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From the Selected Works of Adrian Myers

June, 2011

An Introduction to Archaeologies of Internment

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Available at: <https://works.bepress.com/adrianmyers/8/>

Chapter 1

An Introduction to Archaeologies of Internment

Gabriel Moshenska and Adrian Myers

Abstract In this opening chapter, we introduce the developing field of archaeologies of internment. We first illustrate the prevalence of modern forms of institutional internment around the world since the final decades of the nineteenth century. Second, we offer a tentative definition of “internment” and describe what is meant by an “archaeology of internment,” including a review of previous research in the field. Third, we situate the archaeology of internment within an interdisciplinary context, and discuss some of its potential strengths and unique contributions. Fourth, and finally, we introduce and contextualize the chapters in this volume, and suggest some possible directions for future research.

The Experience of Internment

Internment, past and present, is in the news. During the writing of this introduction, US President Barack Obama is under fire for not closing the infamous Guantánamo Bay prison camp as promised, and the British government is defending the internment of children of asylum seekers in immigration detention centers. At The Hague, Radovan Karadžić is on trial for alleged war crimes, including running concentration camps in the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. In Buenos Aires, former Argentinean president General Reynaldo Bignone has just been imprisoned for crimes including running a secret detention and torture center in the 1970s. The leader of the neo-fascist British National Party, Nick Griffin, was questioned on television about his belief or disbelief in the existence of the

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Nazi extermination camps. The phenomenon of internment clearly has widespread resonance in society today.

The experience of internment is a common thread that links Winston Churchill, John McCain, Günter Grass, Nelson Mandela, Kurt Vonnegut, and Pope Benedict XVI. Internment has inspired powerful and influential books, including *The Gulag Archipelago* and *If This is a Man*, as well as popular films, such as *The Great Escape*, *Empire of the Sun*, and *Bridge on the River Kwai*. Despite their inherent restrictions, sites of internment have become spaces of intellectual and philosophical expansiveness: prisoners on Robben Island, South Africa, drafted the constitution for a new nation; Antonio Gramsci revolutionized Marxist philosophy in his *Prison Notebooks*; a group of rabbis in Auschwitz put God on trial; and Gerhard Bersu pioneered the archaeology of the Isle of Man ([Chapter 3](#) by Mytum, this volume).

The long, varied, and often dark history of internment has played a significant role in shaping societies and cultures worldwide. It touches all the inhabited continents, the sea (e.g. Casella 2005) and, in the age of extraordinary rendition, the sky (e.g. Fastabend et al. 2004; Grey 2007). Internment stretches through time from the distant past to the present day and into the foreseeable future. The practice and experience of internment has been a powerful force in the forging of nation-states, in waging war and, some would argue, in maintaining peace (e.g. Cucullu 2009).

This book draws together studies from around the world with a shared interest in the material and historical traces of internment. It is based in part on a conference session held at the Sixth World Archaeological Congress, and we hope to invoke the ethos of that organization through the recognition that the past, with all its oppressions and injustices, is physically and socially materialized in the present. In this introduction, we examine some of the issues and concepts that make the archaeology of internment a coherent, if novel, field. Following this opening, we begin with a consideration of the word “internment” and argue for an inclusive and flexible conception of the term. The following section examines whether there is a need for an archaeology of internment, the precedents for work in this area, and the range of disciplinary contexts and influences on what is a highly interdisciplinary field of study. The next section of the introduction briefly discusses the contributions to this volume, highlighting connections and contrasts as well as some emergent themes for the discipline as a whole. The final section considers potential future directions for archaeologies of internment, which we anticipate will remain a vibrant field for years to come.

What is Internment?

In the most general archaeological sense, incarceration or internment might be described as the practice of organizing material culture and space to control and restrict the movement of a person or a group of people. Sites of internment can range in scale from a single room or building to entire landmasses. In the chapters of this book we see internment sites defined as physically bounded spaces, with

either human-made boundaries such as fences and walls, or natural boundaries such as rivers or deserts. Landscapes of slavery and other coercive spaces bounded by fear or threats of violence are a separate but closely connected area of study.

There is currently some debate as to whether internment should be distinguished from imprisonment, and the contributors to this volume have taken a range of perspectives on this question. One useful if highly subjective definition of internment drawn from the chapters of this book might be all forms of unjust imprisonment: those that are not the result of a fair and equitable legal process. These forced movements serve social, political, economic and military ends and are often organized around conceptions of racial, ethnic, political and social otherness. The distinction between just and unjust laws and imprisonment is of course usually ambiguous. It is commonplace in criminology to state that prisons have little to do with justice and everything to do with brutal social control by elites. On similar grounds, some anarchists and prison abolitionists argue that all prisoners are political prisoners (e.g. Kropotkin 1927; Davis 2005; Davis and Rodriguez 2000).

A key theme in the history of internment is the notion of the camp, which is typically a newly built collection of more-or-less ephemeral structures designed for communal living, often bounded by a fence or other barrier, with that perimeter patrolled by armed guards. The internment camp is often modeled closely after the army camp, with the barrack as the archetypal structure in both contexts (Fig. 5.3). The architectural relationship between the army barrack and the internment barrack was perhaps formalized through the Hague Convention of 1899 (and later the Hague Convention of 1907 and the Geneva Conventions of 1906, 1929, and 1949) which stated that Prisoners of War (PoWs) must be held under conditions similar to the soldiers of the jailing nation (Geneva Convention 1988; Roland 1991; Vance 1992, 2000).

Everdell (1997) traces the first internment camp for civilians to the late nineteenth century. These “reconcentration camps” were established by the Spanish in Cuba, tested in 1869 and fully implemented in 1896. This system was set up to separate the Cuban rebels from the civilians: after rounding up the civilians and confining them in barbed-wire enclaves, anybody not locked up could be assumed to be a rebel (see also Netz 2004). The Spanish invention was first criticized, then rapidly copied, by the Americans in the Philippines in 1899 and by the British in South Africa in 1900 (Agamben 1997; Everdell 1997; Kessler 1999). Following the establishment of these earliest camps at the end of the nineteenth century, the First and Second World Wars were critical moments in the expansion of these technologies. Though an archaeology of internment should not be temporally bounded, the evidence does seem to suggest a particular association between the internment camp and the twentieth century, and perhaps even more specifically with what Hobsbawm called the “short twentieth century”: that period of “accelerated modernity” which began with the start of the First World War (González-Ruibal 2007, 2008; Hobsbawm 1994).

Prominent and widely known historical examples of internment abound. Internment of PoWs has been a common practice for centuries and formed the basis for some of the earliest international laws. Today the most notorious examples of internment, such as Camp Delta at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, are in violation

of both national and international law (Rose 2004; Margulies 2006; Myers 2010). Where conflicts polarize ethnic communities, members of particular groups are often interned both to prevent their acting as spies or saboteurs, such as Germans in Britain in both World Wars (Bloch and Schuster 2005), or to prevent their joining insurgencies in colonial contexts, such as the Kikuyu in Kenya during the Mau Mau Uprising (Firoze and O’Coill 2002). Other examples of ethnic selection of internees, such as the Serb-run camps in the Bosnian War, were part of a wider scheme of genocide and ethnic cleansing (Campbell 2002). Labor camps, where prisoners are forced to work, existed most infamously in Nazi Europe (Chapter 5 by Myers, this volume) and the Soviet Union (Applebaum 2003), and these harsh penal methods remain in use in China and elsewhere today (Shaw 2010). In these cases the perceived need to isolate a population can conflict with the need to locate them close to their workplaces, whether rural and agricultural as in the case of Chinese forced laborers, or largely urban and industrial as in the Nazi case.

Internment and labor camps aim to control bodies, but some are expressly aimed at controlling minds, as shown in several chapters of this book (e.g. Chapter 4 by González-Ruibal, this volume). In post-war Europe “de-Nazification camps” tried to instill ideas of democracy in the German population (Herz 1948). Since 1957, Chinese dissidents and political prisoners have been sentenced to periods in “re-education through labor” camps. Internment camps are often used to control groups and populations on the move. Refugees, asylum seekers and “illegals” are interned in large numbers for defying national borders, those most arbitrary and often dehumanizing divisions of space (Dow 2004).

In the aftermaths of wars, violent conflicts and natural disasters, large populations of displaced persons are often housed in refugee camps—which have been shown to be a direct descendant of the internment camps of the Second World War (Malkki 1995). In 1945, as the war in Europe was ending, millions of displaced persons (DPs), including demobilized soldiers, Holocaust survivors and bombed-out civilians, were put into camps so that their movements could be regulated (e.g. Malkki 1995; Burström 2009). Internments of this kind are often defended as a means of providing food and shelter, as well as helping to prevent epidemics. In post-war Europe, many of the camps used to house displaced persons had previously held PoWs, political prisoners, forced laborers and soldiers. The institutional and material similarities that enabled these divergent yet connected uses are of significance to archaeologists attempting to understand the past uses of space through traces surviving in the present.

What is the Current State of the Archaeology of Internment?

In photographs, films, art and literature, the internment of civilians and soldiers in temporary or hastily constructed camps is often represented by a recurring set of material symbols, including barbed wire, watch towers and cell blocks. Barbed wire, a nineteenth-century American invention, is perhaps especially notable as both

material reality and metaphor: it has inspired a surprisingly wide body of academic and popular writing (e.g. Liu 2009; Netz 2004; Razac 2000; Krell 2002; Vischer 1919). On a smaller scale we think of the uniforms, restraints and the prisoners' bodies themselves: shaved, shackled, starved or simply confined. But despite their iconic material manifestations, many of these camps have disappeared entirely or are only visible as traces. The brief but awesome power and significance of these structures belie their physical fragility and transience: today even some of the largest and most notorious camps have virtually disappeared from view (e.g. Gilead et al. 2009). As the people who experienced these spaces grow older and die, most of what we can learn about these spaces will come from archaeology.

If internment is a controversial practice, then the history and archaeology of internment is no less problematic. The conflict and controversy begins with the creation of a prison or camp and extends into the future, even to a time when nothing remains but a "site." Former internment camps are now museums, education centers and World Heritage Sites—as well as fields, forests, and urban residential neighborhoods.

Where interpretations and presentations of buildings or artifacts are present, these are continually and sometimes violently contested (Dwork and Van Pelt 1996:354–378). Thus the study of internment inevitably includes the study of its contested history and contested commemorations (Ashplant et al. 2000; Purbrick et al. 2007; Logan and Reeves 2009). With these conflicts come ethical and methodological quandaries: archaeologies of violence and violently contested pasts present complex problems that must be addressed from the outset (Meskell and Pels 2005; Moshenska 2008, 2010). The comparative novelty of archaeological approaches to internment is reflected in the scope of the published literature, which largely consists of site reports, with relatively few comparative studies or syntheses. Nevertheless there is growing interest in this field and it is reasonable to predict that in the coming years a greater number and range of articles and monographs will begin to appear.

There is an apparent dearth of archaeological research into the first generations of concentration camps: some investigation into the early South African Boer War concentration Camps is apparently ongoing but there are no publications to date (Willem Boshoff personal communication 2008). There is no known archaeological research, and apparently very little historical research of any kind, on the early civilian concentration camps in Cuba and the Philippines, and there is a single known report on the archaeology of internment from the First World War (Francis 2008).

A handful of archaeologists have begun to direct their research at the vast complex of camps that were built in Europe during the Second World War, such as Ronald Hirte's work at Buchenwald concentration camp near Weimar, Germany. Hirte excavated a number of war-era dumps "resulting in a collection of several thousand found objects, primarily simple articles of everyday life in the camps" (Hirte n.d.). Many of these artifacts were made by hand or personalized by camp inmates, serving as a reminder of the rich potential for a biographical approach to internment camp artifacts. An international team is currently working at the Sobibor extermination camp in Poland, conducting survey, geophysics and excavations toward an "archaeology of extermination" (Gilead et al. 2009). This project

is an example of how archaeologists can become entangled with the subject of their own study: two of the project director's family members were murdered at Sobibor during the Holocaust.

One of the best-known projects focusing on this era occurred at Stalag Luft III, the Second World War PoW camp, made famous by the 1963 film *The Great Escape*. This interdisciplinary project involved remote sensing and excavations, one of the goals being to locate the escape tunnels *Tom*, *Dick* and *Harry* made famous in the film (Pringle et al. 2007; Doyle et al. 2010). This work is perhaps most useful in its demonstration of the utility of geophysical techniques at such sites: remote sensing work successfully located the *Dick* escape tunnel, which was confirmed by subsequent excavations. The excavations also uncovered remains of the tin can tunnel ventilation system and an escape kit that had been left in the tunnel shaft.

Just as the Second World War brought internment camps to Europe, it also initiated (or expanded) the systems of camps in America, Australia, Canada, South Africa and other nations. In the United States the archaeology of this period has focused on researching the internment of Japanese American civilians. An anthropological research-driven approach to Japanese American internment has been instigated by Bonnie Clark at the University of Denver (Clark 2008; Skiles and Clark 2010). In 2008 Clark's first full field season at the Granada Relocation Center in south-eastern Colorado examined the lives of women and children in the camp, as well as the gardening activities of the internees. A successful program of community collaboration and public interpretation was also developed, with former internees and descendants, among others, visiting the site and working with the archaeologists.

Burton has authored and co-authored an impressive collection of archaeological reports on the sites of the former Japanese American Second World War camps in America (e.g. Burton 1996; Burton et al. 1999). His work includes an overview of the archaeological resources as well as more detailed reports on a selection of specific sites. The archaeology of PoW camps in Britain is also a developing field of research but the published literature is largely limited to descriptive reports and assessments of "what survives and where" (Thomas 2003a, b).

During the Second World War, captured Axis soldiers were sometimes transported from continental Europe, Africa and elsewhere for internment in North America, Australia, South Africa, and elsewhere. The theory behind this policy was that in the event of a successful invasion of Britain the PoWs might become newly available to the Axis armies. Thus thousands of men were transported across oceans to be interned in camps on other continents. The United States Department of Defense has completed a comprehensive historical assessment of all of the Second World War PoW camps built on its lands (Listman et al. 2006), providing a significant resource for future archaeology. Other reports exist for Second World War era PoW camps in Australia (Austral Archaeology 1992) and Canada (Myers 2009).

An exception to the usual cursory reporting of Second World War PoW camps is found in the work of Michael Waters of Texas A&M University. Waters and his research team investigated Camp Hearne, a Texas PoW camp that held 5,000 German prisoners; the result of their work was published as the full length

monograph *Lone Star Stalag* (Waters 2004). Waters reconstructs daily life in the camp based on his comprehensive archival, oral-historical and archaeological research. Waters' treatment might serve as a model for other research projects at North American PoW camps.

The archaeology of internment camps, as a specific area of interest for archaeologists, has reached a critical developmental moment. Increasing attention is being paid to the relevant sites, there is a growing awareness of the research within the wider discipline and, most importantly, the archaeologists working on internment in the recent past are starting to talk to each other. A number of detailed methodological statements on internment site studies have begun to appear, highlighting some of the practical issues in archaeologies of internment (Gilead et al. 2009; Pringle et al. 2007). The critical archaeological study of internment sites has been revitalized by Eleanor Casella's research, and particularly her book *The Archaeology of Institutional Confinement* (2007), which examines imprisonment and internment in America from a historical-archaeological perspective. Casella's work sets out a program for an archaeology of internment that examines the material manifestations of both the social policies of internment and the responses of the individuals who experienced it.

Despite these important advances, much of the work in the field remains unpublished and reports are sometimes difficult to obtain. Limited funding appears to be a serious challenge for archaeologists, and the majority of research on internment sites has been conducted by contract archaeology firms, as attested by the generally descriptive nature of many reports. However, Burton's work on the internment of Japanese Americans stands out as a model for Cultural Resource Management (CRM) reports that go beyond the basic descriptions and listings. The results of CRM work in general should be better recognized as a valuable research resource; Clark's anthropological project, for example, benefits from an earlier report prepared by a contract firm (Ellis 2004). In light of Casella's recent work and the developments described above, it would seem that now is an appropriate time both for critical assessments of the research to date, and a discussion of new approaches and areas of study.

Disciplinary Contexts

Where should we locate the archaeology of internment as a discipline? Like the young but well established interest areas of the archaeology of the recent past (Buchli and Lucas 2001; Harrison and Schofield 2010; Fortenberry and Myers 2010) and twentieth-century conflict archaeology (Saunders 2004; Schofield 2009), the archaeology of internment crosses a number of traditional disciplinary boundaries. The archaeological element in the studies in this book includes methodologies, theoretical frameworks and institutional and professional allegiances. Perhaps most fundamentally, archaeology refers to the focus on historical material culture, which can be approached from a number of directions other than those

traditionally archaeological. Thus archaeologists studying internment will find themselves working as or with historians, archivists, oral historians, criminologists, architects and others. Fields such as human geography, heritage studies, museum studies and architectural history will have much to offer and much to gain from close working relationships.

Though boundaries are malleable, there does seem to be a particular association between the archaeology of internment and the wider field of archaeologies of modern conflict (Schofield et al. 2002). These studies have emerged from battlefield archaeology and historical archaeology, and focus on the theme of conflict in its broadest sense, including both physically violent and nonviolent forms. The archaeology of modern conflict examines contested spaces, sites, bodies and objects, and through these processes engages with contested pasts, making it a strong contender for a disciplinary home for studies of internment.

The nascent archaeology of recent internment also needs to consider its neighbors. These include archaeologies and ethnographies of prisons, schools, workhouses, leprosaria, monasteries and reform establishments such as boys colonies, as they contribute much to the closely related discussions on institutional life (Beisaw and Gibb 2009; Casella 2007; Spencer-Wood and Baugher 2001). There is a particularly rich literature on archaeological approaches to nineteenth-century prisons (Best 1987, 1992; Casella 1999, 2000a, b, 2001a–d, 2005). Studies of the archaeology of internment camps in earlier eras, such as the PoW camps of the American Civil War, are also relevant (Avery et al. 2008; Bush 2000, 2009; Thoms 2000, 2004). An argument could also be made for the relevance of bounded landscapes, such as reservations and sites of exile (Doughton 1997), plantation and urban slavery in the American South (e.g. Epperson 2000), military installations such as army camps (Schofield et al. 2006a) and contemporary maximum security prisons (e.g. Mears 2008; Pizarro and Stenius 2004).

What Can We Hope to Learn?

What can the material remains of internment spaces tell us about the organizations and societies that shaped and were shaped by them? As an introduction to this issue, here is another question: why do some prisons and internment camps closely resemble planned utopian communities: or, why have some utopian communities been designed like prisons (Van Bueren 2006)? The key to this juxtaposition is the notion that arrangements of material culture and space can manipulate or control human behavior. Hospitals display a similar spatial patterning, with an emphasis on widespread, accessible public spaces and small, confined private spaces. Hillier and Hanson (1984) highlight the contrast between modern prisons, hospitals and other public buildings on the one hand, and traditional homes on the other. They conclude that prisons are “reversed buildings” in which structures or arrangements of space embody and reinforce social ideas: “they are expressions and realizations of these organizing principles in a domain that is more structured than the world outside the

boundary” (Hillier and Hanson 1984:184). It is through this lens that we should approach the archaeology of internment.

The arrangement of space in internment camps and buildings is an important area for archaeological study. For example, some forms of internment separate male and female internees while others, like most PoW camps, are exclusively male. These forms of segregation can often be witnessed in the archaeological record, either through the division of space and duplication of facilities, or through possible gender-specific artifacts and other material traces. The control and expression of prisoners’ sexuality is a key element of internment, and one that is often neglected in historical studies, although one source uncharacteristically reveals that a few British PoWs in the Second World War declared “home or homo by Christmas!” (Morison 1995). Rape and sexual violence are common features of internment, both as forms of torture and coercion, and as a result of the increased vulnerability and dependence of the internees. Internment camps have been used to facilitate systematic rape (Diken and Laustsen 2005).

If the material culture of internment ranges from portable objects to buildings, settlements, landscapes and landmasses, then there are substantial opportunities for archaeological perspectives on these diverse elements. We might ask what food was available to the internees and their guards, where it was sourced, how and where it was prepared and consumed. From this information we can begin to examine the economic structures of internment, including perhaps the internal economy of trade and exchange between internees (e.g. Myers 2008, 2009; Valentine and Longstaff 1998). In many internment camps and prisons, varying degrees of malnutrition have been used as a means of control, keeping prisoners physically and psychologically weakened and distracted. Discussions of food feature prominently in historical accounts and memoirs of internment (e.g. Arct 1995; Spiegelman 2003; Williams 1949). Archaeological investigations of internment sites can provide insights into both the official food economy of the site and the unofficial economy of contraband, trade, bribery and hoarding (Chapter 5 by Myers, this volume). This use of archaeology as a source for ethno-historical studies of internment has a range of possible applications.

Archaeologists might contribute to the study of the economics of constructing and running internment sites. Internment is almost always expensive for governments or military groups, but is often extremely profitable for the private sector. The Nazi SS, in cooperation with German manufacturing titans such as Krupp and Bayer, made sure that their concentration and extermination camps extracted income in every possible way from the labor, possessions and corpses of the internees. Today, alliances between the US Department of Defense and contractors such as Kellogg, Brown & Root, and the privatization of the internment of asylum seekers in Europe have enriched a select few while draining the pockets of the taxpayers. To study the infrastructure of internment, we can examine what was constructed, when and by whom, and how much they profited from it.

What can an archaeological approach that reads between the lines of official and technical accounts of internment tell us about the internees themselves, their lives, strategies, personalities and forms of physical or mental escape? We know

that these factors are most strongly affected by the aims of the internment: to control, contain, punish, protect, exploit and murder. Thus the formation and re-formation of individual and group identities is an important factor in the study of internment; for example, in the control, regulation and personalization of spaces through graffiti, violence, threats or consensus.

One of the recurring themes or mythologies of internment is, unsurprisingly, freedom and escape. This includes spiritual freedom, physical freedom or a more personal sense of liberation. These can be gained through petty control of time and space, through escape attempts, and not uncommonly through drug use or suicide (e.g. Human Rights Watch 2008). All of these activities leave their traces in the archaeological record: the archaeology of escape tunnels and escape equipment is a recent development in this field (Pringle et al. 2007). The scope for archaeological contributions to our understanding of internment is wide, both in the unique perspectives these offer and as part of a multidisciplinary approach to sites of contemporary resonance and significance.

In This Book

How, then, have researchers begun to apply these potential forms and foci for the archaeology of internment in practice? The chapters in this book are case studies from the broadly defined disciplines of contemporary and historical archaeology, as applied to practices of internment ranging across more than a century of world history. Weiss (Chapter 2) examines the sinister continuities between the use of camps to control workers in the diamond fields of late nineteenth-century South Africa and the later use of civilian internment camps in the same areas during the Boer War. This revealing comparison of colonial oppression and wartime exigency exposes the brutal inhumanity they share: the conflation of killing and working to death echo back to slavery, and forward to the Holocaust. Weiss convincingly argues that the paranoia around the illicit trade in diamonds based on theft from mines led to a form of control over workers' bodies that matched or exceeded that of an actual internment camp. Combined with routinely fatal working conditions, the economic logic of the diamond industry and the colonial project as a whole have controversially been compared to economic aspects of the Holocaust (Lindqvist 1996). Weiss considers the peculiar socio-legal circumstance of the bodies of the diamond miners, stripped of the presumption of innocence and accordingly their physical freedom. The study of the confined body is a fascinating one that will continue to grow in archaeologies of internment.

Banks' comparison of work and prison camps in Second World War Scotland (Chapter 7) is analogous to Weiss' study, but it highlights a very different equivalence. While the work camp was built to accommodate "friends" (the Canadian guest workers), the PoW camp was built for "enemies." However, these "enemies" were protected by international conventions. To the extent that the two camps are comparable in form, the common practicalities of accommodating groups of young single men seemingly outweigh the ideological differences. Banks' analysis draws

on detailed archaeological studies of both sites, and his comparison of the different roles of the fences, one to imprison and one to demarcate, highlight the challenges of interpreting the archaeological record of even the very recent past.

González-Ruibal's account of the internment and concentration camps of the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath ([Chapter 4](#)) paints a grim picture of brutality and deprivation analogous to that of the Nazi concentration camps. Most of these internment sites were reused structures—such as schools, bullrings and religious buildings including monasteries and seminaries. González-Ruibal argues that the use of religious buildings was a conscious element of a larger plan to mould “rebels” or “reds” into “good Catholic Spaniards.” The policies of widespread forced labor or “redemption through work” also reinforced this idea, employing a range of dehumanizing and de-individualizing techniques of social engineering on a large contingent of the population deemed a sub-human mass of “red scum.” The theme of forced labor is a recurrent one throughout this volume, linking this paper to Weiss' study of diamond mining, the studies of Finnish and Arizonan road-building camps and Myers' consideration of material culture in Auschwitz, with its famous slogan *Arbeit Macht Frei*. In [Chapter 4](#), by González-Ruibal, the concept of forced labor cuts across another key theme in internment, that of social engineering—including, for example, the removal of a category of people from society to change the nature of that society. This can be simply for physical separation, as in [Chapter 11](#) by Pantzou, [Chapter 3](#) by Mytum, and [Chapter 8](#) by Carr; for a period of reform or re-education, as in [Chapter 4](#) by González-Ruibal; or as a step toward mass murder, as in [Chapter 5](#) by Myers and [Chapter 12](#) by Zarankin and Salerno.

Myers' study of the Auschwitz concentration/extermination camp complex ([Chapter 5](#)) examines this symbol of the Holocaust from a material culture perspective. This unusual viewpoint highlights the brutally materialistic world of the death camp in which people's possessions and later their bodies were harvested on an industrial scale to feed the war economy and ideological bloodlust of the Nazi regime. Stripped of their belongings, the few objects the inmates possessed took on immense practical and symbolic significance, as Myers shows: losing your spoon, hat or clogs often amounted to a death sentence. At the same time, the small minority of prisoners employed in processing the possessions of new arrivals at the camp were able to access a super-abundance of material, including food, some of which they stole or smuggled into the camp, sustaining the black market among the prisoners.

The archetypal internment camps in popular consciousness are probably those from the Second World War, due in part to the considerable body of writing produced by former PoWs from this period. Thomas' study of a PoW camp for German prisoners in Texas ([Chapter 9](#)) is an exemplary exposition of the form and function of these sorts of camps, and of the survival, significance and vulnerability of their archaeological traces. The historical background research includes a series of vignettes that illuminate the nature of everyday life in the camp, including endless complaints about food, half-hearted escape attempts, petty corruption and badly paid labor. The documented accounts attest to haphazard adherence to standard camp building patterns and the continuous adaptation and rebuilding of aspects of the

infrastructure: a cautionary tale for any archaeologists seeking literal embodiments of internment ideologies.

Whatever the rationale for the location of PoW camps, whether convenience or security, climate was not usually a consideration. From the Texan heat we move to the extreme cold of Northern Finland, where Seitsonen and Herva ([Chapter 10](#)) excavated a camp built for Soviet prisoners in the Second World War. From an archaeological perspective, the German guards, though numerically fewer, were inevitably richer in portable and disposable material culture than their more numerous Soviet captives. But Seitsonen and Herva describe the difficulties the Germans experienced in adapting their military tactics and technology to the frozen landscape, and the archaeology backs this up, with a significant amount of Finnish material culture mixed in with the German goods.

The civilian internment camps of the Second World War are less numerous and less known than the military PoW camps. These tended to be less regulated and regimented due in part to the legal and constitutional ambiguities surrounding their use, as well as the more diverse populations they enclosed. Carr's study ([Chapter 8](#)) looks at the small but significant number of civilians from the Channel Islands, already living under German occupation, who were held in camps in Germany for the latter part of the war. In contrast, Mytum considers German civilian internment on the Isle of Man ([Chapter 3](#)) in both the First and Second World Wars, providing a parallel to the accounts collected by Carr. Stories from civilian internment such as these often mention the crushing boredom of life behind the wire, and the psychological impact of the restrictions and lack of privacy. Presumably PoWs, in contrast to civilians, can be expected to have become at least somewhat accustomed to boredom, petty controls, and communal living during their pre-internment military lives.

Like Carr's and Mytum's chapters, Farrell and Burton's study of the Catalina Prison Camp ([Chapter 6](#)) examines civilian internment during the Second World War. Like Thomas' chapter, it is based on CRM work in the USA, and like the camp in Seitsonen and Herva' chapter it involves road construction. Unlike these studies, Farrell and Burton's site of internment heritage has a hero: Gordon Hirabayashi, a Japanese American student who argued that the internment of American citizens of Japanese descent was unconstitutional and unethical. Hirabayashi was given a short prison sentence, which he served at the Catalina camp in Arizona. In the 1980s, Hirabayashi's case was re-examined and his resistance became part of the civil rights narrative. Hirabayashi's internment at the camp, albeit brief, was used to challenge a decision to not add the camp site to the National Register of Historic Places. Farrell and Burton's study highlights the complexities of formal commemoration and commemorative practices at sites of internment, a recurring theme throughout this book. Narratives of oppression and resistance often come into conflict with real or perceived guilt and shame, including conflicting conceptions of victim, perpetrator and bystander. Meanwhile in some cases such as those described by González-Ruibal ([Chapter 4](#)) and Compañy et al. ([Chapter 13](#)) the sites can become foci for revisiting or refigiting the original conflicts.

Several of the chapters describe the use of landscape features as technologies of internment. One of the most common types of geography used for imprisonment

is islands, as in the famous cases of Alcatraz and Robben Island, and the Isle of Man (Chapter 3 by Mytum, this volume). Pantzou's study of the Greek island of Ai Stratis (Chapter 11) shows how the isolation and natural boundaries of islands have been used over time for the exile or banishment of individuals, as well as for the internment of larger groups. Ai Stratis has a long history of housing political prisoners during a number of periods from 1929 through to the end of the Greek Junta in 1974. Despite the official policy of erasing the traces of closed internment camps, and the earthquake that devastated the area in 1968, Pantzou shows that the material evidence of imprisonment can still be found on the island. Pantzou raises the issue of dark or uncomfortable heritage, a central theme in studies of internment, and a key element in the socio-politics of remembering and forgetting events that divided a nation.

Many of the post-1945 authoritarian regimes that have practiced mass internment of civilians are located in Latin America (see Funari et al. 2009). Notorious sites of internment include the Chilean National Stadium and the Naval Mechanics School in Buenos Aires. Zarankin and Salerno examine the history of clandestine detention centers in Argentina (Chapter 12), focusing on the 2002 excavation of the *Club Atlético* site, where around 1,500 political prisoners were held, tortured and murdered in 1977 before the site was razed to conceal the evidence of the crime. As with the excavation of the Gestapo headquarters in Berlin in 1985 (discussed below), survivors of the Argentinean detention centre and relatives of victims took part in the archaeological work on the site. This suggests a valuable social impact of conducting the archaeology of contested sites as a public or community archaeology, accessible to those affected by the site so that the excavation or survey project itself can become an arena for articulating and contesting different memory narratives (Moshenska 2007, 2010). In a related study, Compañy et al. (Chapter 13) describe the survey and recording of another detention centre *El Pozo* in Argentina, where again the survivors and relatives of victims chose to visit the site repeatedly to interact with the archaeologists and the space in an intensely emotional environment that challenged the desirability of emotionally disconnected research on sites of painful heritage such as these.

Schofield and Cocroft's study of the Stasi Hohenschönhausen prison (Chapter 14) took the form of *dérive*-like organized wanderings around the landscape context of the jail, mapping and photographing the abandoned factories and other buildings as well as the Stasi complex itself. Since the study was carried out, the prison featured prominently in the successful film *The Lives of Others*, which portrayed not only the offices of the Stasi, but also the residential complexes where employees lived and indeed where many of them still live. Schofield and Cocroft's photographs depict a once-feared centre of power reduced to a decrepit shell, and their discussion of the site reflects on the paradox that the popular culture depiction of internment camps are sometimes better known than the tangible historic sites themselves. It was in Berlin that the excavation of internment sites began, with the Active Museum's 1985 excavation of the Gestapo headquarters, including the cell-block in the basement, which is now a museum (Rürup 1996; Baker 1990; Moshenska 2010).

Purbrick describes recording the site of the Long Kesh/Maze prison in Northern Ireland ([Chapter 15](#)) from its closure and abandonment in 2000 to its near-total demolition beginning in 2006. For a time there were plans to reuse rather than redevelop the site, and several of the infamous H Blocks were cleaned out and redecorated, including painting over the numerous iconic murals and graffiti in both the Loyalist and the Republican blocks. Some of these artworks survived, and Purbrick discusses these in relation to the rich symbolic tradition of political murals in Northern Ireland, many of which are increasingly being regarded as heritage sites or civic artworks worthy of preservation. The murals in the Long Kesh/Maze site, on the other hand, are “orphan heritage” with no proximate community to advocate for their significance (Price 2005). Purbrick reflects on the extreme difficulty facing anyone who might have wanted to preserve or memorialize the H Blocks and their artworks, and raises the question of whether their loss is in fact a positive step in moving toward reconciliation in the affected communities. Material remains and the archaeological processes we devote to them drag painful and difficult pasts into the here-and-now: their power and significance cannot be underestimated, but we should not be afraid to ask whether in some cases material loss and the erasure of memory might not be a necessary stage in conflict resolution.

Future Directions for the Archaeology of Internment

Where do we go from here? The papers in this volume demonstrate the diversity of the field as well as its strength. The archaeology of internment has emerged as a distinct field with links to areas of study including material culture, heritage and tourism, history, museums, anthropology, human geography, planning, psychology, penology, public health and public policy. It is closely associated with conflict archaeology, historical archaeology and indigenous or postcolonial archaeologies. The overview of recent and contemporary work contained in this book, together with assessments of previous work in the field, not only shows a dynamic and exciting new discipline beginning to find its feet, but also highlights opportunities for growth, development and expansion.

The corpus of work on modern internment camps suffers from major gaps: archaeological reports on the earliest era of modern internment camps (in Cuba, the Philippines, South Africa, and elsewhere) are virtually nonexistent. Similarly, there is only one known report on a camp from the First World War. The particular knowledge and skills developed in the context of archaeology conducted at Second World War era camps, where a significant amount of research has already occurred, might be deployed at these earlier sites of internment. Such a program would clearly provide critical information and understanding about the genesis of the modern internment camp.

Archaeologists’ engagements with the material remains of the recent past are growing in number, confidence and quality. A significant number of these studies have focused on contested pasts: episodes of historic violence, oppression or

injustice that resonate in the contemporary world. It is within this context that we hope to see archaeologies of internment grow and develop. Perhaps the most valuable outcome of the long view on internment and internees that this work offers could be a critique of the practice of internment in the present day. One of the largest groups of people interned today are refugees, migrants and asylum seekers, displaced by conflict, natural disasters or economic privations. The hardships suffered by these people are exacerbated by their unjust criminalization when they seek to cross borders in search of a better life. The internment of young children in these camps and detention centers is particularly repellent.

The world is as full of civilian internment camps as it has ever been since their inception in the late nineteenth century, and they remain both symbols and technologies of inhumanity. Hopefully some of the outrage engendered by studying archaeologies of internment can help to change this shameful situation.

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