theories and methodologies

Imperial Ghosting and National Tragedy: Revenants from Hiroshima and Indian Country in the War on Terror

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Much like a family bereft by tragedy, a nation unable to confront its past will surely compromise any sense of a shared civic culture.
—Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land*

The ultimate mark of power may be its invisibility; the ultimate challenge the exposition of its roots.
—Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*

GHOST. Mark me!
—William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SAY THAT WE LIVE IN TRAGIC TIMES? THE 9-11 ATTACK WAS CERTAINLY A TRAGEDY, BUT WHOSE TRAGEDY WAS IT?

What constitutes a national tragedy in the first place? Ned Blackhawk points out that a nation unable to confront its past will surely compromise its civic future (293). What are the consequences of sacralizing one national calamity (the 9-11 attack) as a world-historic tragedy while ghosting the other foundational violences of United States history, which have returned to haunt the post-9-11 era as unspeakable premonitions and accusatory revenants? *"Mark me," said the ghost*.

Put another way, how can we account for the persistent ghosting from official United States history of slavery, the slow genocide of native peoples, and the atomic obliteration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki without also understanding how these great, administered forgettings have come to haunt the United States' global war as collective hallucinations and extravagant violence?

On 9-11, history began again, or so we were told. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage announced, "History begins today" (Freeman 466). Richard Perle proclaimed, "The world began on 9-11. There is no intellectual history" (Packer 41). Cofer Black foreclosed all historical discussion: "All you need to know is that there was a 'before 9-11' and there was an 'after 9-11'" (Thorup 186). President

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George W. Bush summed up this startling repudiation of history. "I think we agree," he said. "The past is over" (Ross 14).

The smoking ruins of the World Trade Center were seen to mark the site not only of the foundational national tragedy of the United States but also of a world-historic tragedy that ruptured time itself. This repudiation of the past, while it was the understandable aftershock of a horrific attack, expressed the growing repudiation across a broad political spectrum of the idea of history itself. After 9-11, large aspects of national memory became state secrets, and civic life became increasingly encrypted in the imperial archives of the NSA.

But what secret in the crypt of the past had so forcefully to be forgotten? What inadmissible trauma rose like an unmourned revenant to haunt the tragic ruins of the Twin Towers?

Imperial Ghosting

> *GHOST. But that I am forbid*
> *To tell the secrets of my prison-house,*
> *I could a tale unfold whose lightest word*
> *Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy*
> *young blood.*
> —William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

Ghost wars, ghost prisons and ghost planes, ghost sites, ghost ships, and ghost money, the orange ghosts of Guantánamo and the Grey Ghost of Bagram.[1] After 9-11, in the shadowlands of empire, in the terminology of the CIA and the Pentagon, in films and in books, the United States' global war came to be haunted by persistent evocations of ghosts. And at the same time in the United States the ancient cult of the paranormal rose up with startling intensity: the whispering phantasmagoria of vampires, zombies, and ghosts that now populate American films and television series, best-selling novels, and social media as dream world and catastrophe. But the hinge that connects the unseen dead of the "war on terror" with the cult of the paranormal (the unquiet dead who refuse to die) has itself been ghosted.

What concerns me here is the intimate relation between imperial ghosting and the remorseless repetitions of military violence. Can we understand the connection between imperial violence and what I call the administration of forgetting (the calculated and often brutal amnesias by which a state contrives to erase its own atrocities) if we don't confront the foundational violence of United States history, whose phantasms haunt the post-9-11 era? For the hinge that connects the stolen time of native histories, the time zero of the atomic attacks, and the permanently ticking paranoid time of the war on terror is invisible.

We use words like *tragedy*, *disaster*, *calamity*, *nemesis*, *fate*. We also use words like *atrocity*, *crime*, *mass murder*, *massacre*, *genocide*. But what distinguishes a tragedy from an atrocity? What makes a particular calamity a national tragedy? Large-scale natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes are often memorialized as national tragedies, but national catastrophes are not tragedies for everyone, and not everyone's catastrophe is sacralized as national. Tragedies arrive at different times for people with different degrees of access to privilege and power. Blackhawk notes how "as many Indian people know all too well, reconciling the traumas found within our community and family past with the celebratory narratives of America remains an everyday and in many cases overwhelming challenge" (287). Not all group afflictions are memorialized as national tragedies in monuments and plaques, history books and exhibitions. The memorializing of national tragedy entails the administration of forgetting as much as it entails the promises of remembrance.

From one perspective, the climate of tragedy is the sense of being obliged to act in a world governed by conflicting, unfathomable, even ineluctable forces. Here, contingent history is naturalized as remorseless destiny.

But does the idea of history as tragic not itself involve a form of ghosting, allowing state violence to be shorn of historical complexity and political agency, so that ethical culpability is more easily cloaked, accountability concealed, and guilt disavowed?

Indeed, the doctrine of American exceptionalism often finds its alibi for violence in the figure of naturalized tragedy. In much United States history, the slow genocide of American Indians is naturalized as the unavoidably tragic outcome of the manifest destiny of the exceptional (white) nation. The emplotment of tragedy casts the Euro-American subjugation of Indians—through massacres and massive land theft, forced removals, the intentional spread of epidemics, the ecocide of the buffalo—not as imperial policy but as the sloughing off of vanishing peoples unfitted by nature for modernity.[2]

The nuclear attacks on Japan were likewise officially figured as necessary tragedies rather than as politically motivated atrocities.[3] J. Robert Oppenheimer, for one, denied culpability by appealing to the unstoppable "organic necessity" of science: "We did the job because it was an organic necessity. If you are a scientist, you cannot stop such a thing" (Smith and Weiner 317). The bombings were seen as tragic, yes, but as inexorably driven by scientific and technological destiny. Although Hiroshima and Nagasaki were chosen as targets because, having escaped firebombing, they could yield greater scientific data, the journalist William Laurence expressed a general sentiment when he proclaimed, "Destiny chose Nagasaki as the ultimate target" (35).

In 1998 Madeleine Albright justified the invasion of Iraq as the obligation of an exceptional nation: "But if we have to use force, it is because we are America; we are the indispensable nation. We stand tall and we see further than other countries into the future. . . ."

Reading history as tragic destiny—the stage on which outcomes are driven by contingent forces larger than human intention—lends itself to the seductions of historical amnesia and the denial of political guilt. To identify a tragedy as a political atrocity, by contrast, is to allocate agency, identify political intention, acknowledge historical complexity, and claim ethical accountability.

So I am interested in historical ghosts, because ghosts point to places where denied, erased, or unresolved state violence has occurred.[4] Can we comprehend the extravagance of the violence unleashed by the United States military after 9-11—two nation-states invaded, over a million estimated dead, thousands imprisoned and tortured, the largest mass displacement in modern history (prior to the Syrian conflict), rampant gender violence, infrastructural catastrophe, cultural and emotional havoc, and ongoing sectarian violence—if, alongside the economic and political interests that motivated the invasions, we do not take into account the interference in national memory that I call imperial ghosting?

Imperial ghosting takes the form of a doubleness, whereby administered forgettings and guarded secrets leave a kind of counter-evidence: material and spectral traces, shadowy aftereffects, and temporal disturbances. Imperial ghosting adopts a number of guises: disturbances of speech, incoherences in language and naming, visual disruptions in photographs and paintings, disorders of bodily gesture, sonic discordance, ruptures in time, and the scarring of landscapes by ruins and mounds. Imperial ghosting throws haunted shadows across different historical moments and generations, creating the temporal palimpsests, visual fugues, and the uncanny anachronisms that I call imperial déjà vu.

History as Tragedy (1): The Administration of Forgetting

The American dream is innocence and clean slates and the future.

—Toni Morrison,
"A Conversation with Miriam Horn"

Perhaps more than any other people, Americans display a consistent amnesia concerning their own past, as well as the history of those around them.
—*Pentagon Report*, January 2005

No act of ours invited the rage of the killers.
—President George W. Bush

The attacks on 9-11 were something new, it was said. This is "a new kind of struggle" with a "new kind of enemy," proclaimed President George W. Bush (Selchow 39–40). The State Department's legal adviser, William Taft IV, agreed: "The conflict with Al-Qaeda is a new sort of conflict, one not covered by the GPW or some other traditional rules of warfare" (Garraway 175).[5] The Bush doctrine declared the attacks to be so new that no existing body of law, including the Geneva conventions, could adequately deal with them, so new that only perpetual war would suffice, and with it the Patriot Act, the ransacking of civil rights, the suspension of habeas corpus, the unilateral freedom to take preemptive military action anywhere in the world, the withdrawal from international agreements, the expansion of Special Ops and "dark" programs, permanent detention without trial, the ramping up of torture, the secret rendition program, the extension of the global network of bases, the use of "mini-nukes" and "bunker-busters," and later, under President Obama, the acceleration of the drone assassination program and the massive NSA surveillance operation.

All this was based on a single supposition: that the attacks on 9-11 were so extraordinary that they legitimized an unprecedented transformation in the laws of war. The first traumatic attack on American soil was of course not 9-11 but what Blackhawk calls the "indigenous trauma" and "epic ordeals" of native peoples caught in the maelstrom of white expansionist dispossession, mass slaughter, and forced removals (5). What was new about 9-11 was *who* was attacked, and *where*, but this did not prevent the doctrine of newness from becoming the sole rationale for what was in fact genuinely unprecedented: the Bush doctrine of perpetual, preemptive global war.

The attacks could be figured as new only by radically repudiating the past. But a curious paradox emerged. On 9-11, having publicly declared that the past is over, President Bush immediately contradicted himself in his diary: "The Pearl Harbor of the 21st Century took place today," he wrote (Woodward 24). Countless news broadcasts repeated the cry "Infamy!" "New Day of Infamy!" echoing President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's sonorous phrase after the attack on Pearl Harbor (Dower 4). In other words, the insistence that the 9-11 attack was new was instantly belied by references to the ghosts of Pearl Harbor. Pearl Harbor became code for American innocence outraged; evoking the prior attack allowed the traumatized American public to give spectral meaning to 9-11, casting the United States as the innocent victim of an unfathomable evil. But recalling Pearl Harbor awakened the ghosts of a violent past when the United States was not imperial victim but imperial aggressor.

Hinge 1: Pearl Harbor

Half-hidden in the crypt of history, disobliging revenants were evoked by the words *Pearl Harbor*. At the end of the nineteenth century, in its oceanic expansion into the Pacific the United States violently occupied Hawai'i and the Philippines. Eighty percent of indigenous people in Hawai'i were killed, and an estimated one million civilians in the Philippines died from military atrocities and famine (Dower; McCoy and Scarano). It was in the Philippines that the United States developed the imperial rhetoric of national innocence, virtuous invasion, benevolent assimilation, and "the white man's burden" that foreshadowed the rhetoric of the post-9-11 era.

History as Tragedy (2): The Political Theology of Evil

We are in a conflict between good and evil, and America will call evil by its name.

—President George W. Bush

On 20 September 2001, President Bush made the argument that soon became official. Combating "evil" would henceforth be the centerpiece of United States foreign policy: the nation had been attacked without any credible cause except the unfathomable "evil" of "bad guys" (Bush 67–68). The Bush doctrine became a political theology of evil, foreclosing any serious engagement with the history of the United States' involvement in the Middle East and stripping the 9-11 attacks of political complexity. The American public was deprived of any meaningful narrative to help it make sense of the attacks, which fell into a crypt of secrecy and incoherence and became thereby more traumatizing because unfathomable: tragic. There was no way for Americans to properly mourn; what remained was the tragic stance of an unsettled, vengeful melancholia that took the form of a retributive willingness to overlook the debauches of military violence soon under way.

Hinge 2: Hiroshima and Nagasaki

But maintaining the theology of meaningless Muslim "evil" meant ghosting from national memory the fact that Osama bin Laden had made his reasons for the murderous attacks clear. Five years before 9-11, he had emphasized, in his litany of American crimes, the nuclear attacks on Japanese civilians. As Dower points out, in a message sent to the Americans on 6 October 2002 bin Laden "played on this theme of double standards and just punishment" (152). Bin Laden stated, "That which you are singled out for in the history of mankind is that you have used your force to destroy mankind, more than any other nation in history; not to defend principles and values, but to hasten to secure your interests and profits. You dropped a nuclear bomb on Japan, even though Japan was ready to negotiate an end to the war" (Dower 152).

Imperial Ghosting: Ground Zero

It has happened before but there is nothing to compare it to now.

—Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow*

By evening on 9-11, the ruins of the World Trade Center had been monumentalized as "Ground Zero": the stage of a national and world-historic tragedy and the inaugural moment of a new epoch. But origins are never originary; something has always gone before. The term *Ground Zero* proliferated with such startling speed that it is hard to remember how misplaced and inaccurate the term is. Even Amy Goodman, host of the independent news program *Democracy Now!*, endorsed New York's originary status: "New York is the first Ground Zero," she said. "Afghanistan is the second" (Ray 51).

But New York was not the first Ground Zero. Sacralizing New York as the originary Ground Zero simultaneously revealed and concealed two prior Ground Zeroes, created in Japan in 1945, when the United States obliterated without necessity or warning the densely populated city of Hiroshima, on 6 August, and, a few days later, Nagasaki. Calling New York the first Ground Zero occluded the fact that the United States had inaugurated the first-practice of instantly destroying an entire city with a single, world-historic weapon of mass destruction, following the "terror" firebombing of sixty-eight Japanese cities into "ghost cities" (Dower 163). It meant forgetting that the nuclear cataclysm was inflicted not because it was militarily necessary to save lives, nor because it was ordained by destiny, but to secure American hegemony in a postwar world. Sacralizing New York as the

first Ground Zero erased the epochal violence of the nuclear attacks and effected a reversal that gave the United States the status not of world-historic aggressor but of world-historic victim and with it the putative moral right to permanent revenge.

The phrase *Ground Zero* is a verbal phantom that summoned the nuclear atrocities inflicted on Japan at the very moment that it ghosted them from memory. The psychological power of imperial ghosting is that it allowed so many Americans to appropriate for New York the term *Ground Zero*, with its phantasmic images of nuclear mushroom clouds, but without hearing the historical echoes in the term or the obvious contradictions that loomed. There was nothing nuclear or unprecedented about the 9-11 attacks. They bore no political or historical connection to the atomic atrocities in Japan.

Unless one looks in the crypt.

The Crypt and the Phantom

Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's terms *crypt* and *phantom* are valuable here, offering a form of psychoanalysis that insists on the connections between individual life histories, intermediating forms of cultural practice, and larger social and historical forces. The crypt is a traumatic event so inadmissible and unspeakable it has to be sealed off from the conscious life of the person or from the collective memory of the people (104). The guarded secret is buried alive by forms of obfuscation and denial. But the forgetting remains incomplete, so the trauma is carried across generations unmourned, and the crime is evaded and unatoned for. The entombed secret, however, leaves telltale memory traces that find expressive shape in disturbances of bodily gesture and disruptions of language and images and so is borne, ghostlike, from one generation to the next. The crypt becomes part of the landscape of submerged family and national secrets, half-present in incoherent stories about the past, in gaps in family and national narratives, half-glimpsed in photographic disturbances and other visual repositories of national and imperial memory. Abraham and Torok call these transgenerational effects phantoms (173–76).

In September 2003, for example, Condoleezza Rice justified the invasion of Iraq by invoking the possibility of nuclear attack: "We don't want the smoking gun to become a mushroom cloud." The figurative incoherence of the sentence, conflating frontier history with the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (a phrase repeated later almost verbatim by President Bush) is just one verbal phantom that shadows the war on terror.

The Victor-Victim Reversal and the Administration of Forgetting

It is hard to know the limits to the forgetting of history.
—Friedrich Nietzsche

There are different ways of ensuring that things are forgotten. Two striking forms of imperial ghosting obscured the nuclear cataclysms of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: the victor-victim reversal and the administration of forgetting.

In *King Leopold's Ghost*, a history of the Belgian Congo holocaust, Adam Hochschild speaks of "officially decreed forgettings" that involve explicit censorship, bowdlerized histories, camouflaging of events, banning of historical records and books, criminalization of cultural traditions, falsification of files, Machiavellian erasures from records, canon formations, assassinations, and massacres (22). One such form of administered forgetting I call the victor-victim reversal.

If ever there was a new kind of war, it was not 9-11; it was when Hiroshima was "blown . . . off the face of the earth" and Nagasaki "disemboweled" (Graburn, Ertl, and Tierney 200). On 6 August 1945, the first radio announcement went out: "This was the story of a new bomb. . . . Allied scientists have now harnessed the basic power of the universe"

(White 161). Oppenheimer captured the enormity of the attack by reaching for scriptural text: "Now I am become death, the destroyer of worlds" (Dower 208).

Yet any patriotic triumphalism at having harnessed, godlike, the power of the cosmos was overshadowed by a foreboding that something unfathomable, even monstrous, had been spawned. Numerous commentators, Edward R. Murrow among them, noted how imperial victory metamorphosed instantly into national vulnerability: "Seldom if ever has a war ended leaving the victors with such a sense of uncertainty and fear, with such a realization that the future is obscure and that survival is not assured" (102).

But the most striking aspect of the atmosphere of national foreboding was that it sprang not from remorse for the Japanese civilians evaporated, boiled, and burned to death but from the perverse apprehension of the nuclear apocalypse now awaiting the United States. What John Haynes Holmes called "the final crisis in history" was not the catastrophe in Japan but rather the ominous sense that "[w]hat that atomic bomb had done to Japan, it could do to us." Over the coming decades, the United States staged countless mass-consumer fantasies of itself as tragic victim. The hallucinations of historical fact in Japan became the hallucinations of futuristic fantasy in the United States.

What is one to make of this collective psychosis: the victor-victim reversal? No nation on earth has invested as much money and time creating collective spectacles of its own apocalyptic ruin for mass consumption as the United States.[6] Untouched by carnage, not one of their cities so much as blemished, Americans would for the next five decades enact countless fantasies for mass entertainment of a future United States tragedy. Hiroshima and Nagasaki were in the process ghosted from the American conscience and fell into a great forgetting.

The United States has never fully commemorated or atoned for the nuclear atrocities it inflicted on Japan. Instead, it embarked on the most thoroughgoing cover-up of its military victory. "The world will note," President Truman duplicitously claimed, "that the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, a military base. . . . We wished in this first attack to avoid, insofar as possible, the killing of civilians" (Thorup 37). The United States immediately banned all photographs or films of the cataclysm, established a rigid censorship code, detained Japanese cameramen, and seized all footage. No images of victims, dead or dying, appeared in the United States until *Life* magazine published a highly sanitized handful in November 1945 ("36-Hour War"). Most remarkably, a top-secret Technicolor film of the aftermath of the bombing, taken in 1946 by a special United States military unit, was locked up in vaults and kept scrupulously hidden from public view for decades. In 1995 the Smithsonian Institution planned to exhibit the *Enola Gay* with a revisionist history of the bombings, but the ensuing uproar was so ferocious the exhibit was cancelled. As Mary McCarthy observed, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki fell into "a hole in human history." Hiroshima was "taken out of the American conscience, eviscerated, extirpated" (367).

And on 9-11, *Ground Zero* was superimposed on the World Trade Center as the inaugural term for the moment when world history began.

Hinge 3: Indian Country

From the jungles of his dreaming he recognized why the Japanese voices had merged with Laguna voices.
—Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*

Overdetermining the administered forgetting of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, however, was a prior form of historical ghosting: the half-hallucinations of "Indian Country" that were displaced onto Japan. One can hardly overstate how pervasively the trope of "Indian

Country" has been used by the United States to characterize as yet unsubjugated territories in active war zones around the world. After the internal frontier was closed, the Pacific Islands became the United States' new western frontier, and the trope of Indian Country was projected onto the oceanic west and Japan. The Japanese were frequently referred to as "Indians," Japanese warfare was characterized as "Indian fighting," and Japanese soldiers were described as "whooping like Indians" (Takaki 76). In 1945, in a victor-victim reversal, the first journalist to describe the atomic "mushroom cloud" called it "a living totem pole, carved with many grotesque masks grimacing at the earth" (Laurence 35). After bombing Hiroshima, the United States military erected a shack in the nuclear rubble and screened a Wild West film for American soldiers. Imperial déjà vu: Hiroshima had become Indian Country.

Imperial Ghosting: Indian Country

In *Imperial Grunts*, Robert Kaplan notes that the defining trope for the United States' war on terror was "fighting the Indians. . . . Welcome to Injun Country was the refrain I heard from troops from Colombia to the Philippines, Afghanistan and Iraq. Welcome to Injun Country" (4). The jarring irony is that proportionately more American Indians serve in the United States military than any other group, fighting in helicopters and vehicles named after their own dispossessed peoples: Blackhawk, Apache, Chinooks (every American helicopter is named for an Indian tribe), firing Tomahawk missiles into Indian Country around the world. These appropriations, as well as the despised distortion *Injun Country*, are a form of imperial soul theft and symbolic wounding.

Throughout United States military history, to be in Indian Country was to be behind enemy lines, from the Philippines and Japan to the Persian Gulf in 1991 to Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, Yemen, and beyond. According to Charles Lane, Colin Powell called the My Lai massacre "understandable as the troops were stuck in 'Indian Country'" (24). The center of Mogadishu was called "Indian Country" during the "Blackhawk down" crisis, as were uncontrolled parts of Baghdad and Fallujah, while Fort Apaches and Fort Geronimos are scattered throughout the global war.

Indian Country is a form of imperial ghosting, a floating, displaced country of the Euro-American imagination, globally dispersed and perpetually shifting, a no-place and an everywhere. It is an aspect of imperial paranoia, double-sided with respect to power: both the geographic marker of a profound sense of impotence and chaos, and the historical marker of a fantasy of omnipotence, the future preordained by a heritage past that guarantees military victory as manifest destiny. In a striking example of the victor-victim reversal, Kaplan called the defeat of Custer's Seventh Cavalry "the 9/11 of its day" (367).

But why does the trope of Indian Country still matter? The founding tenet of American empire is that it is no empire at all. The Unites States has an unbroken history as an imperial power in Mexico, Latin America, Puerto Rico, Hawai'i, the Philippines, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and elsewhere, but it has largely been a covert empire, operating through client states, proxy armies, and subordinate allies: an empire in camouflage and denial. The fact that the United States has never dealt with its genocidal past—the dead not atoned for, the massacres not expiated—means that imperial violence is destined for ritualistic repetition. The trope of Indian Country is a phantom, the ghostly mark of transgenerational guilt as yet unatoned for.

It was therefore inevitable that the Obama administration's plan to assassinate bin Laden would be called Operation Geronimo. A more predictable yet improbable name theft, or phantom, is hard to imagine. Naming the terrorist bin Laden after the American Indian hero Geronimo has produced a storm

of protest by American Indians, largely unheard by the Euro-American public.

Imperial ghosting: the largest crypt in United States history is empire itself.

Tragedy and the Refusal of Amnesia

The idea of tragedy is haunted by the atmosphere of destiny and the shadow of human futility. The naturalizing of tragedy can lead to political paralysis, melancholia, an unsettled malaise, and an exhaustion of political will. But not all tragic modes lead to quietism or nihilism; the choice does not have to be between the hubris of absolute certainty and the defeatism of inaction.

Hence the ambivalent presence of ghosts in dramatic tragedy. Ghosts represent the irruption into the present of an unresolved past, pointing thereby to the possibilities of alternative futures. Ghosts are fetishes of the in-between, marking places of irresolution, particularly in the adjudication of property, territory, power, and justice: unsolved murders, untimely deaths, illegitimate transfers of power or property, disrupted legacies, enacted as traumas of injustice. Ghosts embody the unsettling prospect that the past can be neither foreclosed nor redeemed.

Tragedy is therefore a liminal form, emerging at the rough edges of historical transformation and conflict. The tragic sensibility is not a timeless universal. It arises during periods of historical crisis and irresolution. The tragic sensibility troubles any sense that history is ordained by gods, guaranteed by the dialectic, redeemed by reason, or sanctioned by progress. Tragedy poses the question: how do we act justly in a world where absolute knowledge is not guaranteed, where our eyes may deceive us, and where the stuff of the material world may be precarious?

But if we surrender to the seductions of nihilistic inaction, we will indeed live in tragic times.[7] If the past is silenced, it will resurface in phantasmagoric form, as shattered and disrupted time, as palimpsest and fugue: imperial déjà vu. The administration of forgetting produces the memory blowback of those who have borne the brunt of imperial violence and who have not forgotten. The Japanese have forcefully protested the United States' appropriation of *Ground Zero* just as Indians have protested the United States military's appropriation of native names and terms and "Indian Country."[8] Historical ghosts are not simply emissaries from the past. In their invitations to remember, they can be harbingers of more sustainable futures. Blackhawk asks us to remember not only the "often big and tragic processes" of Indian history but also the positive processes of "cultural revitalization, and community resurgence" (293). Ghosts invite us to remember Marx's dictum that people do make history, even if not under circumstances of their choosing.

Above all, we must recognize that in the shadowlands of empire what the CIA and the United States military call ghosts are not ghosts at all but ordinary people with ordinary lives. We must animate the histories that have been officially forgotten, we must atone for atrocity and commemorate the dead. If we attend to ghosts, as Derrida suggests, we must not just atone for the dead but bring justice to the living. Imperial ghosting leaves spectral traces, which can point to alternative histories, more enabling futures, and the promises of atonement. So we must learn to speak with ghosts, for specters disturb the authority of vision, and the hauntings of popular memory will return to challenge the great forgettings of official history. As Eduardo Galeano has written, "History never really says goodbye. History says, see you later."

Notes

This essay condenses "Premonitions," the first section of my book *Imperial Ghosting: Perpetual War in the Twilight*

of U.S. Power, forthcoming from Duke University Press. I am grateful to Jean Howard, Helene Foley, and Rob Nixon for their invaluable editorial insights.

1. "Grey Ghost" was the name given by the male prisoners at Bagram Air Base to Aafia Siddiqui, the Pakistani scientist and only female prisoner reported to have been held at Bagram.

2. Here and throughout my book, in which I expand on the critical and vexed issue of naming, I alternate among *American Indians*, *Indians*, and *native peoples* to highlight the historical instability and political freight of these terms.

3. See John W. Dower, esp. ch. 10 (221–50). I am greatly indebted to Dower's work on the United States' nuclear attacks and to the invaluable work of Paul Boyer.

4. Here I am in the company of Avery Gordon, Marianne Hirsch, Gabriele Schwab, Renee Bergland, Russ Castronovo, and Jenny Sharpe, to whose explorations of ghostly matters I owe a great deal.

5. *GPW* refers to the 1949 Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War.

6. Joseph Masco offers an insightful, comprehensive account of this phenomenon.

7. See David Scott's rich and provocative engagement with tragedy's implications for postcolonial theory.

8. This appropriation has been protested in an ongoing Senate hearing, in political protests, countless articles and blogs, and, most notably, by Winona LaDuke, to whom I am deeply grateful.

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