

# Commemoration in a Media Age: The Falklands War

## Methodology

I piloted HyperResearch, a digital video management and analysis software package which facilitated coding of textual, sonic and visual data. Using this, I transcribed and coded a three-hour BBC commemoration of the Falklands War. By coding the data under such categories as ‘camaraderie’, ‘chauvinism’, and ‘sanitisation: deaths’, I explored the nature and significance of such themes.

## Findings: BBC Memorial

The most striking finding was the reduction of a horrific war to a sanitised, simplistic and affirmative war narrative. The memorial coverage was characterised by the iconic, stoical shows of camaraderie by veterans, and staged emotions. If death and injury were addressed, they were de-personalised through quantification or shrouded by a Christian narrative of sacrifice. Thus, the BBC’s uncritical reflection on the war evidences an approach to commemoration which broadly fits what Rigney (2005) terms the ‘plenitude-loss-restoration model of memory’. This presumes ‘memory’ to be something that was fully formed in the past which diminishes over time, and therefore requires preservation to mitigate against forgetting.

## Findings: ICA Exhibition

The ‘Memorial to the Iraq War’ exhibition explored the memorial form, challenging many mechanisms of mediated memory evident in the Falkland’s commemoration coverage.

- A clear example is Ondák’s *Snapshots from Baghdad*, a camera containing undeveloped shots from present-day Baghdad, can be seen as an antidote to the media pursuit of the iconic at the expense of comprehension.
- Similarly, Schorr’s *Memorial to Lost Limbs*, where silhouettes are messily filled with body parts, offers a disturbing reminder of those wounded by war, against the media’s extreme sanitisation.

## Conclusions

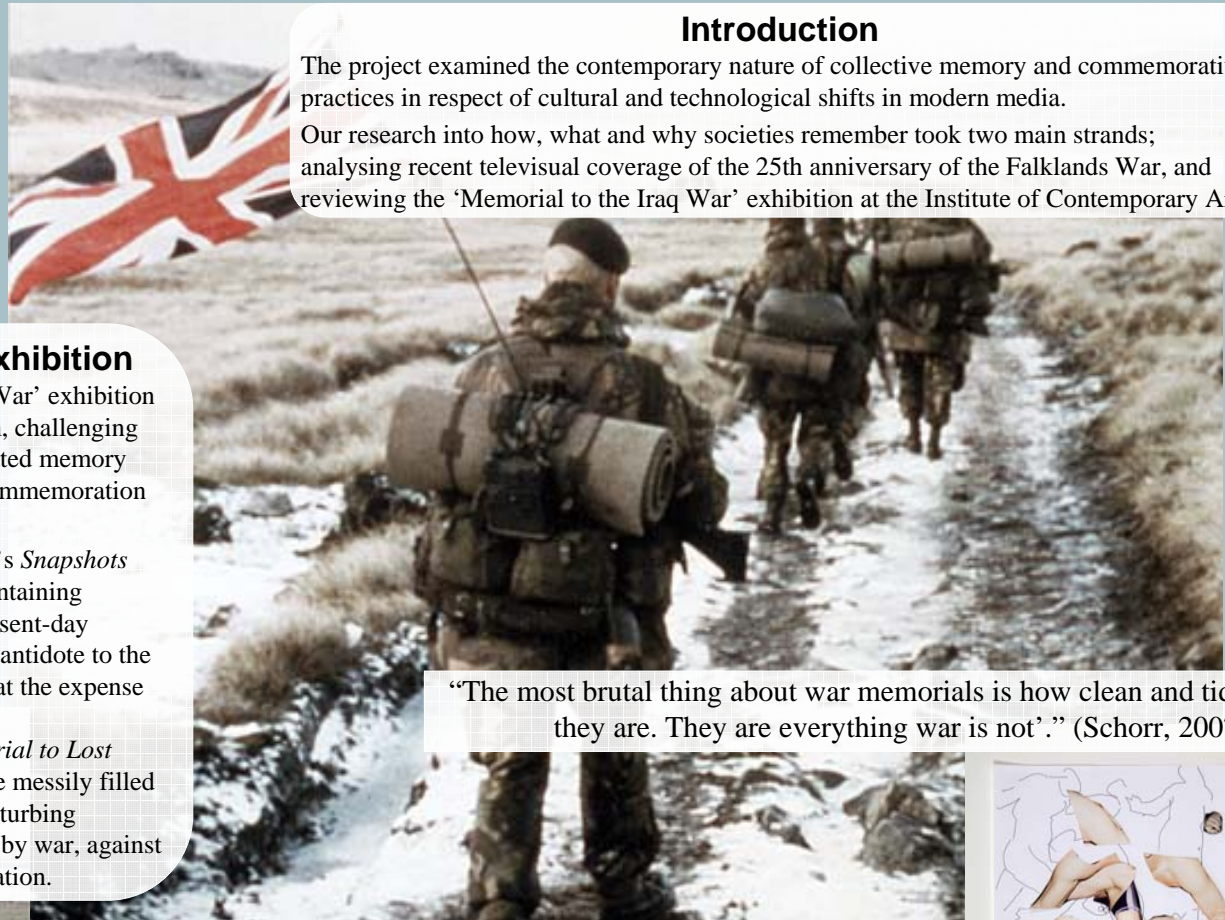
The *Memorial to the Iraq War* appears to subvert the model of memory upon which traditional understandings of memorialisation are founded. This suggests that the BBC’s commemoration may not represent a universal precedent, particularly since the ‘war on terror’ appears perpetual and horizonless, lacking the absolutes of the Falklands war. Indeed, one could foresee a future in which these very complexities and chaos are acknowledged as the very matter of memory.

## Evaluative Comments

My involvement in the URSS scheme has been extremely enriching, offering an insight into academia and motivating me in my future career aspirations. The research culminated in a published review and conference paper delivered at the ESA’s 8<sup>th</sup> conference, allowing me to build up my research profile. Furthermore, I was able to liaise with prestigious researchers through my involvement in the AHRC funded project, ‘Conflicts of Memory: Mediating and Commemorating the 2005 London Bombings’. The contacts and skills gained in this project could prove invaluable in pursuing future academic studies.

## Introduction

The project examined the contemporary nature of collective memory and commemorative practices in respect of cultural and technological shifts in modern media. Our research into how, what and why societies remember took two main strands; analysing recent televisual coverage of the 25th anniversary of the Falklands War, and reviewing the ‘Memorial to the Iraq War’ exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts.



“The most brutal thing about war memorials is how clean and tidy they are. They are everything war is not.” (Schorr, 2007)



Collier Schorr

