about particular areas that some of these communications, at any rate, are in terms dictated by the Japanese authorities. I regret to have to tell the House that information which has been reaching His Majesty's Government no longer leaves room for any doubt that the true state of affairs is a very different one so far as the great majority of prisoners in Japanese hands is concerned.<sup>19</sup>

With the Government's position publicly aired, the question in the minds of wives and families was whether they should they prepare for a homecoming or a bereavement (Moore and Hatley-Broad 2005, p.148).

### **The process of repatriation**

With a few exceptions, the young men who were captured in the Far East had more trouble readjusting to civilian life than any others (Summers 2009).

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<sup>17</sup> In contrast, much more information was available concerning conditions in the POW camps in Germany and Italy, not least because several thousand POWs had been repatriated from Europe at various stages before the end of the war.

<sup>18</sup> E.g. (1) War Cabinet 21<sup>st</sup> October 1943 Memorandum by the Secretary of State. Conditions of British Prisoners of War in Siam. (2) War Cabinet 27<sup>th</sup> October 1943 Memorandum by the Secretary of State. Publicity concerning Japanese Treatment of British Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees. (3) War Cabinet 15<sup>th</sup> November 1944. Conclusions of a Meeting of the War Cabinet.

<sup>19</sup> Hansard, HC Deb 28 January 1944 vol. 396 cc1029-35

([http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1944/jan/28/japanese-treatment#S5CV0396P0\\_19440128\\_HOC\\_9](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1944/jan/28/japanese-treatment#S5CV0396P0_19440128_HOC_9))

Estimates suggest that in the region of 180,000 European and North Americans were in Japanese hands at the end of the war (Overmans 2005), with around 63,000 Allied POWs in Japan itself (McKernan 2001). Contemporary estimates of the total number were even higher, with the Manchester Guardian of 23 August 1945 reporting a figure of 250,000 POWs and internees. The Guardian piece also emphasized that the Government had accorded the returning POWs a status 'second to VIPs'.<sup>20</sup>

Planning for the aftermath of victory against Japan had been underway for some time. Initially, the expectation was that they would be released progressively as Japanese territory was occupied by the Allies. However, with the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the war in the East came to an unexpectedly abrupt end, and recovery planning had to be speeded up (Kirby 1969). Even after the formal surrender on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1945,<sup>21</sup> the POWs remained at risk of malnutrition, tropical diseases, even maverick Japanese troops, and the Allies were aware that some could die before liberation. Given the fragile situation, on the 16<sup>th</sup> August, MacArthur issued General Order No. 1, instructing the Japanese to give the locations of POW camps and to ensure the well-being of the POWs until they could be handed over to the Allies (Willoughby 1994).

For British POWs, the journey home was often long and convoluted, particularly if they needed medical attention (Willoughby 1994). While no doubt frustrating, many British POWs benefited from the extra time it took to reach home. During the lengthy journey they began to put on much needed weight, and continued to receive treatment for tropical illnesses such as malnutrition, beri-beri, degeneration of the optic nerve, ulcers and respiratory infections.<sup>22</sup> Official accounts tell us little of the impact these repatriation journeys had on the liberated FEPOWs. Some idea though can be obtained

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<sup>20</sup> Priority Travel for Far East Prisoners of War: Special Care on voyage Home, widely separated camps may slow down evacuation, The Manchester Guardian, Aug. 23 1945.

<sup>21</sup> Emperor Hirohito had made a radio broadcast on 15 August 1945 announcing the surrender.

<sup>22</sup> The medical details were taken from the 'History of the USS Consolation (AH 15)' - available at <http://www.navsource.org/archives/09/12/pdf/1215a.pdf>. Accessed 10-1-2017.

from the words of Norman, who first worked on the Thai-Burma railway and then in the Iruka copper mines in Japan:

Arriving at Tokyo we were taken to Yokohama bay. Here we were sorted into groups by our apparent state of health. On the docks we were once again sprayed with disinfectant. ... We were like a load of cattle. I was taken to a large American hospital ship and given a bed. When I got onto this bed with brilliant white sheets and pillow, I felt as if I was sinking away into the next world. I couldn't sleep it was too soft. ... We left the hospital ship and were back on the quayside again and here we were made to strip and once again sprayed! All our belongings, if we had any were to be sterilised. My New Testament came back looking as if it had been in an oven, it probably had.<sup>23</sup>

With characteristic irony, Norman anticipated some of the difficulties the FEPOWs were to face later:

... seven days later we were in Southampton, here it was thick fog. We had to wait on the ship all night for the fog to clear. In the morning the boat edged into the docks. Now the British army really took over and the orders were that no friends were allowed to greet us on the dock. Evidently we were wild men and needed taming. .... Then the word went around that we had to be searched - customs! There were chants of "Oh yea we're home all right."

Finally we pulled into what we were told was Clapham Junction. There were no name plates up as yet. We were not actually in the station and it was pitch dark. Then men with oil lamps swinging came along the train and they were locking all the doors. We spent all night locked in that train, there were nearly riots. Then finally we moved off and arrived at Amersham. From the station we were taken in lorries to our new concentration camp. We were locked behind a wire fence. We never even had a wire fence around us in Thailand.

Norman's experiences also highlighted one of the principal grievances felt by many FEPOWs and their children: war pensions.

... at one medical where I met up with some of my old POW mates, we were in a waiting room and the medical officer walked in and said with a loud voice- "All men that have not lost an arm or a leg or an eye can fall out ." We all guessed that this was going to be the end of our pensions.

Contemporary accounts show that medical opinion was divided from the start over what to expect from the ex-FEPOWs. From early 1944 through to 1945, the British Medical Journal (BMJ) saw a spate of letters responding to an article by Major P. H. Newman (1944) on the 'prisoner of war mentality'. Drawing on lessons from the First World War, together with evidence from POWs returning from Europe, Newman

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<sup>23</sup> From the private, unpublished papers of Norman Burrows (died 23 July 2016 aged 98).

recommended establishing an organization capable of 'dealing with "release" phenomena', including 'a prisoner-of-war club in all large towns' (p.10) where advice could be offered to ex-prisoners and relatives alike. Responses to Newman's article varied. Billings (1944) and Eley (1944) both drew attention to the specific situation in the Far East (a gap in Newman's piece). Eley warned against the formation of POW organisations because the POW 'wants to forget' and would prefer help to be provided 'within the confines of, or centred from, his own home, where are concentrated all his longings, thoughts, and desires' (p.404). After summarizing the conditions he assumed had prevailed in the Far East camps, Billings (1944) concluded with some prescience:

These are very, very slow wearing-down cruelties, the relief of which can result in no "acute emotional reaction" but a chronic psychological stigma. ... There is only one class of man or woman who can experience all this (and much more) and who can be rehabilitated to fit into normal reconstructed society again - and that is the "superman." The remainder will be a problem for their lifetime (p.90).

Harkness (1944) was of similar mind, and remarked on the public reaction they might receive: '... the very large majority of our returned prisoners of war will be problems for their lifetime. The men on return will find the war over and be bewildered and hurt by public reaction and indifference' (p.568).<sup>24</sup>

The disparities between camps in the Far East and in Europe were clearly recognised, as explained in *The War Office Handbook*<sup>25</sup> published in 1944 for the relatives of POWs under the control of the Japanese.

The position of prisoners of war and civilian internees in Japanese hands differs materially from that of those in German hands, for a number of reasons, such as:

- a) the wide difference in the Japanese outlook and general conditions of living;
- b) the great and far spread area over which camps are scattered in which the prisoners and internees are detained, and the strongly contrasting

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<sup>24</sup> Horner (2000) describes a narrative in mid-1940s America that pictured the returning soldier as 'contaminated and dangerous' (p.335), and his reintegration as a serious social threat. Allport (2009) also suggests that fear of the ex-servicemen was at play in the minds of the British civilian population (p.185).

<sup>25</sup> War Office (1944) *Handbook for the information of relatives and friends of prisoners of war and civilians in Japanese or Japanese Occupied Territories*. Relatives were charged 2d per copy (Hatley-Broad 2002).

- differences of climate to which they are subjected, varying from the tropical heat of the Equator to the seasonal cold of Korea and Manchuria;
- c) the distances, ranging to thousands of miles, between Japan and the outlying areas of detention, such as Burma, Siam and the Netherlands East Indies, combined with the absence of adequate means of communication or of carriage for supplies, such as exist in Europe, between the seat of central government and the location of the camps;
  - d) the absolute control exercised by the Japanese authorities over means of communication to and from the areas in their occupation;
  - e) the fact that there is no country in the Far East from which the I.R.C.C. can function in relation to Japan as they do from Switzerland for prisoners in Europe.

(War Office 1944, pp.2-3)

Though a modern reader may find the tone rather detached and unemotional - the camp deficits being expressed largely in terms of communications and logistics - we should remember that this was written for an audience of highly anxious relatives who had received precious little information in the previous two years. Reading between the lines, it is not hard to piece together the message. Along with Mr. Eden's statement,<sup>26</sup> and the medical views expressed through the British Medical Journal, the War Office should have been left in little doubt that many POWs would be returning home with psychological damage as well as poor physical health.

During 1944, a groundswell of opinion began to appear that something more needed to be done to support the returning POWs (at this stage of course only from Europe), and to provide - as Newman had suggested - something akin to a decompression chamber to ease transition to civilian life. Complicating matters further, 'civvy street' itself had changed. Between 1939 and 1945, the armed services had expanded from 2 million to 5 million personnel, that is approximately 22.5% of adult men under 50, and by 1945, 63% of 20-29 year olds were in the armed forces (Sokoloff 1999). From 1941, women had been expected, indeed conscripted, to accept paid work 'on farms, in transport services, in civil defence or, more often, in munitions, tank and aircraft factories' (Dawson 2010, p.30). Sokoloff (1999) points out that this fell most

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<sup>26</sup> Hansard, HC Deb 28 January 1944 vol. 396 cc1029-35  
[http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1944/jan/28/japanese-treatment#S5CV0396P0\\_19440128\\_HOC\\_9](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1944/jan/28/japanese-treatment#S5CV0396P0_19440128_HOC_9)

heavily on single working class women, with 80% being involved.

Psychiatrist Tommy Wilson pushed the War Office into establishing twenty Civil Resettlement Units (CRUs) (Shephard 2000, White 2016), offering practical programmes that included communal activities and vocational guidance, as well as psychiatric help if needed (Curle 2001, Sutherland and Fitzpatrick 1945). Some 60% of POWs from Germany attended a CRU (Shephard 1996). By the time that the bulk of the 38,000 FEPOWs began to arrive home (September - December 1945), CRU's had been deemed a success, and were made available to the FEPOWs. However, only 12% of their number attended.<sup>27</sup> To aggravate matters, the official line was that the FEPOWs should not talk about their experiences, and this was extended to their families who were instructed not to ask questions (Shephard 1996).<sup>28</sup> Arguably, the military injunction to stay silent combined with limited access to the CRUs ensured that many returning FEPOWs did not share their memories of trauma or receive systematic psychological support at the time.

Summers (2009) proposed that amongst the reasons for the difficulties encountered by the returning FEPOWs were the humiliation of defeat heightened by anger that the British military command had let them down, the isolation due to very poor communications, and the punitive regimes and deprivations of the camps. However, explanations for why readjustment was so difficult for the FEPOWs are contentious. Swallowe (2007) reported no guilt amongst his sample of eleven Cambridgeshire ex-FEPOWs. Rather, and without exception, they felt 'let down by government and then thrown into a hopeless military situation which was not of their

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<sup>27</sup> FEPOWs were often in poor physical condition and CRUs were not equipped to meet these needs (Curle 2001, p.3).

<sup>28</sup> See also [www.captivememories.org.uk/education](http://www.captivememories.org.uk/education)

making'.<sup>29</sup> Another explanation for their difficulties was the inability to cope with the changes that had taken place in Britain while they were away (Jones and Wessely 2010).

Women had taken on greater responsibilities in wartime Britain, which some returnees felt as a threat to their self esteem. Many couples had decided to marry in the early years of the war, and worries over infidelity were common, intensified by anxieties over impotence due to the debilitating effects of incarceration and the lack of heterosexual opportunities within the camps. The years spent in captivity encouraged the development of 'highly coloured fantasies of his return home and of his reception' (Torries 1945).<sup>30</sup> Singly or together, these factors could provoke paranoid feelings, resulting in serious marital disharmony, and social dislocation.

With most FEPOWs not attending the civil resettlement programmes, the wives and families were left with the task of managing their husband or sons' reintegration into a society much changed by the war,<sup>31</sup> a task aggravated by serious shortages of clothes, food, consumer items, even teachers (Turner and Rennell 1995). The men had lost three and a half critical years of their lives, and the process of restarting work was often far from straightforward. The women were expected to abandon their newfound freedoms and settle for their former roles as full time wives and mothers. Coping could be difficult, as Turner and Rennell (1995) have highlighted. In some cases, the responses could be extreme, as Avril Middleton's account shows:

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[http://www.webring.org/l/rd?ring=fareastpows;id=5;url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww%2Eefepow-community%2Eorg%2Euk%2Fefepow\\_rehabilitation%2Fhtml%2Fformal\\_rehabilitation%2Ehtm](http://www.webring.org/l/rd?ring=fareastpows;id=5;url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww%2Eefepow-community%2Eorg%2Euk%2Fefepow_rehabilitation%2Fhtml%2Fformal_rehabilitation%2Ehtm)

<sup>30</sup> This is consistent with Eley's (1944) views on the aspirations of the returning FEPOWs.

<sup>31</sup> The August 1945 edition of 'Far East' edition of the Prisoner of War magazine included a full page article on 'Planning their food – some useful hints on diet for repatriates' (page 6, 19.22.04) accompanied by a photograph of 'natives working in paddy fields'; sound nutritional advice couched in homespun philosophy – 'a little of what you fancy ...', 'nature itself is the great restorer'. The final paragraph shows clearly how the emphasis at the time was on getting things back to normal as quickly as possible: 'Men and women who have unfortunately been in Japanese hands will, we may well hope, quickly return to their normal ways of living; and the period of imprisonment recede as a nightmare that has passed.' See Langhamer (2017) for an analysis of how women were expected to take responsibility for the 'management of other people's emotions', most critically the 'feelings of returning servicemen' (p.78).

Having been brought up by her [that is, her mother, who had been working as a teacher] for six years I found it impossible to accept this 'interloper' as boss. ... My mother just said quite lightly, 'You're late, Ted'; my father without a word kicked over the table, breaking all the crockery which was difficult to get, and I went over to him and kicked him on the leg and told him how much I hated him. My mother was kneeling on the floor picking up the broken crockery and crying. This pattern of events went on for many years (Turner and Rennell 1995, p.136).

In her study of the factors influencing reintegration, Hatley-Broad (2005) pulls together the findings from earlier studies, most of which related to the Vietnam War, and considered their applicability to the World War Two experiences in Britain and France. She supports the conclusions of McCubbin et al (1976) who identified six strategies for successful reintegration: 'seeking resolution and expressing feelings; maintaining family integrity; establishing autonomy whilst maintaining family ties; reducing anxiety; establishing independence through self-development; and maintaining the past and dependence on religion' (p.466). She argues that although these strategies were identified decades after the end of World War Two, 'it is still possible to use them as a broad framework within which to consider the wartime experiences of wives' (Hatley-Broad 2005, p.141). She notes that the governments in both countries quickly withdrew dedicated support services once the FEPOWs had returned. By so doing they signally failed to recognize the complexity of what they were now officially abandoning, thus reducing the chances of the families benefiting from the type of tailored coping strategies set out by McCubbin et al (1976). Hatley-Broad (2005) concludes by quoting Hill (1949):

'the wives who adjusted well to wartime separation were the ones whose families had the greatest difficulties adjusting to their renewed status as an intact family.'(p.150)

### **Longer term consequences of captivity**

Participants in this research did not simply recall their childhood memories, but narrated their life stories up to the time of interview. For many of the intervening

decades, their fathers were still alive, hence the need to consider the longer term consequences of captivity. Even seventy years after the event, the British Government still acknowledges the broad causal relationship between the POW experience and long term negative health effects:

Many ex-Far East prisoners of war suffer from things like bad nerves and stress problems. This is because of the way they were treated while they were prisoners.<sup>32</sup>

Most British research on the ex-FEPOWs has focused on their physical health, related to the consequence of specific tropical diseases and chronic malnutrition (e.g. Gill et al 2004, Robson et al 2009, and Parkes and Gill 2015). However, in their seminal review, Jones and Wessely (2010) confirm that many FEPOWs also experienced psychological changes, such as posttraumatic stress disorder, as a result of their years in captivity, and they contrast this with the situation following World War One when psychiatrists were of the view that incarceration might actually protect POWs from serious psychological damage (p.164).

In the first few decades following World War Two, long term negative effects of captivity were thought to be unlikely (Jones and Wessely 2010). However, experience with Vietnam War veterans showed plainly that the damaging psychological effects of captivity could indeed infiltrate deeply into civilian life (Ursano and Benedek 2003). Subsequent retrospective research shows broad support for this finding although, as would be expected, studies vary in their approach and in their results (e.g. Port et al 2001, Robson et al 2009). In the USA, the Medical Follow-up Agency began studying the health of POWs soon after the war, publishing their first report in 1955 (Berkowitz and Santangelo 1999), and the Vietnam war led to the establishment of the Robert E.

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<sup>32</sup> Service Personnel and Veterans Agency Leaflet -7, Notes for Ex-Far East and Korean Prisoners of War, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/504504/VeteransUK\\_Leaflet7.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/504504/VeteransUK_Leaflet7.pdf) (accessed 11-07-2016).

Mitchell Centre for POW Studies,<sup>33</sup> which has offered Annual Medical Evaluations to all American POWs since that time, and publishes the findings of their - mainly quantitative - research (e.g. Park et al 2012, Segovia et al 2012, and Segovia et al 2013). Park et al (2012) show that age at capture, posttraumatic symptoms at repatriation, and physical torture are significant variables in predicting longer term mental health. Kaiser et al (2011) refine this further, concluding that 'avoidance-based coping strategies' led to better long term physical health outcomes when the POW had been subjected to torture.<sup>34</sup> The implication of these findings is that ways of coping found to be helpful in captivity may well be continued into civilian life and impact on health through the life course.

A follow-up study of US POWs from World War Two held by the Japanese showed higher mortality rates (compared with controls) in the first few years after the war, but this excess reduced and had disappeared by the mid 1950s (Nefzger 1970).<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, Segal's (1974) over-riding conclusion is that 'the extraordinary stresses of incarceration are related to a heightened vulnerability to physical and psychological health problems over the long term' (1974, p.24). These findings have been supported by subsequent studies that have further elaborated the variables involved.<sup>36</sup>

On this side of the Atlantic, the British government did not institute any national scheme of medical follow-up for FEPOWs. So, while the men were treated for their war-related illnesses, and followed-up individually in various military hospitals and special units, any opportunities for systematic longitudinal research were lost.<sup>37</sup> As Robson et

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<sup>33</sup> <http://www.remcf.org/>; <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmotc/rpow/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>34</sup> Avoidance-based coping strategies reflect disengagement from a stressor, or attempts to evade difficult circumstances and associated emotions. Approach-based coping strategies reflect engagement with stressful circumstances, or attempts to problem solve when presented with a difficult situation (Kaiser et al 2011, p.681).

<sup>35</sup> Most of the excess deaths were due to accidents, tuberculosis and cirrhosis of the liver.

<sup>36</sup> E.g. Dikel et al (2005), Engdahl et al (1997), Park et al (2012), Port, et al (2001), Sutker et al (1993), Sutker et al (1995), Ursano and Benedek (2003), Walser, et al (2012), Zerach et al (2012 and 2013a).

<sup>37</sup> Such as the 'FEPOW Unit' established in Queen Mary's Hospital, Roehampton which saw 4686 former FEPOWs between 1946 and 1968 when it closed. This specialist role was taken over by

al (2009) reiterate, the reliance on US mortality data is due to the British government's failure to institute proper follow-up procedures for their ex-FEPOWs:

... good mortality studies are available only for certain nationalities of FEPOW—mostly US veterans. This is because of enumeration difficulties in many countries, notably in the UK where FEPOWs were returned home after release with little or no debriefing or tracking (p.90).

Beebe (1975) showed that somatic consequences were 'essentially short-term, and caused by malnutrition, infection, and physical injury', while the 'psychologic injury' was 'characterized by a variable loss of ego strength' and 'essentially permanent' (p.418). Of particular interest to my research is Beebe's speculation on how future episodes of ill health might be retrospectively interpreted:

The POW experience is, moreover, of such moment for many that it is only reasonable to expect any subsequent ill health, from whatever cause, to be attributed to it (Beebe 1975, p.418).

From my data, I would suggest that Beebe dismisses the 'somatic consequences' rather lightly; Chapter Four will illustrate the existence of persistent physical problems. On a more general level of argument, the tidy separation of the 'somatic' and 'psychologic' rarely reflects empirical or psychic reality: it is the interplay between the two that constitutes an individual's wellbeing and sense of self. However, I do acknowledge the natural tendency to attribute later health problems to the FEPOW experience, which made war pensions something of a thorny issue.<sup>38</sup> As Derek said,

the trouble with Far East prisoners of war like my dad, suddenly, down the line their health would start breaking down ... and course you had to prove whether

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the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine from 1968-1999. Referrals peaked in the 1980s and other centres had to be used, such as military hospitals in Woolwich, Plymouth, Ely and Catterick, and the London School of Tropical Medicine (see Parkes and Gill 2015, Chapter 5).

<sup>38</sup> To illustrate: concerns expressed by F.E.P.O.W. (the FEPOW National Association) the 'over seven years' rule led to a debate in the House of Commons in 1972. The rule stated that for claims made within seven years after service in the forces, the benefit of the doubt would be given to the claimant. After seven years, claimants had no such advantage. In the course of the debate MPs made several unfavourable comparisons between the British and other governments, for example 'the absence of personal records and the lack of check-up on prisoners when they return to this country, unlike the case in Australia and in the United States' and 'the long-term effects of stress and starvation, is not officially recognised in Britain as it is in the Scandinavian countries'. <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1972/mar/09/far-east-prisoners-of-war-pensions>

that was due to war service. Which was a big contention of my dad and my mum, you know, and they couldn't prove it, really.

Based on their work with former Vietnam POWs, Feder et al (2008) and Segovia et al (2012) conclude that one of the protective factors leading to greater resilience was optimism, and that this applied even in the most harrowing circumstances.<sup>39</sup> But Jones and Wessely (2010) make the telling point that much of the retrospective research relies on 'subjective memory for symptoms experienced on release from captivity' (p.19), thus contesting its reliability and validity.

Verma et al (2001) carried out a rather unusual study with World War Two and Korean veterans who had a primary diagnosis of dementia. Their hypothesis – that the neurobiological changes in PTSD would result in greater behavioural changes, such as agitation, wandering and aggression – was not supported. However, subjects who had been POWs had 'a significantly higher mean score for paranoia and significantly less verbal agitation than the other PTSD patients' (p.359). On that basis, they felt it was 'tempting to speculate that the combination of paranoid hypersensitivity together with reduced verbal aggressivity had survival value in POW camps and may continue to manifest in an institutional environmental'. In their study of former POWs from World War Two and the Korean war, Engdahl et al (1997) concluded that one of the 'survival skills' adopted by the POWs was the 'suppression of their emotions', and their 'primary sources of stress' at the time of the study were 'indelible and intrusive memories, anxiety, and hyperarousal' (p. 1577-8). Both studies indicate the importance of emotional control under conditions of captivity.

The impact of the POW experiences on wives and families has also been a subject of interest to a few scholars, mainly in the USA and Israel. Hunter and Plag (1977), investigated how well the families of Vietnam POWs functioned and adapted, and found that divorce rates within the first three years after return were around 30%,

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<sup>39</sup> We have already seen from the work of Eldredge (2014) and Gillies (2011) the importance placed by the FEPOWs on diversionary and morale-boosting activities.

higher than the average rate for the military. Some studies have examined the specific impact on the wives of POWs (Dekel et al 2005, Dekel and Solomon 2006, Solomon et al 2009a, Solomon et al 2009b, and Dent et al 1998). Solomon et al (2009a) found that husbands who were more able to forgive what had happened to them, and who could share their feelings and employ empathy, enjoyed better marital relationships. Using a phenomenological approach, Dekel et al (2005) showed that even after thirty years the POW experience played a major part in the married couple's life, becoming a 'never-ending movie' (p.13).

### **The distinctiveness of the FEPOW experience and its ramifications**

While concurring with Ursano and Rundell (1995) that 'there is no one POW experience' (p.433), I argue that the British FEPOWs do form a relatively discrete group of prisoners of war, and that this sense of distinctiveness has been transmitted to the children. In this section, I set out the key criteria to support my position.

Legally, prisoners of war were a distinct group, their rights protected by the 1929 International Convention on the Treatment of Prisoners of War. Although Japan had signed the convention, they had not ratified it. Despite Japan informing the Allies of its 'intention to correspondingly apply' the principles of the convention, the Minister for the Army, General Tojo, explained at his war trial that 'necessary revisions of the principles of international conventions could be made in accordance with the demands of the immediate situation and in accordance with Japan's domestic law' (Utsumi 1999). Within the Japanese military, the task of looking after the FEPOWs was deemed very low status; indeed it was 'despised' (Utsumi 2005). With such poor oversight, and with an unexpectedly large, dispersed and mobile contingent of slave labour, it was perhaps inevitable that Japanese camp commanders should be 'indifferent to the health of their workforce' (Hearder 2004, p.77) and that widespread mistreatment should occur. As a result, it was '... soon recognized that the privations suffered by FEPOWs were of a

different order of magnitude to those experienced in Europe' (Jones and Wessely 2010, p.178).<sup>40</sup> These seemingly legal and bureaucratic aspects of FEPOW existence may seem somewhat arcane, but their ramifications filtered down the decades to become part of contemporary FEPOW discourse, and were represented in the life stories of participants.

The circumstances of capture and repatriation also marked out the FEPOWs as a distinct group. The majority of POWs in Japanese hands were volunteers or conscripts, taken prisoner within a brief period of time (December 1941 – March 1942), and also repatriated within a similarly short period (October - December 1945), mainly by sea into the ports of Liverpool and Southampton. Although the particular features of incarceration differed between camps, the common characteristics of capture and repatriation in themselves created fertile conditions for greater postwar comradeship and a more homogenous group identity than was the case with European POWs, an issue that I touch on again in Chapter 5 when discussing the success of ex-FEPOW clubs and associations.

Captivity entailed hard physical labour (for all 'other ranks' but sometimes also officers),<sup>41</sup> unpredictable and brutal punishments (from routine 'slapping' to beheading), exposure to tropical diseases that could incapacitate or kill (often with long lasting effects), and chronic malnutrition causing pathological weight loss (and various critical nutritional deficiencies). This suffering had to be borne while immersed in an alien culture with (largely mutual) racist overtones, and no chance of escape. Under such severe conditions men in the Far East quickly had to adapt to the prospect of death in captivity rather than contemplating when they might be released.

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<sup>40</sup> See MacKenzie (1994) for a discussion of POWs in WW2 in the contexts of different geographies and histories.

<sup>41</sup> Except for work parties in a few locations, e.g. H Force on the Thai Burma railway, officers managed to avoid most hard manual labour and often secured better living conditions and food - circumstances which accounted for the lower death rate amongst the officer class (Beaumont 1983).

A unique hardship experienced by FEPOWs but rarely by European POWs, and one that was especially psychologically damaging, was the severely limited communication with home. Many families had to wait up to eighteen months to receive confirmation that their relatives were still alive and in the hands of the Japanese. Incarceration for three and a half years with very few letters from home, or Red Cross parcels, sapped morale to a degree which is hard to comprehend.

In the years after the war, many ex-FEPOWs shared a sense of bitterness towards the British government and the upper echelons of the armed forces. Many felt they had been let down by their leaders and that the campaign in the Far East was doomed from the beginning. Gwen's father was particularly virulent in his criticisms: 'One person was ... always had his loathing, was Sir Winston Churchill. Because he always said, you know, I ... sometimes I think he's more responsible for it than what the Japanese were. For putting us in a position ... .' Aggravating this was the issue of compensation, which was only finally resolved in 2000,<sup>42</sup> and war pensions for the men or widows. Ex-FEPOW associations flourished after the war,<sup>43</sup> and one of their earliest campaigns was the claim for financial compensation that had been 'built upon a narrative of suffering' (Makepeace 2014b, p.259).

Captivity created strong 'fictive kinship groups' (Winter 2014, p.48), as a result of which the ex-FEPOWs succeeded in creating a special postwar identity,<sup>44</sup> that they nurtured through their local and national associations. As the years have passed, this identity has been shared with the second (and third) generations who have now taken over responsibility for ensuring that the ex-FEPOWs retain a permanent place in the cultural memory.

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<sup>42</sup> See <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN03887> for a House of Commons 2009 update on this issue.

<sup>43</sup> In a BBC News online magazine article (15 August 2015), Makepeace and Parkes commented that: 'In total, almost half of all British Far East PoWs became part of a club or association at some point in their lifetime.' <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-33931660>

<sup>44</sup> Makepeace (2014a) argues that the POWs held in Germany and Italy failed to form fictive kinship groups in the camps and, compared to the ex-FEPOW associations, had no single, coherent organization behind them, or over-riding narrative to pursue.

## **Conclusion**

My principal purpose in this chapter has been to delineate the critical features of the father's experiences as a FEPOW, in order to better understand and contextualize the behaviours the men brought back with them into postwar British society and the family home. Drawing on a wide range of literature, I have shown that many fathers also suffered longer term psychological and medical problems that the families had to accommodate, or suffer. The intimate conditions of camp life, added to the wider sense of cultural and geographical isolation and alienation, were influential in moulding and sensitising the father's psychosocial state.

The notion of the 'body-self' captured the impact of the camps at an integrated, experiential level, thus contesting the split between the psychic and the corporeal that characterizes much writing on this subject. Aside from dermatological research, most scholarly work on FEPOWs underplays the complex role of appearance and the skin. The appearance of the father was pointed out by many of the children - either by way of direct experience or via family stories. By recognizing the psychosocial significance of the skin, we begin to deepen our insight into the more nuanced ramifications of intergenerational communication.

Finally, I argue that this set of circumstances and conditions is sufficient to warrant identifying the FEPOWs as a discrete group of war-traumatized individuals, and that this sense of identity has been taken forward and elaborated by the second generation. In Chapter Four, I examine the multifaceted ways in which the war was brought into the home, and explore the domestic conditions under which participants began to evolve memory practices to meet their particular psychic needs.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### BRINGING WAR INTO THE HOME

‘... take care not to suffer in your own homes what is inflicted on us here.’  
(Levi 2008, p.57)

‘A child is a hollow vessel with a thundering echo’ (Friedman 1994, p.135)

‘I didn’t know it was any different in other families ...’ (Joanna)

#### **Introduction**

My aim in this chapter is to examine how captivity influenced the father’s behaviour towards his family, and how the children experienced this. I pursue this primarily through focusing on the participants’ memories of childhood while they were living in the family home. However, because the war continued to make its presence felt long after childhood, I have included instances of transmission that had an impact on the adult children many years later.

Participants spoke of their father’s behaviour during these early years, and how they were able to relate to him. They talked, too, of the mother’s role in mediating family life, and the nature of the relationships between mother and father, and between siblings. And they reflected on their understanding of how the father’s prisoner of war experiences had shaped their lives and sense of psychological and physical security.

The consequences of captivity were expressed very differently: from the barely perceptible to the brutally explicit. This chapter includes examples from across the spectrum. Firstly, I briefly consider the ex-FEPOW’s return to civilian life within post-war society, then turn to how the fathers’ health and medical problems intertwined with the day to day lives of their children - a curious omission in research to date. The case study of Derek shows how the father’s state of health could infiltrate family life, quietly and undemonstratively. I then move on to the implications of particular habits and behaviours, such as attitudes to food and eating, and the distressing impact of

nightmares. In some families the war merely seeped into the home, introducing subtle changes that hovered around the fringes of consciousness yet became integral to the family's 'experiential matrix' (Kidron 2009, p.9). In the final section, I describe how the children's lives could be blighted by the fathers' aggression and occasionally overt violence, highlighting the experiences of Joanna to reveal how intergenerational transmission of trauma can seem to close the affective gap between past and present.

### **Returning to civilian life**

Children born in the 1940s and 1950s were raised by parents whose memories of the war were still fresh, and the effects of warfare crudely visible in the bombed out areas of towns and cities (Highmore 2013).<sup>1</sup> James described how the aftermath of the war became normalized: 'We used to go and play in bomb sites. I didn't associate the word bomb site with bombs. It was just a flat place. Where a building had been'. War and militarism were inescapable parts of family life in the 1950s, as Quinault (2001) points out: 'Most grandfathers had served in the First World War, most fathers in the Second, and most young men were currently called up for two years of National Service' (p.14).<sup>2</sup>

The fathers' emotions were being actively suppressed in the drive to establish new lives and livelihoods,<sup>3</sup> and home was often the place where any psychic conflicts were played out. Participants in this research were the involuntary witnesses to these struggles. When the FEPOWs returned home, the country had already celebrated VE day (8<sup>th</sup> May) and VJ day (15<sup>th</sup> August), and during this period most families still had no firm news of their fate. On their return the men faced critical challenges: to restore a sense of normality within a set of relationships that had itself been subjected to protracted

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<sup>1</sup> Thomson (2013) argues that the period from the end of the war to the 1970s period saw progressive loss of freedom for the child due to growing worries about child safety. Hewitt (2009) provides an intriguing analysis of the moral and military dimensions of 'urbicide'.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.historytoday.com/roland-quinault/britain-1950>

<sup>3</sup> This 'suppression' was a joint undertaking between the state discourse of 'getting the country back on its feet' and the individual ex-POW who suppressed his feelings to restore normality in the family. See thesis p.93 regarding the 'military injunction to stay silent'.

stresses, and to regain the composure necessary to re-embrace the ebb and flow of everyday life (Allport 2009, Summers 2009, Turner and Rennell 1995). Many young men were returning to parents, wives and girlfriends (and sometimes children too) they had not seen for three and a half years or more, and barely heard from. That in itself was a major task, let alone trying to reconnect with wider society that according to Langhamer (2012) was going through a period of 'significant discursive change and emotional instability' (p.279). Writing about military masculinities, Atherton (2009) sums up the challenge facing ex-military men:

When leaving the military men undergo a process of redomestication, not only back into society, but on a much more personal level. They are returning to a space that ... has been romanticised as existing 'outside of' and 'apart from' the regimented, military mode of life. And yet, it is a space that must now contain within it a body that has been domesticated by the military. It is a space that has been conceived of as the natural domain of the family. And yet, it is a space that these men must negotiate everyday if they are to maintain this family ideal (p.829).

The degree to which men became 'domesticated' after the war is contentious, with Francis (2007) suggesting a persistent 'restlessness' and 'flight from commitment' on the back of the 'all-male camaraderie of service life', albeit achieving expression largely in the 'male imaginary' (p.164). Frank Mort (1999) writes of 'a generation of men who were formed by an ethic of masculinity that provided them - if not those around them - with a standard to live by' (p.355), and who were 'living according to the rule' (p.364). My interviews revealed many examples of traditional behaviour in husbands and fathers: memories of sharply-demarcated gendered domestic roles (for example, wives mostly responsible for preparation of meals and direct child care), and control over resources (for example, the husband giving his wife 'housekeeping money' each week). And these patterns were quite resilient, only necessitating change when life events, such as the wife's illness, intervened. Nevertheless, King (2010) contends that despite retaining a gendered division of domestic tasks, fathers were becoming gradually more

involved with family life, a state of affairs that she describes as 'family-oriented masculinity' (p.27).

Atherton's (2009) interviews revealed that some men saw home 'as a prison and ... a constant reminder of the physical and mental scars received while in action or in service' (p.831). Perhaps a sense of 'home as a prison' also lay behind the lives of those ex-FEPOWs who vented their problems through excessive alcohol consumption, violence or, in quieter mode, through behaviour that conveyed to their children a sense of emotional absence or intersubjective 'distance'. Participants referred regularly to feeling a sense of 'absence' or 'emotional distance' in the presence of their fathers, but their observations need to be seen in the context of the prevailing emotional codes, established between the wars, in which both men and women were expected to 'exercise restraint, reason and rationality in their emotional and affective relationships' (Noakes 2015b, p.77).

We also need to consider how participants constructed their memories during interviews, especially in the light of the 'psychologization of experience' that flowered during the twentieth century (Rose 1997, p.232). The growth of psychology offered a new vocabulary and set of concepts with which to think about society 'and the kinds of people we have become'.<sup>4</sup> Whether the sense of 'absence' or 'distance' as remembered by participants was produced by the trauma of the father's captivity, or was influenced predominantly by 'the emotional restraint and resilience that were judged to have underpinned victory' (Langhamer 2017, p.78), can only be judged through careful examination of individual cases. Participants commonly attributed much of their fathers' psychological remoteness to their captivity experiences. Their attributions were often sophisticated and reflective, and took into account complex configurations of trauma in the father's individual biography, such as events in his childhood, his

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<sup>4</sup> From the text of a spoken lecture by Nikolas Rose in 2007: 'Psychology as a social science.' Online at [http://www.psych.lse.ac.uk/socialpsychology/events/2006-07/other/documents/NikRose\\_05\\_02\\_07.pdf](http://www.psych.lse.ac.uk/socialpsychology/events/2006-07/other/documents/NikRose_05_02_07.pdf) Accessed 13-1-2017.

idiosyncratic response to the circumstances of captivity, and the sense of security or otherwise generated within the home.

Kennedy (2014) demarcates the key parameters of the 'secure home' around which the lives of many participants became problematic.

The contents of the psychic home, its mental furniture, consist essentially of identifications with family members making up the home's interior. In the secure home, the parents provide continuity over time in their homemaking, providing a supportive base for the children to eventually leave, and ultimately to build up their own home (p.26).

As Kennedy suggests, the 'processes of identification and identity formation are intimately linked' (Kennedy 2014, p.52) and any forces that undermine processes of identification, continuity and support will also disrupt a child's capacity to 'feel at home' with themselves.<sup>5</sup> Returning ex-FEPOWs needed to restore or relearn the practices of both social and physical intimacy that were suited to peacetime living, and often had to do so under circumstances of psychological and physical impairment.<sup>6</sup> As we saw from Chapter Three, little psychological support was offered as part of the resettlement process (Turner and Rennell 1995, p.50). Scholars such as Blunt (2005) and Moore (2000) remind us how the home can be a 'potential site of struggle and conflict' (Brickell 2012, p.226). For the children of ex-FEPOWs, tensions between intimacy and 'apartness' could leave them with a fragile and unsettled sense of 'home'.

Although Gwen had a warm relationship with her father, his behaviour regularly weakened his children's sense of stability. She recalled how he would go out for long walks after his 'temper tantrums'. She remembered repeatedly gazing out of the window, standing next to her youngest sister, 'thinking what if we never see him again'. Selena's testimony illustrated how the everyday experience of a child could blend

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<sup>5</sup> Sanja Bahun's professorial lecture in 2015 opens up the concept of home to expose complex ambiguities and imaginative shifts of scale. <https://vimeo.com/132920432> Arguably, the ex-FEPOWs would have had to contend with these instabilities and, I suggest, may have transmitted them to the children.

<sup>6</sup> Doucet and Lee (2014) point out how little research has been undertaken on 'fathering and disability' (p.365).

images of bodily trauma with resonances of war. She began her emailed testimony with a very vivid memory that was both poignant and uncanny.

My earliest memories of Dad are coming into the kitchen and finding him bleeding into the sink. He had strange lumps on his elbow that were creepy when I was little. Just a few years ago they got bigger and burst and puss and shrapnel came out! The bleeding thing was because sometimes the use of his hand would just stop- suddenly- and he would drop what ever he was holding. All our cups had the handles glued back on with araldite. Araldite played a major role in my early life. He often cut his hands during these episodes and would stand at the sink trying to stem the flow.

Images do not come more commonplace than the kitchen sink. Selena's experience made a profound impression on her as a young child, and her memories of those moments pursued her into adulthood. As the example suggests, everyday domestic life is a strangely powerful setting, capable of 'normalizing' behaviours that, in any other context, would be described as bizarre or even pathological. In some families, such behaviours were 'taken for granted' and only hindsight, stretching back over many decades, enabled them to be construed differently. As Sally put it: 'they're just mum and dad, aren't they? Just get on with it. 'Cos when you're a kid, it just is what it is, isn't it? ... If you're brought up in a family that doesn't talk about anything, you don't expect to talk about anything'.<sup>7</sup>

One feature that sometimes confounds neutral observers is that a father's trauma did not necessarily lead to changes in his behaviour beyond the home. To the outside world, these men were unexceptional, hardworking citizens who paid their way. The family, however, witnessed the legacy of the trauma, as expressed through emotional disturbance, self destructive tendencies or, less commonly, physical violence. Where the home atmosphere was particularly tense or oppressive, children might take the risk of leaving home earlier than they might otherwise have done, perhaps using a

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<sup>7</sup> Carolyn Steedman (2005) describes this sense of childhood alienation, but allows for the possibility of reinterpretation later in life: 'In childhood, only the surroundings show, and nothing is explained ... the landscape and the picture it presents have to remain a background, taking on meaning later, from different circumstances (p.28).

precipitous marriage as the vehicle, only to regret it later (as we saw from Jacqui's testimony in Chapter Two).

When the father's behaviour was clearly getting out of control, families closed ranks and kept secret the problems in the home. Often families adopted these strategies to defend themselves from the scrutiny of outside agencies that might bring shame on the family, 'against forms of governance from outside' (Smart 2011, p.540). Deirdre's father was a violent man, whose behaviour became normalized in the family. Her testimony revealed the strength of the urge to conform with the social codes and moral order of the family's local community and class.

The next door neighbour actually came round and spoke to my mother and said, you know, I think your husband needs to be reported, he said. ... And she pleaded, begged with him and said, it wasn't his fault. He'd spent three and a half years in a prison camp, and bla-bla-bla. She related that to me afterwards, you know, when I was older.

Sayer (2005) addresses the psychic implications of shame: 'While it is deeply social in that it is a response to the imagined or actual views of others, it is also a particularly private, reflexive emotion, in that it primarily involves an evaluation of the self by the self' (p.953). The threat of shame drove the wife to protect her husband from external intervention, and perhaps punishment. Thus simultaneously the mother held the couple together, and also reduced the chances of later retribution at his hands.<sup>8</sup> By attributing her husband's behaviour to FEPOW captivity, Deirdre's mother rationalized it to her own psychic advantage and also staved off interference from strangers. Their children, however, were rarely of an age to rationalize events in this way.

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<sup>8</sup> Another participant, Lorna, said that her mother believed her husband - also a violent man - would be 'repaired by family life, and could be loved into "mental health."'

### **The impact of the father's ill health**

In this section, I turn to the physical health of the father, and analyse how this facet of trauma transmission influenced the everyday lives of the children, through the impact of symptoms, treatments, or behavioural limitations.

Certain FEPOW-derived physical illnesses, such as *Strongyloides stercoralis*,<sup>9</sup> could go unrecognized for decades, due partly to ignorance of tropical diseases amongst non-specialist medical professionals. The expectation that a return to a healthy diet would quickly rectify previous nutritional deficiencies proved over-optimistic. Gill and Bell (1982) of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) concluded that even thirty years after the end of the war significant numbers of former FEPOWs still suffered from neurological conditions due to malnutrition in captivity.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, scholarly enquiry into post war health amongst ex-FEPOWs is sparse and largely confined to medical research.<sup>11</sup> Derek described how his father's ill health affected the family's life in ways that were low-key yet pervasive.

### **Derek**

*'It was just ill-health all the time'*

Derek was a rather diffident man, with a pronounced stammer. He was sixty at the time of interview, and unmarried. In my post interview field notes, I wrote:

'There's a strong sense of anonymity surrounding Derek and his life. I feel part intruder and part advocate, and that there's something particularly important about bringing his story to the surface. Something about his story suggests a sacrifice: he has sacrificed some of his life to the father and the mother. Perhaps he has sublimated his hopes and wishes in the pursuit of his father's story.'

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<sup>9</sup> I give details later in the chapter when I discuss Derek's testimony.

<sup>10</sup> 'Of our large series of 898 men, 5.5% were affected up to 36 years later ... after return to a normal diet, and it would seem likely that in most of these men the effects will be permanent' (Gill and Bell 1982, p. 864). The persistent symptoms included peripheral neuropathy (including 'burning feet'), losses in vision, hearing loss, and weakness due to spinal cord syndromes (Parkes and Gill 2015, pp. 196-7).

<sup>11</sup> Writing for a non-medical audience, Parkes and Gill (2015) describe a range of post war health problems, from which the general reader might be able to deduce something of the impact of these illnesses on the families. In some of her examples, Summers (2009) makes brief references to the impact on the families.

Sitting by the window in his living room, we were overlooked by a bookcase that held photos of his father and mother, more distant family members, and a great many VHS videos on war history.

Derek: As I say, he didn't speak a ... like a lot of prisoners of war, he, he never spoke about, about ... the c-c-c- conditions out there. ... m- me father used to go into erm ... tropical diseases erm ... ward every year to ... for a check-up. And that used ... I can remember as a young child m-m-m-mum and me elder brother, we used to troop down there, on a Sunday. And we would visit him in ... in erm ... this hospital there.<sup>12</sup>

Derek's rapid switch from a FEPOW trope ('he never spoke') to the impact of illness on family life suggested a particular need to convey this aspect of his experience. At the beginning of the interview, he had summarized his father's wartime activities with little sign of any stammer, which implied he had prepared for my visit (or that he had told the same story many times). Derek's father, Reg, had been through a great deal in his early years. During the Depression, when he was five, Reg's father had put him into an orphanage after his wife had died. Reg joined the Territorial Army at seventeen, and in July 1941 found himself in Singapore. He was a POW in Changi then sent to work on the Thai-Burma railway. Derek said his dad's survival could be put down to three things: his orphanage upbringing, having no mum, and his Christian beliefs. And he was 'a small bloke. He used to say, a bowl of rice would keep me going, but it wouldn't keep a big bloke going'.

Despite these 'advantages', poor health soon interrupted his repatriation. On arriving at Waterloo railway station, he suffered a bad attack of malaria and was taken straight to hospital by ambulance. Like many returning FEPOWs, he continued to suffer attacks of malaria for many years:<sup>13</sup>

He had a lot of bad malaria attacks when he come back especially when it was hot weather. He would get really severe headaches, you know, with malaria ...

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<sup>12</sup> The journey was a round trip of seventy miles by public transport.

<sup>13</sup> Omonuwa and Omonuwa (2002): 'If untreated the infection will recur throughout the person's lifetime' (p.159)

One memory stood out from the others, and must have been a startling and disorienting experience for a small boy.

I can always remember ... w-w-w- when I was a kid ... he come out the bathroom ... well y'know he'd have a wash and shave, and he had these massive red slashes on his back, like red wheals all right across his shoulders. I said to my mum, what are these things on dad's back? And she said oh, it's something he picked up in the war. And, it was just left at that.

Derek's observation was a dramatic yet poignant juxtaposition of domestic routine (a 'wash and shave') with tropical exotica ('red wheals'). His father was a victim of the parasite *Strongyloides stercoralis*<sup>14</sup> which was prevalent in Thailand. The red wheals that made such an impact on Derek were the signs of 'creeping eruption'<sup>15</sup> that many sufferers experienced (Gill et al 2004). This illness was commonly misdiagnosed in Britain, and it was only in the 1970s that the extent of the problem was widely appreciated. Indeed, some men suffered for fifty years before a diagnosis was made. In a near literal sense, then, Derek's father carried the war within him, as a living presence, a continuous link between past and present. By witnessing his father's symptoms on a daily basis, Derek was party to a very particular form of recursive, pernicious, and embodied, intergenerational transmission.

Ten years after the war, when only thirty-seven years of age, his father's health began to break down further. He developed Type I diabetes that was poorly controlled leading to regular insulin reactions and crises at home. In the mid 1960s, he was diagnosed with tuberculosis (TB) in both lungs, as a result of which he spent over a

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<sup>14</sup> *Strongyloides* is a soil-based organism that thrives in a hot and humid climate, as found in Thailand. Larvae enter the body by 'burrowing into the skin of the feet' (Parkes and Gill 2015, p.193). They gradually work their way up the body to the lungs and throat, from where they get swallowed into the gastro-intestinal system. There they breed, before passing down the bowel and getting excreted. When it reaches the lower bowel and anus, it can re-enter the body (a process known as 'auto-infection') and start the process of infection all over again. It is estimated that the prevalence was around 20% of those working on the Thai-Burma railway (Parkes and Gill 2015, p.194).

<sup>15</sup> Also known as 'larva currens'.

year in a TB sanatorium.<sup>16</sup> Once more the family had to adapt: 'So, again, every Sunday, we had to get on the coach and go down to see him.' Although the Post Office was a good employer, eventually he went on half pay and the family had difficulties making their mortgage repayments. His deteriorating health and trips to hospital were increasingly dictating the pattern of family life. In 1977, at fifty-eight years of age, Reg retired due to ill-health. The following year he had a serious heart attack that further contributed to his failing health. He died in 1986 at the age of sixty-seven. Because of his father's chronic ill-health Derek was never able to form the kind of father-son relationship enjoyed by many of his school friends.

Terry: What did he do with you ...?

Derek: As a child, I can't really say that he interacted with us much, really. We didn't kind of go out, play football or anything like that. ... He might be out in the garden and that ... but, you know, he was just a pretty quiet sort of bloke.

Despite these constraints, Derek maintained close relationships with both parents throughout their lives. Derek strongly identified with his father's resentment over the British government's treatment of the ex-FEPOWs, and was particularly aggrieved about the war pension his father was awarded:

... the trouble with Far East prisoners of war ... like my dad, suddenly, down the line their health would start breaking down, you know, and of course you had to prove whether that was due to war service. Which was a big contention of my dad and my mum, you know, and they couldn't prove it, really.

Towards the end of the interview, Derek reflected on the connections he felt between his father's ill-health and the limitations of his childhood:

... it was just me dad being sick all the time, you know. I just can't really remember him being ...relatively well. I mean at school ... well I said, me dad's in hospital. Oh, what's a matter with him? Oh, he's having tropical diseases. He's there for a week, you know. And they'd go ... (laughs) ... you know.

Throughout the interview I sensed that Derek spoke 'on behalf of' his father, that there was unfinished business. He located himself firmly within the COFEPOW community, but unlike his father and mother, he only engaged through online media. He had not

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<sup>16</sup> Reg was an overseas telegraphist, and so was eligible to be cared for in a sanatorium owned by the Post Office. See this website for a history: <https://benendenheritageproject.wordpress.com/2016/06/22/from-farm-to-sanatorium/>

attended any remembrance events since his mother had died in 2007, neither had he visited the FEPOW Building at the National Memorial Arboretum.<sup>17</sup>

### **The impact on domestic routines**

From Derek's story we can see how the father's ill health could mould day-to-day family life. This section explores the impact of other aspects of the father's legacy on domestic routine, in particular attitudes to discipline, food and mealtimes, and the father's nightmares. Participants born before or during the war were quick to notice changes in disciplinary regimes. Born in 1941, Angie remembers life during the air raids, sleeping in the kitchen under a 'Table Morrison Indoor Shelter that doubled as a dining table'.<sup>18</sup> Life was fun as a small child - 'a house full of jolly young people ... I became very spoiled'. Then, in 1945, her father returned home.

I have a memory of standing at the edge of the living room in tears because a strange man in uniform had just spanked me. I also remember my mother's face, sort of remorseful but siding with him. It was probably the first time I had ever been disciplined.

Establishing a new relationship with a father who was a 'stranger' was naturally going to be difficult (e.g. Allport 2009, Summers 2009). The father's arrival on the scene 'cut right across established routines and disrupted intimate relationships' (Turner and Rennell 1995, p.89). The change was abrupt, despite the attempts of most mothers to keep alive the presence of the father in the home and in the minds of their children by marking birthdays, displaying photographs, and writing letters.<sup>19</sup> Under these conditions, and despite the family's best efforts, establishing or maintaining any semblance of a secure attachment with the father was highly problematic.

Graham, the oldest of my participants, was born in 1938 and was an only child. 'My mother was ultra-protective of me. And consequent to that, I am rather soft'. In the

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.thenma.org.uk/whats-here/more-about-the-memorials/>

<sup>18</sup> <http://ww2today.com/27th-march-1941-the-morrison-shelter-is-introduced> shows the indoor shelter in use, in a middle class domestic environment that would have been very familiar to Angie.

<sup>19</sup> Unbeknown to the families at the time, most didn't reach the FEPOWs.

early part of the war, his mother strove as best she could to maintain a psychological connection between Graham and his father, but this gradually subsided after she discovered he was a POW. Graham sensed that things had changed. In his father's absence, he identified strongly with his maternal grandfather who was a blacksmith. He described their relationship in richly sensual terms: 'I used to spend a lot of time apparently standing on the forge door watching him. I can remember the smell of his leather apron ... I always used to like sitting on his lap when he was in the house ... He told me how to plant radishes'. He never managed to establish a similarly intimate or a secure attachment relationship with his father - 'I mean this is somebody coming completely into your life that you've never seen before. .... I don't think I was frightened of him, only insofar as you're always frightened of your dad, to a certain extent.'<sup>20</sup> Throughout his testimony Graham emphasized how his adult personality had been forged by his mother and grandfather, not his father.

The father's approach to discipline featured prominently in interviews, usually in terms of a need for unquestioning compliance. However, this should be seen against what Kynaston (2007) refers to as the 'harsh or authoritarian' background nature of family life in those times (p.595). Until he was twelve, Robert was expected to address his father as 'sir'. His father linked discipline with survival, and described how a strict approach to hygiene practice in the camps reduced food contamination and diseases like cholera and dysentery.

He did say on one or two occasions that those with the best discipline and the spirit would get through. If you followed orders and you kept that kind of military thing going it was better for you than if you said, fuck, it doesn't matter.

During captivity, many peacetime desires and drives were replaced by fantasies of food (Shephard 2000, p.315) which may explain why it continued to hold a special place in the minds of all ex-FEPOWs. Two tropes dominate the narrative: an aversion to rice, and

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<sup>20</sup> Margaret Bavin (1947) spent a year working as a 'civil liaison officer' in a C.R.U. where she interviewed more than 600 POWs from Europe. Evoking the classic Oedipal triangle, she describes the men's particular 'resentment and jealousy' where 'a small son had occupied the father's place in the mother's bed (p.33-34).'

intolerance of waste. Because the Asian diet depended so heavily on rice, a widespread belief was that once home FEPOWs would be reluctant to eat it. Regular service personnel stationed in Asia before the war were accustomed to eating rice-based meals, often adjusted better to the FEPOW diet, and so had few problems with rice on their return. Responses could be more idiosyncratic, however. Stella's father wouldn't have savoury rice in the house, but did eat rice pudding. And Joanna's father wouldn't have white rice but would eat brown 'because it had goodness in it. He was obsessed with goodness and vitamins'. Joanna recalled another food restriction:

We couldn't ever have pork. He couldn't have pork being cooked in the house because it was the smell of the burning bodies. So, we never had roast pork.

Selena explained how her father used stories about food to make a moral point about not wasting, and how 'a favourite meal' came to be closely linked with a critical episode from his time as a FEPOW.

When we were fussy over food we heard about how the guards were so hungry they ate the goldfish and how he had been glad to eat the heads that were discarded. When the Americans bombed the docks and the ships burnt and the sea boiled and the Japanese threw the tins away as the milk had gone solid and brown. Caramel on rice was a favourite meal for us.

Jeff described how his father's intolerance of waste was taken to extremes.

He was a great hoarder of food. Used to drive my mother nuts. Leftover food from dinner etc. was always saved – down to a half-eaten potato on one occasion. The left overs would often be saved in an aluminum mess tin – of Dutch origin from the camp I recall.

Jeff's mention of the 'aluminum mess tin' recalls Kidron's (2009) interviews with Holocaust survivors and their families which connected private memory work with material traces of 'death-worlds'. Given my knowledge of Jeff's optimistic and positive temperament, I am inclined to see the mess tin as a 'living reminder of the enigmatic power of survival and human resilience' (p.18) but with added poignancy because of its association with food. It is often the case that, as Kidron comments, 'one cannot disentangle the mundane life-world as one knows it from the interwoven co-presence of

the Holocaust past' (p.16).

For some men, chronic malnutrition, combined perhaps with more systemic health problems, caused them to lose interest in food altogether as a pleasure. Gwen's father never ate large meals, 'he just ate enough to survive. He was very a fussy eater, and he couldn't eat a lot. His digestive system had obviously been affected.' Robert's father too 'had never been a great eater. If you took him out to a restaurant for a nice meal, ... not interested. Not interested in the food. To him it was fuel.' Robert recalled a conversation towards the end of his father's life when he was being fed by tube following surgery.

When they put this thing in his stomach, this is marvelous, he said. They said, you can't stay on that forever. You've got to get this thing going [the swallowing reflex]. He said, no, don't worry about that. Just leave it in, it's fine. You know, I remember that conversation. It was odd because he couldn't stay like that and he was going to die.

Recurring nightmares occurred predominantly in the first few years after repatriation, and they featured in the narratives of many participants.<sup>21</sup> The fathers would sometimes 'act out' the nightmare to the great distress of the family.<sup>22</sup> Gwen described how her father would 'wake up and his hands would be round my mother's neck 'cos he'd think she was a Japanese guard, so that was terrible'. Participants occasionally described these 'memories' of nightmares as if they themselves had witnessed them when, instead, they were stories related by their mothers .

Terry: So, did you hear those nightmares yourself ... as a child?

Gwen: No ... I remember my father with malaria....

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<sup>21</sup> In 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', Freud commented on the repetitive quality of traumatic dreams: 'Now dreams occurring in traumatic neuroses have the characteristic of repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of his accident, a situation from which he wakes up in another fright' (Freud 2015, p.7). Although there is no space to address the issue here, Freud had problems fitting nightmares (certainly of the war trauma variety) into his theory of dreams; after all, it was difficult to see them as part of a wish-fulfilment hypothesis. Freud may have been constrained by his 'very limited understanding of the overwhelming nature of the trauma of war' and therefore of the role that nightmares might play (Truda 2007 p.11).

<sup>22</sup> In Peter's (1996) study of eleven wives of Australian POWs indicated that nightmares could be the 'hardest part of being the wife of a POW' (unpaginated).

In Sally's reflective account, however, the route through her memories was more complex.

Terry: The nightmares you mentioned then, how ... how did that affect the family?

Sally: I don't think they affected me particularly. I think erm ... it just used to frighten me a bit, but I ...

Terry: But what happened, what did you do ...?

Sally: B-but he'd just start shouting in the night. And erm ... erm ... again I was more sort of told about them than ... witnessed them really. Erm ... so ... I erm ... I don't know to be honest. Really. Don't know much.

Terry: So, you didn't hear your- ... you weren't disturbed particularly by ...

Sally: It was what I was told.

Sally began with an emotional response ('used to frighten me a bit'), followed by what came across as a first-hand account ('he'd just start shouting in the night'). At that point she began to question herself ('more sort of told about them'), then moved to a position of greater certainty ('It was what I was told'). Helped by my gentle prompting, she finally managed to establish the definitive status of her 'memory'. By initially claiming it as her own suggests it was already located in an unconscious network of associations. In interpreting these shifts in Sally's account, we can see how family stories can be created, drawn on and then reproduced by subsequent generations.

### **The presence of absence: the past seeps into the present**

In the early years after the war, ex-FEPOWs often seemed to need periods 'away' from the family, separating themselves physically, emotionally or both. By making themselves absent in this way, they established their powerful and paradoxical 'presence' in the minds of their children. Participants who described situations such as these had been unable to discuss them directly with their fathers: if anyone, it was likely to be the mother who proffered an explanation. While many men managed to cope with the legacy of captivity without incurring or inflicting noticeable psychological damage, others were less fortunate.

In Brenda's family, certain areas of conversation were off limits. My interview with her was a stumbling affair during which she was politely guarded, and clearly anxious. She responded to my open ended questions with brief responses only, and I found myself needing to shape the interview more than I would have wished. Gradually, however, she began to reveal more about her father's behaviour patterns.

Brenda: He just went off on some days, he'd go off on his own in the front room and he'd sit for hours, pondering. I don't know what was wrong ...

Terry: Tell me more about that ...

Brenda: Well, if he had some days off, he'd just sit in the front room. And he wouldn't come and join us or anything. And I think he was probably relating back to what happened in the war. I mean, I never knew if he suffered. He obviously did suffer because mum said when he came back he wasn't the same person she married. But, of course, in those days when you marry someone, you stay with them, don't you? ...

There was nothing particularly unusual about her father's need to spend some time on his own, but a little while later the topic reappeared and she explained his behaviour in more detail.

I'd come home from school and I'd say, well where's dad then? Mum said well, he's in the other room. And I left it at that. Cos, you know, you don't argue. ... We had the two rooms downstairs, and we all lived in the dining room. And then, the front room, we never used to use it when we were little. We never used to sit in there. ... And he'd just go and sit in there for ages. And then, then all of a sudden, he'd come out and he'd start talking. I wish I'd have asked him lots of questions, but then he wouldn't have answered, I don't think. I'm sure he wouldn't have done. And when you are young, you don't think to ask questions like what they did in their past, do you, really?

Terry: So, when he was in these quiet moods ... how long did that go on for?

Brenda: Two or three days, maybe. She cooked him his dinners, she took them into him, and he wouldn't eat them. And when she went to bed, he'd come out. He'd come out into the kitchen and make himself a jam sandwich. She knew that 'cos he didn't clear up after himself (laughs) ... I probably shouldn't be telling you this, but still ... but never mind. It was one of those things. ...

Although Brenda expressed herself in muted and mundane terms, she was able to clearly depict the pervasive impact of her father's regular psychological and physical absences. A thin strand of guilt threaded through Brenda's words - 'he wouldn't have answered, I don't think. I'm sure he wouldn't have done'; followed by a glimpse of the family 'shame' we considered earlier - 'I probably shouldn't be telling you this, but still

... but never mind.' Her final comment 'It was one of those things. ...' seemed like an attempt to put the memories 'back in their box'.

In reflecting on this interview, I pondered on my feelings of discomfort. I had felt frustrated from time to time when she lapsed into silence or slipped into familiar FEPOW scripts. It was as if both of us had 'gone missing' at times during the interview. Whilst transcribing Brenda's interview, I began to make associative links with how my father used our 'front room'. He was an amateur musician with a passion for brass bands and popular classical music, who used the front room as a place of escape. He spent whole evenings there playing records, away from me and my mother. The music that shuddered daily through the wall between his 'front' and our 'living' room was not simply his method of dealing with a legacy of trauma, but his means of communicating with me and my mother. The dividing wall was a way of creating an interpersonal barrier but he made sure it didn't block all communication. The music emanating from the front room became the literal soundtrack to my childhood. My father's 'escape' was brash and loud; Brenda's father pursued a quieter form of distancing, but both represented absence, both material and psychic. How could these experiences not have affected us both in profound ways? Eventually, I came to the tentative conclusion that Brenda was conveying to me how she had felt when her father withdrew to 'the front room'. The process of transference-countertransference appeared to have released an interpretive logjam.<sup>23</sup>

Jacqui spoke of a strained relationship between her mum and dad, an air of tension in the home, and a father who was emotionally distant - a 'cold fish' - with a need to regularly 'remove himself'. Jacqui described in graphic terms an incident when she was about five:

I remember my mum saying, take this glass of sherry to dad. He's up in the study. ... And you went up the stairs and then you'd curtains at the top 'cos it was

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<sup>23</sup> This awareness came to me very late, in fact not until I was writing up the thesis. For me, this confirmed the significance of remaining reflexive at all stages of the research relationship.

so cold, and you didn't have central heating. ... And she said, hold it tight, don't drop it. So, I held this glass, you know, I'm going to have to get through ... negotiate this curtain. And I was going up these stairs, and I remember clutching this glass so tightly, and it completely broke in my hand. Blood everywhere. Sherry everywhere, which I was more worried about. But it was this notion that I was so, somehow stressed, by life in general in the family. But, when I think back, there was always this underlying tension.

With two brothers at boarding school, Jacqui was a de facto only child for long periods, at that time living in Edinburgh in a dour, traditional sandstone house. She 'had a lot of imagination' and one Easter thought she had 'seen the White Rabbit<sup>24</sup> ... coming into the bedroom and going out again. And seeing it in the snow in the garden. So I think I [had a] very, very lonely. Very, very lonely existence.' We might see the physical descriptions of her home, and her real and imagined experiences, as reflecting her psychic world as a child: hidden places, tensions, curtained off areas. In fact, she kept much of this experience 'curtained off' until quite recently. Jacqui is a professional writer, and writing became the principal creative medium through which she has addressed her childhood and her family's FEPOW legacy.<sup>25</sup>

### **The past bursts into the present**

In a few families, the transmission of a father's war trauma was expressed explicitly, through brutal and oppressive behaviour, with recurrent violent abuse inflicting fresh traumas on the children. The impact of repeated episodes of trauma has been well documented using a variety of descriptors, such as 'sequential', 'cumulative' and 'additive' (e.g. Blum 2003, Cloitre et al 2009, Fenton 2014, Herman 1992, Kellerman 2009, Levine 2014). Although violently abusive childhood traumas are occasionally revealed in the FEPOW literature (for example, Summers 2009), for the most part these

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<sup>24</sup> The character in Lewis Carroll's book 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland'. According to McAra (2011), the White Rabbit symbolizes the desire for knowledge: it was he after all who jolted her out of her day dreaming. But for Jacqui, we are perhaps dealing with a desire for escape from an emotionally confusing home life. As the first character that Alice meets, we might expect the White Rabbit to have made a particularly vivid impression on Jacqui, then only five years of age. And following him down the rabbit hole must have seemed like both an exciting adventure and an escape route to a happier place, or at least to a place more settled.

<sup>25</sup> The analysis of Jacqui's experience is developed further in Chapter 6.

corrosive memories stay trapped in the psyches of the affected individuals and their close relatives.

Earlier we saw how food was often significant in the post-war lives of the FEPOWs. On occasions, food was the trigger for violent outbursts, or other extreme responses. Deirdre's father was an Able Seaman who had been awarded the Distinguished Service Medal (DSM) for 'bravery and resourcefulness on active service at sea'. He was a war hero. She recalled an incident when she was six.

Deirdre: ... we were never allowed to leave anything. If we had a meal dished up, even if you had a lump of gristle on your plate, you ate it. Or you swallowed it. You know, you couldn't leave anything. So there are certain things that I will not eat because of incidents that have happened.

Terry: What are they for example?

Deirdre: Well, gooseberries for a start. I remember the Queen's coronation and we were going to a party at the school, had fancy dress. And I was the 'Queen of Tarts' ... 'Hearts'. (laughs) And mum had made some jam tarts, and they were on a little plate, and we had gooseberries as a pudding. And I was just picking at them because I couldn't stand the texture, the taste. So I stood up and I said I can't eat this. And I can remember him whacking the plate out of my hand, you know, just like a paper plate with these jam tarts on. And ripping my costume that my mum had made me. And because it was the Coronation Day, that's why I'll never forget it.

Lorna was also traumatized at the hands of her father. She gave her testimony by email, and I have resisted the temptation to edit or correct her extracts in any way. The unedited text suggests how trauma can crack narrative coherence and rupture a sense of self.<sup>26</sup> Her writing could convey a sensibility that hovered on the border between the unconscious and the conscious, and between present subjectivity and the social catastrophes that scarred her family history, viz. the Depression and World War Two.

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<sup>26</sup> The following extract - presented as received - shows this fracturing more explicitly, seeming to disintegrate towards the end:

'I talk better than writing I cannot spot my errors When I get triggered into the fear state I cannot write an essay I cant seem to hold a structure well

Sorry this has been a ramble

I was having a difficult time with some of these issues at the time and could not write about this stuff as I amplify the state when I am in it. I unfortunately have started symptoms from my childhood I have been diagnosed with PTSD

As I get older it seems to be worse I very quickly get flipped into fear states But i still can remain clam in an emergency my capacity to remain hypervigilant to keep things safe and people alive is overworked'

The war flowed freely through the interstices of her account. Lorna proposed clear links between specific childhood memories and her father's war background. In the following extract she turned her attention to food, but her account ranged (and raged) across multifaceted psychosocial and historical landscapes.

My father could not stand food wasted in any way. My cousins begged not to come to our house as he was known as uncle .... with the strap that went around corners. They were frightened of him and his gruffness sarcasm and threats of violence His insistence to eat all vegetables ? preventing" vitaminosis" Instilled by Dr Bruce Hunt eating greens was critical to future one survival. One of my cousins was begging my mother to intervene so he did not have to eat greens... beans. She was not game enough to challenge Dad even though she felt for the child. Dad had starved in the depression as his father struggled to keep his business afloat and provide for a large family.

Meal times were never enjoyable Dad would force food down my throat. I did not like fat in the mutton stews. I regurgitated it up and i would be made to re-eat it I would have to stay at the table till eaten !!!!! He too had been forced to eat rotten meat to stay alive a few times.

In places, Lorna's distress felt embodied within the text as she described her young self regularly undermined and punished by her father. Repeated switches in focus forced the reader into disorientating changes of temporality and spatiality. Associations in Lorna's writing (and thinking?) were loosened, and psychic boundaries made more porous, thus increasing the proximity and intensity between her and her father's experiences, and between her and the reader.<sup>27</sup>

### Joanna

*'We suffered the consequences of it. But we weren't to suffer the knowledge of it.'*

I have touched on Joanna's story elsewhere in this chapter and this extended analysis puts these earlier references into their proper context. Joanna was born in 1953 and

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<sup>27</sup> On other occasions her emails were quite normal in grammar, structure and spelling. Elsewhere she told me she had been diagnosed with PTSD that from time to time this suddenly 'flipped' her into a state of relative incoherence. Although she lives in Australia, I had the opportunity to meet her in the UK during a four day conference. The conclusions I have drawn here are grounded in the conversations I was able to have with her.

David, her brother, in 1951. She described her first encounter with her father's war traumas:

The first time I really knew anything about it, was when I was about seven ... because my father had been to Australia on a business trip. ... He came back from this business trip and I remember walking into my parents' bedroom. My father was sobbing. Now, first of all, it was the first time I'd seen my father cry, so I just didn't understand what was going on ... and actually, now, working it out, that's what it was. And my mother said, you know, Daddy's been to see some friends who died - been to their graves - and he's very upset.

When he was seventeen or eighteen her father, Robert, had joined the Territorial Army. So 'when it all kicked off', he was already trained, ready to be sent to France and Belgium. He had had a 'long war': firstly embroiled in the retreat from the beaches of Dunkirk in 1940, then despatched to the Far East where he was a POW on the Thai-Burma railway. During the war, he rose to the rank of Captain and, after the war, became a very successful business man, receiving an honour for his contribution to British exports. On repatriation, he was soon transferred to a Civil Resettlement Unit where he stayed for six weeks. From there he went to university with a view to becoming a teacher. But his ambition was thwarted when he lost his temper with a pupil on teaching placement. Robert married Joanna's mother in 1949:

Mummy said, everything was fine for the first ten years. But then things started creeping in, his temper and stuff like that. And from then on he just got more and more ... volatile. He would just lose his temper with us. ... you just sort of waited to be, you know, you'd be hit. I got hit m ... more ... more than my brother. Mostly because I was defending my mother. He didn't hit my mother but he would be vile to her, and upset her. I think the last time he hit me I was ... s-s-seven...teen. ... Yeah. ... And so because I was always the one defending my mother, he would lash out at me.

I sensed that her slight stutter and hesitation (... s-s-seven ... teen) revealed her embarrassment and shame about still being hit by her father at the age of seventeen. Her brother was at boarding school from the ages of ten to eighteen, so she was much more exposed to her father's temper.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Both Joanna and Deirdre pointed out the harsh treatment meted out to them, comparing it with the much more lenient approach of the fathers towards their sons. As Deirdre said: 'My

Well I found that very difficult because I missed my brother, and I would often find my mother in my brother's bedroom crying. Because she missed him and I then sort of thought well I ... I'm here, you know, I'm ... I'm still here. Hi! ... I'm still here! ... It wasn't easy.

Joanna normalized the dynamics of her family life as best she could and, rather than blaming her father, blamed herself. By rationalizing her circumstances in this way, she maintained a semblance of control over events, and also sustained a degree of attachment to her father. But as she discovered, this psychic position was untenable in the longer term.

I thought it was my fault. Yes. I thought I had probably answered him back one time too many. ... I didn't know ... it sounds terribly clichéd doesn't it? ... I didn't know it was any different in other families.

Crucially, Joanna blamed herself in terms of her own behaviour - 'I had probably answered him back one time too many' - rather than blaming aspects of her own personality or 'character'. Janoff-Bulman (1979) describes the latter as 'characterological self-blame'. Joanna's 'behavioural self-blame' left her with greater control and is said to be less likely to lead to depression (e.g. Barr 2015, Hansen and Elklit 1993, Ullman and Najdowski 2011).

For most participants, the traumatic effects of intergenerational transmission were felt most acutely in childhood. But this was not always the case. Joanna described a defining episode when she was thirty-eight, her father seventy, and her mother sixty-six. Although the following extract is lengthy, her testimony carries an emotional intensity, immediacy, and narrative power that benefits from minimal interruption.<sup>29</sup> In it she describes the depths to which the relationship between her parents had sunk and suggests that this was due to her father's inability to cope with her mother's cancer diagnosis. Her vivid description re-enacts the events the night her mother died, and the

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father was very fond of my son. It was as if he was fond of the males in the family, but not the females.'

<sup>29</sup> Adopting Wertsch's distinction, I would describe the quality of Joanna's narrative as closer to 're-experiencing' than to 'remembering' (2002, pp.46-47). Terr (1991) describes how childhood trauma can cause individuals to 're-see or, occasionally but less frequently, to re-feel a terrible event or a series of events' (p.12).

distressing consequences. I have 'performed' this testimony at conferences and to students, and can attest to its impact.

Terry: Looking back, at what point in your life would you say your father's POW experiences made an impact on you?

Joanna: ... I suppose when my mother got cancer. He was absolutely dreadful with her. He treated her as if she was having an affair, and was going to leave him. He couldn't accept it. He was absolutely vile to her, really vile to her. [audible intake of breath]. He would tell her to hurry up and die, because he had booked a world cruise, which he had. And, I mean, it was awful. And when she went in for an operation, the consultant came to speak to me after her operation. And he said, Joanna, I've got to speak to you because I need to tell you the prognosis. And he said, your father just can't take it. But, he said, I've come across this before, he said, your father was a Japanese prisoner of war, wasn't he? ... And the only way I could interpret this was that all the people that were dying with him in the jungle, they had no drugs. So they were screaming in pain. And I'm pretty certain my father helped them along the way.

Terry: Why do you think that?

Joanna: Because he did it to my mother ...

Terry: So ... so ... how do you know he did that?

Joanna: I was there.

Terry: Oh, you were actually physically present?

Joanna: I was physically present. ... And the doctor had said, she's extremely close to the end now. And I said, right, this weekend, then, I will stay ... I will be with her when she dies. So, I was in the room with her, just reading a book. I didn't sleep. And my father had gone to bed. And he just said, if she becomes distressed at all and you are worried, come and get me. Well, she did, suddenly, at about three-thirty in the morning. She sat bolt upright in bed, eyes open. Very distressed. I was terrified. Never seen anybody dying before, let alone my own mother. So, I said to my father, I think mummy is in distress. I don't know what to do. Eventually, he came in and he just said right, he said, I'm going to end this for her now Joanna. You wouldn't have an animal treated like this. And so he put his ... you know... you just hold the button down ... and morphine just goes rushing in.<sup>30</sup> And then he went out, and said, I'm going to make a cup of tea. He said, go and get a mirror, and hold it in front of her face Joanna, you'll soon tell when she stops breathing. I was left in there with her. I was holding her hand and crying, and beside myself, but ... He did that, he went and made a cup of tea! It was extraordinary! Absolutely extraordinary! And then she died, and he took all her rings off, gave them to me. And then he called the undertakers. And I just remember hearing them zip the body bag. I couldn't hear a zip for years after that ... because that was the zipping my mother up. And then, at seven in the morning, her great friend arrived, Helen, and she said, I've come round to see Ruth. And daddy said, she's gone, at about four o'clock this morning, she died. Anyway, we then were given our instructions. He wanted everything out of the house. Everything belonging to my mother, out of the house. He lit a bonfire. He burnt the mattress, he burnt her wigs, he burnt letters, love letters between them, which she'd kept years and years from when she was in Africa. He burnt photos. He just was chucking everything on the bonfire. Helen and I had to bag up all her clothes into black bin liners. The whole lot had to go to charity ... he

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<sup>30</sup> Joanna's mother had been fitted with a 'syringe driver' to ensure a reliable dose of morphine. It seems as if in 1990 when this occurred it was possible to override the planned dosage. That is not the case with current models.

didn't want anything in the house. Everything was gone. No time to sort through anything ... you know, no-...nothing. He wouldn't have anything . ... Helen then went. I was then having tugs-of-war at the bonfire with photos and things and trying to get things off him, putting them in the boot of my car. ... Bonkers ... absolute bonkers. ... And then ... the funeral was dreadful, the whole thing was absolutely dreadful. And three weeks later, he rang me up and said, Joanna, I've got no photos of your mother. Have you got any? I don't know where they've all gone. But I thought that, again, was to do ... because when they had cholera, they had to burn their bodies. So, the first thing they would do would be light a bonfire. So that was his first ... instinct. ...

Terry: Did, did you ever talk to him about ... that?

Joanna: No ... I didn't talk to him about that. I couldn't talk to him properly for two years after my mother died, I couldn't forgive him ... for the way he treated her.

While on the Thai-Burma railway, Joanna's father had experienced the devastating emotional and visceral impact of cholera outbreaks. The Japanese were terrified of this disease, a fact that has been graphically documented by Weary Dunlop in his diaries (1990).<sup>31</sup> Davoine and Gaudillière (2004) describe situations of the kind Joanna experienced as events that open

'a breach in the continuity of their daily life, one in which incongruous geographies break through. This event should always be considered a traumatic revival, that is, an autonomous process without memory ...' (p.124).

Joanna's description of her father's savage behaviour after her mother's death suggests such a 'breach'. His past burst into his present, and for a period his dominant psychic 'geographies' were those of the POW camp and the horrors of the Thai-Burma railway. Laub (2012) describes how current trauma can trigger buried memories of brutality, and how effective interpretation depends on a knowledge of the 'personal-historical context' (p.35). Her mother's death and her father's behaviour were so traumatic that Joanna was only partly able to exploit what Laub refers to as the 'customary defences

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<sup>31</sup> 'A Nip in Lt-Col. Oakes' camp apparently took the cholera to heart with such thoroughness that he endeavoured to bury a soldier alive the other day. He was first felled by blows with sticks and spades before being pushed into the hole. The Nip then insisted on the hole being filled in, thus burying the lad alive with this potential infection. The soldiers with the party refused to comply with the burial order and many were struck. Eventually the 'corpse' was rescued' (p.289). Jack Chalker (2007) described why the POWs were also petrified: 'Cholera was the most feared of all our tropical enemies. It has a violent and rapid onset, followed by rapid dehydration and death within a few days' (p.79). The cholera dead were normally cremated, and 'their bodies would often twist and writhe, as though they were still alive' (Parkes and Gill 2015, p.225).

against traumatic experiences ... dissociation, derealization, depersonalization' (p.35). Instead, her father's behaviour dragged her into his psychic orbit: controlling her actions, once again treating her as a child. Years later, she was able to reflect on, and symbolize, what had happened; she achieved this by using her growing knowledge of the war, and by drawing strength from the first new shoots of empathy with her father.

Joanna's story illustrates the consequences of cumulative painful experiences, and the impossibility of ever completely disentangling their relative impact. In addition to her traumatized childhood, the painful episode just described was itself enfolded within a ten year span of events that included her brother's cancer diagnosis and death, her mother's cancer diagnosis and death, her own return to work, and her divorce. The struggle to cope 'invades and erodes the personality. ... the victim of chronic trauma may feel herself to be changed irrevocably, or she may lose the sense that she has any self at all' (Herman 2015, p.86). For Joanna, therein lay the danger, and hinted at the depth of work required in revisiting her relationship with her father, as the basis of establishing a strong sense of self. However, over many decades and through a series of events and memory practices, Joanna was gradually able to recontextualise this event, enabling her to live with her memories.

Joanna's story had many twists and turns. In his late eighties, her father developed dementia and went into a nursing home.<sup>32</sup> While there, his wartime traumas still made their presence felt. One incident in particular opened Joanna's eyes to the meaning of events in her childhood.

In the nursing home they [had a] fireworks party. He wouldn't have anything to do with it. He said, I had enough of that in Singapore. He said I was being bombed the whole time, and Dunkirk. He said, I've enough fireworks to last me a lifetime. And that explained why he never came home in time for our fireworks parties. When we were children, we would always have a big bonfire in the garden. And my father was always late. My mother would be beside herself 'cos

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<sup>32</sup> Recent research has suggested ex-POWs may have a 50% increased risk of developing dementia 'after adjusting for potential confounders and accounting for the competing risk of death' and that there be an additive 'association between POW status and PTSD, such that veterans with both of these risk factors had more than a twofold increase in the risk of dementia' (Meziab et al 2014, p.S240).

another of the neighbour's husbands would have to light the fireworks and 'cos it was a man's job. She would always say, you know, your father never comes home in time for these things.

The dementia 'released' these particular memories and others associated with his captivity. As a result, Joanna saw her childhood in a new light and, over time, came to reappraise aspects of her childhood and reached a deeper understanding of her father.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have discussed how the emotional, behavioural, and corporeal legacies of the fathers' war captivity emerged in the home, and interfered with the everyday lives of the children and their ability to establish secure attachments. By emphasizing how the father's ill-health could impact on the children, as exemplified in the case study of Derek, I argue that we need a more holistic conceptualization of trauma transmission that avoids any undue separation between the physical and the psychological (and indeed the psychological and the social/historical).

The complex traumas experienced by vulnerable children like Joanna, Deirdre and Lorna led to 'complex reactions' (e.g. Courtois 2004), including alterations in self perception and a deleterious impact on relationships with others (p.414). Both reactions were prominent in a range of testimonies from participants who had experienced repeated traumas at the hands of their fathers.

At an intersubjective level, my interviews with Joanna and Deirdre at times blurred the 'crucial distinction between then and now' (La Capra 1999, p.699). In most interviews, remembering was 'undisturbed'. That is testimonies were composed through the 'reflexive rationalisations of experience' (Pickering and Keightley 2009, p.10). However, the account by Joanna resisted easy rationalization, remained emotionally troubling in the present, in the immediacy of the interview, and included episodes of enactment during which I felt myself having to resist being drawn into her psychic world.

While this thesis does not argue for simplistic causal links between captivity trauma and specific changes in the behaviour of ex-FEPOWs, participants often made these connections themselves, especially regarding discipline, food and nightmares. But the testimonies also showed how postmemory was able to confound the process of recall. In Chapter Five, I turn to the topics of memory, postmemory and remembrance.

## CHAPTER FIVE

**MEMORY, POSTMEMORY AND REMEMBRANCE**

'... how little we can hold in mind, how everything is constantly lapsing into oblivion with every extinguished life, how the world is, as it were, draining itself, in that the history of countless places and objects which themselves have no power of memory is never heard, never described or passed on' (Sebald 2002, pp.30-31).

**Introduction**

Chapter Four examined the range of ways in which the fathers' captivity experiences made an immediate or longer term impact on their children and families, with effects that could be devastatingly emotional or disarmingly subtle.

In this chapter, I address the topic of memory itself. I begin with a brief critique of selected literature on memory and forgetting. Following this, I examine the concept 'postmemory', at times a somewhat vague notion but one, nonetheless, that has stood the test of time across a variety of fields such as cultural studies, literature, history, and trauma, as well as intergenerational transmission. Following this, I consider the surge of interest in the memories of the FEPOWs seen since the 1980s, and ponder this in the context of 'collective memory'. In the final substantive section, I select two topics whose salience is closely related to issues that arose from the research data and reflect the power of individual agency: memorialization in the home, and memorial activism.

**Memory and forgetting**

At a personal level, memory lies at the core of our identity, provides us with a sense of continuity, and forms the basis of a social existence (Assmann 2008, Misztal 2004).

Memory is the faculty that enables us to form an awareness of selfhood (identity), both on the personal and on the collective level. Identity, in its turn, is related to time (Assmann 2008, p.109).

Stretching out beyond the personal, we find the concept of memory being used to provide coherence between past experiences that are shared and recalled by groups of

people. This is the idea of 'collective memory' (Halbwachs 1992,<sup>1</sup> Gedi and Elam 1996) or one of its close cousins that jostle alongside, such as shared memory, social memory, 'collected memories',<sup>2</sup> 'communities of memory' (Pickering and Keightley 2012) and 'mnemonic communities' (Capelletto 2005). Thus far, memory seems to be a useful if tricky abstraction. However, in practice, it is rooted in the material world - 'remembering through the material' as Beckstead et al (2011) describe it. Place forms the enduring framework within which memories can surface (Halbwachs 1950), and the testimonies of participants confirmed the close interrelationship between places, objects and memories. Widening the lens still further, we discover a more recent concept that draws together several potent and synergistic concepts, and that blends materiality and metaphor. This is the notion of 'memoryscape':

Culture, emotion, memory and landscape are all interrelated. The notion of the memoryscape is an expression of the convergence zone that homogenises these concepts' (Clack 2011, p.119).

However, I balk at the use of the term 'homogenise' because it implies a fixed and irreversible state. If we allow culture, emotion, memory, and landscape to lose their distinct identities in this way, then theoretically and empirically we are the poorer for it. 'Memoryscape' is a valuable heuristic, the components of which, as suggested by Clack, are more productive if viewed as integrated not homogenized. This then creates the analytic space to explore the conceptual borders and boundaries, theoretically and empirically. By drawing attention to 'spatiality of memory and the notion of landscape' (Ullberg 2013, p.14), memoryscape can enhance understanding of the role of trauma and war captivity in the lives of the FEPOWs and their children. Memoryscape also encourages thinking about the movement of memories (spatially and temporally) (Ullberg 2013), a topic I shall return to later in the present chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> In Halbwach's terms, a shared memory that promotes a collective identity.

<sup>2</sup> Young (1993) resists the notion of 'collective memory' altogether, preferring 'collected memories', and also chooses to speak of the 'collective meaning' (not collective memory) that is passed on to successive generations (p.xii).

Jan Assmann (2008) creates an elegant conceptual framework through which he aligns memory, time, and identity within a three level model: an elaboration of Halbwach's (1992) notion of collective memory. The levels are as follows:

- an 'inner (neuro-mental)' level in which 'subjective time', 'the inner self', and 'individual memory' are held;
- a 'social' level embracing 'social time', the 'social self', and 'communicative memory', and
- a 'cultural' level which contains 'historical, mythical, cultural time', 'cultural identity, and 'cultural memory' (p.109).

These three levels of memory tie in well with the psychosocial approach: the 'inner' level makes space for the psychic, while the 'social' and 'cultural' levels enable the introduction of social discourse, and historical and geopolitical dimensions of experience.<sup>3</sup> Assmann (2008) makes an interesting distinction between 'communicative memory'<sup>4</sup> and 'cultural memory'. The former can be transmitted contemporaneously between 'three interacting generations' (p.111) and so has a limited 'life' of eighty or so years. 'Cultural memory' deals with the 'remote past' (p.112), and depends entirely on 'symbolic systems' (Hirsch 2012a p.33), requiring 'institutions of preservation and re-embodiment' (Assmann 2008, p.111), such as museums, rituals and monuments. Communicative memory exists in an informal and unstable world of 'everyday interaction and communication' (p.111).<sup>5</sup> However, my research challenges the undifferentiated conceptualization of communicative memory; it seems to me that Assmann's model needs further elaboration to fit the empirical position. Many FEPOW's chose not to share memories across generations at all, but to restrict reminiscences of this kind to a narrow band of their peers. Assmann's model does not address this

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<sup>3</sup> Assmann (2008) briefly locates psychoanalysis within his 'inner (neuro-mental)' level arguing that it looks for 'collective memory not in the dynamics of social life but in the unconscious depths of the human psyche' (p.109). Psychoanalysis is rooted in memory, as in the concept of repression, a form of unconscious and motivated 'forgetting'. And psychoanalytic practice assumes that 'recollections have to be regarded as creative constructions' (Straub 2008, p.215).

<sup>4</sup> 'Communicative memory' is Assmann's renaming of Halbwach's 'collective memory'.

<sup>5</sup> Oral history is located here.

possibility, and therefore I would propose that communicative memory could be usefully refined to accommodate two subcategories: 'communication between generations' and 'communication within generations'.

Furthermore, in Assmann's conceptualization, communicative memory seems somehow free floating, but I would argue that it remains subject to tradition, group relationships, and certain organizational structures, however embryonic, emergent or transitional. Empirically, boundaries are more blurred than Assmann contends, and the evolution of FEPOW communities provides evidence of how communicative memory can be shaped by psychic and social needs. Since the end of the war, FEPOW groups have formed and re-formed for the purpose of providing various settings (such as reunions, weekends away, conferences, memorial services) where ex-FEPOWs, their wives and families have been able to reminisce together (Makepeace 2014a). It is difficult to find a comfortable home for this form of memory sharing in either of Assmann's categories.

Assmann (2008) highlights Jan Vansina's (1985) notion of a 'floating gap' which lies between the 'eighty years' of communicative memory and the start of cultural memory. The 'gap' is the period in which the transition between communicative and cultural memory takes place, and inevitably recedes as those memories that can be shared 'live' disappear and have to be 'fixed' in some way in cultural products and practices.<sup>6</sup> I would argue that the 'gap' might be better conceptualized as a 'rolling' or 'moving' gap' because it shifts along with the movement of successive generations. Digital technologies that allow easy access to first hand testimonies via video and audio recordings may complicate the picture by metaphorically 'keeping alive' communicative memory, both affectively and cognitively.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Such as in museums, history textbooks, and memorialization rituals.

<sup>7</sup> For instance, the Imperial War Museum holds thousands recorded interviews, including the testimonies of ex-FEPOWs, many of which are available online <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/sound>. Social media such as Facebook are also contributing to this blurring. Virtual reality technologies will no doubt blur this distinction further.

Assmann makes a further discrimination between communicative and cultural memories on the basis of the 'structure of participation', arguing that '... there are no specialists of informal, communicative memory'. By contrast, '... cultural memory always has its specialists, both in oral and in literate societies' (Assmann 2008, p.114). If cultural memory is conceived as emerging only after communicative memory has elapsed, then some roles do not seem to fit comfortably into the framework. For instance, the child of an ex-FEPOW - by definition a member of a group functioning largely within communicative memory - who, nonetheless, becomes an expert in his field (and who is acknowledged as such by others in the group). As we shall see in Chapter Seven, this role operates in the 'gap' as a cultural memory 'specialist' (and associating with 'institutional' structures) while simultaneously rooted, and active, in the communicative memory sphere.

Overall, Assmann (2008) seems unclear about the criteria he is using to distinguish between the two forms of memory. What matters most, time sequence, or formality of participation? In the final paragraph of the paper, he does hint at the need for flexibility in analyzing the 'dynamics of cultural memory' (p.117), referring to 'the transition from autobiographical and communicative memory into cultural memory', but this remains undeveloped and is not reflected in either of the figures within the paper (pages 109 and 117).

Forgetting has been beset by the assumption that 'remembering and commemoration is usually a virtue and that forgetting is necessarily a failing' (Connerton 2008, p.59).

Aleida Assmann (2014) goes further still, proposing that

'forgetting is the default mode of humans and societies. Remembering is negation of and resistance to forgetting, usually involving a will and effort ... Forgetting happens silently, inconspicuously and ubiquitously, while remembering is the unlikely exception from the rule, requiring conscious efforts and specific framework.'<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The text of Aleida Assmann's public lecture should be available from this website <http://castrvm1.rssing.com/browser.php?indx=36566496&item=61>. (Accessed 24 August

However, selective forgetting is just as important as selective recall and, without these faculties, we would be unable to make sense of our memories or make them our own.

‘Just as memory serves an important ethical function during periods of forgetfulness, forgetting permits life to move forward in eras that cannot escape memory’s grip. Both, moreover, are necessary for true historical understanding’ (Rosenfeld 2009, p.156).

Forgetting can be used to introduce ‘a new beginning’, a process that takes one of two forms: a version in which ‘the page is simply turned over’, or the alternative in which ‘the page must be read before it is turned’ (Assmann, 2014). These metaphors are well attuned to the situation of the ex-FEPOWs. The majority of participants who came forward for interview fell into the latter group: people who needed to remember and needed to understand. Assmann refers to this as ‘therapeutic forgetting’ which has to start with remembering - ‘a memory that has been reworked and processed’.

One type of forgetting proposed by Connerton (2008) is that which ‘is constitutive in the formation of a new identity’ (p.62). Here one is reminded of Hoffman’s tentative conclusion about the responses of the second generation to the Holocaust:

Sixty years later, I feel, this is the only thing that can be done: to acknowledge, turn, bend towards the victims rather than away from them. There can be no other recompense, no other closure. Sixty years later ... and after all that can be done has been done, it may also be time to turn away, gently, to let this go (Hoffman 2004, p.233).

A dominant trope in mainstream FEPOW discourse is that of ‘we shall never forget’<sup>9</sup> which is also prominent in the Holocaust literature (Assmann 2010). Some participants recalled how their mothers had ‘forced’ forgetting on the family, fuelling their need to find out more. As Doug said ‘... destroying everything of dad’s.... just wiped his memory. I don’t understand it.’ And in Sally’s case, her mother erased her father from their lives

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2016). If unavailable at this address, it should appear in a search for ‘castrum peregrini’ and ‘Almeida Assmann’. I am not aware of any journal publication based on this lecture.

<sup>9</sup> The motto of the FEPOW Family Facebook page is ‘Keep the candle burning’. And members of this and other similar websites often end their contribution with the words ‘lest we forget’. Anniversaries are marked by a rush of contributions expressing similarly forthright sentiments.

'... by the time he died, and after he died, nobody ever mentioned him. It was like he just wasn't there.'

In the intimate space of the interview, it was easier for ambiguities to emerge. Participants could come to personal conclusions - or speculate - about what they hoped for from their memory work. Derek envisaged no end point: 'and I'll carry it on 'til the day I die, I suppose. Anything I can find out, you know, I ... I'll find it.' Gwen's position was similar although she acknowledged the process could be troubling: 'I can only dip in and out of it, then it gets too dark.' Jacqui's feelings were similar:

I had a table in my office. Literally covered with all this stuff. ... I just got so immersed in it. And I went to the FEPOW conference, and thought arghh! ... It was just doing my head in. You know, just too much.'

She was uncertain about the future. But, as a professional writer and amateur artist, she thought she 'might do some art work that signifies the angst-ridden journey of my father.'

Authors in the literary tradition often provide insights into memory that complement or surpass the work of academic scholarship. The writings of Charlotte Delbo (2001, 2014), an Auschwitz survivor, carry authority and affective weight. She proposes a 'memory of the senses' or 'deep memory' (Delbo 2001, p.3). Deep memory 'preserves sensations, physical imprints. ... For it isn't words that are swollen with emotional charge' (Delbo 2001, p.4). She contrasts this with 'ordinary memory': the means by which we try to render events 'intelligible, pegged to a common or established frame of reference, so that they can be communicated to, and readily understood by, a general audience' (p.25). For Bennett (2005), sense memory is a process 'experienced not as a remembering of the past but as a continuous negotiation of a present with interminable links to the past' involving 'not so much a *speaking of* but *speaking out of* a

particular memory or experience - in other words, speaking from the body *sustaining sensation*' (Bennett 2005, p. 38. Italics in the original).<sup>10</sup>

The distinction sometimes made between semantic and episodic memory (Tulving 1972) is pertinent to the testimonies of participants. Semantic memory 'may be likened to an encyclopaedia, while episodic memory is like a personal diary' (Corballis 2012, p.874). And 'autobiographical memory' results from episodic memories being linked together. Corballis develops these ideas further:

Episodic memory is notoriously unreliable and incomplete, and it has been proposed that its primary function was not to serve as a faithful record of the past, but rather to provide a basis for imagining and planning of future events. (p.875)

This perspective complements my research aims in that my first priority was not to extract an objective historical account from participants, but to explore how a particular way of telling served the psychic needs of that individual. Corballis (2012) claims that the 'human mind has evolved to wander, not only back and forth in time, but also into imaginary worlds, and into the minds of others' (p.888). The free association psychosocial interview offered a formal structure - a facilitative psychic space - for this 'mind-wandering' (p.874) to take place. Participants were able to 'recall' their episodic memories and shaped them into narratives ('autobiographical memory'). However, rather than observing random 'wandering', the assumption of the psychosocial approach is that the researcher is actually witnessing (and co-creating) the products of the participant's unconscious and responding to the intersubjective dynamics evolving within the interview itself.<sup>11</sup> This type of 'wandering' and the future-oriented quality of episodic memory facilitates the reconstruction of past relationships and self-identity

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<sup>10</sup> The testimonies of Joanna and Deirdre in Chapters 4 and 7 conveyed this form of deep, sense memory.

<sup>11</sup> Recent brain research suggests that there may be biological correlates to this psychic process: the 'default network' that is activated 'when individuals are left to think to themselves undisturbed. The default network also increases activity during mental explorations referenced to oneself including remembering, considering hypothetical social interactions, and thinking about one's own future. These properties suggest that the default network functions to allow flexible mental explorations— simulations—that provide a means to prepare for upcoming, self-relevant events before they happen' (Buckner et al 2008).

that lie at the heart of Chapter Six. As we have seen, memories can have a problematic and ambiguous relationship to life events, and I turn to the influential notion of postmemory to develop this line of thinking further.

### **Postmemory**

Marianne Hirsch's childhood was dominated by her parents' repeated stories of their personal Holocaust trauma (Hirsch 2012a). She describes how their memories 'crowded out' (p.4) and intermingled with her own, so 'connecting disparate subjectivities'.<sup>12</sup> She describes this intergenerational phenomenon as 'postmemory':

"Postmemory" describes the relationship that the "generation after" bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before ... these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right (p.5).

Significantly from a psychosocial standpoint, Hirsch recognises that parental memories are not simply swallowed whole by the next generation: the children will also change them 'by imaginative investment, projection, and creation'. In some cases, they might be 'overwhelmed' by these 'inherited memories' and by the 'traumatic fragments of events that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension'. At the extreme, the children's life stories risk being 'displaced, even evacuated, by our ancestors' (p.5).

Hirsch (2012a) distinguishes between 'familial' postmemory which occurs 'vertically' between family members ('intergenerational'), and 'affiliative' postmemory which takes place 'horizontally' between members of the same generation ('intragenerational') (p.36).

Postmemory for the children of FEPOWs was heralded by their first awareness of the fathers' captivity. Participants described knowing vaguely that their fathers had

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<sup>12</sup> Hirsch uses this phrase in an interview with Columbia University Press (undated) <https://cup.columbia.edu/author-interviews/hirsch-generation-postmemory>

been FEPOWs, without necessarily being able to pinpoint exactly how or when they had first heard. For Selena, this vagueness was to have confusing consequences.

I don't remember when I first knew about dad having been a prisoner, it's as if I always did. I was obviously a bit confused about it as I am reputed to have told all the class and the teacher that Dad was in prison ... when he turned up at a class event the boys in the class looked at him with awe and wonder and the teacher seemed a bit scared.<sup>13</sup>

Hirsch explores postmemory through the representation of traumatic memories in cultural and artistic works - especially family photographs - and her light touch use of psychoanalytic concepts enables her to reveal the operation of unconscious processes within both familial and affiliative forms of postmemory (Hirsch 2012a). Reflecting on Hirsch's work, however, I do wonder whether her use of postmemory as the principal frame within which to analyse such a breadth of transmission phenomena might be asking too much. Her initial tight deployment of postmemory as a category to analyse a particular form of familial transmission was where its strength lay. By extending it into the further reaches of social and cultural transmission as a 'one size fits all' concept, she risks damaging both the distinctiveness and the authority of the original insight.

Hirsch's work has an explicitly moral basis. Her interest in memory came about because of her wish 'to uncover and to restore experiences and life stories that might otherwise remain absent from the historical archive' (p.15). She is concerned that the 'sense of living connection' with the Holocaust is 'passing into history and myth' and so being eroded (Hirsch 2012a, p.1). In her view, this erosion threatens to close down vital ethical discussions about trauma and memory. While time inevitably drains the intensity of memory, the exponential growth of social media technologies and other memory practices might slow down the process and partly allay her worries.

Cultural products and practices play a prominent role in the postmemories of the COFEPOW community. The FEPOW Memorial building at the National Memorial

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<sup>13</sup> We see a similar examples of naïve confusion in Carl Friedman's beautifully written 'Nightfather' (1994) in which the children of a Holocaust survivor stretch the meaning of 'camp'.

Arboretum is a richly visual and evocative memorial to the war in the Far East, but also a base for education and research. Although more circumscribed in terms of its audience, but with much wider geographical reach, are the FEPOW websites, Facebook pages, and online discussion groups, all of which are currently accessed by several generations of FEPOW families, and continue to find new members. Films like *The Railway Man* (2013) and *Unbroken* (2014)<sup>14</sup> and books of art work, such as those by Jack Chalker (2007) and Ronald Searle (1986), as well as numerous memoirs and diaries, have succeeded in projecting deeply personal experiences into the public realm and demonstrate the power of the aesthetic response to trauma. Alison Landsberg (2009) coined the term 'prosthetic memory' to describe memory sources that 'are not the product of lived experience'. While being a close relative of Hirsch's 'postmemory', prosthetic memory is focused firmly on 'mediated representations' like film or interactive museums that have the ability to create 'sensuous memories' (p.222).<sup>15</sup> Participants who knew little about the father's captivity relied on such representations to engender 'aesthetic empathy' (Koss 2006, p.139) and to create vicarious emotional connections with what they imagined were the experiences of their fathers. Prosthetic memories also allowed participants to manage their exposure to the traumatic realities (and phantasies) of camp life.

Landsberg also argues that prosthetic memory can support 'ethical engagements' (p.222). For some participants, disseminating awareness of FEPOW history was an ethical choice. Others wanted to promote understanding between the

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<sup>14</sup> In the case of *Unbroken*, the impact spread beyond the individual, constituting a controversial challenge to state discourses about wartime responsibility and accountability, provoking action by right wing Japanese politicians to have the film banned in their country. See <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/dec/09/angelina-jolies-unbroken-is-racist-say-japanese-nationalists>

<sup>15</sup> Perhaps the most creative and evocative example of recent times took place on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016 on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of the Somme: Turner Prize-winning artist Jeremy Deller's project 'Because we are here' - a living memorial that brought the past into the present in a way that was both hauntingly intense and affecting. See <https://becausewearehere.co.uk/>

peoples of Britain and Japan, a position that was generally linked to the correct assumption that many young Japanese have very little knowledge of the Far East POWs.

### **Collective memory and the FEPOW 'memory boom'**

Collective memory and the institutions and practices that support it help to create, sustain and reproduce the "imagined communities" with which individuals identify and that give them a sense of history, place and belonging .... (Weedon and Jordan 2012, p.143)

Collective memory is not about 'thought', but is about becoming-together in space with the material artifacts around us, in film, in museums, in memorials (Bollmer 2011, p.462).

The first few decades after the war can be considered a 'latency period' during which there was minimal interest in the history of the FEPOWs.<sup>16</sup> A parallel process took place in relation to the Holocaust (e.g. Hoffman 2004, Ch.3).<sup>17</sup> However, interest in the Far East POWs surged in the 1980s possibly triggered by the revival of interest in Holocaust memory (Twomey 2013). In Aleida Assmann's (2010) words 'The paradigmatic shift from the model of forgetting to an orientation towards remembering occurred with the return of Holocaust memory after a period of latency' (p.12). A plethora of explanations for this 'remembrance gap' are current. Winter (2000) proposes, inter alia, the validation of traumatic memory in 1980 when PTSD was added to the medical lexicon, the increasing affluence that intensified the demand for 'cultural commodities', more people receiving higher education, greater leisure time, and the growth of computer-based media. Two major TV mini-series from the late 1970s - 'Roots' (1977)<sup>18</sup> and

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<sup>16</sup> Psychoanalytic theory might argue that this was aggravated, if not caused, by extended repression following the complex traumas of the camps.

<sup>17</sup> Hoffman (2004) coined the term 'postgeneration', describing her own childhood as 'a sort of fairy tale ... an enigmatic but real fable'. This 'deeply internalized but strangely unknown past' (p.6) revealed itself through 'flashes of imagery' and 'broken refrains' (p.9) - concepts that seem to resonate with this period of latency.

<sup>18</sup> The viewing figure in the USA for the final episode was 100 million:

(<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jul/27/roots-remake-whatever-happened-to-the-major-television-event>)

'Holocaust' (1978)<sup>19</sup> - were instrumental in preparing the ground for a closer association between family history and global history.

Although some FEPOWs had published diaries and memoirs in the twenty years or so following the end of the war,<sup>20</sup> many more appeared from the 1980s.<sup>21</sup> Adding to this, the Imperial War Museum was also acquiring more FEPOW-related material (Parkes and Gill 2015).<sup>22</sup> A further surge of interest occurred after the death, in 1989, of Hirohito, the Japanese Emperor during the war (Rose 2013). In 1998, the public voice of the ex-FEPOWs rose to an emotional crescendo on the occasion of Emperor Akihito's state visit. Ex-FEPOWs, aggrieved by the reluctance of the Japanese government to paying adequate compensation, or give an acceptable apology, turned their backs in protest as the motorcade drove down the Mall. Some publicly burned the Japanese flag (Murakami and Middleton 2006).<sup>23</sup>

However, macro-level explanations of the memory boom can occlude awareness of the significance of individual psychosocial and developmental factors. Most FEPOWs were in their sixties during the 1980s, many were still in good health, and some felt more comfortable about sharing their memories.<sup>24</sup> Their children - the 'baby boomers' - were beginning to reap the financial rewards of a better education than many of their

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<sup>19</sup> After the 1979 rebroadcast it was estimated that 220 million people had watched this series in USA and Europe (including 15 million in West Germany - half the adult population). After the 1979 broadcast, the West German government 'promptly cancelled the statute of limitations for Nazi war crimes, formerly scheduled to expire at the end of 1979'.

(<http://www.museum.tv/eotv/holocaust.htm>) See also Monson (1982).

<sup>20</sup> E.g. Attiwill (1958) and Parkin (1968).

<sup>21</sup> E.g. Baxter (2010), Chisnall and Maddocks (2014), Cordingly (2014), Godfrey (2003), Griffiths (1989), Hill (2002), Kandler (2010), Peek (2004), Rawlings (2015), and Rose, W. C. (2012).

<sup>22</sup> It is worth noting that eye witness material continues to be offered to the Java Club for inclusion its emailed Newsletters. Unfortunately only subscribers can receive these, and they are not accessible online. <http://www.thejavafepowclub42.org/>

<sup>23</sup> The 1990s saw the start of a controversial collaboration between the UK-based Agape charity and the Japanese government to promote reconciliation by funding visits to Japan by ex-FEPOWs. See <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2002/02/20/national/woman-calls-british-ex-pows-to-japan/#.V96NjyMrKLC>

<sup>24</sup> Bar-On (1995) believed that his work with three generations of Israeli families had to wait until the late 1980s when many survivors were still alive and were willing to speak of their experiences. By then they had accumulated sufficient evidence of the family's 'normality' (p.20).

fathers had enjoyed, and were better equipped technically and academically to engage in memory work.<sup>25</sup>

The strengthening of interest through the 1990s was reflected in the increasingly prominent role played by former FEPOWs and their children in remembrance events such as the Remembrance Sunday parade at the Cenotaph in London.<sup>26</sup> In many respects, the annual parade at the Cenotaph is the centrepiece of remembrance in Britain and its rituals replicated, on a reduced scale, across the country at local war memorials. Recent developments in media technology have allowed these ceremonies to be far more widely distributed than ever before, and broadcasters have begun to introduce new media routes for personal testimony related to these occasions and World War Two generally.<sup>27</sup> Despite this new emphasis from the media, the state's overall control of the public rituals enacted at the Cenotaph<sup>28</sup> continue to embody the rigidities of the British class, religious and military orders, which are seen most conspicuously in the expression of rank and status during the laying of wreaths. Gook (2011) describes commemoration as an 'event of *intensified remembering with others*', at which 'the true performative force of the commemoration ... lies in the subjectivity of those it addresses' (p.16, italics in the original).<sup>29</sup> That being the case, individual attendees can choose whether to be swept up in the emotions of the remembrance event, or to refuse to identify with the ideology being actively sponsored or tacitly endorsed.

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<sup>25</sup> We should note that many fathers were still silent on the subject of their POW captivity (at least to their families), so in the absence of witness accounts from their fathers the children had to seek out alternative sources of information.

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.iwm.org.uk/history/what-is-the-cenotaph>

<sup>27</sup> See the BBC initiative 'The People's War':

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/categories/c1204/index.shtml>

<sup>28</sup> See Bonney (2013) for an interesting account of how the Cenotaph rituals have evolved, and Stephenson (2005) for an alternative, gendered analysis of the Cenotaph, the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior, and the Silence.

<sup>29</sup> Casey (2000) points out the somewhat paradoxical nature of commemoration, for many (sometimes all) of those present at commemorative events can have no direct memory at all of the events being 'remembered' (e.g. commemorating the Great War). Casey argues that the past events become immanent through *commemorabilia* - as if the past is 'somehow set within their materiality' (p.219), as we see this in domestic as well as public spaces.

Joanna's participation in the Remembrance Day parade at the Cenotaph demonstrated how complex and ambivalent personal responses can be. Her experience at the time was emotional but ingrained with her acute awareness of class differences.<sup>30</sup> She had gone with an old friend, Helen:

[It] was absolutely extraordinarily moving. With everybody clapping us in silence'. Later in the interview, she described her reaction to the mass of fellow marchers: '... it sounds frightfully snobby [but] they were "other ranks"... Very sweet, nice people, but absolutely nothing in common with them at all. ... They were just ... different. But obviously we all had that in common [ex-FEPOW fathers].

When it came to exploiting the growing public interest in the war, former FEPOWs were in a better position than many other ex-combatants; not least because they had succeeded in carving out a clear and distinctive identity, and substantial organizational capacity through a network of ex-FEPOW clubs. In 1952, sixty-four of these local clubs came together to form the National Federation of Far East Prisoner of War Clubs and Associations (Makepeace 2014a, p.258). Although every individual FEPOW's experience of captivity was different, there were psychological, social, material and political benefits in building a consensus around a positive, shared narrative (Makepeace 2014a). A sense of individual and collective grievance also lay behind the ex-FEPOWs willingness to ramp up their public profile, feelings that had been hardened by their claims for compensation<sup>31</sup> (Makepeace 2014b), and by witnessing the continuing financial struggles of the war widows (Lomas 1994)<sup>32</sup>. Personal bonds forged by

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<sup>30</sup> As the number of living ex-FEPOWs has declined, visible class distinctions and barriers have dissolved. The remaining few have become lionized, a phenomenon that is now apparent at many of the events at which ex-FEPOWs are honoured guests, and at which other guests 'bask in the reflected glory'. I have attended many such events in the last few years, and listened respectfully as I am told in hushed and reverential tones that FEPOW X or Y 'is here'. And I have watched as the Japanese Ambassador to London manoeuvred himself into a photo opportunity with one of the veterans. As these men become frailer, what they represent discursively has begun to outweigh who they are as individuals.

<sup>31</sup> 'In recognition of the unique circumstances of their captivity, the Government announced on 7th November 2000, that a single ex-gratia payment of £10,000 was to be made to surviving members of British Groups who were held prisoner by the Japanese during the Second World War.' [http://s198596577.websitehome.co.uk/fepow/fepow\\_index.html](http://s198596577.websitehome.co.uk/fepow/fepow_index.html)

<sup>32</sup> See especially p. 224 for an example of the lack of compassion that was regularly meted out.

membership of the ex-FEPOW clubs endure to the present-day, and have permeated into - and animated - many of the second and even the third generations.<sup>33</sup>

That said, many veterans did not join local ex-FEPOW clubs, and sometimes were barely aware of their existence. In 1975, the year before he died, Gwen's father was in hospital. There he met a welfare officer who told him about the help he could have been receiving. '... He didn't even know about the Far Eastern Prisoner of War Association. The only thing he knew about was the British Legion. And he tried to join the British Legion round here, and it was awful.' Other fathers took a deliberate decision not to join any POW associations preferring, in so far as they could, to draw a sharp line between their military and civilian lives. For Deirdre's father, this was driven by a profound bitterness that expressed itself rather quirkily, and certainly in a manner starkly inconsistent with the state approved narrative of World War Two:

He was very bitter. Very, very bitter. ... There was a big old sideboard, and on it there was a carving, bust of Churchill. With his cigar. I don't know how he come by it, whether somebody did it in the camps or something ... but it was a real likeness of him. When he got in a real temper, he would pick hold of poor old Churchill and launch him. And so in the end he had no cigar left at all.

As we noted earlier, most former FEPOWs were in their sixties at the start of the 'memory boom'. Significantly perhaps, this is the same age range as most of the participants in this research. Seen in a psycho-historical context, this is the stage that Erikson characterizes as 'generativity vs. stagnation' (Erikson and Erikson 1998). People in this phase of life incline towards 'expressions of wisdom and preservation of culture' (Slater 2003). In other words, it is the point at which one feels a particular pressure to pass on experience, to summate, to be a witness to one's own past,<sup>34</sup> before we too become history and myth. Far East captivity had disrupted the normal developmental time frame: education, career, work and relationships had all been held

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<sup>33</sup> Principally through COFEPOW, and various 'closed' social media outlets.

<sup>34</sup> Although the imperative to 'witness' does not figure prominently in the academic literature on FEPOWs, it is at the very core of much work on the experience of Holocaust survivors, for example, Delbo (2001 & 2014), Goodman and Meyers (2012), Laub (1992a, 1992b, 2014).

back and, in some cases, damaged beyond repair. For the ex-FEPOWs, the stage of generativity offered the chance to put some of this back together, to create psychic order out of disorder, and to finally attempt a coherent narrative. Thirty years on, and in the wake of major war-related anniversaries,<sup>35</sup> it was the children who now found themselves in this position.

### **Memorialisation: the intimate and the personal**

Although the war in the Far East has grown in public stature in recent decades,<sup>36</sup> it is in the home that we find some of the most intense engagement with memory practices.

War memorials are collective symbols. They speak to and for communities of men and women. Commemoration also happened on a much more intimate level, through the preservation in households of possessions, photographs, personal signatures of the dead.

(Winter 2014, p.51)

Many aspects of domestic memorialization surfaced during my research interviews and grew in importance as the research proceeded. As a result, I argue that the current research literature under-emphasizes the role of domestic artifacts in the memory practices used by the children of FEPOWs. Mementoes and other precious objects invariably played a significant role in participants' relationship networks (Siefkes 2012).

Mementoes and family photographs are part of the conscious and unconscious texture of everyday life, yet infrequently exposed to research scrutiny. Wearing your father's watch, displaying a photograph of your parent's wedding, holiday souvenirs ... all are ways of staying in touch with the past and, to varying degrees, possess an emotional charge. When artifacts are touched by trauma, whether transmitted or

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<sup>35</sup> In 2014, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the World War One, followed in 2015 by the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War Two.

<sup>36</sup> This shift in public recognition is especially noticeable in Australia where according to Twomey (2013) the image of 'the incarcerated soldier' of the Japanese now rivals that of the 'original Anzacs'. She suggests that in the immediate postwar years, Australian society found it difficult to empathize with the 'confinement and passivity' (p.322) of a group of defeated soldiers enslaved by a race whose occupied a 'racially inferior' status in the then-prevailing discourse.

experienced directly during childhood - and especially when associated with global war - they become imbued with particular significance and complicated emotional meanings (Mannik 2011).<sup>37</sup>

Domestic memorialization practices include sifting through the father's papers and belongings; searching for and discovering key artifacts; deciding how and where to store and/or display photos (printed or digital), documents, or artifacts (and who will do this); selecting which of the father's documents and artifacts will be kept, and which discarded; and deciding what use is to be made of letters and artifacts (for example, they may be 'archived' or displayed, or perhaps used as the basis of a participant's creative work). Significant objects and practices were integral to how participants narrativised their own and their fathers' pasts, a process that could blur the boundaries between subject and object:

In this endless shuttling back and forth between the mind and the material world, it seems that objects can act like subjects and that subjects can be acted upon like objects (Ingold 2011, p.213).

Ingold's perspective illuminates the close engagement we feel with certain material objects that have meaning for us, especially during periods of reverie or contemplation (such as occurs on anniversaries, or at remembrance events). For Ingold, material objects lie within a relational field that embraces both the living and non-living, both of which are constitutive of our sense of self.<sup>38</sup> Ingold embraces actor network theory, a basic premise of which is that the social sciences need to recognise that material objects are essential to how humans establish, maintain and change meanings, identities, and manage relationships.

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<sup>37</sup> While this section is concerned with artifacts on the domestic scale, we should not overlook the role of what I call 'celebrity relics' in FEPOW discourse. One such is the 'The Changi Cross' which has its own Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/thechangicross/> - and has featured in publications, e.g. Cordingly (2015).

<sup>38</sup> Perhaps the most powerful of Ingold's insights on this topic - of the blurring between living and non-living - is his contention that the 'animacy of the lifeworld' is 'ontologically prior to their differentiation'. As he points out, we are all 'closet animists' for sound evolutionary reasons: 'Those who take rocks to be crocodiles have greater chances of survival than those who mistake crocodiles for rocks' (p.68).

If human beings form a social network it is not because they interact with other human beings. It is because they interact with human beings and endless other materials too (Law 2003).

For ANT, physical objects are necessary components of networks that integrate with individuals, families and groups. The material elements have a tangible, present reality, but also a psychic one through their existence in the 'object relations' world of the individual's inner life.<sup>39</sup>

In some instances, artifacts associated with a father's traumatic past may become so saturated - so 'overdetermined' - with personal meaning as to be treated as 'sacred' (Belk et al 1989), or 'transformative' (Bollas 1987). However, their meanings and significance may only become apparent much later in the lives of the children, when they are discovered or rediscovered. As Margaret Gibson has noted, it often takes the death of a loved one for us to '*truly notice*' their personal belongings (Gibson 2008, p.1, italics in original). FEPOW-related objects possessed a unique piquancy and resonance because so many of them managed to survive. These artifacts and images have a forceful if fluctuating undertow that pulls together past events and contemporary experience in a process that Knight (2012) refers to as 'cultural proximity'. Artifacts are multivalent in their psychic force, in some cases reinforcing established memories, in others triggering new insights.

... people require a paradigm from the past in order to understand present circumstances. Certain objects, actions and narratives come to the fore as culturally and historically significant. This process is more than simply "remembering the past" as historical moments are embodied through a range of media—firsthand experience, inter-generational narratives, nationalist discourse, artifacts and objects. (Knight 2012, p.369)

As we have seen from the work of Marianne Hirsch (2012b), photography is a powerful medium for reflecting and shaping personal and political memories and meanings, and has been widely discussed by others (for example, Barthes 2000, Gibson 2008, Kuhn

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<sup>39</sup> See Woodward (2011) for an interesting perspective on this, albeit applied within consumption studies.

2002, Kunimoto 2004, and Sontag 2003). When participants introduced artifacts or photographs into interviews, narratives often shifted direction, either complementing, or colliding, with earlier recollections. Memories would be revived, and the past and present coalesce into new psychic formations. In many cases more layered accounts resulted, that enabled 'personal meanings [to] iterate with social and cultural meanings' (Smart 2007, p.158).

My interview with Gwen was a telling example, revealing how two family photographs could implicate and engage with the intersubjective, and with broader social, historical and cultural contexts. Half way through our interview, she began to show me family photographs, beginning with one of her father sitting on a bench in the grounds of a hospital where he was a patient.

Gwen: That's a photo of my father and my sister. And if you look at ... I didn't [lowers voice] want this to be on there, but that's Jonathan my son.

The photograph showed a scene that, to use Barthes's terminology, was 'studium'<sup>40</sup> and unremarkable at first glance. However, as I attended more closely to the photograph, I noticed that Jonathan was mixed race. This awareness interrupted - 'punctuated' - my contemplation of the photograph. I had been jolted into the disturbed state of mind, provoked by what Barthes describes as the photograph's 'punctum' - 'that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)' (p.27). Given Gwen's cautionary and ambiguous words ('I didn't want this to be on there'), I stayed silent about my observation (a quiet collusion perhaps). Twenty five minutes later she showed me a photograph of a family Christmas, which again included Jonathan. But by this time the intersubjective dynamics had moved on.

Gwen: This is my father. That was just about the last Christmas really. And my mother and father ... and Jonathan [I feel she is inviting me to enquire further].  
Terry: A-Jonathan's erm ... mixed heritage isn't he?

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<sup>40</sup> Barthes (2000) uses this term to describe photographs that we can understand because we share the photographer's cultural frame of reference. What we feel about these 'derives from an *average affect*' (p.26), what we have become accustomed to feeling when viewing such photographs. [Italics in the original].

Gwen: Yes.

Terry: Was that any sort of issue, back in ...?

Gwen: It was a terrible time. My father said to my mother, take her to the doctors and say she's got to have a termination. And the doctor said, no, she's a healthy young girl. I didn't realise, you know, my father had such issues. And even when I gave birth, on my own, I had nobody with me. I was barely seventeen and they said, we'll see you at visiting time.

...

And my mother and father came in and the first thing that they said to me was, 'Oh, oh, he's coloured. Are you keeping him?' Cos they didn't know whether to give him to me to hold. And I remember them saying, 'Are you keeping him love?' And I remember saying to them, 'You must be bloody mad'. I remember swearing. And saying, 'After all I've been through, do you think I'd give my son up?' And then one of them said - because there's so few black people around here. But they weren't gonna give me him until I said I was keeping him, you know.

Although she managed to win her father round to the idea of her keeping the baby, Gwen and Jonathan had to put up with a great deal of overt racism from local people. 'I had awful abuse. ... one boy that used to continually stand in the door with his mother, and she'd just let him call him a wog.'<sup>41</sup> However, these cruel experiences contributed to her growing resilience which stood her in good stead for later battles.

The meaning of an artifact could be transformed in remarkable and unexpected ways. Derek prized a Japanese flag brought home by his father. It was inscribed with handwritten Japanese characters that I was able to get translated by Japanese friends:

Yes, this is one of the flags, which when a young man was conscripted and register in a military unit. His family, relatives and friends give their signatures on a Japanese flag, with some encouraging message for a young soldier. Now I can read the young man's first name, which is Kenichirou. KEN means wise: ICHI means one: ROU is a suffix for boys names. He must have been the eldest son.<sup>42</sup>

Two families, two cultures, and two histories fortuitously brought together through a single artifact: a 'sacred' object to both sides whose full cultural and personal meanings only became manifest seven decades after the end of hostilities.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Racism was endemic in south Wales during the 1960s, and attitudes towards 'illegitimacy' remained very conservative (Johnes 2012). There had been a background of racial tension in the area - due to competition for housing, jobs, and women - culminating in the 1919 Cardiff race riots in which three people were killed and many more injured (Jenkinson 1987): one of the least savoury consequences of young men being sent overseas to fight in the Great War.

<sup>42</sup> My thanks go to Yuka and Juji Ibuki for their work on the translation.

Kidron (2012b) asks whether material objects might be an alternative means by which survivors can 'transmit emotive and corporeal traces of difficult and "unknowable" pasts', so challenging one of the main tropes of FEPOW discourse, the 'wall of silence' (p.6). Sally's father didn't speak about the war, but when she was seven or eight she would creep into his bedroom and look through the secret horde of letters and artifacts in an old Red Cross box at the bottom of the wardrobe: 'it was like trying to find something I suppose. You know, the things that just happened that weren't talked about.' Kidron also describes how survivors' artifacts could be integrated into 'mundane and habitual domestic practice' (p.9) As a boy, Derek was regularly reminded of his father's time as a FEPOW because his father wore a 'Japanese hat that he used to use for painting the ceilings to keep the paint off his head'. It was only many years later that he began to see the hat and other artifacts as a unique set of objects with personal and historical significance.

The relationship between memory, artifacts, images, and the material environment is a close and evolving one, and its study becoming more prominent in recent years. De Nardi (2014) contends that mementoes are more than simple 'sites of memory or relics' but can be thought of as 'sites of feeling' (p.443), and a reflection of the growing role of the embodied in social science. For those participants whose childhoods were marred by an 'absent' father, we might envisage artifacts acting as substitutes in some way for the lack of 'secure attachments' in childhood, as 'transitional objects' perhaps (Winnicott 1991).

### **Memory entrepreneurship**

Finally, I turn to the emergence of individual agency in the face of state or institutional apathy. Gaining approval and funding for memorials have often demanded painstaking

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<sup>43</sup> This website explains the cultural significance of the *yosegaki hinomaru* - <http://obon2015.com/english/what-is-a-yosegaki-hinomaru.html>

campaigns over many years by dogged individuals and FEPOW groups: what Conway (2008) and Assi (2011) refer to as 'memory entrepreneurs'.

The most celebrated FEPOW memorial in Britain is the FEPOW Memorial Building located within the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA).<sup>44</sup> The NMA was the brainchild of Commander David Childs, a retired naval officer. Only officially opened in 2001, it is now a much lauded commemorative space which, for the first time, allows the character of individual conflicts to be represented.<sup>45</sup> The design of the FEPOW memorial is 'based on one of the large village huts that can be seen in Thailand' (Childs 2011, p.84), and the building itself is packed with concrete symbolism,<sup>46</sup> much less abstract than most of the other NMA memorials. The driving force behind the construction of the building was Carol Cooper, the Chairman and Founder of COFEPOW.<sup>47</sup> Given the interactive nature of its contents, and the incorporation of a small research centre, the memorial ensures that the history of the FEPOWs is not 'frozen in' (Winter 2014, p.78).

A sense of injustice can drive individuals to challenge and overcome bureaucratic and cultural hurdles placed in their path. The 'memorial entrepreneurs' in this case are Linda and Kevin. Linda's father was a POW in Omi camp in Japan. When they first visited the site in 2010, they were disappointed that there was no memorial in the area of the Omi prison camp or the Denka main factory where the POWs worked. They wanted a permanent memorial to mark the memory 'of these brave men, as in our opinion they should never be forgotten by any nation'. In the four years following their first visit in 2010, the couple had, through the good offices of the British Embassy in

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<sup>44</sup> Trees as living monuments to respond to loss of life through traumatic events was also used in Madrid after the 2004 terrorist bombings. Dr. Dacia Viejo-Rose gives a brief introduction in this YouTube video (starting at 11:11) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NAEFqp4tW2g> As far as I am aware, this memorial has not attracted any scholarly attention. For photographs, see [http://www.fotomadrid.com/listadoFotos/tag/bosque\\_de\\_los\\_ausentes](http://www.fotomadrid.com/listadoFotos/tag/bosque_de_los_ausentes)

<sup>45</sup> The project began in the early 1990s with 'no money, no land, no staff and no trees'. See <http://www.thenma.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are/>

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[http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WM93DK\\_The\\_Far\\_East\\_Prisoners\\_of\\_War\\_Memorial\\_Building\\_The\\_National\\_Memorial\\_Arboretum\\_Croxall\\_Road\\_Alrewas\\_Staffordshire\\_UK](http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WM93DK_The_Far_East_Prisoners_of_War_Memorial_Building_The_National_Memorial_Arboretum_Croxall_Road_Alrewas_Staffordshire_UK)

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.cofepow.org.uk/>

Tokyo,<sup>48</sup> succeeded in persuading the owners of the Japanese conglomerate ('Denka') to build a memorial for the POWs who died in the camp. The company provided £150,000 to fully fund the memorial, which is now located in the grounds of the company headquarters at Omi.<sup>49</sup>

In 2014, Linda and Kevin visited Japan once again to attend the high profile unveiling ceremony.<sup>50</sup> This ceremony brought to mind the distinction made by Young (1993) between 'collective' and 'collected' memories. Young's explicit aim is to 'break down the notion of any memorial's "collective memory" altogether' (p.xi). He prefers the term 'collected' because 'a society's memory cannot exist outside of those people who do the remembering, even if such memory happens to be at the society's bidding, in its name'. As a personal attendee, my observations before, during and after the Omi ceremony brought Young's distinction into sharp relief. Over one hundred people from different generations and different nationalities gathered together in a marquee on the rainy margins of rural Japan and their memories could only be described as 'collected'.<sup>51</sup>

The British Ambassador strived for a more collective position:

Both sides recognise the pain and suffering; on the Japanese side there is a clear recognition that this is an episode in their own history that they must own and accept; but that is not the same as feeling personally culpable ... And on the British side, my sense is of a similar sense of shared history; of personal experience, often of a relative rather than themselves, but of an overwhelming desire not to forget, rather than the impossibility of shaking off the memory. At Omi I felt a sharing of something between the Japanese and British (and Australian and New Zealand) sides, rather than a negotiated truce.<sup>52</sup>

His underlined words probably represented the psychic realities of those present, but perhaps not in such polarized terms. From the participants' stories, I recognise that it is

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<sup>48</sup> Other key collaborators included the POW Research Network Japan, and Mrs. Keiko Holmes of Agape. See <http://www.powresearch.jp/en/> and <http://www.agapeworld.com/began.htm>

<sup>49</sup> Omi POW camp information: [http://www.mansell.com/pow\\_resources/camplists/tokyo/tok-13b-omi/tok\\_13b\\_omi\\_main.html](http://www.mansell.com/pow_resources/camplists/tokyo/tok-13b-omi/tok_13b_omi_main.html)

<sup>50</sup> Attendees includes the British Ambassador, the President of Denka, a high ranking official from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign affairs, families of the POWs from Britain, Australia, New Zealand and USA.

<sup>51</sup> Nationalities included British, Japanese, Australians, Americans, and New Zealanders.

<sup>52</sup> Personal communication.

possible to hold both points of view: a conscious desire 'not to forget' (seen as positive) and a psychic inability to 'shake off the memory' (seen as negative). I note that in neither the public language of the diplomat nor in participants' testimonies does Hoffman's sentiment prevail: 'it may also be time to turn away, gently, to let this go' (Hoffman 2004, p.233).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has charted a course from broad conceptual frameworks of memory and remembrance, through remembering on a domestic scale mediated by artifacts and images, to ways in which memory could drive individuals to create new memorials and practices. Extracts from the testimonies of participants provided an empirical underpinning for the discussion of artifacts and photographs. For participants, they served an important psychic function in personal memory practices; and their presence as part of the interview process threw new light on the subjectivities of participants.

A number of key issues have emerged from this chapter. Firstly, the role of 'postmemory' as a valuable heuristic device for conceptualizing the impact of one generation's memories on those of the next. Secondly, the camouflaging of individual difference offered by high profile remembrance events highlights the tensions between 'collective memories', 'collected memories' and 'collective meaning'. Thirdly, the pervasive influence of technological change on memory is transforming memorialization through digital and online communications; these changes extend and blur the limits of traditional modes of memorialization, thus allowing individual agency greater rein. Fourthly, there are parallels between the 'FEPOW memory boom' of the 1980s and the children's present-day interest in the captivity experiences of their fathers, with the developmental stage of 'generativity vs. stagnation' being at its core. Finally, my research suggests that insufficient scholarly attention has been paid to domestic memorialization practices, and the power of personal domestic artifacts and

images in mediating the memories of the children. Within this, I include digital and online media when created or actively exploited by individuals, which facilitate the formation of complex peer networks. Giving greater exposure to these intimate practices may counterbalance the focus on national, state sponsored rituals, and monumental artifacts, that presently seems to dominate the war memory landscape.

A thorny issue haunts much of this chapter, however. When is it acceptable to forget, to 'let this go'? When should memories be allowed to pass into history? Although I raise these questions in a scholarly context, in a spirit of reflexivity, I have to acknowledge that these questions are highly personal, and cut to the core of my own motivation for this research. In the next chapter, I discuss the psychic processes that underpin the memory practices that participants used to review, re-assess and reconstruct their relationships with their fathers.

## CHAPTER SIX

**NARRATING AND RECONSTRUCTING THE PAST****Introduction**

This chapter acts as a bridge, and a vantage point. It builds on Chapter Five and connects the 'raw material' of childhood memories (Chapter Four) to the memory practices of the adult children (Chapters Seven and Eight). I argue that, as the children passed from childhood into adulthood and on through the life course, pivotal events and an enduring emotional legacy caused many to engage in fundamental re-assessments and reconstructions of their relationship with their fathers. Taken together, participants' testimonies confirmed the significance of the father-child relationship for their emotional wellbeing, and moreover often displayed an acute awareness of their father's singular place in the history of World War Two. Always active in the shadows was a recurring existential unease that bound together many if not all the children of FEPOWs: the belief that, had it not been for the atomic bomb, they would 'not be here today'. For many, however, this recognition co-existed with the equally insistent knowledge of the horrors inflicted on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In that sense, some children of FEPOWs were left in a state of moral and psychic conflict - they could not live with the bomb, yet they could not have lived without it.<sup>1</sup> This topic was rarely raised explicitly within my recorded interviews. This 'silence' might mean that it was treated as a 'given' ('we all know that we wouldn't be here without the bomb'), a psychic avoidance strategy ('I don't want to talk about this because I can't deal with the irresolvable conflict'), or as a moral judgement ('they brought it on themselves').<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Lee (2016) for a recent brief account of the short and long term traumas, and political duplicity, that make a personal moral resolution to this historical dilemma so very difficult for the children of FEPOWs.

<sup>2</sup> Joanna reported a conversation with her father: '... and I just said, isn't it dreadful daddy, that tsunami ... And I said have you seen it, you know, all those people being killed? And he said, yes dear ... I am quietly celebrating. Shall we have a glass of sherry?'

In the first part of the chapter I address the notion of memory practice. As part of this, I offer a heuristic conceptual framework that associates underpinning motivations with particular forms of practice. By drawing on selected theoretical concepts from psychoanalysis and narrative studies, I examine and illustrate how participants processed the consequences of childhood through their life course. It is of course a truism that no relationship is fixed, and that part of the human condition is to put our relationships - past and current - constantly under the microscope. But my research showed that for the children of FEPOWs this urge to review was remarkably tenacious. As the case studies will show, 'turning points' in the life course were often the spur for participants to begin a re-evaluation of the relationship with the father.

### **Memory practices**

*'Memory takes us where we need to go'<sup>3</sup>*

A growing interest in memory practices points to a shift from the study of memory as a phenomenon largely concerned with static representation, to one that engages with the ways individuals and groups ascribe meanings to the past by 'doing' memory (for example, see Brookfield et al 2008, Graves and Rechniewski 2010, Olick 1999, and Stein 2009). As discussed in Chapter Five, this research highlighted the wide range and scale of memory practices, and how they were often derived from, and firmly embedded in, the routines of everyday life and the domestic ecology. Schwarz (2014) comments as follows:

... a whole bunch of highly common mundane practices may be reinterpreted as memory practices that share with commemoration rituals, diary keeping and monuments much more than would appear at first glance (p.18).

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<sup>3</sup> This is a quotation from 'Waltz with Bashir', a 2008 film directed by Ari Forman who had been an Israeli soldier in the 1982 Lebanon war. The film is a beautifully realised meditation on how war trauma can affect (and effect) memory, and how one individual set about addressing his legacy of trauma. It 'allow[s] for an encounter with the tentativeness, incompleteness, fracturing and surreality of trauma in the narrative context' (Viljoen 2014, p.41).

Marita Sturken's (2008) generic definition of a memory practice is succinct yet comprehensive:

A practice of memory is an activity that engages with, produces, reproduces and invests meaning in memories, whether personal, cultural or collective (p.74).

Furthermore, she claims that:

... the concept of memory practices allows for an emphasis on the politics of memory, precisely because the ways in which the production and construction of memory through cultural practices has as its foundation the notion that memories are part of a larger process of cultural negotiation (p.74).

The role of politics is especially pertinent to the participants in this research because their memories - suspended as they were between micro and macrohistories

(Walkerdine et al 2013) - were rarely exempt from political and cultural influences.

Sturken's definition is consistent with Karl Figlio's position that memorials are 'sites of remembering ... around which remembering is alive and ongoing' (Figlio 2014, p.420).

In this sense, memory practices are also sites of remembering, blending activities and artifacts at every scale. Practices often incorporate 'monuments' which Figlio defines as 'material objects which freeze memories, confining them into ideological portrayals' (p.420).

Applying these ideas to my data, we might conceive of family photographs as types of domestic monument whose meanings have been established by the family, and gradually stripped of ambiguity. A more conventional example with political overtones is the small memorial at Omine Machi erected by Japanese villagers to commemorate the FEPOWs who lived and died as coal miners in a site some 120km from Hiroshima (see Chapter Eight in which John's pilgrimage is discussed).<sup>4</sup> The wording on the plaque includes the following: 'When the war ended on August 15, 1945, they returned to their own countries. But some of them died from illness'. This effectively blocks out any thoughts of suffering and cruelty, and was carefully chosen to project (and protect) an

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<sup>4</sup> In 2016, this memorial became unexpectedly politicized. Its removal triggered protests from activists in Japan and UK, and interventions by the British Embassy in Tokyo. The memorial has now been relocated to a nearby site (as at December 2016).

ideological position acceptable to the local community and political sensitivities, suggesting 'a defensive forgetting, not just multiple memories based on different experiences' (Figlio 2014, p.422). However, having acknowledged the political constraints, the fact that the villagers themselves took the initiative to build the memorial is an indication of humanitarian values offsetting politics.<sup>5</sup>

During the analysis of participants' testimonies, I gradually became aware of how their memory practices tended to fall into three loose clusters. To develop this observation further, I devised a heuristic conceptual framework to aid my thinking about the experiences of participants, and about how the construct of 'memory practice' might be unpacked (see Table 1, p.164). The framework and its constituent concepts have a sensitizing not an operational, typological or essentialising purpose.

The 'dimensions' should be seen as dynamic strands, each of which may come to the fore at different times, perhaps in response to unexpected turns of event. Trauma can last a lifetime, and rarely subsides in an orderly or predictable fashion, so we should anticipate changes over time. A change in one dimension might trigger activity in another; for example, discovering a new historical fact about the father (a desired outcome of 'knowledge-based' practices) may reactivate unconscious psychic material

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<sup>5</sup> Memories of acts of mutual kindness sometimes occurred which may have played a part in the later decision to build a memorial. This account by Edmond Babler, a US POW at Omine Machi, describes an incident at the end of the war while the POWs were still in the camp but had begun to receive boxes of American food dropped by parachute from B-29s: 'We remembered an elderly Japanese man who had helped escort us to and from the mine and at times went down into the mine and acted like a straw boss. We remembered that he had never bothered any of us, was never angry at us, and treated us Americans like his own people, always giving us the time of day; he was just a good man. ... we had so much food left over we told this old Japanese man to go and get his wagon and horse. When he returned, we filled his wagon high with boxes of our American food. In exchange, the old man hauled the food boxes that we were taking with us down to the train depot before we boarded the train to leave' (Daniels (2004, p.117). This act of kindness must have made an impact on the elderly Japanese man and his family, especially as it was at odds with what the Japanese population had been told to expect. The following testimony was given in 1990 by a Japanese man who as a fifteen year old schoolboy had been mobilized to work in a copper mine in Iruka. 'We were told that English and American people were "demonic" and egocentric and that, were the Japanese to lose the war, every woman and girl would be raped, all the men castrated and enslaved. ... As we got to know them, we found that most behaved in a gentlemanly manner' (Holmes et al 1991, p.28). Under such circumstances, it is understandable that a sense of 'normal' moral responsibility or a sense of duty to the POW's hardships might surface in the local community, even if after some years.

and thus propel the person more towards practices that enable them to meet their emotional needs. A combination of knowledge-based and emotion-based actions might provoke a values-based response, such as deciding to engage in reconciliation activities. We might also conceptualise these dimensions as three processes that are always active within all participants - albeit at different degrees of awareness - and whose dominant expression (or combination of expressions) at any one time will vary according to childhood experience, life stage, family background and circumstances, social class and so on. The complex relationship between dimensions and specific memory practices can be seen in the case of pilgrimages which often provide the settings and opportunities to meet any or all of these needs (see Chapter Eight).

**Table 1: Memory practices (in the context of the children of FEPOWs):****A heuristic conceptual framework**

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
Memory practices	Knowledge-based	Fact finding, gap-filling; accessing public archives and creating personal archives; genealogy and family history; recording and disseminating (e.g. writing articles for newsletters, offering research services on a pro bono basis); attending and organizing conferences; visiting POW sites. Creating websites to share information.
	Emotion-based	A preparedness or recognition that there is emotional work yet to be done; a willingness to come to terms with past relationships; engaging with counselling or psychotherapy (as client or practitioner); involvement in informal mutual support processes during other activities, such as pilgrimages and conferences; creative work, e.g. explicitly through the creative arts or, implicitly, through the 'curation' of domestic images and artifacts, and the rituals associated with this.
	Values-based	Political, social and welfare activism - e.g. widows pensions and other benefits - Java Club, National FEPOW Fellowship Welfare Remembrance Association; resistance to state suppression or marginalization of FEPOW history; personal crusades - 'righting family wrongs'; activism based on religious or ethical precepts; reconciliation as an explicit aim (perhaps expressed through pilgrimages); resistance to state manipulation or suppression of memory.

Socio-economic factors also influence the 'choice' of memory practice. For instance, Rex's social background was firmly upper middle class, and his ancestors included members of the minor aristocracy. From my interview, and from the paintings on the walls, it was clear that he took immense pride in his family lineage. Most of his energies, however, had been devoted to garnering and organizing information about his father's FEPOW life. He did this in conjunction with a small group of like-minded people in different countries whose fathers had all been held in the same POW camp. Taken in that context, then, Rex's memory practices were largely 'knowledge-based'. However, as we saw in Chapter One, Rex also revealed deep-seated emotions associated with his parents' letters that he felt unable to read. Personal finances could constrain the choice of memory practice. For many people, a pilgrimage half way across the world would be out of their financial reach;<sup>1</sup> and, for others, even a visit to the COFEPOW building at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire was hard to afford.

### **The legacy of childhood through the life course**

In Chapter Two I explored a cluster of concepts - including trauma, intergenerational transmission, attachment and identification - that provided much of the toolkit for the analysis of the testimonies in Chapter Four. Participants who experienced childhood as fraught and fractured, often attributed this to their father's emotional 'distance' or 'absence' which, in turn, diminished the prospects of establishing secure attachments in the family and weakened identifications with the father. Both outcomes were further compromised in homes where overt aggression and physical abuse had occurred.

Later in life, often after the father's death, memories of these childhood experiences returned, and sometimes triggered feelings of guilt, remorse or forgiveness.

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<sup>1</sup> In earlier years, access to funding was a little easier, but only for ex-FEPOWs, their wives or carers. The Japanese government funded a 10 year programme of visits for British FEPOWs, and also one of shorter duration for grandchildren of FEPOWs. The Big Lottery also provided funding for veterans to make return visits to places they served, under the 'Heroes Return 2' scheme, but this programme closed in December 2015.

This was often a period when conflicting emotions resurfaced, when a 'crack in identity' might open up (Frosh 2013, p.17) or when the 'cracks and rigging are exposed' and 'disturbed feelings cannot be put away' (Gordon 2008, p.xvi). My argument in this chapter is that the impact of a childhood in which a father's trauma was liberally yet unconsciously transmitted to his children created particular configurations of psychic need in adulthood. Although a particular pattern of needs was always unique to the individual, common elements could be identified across the cohort of participants (as outlined in Table 1). These needs manifested in behaviours - memory practices - through which the children aimed (consciously and unconsciously) to re-contextualise, reinterpret and reconstruct their pasts through revised narratives.

This re-working of the past, of the father and of the self, begs the question of how we think about the past both from a historical and psychic perspective. As the philosopher-historian Collingwood (2004) comments, separating one's own past thoughts from the 'flow of experience' is difficult but he suggests we look to evidence where available:

Evidence such as a letter, a book or a painting or a very specific recollection of an action that 'clearly' revealed my accompanying thought. Having done so, I rediscover my past self, and re-enact these thoughts as my thoughts; ...' (p.296).

But the influence of the present remains inescapable, and 'we constantly reinterpret our past thoughts and assimilate them to those we are thinking now' (Collingwood 2004, p.296). Collingwood goes on to propose that if we can do this for ourselves, we are better able to do it for another person. So, in terms of the participants trying to understand more of their fathers' captivity, they will never experience the actual sensations of those whose worlds they are trying to imaginatively recreate: the smell of rice cooking, the stench of suppurating wounds, the weight of the iron nails used on the Thai-Burma railway, or the dust in the coalmines of Kyushu. But they can discover something about what their fathers were thinking from what they wrote at the time (e.g. diaries), or from interviews conducted afterwards. We will never know (be able to 're-

enact') the immediacy of their thinking; we can only know the others' thoughts in a disembodied sense, in a historical sense. Because we cannot escape the influence of the present, our perceptions and interpretations are never 'pure' but always mediated by what we have read elsewhere, discussed with others, or by the films we have watched. This is the challenge faced by participants when they try to extract meaning from their fathers' artifacts, photographs, and other archival sources.

This analysis highlights the difficulties inherent in trying to gain a better understanding of a captive life seventy years ago. To address this problem, we need to move away from arguments about specifically historical knowledge, and Collingwood (2004) assists us by offering a distinction between 'thinking historically' and 'engaging in the science of psychology' (p.303). Thinking historically means to 're-enact' experiences (dealing with what can be 're-enacted in the historian's mind', p.302), whereas thinking psychologically means entering into the experiences of others 'with sympathy and imagination ...' (p.302), employing our affective sensibilities. Collingwood's carefully delineated conception of what constitutes historical thought purposely distinguishes itself from 'thinking psychologically'. In their search for a better grasp of their fathers' FEPOW experiences, participants had to grapple with both history (the 'knowledge-based' dimension) and psychology (the 'emotion-based' dimension).

### **Narrative and generativity**

Narrative lies at the core of memory practices, and is especially important in reproducing cultural memory (Brockmeier 2002).

It then becomes clear that these memory practices, to a large degree, are narrative practices or, at least, intermingled with and surrounded by them (p.27). ... And as cultures change, so do their memory practices and their ideas of what is worth and desirable to be remembered (p.20).

Brockmeier goes on to explain how we use narrative to extract meaning from our memory practices.

If I do not only want to count the photographs from my past collected in that box and not only name the persons they show, but also want to point out why they mean anything to me at all, then narrative becomes the hub of my account.  
(p.26)

Although residing at the core of memory practices, a particular narrative was not always immediately apparent or clearly articulated during interviews. It could emerge disjointed, truncated or otherwise incomplete, or be heavily influenced by prevailing social discourses (Hunt and McHale 2008), or 'collective frameworks' (Halbwachs 1992). Participants often appeared to strive for a sense of coherence and acceptance, seeking psychic 'composure' in the face of 'lost histories' (Summerfield 2004, p.93). They even apologised for a story they felt might be deemed unsatisfactory in some way. As Robert put it 'If I'm waffling on a bit ... you stop me.'

I would suggest that in response to hard-to-accept, or hard-to-reveal narratives participants sometimes 'chose' to construct coherent stories that could be told and re-told without risking exposure to psychic conflicts. Other participants found ways to engage with memory practices in order to 'work through' difficult psychic material, thus minimizing the need for continued defensive manoeuvres.

Over the past two decades Dan McAdams has emerged as a leading figure in the use of narrative approaches in the psychology of human development, and I draw on his work to develop my argument further (e.g. McAdams 2001, 2006, 2013, McAdams and Adler 2010). In particular, I focus on his views of narrative identity, turning points in narrative, and the role of redemption, and how these operated in the life stories of participants. Narrative is closely tied to our sense of self, and is a reflexive construction that requires 'constant self-interrogation' to maintain coherence (Abrams 2014, p.14).

McAdams and Guo (2015) define narrative identity as:

the internalized and evolving story that the person has constructed regarding how he or she has become the person that he or she is becoming. ... In narrative identity, the person reconstructs the past and imagines the future as an ongoing story with setting, scenes, characters, plots, and themes (p.2).

Although narrative identity is linked with 'autobiographical memories', such memories are in fact a very selective 'reorganized subset of recollections from the personal past' (McAdams and Adler 2010, p.40). For the children of the FEPOWs, autobiographical memories were, from the beginning, enmeshed within postmemories and with sources that could 'lie beyond the perimeters of the individual' (Freeman 2012, p.345).

McAdams draws heavily on Erik Erikson's stage model of the life cycle, and on the concept of generativity in particular (see Erikson 1977, and Erikson and Erikson 1998), but he also employs classical psychoanalytic concepts, such as repression, denial and dissociation when discussing the narration of negative events (McAdams and Adler 2010). The Erikson framework conceives of a series of stages matched to age bands, each of which brings a conflict or a challenge that must be resolved before moving on to the next. The normative emphasis in this model of human development tends to marginalize or pathologise any potential interruptions or dislocations to the smooth passage between stages. To reach maturity unscathed the child must achieve, between infancy and adolescence, various 'psychosocial strengths' (Erikson and Erikson 1998, p.55): trust, autonomy, initiative, industry and identity. Should these aims not be met, the individual is left to grapple with a concoction of mistrust, shame, guilt, inferiority and identity confusion. The failure to achieve the psychosocial strengths associated with each stage can also be conceptualized in terms of problems with attachment or with identification, and the need to 'make up ground' later in life.

Many participants entered adulthood with a unique combination of negative traces accrued from the struggles experienced during earlier life stages. Having mostly arrived at late middle age, the children of the FEPOWs were actively re-working the past, reconstructing their stories and those of their fathers, aiming to reconcile past and present. For McAdams, the 'stage of generativity' (adulthood) is concerned with 'promoting the growth and well-being of future generations through parenting, teaching, mentoring, institutional involvement, and a range of other social behaviors'

(McAdams and Guo 2015, p.1). Participants predominantly interested in military family history, such as Rex and Jeff, expressed their concern for future generations by compiling comprehensive documents that would become a permanent 'knowledge' record; others achieved similar results online.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, participants like Louise produced artworks that conveyed both knowledge and emotional responses.

McAdams and Guo also claim that adults who are highly generative are more likely to create narratives that feature 'redemption sequences' (McAdams and Guo 2015, p.2): narratives that include 'setbacks, failures, losses, and disappointments' followed by 'positive outcomes' (McAdams 2014, p.63). Participants frequently incorporated redemptive sequences into their testimonies through which they hoped to establish a new internal relationship with the father, thus redeeming past emotional traumas. Redemption sequences are often closely allied to narrative 'turning points', or 'epiphanic moments' (Abrams 2016),<sup>3</sup> as we shall see from the testimonies later in this chapter. Some participants displayed a particular capacity for generativity and reflection, and spontaneously pointed out redemption sequences in their narratives. Deirdre described how her father would get angry if they didn't eat the food put in front of them:

Deirdre: So, anyway, I suppose in the long run it made me a better person because ...

Terry: Wh-wh-what did? [expressing some surprise]

Deirdre: Well, everything that I went through, because I'd decided that my kids were gonna have the best upbringing ever. You know, I would be strict to a point, because I'd want them to grow up into proper people. ... I mean my daughter, she always says, oh, mum, you know, I remember us growing up, I've only got happy memories with you ...

Deirdre's reference to an idealized 'best upbringing ever' hinted at a degree of manic reparation in her testimony, suggesting that her relationship with her father remained

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 7 - Tribute sites - e.g. The Changi artwork of Des Bettany.

<sup>3</sup> Lynn Abrams (2016) notes that the 'epiphanic moment is constituted by a psychic change in the real time of the interview' (p.22), and this is something I have also observed. A moving example (and powerful because it marked a clear transition point within the interview) was when Rex revealed that he had not read his parent's correspondence immediately before the fall of Singapore (and didn't intend to): 'After my mother died I opened them, but I haven't ... (lowers voice) I haven't read them.' This episode was discussed more fully in Chapter 1.

unresolved (an interpretation supported by other parts of her testimony). By wanting her children to 'grow up into proper people' she barely disguised her own history of low self-esteem.

By contrast, Selena's relationship with her father had been warm and affectionate, but she still felt a need

... to protect him from my failings. That I had to make his suffering worth it by not being a waster. ... I did my best but was never convinced it was good enough. He never did or said anything to make me think he wasn't happy with me, its just I felt I needed to be better. That he deserved it.

Her father told the family 'little snippets of stories from the camps' that often bore a moral message; these family stories then became in themselves models of redemptive practice for the children. It is against this strong values-based background that we should see Selena's explicit urge to 'protect' her father and to compensate him through her behaviour. He garnered considerable respect from his family.<sup>4</sup>

A sense of guilt or regret suffused many testimonies, and formed the emotional drive behind participants' subsequent memory practices. Many wished that they could have learned more about the experiences of captivity directly from their fathers: they wished their fathers had volunteered information, and they felt regret that they didn't ask more questions when they had the opportunity. Kim's comments were typical, although few participants had such an explicit invitation:

... I do have a really big regret. When I was a teenager I sat with my boyfriend and my dad and watched 'Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence', and afterwards, he said, oh, what do you think of that then? And as a typical teenager, I went 'Oh, that was boring, wasn't it?' And I didn't really understand the concept, and what he was getting at. And I often think that you know if I had shown an interest then, he possibly would have opened up to me. But sadly - obviously - I didn't. Erm ... and it wasn't until after he died that I came across some photographs, and I recognized one as being in Kandy in Sri Lanka.

Regret has both emotional and cognitive components, and the latter may express itself through recurrent counterfactual thinking (Landman 1987, Coricelli and Rustichini

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<sup>4</sup> A respect I was able to witness personally when I met the family at a 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary memorial event in 2015.

2010). As Kim said: ‘... if I had shown an interest then, he possibly would have opened up to me’.

From Stephen’s testimony we discover how regret can colour a life story, releasing the psychic energy to create a productive life against the odds. Born in the early years of the war, Stephen was the eldest child of four,<sup>5</sup> and was thought by other members of the family to have borne the brunt of his father’s immediate post war trauma. The underlying details were never revealed to me, however, and I suspect were not widely shared within the family. He wrote the eulogy for his mother’s funeral but could not attend himself because of a serious medical condition. The eulogy gives the slightest of hints, but screened behind a trope: ‘She ... cared for our Dad when he got back from the World War, a very different man from the one she married in 1940!’

Stephen emigrated in the 1970s but returned to the UK ten years later on a sabbatical. His father’s health had deteriorated sharply, and within a short time he had lapsed into unconsciousness.

I did not take what was to be this last opportunity to talk to Dad about his illness or of his past experiences in the war and I deeply regret it. With the passage of time I have come to realize that I knew very little about my father and am perturbed by this appalling ignorance. Had I been so busy with my own young family and the preoccupation with a demanding ... career, was it perhaps because I had not cared about him enough or simply that I did not appreciate at that time how little I knew about him? In hindsight it was probably a combination of these factors. At any rate this situation prompted me to write these memoirs so that family members and friends may have a better knowledge of my own story.

In this passage, in a single sweep, he reflected on his relationship with his father, reviewed his own attitudes and values, expressed his regret in passionate terms, and determined that he would pre-empt any such outcome for his own children by writing a lengthy memoir. Stephen’s words suggest that writing his memoir was a form of

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<sup>5</sup> Three of the four siblings were participants in this research. Although there is not the space to develop this phenomenon further, I have become intrigued through my work with this and other families, by the potential significance of ‘lateral’ or ‘horizontal’ transmission (Stein 2012). In Stephen’s case, how trauma in the eldest sibling can perhaps be transmitted to a younger brother or sister, and how memory practices might then be distributed across the sibling group.

memory practice with a clear reparative purpose, a response to the guilt he felt about not taking more interest in his father. Because he was 'so upset' after his father's death, he was unable to help with any of the practical arrangements, leaving the task to his younger brother. His inability to cope with his father's death, his energetic pursuit of personal change, and his commitment to writing an extensive and reflective memoir were all reminders of conscious and unconscious legacies that have continued to haunt him throughout his life.

### **Reparation**

I noted how some of Stephen's actions could be seen in terms of reparation, and in this section I examine these ideas further. In a paper arguing for a reconciliation between psychoanalysis and attachment theory, Diana Diamond (2004) claims that, by throwing ourselves into displacement activities, we believe we will make things better and avoid having to face the true meaning of our loss, or our own sense of guilt.

The full experience of the sadness, guilt, and despair about the object's loss is avoided through manic defenses of denial and idealization of self and other, or through repetitive, exaggerated attempts at reparation (Diamond 2004, p.288).

Some participants pursued idealized versions of their fathers which had the effect of suppressing memories of past traumas and unresolved conflicts: responses that suggested manic reparation (Segal 1974). The expression of manic reparation - or 'mock reparation' to use Alford's phrase (2006, p.101) - may include the following features:

... the denial of the reality of the loss; the obsessive attention to details surrounding the loss, which heralds a reversion to concrete thinking and away from symbolic formulations; the exaggerated sense of responsibility for the death; the eulogistic speech; the dissociative trancelike states when experiencing loss that foretell the lack of acceptance of reality of loss in time and space; and the indices of psychological confusion between the self and the deceased (Diamond 2004, p.288).

Manic reparation is not inevitable, of course. However, making true reparation with the father is a struggle:

based on the recognition of psychic reality, the experiencing of the pain that this reality causes and the taking of appropriate action to relieve it in phantasy and reality. It is, in fact, the very reverse of a defence, it is a mechanism for the growth of the ego and its adaptation to reality (Segal 1974, p.95).

In manic reparation, unconscious feelings of ambivalence towards the father - the 'denial of the hurt and the pain inflicted' (Alford 2006, p.102) - prevent a full transition to the depressive position; and it is this ambivalence and psychic splitting characteristic of the paranoid-schizoid position that provoke the manic defensive response.

Klein makes little distinction between reparation in phantasy and reparation in reality (Alford 2006). For many children of FEPOWs, however, this distinction could be profound: because the father was no longer alive, reparation in phantasy was their only option. Roper (2013) provides a reminder of how reparation might manifest as positive action in the real world:

In the individual's attempt to repair damage to their internal world, reparation becomes, in Bob Hinshelwood's phrase, 'a powerhouse for mature energy and creativity in the actual external world'. It is through humanitarian projects in the external world that reparative impulses are enacted (p.317).

Although the origins of reparation and sublimation are different, their practical expression may be similar. For example, the actions of participants who have been prime movers within FEPOW activist organisations seem to derive from one or the other, or perhaps both, of these psychic processes: reparation being founded on personal psychic issues derived from childhood, and sublimation as a possible displacement of maternal drives. Erikson and Erikson (1998) saw the latter in terms of 'generativity', as a positive alternative when biological parenthood is either not possible or not desired: as a shift towards 'productivity and creativity' (p.53) and a broader conception of 'care'.

The example of Joanna (see later in this chapter) demonstrates the benefit of being able to 'make repairs' in reality, arising through unexpected opportunities occurring late in her father's life. Others were not so fortunate and have been left not

only with the aftermath of childhood, but also with the guilt of 'not asking', or of not taking an interest, while their fathers were still alive. However, Figlio (2014) argues that we can think of memory itself as reparation, 'reviving the past through a benign and restorative relationship to it', and manic reparation as embodying the 'ambiguous, ambivalent, conflicted impulse to assert a falsifying, forgetting, or distorting memory against restorative memory' (p.424). The concepts of reparation and manic reparation are valuable in understanding participants' responses to the past, but they should not be seen as in binary opposition; the battles that participants fought with their pasts saw repeated fluctuations between the two forms of reparation, as will be seen in Deirdre's story later in this chapter.

### **Turning points**

Many fields of social research have incorporated the concept of the 'turning point' (e.g. Hareven and Masaoka 1988, McAdams et al 2001, McAdams 2013, Reimer 2014, Sampson and Laub 2016, and Schiffrin (2003). Teruya and Hser (2010) define the turning point as follows:

'A turning point often involves a particular event, experience, or awareness that results in changes in the direction of a pathway or persistent trajectory over the long-term' (p.189).

While this definition excludes temporary changes, it still begs many questions, such as when are turning points recognized as such, and by whom? Amongst my participants it was commonplace for these significant episodes to take many years to be recognized and incorporated into a new narrative (Hutchison 2007, p.18). The following three cases - Jacqui, Joanna and Deirdre - show how turning points in the life course enabled a reconstruction of their personal narratives.

## Jacqui

By 1997, Jacqui had lost both her parents, and she consigned the family papers to boxes that travelled from loft to loft as she moved house. Finally, in 2013, she began to work her way through these boxes. Amongst the documents, she discovered numerous letters written while her father was in active military service but before he was taken prisoner. As a result, she was forced to confront a picture of her father very different from the person she had known throughout her life:

He is a different person and I've read a letter where he talks about Cliff, when Cliff was little. And this must have been when he was in the Sudan. He was away from mum for a year, before he was taken prisoner. He wrote letters all the way through the Sudan ... to my darling, you know, all these little pet names he had for her. And, you know, give Cliff a kiss from me and bla-di-bla-di-bla. So he was clearly different then.

Jacqui was born in 1953, and her relationship with her father was 'awful'. But, she believes that her brother Cliff - born in 1939 - 'got the worst ... because [Dad] was so raw'.

And I read this letter to Cliff, and he ... burst into tears. Cliff is now seventy-five, living [abroad]. And I said I want you to hear this - 'cos he never came to dad's funeral - - Oh, he did, he didn't want to. I made him come - and I said, if you don't come, you'll really regret it. 'Cos you can't be estranged from someone and then just not turn up. But he said, I don't feel any different afterwards. But when I read this extract, of the letter that mentioned Cliff, and he had a fantastic pet name for Cliff, 'bumbles' or something. It was so sweet, and it was so affectionate. And I read this letter out, and Cliff, I could hear him just breaking into a sob.

Reading her parent's letters pushed Jacqui to discover more about her father's childhood as well his FEPOW experiences. To reconstruct the image of her father in a more realistic light, and to begin to the process of reconstructing, in fantasy, her past insecure relationship, she determined to visit her father's childhood home in Canada. This was her version of pilgrimage: to visit the places her father knew, such as the lake he used to row across each day to get to university.

I wanted to see where he grew up and ... feel what he felt, really. And I think I tried to understand how he got to be where he was. But I don't know. I mean I would have liked to have known from his own words, what he felt and you know his hopes and fears, you know. What did he think going to university the first

time? You know, what was that like? And what about when he got into the R-A-F. Was that exciting? Was he pleased or did he find it difficult?

As mentioned briefly in Chapter Five, Jacqui managed her memory practices in such a way as to protect herself from becoming overwhelmed, choosing writing and the visual arts as her preferred genres.<sup>6</sup>

### **Joanna**

*'If he had died before he got dementia, I don't think I would have even shed a tear.'*

A further level of psychic complexity arises when difficulties between child and father extend into adulthood, and reactivate earlier traumas, effectively producing a 're-traumatisation'. Joanna's story exemplified this. As we saw from Chapter Five, the traumatic memories of childhood were compounded many years later by the devastating events surrounding her mother's death. Later in life, however, Joanna experienced a series of turning points in her relationship with her father.

The first was when an epiphany led to an unexpected apology. In 1993, her seventy-three year old father had read an article in a FEPOW newsletter written by the daughter of a Far East prisoner of war. In the article, the woman described how her childhood 'wasn't like other people's. ... We were never allowed to make a noise, were never allowed to do this, we were never allowed to do that, and it was so strict and my father would have outbursts of temper, and all this stuff, and we had to creep around the house.' After reading this article, Joanna's father reacted in a way that came as a complete surprise to her and her brother.

Anyway, my father cut this out of the newsletter and sent a copy of it to my brother and a copy of it to me with a cheque each for £150 which was very unlike him. And he just said, I read this and realized that this was what your childhood was like and I'm really sorry ... which was the first time he'd ever acknowledged it. And he actually recognized that that's how he had been as a father whereas before he'd never done anything wrong, you know. He was

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<sup>6</sup> In 2015, she wrote a major feature about her FEPOW legacy for a national newspaper.

always right, we were always wrong ... So it was interesting that he, he suddenly read that piece and thought, yes, that is what I was like.

He developed dementia in his early eighties which became 'very evident when he was about eighty-five'. By the time he was eighty-nine he needed a pacemaker, and entered a 'very nice' nursing home (which he came to believe was his own home), for aftercare. Shortly afterwards, Joanna was approached out of the blue by an Australian ex-POW for help with writing an article about her (Joanna's) father for a battalion newsletter.<sup>7</sup> It was a rather unusual instance of the second generation bringing history to the survivor.

I took it [the newsletter] into the nursing home to show my father, and I said, oh, just wanted to know if you'd be interested in this, daddy. I've been doing some research, cos they wanted this piece about you, so I've sent them this, and there's a photo of you. And he just looked at it, and he just turned to me with tears pouring down his face. And he said, I never wanted you to have to go through this, Joanna. .... So that's what it was all about. He never wanted us to ... suffer or know about any of his experiences because it would upset us ... And so they kept it all in. They were all told not to talk about it anyway. We suffered the consequences of it. But we weren't actually to suffer the knowledge of it.

From that point, Joanna felt that their relationship became more positive, her father having accepted some responsibility and inviting forgiveness. Joanna was grateful that, regardless of the dementia, he always knew who she was. Despite her earlier difficulties with him, she began to accept his expressions of regret ('I never wanted you to have to go through this, Joanna') and began to restore, and feel, a greater identification and attachment towards him. The care she now willingly gave her father embraced a level of intimacy and physicality that she had previously experienced only as a child victim of his dominance and control. However, after learning more about her father's war experiences, she began to 'repair' that past through the care tasks she undertook for him.

He never forgot me. Even in the middle of the night, and he'd wet the bed and you'd have to get up at three in the morning and change the bed, get him in the shower and sort him out and ... all the stuff you have to do as a carer. He always knew it was me.

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<sup>7</sup> Joanna's father had been helped by Australian POWs when he was seriously ill, and had kept many Australian friends.

Toward the end of his life he fractured his hip, and Joanna spent many hours with him in the nursing home. She refused to let him be taken to hospital. As his life ebbed away, she made associations with her fantasies of his FEPOW past.

I'm not having that for him. He was a prisoner of war, he is not having that for his last days. So, I said, he's staying where he is. And that's what happened. Hours I spent with him. ... He had the best possible care. But he took weeks and weeks and weeks ... and he was ... in the end skin and bone. He was probably about the size of when he came back from the war.

Eventually he sank into a comatose state.

... he suddenly had a moment of lucidity. ... He pointed at me ... I was at the end of the bed ... and he just pointed and said, Joanna. And I had to go round and hug him and everything, and I said to him, I've got your cygnet ring. Because it's fallen off, his hands were so thin. I said your ring has fallen off, daddy, I've got your cygnet-[ring]. Look I am wearing your cygnet ring. And he straight away looked at the ring, and then he looked at his hand. ... And he'd been in a coma for weeks! It was extraordinary. He was extraordinary. So, he definitely knew me. ... Yeah.

Joanna's yearning for a 'good father' could not have been more evident. Her growing understanding and forgiveness of her father's flaws were strengthened during her pilgrimage to Singapore (described in Chapter Eight), and her empathy was deepened by the research she was undertaking.

But in a lot of processing, and certainly since he got dementia, and certainly since he's died, I've done a lot more research into it, and ... going out to Singapore, and going round Changi museum and everything ... (intake of breath) It is just absolutely dreadful what they went through. Dreadful. So, how, how they - how he - ever managed to live a vaguely normal life, I don't know.

... even getting back at all was a complete miracle, and how incredibly strong he must have been. Both in mind and body. Just to get through it and come back. The fact that he wrecked our lives ... well it really wasn't his fault. But it made me respect him more. Whereas before, I mean, I'd always said if he had died ... well, anytime before, really ... anytime before he got the dementia, I don't think I would have even shed a tear.

Her use of language, here and elsewhere, implied that her approach to memory practices was heavily 'emotion-based', and the highly charged nature of her testimony may suggested that she was enacting past feelings within the research relationship (itself a form of memory practice), as a means of reaching greater composure.

## Deirdre

Deirdre's childhood had been scarred by physical and emotional trauma, and she was still coming to terms with this. From a very young age, she had been traumatised by her father's crushing behaviour. Deirdre was quite nervous about meeting me. Her twin sister had initially agreed to be interviewed at the same time, but changed her mind at the last moment. According to Deirdre her sister had suffered even more than she had.

I began the interview with an 'open' question, but she had trouble getting started - 'you'll have to ask me a question'. But this was the only instance during the interview when she showed any noticeable hesitation in articulating her story. In the event, she adapted well to my interviewing style, and her narrative was graphic and detailed, with strong emotional content that emerged almost from the start.

Terry: What are the first strong memories you have of your father, shall we say?

Deirdre: ... Well, to put it in a nutshell, me and my sister were petrified of him.

Terry: You'll need to explain that, though, won't you?

Deirdre: Yes. Well, he was a very violent man. And, you know, I don't know how my poor mum put up with it. Erm ... I mean I can explain to you ... in incidents.

Terry: Yes. Please.

Deirdre: I suppose my earliest memories ... We lived in London ...

Terry: Whereabouts were you in London?

Deirdre: We lived in London. And it was a three storey house and we lived in the basement. And obviously when my father came home from the camps, he'd caught malaria like everybody else did, and he also had tuberculo- ...TB. He had a bit of a short, very short fuse. And we'd been, you know, bathed and hair-washed and everything like that. I decided to go out in the garden and throw a load of dirt about. All got in my hair, on my clothes. He went ballistic! And, you know, aside from the good hiding I got, erm ... I had, you know, quite long hair with like little ringlets on. He just got these scissors and cut my hair off. So, I can remember that and feeling absolutely devastated.

But worse was to come for Deirdre and her sister.

There was, for instance, a time when he was teaching us to learn to tell the time. And we could only have been about seven. ... And he'd made these two little leather stools. ... He sat us in front of the fireplace, and on the mantelpiece was the clock. So, Anne's there, I'm here. And he'd go out of the room, come back in and ask us what the time was. It was because we were so frightened, we couldn't comprehend the telling of the time anyway. And obviously we got it wrong all the time. And he went out of the room again, and my sister was dying to go to the toilet. And she kept saying to me, [lowered tones] 'I need the toilet, I'm gonna wet myself' you know. And when he came back in and asked the time, I said, Anne needs to go to the toilet. Badly. And he said, 'til you can tell me the time, you will not get up and go to the toilet. So, consequently, she wet herself. 'Course it ... it all went into this leather stool that he'd made. [intake of breath]

And [long exhalation] ... .. he just dragged her into the bathroom, and ... he just punched and punched and punched her.

The manner of its telling made Deirdre's testimony all the more powerful; she conveyed this intense emotion with no melodramatic flourishes. Barely school age, these twin sisters were subjected to extreme violence from their father. One can only guess at how Deirdre must have felt at the time, watching, and listening, to her sister suffering in this way.

Meanwhile, living conditions in their basement home deteriorated. Stagnant water had collected beneath the floorboards, and the council condemned the flat. Not long afterwards, her father was taken into a sanatorium for a year to undergo surgery for his TB.

You know, most children, if one of their parents had to go away for a long time would be mortally upset, wouldn't they? We were highly delighted. ... My sister and I were quite close, and we weren't going to get hit any more. Do you know what I mean?

The response of the children to their father's hospitalization, while perfectly rational in the circumstances, demonstrated just how far the family had drifted away from the norms of a healthy home and family life.

Deirdre went on to talk about her father's upbringing and his career in the navy. Born in 1912, he was the ninth surviving child out of 'about' thirteen siblings, and had been raised in Dr. Barnardo's. 'This is why mum always made excuses for him. Because he was raised in Dr. Barnardo's.'<sup>8</sup> At seventeen he had joined the navy, remaining until the end of the war. In 1994, four years before his death at the age of eighty-six, Deirdre started researching her family history. In the course of this research, she acquired her father's records from Barnardo's, but did not share them with her mother: '... she was

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<sup>8</sup> Deirdre's mother varied the rationalizations she made for her husband's behaviour according to the context. In Chapter 4, we saw how 'three and a half years in a prison camp' fitted the circumstances when warding off the neighbour's threat to report his abusive behaviour to the authorities.

quite frail. She had osteoporosis, and, you know, she would have got very emotional reading that.' Her mother lived until the age of ninety, dying in 2008.

The Barnardo's records made a decisive impact on Deirdre, and 'five or six years ago' she set about uncovering more of her father's FEPOW background. The Barnardo's records had opened Deirdre's eyes to her father's socially deprived upbringing. But the most profound emotional turning point in Deirdre's story of her relationship with her father came with the chance discovery of a small book. She described this shift hesitantly, almost with embarrassment: 'We must talk about this, if we don't talk about anything else. You know, I am ... I am now ... I-I'm pretty proud of him ...'. After the account she had given of her childhood, these words came as something of a surprise.

Deirdre: I sent for this book [she has the book in her hands] ... and I sat up all night reading this.

Terry: How did you come across the book in the first place?

Deirdre: Well, I actually went on Google and just googled my father's name. And because he got erm ... DSM<sup>9</sup>, is it DSM? All these different things came up about him. And he got it because of being on this boat ... that took on the Japanese.

Terry: So that must have been quite a startling find.

Deirdre: It was. It was startling. So, yeah, basically by reading it, that's how I found out, you know, that he landed on Banka Island. But it was getting there from the boat sinking that was horrendous. Cos you'd got the Japanese firing down on you. There was 88 I think people on board that boat, and it was a mixture of Chinese, there was some naval men. ...

Terry: So you only came across this after your father had died. Is that right?

Deirdre: Oh, yeah. I didn't know about it before.

Terry: And was your mother alive? Did you discuss it with her?

Deirdre: Yes. I don't think I had the book but there was quite a bit on the internet about that boat. So there was 88 people on that boat and only ten survived.

Deidre's entire adult life had been punctuated by distressing incidents with her father.

Despite this, these revelations of his naval past, with their psychic and historical resonances, caused Deirdre to rethink the relationship with her father. But she was unable to completely redeem the emotional damage already done. This emerged clearly from the circumstances surrounding her father's death. The underlying conflict between

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<sup>9</sup> D.S.M is the Distinguished Service Medal.

humiliation and violence, on the one hand, and the later emergence of a cautious sense of pride, on the other, was still active, as can be seen from the following extract.

Deirdre: And he was eighty-six I think when he died. ... What happened was, he'd fallen over, after drinking about half a bottle of brandy, and broken his hip. ... And then mum decided she'd have to get an ambulance because he was in so much pain. ... within two days he was dead. He was going down to the theatre, there was me, my sister, my son - my father was very fond of my son. It was as if he was fond of the males in the family, but not the females.

... So, quarter to two, two o'clock in the morning, I gets a phone call, saying, your father's got fluid in his lungs. He's not going to survive. Do you want to come and see him? I didn't go. ...

I did ring my mum straight away. I didn't say to her they'd asked me if I wanted to go and see him. And she didn't say, should I go and see him? She did go and see him when he was laid out. But I didn't actually go and say good-bye to him. I do live with that. But I suppose I just thought, well, there's nothing I can do. And I didn't want to go up there and say a lot of things I didn't mean. So that's why I took that decision. ... I phoned my sister and said that dad had passed away. There's no way she would have gone. She would have had the same thinking as me.

Terry: So, when your dad died, what would you say was the state of your relationship between you and him?

Deirdre: Well, it wasn't as bad as with my sister, obviously. I was talking to him, but I'd quite often put the phone down on him. Because he was just so rude. ... Apart from his drinking and his gambling, he was also a womanizer.

In answer to my final question, Deirdre introduced a fully formed emotional narrative describing how the family handled the funeral arrangements, replete with ambiguity and vivid symbolism.

Terry: Is there anything else that you want to say ...?

Deirdre: The only other bad thing I feel is, when my dad died, you get the discussion of what, you know, is he gonna be cremated? Is he gonna be buried? And I said to my mum, we could approach the Royal Navy at Portsmouth and perhaps put his ashes out to sea. I said because he was a bit of a wanderlust, my father, he couldn't settle in one place. I didn't want to feel compelled that I'd gotta go and keep putting flowers on his grave, or ... and birthdays and things like that. I didn't want that pressure. And so, I was being a bit selfish really, ... ... And so we all went. My sister had never been on a boat in her life, not even across the channel. So she was a bit nervous, but it wasn't actually scattering the ashes. She had to get a little casket, lead lined, so it was actually going to sit on the bottom of the ocean.<sup>10</sup> Cos when I found that out, I did feel bad. ... Cos I had

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<sup>10</sup> 'For practical reasons ashes must not be literally scattered at sea. The ashes should be stored in a weighted, vented and unmarked container/casket. The Naval Base chaplaincy CTL will be able to provide current regulations regarding the casket required. The casket is to be treated as a coffin and is to be covered by a small Union Flag. The White Ensign is not to be used.'(para. 3129) <http://bit.ly/1WSpi0A>

this idea that you would open this casket and just let the wind take it. And where the wind took it, it settled you know. So, I do feel a bit guilty about that.

Terry: You weren't aware of that until it actually happened?

Deirdre: No, no. Well, until actually we were at Portsmouth, and mum said, I had to get a flippin lead lined little casket. Cos my brother said to her, he was carrying it, he goes to my mum, God in heaven, he goes, what have you got in this box? And she said, well, it's got lead in it. And then it clicked. And I thought, oh, God. So I said, they don't open it then, and let the ashes out? And she goes, well, no apparently not. ... they need to know it's on the bottom of the ocean. ... Yeah, so I did go through a stage of feeling very guilty about that. It was a lovely service they do. ... They do you tea, and sandwiches, and it's all at no expense to us. ... It was quite a way out into the Solent. ... It was quite emotional really. Yeah. Plus the fact that I thought, he can't come back and haunt me. Or us, I should say.

Deirdre made a significant emotional 'turn' in the course of her life: from immersion in memories of a horrendous childhood, to a hesitant capacity to feel pride in her father, accompanied by fleeting feelings of guilt on her part. Deirdre's pride in her father, or perhaps more precisely, her need to express pride in her father, raises interesting questions. Had she made this transition despite, or because of, the childhood trauma? Was this a case of ego defence through reaction formation, or the partial healing of a damaged psyche? Was this reparation or manic reparation, or both? Deirdre's behaviour at the end of his life suggested that she remained ambivalent, still harboured negative feelings towards him. She had reached a point where she could feel some respect for him, could recognise and identify with his past struggles, but could not dismiss the trauma he had inflicted on his wife and two daughters.<sup>11</sup> Sadly, however, as she wrote to me in an email soon after the interview: '... my father never showed any remorse to myself, my sister or our mother and neither did he ever apologise.'

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has focused on how participants tried to make sense of the relationships they had with their fathers across the course of their lives, and has highlighted the

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<sup>11</sup> He never abused his son.

narrative trajectories and contours evident as they revisited and attempted to reconstruct these relationships.

Based on my empirical work, I have proposed a tentative heuristic framework to facilitate thinking about the complexities inherent in how and why participants engaged in different genres of memory practice. Three dimensions emerged from this exercise: knowledge-based, emotion-based, and values-based. I suggested also that the memory practices of participants could be understood as unique and dynamic formulations of these three dimensions.

I have argued for the analytic strength of certain key constructs: memory practice, generativity, redemption, reparation, and 'turning points', and have shown how these manifested in the lives of Stephen, Jacqui, Joanna, and Deirdre. The testimonies of Joanna, Deirdre and Jacqui illustrated the significance of turning points in narratives, but also clearly demonstrated the variations: in timescale, in intensity, and in the events that triggered 'turns'. Most importantly perhaps, the story of Deirdre spotlighted the psychic subtleties entailed: how the lives of participants did not pass smoothly from one stage to the next, but frequently had to navigate disturbing emotional cross currents and conflicts, through to the present day.

The process of 'reconstruction' was a continuing process, and the vestiges of the past had to be accommodated, or lived alongside. Nevertheless, although the negative consequences of flawed relationships might have to be shouldered, positive outcomes, such as greater personal resilience, could still result. In the next two chapters I examine two genres of memory practice that featured prominently in the testimonies of participants: one focused on the search for military family history (Chapter Seven), and the other on pilgrimage (Chapter Eight).



## CHAPTER SEVEN

**THE SEARCH FOR MILITARY FAMILY HISTORIES**

‘ ... I was down at the National Archives soon after they’d released this batch of documents ... .. I don’t think I’ll ever complete this jigsaw’ (Pete).

... one finds evidence [...] of a group of researchers with an astonishing grasp of a huge and daunting range of sources and displaying an historical sensitivity and acumen that would be the envy of some professional historians (Erben 1991 p.280).

‘... for many the *process* of finding out becomes as significant to their experience as *what* they find out, and new ends are created’ (Bottero 2015 p.4).

**Introduction**

In the course of my fieldwork, I came to recognize a group of participants whose choice of memory practice was remarkably distinctive, and for whom the search for information evoked the connection they felt between the individual histories of their fathers and the wider context of the war in the Far East.<sup>1</sup> Their efforts to make sense of the past through the use, and expansion, of the archive exemplified a transparent, intimate, and richly dynamic connection between ‘personal troubles’ and ‘public issues’ (Mills 2000).

The general desire to learn more about the father’s experiences in the POW camps is common amongst children of Far East POWs, often begins later in life, and may be triggered by the death of the father (or of both parents). However, unlike the participants described in the present chapter, most did not feel a similar urge to systematically research and meticulously document the father’s military history.

In this chapter, I address the question of why a significant proportion of the children of FEPOWs do choose to invest copious amounts of time, energy and money in tracing their military family histories. I examine the nature of this genre of memory

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<sup>1</sup> Jay Winter (2006) remarks on how history is able to locate ‘family stories in bigger, more universal, narratives’ (p.40).

practice, illustrate key issues through extracts from interviews (principally Pete and Jeff), and discuss how in some cases the practice has become an influential force in reworking identity. With little directly relevant research to draw on or to critique, I consider literature from the fields of genealogy and family history.<sup>2</sup>

The 'COFEPOW researchers'<sup>3</sup> had narrower aims than mainstream genealogists or family historians, their focus being on a single person and a single generation.<sup>4</sup> While quite evidently located within family history, their work was also associated with the discipline of military history. For that reason, I settled on the term 'military family history'<sup>5</sup> to cover the activities undertaken by the COFEPOW researchers. Unlike family history in general, the purpose of military family history is not to 'move on' to the next link in the genealogical chain, but to 'drill in', to discover the precise movements of one man over a very specific period and set of locations, and to extricate the minutiae of his day-to-day life.

To understand the drive behind the activities undertaken by these participants, we should keep in mind the words of Michael Roper on how historians of the Great War have tended to neglect the emotional dimensions of their subject: 'faced with scenes of psychic dissolution, it is safer for the historian to stay in the realms of the rational ... to try to make safe the unconscious residues of violence and terror, dispatching them to a

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<sup>2</sup> In line with what appears to be the current consensus amongst practitioners, I shall employ the terms 'genealogy' and 'family history' interchangeably. Sometimes the terms are subtly differentiated, for example, by the Society of Genealogists. In these situations, the term 'genealogy' applies when establishing a pedigree, and 'family history' used for the biographical study of a genealogically proven family (which shades into 'social history'). 'Family History incorporates Genealogy'<sup>2</sup>. <http://www.sog.org.uk/learn/education-sub-page-for-testing-navigation/guide-ten/>

<sup>3</sup> For purposes of clarity, I have decided to use the term 'COFEPOW researchers' to describe participants whose self-declared aim is to research their father's FEPOW history. This designation is not intended to imply that they have no interest at all in other aspects of the fathers' experiences, just that this is the most visible feature.

<sup>4</sup> A few participants extended their searches to grandfathers if they also had a military background.

<sup>5</sup> In this context, I am using the term to describe a very specific branch of family history whose primary purpose is to uncover information about a particular FEPOW, to trace and document his movements through the war, including the details of the POW camps where he was held, the 'hell ships' he was on, and his route of repatriation.

kind of cultural strongbox from which they cannot burst out' (Roper 2009, p.266). One of the questions addressed by this chapter, then, is how far COFEPOW researchers may be using their particular memory practices - deliberately situated in the 'realms of the rational' - as a 'strongbox' to protect more vulnerable parts of the psyche. Few scholars have attempted to problematize this field to any substantial degree. Such theoretical work as does exist is located largely within the sociology of family history which is where I begin my discussion.

### **The practice of military family history and the psychosocial**

The widespread interest in family history begs the fundamental question of just why in fact people strive so assiduously to uncover the fine grain of their own family histories. Is this merely a hobby whose popularity is entirely fathomable, or a more subtle process of self-making? The literature provides a range of answers.<sup>6</sup>

Some scholars speculate that rapid social change, social dislocation and other existential concerns generate practices to strengthen identity, a sense of self, or greater 'ontological security' (Back 2009, Basu 2004, Bishop 2005, Bottero 2015). Emotional reasons can be dominant, such as the need for meaning when dealing with 'grief, depression and a lack of self esteem' (Kramer 2011a, p.380) or, at a more mundane level, the wish for social contact: 'wanting to become a member of a club' (Erben 1991 p.280). The desire to create a 'compelling family history' that can be passed on to future generations is a powerful drive for others (Bishop 2008), perhaps with the aim of satisfying the 'ultimate human fantasy, the pursuit of immortality' (Lynch 2011, p.116). Rather contentiously, Edwards (2009) adds to this list by suggesting that family history exercises 'some of the emotional capacities that would otherwise be exercised by organized religion - although they are not mutually exclusive' (p17). Kramer (2011a)

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<sup>6</sup> Given its recent boom in the English speaking world, several academics have questioned why sociology and other academic disciplines have taken such little interest in amateur genealogy and family history research, (e.g. Barnwell 2015, Bishop 2008, Edwards 2009, Kramer 2011a and b). Durie (2017) writes of genealogy suffering from 'academic neglect.' (p2.)

also pursues a social and psychological rationale, concluding that genealogy is a 'creative and imaginative memory practice which produces kinship, auto/biographical selves and interiorities ...' (p.381).

From a psychoanalytic standpoint (Erben 1991) introduces the potential role of obsessive-compulsive traits to explain the attraction of 'listing names and connecting them with lines' (p.279), and there is substantial support for this in the literature (Subkowski 2006). Erben also refers admiringly to Lawrence Stone (1971) whose view is that

In terms of psychological motivation, these obsessive collectors of biographical information belong to the same category of anal-erotic males as the collectors of butterflies, postage stamps, or cigarette cards; all are by-products of the Protestant Ethic.<sup>7</sup> But part of the stimulus came from local or institutional pride and affection, which took the form of a desire to record the past members of a corporation, college, profession, or sect (p.49).

In other words, Stone speculates that the 'collection of biographical information' may meet an intrinsic psychic need, whilst also allowing for the 'pride and affection' that figured prominently amongst the community of COFEPOW researchers. While warning against exaggerating the Freudian interpretation of genealogy, Erben (1991) concludes that it 'should not be under-emphasised or go undeveloped' (p.279).

One way of thinking about military family history is to see it 'as a set of practices and discourses of *expertise*' [in which] 'accounts of the *research* process are prominent' (italics in original) (Bottero 2012 p.68). She emphasises that 'family history as a social practice', is embodied in the skills and the 'procedural conventions' acquired while delving into the archives (Bottero 2015, p.18). These skills include sifting, tracing, filing, checking, collating, documenting, travelling to libraries and archives, drawing conclusions, attending meetings and conferences, visiting sites ... and in the process, and perhaps above all, creating narratives. As the storytelling proceeds, typically in knight's

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<sup>7</sup> '... secular vocation, self control, hard work, collective responsibility, responsible stewardship' (Jones 2001, p.328) - characteristics which do seem consonant with those of the COFEPOW researchers.

move fashion, the social practices entailed in building a family history themselves become a 'form of identity-work' (p.2).

Conventionally, family history has enabled people to manage kinship, to allow in, or to exclude from view, particular ancestors, behaviours, or events (Kramer 2011b). By definition, however, participants researching their fathers' military histories have largely predetermined their choices. With so much resource and emotion invested in one significant person, small differences between expectations and reality become magnified, with inevitable frustrations if, and usually when, the research heads down blind alleys.

As their involvement deepened, COFEPOW researchers were obliged to become familiar with mainstream practices of archive-based research, and a pseudo-professionalism superseded their previous practices that had been heavily dependent on 'communicative memory' (Assmann 2008). Carolyn Steedman (2001) compares the archive to memory. The archive may in her words '... take in stuff, heterogeneous, undifferentiated stuff ... texts, documents, data ... and order them by the principles of unification and classification', which can give the impression of being analogous to human memory. However, unlike memory 'The Archive is not potentially made up of *everything* ... and it is not the fathomless and timeless place in which nothing goes away ...' (italics in original). While human memory is constantly called upon to provide the raw material we use to narrate a meaning into our lives, in the archive, this 'stuff' - some chosen, some there 'as mad fragmentations that no one intended to preserve' (p.68) - waits around for someone to read, respond and integrate it into a narrative to suit their particular purpose. The inherent and paradoxical randomness of the archive (the 'mad fragmentations') has caused COFEPOW researchers great consternation over the years, but the archive still retains its 'allure' and, especially pertinently, 'romance, as in the sense of the quest: endurance of all kinds of trial and tribulation, in pursuit of some goal or grail' (Steedman 2008, p.6).

The emotional potency of the archive - tucked away from public gaze - must not be underestimated.<sup>8</sup> However, working with emotionally charged materials has risks, and can release unconscious traces: those 'specters or ghosts [that] appear when the trouble they represent and symptomatize is no longer being contained or repressed or blocked from view' (Gordon 2008, p.xvi). The 'archival impulse', that 'desire to find or locate or possess the moment of origin or the beginnings of things' (Boscacci 2015, p.1), can arise from unconscious motivation, as an expression of the 'compulsion to repeat - to recollect/ re-collect in memory' (p.3). In this sense, creating archives may be seen as a way to possess 'the moment of origin' and in doing so to take control.

### **Pete<sup>9</sup>**

Pete was born in 1948, the third of four children. His father, John, was a quartermaster sergeant, responsible for stores and supplies, and so comfortable with detail and the workings of the military bureaucracy. Despite his father being a professional soldier, Pete claimed no special interest in military history as such. Early in the interview, Pete began to set out his father's army career with characteristic fluency and gusto.

Dad joined the Regiment in 1927. And from Germany he went to Northern Ireland, and from Northern Ireland he went to India in 1936. He was in a place called Jabalpur for a few years. He had a year on the north west frontier trying to keep the feuding tribes apart. They're still fighting even today. And then he went back to Agra, in 1939. Which is where he met mum.

He was a company quartermaster sergeant and so he was in a supportive role. Before the two battalions merged, he was the quartermaster sergeant for D

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<sup>8</sup> Although my own research has not relied on regular visits to the state archives, I can vividly recall the psychological impact of looking through my first batch of documents in the National Archives at Kew, materials that covered how the military high command planned to get the FEPOWs home. I had not anticipated that I would respond emotionally in the way I did. It felt like a sudden collapse of the past into the present, courtesy of the oddly mundane bureaucratic minutiae, the 'throwaway' comments in letters and telegrams, and what seemed to me, rather pompously, as the incongruous humour. Of course it was completely congruent with the times and the reality within which these people were working (as someone who spent a good deal of their professional life working with madness and death, I really should have known better). This tactile and weighty (in all senses) experience - and the smells - raised questions and feelings I don't think I could have summoned from engaging with secondary sources alone.

<sup>9</sup> Pete has a brother (Stephen) and a sister (Brenda) both of whom were also participants in this research, and whose testimonies figure in Chapters 6 and 4 respectively.

company. And then, after the merger, he was a quartermaster sergeant in HQ company. And I think, you know, being HQ company, they were probably more aligned to the senior officers which is probably why, when he was in Changi, I don't think he actually got posted away to a work party camp in River Valley or Adam Park, or Sime Road or anywhere like that.

He was in Changi for a few months, from February 'til October 1942. Then he went up onto the railway. So he got up there sort of November ... and then he was on the railway quite far north until February '44. And then they all started moving south again. Yeah. Even the guys that were building the railway from the Burma end filtered through into Thailand and all ended up in the Chungkai erm ... Tha Markam, Kanchanaburi area. And it was from there that men started getting nominated for parties to go down to Singapore and off to Japan. Fortunately dad wasn't.

Pete explained that as the Japanese military prepared for the construction of the Thai-Burma railway, they were keen to exploit the skills of the men they had captured. He relished sharing his father's pride in minor acts of sabotage.

He talked about sabotage and leaving bolts in the cylinders and things like that. There was one engine still not working, even at the time of the Japanese surrender. So he was rather proud of that!

I think he was liberated from Kairin camp in the central railway workshop. I think he went back there. The evidence I have for that is a photograph he has in his collection of Singapore cathedral, and on the back of that is a verse written by a padre Harry Thorpe from Saratoga in New South Wales, Australia. I have found reference to him in Weary Dunlop's diaries for instance. But it's dated Kairin August 1945. And I think that's probably where dad was at the time.

Pete's mastery of detail and his joy in its communication typified the prowess of the COFEPOW researchers, as did the references to an impressive range of sources, some fairly mainstream, such as the 'Weary Dunlop's diaries',<sup>10</sup> others less so, as least to British ears ('padre Harry Thorpe'). The macro history of the war in the Far East provided critical points of anchorage for the details of his father's story, adding significance to the family stories and providing a rich geopolitical context against which to locate the actions of otherwise marginal actors.

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<sup>10</sup> The famous Australian surgeon who has become an iconic figure in POW discourse. See Dunlop (1990).

Famous intermediaries, such as Weary Dunlop or Lady Mountbatten,<sup>11</sup> provided historical references to facilitate narrative transitions between personal, local, national, international and global perspectives. Where evidence was missing, Pete made educated guesses - working hypotheses - that, in accordance with standard scientific method, he exposed to challenge as his meticulous researches flushed out fresh data. The efforts of the prisoners of war to sabotage the building of the 'railway' have become something of a trope,<sup>12</sup> but Pete's jocularly in telling this story suggested that a strong sense of pride was injecting motive power into his extensive inquiries. Other than occasional diversions into more conventional family history, Pete directed his attention and energies firmly onto the task of uncovering the factual details of his father's POW existence. Pete began researching into his father's history in 2006, after he had retired from a series of senior roles in the oil and steel industries. He had little to go on.

Terry: How conscious were you of the POW part of your father's life?

Pete: Well I think I was aware that he had been ... associated with the Bridge on the River Kwai. And that was probably the limit. You know, I didn't have any details of where he'd worked, what he'd been doing, which camps he'd been in.

Terry: Had he ever spoken about it to you?

Pete: No ... no. No. At any stage ...

Terry: So, when you were doing your research, and you were starting off ...

Pete: Well, it was his army records. His army records.

Terry: Yeah. But you had to get those, didn't you?

Pete: Oh, yeah.

Terry: Before then did you have anything around the house?

Pete: Well, I just started looking online.

Terry: Oh, okay, so you didn't have any concrete material [no] that had sort of come through the family or [no] after your mum [no, nothing]. Nothing at all? [no, no] Ah, okay.

Pete: No, I mean, it's only subsequently that I have found things that have been left behind, like diaries. Not diaries erm ... address books ... and of mum's and, you know, like I said earlier about mum's address book with contacts in them.

Serendipity came to Pete's aid. A family wedding in New Zealand was the catalyst that led to the discovery of unexpected material, and gave extra momentum to his research.

During the wedding visit, his younger brother had shown him numerous family

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<sup>11</sup> See <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straitstimes19450911-1.2.5.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> Alistair Urquhart provided convincing detail in a 2010 article for the Daily Mail; <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1254168/Monsters-River-Kwai-One-British-POW-tells-horrifying-story.html>

photographs which proved invaluable. But, other than documents and scans of these photos, he had no artifacts of his own to handle, or to display. He was missing what Susan Pearce (1994) calls the 'power of the real thing', its sheer facticity, as well as its 'message-bearing' potential (p.20). What items were held in the family - the father's medals, his clarinet, and a ceremonial dagger (of uncertain provenance) - were all in the possession of his eldest brother, who also lived in New Zealand. In reconstructing the past, sensory elements ('relics') are one of the three interconnected 'routes' - history, memory and 'relics' - that Lowenthal (2015) suggests are essential in achieving 'full awareness' (p.398). In Pete's case, the very meagre contribution of relics to his cause meant that he pursued history and memory with particular insistence and intensity.

Terry: Were you always interested in military history?

Pete: No. No, no. I realised that I knew so little about dad's military career that I thought well it would be quite interesting to find out what he did. And I just started with an A4 sheet and a table, and I just put key dates that I knew and I started putting bits of information in that I knew about dad. And then I thought, right well let's get his army records. I got his army records and that enabled me to put a few more dates in. And this table started getting bigger and bigger and bigger. And then, I started collecting information together. I think it was 2006 I started that. And then it was at the end of 2006, that's right, my nieces wedding out in New Zealand. I went out to New Zealand, met up with my younger brother,<sup>13</sup> told him what I'd started doing. He said, oh, you might be interested in these then. And he brought out all these photographs. And that's where photographs of Stephen<sup>14</sup> came from, and the church, the cathedral ... the inscription on ...

Well I did realise dad had a photo collection but it had never occurred to me where it had gone. But it turned out that he had given it to Jim, you know. And so he was sort of the custodian of dad's photograph collection.

Terry: Did he have all of your dad's papers then, effectively, connected to the war?

Pete: Well, no. No. Just the photos. There were no other papers as such.

What marked out Pete's research from all others was that he expanded his realm of interest beyond his father. Remarkably, he carried out detailed tracking work on all 935 members of his father's battalion. In full flow, Pete provided a running commentary on his 'live' research:

They were all taken back to Bangkok, put on DC-3 Dakotas and flown to Rangoon. Now, for a long time - up until about a week ago - my research had

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<sup>13</sup> Both of Pete's brothers lived in New Zealand.

<sup>14</sup> His eldest brother, born in 1941.

identified that he could have come back on one of two vessels. The Boissevain<sup>16</sup> or the Empire Pride. They arrived in Liverpool on the 12th of October 1945. And there were two ships that arrived that day which according to dad's army records was the day he came back.

At the close of the interview, Pete showed me his spreadsheets detailing the movements of the 935 men of the battalion. Laid out end-to-end, they seemed to extend halfway across his living room.

Pete is the brother of Brenda whose testimony I discussed in Chapter Four (and also the brother of Stephen who appears in Chapter Six). My interviews with Pete and Brenda were very different, in content and in affective tone. Pete was much more outgoing and 'in control', whereas Brenda was very tentative and reluctant to venture an opinion. The significant episode that Brenda raised about her father retreating into the front room for several days at a time was never mentioned by Pete.

The level of detail revealed in Pete's researches begs questions about the dynamics of 'list making'. Ernst van Alphen, a scholar of the Holocaust, draws attention to a phenomenon he calls 'list mania' (van Alphen 2015): the growing propensity to create lists. In this way 'all victims can be acknowledged and represented. Not by means of one symbol or allegory that is supposed to represent all victims ...'. But as he points out, the genre has been 'contaminated by its history, as the Nazis had particularly excelled in listing' (p. 12).<sup>15</sup> The Nazi's fanatical dedication to record keeping - numbers tattooed on arms, transforming detainees into 'archived objects' (p.13) - was not followed by the Japanese. Although they were obsessive about counting the prisoners ('tenko' or roll call), beyond that day-to-day ritual, their attitude to keeping POW camp records was much less assiduous. Nonetheless, it was still thought sufficiently incriminating to bring about their deliberate destruction at the end of the war.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Erben (1991) notes the ambivalences faced by Jews when tracing their relatives' fates during the Holocaust. Firstly, the emotional impact of discovering that 'line after line of ancestry' (p.280) ended in the concentration camps; secondly, the knowledge that Nazis had used family trees to trace individual Jews in the first place.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/prisoners-of-war-of-the-japanese-1939-1945>

Pete was following in a proud tradition of list making in the POW camps. At considerable personal risk, far sighted POWs had created lists of POWs that recorded the movements and deaths of their peers (e.g. Godfrey 2003, Kandler 2010). In the Far East, it was the victims, rather than the perpetrators, who were using lists: to witness, to resist the devaluation and the obliteration of individual lives, and to preserve for history and humanity a record of those destructive forces. So, while acknowledging the 'driven' nature of Pete's list keeping - even perhaps the 'list mania' - we can also recognise the altruistic, values-based dimension underpinning his memory practices.

Paradoxically, however, the very numbers involved can risk 'an overwhelming effect of absence' which is what van Alphen claims has happened with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC on which are engraved the names of 58,000 soldiers who died or who were missing in action in that conflict (van Alphen 2015, p. 16). Should we simply see Pete's listing of 935 men as an archive that allows access to otherwise obscure facts, or view it as a memorial to those who, now, are likely all dead? I think it is best regarded as both.

## **Jeff**

Forming networks of the like-minded is a key skill of any COFEPOW researcher, but few could match Jeff's energy and sheer doggedness when it came to making and growing connections. His expanding and increasingly diverse network encompassed not just the people he wanted to talk to but also the ideas, practices and artifacts that were needed to throw further light on his father's past. These included portraits his father drew in the camps, personal reflections on 'hierarchies of suffering', and the activities that grew out of the memory practice itself, such as collaboratively transcribing ten hours of tape recordings that the network had tracked down.

Jeff was born in 1948 and raised in New Zealand. I have included his testimony in my research because he was instrumental in instigating an informal, international

network that includes UK-based COFEPOWs. It is this international dimension, initiated by individuals comfortable with exploiting digital media, that is an interesting feature of evolving memory practices in this field. Although holding a degree in history and archaeology, Jeff has a strong technical bent, spending most of his working life in the steel industry, most recently concentrating on market development for the two main slag aggregates produced at New Zealand Steel. Jeff had contacted me in response to my original email request for research participants.

There was a prominent Broadcaster in NZ – Paul Holmes – now deceased, who coined a phrase that “Our generation lived in the shadow of the war.” I can think of no better description and certainly for those whose parents were captives of the Japanese. In my case my late Father was a Naval POW in Palembang, Sumatra after the fall of Singapore. From a very young age I knew about “the camp” but also knew that he did not like to talk about it much, except for some of the funny things that happened.

Jeff’s father was a talented amateur artist who had joined the Naval Volunteer Reserve in 1940. He was captured by Japanese forces in February 1942 at the end of the Battle of Singapore, then held at three POW camps in Indonesia before being liberated. Jeff’s interest in his father’s time as a POW took some years to grow. Initially quite modest, his interest accelerated after coming across a FEPOW website, and then being deeply affected by reading Russell Braddon’s now classic account of life as a POW, *The Naked Island* (Braddon 1952).<sup>17</sup>

My Father has been deceased for many years but there was always my lingering fascination of what actually went on, promulgated by reading various books by ex POW’s. Suffice to say I knew the camp was bad but I didn’t know how bad until relatively recently. Ron Taylor’s FEPOW website was the trigger to finding out more and gradually I was able to start building up a better picture, added to by incredibly, two books that were published in the mid 1990’s by fellow POW’s.

I think I really became interested in earnest after reading Russell Braddon’s book “The Naked Island.” Braddon was captured during the Malayan campaign and as he put his hands up in surrender he realised it was his 21st Birthday. I was 21 at the time and wondered how I would have reacted. This was the first book I read about Japanese POW’s and I set out to read more.

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituaries-russell-braddon-1613338.html>

All went quiet for a number of years, then one day my Mother phoned to say she had read an article in an English magazine about a book on JAP POW's in Palembang and "Wasn't that Dad's camp?"

An Englishman, Ray Stubbs, had been imprisoned with Jeff's father. In 1995, Stubbs penned a memoir of his time in captivity (Stubbs 1995). After his mother's phone call, Jeff searched for the book. He couldn't get hold of a copy at first but after winking the telephone number out of the publishers, he rang Ray Stubbs directly and was sent a copy. "It was really the first information I'd had about the camps," Jeff wrote. Subsequently he found a copy of a portrait of Ray in his father's collection and sent it to his family (Ray had died by then).

I conducted my interview with Jeff by email over several months, and was immediately rewarded, yet taken aback, by the freedom and ebullience with which he responded to this opportunity. To my shame, his replies confounded my stereotypical expectations of someone from such a strong and successful scientific background.<sup>18</sup>

Over several years, Jeff had put together an international network of contacts comprising sons and daughters of people whose fathers had also been in Palembang. It all began when he acquired 'meticulous records' from the son of the camp adjutant.

I managed to get hold of these from the son, copied them electronically and then was able to start corresponding with people who had posted on FEPOW re "My Father was a POW in Palembang but I don't know much about it" sort of thing. My Father had done formal portraits of several and I was able to provide them copies – highly emotional as you can imagine.

Aided by Jonathan Moffat of the Malayan Volunteer's Group,<sup>19</sup> Jeff pushed his researches further.

... with the help of two UK based "children of" that I had found we started to really bore in, particularly with the help of Jonathan Moffat who had a good stash of material ex the NA at Kew. Very recently this included finally getting hold of the transcripts of the post war trial of the guards in Singapore in 1946 and a 10 hour (!) oral history by one Lt Brewer that was lurking at the IWM. We are still slowly digesting the latter, including funding the transfer of the 1980's tapes to digital for the IWM to put on their web site.

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<sup>18</sup> Jeff was recently described in a trade journal as having a 'passion for melter slag'.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk/node/1>

Jeff now has connections with sixteen “relatives of” scattered around the world’. One of these was Rex (another of my participants) whom Jeff had contacted

via another “relative of” who with his son trolled through the UK phone book. He was quite taken aback with [the] call, particularly as I had some caricatures of his Father which I have since sent to him.

Much of Jeff’s drive to stay engaged with his particular style of memory practice - which blends detailed military family research interwoven with proselytizing - is founded on a sense of injustice embedded in the public discourse surrounding Far East POWs.

The thing about all this Japanese POW stuff Terry is that much of what has been published is about Changi and the Railway and until relatively recently, very little on other camps. It’s a bit like Spitfires winning the Battle of Britain. Well actually Hurricanes shot down more German aircraft but Spitfires got all the glory. This is not to denigrate the suffering that went on in Changi and particularly the railway. There were thousands of POWs involved verses [sic] about 1200 in Palembang or other outlying camps in the then Japanese domain. In truth conditions in these other camps were just as dire as those on the railway – possibly worse in some cases – but the Railway and Changi gained the most notoriety, probably because of the numbers involved. Commander Clark (he who sailed around the world who I mentioned) told my Father that Changi was “A five star boarding house” compared to Sungai Ron in Palembang and I think you will find other comments in the same vein from those who either transited through Changi or who were sent there from outlying camps around May 1945.

Another of the beneficiaries of Jeff’s passion for facts and communication was Kevin. His father, George, had also been a POW in Palembang. Kevin’s story provided an unusual opportunity to touch on the factors that may align participants with particular genres of memory practice. Kevin told his father’s story by means of a self created public website<sup>20</sup> packed with photos and hyperlinks whose pages testified to the dedication needed to put together an online family archive. ‘Jeff supplied me with a vast amount of information and pointed me in the right direction for my research. Jeff also supplied me with information that confirmed my father’s final Prisoner of war camp’.<sup>21</sup> The following extract is from the website and describes his father’s return home at the end of the war:

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<sup>20</sup> <http://aotn.dvrDNS.org/MyWeb/public/websites/ww2/>

<sup>21</sup> Discovering the identity of ‘the last camp’ is significant for many participants. It was the place where the POWs heard the news of the war’s end, and from where they began the psychological

## Back Home

After disembarking from the Dakota airplane my father would have gone for medical assessment to determine if he could go home on the first available ship . Unfortunately the years of captivity had take a great toll both physically and mentally so he would have been admitted to a Hospital in Singapore , possibly Woodbridge Hospital , for initial treatment.<sup>22</sup>

My Father arrived back in the UK on the 10th February 1946 and was admitted to Carstairs Hospital in Lanarkshire, Scotland. A note on his record stated "**Not to be posted overseas before 10th August** " and then a note "**Not to be sent to the Far East under any circumstances**". [emphasis in original]

Carstairs Hospital was constructed during 1936–39. Although it was planned and financed as a facility for "mental defectives" (i.e. persons with a psychiatric disorder, the former term is no longer used) it was first used as an Army hospital, during World War II. The Army relinquished control of the hospital in 1948, when it opened as the State Institution for Mental Defectives .

My father was diagnosed with 'Manic Depressive Psychosis'.

Because of my own professional background in mental health, my eyes were drawn to the diagnosis of manic depressive psychosis.<sup>23</sup> It is a brave (or fully convinced) psychiatrist who would make this diagnosis in a man so recently returned from prolonged war trauma. Nevertheless, it drew my attention to the fact that the COFEPOW researchers shared certain personality characteristics. These included high levels of drive, optimism and inquisitiveness, which is typical of people with 'hyperthymic temperament'.<sup>24</sup> Akiskal (2005), a major authority on mood disorders, writes of affective temperaments as follows:

Most persons have a characteristic pattern ... For instance, some are easily moved to tears by sad or happy circumstances, whereas others tend to remain placid.... Temperaments tend to cluster into basic types ... [including] the hyperthymic temperament, in which the person is naturally inclined toward cheerful moods has been reported in 4 to 8 percent [of the general population] (p.1614).

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and physical transitions from captivity to freedom. Pragmatically, it was also valuable data in the search for the father's route of repatriation.

<sup>22</sup> Notice the free use of conditional verbs to plug awkward gaps in the narrative.

<sup>23</sup> Nowadays more commonly referred to as bipolar disorder.

<sup>24</sup> Although the hyperthymic temperament relates to the manic pole of bipolar disorder, it is not a pathological category in itself. Indeed Ravai et al (2013) write that it has been shown to 'improve the quality of life' (p.2075) and, of all the 'affective temperaments', it is the 'most adaptive ... the most functional and desirable' (p.2076).

He proceeds to describe the psychoanalytic rationale for a link between elation and depression.

Elation is conceptualized psychodynamically as a defense against depression or as a denial of the pain of loss, as exemplified by the so-called maniacal grief, a rare form of bereavement reaction in which elated hyperactivity may replace the expected grief (p.1614).

Pete and Jeff, and Rex, participants whose stories appear in the thesis, share many of the core features of the hyperthymic temperament, and their career histories also suggest they are above average achievers. Their gregariousness separates them from the caricature of the family history researcher who, according to Bishop (2008), typically works alone in front of the computer or in a library. By working hard to form productive collaborative research networks these participants also recreated something of the spirit of 'mateship' that they imagined (or hoped) was part of their fathers' social world in the camps (Twomey 2011 and 2013).

### **Identity and the re-working of the self**

Whatever the primary reason for starting to investigate any form of family history, Bottero (2015) maintains that the process will tend to metamorphose into 'identity-work' (p.3). By tracing 'ancestral links', family historians try to 'reconstruct the lives of ancestors' (Bottero 2012, p.55), thus activating 'traces of the past' (Kramer 2011a p.429). In the course of doing so, they work through 'notions of cultural and biological "belonging"' (Bottero 2012, p.55), and 'rootedness' which are 'foundational to identity' (Kramer 2011a p.429). The practice of military family history is the search for something missing or lost, but it also possesses the capacity to challenge our sense of self: 'The very search for what is lost and gone (in an individual past or a public historical past) alters it, as it goes along, so that every search becomes an impossible one' (Steedman 2001, p. 77).

To delineate the nature of the COFEPOW researcher more precisely, it will be helpful to contrast it with James's situation. Although he began as an enthusiastic collector of facts, this soon faded, and he became ambivalent about their value. It was no coincidence that the core of James's testimony was focused on his emotions, and showed the influence of psychic pain.

... I'm not sure how important the actual facts are. I mean, I was tremendously interested in the actual facts, but ... more important really for me to get to the ...the feelings really and make sense of it for me. Because I know at the time, I know as a small child ... I didn't ... I didn't know any of it. I just knew bits and pieces, but I didn't know ... so, I mean, my-my experience in a way is more important ... than the actual facts of what was ...

James was aware that during his childhood the family had 'secrets', one of which was his father's FEPOW experiences. But there were others and, as the youngest child of five, he struggled through childhood convinced (correctly, it seems) that everyone else knew more than him.

Terry: So, what's your take on how much you know about that, versus how much you need to know?

James: I don't really need to know any of it. I ... I was ... I was kind of drawn fairly recently ... without knowing why, really ... kind of drawn to know. I really want to know. And I kept looking, and looking, and looking. But I don't feel that so much now. I don't really need to know it at all. It would be nice to know. But, I mean, I know I won't know. There's so much I won't know. It's impossible to know. And I know some of the things they went through. But I can't possibly know what it was like for them. Can't possibly. And I know some of the effects it had on him...

We can see from James's testimony that the desire to know came unbidden, then waned, as the psychic urge met the limits of the archives. More significantly, he realised that knowing the facts would not satisfy his needs. Instead he contented himself with partial accounts, and spliced in existing generic narratives where required ('And I know some of the things they went through').

The social practices of family history are not simply ways of accessing 'resources': they can change identity and the self (Bottero 2015). Given my own theoretical position, I am bound to see any 'splitting' of the social from the psychic, and viewing family history solely as an externally-oriented social practice, as uncomfortably

two dimensional, and inconsistent with the findings from my research.<sup>25</sup> From a psychosocial perspective, then, I would argue that the embodied, practice elements inevitably interact with the material that is being revealed, and create a psychodynamic matrix that will hold identifications, transferences and projections. That said, by introducing the notion of 'social practice', Bottero offers an interesting alternative frame of reference through which to revisit the work of the COFEPOW researchers, and to reconsider how the specifics of their practices might have consequences for their lives, identities, and social roles.

Over the years, Pete has evolved his practice through making his material available to others. Through this work, he has carved out a new and expanding post-retirement role. He has written reports and given talks, activities that satisfy his particular personal needs, yet also provide much needed information for families not in a position to do this work for themselves. His researches have spawned several documents and events. Using his small, specialist 'archive', grounded in his extensive spreadsheets, he wrote a comprehensive report in 2014 that he subsequently made available online. His expertise has been acknowledged on the regiment's official website,<sup>26</sup> and he recently organized an event at a local hotel, in association with the regimental association and COFEPOW, which was attended by ninety delegates and was covered by the local press.

### **What next?**

... genealogy is no mere pastime. Anthropological studies attest to the powerful role of genealogy in 'signifying existence itself' (Erben 1991, p.277)

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<sup>25</sup> Bottero (2015) does seem to sense the dangers however - '... in casting people as "carriers" of practices, there is a potential danger of effacing the individual and of losing sight of "identity" altogether' (p.8).

<sup>26</sup> Most particularly, these contributions have taken the form of 'additional notes' that provide supplementary information about individual veterans.

Most family history work lacks an ending (Bishop (2008). The participants involved in military family history practice mostly shared this assumption, and this remained the case in spite of much FEPOW research having tightly predetermined temporal and spatial boundaries. For there remains an almost inexhaustible supply of unopened boxes in the National Archives, or boxes about to be released, or accidentally discovered, and certainly no shortage of rumours and speculation about what might remain to be discovered.

A question that lurked in the shadows - and one that I asked every participant - was 'what next?' What did they have in mind for their painstakingly collected historical findings? Where was it all leading? Pierre Nora comments on the growing importance of materiality and visibility in managing memory:

Modern memory is, above all, archival. It relies entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image. What began as writing ends as high fidelity and tape recording. The less memory is experienced from the inside the more it exists only through its exterior scaffolding and outward signs - hence the obsession with the archive that marks our age, attempting at once the complete conservation of the present as well as the total preservation of the past (Nora 1989, p.13).

Nora's argument is that the rush to archive is founded on a 'fear of a rapid and final disappearance' (p.13), and as a consequence we find comfort in this 'materiality of the trace'. Pete's pleasure in the sheer physicality of his abundant spreadsheets spoke volumes to this disposition. Like archaeologists sifting soil at an excavation site, Pete and his peers picked their way through the archives for fragments or traces of information that would shape how subsequent generations would come to 'remember' these events.

The practices of the COFEPOW researchers exemplified Nora's contention that 'the materialization of memory has been tremendously dilated, multiplied, decentralized, democratized' (Nora 1989, p.14). The pervasive 'fear' to which Nora refers, hints at the dynamic unconscious: the control, the regimentation and the orderliness required to create and maintain these particular archival forms of memory

practice may be adept at keeping at bay the ‘unconscious residues of violence and terror’ (Roper 2009, p.266).

Together with his collaborators, Jeff was undecided about how to handle the material he and his ‘correspondents’ had accumulated, and he seemed daunted by the prospect of more arriving.

I have commented to a number of my “correspondents” that researching this is rather like the Pink Floyd song “All in all its just another brick in the wall.” You pick up the odd brick here and there and then suddenly a whole truck load arrives.

So now we have a whole bundle of stuff – a brickyard full as it were. My son in law – the “Family Ferret” – has a keen interest in our respective family’s military histories and last year scuttled off with my collection: to deliver on Xmas day an 86 page manuscript, all carefully annotated, cross referenced etc. A bit like a PhD thesis (!). What we do now remains to be seen. A private publication perhaps - Rex is quite keen to publish something – including some of my Father’s drawings and personal reminiscences I can remember – plus of course stuff that has just arrived. Dunno. We’ll see.

We have noted how collaboration featured strongly in Jeff’s case, and altruism in general figured highly in the work of the COFEPOW researchers. Many went out of their way to share their findings, or to carry out work on behalf of others unable to do this for themselves. At this level, Assman’s (2008) concept of ‘communicative memory’ seems particularly pertinent, and the growth of small peer groups lies at the heart of what are now extensive informal online collaborative networks that strengthen the ‘commonality and connectedness’ between members (Bottero 2015 p.2).<sup>27</sup>

At intervals in this chapter I have suggested that participants with a primary interest in the military family history of their fathers may be less comfortable with the emotional dimensions of memory work. Occasionally, however, chance events may bring emotional issues closer to the surface. I had been trying to arrange an interview with a prominent COFEPOW researcher, but the logistics had defeated us. However, I bumped into him on a visit to the FEPOW Building at the National Memorial Arboretum.

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<sup>27</sup> In Chapter 5 I argued that participants like Pete operate in the ‘floating gap’ between communicative memory and cultural memory, sharing their information and expertise as their body of work moves close to permanence.

I introduced myself and reminded him that we had been in email correspondence. He immediately responded with 'I owe you an email', then quickly threw doubt on whether an interview would be of any value. 'There were no horror stories', he said, assuming that this was what I wanted. Given the context and his comments, I decided to drop the idea of an interview. A few months later, I unearthed a post on a FEPOW website from ten years earlier in which he told a curious story of his own. He recalled how he had contracted tuberculosis as a child, and had been hospitalized for nine months. Yet his father had never visited. 'I often wondered why Dad never came to visit "in the Surrey countryside"'. He went on to surmise that this was due to the appearance of the hospital's perimeter fence, which was topped with barbed wire. 'Understanding seems to come so late!' he concluded.

### **Is military family history a gendered memory practice?<sup>28</sup>**

The urge to collect is a ubiquitous phenomenon which has anthropological, sociobiological and individual psychodynamic roots, but occurs far more frequently among men than women (Subkowski 2006, p.383).

When I began to prepare this chapter, I adopted the rather flippant working title of 'the history boys' because in my sample this genre of memory practice was so evidently gendered. It was the men who displayed the most intense interest in the specifics of military history, who wanted to accumulate and document the 'facts', and who were most insistent on recounting the chronology of their fathers' POW histories. I am reluctant to ascribe simplistic explanations using theories of masculinity, but the approach of the COFEPOW researchers did seem to embed traditional gender roles consistent with 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, Hinojosa

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<sup>28</sup> Carmen Paglia is in little doubt that military history per se is dominated by men: '... for nearly twenty years I have been calling for young feminists to study military history' (Paglia 2008, p.2). See also the following on the topic of gender and interviewing: Jefferson (2002), Oliffe and Mroz (2005), Pini (2005), and Smith and Braunack-Mayer (2014). Wikipedia's list of over 150 'military writers' does not as far as I could tell include a single woman. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_military\\_writers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_military_writers) I am aware of a few female scholars in the military field but it seems as if men still have a stranglehold over the 'airfix kit' genres.

2010). In addition, some of these men (some of the time) identified with the military backgrounds of their fathers and the discipline that service life had instilled, which in turn further reinforced this type of traditional masculinity (Demetriou 2001, Hinojosa 2010).

Earlier in this chapter, I raised the possible connections between the activities of the COFEPOW researchers and associated personality traits and practices (such as 'listing'). If we can accept that listing is a variant of 'collecting', then Subkowski (2006) offers a range of psychodynamic explanations for why this should be more common amongst men.<sup>29</sup> He proposes the following hypotheses: firstly, that 'women place a higher value on relationships with living objects, whereas men prefer inanimate objects (of collection)' and secondly, that 'women appear to express themselves through artistic creativity and their fecundity ... while men, however, tend to define themselves through possessions,<sup>30</sup> which in turn include their collections' (p.386). He suggests that women invest more time and energy in maintaining their 'social networks' than men who appear content to 'spend [their time and energy] in the closed-off universe of their collection' (p.386). On the face of it, this hypothesis may not appear to fit Jeff and his network of collaborators. However, extensive as they are, Jeff's interactions are largely online and, arguably, might be seen as part of an inanimate, digital universe.

In her much cited 1981 paper, Ann Oakley distinguishes between 'proper' ('legitimate') interviewing that she equated with a masculine stress on the scientific method, rationality and objectivity, and 'improper' ('illegitimate') interviewing that was reflexive and intersubjective, that was attentive to emotional matters, and levelled

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<sup>29</sup> Freud himself collected - 'It is known that Freud was a passionate collector of Roman, Greek and, albeit less so, Egyptian antiquities, and by 1933 he owned almost 3000 pieces' (Subkowski 2006, p.383). Freud's archeological metaphors are in harmony with the 'excavations' of the COFEPOW researchers.

<sup>30</sup> Which they use as objects of displacement - 'In all forms of collecting, the collector displaces relationship needs on to an inanimate object' (Subkowski 2006, p.388).

power relationships (Oakley 1981).<sup>31</sup> Male participants seemed ready to align themselves more readily with Oakley's 'proper' paradigm, anticipating that I would follow suit by adopting a more traditional, directive model of interviewing. They saw their role as providing 'data' which, after all, was the paradigm they adopted in their own military family history practice. By failing to conform with their initial expectations, I had introduced a transient unsettling influence into the relationship.<sup>32</sup>

Participants sometimes raised the topics of military rank and social class, both of which implicate issues of masculinities and power. The occasional 'clashes' of masculinities that surfaced in the interviews<sup>33</sup> should be kept in context, however, because they were inseparable from the transferences, countertransferences and other psychic mechanisms in operation, which suggests perhaps that we need a 'more adequate, more psychosocial view of masculinity' (Jefferson 2002, p.63).

## Conclusions

In this chapter I have focused on the memory practices of the 'COFEPOW researchers': a group of participants whose dominant practice was 'military family history'. Although they were the most homogenous subgroup, it would be inaccurate to suggest that this group and the practice of military family history were exactly coterminous. However, although every participant was curious about their father's POW background, it was only the 'COFEPOW researchers' who chased the detail.

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<sup>31</sup> Oakley (2015) recently re-appraised her 1981 paper. Although reducing the emphasis on feminism, and introducing the concept of 'the gift' to suggest why people agree to participate in qualitative research, she does not revisit the 'masculine paradigm' (Oakley 1981, p.31) - aside that is from a general comment on the political context of the early 1980s when 'social science was emerging from a period of masculine domination' (Oakley 2015, p.196). She expresses no opinion about how complete that emergence might be/have been.

<sup>32</sup> But I do need to recognise also that at times I may have colluded unconsciously to keep some emotional issues under wraps.

<sup>33</sup> In Chapter 1 I discussed my interview with Rex in which the introduction of 'rank' temporarily fractured the flow of the interview and led him to seek a 'redeeming' identity for my father. Being ill-treated as a coal miner ('Oh, I didn't understand that. Oh, my God... Bloody hell!'), seemed to give my father an alternative status that compensated for his rank.

I have noted the complex relationship between general family history and military family history practice, and whether underlying personality characteristics might be significant. The proposition is that participants may have been drawn to particular memory practices through personality-based predispositions, such as obsessive compulsive personality, and hyperthymic temperament, as well as by psychic needs derived from transmitted emotions in childhood.

Sociological research into genealogy and family history is sparse, and has tended to focus on 'social practices', a perspective that throws light on how social practices can facilitate new, niche identities and social roles. I described how military family history did indeed promote new identities and social roles for Pete and Jeff. Through engaging with this particular genre of memory practice they evolved new roles for themselves within the COFEPOW community, and reached the point where they achieved recognition as experts within their field. However, unlike some other participants, deep emotions stayed especially deep amongst the 'COFEPOW researchers'. They remained firmly 'in the realms of the rational' (Roper 2009, p.266).

Finally, I argued that military family history seems to be a gendered practice. The COFEPOW researchers in my sample were all men, and I drew attention to theoretical and empirical evidence that associates men with the discipline of military history, with 'collecting' (their priority being on 'possessions'), and finally with particular expectations about interviewing which were reflected in my fieldwork.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### PLACE AND PILGRIMAGE

With the era of memory, the era of returns.  
(Hoffman 2004, p. 203)

#### Introduction

For many participants, visiting sites connected with their fathers' POW captivity added enormously to their store of knowledge and understanding of the history of World War Two, and of their fathers' place in it. More significantly, these journeys - that I describe here as 'pilgrimages' - became focal points in their personal development: expressions of psychic transformation that had often been long in the making. Enacted within physical and emotional landscapes of exquisite personal and historical significance, the dynamic combination of disparate memories, visceral experiences, and a blend of planned and serendipitous activities created the psychic conditions within which participants were able both to learn and undergo enduring change (Lopez 2013).

In this chapter, I address the nature of pilgrimage and explore those defining features most pertinent to the children of FEPOWs. The heart of the chapter is the pilgrimage experiences of four participants whose journeys took them to very different locations across south east Asia: Singapore, Japan, Ambon (then in the 'Dutch East Indies'), and to the Thai-Burma railway. Their stories show how visits to their fathers' POW sites revealed nuanced emotional associations with the past, and how pilgrimage as a memory practice enabled them to address 'the father within'.

The use of the label 'pilgrim' can be contentious. Not all travellers to FEPOW sites self identify as pilgrims, or see themselves as 'on a pilgrimage'. In contrast, the travellers interviewed by Scates appeared to be of one mind on this matter:

Nonetheless 'pilgrimage' is the word they choose to describe their journey. It captured the sense of a quest, often an ordeal, a journey (as Victor and Edith Turner's classic formulation put it) 'out of the normal parameters of life [and] entry into a different, other world' (Scates 2013, p.3).

Only a minority of my participants chose to describe themselves in this way. While the idea of secular 'pilgrimage' was broadly accepted, most saw themselves as travellers with a very particular, and personal, aim in mind. However, if they were part of a group, then this social context added an interesting psychic dimension, as I suggest later in the chapter. For consistency, I use the term 'pilgrimage' whether or not the travellers self-identified as 'pilgrims'.

### **The nature of pilgrimage**

*'a tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is half a tourist'*

(Turner and Turner, 1978)

Pilgrimage is surely the most comprehensive and intense expression of an embodied and reflective memory practice. However, the concept can easily become unhelpfully diffuse, as can be seen in the delightfully meandering essay by the Jean Watson (2014) in which she suffuses everyday life with the spirit of pilgrimage, gently aligning herself with Scates' contention that 'alongside these actual journeys is a journey of the mind' (Scates 2013, p.9).

While the purpose of pilgrimage is always unique to the individual, historically the practice has been closely allied with religious institutions. Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism - all have journeys to holy sites at their core. However, Collins-Kreiner (2009) suggests that nowadays pilgrimage needs to be seen 'as a traditional religious or modern secular journey' (p.440) and, in recent years, scholars have begun to reflect on the relationship between tourism and pilgrimage. Some propose a derivative link between the two (e.g. Collins-Kreiner 2009), arguing that 'the origins of tourism are rooted in pilgrimage' (p.444), and moreover suggesting that the gap between concepts of pilgrimage and tourism is closing (Cohen 1984, Collins-Kreiner 2009, Margry 2008). Certainly, some convergence appears to have taken place and is especially visible in the commercial field. Visits to sites of war-related trauma are now often linked with mainstream tourist destinations. Travel operators offer 'optional

excursions' to Auschwitz on package tours to Poland, and to civil war sites on trips to the east coast of America. Conversely, in trips to sites of trauma, tour operators will often include general site-seeing.

The term 'dark tourism' entered the pilgrimage lexicon in recent decades, and has been defined as 'the act of travel and visitation to sites of death, disaster and the seemingly macabre' (Collins-Kreiner 2009, p. 445). But, as Stone and Sharpley (2008) point out, this form of behaviour has been occurring for as long as people have travelled, arguing that one of its purposes in contemporary society is to desensitize individuals to the idea of death, by allowing it to be 'brought back into the public realm and discourse, thus acting as a de-sequester that allows absent death to be made present' (p.589).

In their analysis of a journey to Gallipoli, Hyde and Harman (2011) define pilgrimage as 'a journey to a non-substitutable site embodying the highly valued, the deeply meaningful, or a source of core identity for the traveller' (p.1343). This view supports Scates's (2013) argument that the common feature of secular and religious pilgrimages is 'emotional geography ... a sense of quest, a journey through landscapes saturated with meaning' (p.78). Pilgrimages are personal, usually meticulously planned, and almost always keenly anticipated - and subsequently perceived - as events of great significance, and pilgrims invariably have 'some deeply felt connection to the site concerned' (Scates 2013, p.3). The testimonies of the children showed that the decision to make a physical pilgrimage was often the culmination of a protracted and possibly tortuous psychic journey. At the core of their decision was the determination to travel to the site (or sites) pertinent to their fathers' war time struggles, that is their destinations were 'non-substitutable' (Hyde and Harman 2011).

In traditional religious pilgrimages, the severity of the journey, and the suffering and hardships endured along the way, reflected the pilgrim's level of commitment (Schnell and Pali 2013). Participants often spent many years on the research needed to

determine the precise locations of the POW camps, and to organize a workable itinerary. Journeying to POW sites in the Far East is generally more complex and expensive than getting to their European counterparts. More profoundly, however, on some visits, such as those to the Thai-Burma Railway, there was a dual significance in the journey: firstly, the travel between the participants' home country and Thailand and, secondly, the journeys between the camp sites reflecting the movements of the FEPOWs. With help from local experts, pilgrims travelled along sections of the railway route, gaining insight into their fathers' punishing experiences as they were shunted from camp to camp, constructing the 250 miles of track.<sup>1</sup>

Commercial pilgrimage tours from the UK to Far East POW sites are uncommon,<sup>2</sup> and to mainland Japan almost unheard of. Travel companies offering mainstream holidays to the Far East may allocate a day or so to visit those FEPOW sites that are supported by a dedicated tourist infrastructure, such as Changi in Singapore or the Thai-Burma Railway.<sup>3</sup> Tours to Pacific war sites have always been bigger business in USA and Australia, where the Burma Thailand Railway Memorial Association<sup>4</sup> and its precursors have been offering trips to Java, Singapore and Thailand since 1985. Visiting the POW sites on mainland Japan requires an intrepid sense of adventure or the support of individuals in Japan garnered through personal contacts. The only organization offering tailored pilgrimages is the UK-based charity Agape World, founded by Mrs.

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<sup>1</sup> Rod Beattie pioneered the opening up of the area as a pilgrimage destination - <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/08/10/asia-pacific/australian-thailand-devotes-life-wwii-pows-death-railway/#.V-ZQ5yMrISl>

<sup>2</sup> An exception is Battlefield Tours which offers *Singapore and the Bridge over the River Kwai* <http://www.battlefieldtours.co.uk/tours3b.htm>

<sup>3</sup> For example, Cosmos Tours offers entices prospective travellers with heavily trope-laden descriptions - 'A sombre morning visiting the town's famous JEATH War Musuem [sic]. JEATH stands for Japan, England, American, Australia, Thailand and Holland - the nationalities of the Prisoner's of War involved with the building of the railway in WW2. This fascinating musuem [sic] details POW's experiences during the building of the world famous "Bridge over the River Kwai". Built during World War II by the Allied prisoners of war. Included is a thrilling ride on the notorious "Death Railway" along the infamous railway.' <http://www.cosmostoursandcruises.co.uk/holiday/taste-of-thailand-new?itineraryVersion=2016>

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.btrma.org.au/index.html/>

Keiko Holmes,<sup>5</sup> which has been taking groups of FEPOWs and their families to Japan since the early 1990s. Her pilgrimages focus on reconciliation, and operate within an explicitly Christian context.<sup>6</sup> In practice this means that itineraries include visits to Christian churches, and also to schools and universities (sometimes private Christian universities). Most of the local volunteers are Christian, though not exclusively so. Although pilgrims are encouraged to participate in these planned activities, there is no pressure to express any overt or personal commitment to Christian theology.

### **The desire to visit sites of personal significance**

Memories of childhood often dictate why we choose to travel to particular places later in life; places where we used to live, or where we spent our holidays. For the children of FEPOWs, however, the memories most closely associated with pilgrimage destinations are not their own but their fathers', transmitted during childhood as postmemories. As Hirsch and Miller (2011) argue:

While the idea of postmemory can account for the lure of second-generation "return", it also underscores the radical distance that separates the past from the present and the risks of projection, appropriation, and overidentification occasioned by second- and third-generation desires and needs (pp.4-5).

While concurring with Hirsch and Miller on the motivational significance of postmemory, I am intrigued by their reference to 'the *risks* [my italics] of projection, appropriation, and overidentification'. Observing these 'risky' processes in some of my participants' narratives, I prefer to regard them as commonplace features of everyday memory practice, even necessary steps in how participants come to address the past.

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<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.agapeworld.com/contacts.htm>

<sup>6</sup> She converted to Christianity after meeting her English husband. His tragic death in an air accident over 30 years ago left her with two small sons to raise in the UK. After she 'discovered' the memorial to the POWs (the 'Iruka boys') who had died in the copper mine near her home village of Kiwa-cho, she determined to contact the ex-POWs of Iruka to promote reconciliation. She organized her first pilgrimage for ex-POWs and family members in 1992, and she has continued to offer them ever since.

Given that much postmemory in these families is, at the very least, tinged with trauma, why do people decide to visit sites they know may upset them? The reasons are rarely simple or fully evident, even (or perhaps especially) to the pilgrims themselves. Writing about 'tourist pilgrimage', Sturken (2011) points out that, 'people make pilgrimages to sites of tragedy not simply to pay tribute to the dead but also to feel transformed in some way in relation to those places' (p.285), perhaps by participating in ritualized memory practices such as reading the names of the dead, participating in a (usually) religious service, or leaving behind items of significance, such as a cross or photograph. While Sturken is right to introduce 'transformation' into the debate as a personal (but possibly unconscious) goal of many pilgrims, my data suggest that we need to think beyond 'place' as the primary setting in which transformation might occur.

Psychoanalyst Warren Poland (1977) also stresses the dynamic aspects of transformation in pilgrimage, viewing modern secular pilgrimage as 'a pattern of action that can serve as an organizer for resolving conflict and for psychic growth ... resulting from identifications passed down through the generations' (p.398). Many pilgrims experienced transformation not at the destination itself, but also through the dynamics of the journey. Both the place of pilgrimage and the pilgrimage journey enabled participants to revisit and reflect upon the relationship they had with their fathers, and with their own sense of self (Devereux and Carnegie 2006, Schmidt 2009). That is not to minimize the physicality and 'presence', the history, the ethos, and the aesthetics of the site itself; indeed they may be extraordinarily powerful in provoking emotional responses (Dunkley et al 2011). But I argue that we should view 'place' and 'journey' as complementary and mutually catalytic. Sacralized landscapes provided the context within which participants worked through - in an embodied way - painful and unresolved traumas, and operated as ready settings for displacement and projection. Time spent in pilgrimage sites (typically anything from few hours to several weeks)

enabled participants to unconsciously repeat in imagination the type of psychic distress that Freud (2015) argues allows individuals 'to work over in the mind some overpowering experience so as to make oneself master of it ...' (p.10).

Participants described how pilgrimage changed and deepened relationships: between members of the pilgrimage group itself (some of whom might be related),<sup>7</sup> and between the group members and helpers or guides (McRae 2007). Kidron (2013) notes the paucity of research into 'family tourism' (p.178), and presents findings from her interviews with descendants who had participated in 'roots trips'. Some travelled with their Holocaust survivor parent(s), others went alone.<sup>8</sup> What emerged most strongly from Kidron's interviews was how visiting sites of trauma could trigger changes in the way family members related to each other, thus enabling 'family members to "perform" emotions that, at home, were more tacitly expressed' (p.188). Although the pilgrimages considered as part of my research did not have the family group as its focus, the testimonies and my own personal observations confirmed that members of groups who started out as strangers quickly felt comfortable sharing personal experiences and emotions, and that this in turn promoted greater trust between members of the group.

### **Liminality and reflexivity**

Pilgrimage detaches travellers from familiar environments and places them in unknown situations, which heightens reflection (Beckstead 2010, p.384) and intensifies the overall experience. According to anthropologist Victor Turner (1969), pilgrimages typically involve a stage of liminality, similar to that observed in the 'ritual process' (Collins-Kreiner 2009, p.446), in which novices find themselves in a transitional stage (or 'threshold') between two different statuses.

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<sup>7</sup> In earlier years, groups often comprised survivors and their spouses and/or children. With few survivors and their spouses now alive, it is the children of ex-FEPOWs and their spouses and/or their children who undertake pilgrimages.

<sup>8</sup> As the child of a survivor, I would argue that the idea of being 'alone' on a pilgrimage is problematic. Given the emotion work entailed in preparing for and living through such pilgrimages, should we not acknowledge that we always carry the survivor within?

Adopting this framework, we could view participants as passing through a process (a 'ritual'), a series of liminal stages, during which they addressed their pasts, their memories of those pasts, and the evolving relationship with their internalized fathers. The 'approach to the pilgrimage site' (Beckstead 2010) is significant in creating the conditions for liminality. If we take the Taj Mahal, Uluru, Lourdes and Petra as quintessential pilgrimage destinations with clearly demarcated physical 'approaches', then the sites visited by the children of FEPOWs (with the exception of conventional war cemeteries such as Yokohama in Japan, and Kranji in Singapore) are often less well defined and certainly less 'managed'. Indeed, pilgrimage sites may be quite prosaic and only reveal their meanings through the knowledge that the pilgrims bring with them.<sup>9</sup> This is a reminder perhaps that the concept of 'the approach' needs also to embrace the psychological preparation for the pilgrimage.

My own 'approach' lasted many months before the start of the physical pilgrimage in 2010, and evolved progressively through the entire journey from UK to Japan, culminating at the site of my father's POW camp, some sixty miles from Hiroshima.<sup>10</sup> Once there, to use Beckstead's (2010) terms, the internal catalysts - 'faith ... a deeply felt value suggestive of things held in high regard' (p.390) - and external catalysts - 'the sensuous and symbolic environment and landscape' (p.390) - combined to create an experience perhaps best described as a fragile and fragmented, self-conscious sense of awe, and an expectation to 'perform' in an alien but exquisitely resonant Japanese landscape. 'Fragile and fragmented' because of the circumstances under which the visit took place: a brief visit, accompanied by the local press and TV. Despite the ephemeral nature of the experience, within minutes it began to coalesce into

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<sup>9</sup> Such as the original memorial board in Mukaishima, attached to the side of a factory located in a rather unprepossessing neighbourhood. With the demolition of the factory, a new memorial was created on the plot of a newly built supermarket: <http://www.us-japandialogueonpows.org/Mukaishima.htm> and <http://www.us-japandialogueonpows.org/2013POWvisit/Mukaishima%20Camp%20Memo.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> I undertook this pilgrimage well before the start of the PhD. These reflections are based on the copious notes that I made at the time.

something more tangible, as members of the group invited me to tell them 'how I had felt'. That evening in the hotel, we gathered in the hotel lobby to watch the news item on local TV, and pooled our memories of the event. Gradually and silently, I began to form a coherent reminiscence that I could share with others on our return home, and hoped that this retrospective account bore some resemblance to what I had felt at the time.<sup>11</sup> My priority was to narrativize the material aspects of the event, including responses by the Japanese people who were also present. Still lingering within were ambivalent feelings towards my father, distressing childhood memories, and postmemories and, I suspect, for those reasons I was unable to adequately symbolize my deeper emotions. Yet I also sensed that the combination of concrete action and untamed reflection that occurred during the pilgrimage had created a means of addressing these unsettled psychic matters. However, as (Poland 1977) points out, pilgrimages also may also be used defensively to avoid anxiety and difficult emotional work, perhaps undertaken out of a sense of duty, and are not always the harbingers of greater psychic composure.

With so many FEPOW-related destinations well off the beaten track, in rural areas that few foreign tourists choose to visit, pilgrims soon find themselves immersed in local culture. As a form of ritual, pilgrimage provides participants with some planned, and many more unplanned, opportunities to engage in what Turner (1969) describes as 'the reflexivity of the social process' (p.vii), and to create the psychosocial spaces in which we might detect the expression or imprint of personal and idiosyncratic unconscious forces. Especially in Japan, this process may expose conflicts and contradictions.<sup>12</sup> Pilgrims are exposed to physical and social landscapes, and aspects of

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<sup>11</sup> Dori Laub (2013) describes a similar transmutative process by which 'fragments' are put together 'creating a whole, making such a whole a part of one's experiential landscape in a temporal, historical sequence, historicizing it, restoring the narrative flow, and associatively linking it to other experiences and to the experiencing "I"' (p.187).

<sup>12</sup> Ofra Bloch (2015) describes how she journeyed to Germany to satisfy her 'urgent need' to learn about the perpetrators' descendants (p.314). She goes on to explore what reconciliation might mean under such difficult circumstances. <https://vimeo.com/58763621> Similarly, Japan is the single location where relatives of FEPOWs are guaranteed to be brought face to face with descendants of the 'perpetrators'.

traditional Japanese culture, that their fathers would have recognized over seventy years earlier. Gazing out of the window of the Hiroshima to Onomichi *shinkansen*,<sup>13</sup> fantasy quickly took over, and I sank into a reverie that stripped away the gloss of contemporary Japanese life to reveal images of past events, coloured by earlier conversations and visits. Victor Turner's words are particularly evocative:

Society, moreover, is a process in which any living, relatively well-bonded human group alternates between fixed and—to borrow a term from our Japanese friends—"floating worlds." By verbal and nonverbal means of classification, we impose on ourselves innumerable constraints and boundaries to keep chaos at bay, but often at the cost of failing to make discoveries and inventions: that is to say, not all instances of subversion of the normative are deviant or criminous.<sup>14</sup> Yet in order to live, to breathe, and to generate novelty, human beings have had to create—by structural means—spaces and times in the calendar or, in the cultural cycles of their most cherished groups which cannot be captured in the classificatory nets of their quotidian, routinized spheres of action. These liminal areas of time and space—rituals, carnivals, dramas, and latterly films—are open to the play of thought, feelings and will ... (Turner 1969, p.vii).

Thoughts and images that make fleeting appearances during train ride reveries are not always charitable or fair. Fantasies summoned by our fathers' stories provoke primitive emotions, especially in the midst of historically hostile memoryscapes. Perhaps not all 'subversions of the normative are deviant or criminous', but we would be naïve to believe we can fend off retaliatory and aggressive impulses entirely, even during pilgrimages organized for reconciliation.<sup>15</sup> In the end perhaps it would be counterproductive to do so. For my own part, I find the harsh version of the male Japanese voice difficult to adjust to. Each time I hear it, I react viscerally, thrown back into my stock of violent imagery, immersed in the postmemories I have drawn on for so long, and accompanied by the sound of my father's jaw being smashed by a rifle butt wielded by a camp guard.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> <http://english.jr-central.co.jp/about/>

<sup>14</sup> *Archaic* criminal.

<sup>15</sup> See Bloch (2015) for a related discussion in the context of the Holocaust.

<sup>16</sup> This is not a metaphor but a real assault, and my father had a permanent facial scar as a result.

Shared experiences forged friendships. In pilgrimage groups, participants travelled together, exchanged memories of childhood, and swapped stories of the war passed down by their fathers. In Japan, this could extend to sharing the rituals of a communal bath, and doing so in the company of Japanese people of the same generation. Such experiences are not easily forgotten. Victor Turner's subjects followed formal and traditional rites of passage, whereas those undertaken by the FEPOW pilgrims were more idiosyncratic, their purpose less explicit and the outcomes less predictable. Nevertheless, framing the pilgrimage as a kind of rite of passage does open up new lines of thought.

What is interesting about liminal phenomena for our present purposes is the blend they offer of lowliness and sacredness, of homogeneity and comradeship. We are presented, in such rites, with a "moment in and out of time," and in and out of secular social structure, which reveals, however fleetingly, some recognition (in symbol if not always in language) of a generalized social bond that has ceased to be and has simultaneously yet to be fragmented into a multiplicity of structural ties (Turner 1969, p.96).

How should we interpret 'lowliness' within the liminal phases of the pilgrimage experience? Perhaps the idea of humility gets closest, displayed through a willingness to put aside hardened attitudes or preconceptions, and to 'submit' to the external or internal 'other': to internal psychic objects that require attention (such as the father, or the child self), to the landscape, to the immanence of the past. And to loosen long held beliefs and stereotypical attitudes embedded in discourses of World War Two, such as the roles ascribed to the FEPOWs, the Japanese people, and the British government. For some pilgrims, 'submitting' to these psychic shifts was a necessary precondition for reconciliation based on a sense of shared humanity.

### **Joanna ... a pilgrimage to Singapore**

In Chapter Four, I explored how, at the point of her mother's death, her father's captivity experiences had 'burst through' into the present as a 'traumatic revival' (Davoine and Gaudilliere 2004, p.124). While this event represented a pivotal moment in Joanna's

relationship with her father, her whole adult life had been dogged by her memories of him and how his violent temper had created mayhem during her childhood.

Over the years, she had sought comfort from rather unorthodox sources. One day, 'somebody' just left a clairvoyant's phone number on her car seat. This 'was weird ... and so I thought, ahh, I'm obviously meant to go. I was absolutely gobsmacked, at the stuff that she knew, that only my mother could possibly have known. That was very, very strange'. Several visits to the clairvoyant convinced her that she should 'believe in something else, something afterwards'. She felt that 'they're, sort of, floating about watching over me ... in some shape or form.' This amorphous belief in an afterlife was strengthened during the 'pilgrimage' she made to Singapore.

Joanna's relationship with mainstream religion was problematic. Her father and mother had clashed over where to get married which led to a schism in the family. Her father eventually insisted on the Church of England. Her mother's family then boycotted the wedding, and her mother was, as Joanna put it, 'excommunicated' from the Catholic church. As children, she and her brother, David, had been 'dragged to church' by their father. But, years later, her father had rejected religion entirely after David's life was cut short by a brain tumour. Death had been a recurrent theme in Joanna's life, and persisted during my interview with her. Joanna explained how she came to travel to Singapore.

Because I've got another friend who's dying .. I mean, I've got more friends who've died than I have left who are alive (laughs). I have got one who's dying at the moment, whose father was a Japanese prisoner of war. And she's got terminal cancer ... But she wanted to go out to Singapore to lay a few ghosts to rest. ... And it so happened the hotel we were staying in, which used to be the British administrative headquarters - so it's an old colonial building - is set in the middle of a national park, their national park. And the week we were there, they had on their website that they were doing tree planting. Anybody who wanted to plant a tree in memory of somebody. ... So, we just couldn't resist it. And, of course the hotel thought this was brilliant PR because the first two people planting trees were doing it in memory of their fathers who had been taken prisoner in Singapore. ... They chose trees that were endangered species like our fathers. They will be the tallest trees in the park, so it's ... they said, it will be like your fathers are overlooking the whole of Singapore. They're very

hardy, as obviously our fathers were. They'd done their research and made it really personal to us. And I found it really, erm ... quite spooky. I did feel that my father was somehow lurking ... And also, I suppose, cos it's only two years since I put his ashes in my mother's g-grave, I mean, his ashes in a casket interred in her grave. ... And I was in there digging ... Well the gardeners had dug the hole but I was planting this tree, and it was earth again, you know, it was all sort of, I'm back down ... grave digging again. So, I mean, I just thought, yeah, he really would be proud of this.

In this particular place, at this particular time, Joanna experienced herself as connected with her father in profound and transcendental ways, and found meaning at psychic ('I did feel that my father was somehow lurking') and archetypal levels ('I was planting this tree, and it was earth again ...'). Bennett and Bennett (2000) note that a sense of the presence of the dead may last much longer than previously thought, and that people who have had such projective experiences choose from a range of available discourses to rationalize their phenomenology, thus giving rise to a 'more fluid ongoing relationality between the bereaved and the dead' (Maddrell 2016, p.172).

Joanna was fluent in her use of symbolism, for example the idea of 'endangered species' and 'hardiness' that she applied to both trees and to the ex-FEPOWs, and the fact that the trees would be 'the tallest in the park'. Arguably, we might infer that the tree represented her ideal father, devoid of flaws: tall, upright, reliable, hardy, and commanding yet unthreatening. Not content to leave her interpretation of events at an abstract symbolic level, however, she pushed her narrative firmly towards personal resolution, claiming the validation and emotional response from her father she had so yearned for as a child, and indeed as an adult ('... I just thought, yeah, he would be really proud of this').<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> In East Asian cultures, the role of ghosts and spirits is embedded in contemporary social and domestic rituals, and responsibilities towards the dead are taken seriously and more literally than in the West (e.g. Walter 2009). It is difficult to judge whether - if at all - this specific cultural characteristic had any bearing on the actions of individuals while on their pilgrimages. See Braunlein (2013), Iwasaka and Toelken (1994), Nelson (2008). Uriu and Odom (2016) show how the memorialization of ancestors is being blended into contemporary living.

I suppose I've always wanted him to be proud of me. And he never was, I don't think ... I think he was in the end. In the end, he was.

Against the background of extensive traumas in her life, this pilgrimage enabled Joanna to reflect on her life, and to reach a position in relation to her father that might not have been anticipated from her life story. Through the embodied practices of pilgrimage, the impact of specific places she visited and the people she met, and travelling with a friend who could provide support, she re-evaluated her situation, and secured a measure of psychic composure through a 'redemption narrative' that drew together 'people, places and practices' (Murakami & Middleton 2006, p.292).

Murakami and Middleton (2006) applied aspects of actor network theory in their study of the reconciliation practices of ex-FEPOWs on a reconciliation visit to Japan, an event centred on a local memorial in Kiwa-Cho close to where the men were forced to labour in copper mines. Their analysis of interviews with the veterans draws attention to the relationship between local issues (e.g. individual feelings, attitudes and dispositions) and global issues (such as history, geopolitics,<sup>18</sup> and national identities), and shows how reconciliation practices emerge out of 'networks of circulating reference' (p.284).<sup>19</sup> As a result, individuals created narratives that tied together "heterogeneity in terms of people, material, places, time, and practices' (p.291), thus enabling 'new forms of belonging' (p.292) and thereby the means to 'open up' the past in different ways (Middleton and Brown 2005, p.216).

By bringing the psychosocial approach into closer proximity with actor network theory we may be better able to envision how unconscious forces within the individual may interact with embodied and material external actions and phenomena - individual,

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<sup>18</sup> For example, the changing position of Japan in the world.

<sup>19</sup> Murakami and Middleton's own definition of 'circulating reference' may be helpful here: 'By circulating reference, we mean that the memorial is inscribed in stories of discovery, mobilized in reconciliation activities and civic and international ceremonial, and incorporated into research on the dynamic of collective remembering. Its substance is continually transformed and extended into networks of circulating reference' (Murakami and Middleton 2006, p.284).

communal, global - that constitute complex memory practices such as pilgrimage. A further extract from Joanna's testimony will illustrate how these two approaches can work together. Three months before the end of the war, Herbert, one of the men under the command of Joanna's father's, contracted peritonitis.

... of course there were no drugs, nothing, and I suspect my father helped kill him because he would have been in agony. With no drugs, with peritonitis. He would have been screaming and screaming and screaming so I expect that daddy helped him ... along the way. He was probably asking to be helped. He probably was crying out and saying, for god's sake, just end this pain. For god's sake, just end this pain, you know. Anyway, when they got back from the war ... my father went to visit the parents and the wife - he was married, no children - to say, you know, we were with him when he died, and we buried him. The wife had already met someone else, so she ... you know, had already gone ... erm ... which made my father even more of a misogynist than he already was. And, of course, the parents were totally distraught. He was their only child and so they were very grateful to my father. Many years later, they sent him a [copy of a] Ronald Searle drawing of their son when he was a prisoner, I presume. And my children, and my brother's children, you know, are so disinterested in any of this that, I just thought there's no point in me hanging onto this because if I drop dead ... it will go on a skip. And, I can't have that. So, I took it to Singapore, with me, gave it to the guys at Changi museum, and, of course, they were absolutely delighted ... and they said, we will actually try and put it somewhere where people can see it, because, I said, it's so sad that this chap had no children. ... Nobody knows about him, except me! And I didn't know him in the first place, but, you know, somebody's got to take some notice of this poor man that died aged twenty-four ... for no good reason! ... So, they've got it at Changi.

Joanna constructed an emotional narrative around the death of her father's colleague. She invested the event with an imagined context and motivation - 'mercy killing' - that she had also used to rationalise the part her father had played in the death of her mother (see Chapter Four). By donating the copy of the Searle drawing to the Changi Museum, she created a presence not only for an otherwise unknown soldier, but for someone who she speculated had been close to her father. While in Singapore, she placed a cross at Herbert's grave. Joanna's memory practices on this pilgrimage not only went some way to meeting her own psychic needs but, using Murakami and Middleton's (2006) framework, located her within a network of associations between Singapore, the copy of Searle's drawing, the Changi museum and its staff, the cross, Herbert and his

family, her mother's death, and her dying friend. Individually, each of these elements held its own particular resonance; together they created a new and unique network of associations, worthy of further investigation.<sup>20</sup>

### **Landscape and place**

Why do some places become sites of pilgrimages and others do not?

Complex and intriguing questions surround the issue of which sites have come to be remembered and why. Clearly, though, it was not just the size of the battle or the number of fatalities. For reasons that range from domestic politics to climate and geography, some sites became places of pilgrimage whereas others did not (Scates 2013, p.7).

Stone and Sharpley (2008) make a useful distinction between 'purposefully constructed attractions or experiences that interpret or recreate events or acts associated with death', and sites such as cemeteries or memorials that became attractions 'by accident' (p. 577). Many of the sites visited by FEPOWs and their families fall into one or other of these categories. For example, the Changi museum in Singapore<sup>21</sup> was established with a clear purpose, whereas 'Hellfire Pass' would be considered 'accidental'.<sup>22</sup> But some sites do not fit so comfortably. One such is the 'Iruku boys' memorial in Kiwa-Cho,<sup>23</sup> whose focus is local, specific to a particular village and group of FEPOWs, and is not in any sense a tourist attraction (Murakami and Middleton 2006). Starting life as a small memorial garden that local villagers created to recognize the sixteen POWs who died in

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<sup>20</sup> These 'circulating references' reach out further still, pulling in the grand narratives of the history of war in the Far East. The father of Joanna's travelling companion was seriously debilitated at the time of capture and spent the entire period of his incarceration in Changi hospital. While there, he was one of the draughtsman responsible for preparing the drawings for the Changi Lychgates<sup>20</sup> through which passed the bodies of almost 600 men on their way to the POW burial ground. The gates stood until the re-occupation of Singapore by the Allies, when they were taken down and stored. In 1952, they were re-erected in Singapore, then dismantled again in 1971 and taken to Basingbourn Barracks in the UK. In 2003 they were moved to the entrance to the FEPOW plot at the National Memorial Arboretum.

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.changimuseum.sg/>

<sup>22</sup> Hellfire Pass is the largest railway cutting on the Thai-Burma railway, and the site of numerous POW deaths. Although now an established part of the FEPOW 'tourist' itinerary (Scates 2014), self evidently it was not constructed with memorialization in mind - and therefore is 'accidental' in Stone and Sharpley's terms (2008). See <http://hellfire-pass.commemoration.gov.au/remembering-the-railway/hellfire-pass-rediscovered.php>

<sup>23</sup> Known as Iruka during World War Two.

the nearby copper mine, its significance has grown over the years, to become a focus of pilgrimage for many UK ex-POWs and their families. As Collins-Kreiner (2009) declares, 'No place is intrinsically sacred' but must await social construction as sacred, through a process of 'sacralisation' (Eschebach 2011, Schäuble 2011). Pilgrimages undertaken by the 'Iruka boys', over a period of almost twenty five years, in collaboration with sympathetic Japanese people from the local area, have progressively co-created this place as sacred (Murakami and Middleton 2006).<sup>24</sup>

Certain pilgrimage sites have risen to prominence through sheer force of personality. Charismatic individuals adopted or developed specific sites as their own special projects, and often spent many years of arduous research (sometimes literally 'in the field'), struggling against the odds to track down the material minutiae and the stories of wartime captivity. Some are widely recognized in the FEPOW community: Rod Beattie, MBE<sup>25</sup> (Thai Burma railway),<sup>26</sup> John Cooper (Adams Park),<sup>27</sup> Jamie Farrell and his daughter Amanda (Sumatra railway),<sup>28</sup> and Keiko Holmes, OBE.<sup>29</sup> (Kiwa-Cho).

The work of activists like Rod Beattie has done more than simply reveal history - in many senses it has extracted and constructed history from a much modified and still changing landscape. By developing museums and interpretive centres alongside excavations, history is both shaped and preserved for the pilgrims, despite the political and financial constraints that restrict what is accessible or recoverable.<sup>30</sup>

The preceding account has been based very much on the physicality and mechanics of place. But as we saw from Joanna's testimony, memory and consciousness,

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<sup>24</sup> Many smaller sites are quite fragile, and subject to 'desacralization' in the interests of local and national vested interests.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.kokoda.com.au/staff/rod-beattie/>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.tbrconline.com/>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.adamparkproject.com/>

<sup>28</sup> <http://pakanbaroe.webs.com/>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.agapeworld.com/>

<sup>30</sup> The passing decades have witnessed partial or complete disruption of what existed between 1942 and 1945, for instance 'traumascapes' overgrown (Scates 2013), and shopping centres and solar farms built over POW camp sites. In other areas, POW camps and work locations have changed very little, which is more often the case in rural landscapes.

postmemories and fantasies intersect at places of trauma, giving rise at a phenomenological level to sensations of 'ghostly hauntings' (Bell 1997, Trigg 2009), and the urge to carry out acts of remembrance (Schramm 2011). Dylan Trigg's starting point is the 'tension between place and trauma' (p.88) which gives rise to disorientation in the visitor; at sites of trauma, we experience a disjunction between our postmemories and the 'banality of the daylight', and sense that we have 'come to a scene too late' (p.98). The materiality of the place resists and disrupts our imagined narratives of past events that took place here - all that is left is a '*murmur* of the place where that narrative once existed' (p.99). The traumatic event, as Trigg puts it, '*trembles* as an incommensurable void is given a voice between the viewer and the place' (p.99). In other words, what was previously unreal (the reality of the trauma, the unthinkable) is now felt as 'becoming real'. 'The spectre becomes visible as the scene establishes a portal between the past and the present' (p.99). According to Bell (1997), 'ghosts are social phenomena ... and yet still particular'. The responses of participants to sites of trauma were mediated by existing discourses, their own life histories, and by their psychic singularities. The case studies that follow demonstrate how participants crafted their own individual forms of psychic response.

### **John ... a pilgrimage to rural Japan**

Three brothers - two resident in the UK, one in Australia - agreed to visit together the site of their father's POW camp in Japan where he had been forced to work as a coal miner. In the event, only one brother - John, from Australia - made the journey, in 2015. The process of planning the pilgrimage had reactivated unsettling memories from their shared past. I conducted my interview with John by email.

Terry, I will try to answer all the questions! Lorraine and I visited Omine Machi by ourselves. ... The actual site is derelict and is surrounded by low hills, I took a small panoramic movie of the area. As you can imagine it was very moving for me to stand in the actual place where all the misery occurred. The POW's walked from there through a 'gap' in the valley to the mine entrance. It all was surreal especially the fact that the entrance has not been altered, blocked of

course some way in, and the mine buildings are also mostly the same (appear to be very large tin sheds!). Locally very poor and neglected, perhaps why it has stayed similar for so many years. ... The people were very nice: I was in tears with the lovely interpreter lady, a buddhist who abhors war and feels very sad about the Japanese war mongering. Interesting that her parents ran a brewery (Sake) and at the end some prisoners went to the brewery and had a few. Like to think my dad was in that!. All in all I am so glad we did the trip. It could not have happened earlier in my life because of the obvious sensitivities.<sup>31</sup> It gives me a little satisfaction that perhaps I have honoured my fathers memory in some small way. [text unaltered from his email]

Before visiting the camp site, John and his wife had been on a nine day walking tour in Japan with a group of friends. Later, en route to the POW camp site, they had visited Hiroshima.<sup>32</sup> 'What a sobering experience to go to the actual bomb site and to see the many memorials to children, the mound for those dead who are unknown etc.'

So at last we travel to Omine Machi, a place that I have thought about for so long. I had spent some time writing and rewriting a speech that I thought might be necessary as we were advised by Morio<sup>33</sup> that we possibly would be met by local dignitaries and the press. ... we travelled with Morio on the Shinkansen bullet train from Hiroshima to Asa and then took a local JR train to Mine. Nice trip and talking to Koshi was interesting. Suddenly we are at the tiny station of Mine and we are met by the a small contingent of the local press, TV, school children and the local mayor or councillor Mr Yamamoto as well as a young Buddhist man who runs a local Kindergarten, another elderly Buddhist man who I understand was instrumental in establishing the memorial at the POW site, and a man who worked at the mine as a driver for many years, and a lady interpreter. In addition a number of young children, and a big sign welcoming John and Lorraine Bird from Australia. How special.

His first words suggested he had undergone a lengthy psychological 'approach' to this place ('that I have thought about for so long'). And the physical journey to the site on the day also contained elements that provoked further reflection on his part ('talking to Morio, and being met by a group from the local community). Although John had not given any indication in his testimony that he viewed his lengthy and strenuous 'walking

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<sup>31</sup> His father had died in 2005, and his mother only in 2010. The family sensitivities extended to the second generation. I interviewed one of his brothers, who was unambivalent about his attitude to the Japanese: 'I'm not particularly proud of it but it's given me a lifelong aversion to the Japanese.'

<sup>32</sup> My interpretation is that we should see this visit to Hiroshima as part of the 'approach' to his pilgrimage site.

<sup>33</sup> Morio, a retired engineer who had excellent contacts and often assisted with organizing visits to the Omine Machi area, even though he lived some 250km away in Fukuyama.

tour'<sup>34</sup> as anything other than a leisure activity, I was struck by his decision to introduce such a traditional pilgrimage activity into his visit. Slavin (2003) writes of 'walking reflexively' (p.5), and of how the act of walking can engender a shift from 'material things' to 'spiritual themes' (p.6), and a change from a focus on the destination to the rhythm of the journey itself.

Although John had organised this trip himself, albeit with help from Japanese volunteers,<sup>35</sup> the local itinerary resembled those organised by Keiko Holmes for her groups. Children often play a crucial role in these pilgrimage visits to Japan, being accepted as 'innocents' by both 'sides'. On one of Keiko Holmes' early pilgrimages, an incident occurred that subsequently became a seminal 'circulating reference' in the COFEPOW community, and contributed to a wider narrative of Japan's failure to teach their young people about the 'realities' of World War Two.<sup>36</sup> Being present at Omine made its impact on John. He began to identify with the landscape, and took an empathic leap to forge emotional connections with an imagined past that, for him, at that time, felt immanent. The sense of 'disorientation' and 'coming ... too late', that Trigg (2009) writes about, were also evident in his testimony.

Much discussion and flower presentations etc at the memorial. I walked around a bit being filmed all the time, very emotional for me actually. There is nothing left to indicate what transpired here. It is an area of flat land surrounded by hills and I imagine that the prisoners would have thought they were in the middle of nowhere and completely deserted by their compatriots. This memorial was stated as being the first for a POW camp in Japan and the older Buddhist man who I believe made it happen should be celebrated and applauded. Standing in an area where so much suffering occurred brings many tears.

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<sup>34</sup> I learned later that they had taken the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage trail, immersing themselves in traditional Japanese culture. In his notes on the walk, he writes about thinking of his father.

<sup>35</sup> The POW Research Network Japan supports the 'official' FEPOW groups from USA and Australia, and will offer help to families of British POWs travelling independently.  
<http://www.powresearch.jp/en/>

<sup>36</sup> What happened at the riverside changed Mr Blackler's life. "I felt a little hand slide into mine. I looked down and saw the smiling face of one of the daughters — it was seven-year-old Rika," he told me. "In that instant, more than 50 years of hatred vanished. I felt great warmth flow through me. I felt so at peace." He continued: "I thought that I couldn't go on with such bitterness in my heart. These are not the people who tortured us."

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2004/15-october/features/lessons-in-love>

From there we travelled by car to the mine entrance about 2-3kms away. Of course the POW's would have marched, the old roads and a high wire used for transporting coal are now all gone. A lot of the mine buildings are still the same according to Shiziko who knows the area intimately. The roads then were dirt with wooden carts for transport. We ended up teary eyed together as she still feels so bad about war, treatment of prisoners etc. I tried to console her by stating that people do very bad things on both sides in war and that war is the problem not ordinary people....Very strange to stand there, I believe that the entrance is identical apart from being a bit overgrown as it was all those years ago.

John gave a short speech at the site of the camp.<sup>37</sup> A declaration of thanks to individuals and to the 'Japanese people'; a 'few words' about the father's personal background, then rather more about the hardships he experienced as a POW (conditions, incidentally, not at all reflected in the text inscribed on the Omine memorial).<sup>38</sup> He stressed his father's resilience, a quality guaranteed to resonate with Japanese national self image (e.g. their responses to tsunamis and earthquakes). At one point, he took a risk. 'He told me many stories that cannot be repeated here', but the ambiguity saved it from being perceived as confrontational or disrespectful (and of course much would depend on how his words were translated). However, he quickly shifted direction - 'But he did overcome and lived a very fruitful life'. Many fewer relatives of FEPOWs now visit this area, and the positive tone of John's speech may have encouraged local people to register this memorial as important within their community, to continue to protect and maintain its fabric, and welcome future visitors (whose regular presence would help to sustain the 'sacred' nature of the site). What might have seemed a fleeting event, with only personal consequences, had wider ramifications and needed to be managed with care and discretion.

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<sup>37</sup> The full text is included in Appendix 8, and shares several features with speeches given in similar circumstances by other children of FEPOWs.

<sup>38</sup> 'THE PRISONERS QUARTERS (Shiraiwa, Shinwa-Ryo) TRACE. In World War II, 184 British soldiers in 1942 and 288 American ones in 1943 were taken to Shiaiwa as the prisoners of war and worked as the coal miners. When the war ended on August 15, 1945, they returned to their own countries. But some of them died from illness. We record the fact here, wishing eternal peace never to repeat such a tragedy as this. From the war experience witnesses in Mine and the cooperation of Mine Board of Education. 2, 9, 1996.'

### **Narratives of return**

When the children of FEPOWs described their first visit to a pilgrimage site as a 'return' (as some did, explicitly or implicitly), it was by definition a symbolic return. A place to be imagined through the eyes of the fathers, and through the layers of memories and re-memories that arc<sup>39</sup> through the intervening years. Later in this chapter, I describe how Sally was made to feel 'safe' on her pilgrimage to the Thai-Burma railway by an empathic professional guide who offered the type of help that, in any other context, might be considered therapy.

Pilgrimage groups may succeed or fail to the degree to which their members can establish a bedrock of mutually sustaining relationships capable of offering reciprocal support, based on the kind of bond described as 'communitas' by Turner (1974, p.75). Should the children make return visits to these sites, they will confront a double and difficult meaning: memories from their own first visits to the site, interwoven with the still active - though now modified - postmemories of their fathers that were active during the first visit. So visits by the children to 'sacralized' sites are more than simple, straightforward acts of memory tourism as Sturken (2011) suggests, and may be better conceptualized as part of elaborate, stage-managed commemorative or reconciliatory processes charged with personal, cultural and political meanings. In these circumstances, the children had to simultaneously manage the fragile internal processes that tied the visit to their personal pasts and evolving postmemories, while also acknowledging that they were participants in rituals shaped by grand narratives of war. In addition, they had to navigate the choppy waters of Far East historical and contemporary political discourse that breeds emotional and moral ambivalence among foreign visitors. I am referring here to provocative issues such as the 'comfort women',<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> When electricity jumps between two conducting electrodes, such as two exposed pieces of wire, or in this case metaphorically between two layers of memory, it makes an 'electrical arc'.

<sup>40</sup> See the following report <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/comfort-women-japans-ww2-sex-slaves-tell-their-stories-demand-apology-photo-report-1515139>

and attitudes towards FEPOW survival versus the apocalyptic horrors of the atomic bomb.

The relationship between pilgrimages and the idea of 'return' is a prominent theme in the Holocaust literature (Hoffman 2004, Hirsch 2012b, Hirsch and Miller 2011). Hirsch (2012b) explores the idea of a 'narrative of return' which she claims has 'been increasingly prevalent in recent years', and links this to intergenerational transmission (p.205). These narratives are essentially memoirs by the children of survivors, driven by a desire to "walk where they once walked" (p.205), and often 'punctuated' by significant images and artifacts. But she also reminds us that there can be an emotional downside, that 'embodied journeys of return, corporeal encounters with place' have the potential to 'create sparks of connection that activate remembrance and thus activate the trauma of loss' (p.212). Writing of the dilemmas that descendants of Holocaust survivors face when they return to their parents' places of origin. Hirsch refers to the 'impossibility of return':

The impossibility of return is intensified if descendants who were never there earlier return to the sites of trauma. Can they even attempt to put the pieces together, to create the spark? Or are the point of connection and the physical contact with objects lost with the survivor generation?

(Hirsch 2012b, p.213)

Hirsch comments that descendants of survivors express a 'yearning to find a world *before* the loss has occurred ... from a need for an irrecoverable lost innocence' (p.214).

In response, I suggest that many children of FEPOWs who visit the sites of camps were seeking not simply to reimagine and identify with their father's traumatic experiences in their material context (or at least as close as can now be achieved), but to gain a better understanding of the place where significant transformation had taken

place. In this way, they sought a broader and deeper empathy (individual, social and cultural), with the experiences that had made the father the person they knew.<sup>41</sup>

### **Sally ... a pilgrimage to the Thai-Burma railway**

Sally's father had died suddenly and unexpectedly when she was only fifteen years of age. He had always been a very distant, 'absent' figure in her life. In her early forties, she qualified as a psychotherapist, and established her own private practice from home. She began to investigate her father's POW experiences in parallel with undertaking psychotherapy training. The two experiences became entwined:

... a lot of my analysis was discovering my dad's experience. I couldn't have done that without my analyst, because it was so painful. My own choice of going to analysis was knowing that there was a lot more to do, I think, and that was really when I started, you know. And I went to Kew,<sup>42</sup> and I read the books ... well, not all the books of course ... but you know quite a lot. ... And ... erm ... I had that picture framed [referring to a painting of the Chapel at Changi, which hung in her consulting room]

In the following extract, Sally discussed her feelings about a forthcoming trip to Thailand, its purpose, her preparations, and her expectations: what I refer to as the emotional 'approach'.

Sally: ... I think that going to Singapore and Thailand [in] August-September this year, for me, will be the culmination of it. I couldn't have done that years ago ... either because it wouldn't have meant anything, you know. I'd have gone, 'oh, yeah, oh, that happened ... that happened to them over there, y-you know. There would have been no ... [deep intake of breath] it wouldn't have had any p-personal erm ... connection for me.

Terry: So, what has given it meaning now, in particular?

Sally: ... Well, I guess m-my analysis, really. Y-you know and doing all the groundwork ... of being able to sort of bear it. As I said to you earlier, you know, I invited my brother and he said, 'No, it's too sad, I can't do it.' So ... i-i, i-i-it's ... it is a pilgrimage for me, t-to go where my dad was, to go to Changi, to go to erm ... erm ... to the museum there, and then to go up the railroad. I mean, it going to be ... really tough think but i-it is a erm ... I am doing it for me and I'm doing it for my dad. That's how I se- ... I-I-I think I see it. So that he exists, actually. Because he was ... erm ... he just erm ... he was a shell ... He was a ... he was a shell of a man. And this sort of fleshes him out and gives him life, so ... Yeah, that's the way I am looking at it.

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<sup>41</sup> This was the motivation behind Jacqui's returns to her father's Canadian birthplace mentioned in Chapter 6.

<sup>42</sup> The National Archives.

Before travelling, Sally had made contact with Rod Beattie who sent her information about her father's time on the railway, but she had found it difficult to take it all in. As far as she was able, Sally wanted to experience the pilgrimage without unnecessary emotional demands or distractions, and so she refused her husband's offer to accompany her. But did want her daughter alongside; as the granddaughter of a FEPOW, she was a 'legitimate pilgrim' in her own right ('she'll do it with me'):

... my husband said he would come with me. I said I didn't want him to. I have ... I have to be able to just do this... . I didn't want to have to ... think about him, you know, are you all right? What do you thi-? I just ... I don't wanna have to ... think ... about anybody else. And my ... my daughter, she's very erm ... erm ... sensitive - that's not to say my husband isn't - but she will just, she won't ... she w- ... I won't have to ... think about her. Y-you know, she'll do it with me ... And, and it's her granddad too. ... Erm ... we'll take a lot of tissues, I guess. I guess that's how we'll get through it. Erm ... I can only do as much as I can really.

I wanted to find out how Sally felt about her father now that she had committed herself to visiting the railway.

Sally: Yeah. ... .. I don't know. I don't know ... .. He-he's been huge ... er ... his experiences as a prisoner of war has been huge in my life. But I hadn't known it. Erm ... and it's by going to do this now ... It's not out of idle curiosity or even un-idle curiosity. It's about going because ... this man that I knew for fifteen years ... and then wasn't there for a long time, is so huge in my life, you know, [subdued laugh] It's ... very strange. So ... .. I'm sad, it's ... it's a sad thing what happened. ... But I've done my best to ... to repair ... what I can for him, I think. So, it's part of ... er... er... you know, this is as much for him as for me. Not that he'll know, I don't suppose.

Terry: And ... looking ahead to when this is over ...

Sally: What then?

Terry: What do you expect ...? Yeah.

Sally: I don't know. ... I don't know. I can't see myself becoming a sort of flag waver. I think that ... I hope ... what I'd like to go is, 'I've done that now'. Let him rest in peace really. Hm. ... .. Yeah, I ... i- ... you know, I don't ... I don't have ... you know, I'm not thinking he's watching and ... wants me ... I don't, you know, I don't s-see it as sort of ... a-a ... It is for me. But it is to repair the dad that I had inside of me, I think. Hm.

The expressions of reparation towards her father are explicit in her account and, I infer, are associated with both the early loss of her father and, perhaps most significantly, her

mother's decision to effectively 'disown' him after his death (I touched on this in Chapter Five).

After her return from Thailand, I contacted Sally again. These extracts are from our email exchanges. Her testimony revealed how the pilgrimage had met many of her expectations: the importance of acquiring historical facts, the psychic significance of place, the embodied quality of the journey, the sensitive reception of the guides ('made me feel safe'), and her acute awareness of the father 'inside of me'.

Well, I think the biggest impact was that the experiences of those on the railway were talked about – there was so much knowledge, and all the things that I had wanted to ask had answers. ... I understand now how the railway was built, and how it joined up along the way, the train ride to Ban Pong, and what the prisoners would have seen and maybe felt when they got off the train. The jungle, the rain, but for my dad, surviving it, at some cost to himself of course.

Some of the trip was very emotional, particularly when I stood on a bridge near the Burma border and Rod pointed out the camp, and where the bridge that the prisoners built, and where the cookhouse was and the men's quarters. My dad had spent 8 plus months as part of F force in what was considered the worst camp, and the furthest march.

We literally followed my father's footsteps at some points, and what had always been an unmentionable nightmare became something different to that – it became much more real, and awful, but survivable.

One of the first things that Terry and Andrew<sup>43</sup> said to me was 'you don't have to tell us, we know'. That made a big impression, and made me feel safe.

I have done the trip now, and have done it for my dad – whether he knows or not, I can't know. But the father inside of me knows, and that gives me a lot of peace. I am going to Burma next February and on the way will take my husband to Kanchanabri and maybe my son too, and I will be able to show them some of the things I saw, without fearing being overwhelmed.

Transformation held a dominant place in Sally's testimony ('the father inside of me knows, and that gives me a lot of peace'). At that time, worries over her son's health weighed heavily on her because of the imminent prospect of transplant surgery. Were the trips to Thailand and the other aspects of her research a means of 'clearing the decks' so that she could offer herself more fully to her son and his future needs? If so,

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<sup>43</sup> Staff members at the Thailand-Burma Railway Centre, created by Rod Beattie, all Australians living in Thailand.

that is testimony both to her commitment to her son's welfare, and to the depth of her self awareness: that she needed to resolve the issues with her father first. Sally's personal therapy was at the core of this lengthy process, but the visits to Thailand enabled her to take her psychic work to a deeper level. She was able to 'embody' and historicize the memories and fantasies surrounding her father, and to externalize and work through the traumatic aspects of his psychic presence, thus enabling what remained internally to be a more benign and balanced influence.

### **Kim ... a pilgrimage to Ambon**

Kim is active on the national stage, providing practical and social support for FEPOWs and their families. A gunner in the Royal Artillery, her father spent most of his time as a POW in Java and in Ambon, one of the Spice Islands in the Moluccan archipelago. '... they were making airfields, out of coral. Erm ... which was pretty horrendous.'<sup>44</sup> He died in 1989 when she was twenty six.

In 2012, Kim travelled out to Ambon, in a small party that included an ex-FEPOW. 'I was honoured ... I went back to Ambon ... I went over to Ambon. I've always wanted to go. Ever since I learnt about it'. Like some other participants, Kim initially framed her visit in terms of a 'return', but then quickly 'corrected' her 'error'. Her words tell of a symbolic return as well as a physical journey to the site where her father was held prisoner. Through her slip of the tongue, she unconsciously revealed the intrusive influence of postmemory. The psychic presence of the father was never far from the surface in her testimony and, as she described her experiences, the deep connections between her physical pilgrimage and her psychic journey emerged more clearly.

And we went back with one guy ... with one FEPOW who was actually on Ambon as well. And he was fabulous because he'd stop the minibus and he'd say, oh, stop-stop-stop! And he'd try to start demonstrating how they used to climb the coconut trees. ... But it was a very emotional tour ... When we got to their camp

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<sup>44</sup> Robson et al (2009): A final problem localized to the coral beaches of some of the Southeast Asian beaches, where POWs were set to work constructing aircraft runways, was painful blepharospasm and blepharitis, lacrimation and photophobia. Probably analogous to snow blindness, it became known as 'coral blindness'.

site, we found the airfield that they built. Because obviously being on coral, there's not much grown there. And you could see where the trees had been cut away. They'd had to cut away the palm trees. And then build it, so you could see the line of palm trees from where they'd cut them away. And there was very little grown up, even in 70 odd years, on the site, and we walked around and we managed to find where they ... I don't know what the official term was but where they'd erm ... built up to hide planes - little dug outs I think .... So that was quite magical.

Sacred sites present in many forms, and in varying states of visibility and disrepair: in this case, an airfield emerged like a palimpsest, its presence known only to those with the necessary knowledge, insight, and persistence. Kim's drive and determination in organizing this trip - and her responses to it - begged questions over her emotional investment and the psychic origins of that investment. Her two brothers had no interest in their father's FEPOW history. Did her father unconsciously transmit something to his only daughter - some part of himself, perhaps, or a need that required or invited a response? Kim told a story about her mum (who was still alive) and her dad:

... .. She's just a cow. No, my dad's sort of very jovial and easy going, but quite unassuming in other ways. He didn't really have much confidence, I think because he ... he was out of his comfort zone. I think my mum used to put him down a bit, so he never felt really good enough. There was a story she told me quite recently, erm ... when they went to some sort of dinner and dance. And, when they were on the table he picked up a bottle of wine, and started pouring it, and someone had a go at him and said, here, that's my wine. And dad didn't really know that you go to these things and then you'll buy a bottle, and bla-bla-bla. He just presumed it was in the ticket price. Erm ... and he felt very embarrassed by that. And rather than ... I would turn round and say, well, I'm really sorry I didn't know. He just went very quiet and apparently he left early. Which is ... quite sad really. Very, very sad.

During the interview, the sharpness of her opening statement had surprised me ('She's just a cow'), because her earlier words had depicted a warm if bland family life. Kim's strong and confident persona suggested that her identification with her father's sense of humiliation - rooted in his experiences as a FEPOW - had triggered an unconscious reaction formation, and a displaced desire not to allow such humiliations to be perpetuated in the lives of other ex-FEPOWs. This may also help explain the force behind the expressed negativity towards her mother. The evident psychological

rewards she has obtained from her day to day work with ex-FEPOWs and their families serve to reinforce her psychic position.

Terry: So what were you expecting from [the trip], before you went?

Kim: Erm ... I went because I wanted to see where my dad was and I wanted to honour his friends that didn't come back. Erm ... I don't know what I expected. I knew it would be like that. But you don't know until you're actually there. How you're going to feel, how you experience it. But I remember when we stopped the ... where the runway is, is 200 yards from the beach, so we all stripped off and ran into the sea. And I know the FEPOWs when they were lucky were a- ... able ... able to bathe there. And you know I went in and I looked around and thought, my goodness, my dad actually saw these sites, that I'm seeing. That wouldn't have changed in seventy years. You know, like the island over there. Erm ... and things like that, and the colour of the sea, and it was very, very, very magical, and very beautiful.<sup>45</sup>

Kim's words created a vivid and intense - almost mystical - impression that prompted a range of associations in my mind: the physical immersion in the sea, the psychological and spiritual symbolism, the evocation of baptism that might point to psychic regeneration or purification, a moment of epiphanic awareness, and a shift to a deeper level of empathic understanding.

... when we went to Jakarta, we went to where a lot of the guys who returned from the Moluccas [went]. The really ill ones went to St Vincentius hospital. And it's now a ... an orphanage. And we walked in and you knew it was identical to seventy years ago. It hadn't changed. In one hundred years. And I .. I walked in and I got very emotional because it was like, my goodness, my dad actually probably stood in this spot, through the front door. And you know, walking around and seeing the erm ... balustrades and everything that he would ... a-and walking along the pathways that he would have walked down. That was very, very emotional. And of course then it was so lovely because it was sad and emotional in one way, but it was also fabulous because you knew that that place saved a lot of lives, of the guys who came back from the Moluccas.

She continued the redemptive theme.

... and also it was doing good now from being an orphanage. And the children were so excited to see us, and it was still doing good now, so it was ... i-i- really ... strange. One moment you're laughing and the next minute you're crying, and then it was really ... We also managed to see the windows that were made by the FEPOWs in Tandjong Priok, the actual original windows which are now in a church in Jakarta. And that was very magical as well.

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<sup>45</sup> The FEPOWs themselves were not immune to the beauty of their natural surroundings, e.g. Chalker (2007). However, as an art student, Jack Chalker might have been expected to be more responsive to their visual attributes.

Her relationship with the ex-FEPOWs became central to her sense of self - 'I've spoken to so many FEPOWs - or my boys as I like to call them.' Kim has no children of her own. During the interview, she sat at the dining room table perusing various documents and photos laid out in front of her.

Terry: Have you got children?

Kim: No. No.

[She averted my gaze and answered in an uncharacteristically low and breathy voice.]

Terry: No, okay

[I mirrored her tone of voice, and got the strong impression she wanted to proceed as if I had not asked her about children.]

This brief exchange was in a very different register from the rest of the interview which proceeded as if the topic of children had never been raised. The obvious interpretation - that she might be displacing (sublimating) her maternal drive into her work with the FEPOWs - was so clichéd that its very presence seemed to block me from thinking it through further. Sensing this blockage in my own thinking I began to wonder whether her transference (and my countertransference) might have screened off some other area of psychic significance.

Toward the end of her account of the trip to Ambon, she made a tentative connection between her childhood and the pilgrimage.

Well, a magical thing which ... I often wondered [about]. I mean my mum poo-poo's it - but erm ... we never moved very much. We were in a house between when I was two to when I left home [at] twenty-one. And in that house, I suppose maybe it was the fashion in those days, in the 60s and 70s, but he had a mural on the wall which was a beach scene, with palm trees sideways, and it was sort of the thing that you see all the way over ... all ... everywhere in the Far East. But I often wonder if he had that and he used to look at and think of his friends. ... And the fact that when we went to Ambon, that's exactly what it looked like, really, really touched me. In his own way, he probably honoured his friends by doing that. But he was ... he was the type who would have honoured them quietly, and not ... he didn't join any clubs, or anything like that.

While transcribing this section of the recording, I was taken (a)back to my own childhood. My counter-transference triggered a personal memory, connecting Kim's memories with mine. My father also had a large mural on the wall of our 'front room',

the room where he spent so much time on his own, listening to music. Our mural represented a hilly scene - I think it was probably Scotland, where we took nearly all our holidays. As I discovered in 2010, my father's POW camp was in just such a hilly, rural environment. Were these ways in which our fathers unconsciously tried to reclaim, tame or domesticate, the landscape previously associated with humiliation and hunger; to establish 'mastery' over distressing events (Freud 2015, p.10)?

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have addressed the nature and purpose of pilgrimage, including the problematic relationship between tourism, so-called 'dark tourism', and pilgrimage itself, and also between pilgrimage as journey and as destination ('place'). From this, I identified a number of key themes, most particularly liminality and reflexivity as part of the 'approach' to the place of trauma, the potential of shared experience in a pilgrimage group, and the paradoxical nature of 'return'.

At the empirical core of the chapter were the testimonies of four participants, for whom pilgrimage was a pivotal, multifaceted and transformative memory practice, a cathartic phase at the culmination of lengthy psychic journeys with their biographical roots in childhood, and their psychic roots in the POW experiences of their fathers. The tensions embedded in visits to sites of trauma could be confusing to participants but by adopting a phenomenological perspective these complex experiences of 'place' were rendered a little more comprehensible.

In the Introduction to this chapter, I claimed that the four participants featured in this chapter 'revealed nuanced emotional associations with the past'. These nuances challenged what could otherwise be rather homogenized narratives of FEPOW-related pilgrimages, and further demonstrated how participants were subject to the presence of unconscious yet active influences derived from past relationships with their fathers.

I conclude this final substantive chapter of the thesis with a brief observation on methodology. Pilgrimage is a complex and multi-layered memory practice which invited

a methodological approach that would not needlessly or unduly interfere with a participant's story-telling. They needed to be free to make connections between past and present, micro and macro, local and global, and to make wide - even wild - associations without feeling that they were taking the interview 'off course'. I found that the psychosocial approach met this need, and suited the pilgrimage experience particularly well, both methodologically and epistemologically. Because pilgrimage does represent something of a culmination, a place to integrate many psychosocial levels, I also took the opportunity in this chapter to allow my own reflexivity freer rein.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In *'Roots of Remembrance'* I have investigated the different ways in which the memory practices of the children of Far East prisoners of war have their psychosocial roots in the captivity experiences of their fathers. Teasing out the connections was complex, and the results were always unique to each family. In the case of Joanna, we saw how her father's captivity traumas were brutally re-enacted during her childhood. Yet, during a pilgrimage to Singapore, she was able to recontextualise and reconstruct her relationship with him in order to live alongside her traumatic memories. By contrast, Derek's childhood was impoverished by his father's chronic ill-health, in response to which Derek has striven to keep his father's memory and history alive by regularly contributing old family photographs and document scans to COFEPOW social media sites. Through this research, I was able to uncover not only the intricate modalities entailed in the transmission of emotions and memories between father and child, but also the associations between this 'micro' (family) level of transmission and the 'macro' levels that connected participants to wider cultural, geopolitical and ethical contexts.

Before discussing the findings of the research, I shall summarize the core of my argument, followed by a chapter-by-chapter outline of key points. Captivity had a profound and inescapable impact on all Far East prisoners of war, with psychological, behavioural, social, and health consequences. These consequences penetrated the domestic space, and influenced the psychological, social and material lives of their children, via a range of transmission processes (with or without the physical presence of the father),<sup>1</sup> both during childhood and through later years. The expressions of the father's traumas within the family could be implicit, or explicit, and were sometimes characterized by aggression and violence. As a result some children were unable to

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<sup>1</sup> There were consequences for the children even when they had never met the father because of his death in captivity.

form secure attachments with their fathers, which could leave them with unfulfilled psychic needs and enduring psychic scars. The children's attempts to make sense of their fathers' experiences were frustrated because so few men spoke openly of their time in captivity, leaving the children with yawning gaps in their knowledge and understanding. The children's life stories revealed the traces of these complex, and often ambivalent, early relationships with their fathers, within which defensive psychic processes figured prominently. Through the life course, the children evolved or adopted memory practices to respond to their individual psychic needs. These practices included researching their fathers' time in captivity, memorialization in the home (including their relationship with artifacts and images), involvement in commemorative events (formal or informal, state or community organized), setting up online individual tribute and remembrance sites, engaging with activist organisations, pilgrimages to FEPOW sites, reconciliation activities ... even participation in research interviews. Through these memory practices, the children reviewed and revisited their relationships with their fathers (consciously, unconsciously or both), and with their own, younger selves. As a result, some were able to 'reconstruct' their fathers psychically, re-identify with aspects of the 'new' father and, in so doing, hold out the prospect of greater psychic composure.

The Introduction outlined the historical and theoretical background to the research. Chapter One explained the process by which I reached a particular mix of methodologies, highlighted the decisive role played by the fieldwork experience, and then discussed the implementation of the research design. Chapter Two focused on the nature of trauma and how the experiences and memories of the FEPOWs influenced the lives of their children, and also presented the argument for the link between trauma and attachment problems in childhood. In Chapter Three, I examined how the psychic and physical conditions of captivity affected the men's sense of self - including the notion of 'body-self' - and heralded the challenges they faced on their return to civilian and family

life. Successful reintegration was repeatedly compromised by state inadequacies, and by social and cultural circumstances that failed to recognise how incarceration could inflict long term damage. In many ways, Chapter Four was the place where participants' memories of childhood came most clearly to the fore. The range of ways in which war was brought into the home was extraordinarily diverse and idiosyncratic. I concentrated on the topic of memory in Chapter Five, and examined concepts such as postmemory, memoryscape, and collective, communicative and cultural memories. The chapter concluded with sections on domestic memorialization, an under-researched aspect of POW studies, and memory activism. Chapter Six acted as a bridge, and a vantage point, that built on Chapter Five, connecting the 'raw material' of childhood memories (Chapter Four) to the memory practices of the adult children. It explored the concept of memory practices, and proposed a number of key concepts with which to analyse participants' engagement with memory practices; these included generativity, reparation, and turning points, which were then applied to three case studies. I also proposed a heuristic framework to assist thinking about the relationship between motivations, needs and memory practices. In Chapters Seven and Eight, two genres of memory practice - 'military family history', and 'pilgrimage' - were shown to function as psychosocial milieux within which participants were able to revisit, review and reconstruct childhood experiences and relationships.

My first finding concerns the value of attachment theory in explaining the link between the fathers' captivity experiences and the impact on their children. Most families acknowledged that returning POWs from the Far East were changed men, both physically and mentally. These changes were shaped by what the men had experienced or witnessed in captivity: the effects of chronic humiliation, degradation, anxiety and fear, frequently punctuated by episodes of unvarnished violence - all of which could lead to what Stein et al (2015) describes as 'attachment injuries'. For some, the initial

trauma evolved into what has, since the 1980s, been conceived of as post traumatic stress disorder. On their return, the ex-FEPOWs were encouraged - and indeed wanted - to get on with their lives, with the result that they suppressed or unconsciously repressed their traumatic memories and emotions. However, these unconscious emotions continued to animate the father's behaviour in different ways, as Chapter 4 showed. When recalling their childhoods, participants frequently described the relationship with their fathers as 'distant', or as characterized by a 'sense of absence'. Prevailing emotional codes could only account for some of their fathers' 'emotional restraint'. For the participants most affected by this type of relationship, the psychic consequences could interfere with the development of positive identifications and attachments with the fathers. As I explored in Chapter Two, the children in these situations often felt unsettled, without a secure emotional base; this sense of unease and dissatisfaction generated the desire to get closer to the father, to symbolically repair past relationships through engaging with memory practices. This emphasis on the importance of paternal attachment contrasts with conventional attachment theory in which the focus is heavily on the child's relationship with the mother (e.g. Bowlby 1982). As we saw from Chapter Three, the government had clear expectations of the wives' place as primary caretakers of the returning FEPOWs. We might speculate that during this period the father came to hold a more pivotal role in the family and in the psychic lives of the children, a shift that might have increased the significance of the father-child relationship seen in this research.

The second finding challenges what I have come to see as an over reliance in the academic literature on psychological explanations of intergenerational transmission of trauma, at the expense of any physical or corporeal dimension. What emerged strongly from the testimonies was the father's body, for example his appearance, gait, and the specific consequences of POW-related ill-health, and how these had an impact on the children's emotions and the everyday life of the family. Before beginning the fieldwork, I

had not anticipated just how significant a part these embodied realities would play. Two aspects arose in particular. Firstly, there are the participants' direct memories of the father's appearance, such as Derek's shock at seeing the striations on his father's back caused by the *Strongyloides* parasite, or Selena's memories of her father 'bleeding into the sink'.<sup>2</sup> And secondly postmemories could be embedded in, and conveyed through, family stories that regularly incorporated poignant images of the father, such as how a wife spoke of not recognizing her husband on the railway platform. Postmemory accounts are, of course, readily embellished by family members, and complicated by the influence of prevailing tropes and discourses.<sup>3</sup> Even so, they add further credence to the fundamental place of physical presence and embodiment.

The third finding makes a contribution to the debate on the nature and ramifications of trauma transmission, and concerns the multi-layered and often cumulative nature of traumatic experience as expressed in participants' life stories. While the trauma deriving from captivity in the Far East was central to all testimonies, it was rarely if ever the single source of trauma in the family, and could not on its own form the basis of participants' subsequent responses and behaviour. In a nutshell, FEPOW incarceration was 'necessary but not sufficient'. As Bar-On (1995) asserts with respect to the Holocaust: 'It is almost impossible to *isolate* the Holocaust as a component in attempting to investigate its multigenerational effect' (p.31, italics in the original).

As I began to examine the sources of father-child trauma transmission, four interrelating levels of trauma began to emerge: historic trauma, trauma in captivity, trauma in childhood, and trauma through the life course. Firstly, the historic, which itself has several variations. Some participants referred to their fathers' highly

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<sup>2</sup> In both cases, see Chapter 4.

<sup>3</sup> A limited range of FEPOW imagery is used by the mass media. However, sometimes this can bring unexpected results. In a very unusual and highly emotional instance, Gwen described seeing her father in a TV documentary broadcast in the 1980s. Her testimony was used to open the Introduction to this thesis.

traumatic pre-captivity war experiences, such as escaping from Dunkirk, or surviving the sinking of the 'hell ships'. Participants also referred to more distant and parlous family circumstances, and introduced traumatic legacies from previous generations. These included serious deprivation suffered by the father when a child (for example, families splitting up due to poverty, and siblings being raised in separate Barnardo's homes); and the devastating impact of the First World War on families. 'Trauma in captivity' refers to the father's experiences whilst a POW, the topic I examined in detail in Chapter Three.

By 'trauma in childhood' I refer to those events occurring in childhood that varied between implicitly transmitted trauma, and physical or serious psychological harm to the child. An added complication in the more abusive forms of trauma was that a young child would have understood little about the war at the time, so the abuse would be experienced as a new 'primary trauma'. However, as the child grew up, the abuse gradually became linked to the father's captivity, mediated through the mother's rationalizations (as we saw in Deirdre's family). With this mediated awareness, the child's responses could become coloured by shame and guilt, leading to emotional ambivalence towards the father (again, Deirdre's life story exemplifies this). The impact of the 'trauma through the life course' could be seen in the effects of long term health problems (including PTSD) and how it moulded everyday family life (as in Derek's family). It also embraced episodes of re-enactment in which repressed forces deriving from captivity were suddenly released and erupted into contemporary life (as in the case of Joanna).

In Chapter Three, I argued the case for the distinctiveness of the FEPOW experience, one element of which was the role of COFEPOW organisations. The fourth finding from this research concerns the commitment most participants felt towards their identity as children of Far East POWs. This might appear self-evident, given that I recruited largely via an online FEPOW-related group, but that would be an over-

simplistic and inaccurate judgement. A surprising feature of the online FEPOW groups was their varied composition. This, I suggest, is closely related to changes in communication technology, enabling websites to be found via Google, and membership of closed groups to be achieved via computer or mobile phone. The result was a mix of people, of very different backgrounds, some who were regular contributors with a long-term commitment to the online (and offline) community, others who had been members for some while but who stayed on the margins, and yet others who had joined recently.

Many returning prisoners of war were not members of any ex-FEPOW association, either because they chose not to join or, as we have seen from some testimonies (for example, Gwen's), because they were unaware of their existence. So, a participant's decision about whether to join COFEPOW groups or to participate in specific remembrance practices was often unrelated to any family traditions: the father or other family members might or might not have been members of ex-FEPOW associations. Therefore, a participant's pursuit of their father's POW history was not simply a matter of socialization within the family but could point to deeper psychic roots.<sup>4</sup> For some, their overt interest began in later life, and often only after the father's death. It was as if a break (a final 'detachment') was necessary before a less encumbered view of past relationships could emerge.

Engaging with other COFEPOWs also provided the potential for 'communitas' to develop (Turner 1974, p.75), an order of experience in which individuals could enjoy a degree of freedom from everyday roles and statuses. We saw from Chapter Five that rank and social class permeated certain types of memory practices, such as public state sponsored events, whereas in other smaller and more informal contexts, socio-economic differences were less visible. Online communities were relatively free from concerns over socioeconomic background, and it was rare to encounter any

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<sup>4</sup> We need also to recognise the possible influence of the 'memorial culture' that has emerged in recent decades.

contributions in which this featured prominently, unless for descriptive purposes, e.g. where rank was needed to identify a particular person.

My fifth finding concerns the power of memory practices. My contention is that through the creative use of particular genres of memory practice, participants could both learn more about their father's FEPOW experiences, and begin to revisit and review their relationships with the fathers. I gave examples of this in the case studies discussed in Chapter Six, where I also proposed a heuristic framework for exploring the mix of motivations that might underpin these practices. Memory practices could be quite diffuse or could crystallise into recognizable and definable genres. In Chapters Seven and Eight, I explored two specific genres - the practice of military family history, and place and pilgrimage respectively. However, in addition to these, and more pervasive, were practices associated with domestic memorialization,<sup>5</sup> which I raised in Chapter Five. Even if participants had no connections at all with COFEPOW memorial culture (off or online), almost without exception they conveyed emotional connections with personal artifacts and images associated with the fathers' captivity. The everyday nature of domestic memorialization meant that it figured prominently during the fieldwork, often as the literal backdrop to the interviews, or as an elaboration of them: several participants had carefully 'curated' precious artifacts and images ready for my arrival. By giving greater exposure to these intimate practices, I believe we can counterbalance the focus on national, state sponsored rituals, and monumental artifacts that presently dominates the war memoryscape.

I shall make two final points about the power of memory practices. Chapter 7 showed how the father's captivity could become a 'master narrative' in the lives of some participants, and a hub around which some forged new identities and roles (e.g. becoming disseminators of valuable information and achieving the status of 'expert' amongst their peers). The pursuit of historical knowledge was sometimes contentious,

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<sup>5</sup> I include digital and online media when created (e.g. the growth of 'tribute' web sites), or actively exploited (e.g. existing FEPOW Facebook group pages).

and could fuel anger and resentment, for instance as participants came to realise how the popular media privileged some FEPOW narratives over others (especially the so-called 'notorious' Changi,<sup>6</sup> and the Thai-Burma railway). This awareness converted participants into strong advocates for their fathers' stories, and this surfaced occasionally in interviews.<sup>7</sup> The testimonies in Chapter Eight revealed pilgrimages to be highly complex, multifaceted and simultaneously embodied and psychic experiences; they were potentially transformative, and occasionally transcendental in their impact, as we saw from the testimonies of Joanna, Kim and Sally. The research showed that transformation could occur at the individual psychic level, but was often deepened by the 'communitas' expressed in pilgrimage groups.

I turn finally to lessons arising from the methodology, and address two aspects: the mix of methodologies, and the force and complexity of the research relationship. While the psychosocial approach successfully provided the broad framework for my methodology, fieldwork experience highlighted the fact that participants were embroiled in intricate and dynamic experiential networks that involved various artifacts and images as well as other people. My growing awareness of this wider context drew me towards actor network theory (ANT) in order to accommodate the extra complexity. In their testimonies, participants pulled together images, phantasies, memories, objects, emotions and corporeal experiences into fluid psychic 'shapes' that resisted satisfactory conceptualization solely within a psychosocial framework. Although the psychosocial approach embraces 'scenic composition' (e.g. Froggett et al 2014), it does not comfortably register the part played by specific artifacts and images. Certain objects have significant meaning for particular individuals (as in 'transitional

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<sup>6</sup> Havers (2003) challenges the widespread assumption that Changi POW camp was particularly harsh, a view confirmed by the Australian War Memorial:  
<https://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/pow/changi/>

<sup>7</sup> Participants sometimes needed to tell their father's FEPOW story before they could concentrate on their own.

objects'),<sup>8</sup> but they may also extend their relevance beyond the individual as dynamic elements in psychic and material networks that have global and historical associations.<sup>9</sup> The psychosocial approach and ANT are both responses to a dissatisfaction with what Lisa Blackman (2016) describes as 'static or sovereign models of the biological, psychological or social'. In response, she argues that we need 'more complex, processual models' (p.258) which is what, through my particular methodology, I have tried to achieve.

By adopting the psychosocial approach, I was confirming my personal commitment to the significance of the relationship between me and the participants, the people who had trusted me with their testimonies. A clear lesson from this research was that, although consistently demanding and often provocative, the psychosocial approach enabled me to access areas of subjectivity and intersubjectivity that might otherwise have remained in the shadows.<sup>10</sup> And, by accommodating the countertransference, and deploying free association and reflexivity, not only as part of the interviews but throughout all stages of the research, I became engaged very personally with the process. Interviews conjured images, which in turn fed reflexivity and 'reverie' - the 'contemplative openness of the psyche' (Parsons 2014, p.157) - thus putting creative imagination at the service of the research process. Poetic and visual imagery - often trauma-related - reverberated powerfully through the lives of many participants.

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<sup>8</sup> Winnicott's (1991) term to describe objects that substitute for interpersonal relations with a key person in the life of a child or adult. See also Parkin (1999) who explores mementoes as transitional objects.

<sup>9</sup> Derek's Japanese flag had global, historical and psychic associations, connecting two families across time and distance (Chapter 5). And Louise produced artworks that incorporated fragments of her father's artifacts; in this way she was consciously sharing and contextualizing complex emotions much of whose force emanated from the artifacts.

<sup>10</sup> In Chapter 4 I explored my interview with Brenda and showed how the psychosocial approach allowed me access to the memory of her father's regular retreats into 'the front room'; in addition, the countertransference gave me a greater degree of insight into her emotions during childhood.

In Chapter 1, I referred to the cognitive and emotional challenges of 'handling time' during interviews. I wish finally to reflect on a further temporal and intersubjective dimension. Interviews with very powerful emotional content had the ability to cloud the 'crucial distinction between then and now' (La Capra 1999, p.699). In most interviews, remembering was 'undisturbed', testimonies being composed through the 'reflexive rationalizations of experience' (Pickering and Keightley 2009, p.10). However, the accounts by Joanna, Deirdre and Lorna resisted easy rationalization, remained emotionally troubling in the immediacy of the interviews, and included episodes of enactment during which I felt myself being drawn into their psychic worlds.

Working through this as the interviewer could have its own rewards for both participant and researcher. Although Deirdre had entertained doubts about being interviewed, I succeeded in offering her a 'containing' relationship from first contact through to interview, a process aided I believe by my being an 'insider'. As a result I was able to witness with 'respect - not to upset, not to trespass' (Laub 1992b, p.61) how she created for herself 'a present and a future through the distancing act of narrating [her] past' (Tresize 2013, p.8):

You know... like this morning, I was getting quite anxious. So, I hadn't met you - obviously ... and I'm thinking, am I doing the right thing? You know, am I ... am I opening doors that you know have been shut a long time? Do I need to be reminded? ... What's it gonna do to me? All these things I'm thinking. But anyway, I ... I can say to you, in all honesty, that I-I, I feel fine. ... and to be truthful, its actually nice to talk to somebody and ... remember things and get them off your chest, ... But, you know, to me this is enough for me now. So, you know, I can put it to rest, if you like, and, you know, get on with my life.<sup>11</sup>

*'Roots of Remembrance'* began with my 'personal troubles', troubles that had their origins in the mundaneness of my postwar childhood home. From there, the research led me towards spectacular 'public issues' (Mills 2000, p.8) of global historical significance and the tangled legacies of world war: the unending conflicts between nations, persistent questions over national guilt and reconciliation, and the social

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<sup>11</sup> Klemppner (2006) characterizes the trauma narrator as almost always trying 'to find closure' - a form of 'resolution which allows the event to become integrated into the psyche' (p.200).

divisions crystallized in state remembrance events. This research has revealed the proximity of the psychic and the social, and celebrated the ways in which participants worked with their memories through their lifetimes, steering a fragile and individual course between what novelist Tim O'Brien refers to as 'story truth' (emotional truth) and 'happening truth' (the facts) (O'Brien 1990, p.157).

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## APPENDIX ONE

### PARTICIPANT GRID

All potential participants were allocated a reference number on first contact. In total, I made 84 contacts, 47 of whom made a substantive contribution and all of these are included in the following tables. 34 were interviewed face-to-face, and 13 by email.

23 participants (13 women and 10 men) are named within the thesis, and their pseudonyms are given in **bold**. Appendix Three contains 'thumbnail sketches' of those participants.

Taking siblings into account, the 47 participants represented 39 different fathers.

All face-to-face interviews were conducted in participants' own homes, except for numbers 64, 65 and 82.

\* = the total number of siblings/the number interviewed.

\*\* = from New Zealand, interviewed in Japan.

\*\*\* = from USA, interviewed in UK.

<b>Face to face interviews (n=34)</b>								
No	Name	M/F	DoB	Home	Occupation	Father's rank in war	Father's occupation	Sibs*
1	<b>Robert</b>	M	1950	Middx	Corporate executive (rtd.)	Squadron Leader - engineer in Japan	Career in RAF & MoD HQ London	3/3
6	<b>Stella</b>	F	1949	Staffs	Psychiatric nurse (rtd.)	Company Sergeant Major. Dunkirk then POW on Thai-Burma railway.	Miner from 14yrs. of age & 'Fore Overman'.	5/1
7		M	1959	Essex	Police detective (rtd.) Security consultant.	Joined army in 1937 or 1938: Gunner in R.A. POW in Thai-Burma railway, and Changi.	Coal miner before war. Lorry driver - coalman, then for a brick company after the war.	7/1
11	<b>Sally</b>	F	1958	Herts	Psycho-therapist	Private in Army. POW in Changi and the Thai-Burma railway.	Shop manager	2/1
15	<b>Derek</b>	M	1954	Kent	Book keeper	Lance corporal. POW in Changi	Post office - international	2/1

						and Thai-Burma railway.	telegraphist	
16		M	1942	Cambs	School teacher. Biochem. technician. Christian missionary.	R.A. POW in Changi.	Self employed window cleaner. Vat cleaner with Heinz.	2/1
17		M	1956	Berks	Works in IT.	[As 1]	[As 1]	3/3
18		M	1949	Essex	Financial manager (rtd.).	Sergeant in regular army. POW Thai-Burma Railway.	Career in army. Joined in 1924 at 14yrs. Left army 1955, & worked in insurance.	2/1
19	<b>Deirdre</b>	F	1946	Surrey	Hotel manager.	Seaman in Royal Navy. Joined when he was 15. (b.1912) POW in Sumatra. Awarded DSM.	Career in royal navy. Trained electrician. Later an insurance salesman.	3/1
20		F	1949	Leics.	RAF Nurse (rtd.). Gives FEPOW talks with husband locally. (Father-in-law was a German POW in UK).	Called up 1940 to Royal Corps of Signals. POW in Changi and Thai-Burma railway. Inc. time as a 'ward orderly'.	Hosiery operative pre-war. Primary school teacher after the war.	4/1 2 step & 1 half sister
24	<b>Doug</b>	M	1941	Hamps	Buyer for vehicle company (rtd.)	R.A. Anti Aircraft gunner, became a Bombardier. Died 1943 on Ballili Island.	Trained as a tailor before the war.	2/1
26		M	1963	Hamps	University lecturer.	Career Acting Leading Seaman in RN (24 years). POW Saigon and on Thai-Burma railway.	Career royal navy seaman. Left navy 1946, became a live-in school caretaker after the war.	Only child.
27		F	1949	Oxford	Pharmacist (rtd.)	Private in RAOC. POW in Changi, the Thai-Burma railway, and then Saigon.	Solicitor's clerk pre-war. Primary school teacher and head teacher post-war.	4/2

29		F	1954	Lond.	Nurse.	Army Lieutenant. POW in Japan.	An actuary 'in the city'. 'Died 2005.	3/1
36	<b>Gwen</b>	F	1951	Wales	No regular work. Complementary therapist.	Gunner, R.A. POW in Saigon, then Thai-Burma railway.	Radio mechanic post-war: GPO putting up telegraph poles, then electrician.	5/1
39	<b>Joanna</b>	F	1953	Oxford	Senior secretarial work (freelance).	Captain in Army. Dunkirk then POW in Changi and the Thai-Burma railway.	Business man.	2/1
44	<b>Rex</b>	M	1940	Lond.	Senior executive in the IT industry (rtd.).	Wing Commander in RAF. Captured Banka island, then Palembang & Changi.	Career pilot in RAF. Retired as Group Captain. Then worked for the Officers' Association.	Only child.
45	<b>Kim</b>	F	1963	Essex	Career in advertising, now P/T. Runs a FEPOW association.	Gunner in RA. POW in Java and Ambon.	Coal merchant.	3/1
48		M	1953	Wales	Civil service - middle manager.	Private in army. POW in Changi and Japan.	Coalminer at 14, then labourer.	4/1
49		M	1951	Berks	Police service - 'the local bobby' - late academic flowering.	Called up & joined RN as a rating (coder). POW in Palembang, Sumatra.	Chartered surveyor.	2/1
50	<b>Pete</b>	M	1948	Herts	Electrical engineer. Senior roles in oil industry (rtd.)	Regular soldier - 'boiler maker and musician'. Colour (Quartermaster) sergeant. POW in Singapore, Changi, then Thai-Burma railway.	Career in army. After the war became a security officer with MoD.	4/3
53	<b>Linda</b>	F	1947	Norflk	OT assistant (rtd.)	Private in the Army. POW in Changi and	Delivery driver. Maltster and factory worker.	Only child

						Omi.		
57	<b>Jacqui</b>	F	1953	Lond.	Journalist.	Wing Commander. Bomber pilot.	Career in the RAF.	3/1
59	<b>Graham</b>	M	1938	Staffs	Clergy (rtd.)	Private. POW in Japan.	Dispenser.	Only child
60	<b>James</b>	M	1963	Staffs	Teacher of adults.	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in RA - posted to Malaya. Promoted to Captain and then to Major after the war. POW in Java and Japan.	Insurance salesman after the war.	5/5
61	<b>Esther</b>	F	1948	Lond.	Teacher of adults (rtd.)	[As 60]	[As 60]	5/5
63	<b>Charles</b>	M	1946	Essex	Accountant	[As 60]	[As 60]	5/5
64		F	1951	NZ**	Teacher.	Private in the Signals. POW on Thai-Burma railway, then in Japan.	Prewar shop assistant. Postwar trained as primary school teacher, then head teacher.	4/1
65		M	1958	Lond.	Clergy.	[As 27]	[As 27]	4/2
67	<b>Brenda</b>	F	1947	Hamps	Nurse (rtd.)	[As 50]	[As 50]	4/3
68		M	1950	Essex	Career in retail banking.	[As 60]	[As 60]	5/5
70		M	1946	Essex	Psychiatric nurse.	Gunner in R.A. POW in Changi, Java and Japan.	Painter and decorator.	2/1
76	<b>Louise</b>	F	1952	Lond.	Artist.	Bdr. Gunner. POW on the Thai-Burma railway.	Prewar: hotel management. Postwar: in oil industry abroad.	2/1
82		F	1946	USA***	Music educator. Charity manager.	Army Captain (USA). POW in Philippines and Japan.	Career in army. Postwar medical discharge, sold insurance, then started a leisure business.	4/1

<b>Email interviews (n=13)</b>								
<b>No</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>M/F</b>	<b>DoB</b>	<b>Home</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Father's rank in war</b>	<b>Father's occupation</b>	<b>Sibs*</b>
10	<b>Rory</b>	M	1959	Scot.	Qualified nurse. Care home manager.	Private in a Scottish regiment. POW in Japan.	Coal miner.	7/1
14		M	1948	Lancs.	Teacher.	Regular soldier. POW in Changi and Thai-Burma railway.	Career in army. Bus driver, lorry driver, then at an RAF base.	Only child.
32	<b>John</b>	M	1948	Australia	Computer programming (rtd.)	[As 1]	[As 1]	3/3
33		F	1951	Canada	?	Infantryman, regimental policeman, army cook. POW in Japan.	Night watchman, Cleaner.	3/1
37		M	1937	N. Ireland	?	Regular soldier. POW	Army and then Royal Ulster Constabulary.	3/1
38	<b>Lorna</b>	F	Post war	Australia.	Nurse	Infantryman in Australian army. POW Changi and Thai-Burma railway.	Policeman.	2/1
40	<b>Jeff</b>	M	1948	N.Z.	Technical advisor in steel industry.	Lieutenant in New Zealand navy. POW in Palembang.	Draftsman, stonemason. Senior director of large construction company.	2/1
62	<b>Angie</b>	F	1941	USA	Actress	[As 60]	[As 60]	5/5
66	<b>Stephen</b>	M	1941	N.Z.	Doctor (rtd.)	[As 50]	[As 50]	4/3
74		F	?	Hamps	?	RAF Gunner. POW in Java and Japan.	Coalman, decorator, driver. Ordnance survey.	6/1
75		F	1947	Australia	Accounts manager,	POW Changi and Thai-	Prewar on family farm. Postwar	4/1

					teaching assistant, research officer.	Burma railway.	owned toy shop, driver, estate agent.	
77		M	1937	Wales	Army, bus driver, self employed builder (rtd)	Staff sergeant. POW in Changi, Japan. Died from beri beri on the journey home.	Head motor mechanic for laundry company.	3/1
83	<b>Serena</b>	F	1956	Suffolk	Voluntary work	RAF - Flight engineer, Squadron Leader. POW in Japan.	Career in RAF.	4/1

## APPENDIX TWO

## NUMERICAL OVERVIEW OF THE SAMPLE

## 1. Demographic characteristics of the study participants (n=47)

Sex

<i>Sex</i>	<i>Interviews</i>		<i>Totals</i>	<i>%</i>
	<i>Face to face</i>	<i>Email</i>		
Female	16	6	22	47%
Male	18	7	25	53%

Marital status

<i>Marital status at interview</i>	
Never married <sup>1</sup>	2
Married <sup>2</sup>	42
Divorced/separated	2
Widowed <sup>3</sup>	1

Age

<i>Age at interview</i>	<i>Interviews</i>		<i>Totals</i>	<i>%</i>
	<i>Face to face</i>	<i>Email</i>		
50-59	7	3	10	21%
Female	2	2	4	
Male	5	1	6	
60-69	23	6	29	62%
Female	14	3	17	
Male	9	3	12	
70-79	4	4	8	17%
Female	0	1	1	
Male	4	3	7	

Social class

<i>Social class</i>				
<i>Working class</i>				15%
Female	1	1	2	
Male	3	2	5	
<i>Middle class</i>				85%
Female	15	5	20	
Male	15	5	20	

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<sup>1</sup> One man was openly gay and not in a permanent relationship at the time of interview.

<sup>2</sup> One woman was widowed, and remarried. Five of the women had been married two or more times; four were now established with their final partner, the other was single.

<sup>3</sup> One man's wife had died in the previous 12 months.

Home region

<i>Geographic region at interview</i>				
South East	9	1	10	21%
London	7	0	7	15%
North West	0	1	1	2%
East of England	10	1	11	23%
West Midlands	3	0	3	6%
South West	0	0	0	0
Yorks & Humberside	0	0	0	0
East Midlands	1	0	1	2%
North East	0	0	0	0
Scotland	0	1	1	2%
Wales	2	1	3	6%
Northern Ireland	0	1	1	2%
Australia	0	3	3	6%
Canada	0	1	1	2%
New Zealand	1	2	3	6%
USA	1	1	2	4%

**2. Rank, service and social class<sup>4</sup> of participants' fathers (n=39)**

	Army	RAF	Navy	Totals	%
<i>Rank</i>					
Other ranks	27	0	3	30	77%
Officers	4	4	1	9	23%
<i>Social Class</i>					
Working class	19	0	2	20	51%
Middle class	12	4	2	19	49%

<sup>4</sup> I allocated participants and fathers to social class groups using the NRS Social Grades in which ABC1 equates to middle class, and C2DE to working class. <http://www.nrs.co.uk/nrs-print/lifestyle-and-classification-data/social-grade/>

## APPENDIX THREE

### THUMBNAIL SKETCHES OF KEY PARTICIPANTS

No.	Name	
1	Robert	<p>Robert's father was a 'clever, creative, articulate sort of bloke from a very poor background' who joined the RAF and rose to become a Squadron Leader. He was a FEPOW in Japan, in the coal mines. He was a strict disciplinarian when Robert was growing up, but their relationship improved in later years. He was hospitalized with a 'nervous breakdown' in his late 40s which had 'curtailed his promotion in the RAF'. He died in 2005 at 87. Robert was born in 1950, the second of three brothers. The family moved every two to three years with his father's postings in Europe. Robert got to university after a bit of a struggle, and graduated in economics. He climbed the corporate ladder, finishing as a CEO of a national retail company. He was married twice with no children, except for a stepson who had died 5 years earlier (the interview took place on the stepson's birthday). He had been socialized into very senior positions in the corporate sector and this, together with no apparent financial worries, had created someone with a highly confident persona. Although he denied being very interested in FEPOWs etc., a poster for a POW camp concert hung prominently in his study, and he was in the process of gathering together relevant papers and photos. He clearly held his father in very high regard. A couple of years ago, his older brother John (see 32) undertook a 'pilgrimage' to Japan on his own, letting down the other two brothers (the 3<sup>rd</sup> brother is no. 17 in Appendix 1). In response, Robert lost interest in visiting Japan, saying he didn't want to risk 'falling out' by discussing it further with John.</p>
6	Stella	<p>Stella's father had been a coal miner from the age of 14. He joined the Territorial Army before being sent to Singapore, then spent the rest of the war as a POW on the Thai-Burma railway. He suffered recurrent bouts of malaria and died in 1989. He never talked about the war, except for the night of his wife's funeral (when Stella was not present due to illness). Born in 1949, Stella is one of 5 siblings, her brother being 20 years older than her. Married twice with a son and daughter, she enjoys a comfortable middle class lifestyle. She qualified as a nurse and worked in the mental health field until retirement. Throughout the interview, her emphasis was very much on her efforts to empathize with her father's feelings as a POW. She had visited the Thai-Burma railway sites twice in the 4 years prior to interview - once with her husband and once with her daughter, and she described the powerful emotions these trips engendered. She used to take an active role in COFEPOW but now confines herself to the FEPOW remembrance activities.</p>
11	Sally	<p>Sally's father enlisted in 1940 and was a private in the Royal Artillery. He was a FEPOW in Changi and the Thai-Burma railway. Postwar he worked as a green-grocer. Born in 1958, she has one older brother, and is married with two children. Her father died suddenly from a heart attack when he was 56 and she was 15. Her mother never spoke of him afterwards. This cast a heavy shadow over her life and, combined with her preoccupation with his FEPOW captivity, led her to qualify as a psychotherapist. Her mother was still alive and 86 at the time of interview, and their relationship had been poor for many years. Since the interview, she has been on two 'pilgrimages' to Thailand; her analysis had given her the 'connection' to want to travel there.</p>
15	Derek	<p>Derek was unmarried and lived alone in a ground floor flat which he owned outright. The flat was quite spartan, and most of the items on display were connected with his mother, father and the war. He was recently retired from his job as a book-keeper. He has one brother who lives in France who he sees irregularly. Derek is a frequent contributor to FEPOW websites, uploading photographs of his father during wartime, and of his parents at reunions etc. In about 1995, his mother</p>

		was interviewed as part of an oral history project. In the interview, she described her and her family's involvement in the FEPOW association, reunions and other social events; her words confirmed Derek's account of the all-pervasive impact of the father's illnesses on family life. Her brother was also a FEPOW and she met her husband at one of the postwar social events. She described her husband as a 'quiet, inoffensive' chap she 'wanted to mother'.
19	Deirdre	Deirdre lived in a modern maisonette in the home counties. She has a twin sister and a brother. After a bad first marriage to a man she says was like her father, she has been happily married to her second husband for twenty five years. She has two children from her first marriage, and works as a hotel manager. She was nervous about being interviewed because she feared it would reawaken distressing memories (her father had been extremely controlling and abusive). Her twin had declined the interview for this reason. Her final comment on the interview experience was: 'It might be sad to say, but, yeah, I have enjoyed it!'
24	Doug	Born in 1941, Doug had no memory of his father, though he had a photo of his father holding him in his arms, taken just before being posted overseas. His father died in 1943 on Ballali Island in one of the most controversial and brutal episodes in the Far East war. His mother had only known Doug's father for a short time and, after the war, pushed his memory to one side. She entered into a number of short term relationships, including marrying an alcoholic. She had barely known her own father, who had died in WW1. Despite an unstable childhood, and being brought up in an old army hut with primitive facilities and numerous relatives, Doug passed the 11+ and went to grammar school. His working life was varied, and included time as a machinery buyer, and a Thames bargeman. Now divorced, he has two daughters.
32	John	John is Robert's brother (see 1). John has been settled abroad for many years. In 2014, he undertook a pilgrimage to Japan to visit his father's POW camp site. Originally the aim had been for all three brothers to travel together, but John finalized the arrangements just for himself and his wife. This had unsettled relationships between the brothers. John is the eldest son and, according to Robert, was his father's favourite. Information from John was obtained by email and was limited to his thoughts on the pilgrimage.
36	Gwen	Gwen is the third of five siblings, all born between 1948 and 1956. She has lived in South Wales her whole life. Her father was a gunner in the Royal Artillery who ended the war as a POW on the Thai-Burma railway. His postwar life was blighted by chronic war-related illnesses that led to his death in 1976 at age 56 years. While still a teenager, she gave birth to a son, fathered by an African American man who soon returned to the USA. Her first husband, with whom she had two children, died of cancer, and she met her present husband in the late 1990s at a self help group when both their spouses had terminal cancer. From the totality of the research relationship, it was clear that her father's time as a POW had become both an embodied and a psychic presence throughout her life. Gwen's life story had been largely defined by trials and tribulations, obstacles to be overcome, and the need to draw heavily on her individual psychological resources to see her through difficult times. When her first husband was dying, she launched her campaign to obtain a widow's pension for her mother. She eventually succeeded ... a success that, she said, caused the government to tighten its rules on claiming.
38	Lorna	Lorna's father had been a POW in Changi and the Thai-Burma railway, and these traumas had had a devastating impact on her childhood. The effects of this legacy worsened over the decades, resulting in her being diagnosed with PTSD. After the war, her father became a policeman and won a bravery award in the early 1950s. He was active in his regimental association, becoming its president. Family shame was a prominent theme in her testimony: 'My mother gave me a stern injunction "don't you talk" about our troubles'. The difficulties entailed in trying to reconcile her growing knowledge of her father's captivity with his brutality towards her in

		childhood (aggravated by alcohol) have remained central and active throughout her life. Despite this she has held down employment as a qualified health professional in a demanding setting. She has been on two pilgrimages to trace her father's footsteps: seven years ago to the Thai-Burma railway sites, and four years ago to Malaysia. My interview with Lorna was by email.
39	Joanna	Joanna was born in 1953, two years after her brother, her only sibling. To all external appearances their upbringing was comfortably upper middle class. Her father had been an officer in the Royal Artillery, surviving Dunkirk, before being taken prisoner and labouring in Changi and on the Thai-Burma railway. Despite her father's cumulative traumas damaging Joanna's childhood and adolescence (her brother was at boarding school for most of this time), his career in business took off, culminating in a national honour. Joanna's life has been punctuated by tragedy and misfortune: her brother died from a brain tumour in his forties, her mother's death was made extremely traumatic by her father's reaction (described in the text - Ch.4), she was unable to establish a successful marriage for herself, and she does not have a close relationship with her children. She undertook an emotional pilgrimage to Singapore that is discussed in Chapter 8.
40	Jeff	Jeff's father was a Lieutenant in the navy, and a POW in Sumatra. He was a talented artist who made many portraits of fellow POWs and cartoons of camp life which he began to annotate in the 1980s. Over the years, Jeff has been able to send copies to the relatives. After the war, his father's 'demons' gradually faded, and he rose to become the senior director of a national construction company. Jeff was born in 1948, and adopted soon after birth (though he only found out when he was in his late forties). He lived a 'very privileged life', and attended private schools. He remembers his father as a 'great hoarder of food', left overs being saved in an aluminum mess tin 'of Dutch origin'. His father's legs were scarred as the result of 'jungle ulcers'. Together with a close ex-POW friend, his father used to have a 'ceremonial dinner to commemorate their release'. Jeff is at pains to point out that his father 'never spanked me - or my sister'. As explained in the text (Chapter 7), Jeff has pursued his father's POW story with great vigour and determination, his interest being sparked by reading Russell Braddon's 'The Naked Island'. His son-in-law - described by Jeff as 'the Family Ferret' - has also been active in collating and writing material. My interview with Jeff was by email.
44	Rex	Rex's father was a career pilot in the RAF, retiring as a Group Captain. In the war, he was a POW in Sumatra. Rex is an only child, born in 1940, and moved to the USA with his American mother in 1945, where his father joined them at the end of the war. They all returned to England in 1946, and the family relocated many times until his father retired from the RAF in 1975. He says that he had 32 different home addresses in his first 30 years. He was privately educated in the UK, then went on to university in the US. He enjoyed a high status career in computer technology and engineering with prestigious companies, followed by several years in consultancy. He is married with a daughter and grandchildren. Now retired he has thrown himself into his military family history, as part of the worldwide network established by Jeff (see no. 40).
45	Kim	Born in 1963, Kim was the youngest of the female participants. She had two older brothers, one of whom died recently. She pursued a successful career in advertising that she scaled down when she married ten years ago. Now she combines freelance work with helping to run a FEPOW association. She has no children. Her father was one of nine children, and was called up in 1941 as a gunner in the Royal Artillery. After capture, he spent his time as a POW in Java and Ambon in the Moluccas. Her mother and father had first met after the war. Kim said her father didn't get on with her mother (and neither does she); they rowed all the time when she was a child. She felt much closer to her father because he was more oriented towards family life. He died of lung cancer in 1989 when Kim was 26 years, probably the result of inhaling coal dust while working as a coal merchant. Her mother was still alive at the

		time of interview. Kim and her husband travel to Thailand three times a year on holiday, and in a few years time plan to divide their time between there and the UK. In recent years, she has been on an emotional pilgrimage to the sites of her father's POW camps (discussed in Ch. 8).
50	Pete	Pete was born in 1948, the second of four children. His father was a regular soldier who joined up in the mid 1920s, becoming a quartermaster sergeant. He spent time in Germany, Northern Ireland and India on the north west frontier 'trying to keep the feuding tribes apart'. He met Pete's mum in India where she worked as a nanny. Their first child (Stephen - no.66 - was born in 1941, and mother and son returned to the UK in 1942. Pete's father was in Malaya when the Japanese invaded, and he was a POW in Changi and on the Thai-Burma railway. He was discharged from the forces in 1949, following which he worked as a security officer. Before the war, he was described as 'one of the gang' and ambitious. But the three and a half years of incarceration 'just knocked the stuffing out of him', and he lost his ambition. He died in 1985. Pete went to grammar school and on to university where he studied engineering. Soon married, he went with his wife to work in Africa for several years where their two children were born. He enjoyed a successful career in industry, involving considerable international travel, including Japan. His father died in 1985, and his mother in 2002. Shortly afterwards, his sister Brenda made a comment about him working with the Japanese, asking whether 'he had had any funny feelings' about working with them. This seemed to spur him on to 'start digging around to find out what dad really did get up to in the war'. After his retirement in 2006, he undertook his research in earnest. In 2009, Pete wrote an unpublished biography of his father's time as a POW, which he has since updated. Over recent years, he has dedicated many hours to this research, and has carved out a role as a valuable resource person in the COFEPOW community. In 2011, he visited the war sites in Singapore and travelled along the Thai-Burma railway.
57	Jacqui	Jacqui was born in 1953, the youngest of three siblings. Her eldest brother was born in 1939, and the younger in 1947. She was born in Germany where her father was stationed with the RAF. She says she attended 13 different schools before the age of 12. Her father made a rapid rise to Wing Commander. He was captured in Singapore then held in various POW camps in Java for the rest of the war. After the war, he made a complete break with his FEPOW past, keeping no friends from that time. When he left the RAF in the 1960s, he trained as a school teacher and taught mathematics. Jacqui has been married three times. The first was as a teenager as a form of 'rebellion' to 'a very unsuitable man'. Her first child was born a year later. A second difficult marriage and a second child followed. She has been happily married to her third husband for 25 years. After some years in secretarial work, Jacqui became a freelance journalist, and has written about her experiences as the child of a FEPOW in both the local and national press. She has many papers relating to her father's wartime experiences which she has only recently begun to work through.
59	Graham	Graham was in his mid 70s at the time of interview and was the oldest participant. He is an only child. His father was a private in the Royal Army Medical Corps, and was captured on Christmas Day in Hong Kong. He is hazy about the details but his father ended up in a camp on mainland Japan. Apparently, he read the Bible 'two or three times' in the camp. During the war, Graham and his mother alternated between the homes of his maternal and paternal grandparents. He described his mother as being 'ultra-protective' of him. He was able to recall many details of his war time childhood, including where they sheltered during air-raids, the life he led with his different grandparents, and his early school years. When his father returned, he and his mother met him at the train station; he can recall the place he stood but cannot remember his father arriving. His early relationship with his father was rather strained - 'he was a bit frightening'. After the war, his father worked in a chemist's, and also kept in touch with a few of his former POW friends. Graham did well at school and, following National Service, went to theological college, qualifying in the early 1960s. He married in 1968, but they had no children. Now retired, he

		has lived alone since his wife died fifteen years ago.
60	James	<p>James was born in 1953 and is the youngest of five siblings. His two sisters also feature in the thesis: Esther (see 61) and Angie (see 62). His father was one of two brothers born into a working class family in the East End of London, but got a scholarship to public school whereas his brother grew up a 'cockney Londoner' like his dad. Before and after the war, he was in the TA and in the early years of the war was posted to Malaya. He was a POW in Java and on mainland Japan, and promoted to Major by the end of the war. After his discharge from the army, he worked for an insurance company. Family life was always very fraught and, when James was fifteen, his father committed suicide at the age of 55. As a young man, James did not settle into a career. Instead, his life became increasingly chaotic - taking drugs, and sleeping rough for a while. His mother died when he was in his thirties, and he then started to turn his life around. At much the same time, he met his long term partner and mother of their two children. In the mid 1990s, he obtained a PhD, and for the past decade or so has taught in adult education. He still has to manage his emotions with care, and the couple have been trained in co-counselling. Although not interested in visiting the sites of his father's incarceration, he is acutely aware of his lack of knowledge of what his father went through and (like his father) is 'fascinated and preoccupied' with Japanese culture.</p>
61	Esther	<p>The middle of five children, Esther was born in 1948. She describes her father as a 'very artistic man' with a lively interest in lots of things, very intelligent and imaginative ... but someone who from a young age always wanted to be on the stage. After the war, he was unable to realise his ambitions and became very frustrated. He could be verbally violent - he 'could turn on a sixpence'. Her mother tried to keep him in a good mood. She says her parents described themselves as having 'an open marriage'. She spoke of her father creating an atmosphere of overwhelming control which became clear after his suicide, which was experienced by the family with a sense of relief. She was never able to talk to either of her parents. After three failed marriages, she married her present husband 10 years ago. She has four children in total and also grandchildren. Now retired, she went to university when she was fifty and then worked in adult education. She has done very little research into her father's FEPOW history, although through films and books she is aware of the privations he must have suffered.</p> <p><i>Esther is the sister of James (no. 60) and Angie (no. 62). For more background on the father, see James (no. 60).</i></p>
62	Angie	<p>Born in 1941, Angie was the one child with the singing talent to follow her father's ambitions of a stage career. As she put it, her father 'transferred his thwarted theatrical ambitions on to me and it is fortunate that I had a talent in that direction'. After going to a specialist performing arts boarding school, she studied singing in a London conservatoire. She was soon performing in West End stage musicals, and her career took off, meaning she was away from her home town for much of the time. She 'had no idea how to have a sane relationship' and gradually turned to alcohol. In the 1980s, she moved to the USA where the theatrical world was 'unbelievably intimidating' and the work intermittent. At 48, she 'had never married or had children, had no money, no career ...'. In 1990, she joined AA, and slowly developed a career in the business side of the theatrical industry. She married in 2004, when she was 62, and now has 'a wonderfully strong stable marriage'. She was always aware that her father had been a POW but 'had not linked that experience with his behaviour until PTSD was first talked about in the 1980s'. She thinks a lot about how her father's POW experiences affected her and the family as a whole. My interview with Angie was by email.</p> <p><i>Angie is the sister of James (no. 60) and Esther (no. 61). For more background on the father, see James (no. 60) and Esther (no. 61).</i></p>

66	Stephen	<p>Stephen is the oldest of four children, being born in 1941 in India where his mother worked as a nanny. He returned to the UK in 1942, first to London but when the bombing intensified, they moved to the north of England. For the first four years of his life he had the 'undivided devotion and attention of my dear Mother'. He first met his father at the war's end, and recalled that he never felt close to him which he attributes to the FEPOW captivity. Three more siblings arrived in the next seven years: in 1947, 1948 and 1952. Stephen's mother had said that as a child he had been treated more harshly by his father than his siblings. As a child he had always wanted to be a doctor. His academic progress at school was good and, after passing his A levels, he was accepted into medical school. Once qualified, he married his long term partner in 1966; four children followed. In 1978, he was offered a job overseas and the family emigrated. Now retired, he recently completed an eighty thousand word 'memoir'. In this, he suggests that his father's 'PTSD' had a very bad effect on his mother and the rest of the family (but he does not give further detail). He has read a lot about the 'barbarity and obscenities which the prisoners were subjected to'. My interview with Stephen was by email.</p> <p>Stephen is the brother of Pete (no. 50 and Brenda (no. 67). For more background on the father, see Peter (no. 50).</p>
67	Brenda	<p>Born in 1947, Brenda had always wanted to do nursing. As a child, she suffered from intermittent deafness, and bad eczema which led to bullying. She left school at sixteen, moved to London to become a cadet nurse. She completed her general nurse training at the same hospital. A few months after qualifying, she married her first husband; in due course they had two children. She continued to work as a nurse around the needs of her children; she retired in 2006. Following the death of her first husband, she married a man from the north of England who had much in common with her father (hated gardening and decorating, but liked sport). She was always close to her parents, and lived near the original family home. Brenda is the only one of the four siblings who had never visited the Far East. She says she would like to but can't really afford it. Also, she is 'worried about seeing the Japanese ... wondering what they did to my dad'.</p> <p>Brenda is the sister of Pete (no. 50) and Stephen (no. 66). For more background on the father, see Pete (no. 50).</p>
76	Louise	<p>Louise's father was the youngest of seven from two marriages, and had 'a pretty awful childhood'. The family was split up after her paternal grandfather was killed on Christmas morning by a brewer's dray. In the war, Louise's father was a gunner in the Royal Artillery and spent his time as a POW on the Thai-Burma railway. Her mother and father met after the war: both were working for an oil company in the Middle East. Louise was born there in 1952 where she also spent the first six years of her life. Her sister was born in 1955. Her father stayed in the Middle East until 1963 when he retired. She has very happy memories of her early childhood. After his return, her father developed several neurological problems that lasted for the rest of his life, receiving regular treatment in a specialist military hospital. Louise went to grammar school and then worked in administration. She took an art degree as a mature student. Louise and her husband have two children, both of whom are interested in their grandfather's POW experience. Louise herself is 'fascinated' by the FEPOW story - 'it was part of my growing up' - and she has visited the Thai-Burma railway sites. She now works as a professional artist who responds to and incorporates aspects of her father's captivity in her work. A few years ago, she survived breast cancer - 'Since my own health problems I have often wondered about whether three and a half years starvation and disease may have affected the genes of the FEPOW children, given that many of us were born within a few years of their release.'</p>
83	Selena	<p>Born in 1956, Selena is the youngest of four children. Her father was a Flight Engineer in the RAF, and incarcerated as a POW in Japan. As an RAF family, they</p>

		<p>moved frequently, including the UK, the Middle East, Norway and Germany. Selena has clear memories of how her father's captivity as a FEPOW had an impact on the life of the family. Selena's memories of her father are rich and detailed, and it is evident that they have had a significant effect on her own sense of self and her moral development (see Chapter 4). She felt the need to 'protect him from my failings .... I had to make his suffering worth it by not being a waster'. Although I had met her at a remembrance event, my interview with Selena was by email.</p> <p><i>At the time of the email interview, Selena's father and mother were both still alive. Her father's moral lessons were probably derived from, or strengthened by, the example set by his Squadron Leader who in the POW camps was renowned for putting the men's needs ahead of those of the officers.</i></p>
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## APPENDIX FOUR

### INVITATION TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS

This is the text used to invite interest from members of relevant Internet forums. I adopted an informal and relaxed style because I am also a participant in these forums:

#### **Researching into the children of FEPOWs**

Hello everyone

Last year, after several years researching into my father's time as a POW in Japan, and somewhat to my surprise, I found myself applying for and being accepted onto a full time PhD in Sociology and History at the University of Essex.

My research focuses on the life experiences of the children of British Far East Prisoners of War. When I first began to read around the subject, I was rather taken aback to discover hardly any academic research into the topic. For me, this is an important story, and one very much worth telling. Through face-to-face interviews, I aim to explore how the fathers' experiences have impacted on the children, from early memories through to the present day.

Now in my second term, I am beginning to plan ahead for the interviews, most of which will need to occur during the second year.

So, if your father was a British FEPOW and you are interested in taking part, then I'd really like to hear from you. Later on, I'll send out a briefing sheet giving more details of the research to those who have expressed an interest in getting involved. If you do think you could help me with this, I am sure you'd find it interesting.

My email address is [Terence.smyth@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:Terence.smyth@tiscali.co.uk) and I really look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes.

Terry Smyth  
Leavenheath  
Suffolk





## **'Children of British Far East Prisoners of War' - Information Sheet**

My name is Terry Smyth, and I am a PhD student at the University of Essex in the department of Sociology, and my interest in this topic is because my father was a prisoner of war in the Far East (FEPOW).

You are being invited to take part in a research project that will explore the life stories of people whose fathers were British FEPOWs. I am sending this to you now because you have already expressed an interest, in principle, in taking part in the research. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

The research is based on in-depth interviews with children of British FEPOWs, and these interviews will take place through 2014 and into 2015. If you confirm your willingness to participate, I will contact you to arrange an interview, if possible in your own home. In some cases, we might agree to organize a second interview. Interviews will be audio recorded, and flexibly structured to give you ample opportunity to reflect on and describe your experiences. If appropriate, I may ask you to allow me to take photographs, of yourself and of any materials (photos, objects, documents) you choose to show me.

Whilst there are no material benefits from participating in the project, I hope and expect that you will find the interview an interesting experience. In the long run, this research will contribute to a better understanding of how the Far East prisoner of war experience has impacted on, and influenced, the next generation.

If you do decide to take part, I will ask you to sign a consent form. However, you can withdraw from the research at any time, and do not have to give a reason for this.

Unless you choose otherwise, all the information I collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential.

I am self funding this research, and there are no funding bodies or other any organisations involved, other than the University of Essex, of course, which is supervising my PhD.

Please do contact me if you wish to discuss the project further. You can use either my personal or my university email address, as follows: [Terence.smyth@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:Terence.smyth@tiscali.co.uk) or [tsmyth@essex.ac.uk](mailto:tsmyth@essex.ac.uk)

May 2014



## APPENDIX SIX



## Consent Form for 'Children of British FEPOWs'

*Please tick the appropriate boxes*

### Taking Part

I have read and understood the project information sheet dated May 2014.

**Ye  
s**      **No**

    

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

    

I agree to take part in the project. Taking part in the project will include being interviewed and recorded.

    

I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part.

    

### Use of the information I provide for this project only

I understand my personal details such as phone number and address will not be revealed to people outside the project.

    

I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs.

    

*Please choose **one** of the following two options:*

I would like my real name used in the above

I would **not** like my real name to be used in the above.

### Use of the information I provide beyond this project

I agree for the data I provide to be archived at the UK Data Archive.

    

I understand that other genuine researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.

    

I understand that other genuine researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.

    

### So we can use the information you provide legally

I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials related to this project to Terry Smyth.

    

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of participant      [printed]      Signature      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher      [printed]      Signature      Date

Project contact details for further information:

Terry Smyth, Principal Investigator and PhD candidate

[Terence.smyth@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:Terence.smyth@tiscali.co.uk) or [tsmyth@essex.ac.uk](mailto:tsmyth@essex.ac.uk)

Tel: 01206 262077

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## APPENDIX SEVEN

### SELECTED WEBSITES

#### **FEPOW-related organisations (UK)**

*Agape World*

<http://www.agapeworld.com/began.htm>

*Burma Star Association*

<http://www.burmastar.org.uk/>

*COFEPOW*

<http://www.cofepow.org.uk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/cofepow>

*Java FEPOW Club 1942*

<http://www.thejavafepowclub42.org/>

*National FEPOW Fellowship Welfare Remembrance Association*

<https://nationalfepowfellowship.org.uk/>

*The Royal British Legion - FAR EASTERN PRISONERS OF WAR TRUST FUND*

[http://support.britishlegion.org.uk/app/answers/detail/a\\_id/292/~/\\_far-eastern-prisoners-of-war-trust-fund](http://support.britishlegion.org.uk/app/answers/detail/a_id/292/~/_far-eastern-prisoners-of-war-trust-fund)

#### **Social media sites**

*COFEPOW - Children and Families of the Far East Prisoners of War (UK)*

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1248087371902974/>

*The FEPOW Family (UK)*

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1248087371902974/>

*WW2 Japanese War Crimes in British Malaya and British Borneo 1941-1945*

<https://www.facebook.com/JapaneseWarCrimesMalayaBorneo/>

#### **International Pacific War POW websites**

*American Defenders of Bataan & Corregidor Memorial Society (USA)*

<http://www.dg-adbc.org/>

*Australian War Memorial (Australia)*

<https://www.awm.gov.au/research/infosheets/pow/japanese/>

*Burma Thailand Railway Memorial Association (Australia)*

<http://www.btrma.org.au/> (Offers pilgrimage tours)

*David Boggett's Death Railway (focused on the plight of the 'romusha')*

<http://www.deathrailway.org/the-death-railway-part-1-introduction/>

*Hong Kong War Diary*

<http://www.hongkongwardiary.com/hkwdhome.html>

*Taiwan POW Camps (Taiwan)*

<http://www.tbrconline.com/>

*The Thai-Burma Railway and Hellfire Pass (Australia)*

<http://hellfire-pass.commemoration.gov.au/>

*US-Japan Dialogue on POWs (USA)*

<http://www.us-japandialogueonpows.org/>

*WW2 Japanese War Crimes in British Malaya and British Borneo 1941-1945*

<http://www.japanesewarcrimesmalayaborneo.com/>

### **FEPOW research resources**

*Captive Memories (UK - Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine)*

<http://captive memories.org.uk/fepow/oral-history-project/>

*Center for Research - Allied POWs Under the Japanese (USA)*

<http://www.mansell.com/pow-index.html>

*POW Network (UK)*

<https://powstudiesnetwork.wordpress.com/>

*Prisoners of War of the Japanese 1942-1945 (Australia)*

<http://www.pows-of-japan.net/index.html>

(Includes video recordings of 70 interviews with FEPOWs).

*Researching FEPOW History (UK)*

<https://fepowhistory.wordpress.com/about/>

*Robert E. Mitchell Center for Prisoner of War Studies (USA)*

<http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmotc/rpow/Pages/default.aspx>

<http://www.remcf.org/index.html>

*The POW Research Network Japan (Japan)*

<http://www.powresearch.jp/en/>

### **Museum sites**

*Hellfire Pass Memorial Museum (Thailand)*

<http://www.dva.gov.au/commemorations-memorials-and-war-graves/memorials/war-memorials/thailand> ; <http://hellfire-pass.commemoration.gov.au/>

*Imperial War Museum (they hold an online collection of oral history recordings) (UK)*

<http://www.iwm.org.uk/>

*Thai-Burma Railway Centre (Thailand)*

<http://www.tbrconline.com/>

**Tribute sites**

*5th Beds & Herts in the Far East UK*

<https://www.facebook.com/bedsandherts/?fref=nf>

*Albert Erickson (USA)*

<https://sites.google.com/site/powsofthejapanese/Home>

*Australian WW2 POWs in Nagasaki (Australia)*

<https://www.facebook.com/NagasakiPOWs/>

*Far Eastern Heroes (UK)*

<http://www.far-eastern-heroes.org.uk/>

*FEPOW Day (UK)*

<http://www.fepow-day.org/>

*Frank Larkin (Australia)*

<http://pow.larkin.net.au/>

*Pekanbaru Death Railway*

<https://www.facebook.com/PekanbaruDeathRailway/>

*The Changi Artwork of Des Bettany (UK)*

<https://changipowart.com/>

*The Changi Cross (UK)*

<http://thechangicross.co.uk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/thechangicross/>

*The Story of the Taiwan POW Camps (Taiwan)*

<http://taiwanpow.org/>

*Two Weeks in Japan (UK)*

<https://www.facebook.com/TwoWeeksinJapan/>

**National remembrance sites**

*National Memorial Arboretum (FEPOW Building)*

<http://www.thenma.org.uk/>

*FEPOW Memorial Church*

[http://www.fepow-memorial.org.uk/The\\_Memorial\\_Church.htm](http://www.fepow-memorial.org.uk/The_Memorial_Church.htm)

**Other**

*Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine*

<http://www.lstmed.ac.uk/about/history/far-eastern-prisoners-of-war-fepow>



## APPENDIX EIGHT

### TEXT OF SPEECH GIVEN BY JOHN DURING PILGRIMAGE IN JAPAN

I would first of all like to thank you all for helping us make this very emotional visit. I thank especially Morio and Yamamoto for their kindness and generosity. We have found Japanese people to be wonderfully kind and helpful throughout our visit. I would like to say a few words about my father who died a few years ago and who was held here for about four years. Morio has also said you might be interested in our thoughts about our walking trip on the Kimano Kodo pilgrim trail in the KII peninsula. My father was a sergeant in the RAF No 36 Squadron. He was accidentally sent to the Malaysian peninsula as he went to the wrong RAF base in England. No 36 Squadron had the out of date Wildebeest aeroplanes which were no match for the Japanese Zero's. Most were lost in the first action. I think that of an initial squadron of twelve only about four remained. The Commanding Officer said every man for himself and my father was captured shortly thereafter at Kota Baru and subsequently shipped to Japan by one of the so called 'hell ships'. He was held here in 'Sanyo' now Omine in very harsh conditions. He never really overcame the experience and it is so sad that he could not and was not helped in this regard. He was never able to see the wonderful side of Japan and its people that Lorraine and I have seen. My two brothers (Robert and Nick) and I have some very special momentos of my father's time as a POW including a poster advertising a POW concert. I have my father's Oxford book of verse that he kept with him the whole time. It has a Japanese censor stamp in the front cover. My enduring memory of my father in relation to these experiences is fortitude in the face of hardship and adversity. He told me many stories that cannot be repeated here. But he did overcome and lived a very fruitful life.

Finally a few words about the Kimano Kodo. What a wonderful and uplifting experience it was to travel along the Nakahachi route from Takijiri to Nachi. Many sore legs and knees and lots of Onsens along the way. We thank you for our welcome it has been a very special occasion for us.



