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Editors' Introduction

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Editors' Introduction

It is with great pleasure that I write my very first Editor's Introduction.

Before I share some initial impressions about the journal more generally, and then reflect on this edition specifically, I wish to pay my respects to the former Editor-in-Chief, Christian Gudehus, who, for eight years, guided the journal to where it is today. Christian's decisions across those many years have meant that the journal's reputation remains as one of the foremost scholarly publications on genocide and its prevention. Under his guidance the journal opened itself to other forms of voice and today includes not only traditional scholarship but submissions such as dossiers, interviews, essays, roundtables and, more recently, the Arts and Literature section, all of which I believe provides the journal, and our community, eclecticism of insight and opinion.

Alongside this evolution, and with the help of the journal's cohort of editors, Christian implemented several pragmatic initiatives that sit behind the scenes and are crucial to the running of the journal. These range from refining templates and the compilation of a reviewer's list (as examples), to using software that helps the board in its communication. I add this praise as I am not sure how I might have coped as a newcomer to the journal had these incentives not been in place. I am very grateful to all on the board who helped in the adoption of these ideas, and to Christian for realizing the need to constantly develop and refine their implementation.

In sum, Christian leaves an indelible and significant legacy, and the journal has benefited much from his guidance.

And here I am, six months into the role and I have already learned much. For one, and as mentioned a short while back in an IAGS newsletter, I am surprised by the breadth and width of scholarship the journal receives, and the eclectic types of voice from those who find the topic of genocide and its prevention a scholarly interest. I am also pleased to realize that the journal receives a wide array of scholarship and over the past six months I've read articles whose topics stretch the globe, and in equal balance from both the established and the newcomer. I believe this speaks well of the future of our community and, so too, the journal and the reach of its appeal as a repository of ideas on a difficult topic.

In this very first edition that I have been privileged to learn from, guest edited by our colleagues Emily Sample and Henry Theriault, we come to a difficult and pressing issue. Under their guidance, this edition offers an array of submissions on the subject of environmental degradation and genocide, a topical and worrying concern that is also being addressed in an upcoming edition of *Holocaust Studies* and was the subject of a special edition of the *Journal of Genocide Research* in 2021. I think this alignment speaks to our fears as a group of people who, all too well, understand the risks associated with climate change and environmental damage.

As Martin Crook and Damien Short pointedly highlight in their introduction to their 2021 edition, "[t]he preponderance of evidence demonstrates emphatically that unless the global community and political and diplomatic elites involved in

climate governance, change course dramatically and wean us off fossil fuels, ecological catastrophe awaits us.”¹

Having read the articles submitted under Emily’s and Henry’s guidance, I have been left thinking about the dire situation we find ourselves in, and not just from an ecological point of view, but existentially. Working in this field as we do, as scholars (from many backgrounds) that ponder the human condition in relation to the worst forms of criminality we can inflict on ourselves, I suppose none of what is being reported in these articles should come as a shock. Reading each of the submissions on their own merit reveals some aspects of the troubles we find ourselves in. As a collective, however, the ideas and discussions act as a warning, highlighting our inadequacies as a species. Either we cannot comprehend the impending doom, or we do understand yet have an inbuilt societal stasis that, for whatever reason, leaves us very (very) gradually making changes that might help us avoid a calamitous outcome. It is indeed worrying. And yes, ecological catastrophe seems to await.

A core argument that these discussions highlight, as noted in Nancy Rosoff’s exegesis of Brooklyn Museum’s display titled “Climate in Crisis: Environmental Change in the Indigenous Americas,” is that for far too long (and I write this as an Australian who recognizes my own nation’s many failures in this regard), we have flagrantly and arrogantly ignored Indigenous ways of caring for the world, privileging a Western-centered lifestyle that emphasizes ownership, exploitation, privatization, and so the list goes on. One message I took from reading this collection is a need for an orientation away from Western “values,” to an alignment with Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies. We need, at the very least, to be aware of those populations, and their ways of living, who have been warning the world for generations about the harm being inflicted, and who have been purposefully ignored.

A few years ago, I was teaching a course on Australian literature and the book-of-the-week was by Kim Scott, a Noongar man from Western Australia. Called *That Deadman Dance* (2010),² the book, in part, describes the spiritual relationship the Noongar people have with nature. The book resonated and I subsequently went in search of other authors to better understand this relationship. I found a poignant and important description from an American-born ethnographer called Deborah Bird Rose, who came to Australia to study indigenous relations to ecology. This is the description:

Country in Aboriginal English is not only a common noun but also a proper noun. People talk about country in the same way that they would talk about a person: they speak to country, sing to country, visit country, worry about country, feel sorry for country, and long for country. People say that country knows, hears, smells, takes notice, takes care, is sorry or happy. Country is not a generalised or undifferentiated type of place, such as one might indicate with terms like ‘spending a day in the country’ or ‘going up the country.’

¹ Martin Crook and Damien Short, “Introduction,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 23, no. 2 (2021), 155.

² Kim Scott, *That Deadman Dance* (Sydney: Picador, 2013).

Rather, country is a living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow, with a consciousness, and a will toward life. Because of this richness, country is home, and peace; nourishment for body, mind, and spirit; heart's ease.³

As I reflect on the articles submitted as part of this edition, I cannot help pondering this idea of Country versus country, and how so much of what might befall us due to climate change and the degradation of the environment might (possibly) have been avoided (or be avoided) had we a better understanding of this relationship. Or had we been open to other ways of thinking and being that are different to those that have been imbibed socially and culturally within many of us for far too long. Even in this age of "green technology," as Regina Paulose shows us, we still seem to ignore these crucial voices. Let us hope that editions such as the one compiled here show us, as a community and a population more generally, that we are slowly working towards realization and a hopeful recovery, keeping in the forefront of our social conscience the importance of the adoption of something akin to Country.

With that, I leave you to read and reflect.

Kirril Shields
Editor-in-Chief, GSP

The editorial team of GSP welcomes this special edition that has been guest edited by Emily Sample and Henry Theriault. As outlined in their editorial, the conversations at the core of these papers represent a growing corpus of work that speaks to the risks, including genocide, associated with humanitarian crises caused by climate change and the environment's demise. We hope readers take as much from these diverse voices as did our editorial board, and we hope the collection acts as a springboard to much needed discussion and deliberation, and action, that aims to minimise the risks of genocide and human rights violations that may come from climate change.

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³ Deborah Bird Rose, *Nourishing Terrains: Australian Aboriginal Views of Landscape and Wilderness* (Sydney: Australian Heritage Commission, 1996), 7.