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# Hope(s) after Genocide

Margaret Urban Walker

*Marquette University*, [margaret.walker@marquette.edu](mailto:margaret.walker@marquette.edu)

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## Hope(s) after Genocide

Margaret Urban Walker \*

In a news story on the unveiling of a monument to commemorate the Armenian Genocide in a public space in Canada, the monument's creator, the sculptor Arto Tchakmakdjian is reported to have said that the meaning of the monument is hope.<sup>1</sup> The idea of a genocide monument whose theme is hope can strike one in different ways. Some will find it apt and powerfully moving; others might find it presumptuous, treacly, obscene, or simply irrelevant. And it is incomplete: whose hope, and for what?

The affective vocabulary in writing on the aftermath of genocide, especially with respect to survivors, is elaborate on the negative side: fear, terror, shame, humiliation, sadness, and despair; anger, rage, hatred, resentment, indignation, outrage, and vengefulness; pessimism, suspicion, mistrust, skepticism, and cynicism. The positive side of the ledger is meager, save for a focus on rebuilding trust and a fascination with forgiveness and mercy. Building or rebuilding trust is central to many accounts of social reconstruction and reconciliation. It is widely accepted that commonplace forms of trust in institutions and other people will be shaken or destroyed for survivors of mass violence and severe repression, and that establishing stable societal conditions between individuals and groups and viable and legitimate political institutions will require trust to be created or revived. Following the Christian ethos with which South Africa's transitional process

\* My thanks to the convenors, Johannes Lang and Thomas Brudholm, and fellow participants at the "Uproar of Emotion" conference (Danish Institute for International Studies, Copenhagen) for challenging and very helpful discussion of a draft of this paper. I thank also participants at "The Nature and Norms of Hope" conference (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY) and the convenors, Andrew Chignell and Samuel Newlands, for another opportunity to discuss these ideas.

<sup>1</sup> Cited in "Genocide Monument in Canada Inaugurated," *Asbarez Armenian News* (October 21, 2013).

was aggressively (but not uncontroversially) imbued, forgiveness became a prime topic concerning post-conflict contexts. Forgiveness and mercy are often urged upon survivors; their anger or terror, their grief and despair, and their justified hunger for accountability, reparation, punishment, or vengeance may be seen as obstacles to recreating stable and normal social and political relationships.

I want to think about hope, which I believe must be a central affective resource in the aftermath of genocide, despite the lack of thematic attention it seems to have received.<sup>2</sup> I begin with the central role for hope in the aftermath of grave wrongs that I argued in my book *Moral Repair*, extending widely the range of hopes that might be critical in the wake of genocide.<sup>3</sup> I then examine some sources of hesitation in introducing hope into a discussion of the affective landscape of genocide's aftermath. Some of these sources stem from confusion about the nature of hope, while others reflect certain assumptions about genocide. In the first category, there are misunderstandings and disputes about the nature of hope. For example, it is harder to attribute the possibility (much less the necessity) of hope to survivors of genocide if hope is confused with optimism; but hope is not optimism. In the second category, one may hesitate *morally* to speak of hope in the context of genocide if one thinks it presumptuous or cruel. In this connection, I will discuss Lawrence Langer's warning against redemptive interpretations of Holocaust survivors' experiences. Alternatively, one might assume that no basis remains for ordinary hope in the wake of the "crime of crimes," so that only a special kind of superordinate hope can remain. I consider in this regard Jonathan Lear's claim that a kind of decimation and cultural devastation, as occurred to Native peoples in North America, can reveal the role of "radical hope." I argue that these views are too constrained for the varied experiences of survivors of genocide and for the varied roles of hope even (or especially) in that context.

<sup>2</sup> Ervin Staub, *Overcoming Evil: Genocide, Violent Conflict, and Terrorism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011) is a massive compendium of recent research and intervention in the aftermath of genocide, but contains no entry on hope in the index. Neither does *Genocide, Risk and Resilience: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, ed. Bert Ingelaere, Stephan Parmentier, Jacques Haers, and Barbara Segaert (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) index hope or include any articles with hope as a principal theme. Tzvetan Todorov has written powerfully on the Holocaust and mass violence, but even his book *Hope and Memory: Lessons from the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003) contains no thematic attention to hope. A striking exception that I will discuss is Jonathan Lear's *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Walker, *Moral Repair: Reconstructing Moral Relations after Wrongdoing* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

## HOPE AFTER VIOLENT WRONGDOING

In *Moral Repair*, I asserted a fundamental and indispensable role for hope in the aftermath of grave wrongs involving mass violence, violent state repression, and intergenerational oppression and injustice.<sup>4</sup> I argued that hope is such a central good in human life that careless or intentional destruction of hope is itself a profound moral wrong. I further argued for the importance in repairing moral relationships of restoring hope and trust after wrongdoing. Hope and trust are essential aspects of working moral relationships. Building trust has received significant attention as a core requirement of post-conflict or post-repression reconstruction.<sup>5</sup> Hope, I believe, is more fundamental than trust, because hope alone creates conditions in which trust in shared moral standards and others' responsiveness to them, however tentative, might be regained, or at least entertained and tested, after being destroyed. In trusting, we rely on others, or on institutions or environments, to behave as they should, given norms we assume are shared and the normative expectations they foster. In moderately stable conditions, one more or less expects those trusted to behave as they should or to stand accountable for their failures to meet normative expectations. One feels entitled to their compliance and holds them responsible to comply or stand accountable.<sup>6</sup>

In the case of serious wrongdoing and mass violence, victims find that other individuals, members of particular groups, and public officials and institutions engage in hostile, intentionally destructive, and murderous acts with an attitude of justification or impunity, utterly betraying victims' trust in shared moral standards and in others' acceptance of responsibility under these standards. In the same context, many others stand by in active or passive complicity with abusive and violent treatment of those targeted. Indeed, it is a striking fact in the literature on genocide that complicity, failures to aid, and failures to stand with the victims in demanding accountability in the aftermath of violence are often experienced by victims as an outrage distinct from, and in some cases more wounding than, the primary violent injury.<sup>7</sup> These failures

<sup>4</sup> Walker, *Moral Repair*, 40–71.

<sup>5</sup> See Pablo de Greiff, "Theorizing Transitional Justice," in *Transitional Justice, Nomos 51*, ed. M. S. Williams, et al. (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2012), 31–77; Colleen Murphy, *A Moral Theory of Political Reconciliation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); and Walker, *Moral Repair*. Passing references that assume the centrality of trust are numerous in work on transitional justice and the aftermath of mass violence and conflict, including genocide.

<sup>6</sup> Walker, *Moral Repair*, 72–98.

<sup>7</sup> On the "second wound" when others do not recognize one's victimization, see Ronnie Janoff-Bulman, *Shattered Assumptions: Towards a New Psychology of Trauma* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1992), 147 (who attributes the idea to Martin Symonds); Yael Danieli, "Introduction," in

signify an absence of basic regard and a civic and moral abandonment of victims.

If there is any chance in the aftermath of violence for the creation or reinvestment of trust, victims must have a sense that reasonably safe reliance on others vital to shared life is at least *possible* in the future. And it will require enough *motivation* on the part of those injured to permit and test some forms of renewed connection, perhaps even with those who are members of the group that engaged in violent wrongdoing or at least with a social environment that has proven it can turn indifferent or malignant. This is the signature configuration of hope: a desire that some perceived good come to realization; a belief that it is at least (even if only barely) possible; and an alert openness to, absorption in, or active pursuit of the desired possibility. It is hope for moral reconstruction, for a basis to believe in shared standards and the trustworthiness of others – and that is to say, for a reasonably stable human life with others – that creates conditions in which trust might be regenerated through an openness to reconnection (even if selective) and possible reliance on the trustworthiness of others (even if sharply limited).

In *Moral Repair*, I was concerned primarily with the nature of functioning moral relations in order to understand what in them is damaged or destroyed by wrongdoing, and so what is required in creating these relationships anew after grave wrongs. Moral reconstruction must spur hopes that others with whom victims must live and environments and institutions upon which they must rely might again become minimally trustworthy; without these hopes, opportunities to build trust are unavailable. The massive destruction of many different kinds of important hopes, however, is also a consequence of mass violence and is often an intentional aim of it. The lives of victims will be devastated in numerous ways. So the need for hope in the aftermath of mass violence will involve not only what is needed to reconstruct functioning moral relationships but what is needed to go on in individual lives and communities.

The many impacts of hope-crushing violence cannot be exhaustively detailed, but genocide scholars identify some predictably recurring ones. The permanent physical wounds of torture, mutilation, severe deprivation, and physical attack are joined to devastating losses of family and other loved ones, the terror of experiencing or witnessing mass atrocity, and, in some cases, the extreme degradation involved in physical survival in captivity, hiding, or

flight, a common theme of survivor testimonies. The social psychologist and Holocaust survivor Ervin Staub, who has studied genocides and other mass violence for decades in different locales from the Holocaust to Rwanda, points to such common psychological and interpersonal effects as a diminished sense of self; feelings of danger and threat; mistrust, fear, avoidance, hostility, and aggression; and “seeing the world as unjust.”<sup>8</sup> Staub observes that “People feel vulnerable, the world looks dangerous to them, and other people, especially those outside their group, seem untrustworthy.”<sup>9</sup> Henry Theriault points, in addition to staggering material losses of home, land, and property, to genocide’s effects on the victim group of “poverty, the military vulnerability of their group, . . . the fragmented and tenuous nature of their post-genocide group identity, their geopolitical marginality, the long-term effects of trauma, internalised feelings of shame and unworthiness, lack of faith in the justness of human society and more,” effects which may persist down generations.<sup>10</sup>

Especially, although perhaps not uniquely, in the case of genocide, survivors speak of a loss of trust in “the world” or in “life itself.” Jean Améry said of his torture in a German prison in Belgium, that the first blow brings about a loss of “trust in the world,” which he links to a failure of anticipated “respect” and “the expectation of help.”<sup>11</sup> It is a loss he regards as “indelible.”<sup>12</sup> For Améry, it was never over: “Twenty-two years later I am still dangling over the ground by dislocated arms, panting, and accusing myself.”<sup>13</sup> Lawrence Langer recounts Holocaust testimonies that return repeatedly to the theme of a catastrophic and irreversible experience of betrayal. Survivors say they “don’t feel at home in the world” after “really knowing the truth about people, human nature, about death . . .,” or how it “doesn’t make any sense . . . To go on and on after you know what the world is like or what it was.”<sup>14</sup> Survivor Julia

<sup>8</sup> Staub, *Overcoming Evil*, 275.

<sup>9</sup> Ervin Staub, Laurie A. Pearlman, Alexandra Gubin, and Athanase Hagengimana, “Healing, Reconciliation, Forgiving and the Prevention of Violence after Genocide or Mass Killing: An Intervention and Its Experimental Evaluation in Rwanda,” *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 24, no. 3 (2005), 297–334, here 300.

<sup>10</sup> Henry C. Theriault, “Shared Burdens and Perpetrator-Victim Group Conciliation,” in *Genocide, Risk and Resilience*, ed. Ingelaere et al., 98–107, here 103.

<sup>11</sup> Jean Améry, *At the Mind’s Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and Its Realities* [1966], transl. S. Rosenfeld and S. P. Rosenfeld (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1980), 28.

<sup>12</sup> Améry, *At the Mind’s Limits*, 34.    <sup>13</sup> Améry, *At the Mind’s Limits*, 36.

<sup>14</sup> The survivor who says “you don’t feel at home in the world” is Hedda K. See Lawrence L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 35. Irene W. speaks of the “total world view . . . of extreme pessimism” of “really knowing the truth about people” (59). Leo G. speaks of the senselessness of knowing “what the world is like” (147).

S. says, “You’re not supposed to see this; it doesn’t go with life.”<sup>15</sup> Bessie K., whose infant was seized on a train says, “To me, I was dead. I died,” and Michael R. says, “So there’s no tomorrow, really . . .”<sup>16</sup>

Jean Hatzfeld’s remarkable collection of survivor interviews in post-genocide Rwanda sounds similar themes. A sense of degradation lingers for some after surviving by doing what they had to do. Witnesses speak of “the defilement of a bestial existence” in “being hunted like a game animal.”<sup>17</sup> Francine Niyitegeka, who is “never at peace,” says she “saw herself in muddy detail as a corpse in the papyrus lying among all the others.”<sup>18</sup> Innocent Rwiliza explains that “The more you tell of your survival, the more you run yourself down in others’ eyes.”<sup>19</sup> The loss of trust – in other human beings, in any moral rules or values, or in the world – is even more evident. Even as survivors acknowledge the necessity of resuming life alongside those who killed, they say, “recovering trust . . . that’s done for”; “. . . trust is unthinkable in the future”; “[t]he missing twenty percent . . . is trust”; and “I expect betrayal.”<sup>20</sup> The sense that morality itself is entirely precarious is captured by Berthewan Mwanankabandi: “. . . I used to think about good and evil . . . honorable effort, decent behavior, the strait [sic] and narrow path. In the marshes I learned that any belief can vanish on a first morning of machetes . . .”<sup>21</sup> Claudine Kayitesi sums up the loss of trust in life itself: “Life betrayed me. To be betrayed by your neighbors, by the authorities, by the Whites – that is a staggering blow. But to be betrayed by life . . . who can bear that? It’s too much. You lose all sense of where the right direction lies.”<sup>22</sup>

Could there yet be room, much less an important role, for hope in these unimaginably abysmal conditions of survival? To think about this, some clarity about hope is needed.

#### HOPE: FROM ACTIVE PURSUIT TO PATIENT ABIDING

My account of hope in *Moral Repair* begins with the commonplace that hope, whatever else it involves, requires a desire for a state of affairs and a belief that it is possible, although at present uncertain. Hope is oriented toward the

<sup>15</sup> Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies*, 136.

<sup>16</sup> Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies*, 173. On a variety of psychosocial effects that might be the results of direct experience of genocide, see Blustein, this volume.

<sup>17</sup> Jean Hatzfeld, *The Antelope’s Strategy: Living in Rwanda after the Genocide*, transl. L. Coverdale (New York, NY: Picador, 2009), 6 and 102.

<sup>18</sup> Hatzfeld, *The Antelope’s Strategy*, 234 and 235. <sup>19</sup> Hatzfeld, *The Antelope’s Strategy*, 89.

<sup>20</sup> Hatzfeld, *The Antelope’s Strategy*, 203, 207, 209, and 229.

<sup>21</sup> Hatzfeld, *The Antelope’s Strategy*, 232–233. <sup>22</sup> Hatzfeld, *The Antelope’s Strategy*, 7.

realization of some possible state of affairs to which the world is still open, to what is not yet decided from the perspective of the one hoping. To these three typically acknowledged features – desire, possibility, futurity – I added efficacy. In hoping, we believe that something is possible, although perhaps just barely so. We desire that it actually come to be the case, unlike transient desires or desires for things we do not approve of and to which we don't attach ourselves. In addition, we are moved in thought, imagination, feeling, and expression toward the anticipation or achievement of the desired situation. Hope is complex in the variety of ways that we can “bend” toward the world in the manner of hoping. In hoping, we can muse or plan or take purposeful action. We can proliferate scenarios that lead to what is hoped for and imaginatively dwell on what its realization will mean or be like, searching for effective means, recruiting assistance, or biding our time in patient alertness. What we hope for can engage us in mild absorption or intense longing that can be heartening or blissful but also anxious or fearful. I describe hoping as a “patterned syndrome” of varied and shifting combinations of ways we are engaged and moved by the world when we believe something is possible, we desire its realization, and the world appears to us open to its realization.<sup>23</sup> Hope, then, is an affective attitude registered and expressed in multiform cognitive, emotional, practical, and expressive ways that engages us toward the actual future realization of (and not merely wishing for) something we value.<sup>24</sup>

In *Moral Repair*, I was drawn to explore hope because of the depth of damage to hopes recounted by survivors of genocide and other mass violence, but also by the astonishing power of hope to sustain people's attachment to life in punishingly bleak conditions and in circumstances of excruciating powerlessness and overwhelming destruction of what people most value or of everything they value. It is important to understand hope in a way that explains its power not only when we can be moved by it to purposeful action but also how it can engage us in a world that seems to have preempted or already defeated any effort we could possibly make. Much of what we hope for in both everyday life and at the extremes is either not open fully or not open at all to our own efforts. As Victoria McGeer's and Stan van Hooft's accounts of hope stress, hope embodies a sense of both our agency and its inherent limitations.<sup>25</sup> Our

<sup>23</sup> Walker, *Moral Repair*, 44–49.

<sup>24</sup> I discuss the (not always precise) distinction between wishing and hoping in *Moral Repair*, 53. Stan van Hooft, *Hope* (Durham, NC: Acumen, 2011), 19–27, gives an extended and useful treatment of what differentiates hoping from wishing.

<sup>25</sup> Victoria McGeer, “The Art of Good Hope,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science: Hope, Power, and Governance* 592, no. 1 (2004), 100–127; van Hooft, *Hope*.

imagination allows us to see possibilities that draw, galvanize, and direct our attention, but many of which are not open to our own efforts, or to the efforts of others, known or unknown. Many possibilities for which we hope are realizable only by chance occurrence.

Hope permeates agency, but this does not mean that hopes only engage us in planning and purposeful effort.<sup>26</sup> There are many hopes in which we “dwell” and others that we act to realize. As McGeer nicely puts it, hoping has us “actively confronting, exploring, and sometimes patiently biding our limitations as agents.”<sup>27</sup> This point matters: if we think of hoping too much in terms of action, we not only fail to grasp the full range of hopes, but we are apt to assume that hopes must have objects well-defined enough to be suited to planning and purposeful pursuit. This might in turn suggest that we need to postulate a distinctive kind of hope that is different in kind – existential, pre-intentional, or radical – for cases where the object of hope is obscure or hardly defined. But while what is hoped for may be a quite specific state of affairs on which we fix with laser-like precision, it can also be diffuse to the point of believing, as the title of a Stephen Sondheim song has it, that “something’s coming.” The anticipatory orientation created by hope can in some cases be less a fine-grained cognitive exercise than an affective restlessness or a patient biding with an eye to some aspect of the future.

The rich cognitive repertory of hope is one of its striking features. Hoping is constituted in part by configurations of perception, attention, thought, imagination, and feeling that mentally open and hold open in the mind the space of possibility, that experiment with the imagined experience of what is hoped for, and where appropriate that explore and assess avenues for effort. Cheshire Calhoun captures this when she attributes to hope cognitive patterns of “previsaging” the content of a particular successful future in which hopes are fulfilled, a mode of reflective imagination with motivational effects that “second” the motivating reasons we already have for our commitments.<sup>28</sup> Philip Pettit sees hope as involving “cognitive resolve,” an ability to view the hoped-for state “as if” it were in fact going to obtain, thus buoying confidence

<sup>26</sup> Adrienne M. Martin rejects the “agential investment” view of hope, in which hope involves “setting an end or goal” for action. Martin misreads my own view as an example, but my characterization of hope is explicitly concerned with hopes in situations of overwhelming or helpless exposure to threat and loss. See A. M. Martin, “Hopes and Dreams,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 83, no. 1 (2011), 148–173, here 152.

<sup>27</sup> McGeer, “The Art of Good Hope,” 104.

<sup>28</sup> Cheshire Calhoun, “Motivating Hope,” in *Doing Valuable Time: The Present, the Future, and Meaningful Living* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

while suspending blow-by-blow rational assessment of evidence, risk, and reward.<sup>29</sup>

The precise nature of the efficacy of hope, its seeming power to energize and motivate, remains little understood, even while the association of hope with feelings of elevation or buoyancy is deep, historically and phenomenologically. One experimental psychologist, Richard Davidson, sees in hope not only a cognitive “marshaling of information,” but also “affective forecasting – that is, the comforting, energizing, elevating *feeling* that you experience when you project in your mind a positive future.”<sup>30</sup> Hope’s characteristic cognitive activities can evoke present and anticipatory feelings of relief, joy, excitement, gratitude, and pleasure, should what is hoped for come to pass, and these emotions might provide some of hope’s momentum. It is possible that hope has its own affective surge that steers thought, or that hope is the cognitive handmaiden to independently motivating desires, as in Calhoun’s “phenomenological idea of the future,” where it is the expectation of being successful that adds motivational heft.<sup>31</sup> It is also possible that cognitive activity and feeling interact and influence each other in producing the state we identify as hoping.<sup>32</sup> The conception of hope as a complex interaction of emotional and cognitive states seems to best capture how hope is both identified and experienced. For my purposes here, though, it is enough to accept a strong tie between the cognitive shaping and affective energy that obtains in instances we identify as hope.

To recap, several general points bear on thinking about hope after genocide. Hope involves a belief in the possibility, however slight, of something one desires to see realized, together with an awareness of its uncertainty. You cannot hope for what is either impossible or certain; and if you are sure that what you desire will come true, you have gone beyond hoping for it to expecting it. What we hope for must be possible, but it may be just barely so. In this way hope is constrained by reality and evidence, unlike wishful thinking or blind faith; yet the epistemic bar hope sets is low, in that bare possibility renders a situation apt for hoping. This is one reason that hope can be a bulwark against despair or a spur to creativity. Hope can empower planning and striving, but it need not do so, or be able to do so; where hope

<sup>29</sup> Philip Pettit, “Hope and Its Place in Mind,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science: Hope, Power, and Governance* 592, no. 1 (2004), 152–165.

<sup>30</sup> Davidson is cited in Jerome Groopman, *The Anatomy of Hope: How People Prevail in the Face of Illness* (New York, NY: Random House, 2004), 193. Groopman discusses the uncertain biology of hope in relation to placebo effects, expectation of relief or reward, tempering fear, and resilience (161–207).

<sup>31</sup> Calhoun, “Motivating Hope.” <sup>32</sup> Groopman, *The Anatomy of Hope*, 193–194.

is not agential in the narrow sense, it will still shape thought, spur imagination, steer attention, and prompt feeling. Hope's object – what we hope for – may be (but need not be) well-defined enough to support planning and purposeful effort; in many cases, what we hope for is not open to purposeful pursuit. Hope is cognitively rich; it can take the form of resolve to treat what is desired “as if” likely, but it can create agility, flexibility, and resilience in adapting to changing conditions and evidence. While hope requires sophisticated cognitive operations, it is widely associated with emotional properties of elevation, energy, or buoyancy, creating or adding momentum to desires and commitments. Hope's emotional momentum might be decisive in cases of great risks, long odds, or former defeats and losses.

Finally, many philosophers, myself included, are led to conclude that hope, far from being a special affective resource primarily for adversity or extremity, is in fact ubiquitous in human life and plays a foundational role. Pettit notes that hope sustains both collective action, which requires cooperation under uncertainty, and interpersonal relations, which are supported by a belief, often enough disappointed, that others are responsive to reasons.<sup>33</sup> McGeer believes hope is inseparable from our agential interest in the future, a “grounding force of human agency.”<sup>34</sup> van Hooft locates hope in the “gap” between effort and outcome that exists in the vulnerability of all our actions to bad luck and mishap, a fact we necessarily learn early and that is relentlessly confirmed.<sup>35</sup> In my own view, if the trust at the heart of minimal moral relations requires hope, then hope is the root of a life lived among others seen as responsive and responsible actors rather than objects to fear and avoid or to manipulate, coerce, or overpower. And that is to say that hope is at the root of a distinctively human form of life mediated by norms and values, just as it is essentially, like memory, threaded through the lives of human subjects who live not in a timeless present but in light of our pasts and for our futures. The ubiquity of hope underscores how catastrophic the loss of hope can be, and how abhorrent is its willful destruction.

#### RESISTANCE TO HOPE AFTER GENOCIDE: “TAMING ATROCITY”

I am not alone in seeing hope as one of the most powerful human needs and powers in response to suffering, adversity, and devastation. Psychologists are interested in the nature and bounds of resilience and supporting interventions, even in the wake of atrocity. But one might worry that hope is out of place in

<sup>33</sup> Pettit, “Hope and Its Place in Mind,” 163–164.    <sup>34</sup> McGeer, “The Art of Good Hope,” 101.

<sup>35</sup> van Hooft, *Hope*, 32.

speaking of genocide, and that references to it are dangerously complacent, offensively irrelevant, or unintentionally cruel when confronting “the epitome of the irreparable.”<sup>36</sup> Is a concern with hope presumptuous and insulting? In this section, I will consider how discussion of hope in the aftermath of genocide may be chastened or silenced by the idea that hope is likely to be out of place in comprehending the aftermath of genocide. In response, I suggest that to speak of hope after genocide could be, but need not be, irrelevant or irresponsible. It is easier to think this if one fails to understand certain features of hope or to recognize the varieties of genocide experience as well as differences among individuals.

To bring these worries into focus, I turn to Lawrence L. Langer’s *Holocaust Testimonies*, a landmark in the literature on Holocaust survivor experiences. Langer cautions us about a certain anxious eagerness to avert our eyes and ears from the full reality of the enduring devastation in survivors’ lives. Langer’s point is about what we are or aren’t *hearing* in the testimony, but this caution might tempt those speaking about atrocities and their sequels to avoid all seemingly “redemptive” discourses by which “the horror of the atrocity is tamed.”<sup>37</sup> Through close reading of testimonies, Langer explores the unbearable burdens of memory and the ruptures in self-understanding that persist in light of an experience that survivors never leave behind and yet find unbelievable, anticipating that others will not understand. Langer’s examination of layers of unlivable memory is framed by a warning. He admonishes us, the listeners or readers, to avoid any hint of celebrating “the resourceful human spirit.”<sup>38</sup> The impulse to redeem, to find edification, to render survival an heroic odyssey, is cast by Langer not only as a disrespectful falsehood, but as evidence of a refusal of understanding that survivors themselves anticipate and routinely suffer. “Our needful ears” are not only uncomprehending, but

<sup>36</sup> I borrow this phrase from Joëlle Hecker, “The Meaning of Monetary Reparations after a Genocide: The German-Jewish Case in the Early 1950s,” in *Genocide, Risk and Resilience: An Indisciplinary Approach*, ed. B. Ingelaere et al. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 190–201, here 190. In saying this, Hecker obviously does not think that genocide requires no reparation.

<sup>37</sup> Jennifer L. Geddes, “Religious Rhetoric in Responses to Atrocity,” in *The Religious in Responses to Mass Atrocity: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Thomas Brudholm and Thomas Cushman (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 21–37, here 28. Geddes is concerned specifically with religious languages in their apophatic and redemptive uses; many people hear discourses about hope (or forgiveness) as implicitly religious, a tendency I do not address in this essay.

<sup>38</sup> Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies*, xi. Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* [1986], transl. R. Rosenthal (London: Abacus, 1989) remains a masterpiece of difficult reflection on what can and cannot be told and the difficulties of comprehension both in and after the events.

unintentionally cruel in isolating survivors.<sup>39</sup> In a pointedly admonitory preface, Langer contrasts the testimony of a couple, survivors of Auschwitz and several other camps, with their daughter's feelings about her parents' experience. Mrs. B. confesses, "We are left with loneliness. As long as we live, we are lonely," while their daughter sees her parents as people who have "managed to build a life afterwards and still have some hope."<sup>40</sup> Langer comments that "all of them were telling a version of the truth as they grasped it," but the passage is meant to accentuate the dissonance between the survivors' own discourse and their daughter's perception. Commenting on this exemplary instance, Langer says that "the losses they record raise few expectations of renewal or hopes of reconciliation"; although he immediately adds that "this does not mean that witnesses have no future" but that their futures are "hostages to a humiliating and painful past."<sup>41</sup>

Jean Hatzfeld's interviews, too, record eerie reports that survival can mean life without, in some sense, a future. Ms. Kayitesi, who now is married and has children and land to farm, says that she is grateful. Yet, "the future has already been eaten up by what I lived through."<sup>42</sup> "But for me, the chance to become someone is over," despite her good fortune; her second life "will be half a life, because of the complete break."<sup>43</sup> Berthe Mwanankabandi, too, says, "All the things I expected in my first life – I cannot find them anymore in my second." Most poignant is the concreteness with which she describes losing a taste for life, like the ripe bananas she used to love: "We also promised ourselves that if we survived, we would throw ourselves full tilt into every endeavor from then on . . . And that was the first promise forgotten."<sup>44</sup>

The searing testimonies studied by Langer and Hatzfeld give full scope to the worry that talk of hope might be unseemly, if not insulting. I in no way want to deny or minimize the barely conceivable experience of many survivors that "doesn't go with life," and the reality of feeling dead, deadened, or haunted that evidently persists. If hope is correctly characterized by the four features I have emphasized – desire, futurity, possibility, and efficacy – these testimonies give stark evidence that genocide can arrest or extinguish precisely the forms of perception and feeling, and the experiences of agency, that constitute hope. Where desire is deadened, the future seems closed, and no relief or restoration seems possible, hope is to that extent absent. For some, there may be despair and a loss of the interest or will to go on. A recent survey of studies on aging Holocaust survivors, for example, finds a suggestion of

<sup>39</sup> Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies*, xi.      <sup>40</sup> Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies*, ix and x-xi.

<sup>41</sup> Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies*, xi.      <sup>42</sup> Hatzfeld, *The Antelope's Strategy*, 4.

<sup>43</sup> Hatzfeld, *The Antelope's Strategy*, 6.      <sup>44</sup> Hatzfeld, *The Antelope's Strategy*, 233 and 234.

increased risk, perhaps three times the risk, for suicide among Holocaust survivors compared to other older people, confounding a certain “myth of endurance” that survivors clung to life and would continue to do so.<sup>45</sup> Rather than despair, there may be an anesthesia, numbness, or a sense of resignation.<sup>46</sup> We should assume that mass violence creates risks for psychic and moral wounds that may not heal. Yet survivors are individuals with varied experiences of genocide and for whom different kinds of hope can give a stake in the future. Certain hopes, however local and cautious, are necessary to go forward with life, which most survivors in fact do.

Consider first the revival of ordinary or everyday hopes. For some individuals, life does again become engaging or specific prospects in life draw them forward. The therapist Esther Perel, a child of survivors, says (in an interview unrelated to genocide), “There were the ones who did not die and the ones who came back to life.”<sup>47</sup> This is not an evaluative judgment, but rather an observation about the fact that genocide survivors fare differently in the aftermath. No doubt, some of the variation is due to different experiences of or in a genocide, some to different experiences in the aftermath, and others to social, cultural, and individual variations that are not under the control of victims. Even among Hatzfeld’s disturbing testimonies, there is Sylvie Umubyeyi, who says that she lost her taste for life but then “Courage came back, and with it that zest for living . . . Since I am alive, I cannot get tired of living; how could I?” She speaks of “one day” being at peace with herself.<sup>48</sup> I do not mean here to highlight a stark contrast between despair and buoyancy, but to mark the great variation in ways individuals will go on with life. A second life post-genocide is a life, and it requires forms of ordinary engagement, but neither optimism nor cheer. Hope is not optimism that expects the best, nor cheerfulness that makes light of a dreadful past. Nor is hope intrinsically heroic, although it can seem miraculous under devastating conditions. Hope is a ubiquitous and basic human capacity to orient ourselves practically in time, to organize our minds, choices, and lives toward what we value, and to experience both the efficacy and the limitations of our agency.<sup>49</sup> In hoping, one need not assume that everything – or even anything – *will* turn out well;

<sup>45</sup> Yoram Barak, “The Aging of Holocaust Survivors: Myth and Reality Concerning Suicide,” *Israeli Medical Association Journal* 9, no. 3 (2007), 196–198.

<sup>46</sup> Hope has, among its contraries, at least fear and despair. Calhoun’s “Motivating Hope” also suggests “fretfulness” about one’s pursuits that hope calms.

<sup>47</sup> Susan Dominus, “The Sexual Healer,” *New York Times* (January 26, 2014).

<sup>48</sup> Hatzfeld, *The Antelope’s Strategy*, 231.

<sup>49</sup> Calhoun, “Motivating Hope,” is an acute and original discussion of the temporality of hope and the role of “the phenomenological idea of the future.”

one need only grasp that the future is in some desired respect open to what we value and that, in some cases, one's own acts can make a difference to the future that comes to be.

Most human hopes are everyday; through them, we structure our lives, enlivening desires and steering attention, imaginings, and plans. Survivors of mass violence will be threatened with profound disengagement, or even despair, if they cannot reclaim some everyday hopes. These might include opportunities for education and employment, for a return home, or to live in communities without fear about their group heritage or identity. Of course, "everyday life" implies countless mundane hopes for the pleasures of family life, good health, good food, good friends, and so on. Some of the consequences of genocide will literally put some of these hopes out of reach. But responses to genocide, especially in the form of reparations, moral reconstruction, and peace building, must do more than appreciate the catastrophic effect that genocidal violence can have on hopes of survivors. Responses must also presume that genocide survivors have needs for hope that they must be supported in defining. Hopes not only sustain us; they individuate us. What we hope for reveals not only what we want, but who we are in both common and distinctive ways: what in particular can absorb our attention, spark our imagination, and mobilize our plans and efforts. The picture of survivors as uniformly or inevitably dwelling in a netherworld of hopelessness can be as nullifying as misplaced redemptive views. It de-individualizes survivors and possibly desensitizes us precisely to the importance of support for survivors to reawaken everyday hopes that matter specifically to them after devastating experiences. Support for survivors – personal, social, and political – must be designed for the long term that will be needed to reawaken and reorganize everyday hopes. It should also address the effects of genocide on later generations. The need to address transgenerational effects is both for the sake of those descendants who cope with legacies of genocide and for survivors themselves, for whom the fact that "we are still here" is a pointed and enduring repudiation of genocide.

Two forms of hope appear to have a special role to play for many survivors of violence: hope for understanding and hope for justice. "Understanding" and "justice" may sound like very abstract ideas, but there is massive evidence that these desires can remain intense (or can intensify) over time for survivors and become a quest for later generations. Ervin Staub and colleagues report on a post-genocide intervention in Rwanda that includes some intriguing observations regarding hope. The intervention trained community group leaders to work through their programs toward healing and mutual acceptance among members of Hutu and Tutsi groups. Unusual in this approach was an

emphasis on providing information through “psycho-educational lectures” and discussions on the causes of genocide, the predictably traumatic effects of genocide, and a framework of basic psychological needs that, when frustrated, lead to intergroup conflict. The principal finding was that this approach reduced trauma symptoms and created positive intergroup orientation to a greater degree than two other approaches. The investigators also note that although there is “relatively little tradition” for the use of *information* about the origins of violence, it appeared to have “emotional meaning” for participants; they were moved to realize that the horror of their experience might be a comprehensible, even predictable, outcome of human processes “rather than of incomprehensible evil,” a realization that “gave participants hope” for preventing future violence.<sup>50</sup> The investigators also believe that understanding trauma and healing “depathologizes” problems and gives hope for healing.<sup>51</sup>

It has often been said that in the aftermath of violence and repression, what matters goes beyond knowledge to acknowledgment. Yet often knowledge, ranging from factual information to explanatory frameworks, answers a deep need. This need is widely recognized in the practice of restorative justice in criminal contexts and it is demonstrated in the rapid evolution of the concept of a “right to truth” about human rights crimes.<sup>52</sup> Demands for truth recovery about political violence endure for decades. The hope that the truth will yet be known and acknowledged can be sustaining, whether in active pursuit or in patient waiting.

Finally, there are the equally persistent moral hopes, ranging from the hope for justice in the aftermath of the genocide to hopes for a more decent society in the future. “Hopes for justice,” however, can mean many different things. A descendant of survivors of the Armenian genocide comments, “Like many Armenians outside Turkey, I grew up in an atmosphere where the desire for revenge was not always easy to separate from the desire for justice.”<sup>53</sup> It is

<sup>50</sup> Staub et al., “Healing, Reconciliation,” 327–328.

<sup>51</sup> Staub et al., “Healing, Reconciliation,” 304–305.

<sup>52</sup> On restorative justice, see Howard Zehr, *Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1995), 19–29. On the right to truth, see Juan E. Méndez, “The Human Right to the Truth: Lessons Learned from Latin American Experiences with Truth Telling,” in *Telling the Truths: Truth Telling and Peace Building in Post-Conflict Societies*, ed. Tristan A. Borer (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 115–150; and Margaret U. Walker, “Post-conflict Truth Telling: Exploring Extended Territory,” in *Morality, Jus Post Bellum, and International Law*, ed. Larry May and Andrew Forchhimes (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 11–31.

<sup>53</sup> Raffi Khatchadourian, “Letter from Turkey: A Century of Silence,” *The New Yorker* (January 5, 2015), 32–53, here 44.

certainly true that desires by some victims and descendants for what they see and deeply feel as justice in the aftermath of terrible violence may not be ones that others – or even they themselves in cooler moments – can morally endorse. Victims can be mistaken or wrongheaded in what they perceive to be justice and so may not be morally entitled to what they hope for. Nor is it guaranteed that well-grounded justice claims of victims will trump all other moral considerations, as continuing debates on “peace vs. justice” illustrate. Still, wrong-headed or perverse ideas of justice, as much as defensible and paradigmatic ones, organize strong, deep, and persistent hopes in the wake of violence.<sup>54</sup> In addition, the hopes of victims for justice often take entirely recognizable and legitimate forms: restitution of lost land and property; compensation for unrecoverable losses, suffering, and indignity; accountability or punishment of responsible actors; acknowledgment of wrongs, apologies, and an accurate historical record; reform or transformation of corrupt or repressive societal institutions; or more just distributions of resources, opportunities, and respect. Victims’ hopes for justice may vary considerably in context, with diverse perceptions of what measures signify justice to them and with different priorities among such measures; this has become, properly, an object of study.<sup>55</sup> It can be studied, however, because victims do often have such hopes and these hopes can be integral to how victims see their lives as survivors of violence.

<sup>54</sup> See Crawford, this volume, on the possibility that hope as well as fear can motivate genocidal actions.

<sup>55</sup> Some studies that exemplify this diversity are: Lieselotte Viaene, “Life Is Priceless: Mayan Q’eqchi’ Voices on the Guatemalan National Reparations Program,” *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 4, no. 1 (2009), 4–25; Simon P. Robins, “To Live as Other Kenyans Do”: A Study of Reparative Demands of Kenyan Victims of Human Rights Violations (New York, NY: International Center for Transitional Justice, 2011); Dyan Mazurana, Teddy Atim, and Helen Kezie-Nwoha, *Making Gender-Just Remedy and Reparation Possible: Upholding the Rights of Women and Girls in the Greater North of Uganda* (Kampala: Isis Women’s International Cross Cultural Exchange and Somerville, MA: Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, 2013); Kimberly Theidon, *Intimate Enemies: Violence and Reconciliation in Peru* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Phuong N. Pham and Patrick Vink, *Fragile Peace, Elusive Justice: Population-Based Survey on Perception and Attitudes about Security and Justice in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, Harvard School of Public Health, Brigham and Women’s Hospital, 2014). Stories from a post-genocide socio-therapy storytelling project for Rwandan women survivors movingly illustrate both the difficulties and the possibilities of reviving hope and the women’s ideas about justice. See Annemiek Richters et al., “Of Death and Rebirth: Life Histories of Rwandan Female Genocide Survivors,” *Torture* 24, Supplementum 1 (2014), 6–57. On the psychological and moral complexity of victims’ situations, see Brandon Hamber, *Transforming Societies after Political Violence: Truth, Reconciliation, and Mental Health* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009).

That individuals and groups can sustain hopes for justice through a lifetime and down generations is a fact as familiar as it is remarkable, whether in the decades of walking of the Madres in the Plaza de Mayo or the 60-year process in which the Taos Pueblo people actually reclaimed their sacred Blue Lake. The Lakota have continued to seek to regain their sacred ground in the Black Hills for more than a century. If injuries and trauma have intergenerational impact, so to do the hopes that can arise and survive in their wake.

#### GENOCIDE, CULTURAL DEVASTATION, AND RADICAL HOPE

I have suggested that the picture of relentless hopelessness is as unhelpful as that of cheery denial or misplaced triumphalism. Here I consider another idea about the limits of hope after the devastation of genocide or other catastrophic violence. The philosopher Jonathan Lear argues that even when all *particular* hopes are placed beyond reach by the collapse of a culture there is yet a special transcendental form of hope that might survive and serve as a bridge to the future. In his book *Radical Hope*, Lear explores the “act of radical anticipation” that may still be possible when a people have lost their concepts under conditions of cultural collapse.<sup>56</sup> He tells the story of the Crow people of the American plains under the leadership of their great chief Plenty Coups during the events that led to their confinement to a reservation. Lear is drawn to a remark recorded by a white man to whom Plenty Coups chose to tell his story.<sup>57</sup> Plenty Coups is cited as saying that after the buffalo went away, “the hearts of my people fell to the ground, and they could not lift them up again. After this nothing happened.”<sup>58</sup> Lear’s interpretation is that with the collapse of a culture as a system of meanings that gives significance to events, it is not only that the Crow way of life had ended but that the point of view in which anything that happened had significance or made sense for the Crow as a distinct people had collapsed. Even as the life of Crows goes on, the events are “not genuine happenings” for the Crow, nor are the possibilities of living by and living up to Crow ideals any longer coherent.<sup>59</sup>

Lear does not speak of genocide; instead, he repeatedly refers to “cultural collapse,” devastation, or catastrophe. The story of the Crow is one of removal to a reservation in the 1880s (so, as with other American Indian peoples, from some or all of their land) and ensuing destitution and mass death from disease

<sup>56</sup> Lear, *Radical Hope*, 78.

<sup>57</sup> The book to which Lear refers is Frank B. Linderman, *Plenty-Coups: Chief of the Crows* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), now available in a second edition.

<sup>58</sup> Lear, *Radical Hope*, 2. <sup>59</sup> Lear, *Radical Hope*, 40 and 43.

epidemics (one-third of the Crow died in the 1890s). The US government then embarked on policies to break up tribal lands, break intergenerational ties by removing children to schools with a relentless assimilationist regime, and outlaw and extinguish Native American religious practices and languages. These historical processes arguably encompass many specifically genocidal acts.<sup>60</sup> Lear's interest is in the inherent human possibility in which the tools to conceptualize, consider, and project possibilities are lost as the conditions for continuing a way of life are destroyed. He suggests that the Crow might be understood as surviving the cultural catastrophe through *radical* hope, hope "directed toward a future goodness that transcends the current ability to understand what it is."<sup>61</sup> This involves a complex story about how Plenty Coups was able to draw guidance, despite its indeterminacy and vagueness, from a prophetic childhood dream that instructed the Crow to survive not by continuing to fight but by learning from others. The Crow allied with the United States against their traditional enemies, the Sioux. Although the Crow did not escape confinement to a reservation and later encroachments by the United States, Lear recounts that the Crow remain proud of retaining their land and being able to say that they were not defeated.<sup>62</sup> They did not know what their future good would be, but they were guided by Plenty Coups' conviction that they could survive as a people in search of that good.

Lear's book does something unusual and admirable in academic philosophy, making the situation and experience of a Native American people and their leader into exemplars of human possibility, though Lear repeatedly denies that his is the story of what *actually* happened to the Crow. It is a speculative story that illustrates a peculiar vulnerability of human beings from infancy: we reach out toward a source of goodness that we as yet lack the concepts to understand.<sup>63</sup> Lear's account is moving, but it is highly questionable, both in the assumption that the only hope available for human beings at

<sup>60</sup> The use of the term "genocide" to describe the treatment of indigenous peoples or specific policies directed at them in the Americas, Australia, and Canada, is a topic of disagreement and controversy, despite the fact that many government policies do seem to be explicitly covered under the official definition of genocide in the UN Convention and the Rome Statute. It is not only non-indigenous citizens who question this usage. See, for example, Joseph P. Gone, "Colonial Genocide and Historical Trauma in Native North America: Complicating Contemporary Attributions," in *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America*, ed. Alexander L. Hinton, Andrew Woolford, and Jeff Benvenuto (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 273–291, who questions whether "genocide" in fact characterizes "the overarching pattern" of European dispossession of indigenous peoples in North America. See also other essays in this volume for a nuanced view of what constitutes genocide, with a focus on indigenous peoples.

<sup>61</sup> Lear, *Radical Hope*, 103. <sup>62</sup> Lear, *Radical Hope*, 136. <sup>63</sup> Lear, *Radical Hope*, 122.

extremity is some unusual “radical” sort of hope and in the claims (even if hypothetical) that Lear makes about the Crow (and possibly by implication other Native American peoples) in order to illustrate the need for and possibility of radical hope.

Lear is not alone in believing that cases of extreme collapse of human hopes require the postulation of a special or superordinate form of hope. Matthew Ratcliffe identifies Lear’s radical hope as “a general orientation or sense of how things are with the world in the context of which intentional states of the kind ‘I hope that *p*’ are possible,” what he calls “pre-intentional hope.”<sup>64</sup> Unlike Lear, Ratcliffe believes that pre-intentional hope is always with us and not only a resource in extremity; it is a background condition for forming our particular intentional hopes, “a general sense that things might turn out for the good.”<sup>65</sup> Ratcliffe believes, and Lear presumably must as well, that even pre-intentional or radical hope itself might fail, whether for individuals (Ratcliffe) or in whole communities (Lear). The shared view here is that hopes in the usual sense require well-defined intentional objects, clearly conceived particular states of affairs that the hopes are about. On this view, dramatic losses of particular hopes, then, might be met by some sort of special higher-order hope that allows us to hold open the space for particular hopes with the vague sense that “something good will emerge.” This, however, seems to be a mistake. We do not need to postulate a condition for the possibility of hopes that is itself a superordinate hope, such as Lear’s radical hope or Ratcliffe’s pre-intentional hope. Instead, as I have suggested, an analysis of hope in the usual sense unpacks the conditions for its possibility and sustenance: desire, a sense of an open future, a belief in possibility, and the ability to be energized and directed in thought and possibly to action. Nor is this merely a conceptual point. When people are rendered hopeless, including by the ill-treatment or indifference of others, what is practically necessary in order to confront avoidable hopelessness (or to appreciate unavoidable losses of hope) is not another concept, but an understanding of what concrete conditions of hope have been destroyed for them or put beyond their reach.

Particular hopes and the ability to go on forming and sustaining hopes will be extinguished if one has been crushed or numbed beyond desiring; if one no longer sees a future, or one that is open to certain possibilities; or if one is demoralized or terrorized into inertness or helplessness. These conditions might occur, and particular hopes might be defeated or blocked, when one

<sup>64</sup> Matthew Ratcliffe, “What Is It to Lose Hope?,” *Phenomenology and Cognitive Science* 12, no. 4 (2013), 597–614, here 603.

<sup>65</sup> Ratcliffe, “What Is It to Lose Hope?,” 604.

experiences grief, terror, trauma, or illness; a catastrophic loss of hope does indeed seem possible under these conditions, at least for individuals, whether temporary or longer term.<sup>66</sup> There seems to be no reason to postulate a peculiar form of hope to explain the possibility of transcending hopelessness, once conditions for hope are understood; one instead needs to understand conditions of cognitive, conative, or affective collapse or blockage, local or global, that might be reversed. Nor should one be misled into thinking that the absence of a specific object of hope means that one cannot hope. Hope is cognitively flexible, and can feed on the ability to imagine a future under some description that matches something one desires. It is quite possible to hope for “better times,” “a second chance,” “something good to happen,” or “a better future for the ones that follow.” Vague hopes are hopes all the same; they are not without content, but have underdetermined content that can be realized in varied and even unanticipated ways. Finally, one must not make the mistake of thinking that one only hopes in those cases where one believes what is hoped for is open to effort. Being defeated or stymied or stumped does not preclude hoping, as long as desire persists, imagination is enlivened, and the future seems open to what one desires. Stan van Hooft believes that hope has the psychological structure of “supplication,” a sense of appealing to something beyond oneself that might help.<sup>67</sup>

Lear’s account of the Crow should also give us pause. First, Lear’s characterization of the “Crow way of life” is reductive in a way that simply could not be right for any human culture. When Lear says that “in traditional Crow life, *everything* counted either as hunting or fighting or as preparing to hunt or fight,” we have reason to doubt that this could portray the way of life of a recognizably human group, with its complex history, its layered collective memories and myths, its varied culturally defined roles, social positions, and practices, and its history of exposure to other groups’ ways.<sup>68</sup> Second, Lear does not really mean to say that the Crow ceased to live in time when the buffalo went away and they were confined to a reservation. Lear says that “the members of the Crow tribe still inhabited some minimal form of temporality.”<sup>69</sup> More tellingly, he goes on to describe the “historical

<sup>66</sup> Ratcliffe, “What Is It to Lose Hope?” 605ff. contains a valuable discussion of different ways in which pre-intentional or radical hope might fail. I am suggesting that these can be explained without recourse to the notion of radical hope.

<sup>67</sup> van Hooft, *Hope*, 37.

<sup>68</sup> Lear, *Radical Hope*, 40. Lear mentions the possibility that the Crow were pastoralists before becoming a nomadic hunting tribe (99). If so, the form of life that collapsed at the end of the nineteenth century was not the only source of Crow tradition, practice, and self-understanding.

<sup>69</sup> Lear, *Radical Hope*, 41.

vindication” of the Crow who, still under the leadership of Plenty Coups, continued for decades to lobby the US government for favorable policies, especially concerning their land.<sup>70</sup> It seems the Crow persisted with a motivating sense of a desired future possibility that characterizes hope.

None of this is to deny that the Crow suffered devastating injuries to their way of life. While the Crow survived and held some of their land, many Native peoples were exterminated or lost land, language, and many basic intergenerational continuities of memory, custom, craft, ritual, and practice. The cultural injuries may in many cases be correctly described as devastation or even catastrophe, although the specific histories of particular Indian people and the stories of loss, choice, or change that they have to tell deserve to be considered in detail. Disturbingly, Lear’s image of a culture that vanishes without a trace uncomfortably echoes the persisting trope of the “vanishing” Indian so deeply and purposefully ingrained in the imaginations of other Americans. Yet Lear’s own story is one of a people’s persistence and the continuing pursuit as a people of some central goals. It is hard to see why we should not see Crow people as managing to sustain, despite extreme shocks to their culture and population, some shared hopes about the way of life they were in fact continuing, even if they had lost a very great deal, and to see the emergence from those very losses as the focus of some of their hopes.

There is no denying that Native Americans are among the most disadvantaged populations in the United States. The well-documented problems of poverty, inadequate housing and education, high rates of suicide, early mortality, alcoholism, chronic illness, and violence should raise alarms about their current conditions and continuing histories, as well as those of other indigenous groups. These conditions can be seen as effects or symptoms of some kinds of hopelessness in some individuals and possibly in shared lives.<sup>71</sup> Given the ubiquity and importance of hope in human life, pervasive patterns of hopelessness or diminished or embattled hope are urgent moral problems likely to be explained by conditions that include gross failures of justice in the present as in the past that have blunted people’s desires or their senses of possibility or agency. To argue that hope can persist is not to deny that the conditions of hope may be imperiled or extinguished. Yet many Native communities and populations have survived, physically and culturally, and in many cases revived. I do not think we can understand this resilience without the

<sup>70</sup> Lear, *Radical Hope*, 136ff.

<sup>71</sup> Charles Lyons, “Suicides Spread through a Brazilian Tribe,” *New York Times* (January 4, 2015).

persistence of everyday hopes for better lives as well as hopes for understanding and justice.

It is true that we should not assume that particular ideas of “understanding” or “justice” map on unproblematically to those of the people in question. Nor, for that matter, should we assume that the categories of desire, possibility, the future, and energized agency that I have used to explain hoping are the ways all people will understand the phenomenon of hope, given their own conceptions of time, history, personality, humanity, power, and action. What we can assume is that the drive to survive as a people under concerted attempts at removal, extermination, and assimilation, and to struggle to maintain and revitalize one’s culture, cannot be explained without the persistence for many of the kind of affective orientation we call “hope.” So, too, do the long and often disappointing, yet continuing histories of seeking self-determination and reclaiming stolen land and sacred objects provide evidence of hope in both its aspect of patient biding and active pursuit.<sup>72</sup>

#### CONCLUSION: HOPE MATTERS

Why does hope after genocide matter? Why have I undertaken to displace assumptions that hope in all of its operations – everyday hopes, hopes for understanding, and hopes for justice – is foreclosed or irrelevant in the aftermath of genocide? Ultimately, it is because that assumption itself, neither inevitable nor realistic, is de-individualizing and potentially dehumanizing. Our hopes reveal not simply what we want, but how our powers of attention, imagination, and motivation can be captured and steered in distinctive, and perhaps singular and surprising, ways. If hope is deeply characteristic of human agency, expresses our human subjective orientation in time, and underpins normal moral and social relations, to see hope as foreclosed for some people is to view them as humanly diminished. Similarly, the assumption of the need for radical hope might bypass the everyday humanity of some people whose humanity has itself been discounted by genocidal treatment, by failing to allow for their individual powers of imagination and the complexity of the practical and symbolic resources of their ways of life. It slights the human subjectivity that compels them to hope for truth and justice.

I do not deny that genocide survivors may indeed live in that space beyond all hopes. Not only despair, but simple resignation and a diminished

<sup>72</sup> See, for example, Jeffrey Ostler, *The Lakotas and the Black Hills* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2010), a compact and careful history of the continuous hope of the Lakota to hold and later to regain the Black Hills over more than a century.

investment in the future are possibilities. But it is certain that not all survivors live in that space and it is possible that some of them may transit over time from ravaged or stunned hopelessness to some specific and emotionally sustaining hopes. Nor is it true that all hopes are good for those who sustain them or for others. The content of some hopes is morally unsavory. The pursuit of some hopes can be foolish, harmful to one's own interests, or the cause of indefensible expense to others. In lives devastated by violence or by historical legacies of profound mistreatment, however, everyday hopes for a safe, decent, or better life, or hopes for understanding and justice are not morally objectionable or unwise. Such hopes can be the basis of renewed investment in individual and shared projects, including moral and political projects of seeking truth and justice and social and spiritual commitments to reclaiming communities and culture. It is survivors and heirs of genocide, not we observers, who will be the judge of what they can and do hope for.