Photography, Truth and Reconciliation

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Introduction

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This book begins with an 'impossible' photograph (Fig. 1.1).[1] It is a time-travelling family portrait of the adult Veronica Castelli, her young mother María Teresa Trotta and Castelli herself as a baby. Castelli was just two and a half years old when her mother was abducted. Her father Roberto Castelli was kidnapped in a separate operation on the same February day in 1977. Never seen by their families again, the couple is among the estimated 30,000 people who were forcibly disappeared at the hands of their own government during Argentina's military dictatorship (1976–83). Trotta was six months pregnant when she was abducted, and was held in a clandestine detention centre until her child was born. Her baby, Veronica Castelli's sibling, was secretly adopted with the help of the *Movimiento Familiar Cristiano* (Christian Family Movement), which supported the military regime's efforts to separate children of the disappeared from their families.[2]

This photograph was taken by the Argentine artist Lucila Quieto as part of her series '*Arqueologías de la Ausencia*' (Archaeology of Absence) (1999–2001). Quieto's series is one of many photography projects developed in the post-dictatorship period after the *Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas* (CONADEP) (1983–84) called for truth and justice for the human rights violations that occurred under the military regime.[3] At the time this photograph was made, Quieto and Castelli were part of a group known by its Spanish acronym HIJOS.[4] This group formed in 1995 to highlight the intergenerational impact of forced disappearances, and challenge the injustices of a system that has allowed those responsible to live in freedom. 'Archaeology of Absence' complements the group's desire to assist the sons and daughters of the disappeared to rebuild their family histories. Quieto enticed members to take part in her series with the promise of 'the photo you have always dreamed of and could never have'.[5] After inviting participants to select a photograph from their family albums, Quieto scanned it and projected it onto a wall. Quieto then prompted her subjects to place themselves between the projector and the wall, and interact with the image as she took a new photograph.
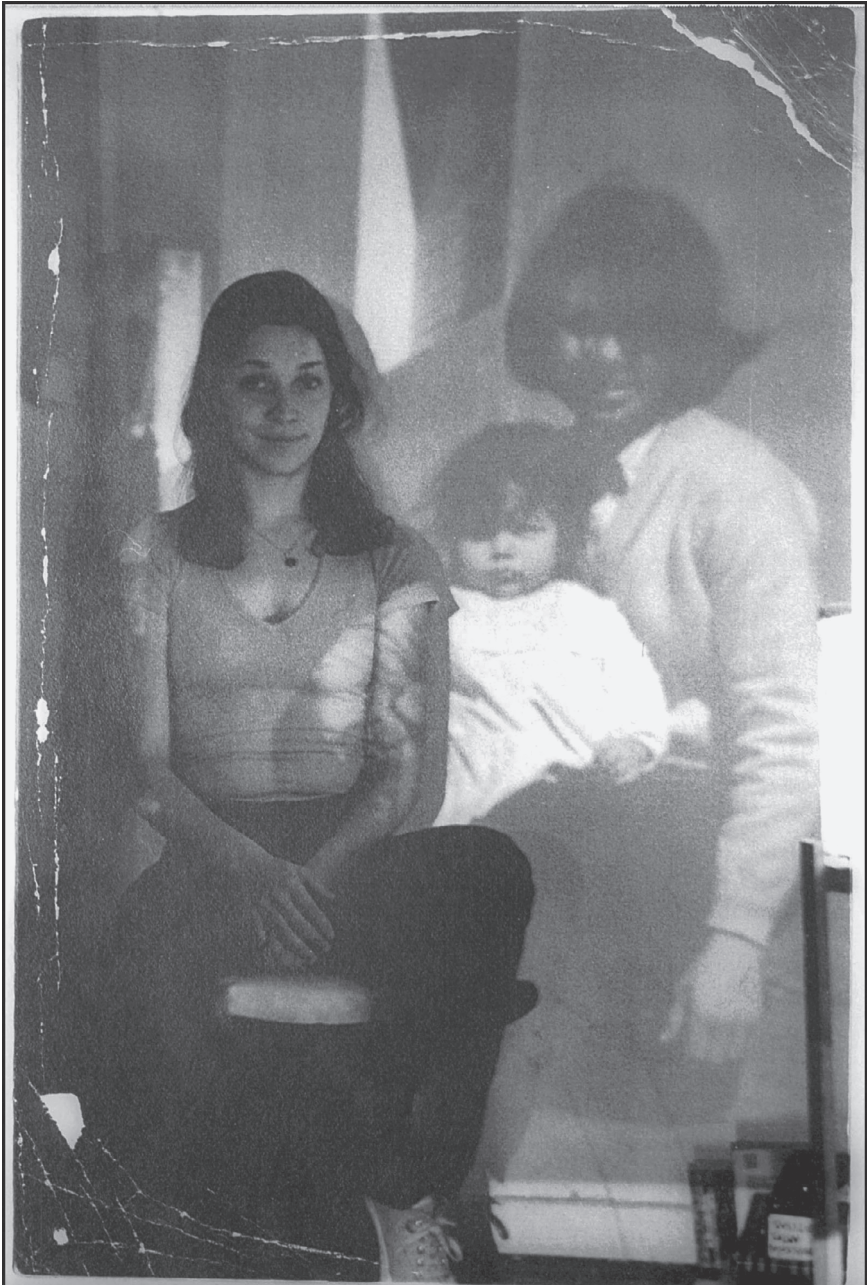
FIGURE 1.1 Lucila Quieto, *Arqueologías de la Ausencia* (Archaeology of Absence), 1999–2001. Rafael Wollmann/Gamma-Rapho/Getty Images.

As Castelli was blanketed by the projected grain of the family photograph and inserted into its pictorial field, she became part of a much-desired photograph with her mother. Castelli's position seated next to her mother creates a sense of compositional unity. However, disjunctions in scale, materiality and setting between the enlarged projection of the crinkled 1970s photograph of Trotta crouched on the street and the contemporary photograph of Castelli seated indoors suggest that this meeting of the past and the present is not designed to achieve a neat resolution. HIJOS has elsewhere expressed its strong opposition to a comforting, unproblematic form of memorialization that produces 'an unquestionable past, incapable of establishing links with the present'.[6] To Quieto, the time of her photograph is neither an idealized distant past, nor the present of the contemporary photograph. It is an undefined, fictionalized time where the past is made present in the production of the new image.[7] This photograph is also an expression of Castelli's hopes for the future. At the time the photograph was taken, Castelli had been searching for her adopted sibling for many years.[8] Castelli's hope of finding her missing sister was realized in 2008, thirty-one years after she was taken from her family.

Quieto's photograph makes visible the desire to reimagine relationships between the past, present and future that pervade the photographs in this book. *Photography, Truth and Reconciliation* examines the special place of photographs in contexts of truth and reconciliation. This book argues that the proliferation of processes of truth and reconciliation internationally since the 1980s has important but little-acknowledged implications for photography and historiography, extending well beyond the use of photographs as evidence of human rights violations to encompass new ways of imagining some of photography's and history's most fundamental qualities. In the wake of extensive critiques of photographic truth and historical objectivity in the 1980s and 1990s, the meaning and value of photographs in historical analysis have become topics 'of urgent intellectual and cultural interest around the world'.[9] The traditional reliance on the 'mute sensuality' of photographs in histories has been criticized increasingly, as it invokes photographs simply as illustrations of other conclusions rather than the basis for new historical knowledge.[10] The treatment of photographs as visual texts to be interpreted with reference to the discourses of their day is equally problematic because it assumes that photographs act as static windows onto the past and are isolated from the present. Driven by the creative, critical and political power of photographs, this book recognizes that photographs do not simply reflect historical events – they offer a valuable means of understanding the past and its place in the present. The official, institutional, personal and artistic uses of photography examined in this book variously show how the past imbues the present, how we can learn from it, and use it to envision new futures.

In contrast to studies of atrocity photographs or images of human rights violations, *Photography, Truth and Reconciliation* does not focus on photographs of violent events but on the use of photography after these events. Substantial research has been done on photographs of atrocities and violence since the late 1990s.[11] The moral and political implications of viewing photographs of human suffering, especially from a political and geographic distance, informs much of this body of work.[12] More recently, others have sought to expand the scope of studies of photography and human rights. Challenging the idea that human rights can only be pictured in their violation, Jane Lydon argues that the 'focus on suffering and atrocity imagery has displaced other ways in which we imagine humanity'.[13] Although *Photography, Truth and Reconciliation* is concerned with very different types of photographs, valuable lessons from studies of atrocity photography inform this project. These include Susie Linfield's argument in favour of shifting the terms of debate away from the misplaced hope that photographs can somehow 'vanquish violence', and towards an appreciation of how images are used to make meaning of the past and the present. According to Linfield: 'This requires transforming our relationship to photographs from one of passivity and complaint to one of creativity and collaboration.'[14] The practitioners discussed in this book have adopted this kind of creative, collaborative approach, either in their production of new photographs or by using photographs with prehistories in the media, family collections, or medical and judicial realms. This work shows how contexts of truth and reconciliation create conditions in which personal and public demands on photographs are stretched, and their place in relation to history is reconfigured.

The era of truth and reconciliation

The dozens of nations in North and South America, Europe, Africa and the Asia Pacific that have established truth commissions since the 1980s underscore the international interest in this means of recovering from periods of severe violence or repression.[15] The popularity of truth commissions is linked to a series of factors. Between the Second World War and the late 1980s, there was a marked escalation in the number of military dictatorships and civil wars involving systematic human rights violations against civilians including forced disappearances, torture, rape and extra-judicial killings. Andrew Mack describes in his 'Human Security Report 2005' how these armed conflicts and dictatorships increasingly came to an end from the 1980s. The conclusion of the Cold War in the late 1980s meant that US and Soviet support for 'proxy wars' in Asia, Africa and Latin America also ended, causing many conflicts to 'quietly ground to a halt'. No longer hamstrung by Cold War

politics, the United Nations (UN) was able to lead 'a veritable explosion of conflict prevention, peacemaking and post-conflict peace-building activities in the early 1990s'.[16] International norms for human rights also became more clearly defined at this time, and consolidated in international and local human rights law.[17] Along with improvements in the international monitoring of human rights and the growing effectiveness of human rights NGOs in assisting victims to better identify and document violations, these changes helped to mobilize local public opinion against oppressive regimes and more effectively articulate demands for official apologies, recognition of victims, reparations and justice.[18]

Formerly divided nations were faced with the challenge of transitioning to a democratic and peaceful future. Mass violence left societies in chaos, with large numbers of people displaced and traumatized. Violence associated with ethnic, racial and religious divisions recurred in several countries where past violations had not been addressed, as states were unable or unwilling to prosecute perpetrators.[19] Amid this instability, transitioning governments turned increasingly to truth commissions to investigate and report on the causes, facts and consequences of human rights violations, pacify social relations and reduce the risk of renewed violent conflict. Truth commissions also helped new governments to distinguish themselves morally and symbolically from former regimes.

Although truth commissions vary significantly in their mandates, procedures, terms of reference, composition and purpose, there are some common features. Truth commissions are temporary bodies often authorized officially or empowered by the state under review, and are usually formed with the intention to conclude with a final report.[20] They are typically established to investigate a pattern of past violence or repression over a limited period of time rather than an isolated, individual event or events that remain ongoing. While commissions collect evidence and may make recommendations for prosecutions, they generally do not punish offenders. In contrast to criminal trials where accused offenders are the focus, truth commissions are victim-centred. They engage 'directly and broadly with the affected population' and gather information about victims' experiences through written and oral testimonies.[21] These strategies collectively mark a notable change from the Cold War era, in which the prevailing attitude to reconciliation was that it was best achieved through amnesty.[22] In truth commissions, the goal of unity is sought by giving voice to suppressed histories and officially recognizing past abuses.

As the demand for transitional justice grew internationally, new organizations like the International Centre for Transitional Justice (established in 2001) were formed to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and expertise. The UN also played a key role in promoting the establishment of truth commissions.

A UN Secretary General's report released in 2004 argued that truth commissions:

> have the potential to be of great benefit in helping post-conflict societies establish the facts about past human rights violations, foster accountability, preserve evidence, identify perpetrators and recommend reparations and institutional reforms. They can also provide a public platform for victims to address the nation directly with their personal stories and can facilitate public debate about how to come to terms with the past.[23]

Even in countries that have not established formal truth and reconciliation commissions – such as Australia and Cambodia – this mode of reckoning with the past has had a striking impact upon public cultures through official recognition of the perspectives of victims and an interest in uncovering formerly suppressed histories. Activities and events such as the opening of government archives to the public, public expressions of remembrance, the rewriting of official histories and commemorative ceremonies have also proliferated as nations look to others when seeking to facilitate truth-telling and reconciliation.[24]

Despite this international enthusiasm, truth commissions have also attracted substantial criticism. Issues of impunity and formal provisions for amnesty from criminal prosecution have been especially controversial. Amnesty may allow perpetrators to escape justice in exchange for assurances that they will cease their violent acts, co-operate with investigators or offer full confessions. Although amnesty provisions enabled the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to uncover facts about serious violations that may have otherwise remained hidden, they also risked contradicting 'the principle of individual criminal responsibility and undermin[ing] the country's efforts against impunity'.[25] The necessity of a limited mandate also means that not all crimes and abuses are investigated by truth commissions. South Africa's TRC was concerned primarily with gross human rights violations, leaving thousands of perpetrators, beneficiaries and victims of apartheid's daily abuses out of the process. Recognition of the distinctly gendered qualities of violence is another area where many truth commissions have fallen short. In the conclusion to her major study of truth commissions and gender for the International Centre for Transitional Justice in 2006, Vasuki Nesiah reports that 'many truth commissions have failed women – the crimes they have suffered are under-reported, their voices are rendered inaudible, their depiction in commission reports is one-dimensional, and their needs and goals are deprioritized in recommendations for reparations, reform, and prosecutions'.[26] These and other limitations have a lasting effect on the official histories produced through truth commissions by promoting some narratives while cloaking others in silence.

Truth, reconciliation and the 'memory boom'

Since the 1990s, transitional justice and truth commissions have inspired a great deal of scholarly analysis. Scholars have analysed how societies emerge from civil war, dictatorship and state violence, and assessed the strengths and weaknesses of individual truth commissions.[27] Exhibitions and studies of the films, art and public memorials produced in response to processes of truth and reconciliation form another extensive field of inquiry. By extending its scope beyond the art world to acknowledge the important cross-fertilization of photographic practices in official commission reports, the media, activism, the family and art – as well as their implications for historiography – *Photography, Truth and Reconciliation* diverges from the emphasis upon witness, memory and trauma that dominate studies of visual art and transitional justice.[28]

The unprecedented significance attributed to memory, witness and testimony in public cultures in Europe and the Americas has been acknowledged by several historians, philosophers and theorists.[29] Described by Jay Winter as the 'memory boom', the heavy attention on witness and testimony in popular and academic histories has shifted emphasis away from the idea of history as a presentation of facts about the past, to one of personal narrative characterized by emotion, memory and affect.[30] Informing this change is the intensifying concern for the individual actor in history since the late 1960s. Radical political movements of the 1960s and 1970s associated with issues of gender, race, class and sexuality helped to reinforce the concern for individual life stories in history writing, especially those of the poor, migrants, minorities and women in a trend known as 'histories from below'. The triumph of an ideal of human rights and expansion of the politics of identity in which people tell their own stories of oppression also contribute greatly to the ever-expanding body of testimonial literature and imagery. Ernst van Alphen argues that: 'At the heart of this change is the activity of storytelling, seen as healing. Since the 1990s, more and more countries see the right of victims to tell their stories as fundamental.'[31] Winter similarly notes that the rising level of recognition of traumatic memory since the 1980s is 'one of the salient features of the contemporary memory boom'.[32]

This prominence of testimony and memory is reinforced by intense interest in truth commissions and the histories that they produce. As well as humanizing often overwhelmingly large-scale human rights abuses, the victim-centred ideals of truth commissions have led to changes in practices of historiography, the authority of historians, and perceptions of the relationship between the past and the present. Those people who experienced an event have come to be regarded as special embodiments of history and bearers of a privileged voice, while professional historians are no longer positioned as the authorities

who reveal the 'truth' about the past. According to historian Bain Attwood, 'Together, these changes have placed the personal at the centre of public culture and put emotion on display; the individual and affect wield more power in representing the past than the intellectual and analysis.'[33] The photographs and photographic practices examined in this book provide a means of extending discussion of traumatic histories and imagery beyond the privileged truths embodied in witness testimonies to consider other narratives, questions of materiality, changing interpretations of imagery and the past, and their silences.

Along with the international interest in reconciliation and reparation politics, the fixation on memory in academic research and public cultures has been criticized for its preoccupation with the past and neglect of the future. Charles Maier expressed concerns about the 'memory industry' in 1993, and asked whether this 'addiction to memory' had become 'neurasthenic and disabling'. According to Maier, the focus on issues of past suffering and victimhood rather than encompassing communities and wider questions of citizenship are indicative of a loss of a 'future orientation'. The 'surfeit of memory', says Maier, 'is a sign not of historical confidence but of a retreat from transformative politics'.[34] A comparable point was made by several others, as the memory boom intensified. John Torpey argues that the rise of reparation politics and efforts to frame history in psychotherapeutic terms – with aims of overcoming denial, healing and closure – have supplanted more 'expansive visions of an alternative human future' such as those which inspired the civil rights movements of the mid-twentieth century.[35] Problematically, as Elazar Barkan argues, processes of restitution can enable states to re-establish a sense of political and moral legitimacy by foreclosing on confronting pasts.[36] I demonstrate in this book that while the use of photographs in official commission reports and certain exhibition practices may reinforce this kind of historical closure, other photographic practices address how the past persists in the present and shapes possible futures.

Truths, reconciliations, histories and photographies

Central to this book are the diverse approaches to truth and reconciliation that are evident across a range of contexts, and the practices of photography and historiography with which they are linked. Despite Ralph Keyes' 2004 declaration that we have arrived in a post-truth era, in contexts of truth and reconciliation, truth has profound personal and political significance.[37] According to a 2006 UN Commission on Human Rights report on the 'right to

truth', '[t]ruth is fundamental to the inherent dignity of the human person'.[38] This report's definition of the right to truth has its roots in responses to forced disappearances, but has expanded in recognition of other serious human rights violations such as extra-judicial executions and torture. The right to truth is described as the right for people 'to know what happened to them or their relatives'. It 'implies knowing the full and complete truth as to the events that transpired, their specific circumstances, and who participated in them, including knowing the circumstances in which the violations took place, as well as the reasons for them'.[39] Truth is consequently defined objectively in terms of an accurate account of events as they really happened. Importantly, it is not simply the disclosure of a formerly oppressed truth that is claimed to be healing for the individual and the nation. Healing reputedly comes from the official, public recognition of that truth.[40] The revelation of such truths and their use in the production of new versions of history are also said to ensure that the violations will never happen again, and that the past can be left behind. According to Desmond Tutu, Chair of the South African TRC: 'It is only by accounting for the past that we can become accountable for the future.'[41]

However, it is deeply problematic to position these processes of truth-telling as 'universalizing and redemptive', as though history and truth are the same thing.[42] The investment in history as truth ignores the culturally and temporally specific qualities of both history and truth, and their role in processes of truth and reconciliation. The truths that emerge through these structures are not autonomous, but as Ruti Teitel points out, are 'inextricably related to particular processes of creating knowledge, as well as to prior historical narratives'.[43] Following Teitel, I argue that the production of officially authorized truths and the ways in which contested histories are resolved (or not) have significant implications for political accountability and justice, as well as for society and individual witnesses.

The importance of acknowledging these contextual specificities is why *Photography, Truth and Reconciliation* is structured around five discrete national case studies: Argentina, South Africa, Canada, Australia and Cambodia. These case studies show how the meanings of truth and history vary, and how these variations are bound up with certain photographic practices. In Argentina's CONADEP and Truth Trials, for example, truth was cast as a foundation for justice and linked to the right for relatives of the disappeared to know what happened to their loved ones, as well as the right to bury and mourn the dead.[44] In contrast, South Africa's TRC adopted a multi-dimensional conception of truth. While aspiring to produce a new historical truth that could unite the nation, it also took into account the factual, narrative, experiential and moral qualities of truth, and acknowledged how truth is contingent and contextually determined. Meanwhile in Australia, where reconciliation is taking place slowly and without a truth commission, the meeting of different

conceptions of historical truth has led to intense political and academic conflict over the meaning of the past and its place in the present. The case studies examine how photographs variously produce, challenge or reconfigure tensions between the belief in the possibility of an objective account of the past and recognition of the political and social contingencies that inform historical narratives.

Photography's ability to lend itself to different forms of truth means that this medium has been eagerly adopted in contexts of truth and reconciliation. Conceptions of the photographic witness, associated historically with photojournalism and the evidentiary use of photographs in law, inform the use of photographs in commission investigations and hearings, and the publication of photographs in official reports and websites in each case study. Photographs do not just illustrate the histories forged through commissions; they help to produce them, make them accessible to the public and lend them weight. In these official contexts, the supposed impartiality and objectivity of the camera as a recording device underpin its authority. Yet photographs have an equally long history of speaking to other kinds of truth, including the truth of experience, emotion or feeling. The content, meaning and materiality of photographs discussed in the following chapters express a range of personal and subjective responses to processes of truth and reconciliation and the traumatic events that lie at their heart. The artistic and activist appropriation of judicial and media photographs also highlight how distinctions between objective and subjective truths are fraught, contingent and highly changeable in photography. I will show how this power of photographs to assert multiple truths, and operate as conceptual, contextual and temporal bridges makes photography such a pervasive and valuable tool in cultures of truth and reconciliation.

Reconciliation and its relationships to photography, truth and history are similarly variable and contextually determined. In studies of transitional justice, there is little consensus about what reconciliation means and how it can be achieved.[45] Generally, it involves the active participation of parties formerly divided by enmity. Reconciliation can range from 'thin' forms in which conflicting parties agree to lay down their arms, to 'thicker' forms associated with forgiveness, the creation of mutual trust, shared values, a political community, a collective narrative about the past and a shared vision for the future.[46] The heavy emphasis upon forgiveness in South African reconciliation discourse was problematic for some victims who were obliged to bear the weight of forgiveness for the nation. One young South African woman describes the resultant pressure:

What really makes me angry about the TRC and Tutu is that they are putting pressure on me to forgive . . . I don't know if I will ever be able to forgive. I

carry this ball of anger within me and I don't know where to begin dealing with it. The oppression was bad, but what is much worse, what makes me even angrier, is that they are trying to dictate my forgiveness.[47]

This stress on forgiveness can be especially problematic for women, who in many societies are taught to 'forgive and forget instead of to resent and resist'.[48] Forgiveness is also a major challenge when the wrongdoing or its effects are ongoing, as it undermines the possibility for meaningful change.

Other aspects of reconciliation inform this book, particularly its recognition of the value of listening to other people's stories and conceptions of reconciliation as a conversation between the past and the present. However, rather than seeking to resolve conflicts between the different truths and histories that emerge in each case study, I wish to acknowledge the political value of these alternative perspectives. This value can be understood with reference to what Leigh Payne refers to as 'contentious coexistence'. While the term reconciliation implies a kind of transcendence of conflict, contentious coexistence acknowledges the existence of competing interests and perspectives as not only reflective of society but as a vital ingredient in the struggle for democracy. Payne argues that contentious coexistence 'rejects infeasible official and healing truth in favor of multiple and contending truths that reflect different political viewpoints in society'. In this 'conflictual dialogic' understanding of democracy, unsettling stories and images provoke 'political participation, contestation, and competition' in public and private contexts.[49] Although contentious co-existence makes the struggle for a democratic ideal possible, Payne stresses that it does not guarantee democratic outcomes – 'the best, most ethical, democratic, or even legal argument will not necessarily win'. The value of contentious co-existence is that it puts 'into practice the democratic act of participation, contestation, and competition'.[50] Photography aids this process by inviting viewers to identify with stories, events and others, while the ease with which photographs circulate locally and transnationally in print, exhibitions and online makes them ideal for fostering discourse and debate.

An appreciation for diverse meanings of truth and history also has critical implications for photography studies. The urgency of photography in contexts of truth and reconciliation, and its use to respond to national, local and personal issues, has helped to generate some important photographic practices and discourses that differ from more well-known Euro–American models. The suspicion of truth and questioning of the limits of the medium in South African photography in the 1980s, for example, may on the surface appear to mirror the concerns of postmodernism in the US and Europe. However, I argue in Chapter 3 that this critique of photographic truth grew out of very different conditions in South Africa and has different consequences. To ignore these regional specificities is to misconstrue the photographs and reinforce a model

of photography theory that assumes that innovations are exported from the Euro–American world before being adopted in other countries. Consideration of these issues also involves recognizing that questions about photography's meaning in relation to history are not simply abstract philosophical concerns, but matters of weighty social and political significance.

As well as respecting these cultural and geographical differences, it is crucial to acknowledge that neither the historical events discussed in these pages nor the production and circulation of photographs and photographic discourses occur in isolation; they are all the products of a confluence of international, national and local factors. The events discussed here have been shaped by transnational forces including but not limited to colonization, the Cold War, globalization, supranational legal institutions, and the international human rights movement. Photography is also a global medium *par excellence*. Many of the photographers discussed in this book have developed international careers studying, exhibiting, publishing and speaking about their work far beyond their home shores, and several have made new homes in foreign lands. Local and international photography scholars commonly cite one another in a productive exchange of ideas about the medium. Moreover, the contemporary interest in witness, trauma and memory ensures that photographs dealing with issues of truth and reconciliation have found eager international audiences in museums, biennales, galleries, festivals and magazines in North America, Europe and the Asia–Pacific, as well as online and in the exhibition activities of NGOs.

However, this international story must be treated with caution as it involves a series of risks. One risk is that photographs can operate as a kind of universal myth that subordinates historical specificity to transhistorical explanations for 'human' events and experiences. As a result, photographs may fail to deepen historical knowledge or awareness of how the past may differ from the present.[51] A related danger is that culturally and socially specific histories come to be viewed as part of an essential 'collective memory' or 'public memory' rather than being recognized as contingent narratives. Myths of collective memory enable viewers to identify with the experiences of victims in the photographs, while failing to acknowledge how they or their forebears may have been complicit in their suffering by acting as perpetrators, collaborators, bystanders or beneficiaries who failed to act, claiming passively 'we didn't know'.

My own place in relation to these histories and photographs should therefore be noted. As an Anglo-Australian photography scholar, I am conscious of the harm caused when researchers distance themselves from photographed 'others' or appropriate their experiences, images and histories. Consequently, I do not claim to speak for the people whose work or stories are included in this book whether they are from Australia or another country. Rather, this

project is informed by the spirit of reconciliation and involves attentive listening to the stories and views of others, thinking about what is heard and participating in a respectful dialogue. Studies of photography and history in each national context have developed a compelling, internal dynamic that is informed by and has implications that reach far beyond these individual contexts. Through this book, I hope to draw some of this scholarship and photographic practice further into an international, cross-disciplinary conversation. Much as nations look around them to learn from international experiences of truth and reconciliation, there is benefit in looking to international photographic practices and theories to understand different ways of grappling with history and its role in the present.

Establishing connections

My approach involves identifying and analysing the points of connection between photographic practices, historiography and processes of truth and reconciliation in a range of contexts. Selection criteria for the case studies are based on the depth and diversity of these points of connection, rather than a desire to achieve a certain kind of geographical or historical spread. As a result, the chapters do not represent broad surveys of photographs in processes of truth and reconciliation in Argentina, South Africa, Canada, Australia and Cambodia. They focus on a limited number of examples chosen for the nuance and complexity that they bring to the key issues or themes that link photography, historiography, and processes of truth and reconciliation in these contexts. These linking themes include: presence, truth, narrative, time, place, silence and justice. While only one or two of these themes are aligned with each national case study, I do not claim that these issues are specific to that context. Indeed, issues of presence, truth, narrative, time, place, silence and justice resonate in photographic practices and historiography internationally. The case studies have been selected because they reveal moments of conflict, innovation or contradiction in these issues that provide new insight into the role of photography in how we engage with the past.

   In recognition of the wide reach and impact of truth and reconciliation in public cultures internationally, *Photography, Truth and Reconciliation* includes case studies that are not limited to contexts of transitional justice or formal TRCs. Argentina's CONADEP (1983–84) and South Africa's TRC (1995–2002) are very high profile commissions established as part of strategies of transitional justice. Canada's TRC (2008–15) contrasts with these two examples in that it was instituted by an established democracy and was not associated with a major political transition or regime change. Rather, this TRC was created in response to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

(1992–96), which also led to the Canadian government's *Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan* (1997) and its program of reconciliation and 'healing'.[52] Australia's ongoing efforts towards reconciliation differ again; here reconciliation is informed by lessons learned from international truth commissions but is developing very slowly without benefit of an official TRC. Although Cambodia has taken a judicial approach to reckoning with its past rather than opting for a TRC, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) is characterized by qualities associated with TRCs, such as the desire to recognize the voices of victims, uncover the 'truth' about the past and revise the nation's history.

Argentina is selected as the first case study and focus of Chapter 2 because of the special significance of presence in activist and artistic photographic practices developed during the military dictatorship and in the post-dictatorship period. The military dictatorship's use of forced disappearances to stifle dissent and intimidate the population, as well as its concealment of evidence relating to those disappearances, means that family photographs have taken on enormous importance as a sign of the disappeareds' ongoing presence in the lives of family members and as an issue in public culture. The use of family photographs by the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo and in the creative work of Gustavo Germano and Marcelo Brodsky invoke photographic presence in a manner that differs from the familiar absence/ presence dualism popularized in Euro–American photography theory and historiography. This dualism is underpinned by an objective conception of time as a series of discrete moments that can be structured in a linear manner, one after another.[53] Photographs of disused clandestine detention centres produced for publication in the CONADEP report reflect this objective sense of time, and accordingly enabled the post-dictatorship government to distance itself from the military regime. In contrast, the iconic, temporal and material aspects of photographic presence discussed in relation to other Argentine photographic practices suggest how photographs may also embody the perception of time as an unfolding of the past in the present. Rather than claiming access to a past truth, here presence promotes a dialogic relationship between photography and history that refuses to put the past to bed.

Chapter 3 builds on this discussion of presence by considering the varied conceptions of truth associated with South Africa's TRC and related photographic practices. This commission investigated the gross human rights violations committed by government forces and the anti-apartheid movement between 1960 and 1994. South Africa's TRC provided a very different context for photography from Argentina's CONADEP. Whereas CONADEP drew on forensic definitions of truth and the right for family members to know what happened to their loved ones, South Africa's TRC brought together four distinct forms of truth: 'factual or forensic truth', 'personal or narrative truth', social

or 'dialogue' truth, and 'healing and restorative truth'.[54] Photography was employed in aid of all these overlapping truths in activism, forensic science, the law, journalism and personal testimonies. In contrast to Euro–American critiques of photographic truth that gained momentum in the era of postmodernism, the approaches to photographic truth and history discussed in this chapter grew out of the tradition of documentary photography that preceded the TRC. In struggle photography, official claims for photographic truth were treated with suspicion and photographers were impelled to consciously compose particular narratives of oppression and resistance as a matter of political urgency. The TRC, however, demanded a new investment in truth that countered the lies of the former regime while acknowledging the different perspectives of perpetrators, victims, forensic specialists and investigators. Rather than assembling the iconic images of the apartheid era,[55] the various photographs and practices discussed in this chapter were selected because of their explicit engagement with the TRC, and/or questions of truth, narrative and history. Calling into question the opposition between truth and narrative in historiography, this work proposes productive ways of promoting their interaction.

Chapter 4 explores an issue that also arises in the previous two chapters: the philosophies of time that underpin photography and history. The unique conditions of Canada's TRC (2008–15) raise a series of issues concerning photography, time and history. This was the first TRC to be primarily concerned with children, the first to cover such an extended period of time (165 years), and the first for an established democracy. Canada's TRC investigated the Indian Residential School (IRS) system, which operated across all territories of Canada between 1831 and 1996. The schools were intended to assimilate First Nations, Inuit and Métis people into colonial society, and achieved this goal by separating children from their families, communities and cultures, often with the use of brutal force. Within the IRS system, photography was widely used to demonstrate the 'success' of the schools. It provided 'evidence' of how children could be assimilated into the temporal logic of the colonizers that privileged progress, order and regimented structure as signs of civilization, morality and rationality. This chapter examines the new connections between time and photography that are forged in the cultural afterlife of these archival photographs in contemporary exhibitions and artworks. This work acknowledges the importance of Aboriginal perspectives in decolonizing photography, history and time, and developing a respect for the co-existence of multiple temporalities. Such temporal heterogeneity has valuable implications for historiography and photography theory by recognizing the voices of the formally marginalized and challenging how the 'now' of the photographed moment is understood.[56]

The legacies of colonization are also examined in Chapter 5, which considers the significance of place in photography, historiography and reconciliation in

Australia. Reconciliation and historical truth have been prominent issues in Australian public culture since the 1990s, as Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians have sought to acknowledge centuries of colonial dispossession and violence, and what this means for the national self-image. Problematically, Australian reconciliation lacks the focus and structure that a TRC typically provides. It also involves the meeting of conflicting conceptions of history as an objective, authoritative account of the past around which all Australians may unite, and the product of sharing and listening to individual stories.[57] These two ideals have distinct social implications regarding the purpose of history, the public role of historians and the form that society should take.[58] In contrast to the heated debates about Australia's colonial history known colloquially as the 'history wars', these different approaches to history have been brought together more constructively around photographic conceptions of place. Reflected in accounts of the stolen generations (Aboriginal people who were forcibly removed from their families and communities as children), Aboriginal conceptions of place and narratives of returning to Country have gone from being a highly significant aspect of localized Aboriginal identities to a prominent feature of national public culture. Photographs are an important part of this assertion of place and return, made evident in programs for repatriating photographs from public museums to Aboriginal communities and the production of new work by Ricky Maynard and Brenda L. Croft. Like the previous chapter, this chapter stresses the importance of Aboriginal perspectives in not only decolonizing archives and histories but in developing innovative means of connecting to the past in which different perspectives may sit side by side.

Cambodia was selected as the focus of the final chapter because of its lengthy, dismal record for justice and the complexity with which contemporary Cambodian photographers Mak Remissa, Vandy Rattana, Khvay Samnang and Lim Sokchanlina respond to injustices past and present. An idea common to all the contexts examined in this book is that photographs support the interests of justice by helping to give voice to the silent. The international fascination with the infamous S-21 prison photographs as symbols of silent Cambodian victims crying out for justice in the aftermath of the barbaric Khmer Rouge regime (1975–79) reflects this tendency. However, the convergence of photography, silence and justice in the contemporary photographic practices addressed in this chapter has different resonances. The interests of this chapter extend well beyond the Khmer Rouge regime to encompass the devastating US bombing campaigns that led to the Khmer Rouge's ascendency, international support for the Khmer Rouge after its fall, the ECCC, and the corruption and lack of accountability that characterizes Cambodia's 'triple transition' to peace, democracy and a free market.[59] By considering photography's many registers of silence and their implications for justice, the

photographers discussed here lead debate away from concepts of the photograph as a speech act to consider what sits beyond the photograph's frame.

The events, photographs and photographic practices addressed in these case studies are deeply varied. By bringing them together and making comparisons, I do not wish to imply an equivalence between the historical events or the photographic practices through which they are understood. No two truth commissions are the same, and the events that they investigate are all the products of myriad, intricate international, national, local and cultural relations. Most importantly, the very personal significance of these photographs for the individuals and communities whose stories are represented must also be respected. The goal of this book is to promote a productive dialogue that recognizes these specificities as well as acknowledging the lessons that they may offer to others. The strategies and tools presented here have valuable implications for other nations and individuals endeavouring to live with the legacies of harrowing pasts, as well as for those seeking to understand photography's relationships to history in new ways.