

Article

Oranges and Sunshine: The Story of a Traumatic Encounter

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Abstract: This paper will rely on some well-known theories on trauma, memory and ethics to study how Jim Loach’s debut film *Oranges and Sunshine* (2010) testifies to the traumatic deportation of up to 150,000 British children to distant parts of the Empire, mainly Australia, until 1970. *Oranges and Sunshine* was based on Margaret Humphreys’ moving memoir, originally entitled *Empty Cradles* (1994) but later re-titled *Oranges and Sunshine* after Loach’s film. What these two texts basically claim is the need to recover historic memory through heart-breaking acts of remembrance, which can alone denounce the atrocities that were concomitant with the colonial enterprise and pave the way for disclosing and working through individual and collective traumas.

Keywords: Jim Loach; Margaret Humphreys; trauma theory; memory studies; Australian studies; postcolonial trauma; Lost Children of Empire; biopolitics; missing person; *homo sacer*

1. Introduction

Contemporary Australia is still trying to cope with the traumatic unsettlement brought about by the publication in 1997 of the polemical *Bringing Them Home Report*, which disclosed, to use the title of Mishra and Hodge’s well-known book, “the dark side of the Australian dream” [1]. What this report disclosed and denounced was the long-term suffering inflicted by the Australian government upon the Aboriginal community, which saw for decades how their children were being wrenched from their families to be brought up in white missions, where they were deprived of their names, their language, their culture, and any kind of contact with their families. “Stolen Generation” was the name given to these Aboriginal children. Conservative Prime Minister John Howard refused to apologize for all of

these atrocities. It was Kevin Rudd, Australia's next Labour PM, who in 2008 finally delivered an official apology.

It was only one decade later that yet another skeleton was found in the Australian cupboard, but this time Australia had only been the perpetrators' accomplice. The nation that was years later revealed to have stolen children was not Australia, but England. In 1986, Margaret Humphreys, a social worker from Nottingham, brought to the surface what had for decades remained a well-kept shameful secret. Margaret Humphreys investigated a woman's claim that, at the age of four, she had been put on a boat to Australia by the British government. Much to her shock, this social worker discovered that this was not the only case since, under the postwar Children's Act 1948, up to 150,000 children had been deported from Britain and sent to distant parts of the Empire, mainly Australia, right up until 1970. Many were told that their parents were dead when they were not, or else that their country did not want them, since they were the children of British whores. To make matters still worse, if they had siblings when they arrived, they were often separated from them, too. On the other hand, their parents/single mothers were told that their children had been adopted by families who would offer them a better life. These children were promised a land of oranges and sunshine, but what most of them found instead was a life of physical and sexual abuse in institutions where they were put to work as laborers, if not slaves, far away from everything and everyone they knew. It took the British government more than two decades to make a public apology. In 2010, Britain's Prime Minister Gordon Brown followed suit in the House of Commons, for "this shameful episode...this failure in the first duty of a nation: to protect its children" ([2], p. 8).

Jim Loach's debut feature *Oranges and Sunshine* (2010), based on Margaret Humphreys' moving memoir *Empty Cradles* (1994), testifies to the need to recover historic memory through heart-breaking acts of remembrance, which can alone pave the way for disclosing and working through individual and collective traumas.

2. Margaret Humphreys' *Empty Cradles*

Humphreys' memoir narrates these child migrants' traumatic stories, together with this social worker's struggle to bring both the British and Australian governments to account for all of these atrocities. It all began when Humphreys tried to find out why British children had been sent overseas to institutions in Australia. She put advertisements in Australian newspapers, asking people with similar stories to come forward. Since several did, she took annual leave and, with an *Observer* journalist (the only way she could raise the money for the trip), set off for Australia to meet them. On her return, with the help of her husband, who enrolled for a doctorate at Nottingham University in order to have easy access to the archives, she investigated their situations. They soon discovered that these children's parents had not died, and that these kids had been transported overseas without parental consent. The *Observer* piece, published in July 1987, brought the cases of many more migrants to the surface and, as a result, Humphreys set up the "Child Migrants Trust". This trust received hundreds of queries, which Humphreys began to investigate. The pressure was so great that four months later Humphreys had to give up the day job she had had for 15 years in order to pursue this search full time. When a documentary, *Lost Children of Empire*, was screened in 1989, the trust was inundated. Something similar happened in Australia. As Kelly Jean Butler argues ([3], pp. 247–50),

the traumatic experiences of these child migrants came to the surface there mainly through the publication in the same year of Philip Bean and Joy Melville's history *Lost Children of the Empire* [4], which was soon followed by hundreds of stories about the ill-treatment of non-migrant children in "care" homes run by the government and religious institutions. The proliferation of these testimonies led the federal government to carry out a series of inquiries into the experiences of all of these children. The outcome of this harrowing process was the release in 2001 of the Senate Community Affairs References Committee report into child migration, titled *Lost Innocents*. This report was followed in 2004 and 2005 by other reports on the forgotten Australians. Although these inquiries were not as strongly funded as the *Bringing Them Home Report*, they called for and received a myriad of written personal testimonies of childhood abuse. The Australian government soon afterwards decided to develop a repository of the testimony of the forgotten Australians along the same line as the National Library of Australia's *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project* [5]. Kevin Rudd's 2008 apology was clearly formulated in response to all of these heart-breaking testimonies. As far as Britain was concerned, the outbreak of indignation unleashed by the aforementioned documentary *Lost Children of Empire* was nothing compared to the reaction triggered off by *The Leaving of Liverpool*, a dramatization of the story, screened in 1992. Telephone help-lines got jammed, and this shameful episode definitely came to light in British public culture. As it turned out, children had been exported from Britain since the 1600s, though the practice only gained real pace in the late 1800s. Although many of those who sent them away seemed to have believed they were doing good, giving the children a new beginning, it is clear that they had no idea what this new beginning might be like. After the Second World War, many families found themselves unable to look after young children, and so put them into care, promising to pick them up again as soon as they could. To these children were added those of single mothers experiencing social stigma and giving their children up for adoption. These children were the victims, not only of irresponsible "do-gooding", but also of the dynamics and anxieties of empire. After all, it was the colonial enterprise that encouraged this abduction and kept it hidden for years. Interestingly enough, most of these children happened to be of Irish descent. Although in 1937 a new Constitution re-established the state as Ireland (*Éire* in Irish), a self-governing Dominion of the Commonwealth of Nations in the manner of Canada and Australia, and in 1949 the state was formally declared a republic and finally left the British Commonwealth, it is undeniable that, after the Second World War, people of Irish origin were still being regarded and dealt with by the British authorities as if they were subdued colonial subjects. Secondly, like many British convicts decades before, these children were seen as a burden on the state in Britain, and were accordingly treated like trash and transported overseas. Last but not least, just as thousands of blacks were for centuries wrenched from their homelands and transported from Africa to the Caribbean to work the plantations as slaves on account of their skin color, it was these children's "whiteness" that turned them into the tools/commodities that the metropolis used (and abused) to fertilize the Australian continent with the "good white stock" ([6], p. 2) required to neutralize the ever increasing numbers of Asian migrants coming to Australia, who came to be pejoratively labeled as the "yellow peril". The words uttered by the archbishop of Perth when welcoming a shipload of boys in 1938 speak for themselves:

At a time when empty cradles were contributing woefully to empty spaces, it was necessary to look for external sources of supply. And if we did not supply from our own stock, we were leaving ourselves all the more exposed to the menace of the teeming millions of our neighbouring Asiatic races ([2], p. 278).

As Humphreys explains, “this wasn’t about giving kids a new start in life. It was a blatant piece of pragmatic social and religious engineering to fill rural Australia with bright, white British stock” ([2], p. 278). Besides, these child migration schemes allowed the local authorities to save money because, whereas “it was costing them 12 pounds a year to support a child in a parish workhouse, [...] for a single payment of 15 pounds they could send them overseas and be absolved of any further financial responsibility” ([2], p. 80). This wave of migration, which took an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 white children to Australia, did not end until 1967. These children were transported by force and prevented from establishing further contact with their homeland and families. They were deprived, as Jenny Edkins would put it, of their “personhood” [7], and were therefore condemned to be perpetually missing. In Giorgio Agamben’s words, they became “perpetually forgotten”, “irretrievably lost in the history of society and the history of individuals”, while paradoxically becoming utterly “unforgettable” ([8], p. 40). As Jenny Edkins goes on to explain ([7], pp. 129–30), there are a number of instances where people go missing: people can be *ontically* missing, *ontologically* missing and *politically* missing. Although, ontologically speaking, any person, or indeed any being is, in some sense, “missing” (in Lacanian terms, a person is always incomplete, because his/her entry into the symbolic order always produces a gap—a lack or an excess), it is the ontic and political dimensions that should be paid special attention here. When people are ontically “missing”, they disappear from the context that constitutes their known social or symbolic system. According to this, the dead are not “missing”, because they have corpses that have been either buried or cremated, and the fact that they have a resting place allows their relatives to move on, somehow. The case of the missing is quite different. They are nowhere to be found, but are not confirmed as dead yet. They are neither symbolically dead (they still occupy a place in the social or symbolic order, as long as there are people who still remember and look for them), nor actually dead, which keeps the lives of their friends and relatives suspended. When it comes to analysing this question in political terms, another sense of “missing” person must be taken into consideration. In Lacanian terms, the symbolic order is produced in relation to a master signifier that authorizes and organizes the symbolic field. In contemporary western politics, the socio-political field is articulated around sovereignty or sovereign power, which thus becomes the master signifier. Furthermore, in the Foucauldian account of biopolitics provided by Agamben [8–11], persons are produced in relation to sovereign power, that is, persons are no longer in the focus of politics, since politics is organized around populations. The person as such is missing, because population is produced as a site of regulation, control and intervention. In keeping with this, under sovereign power what could become the person is instead produced as *bare life* or *homo sacer*, in a word, as life with no political status. Personhood is politically missing, because it has no significance in the sovereign symbolic order, where it can only exist as bare life, as something excluded that is no longer taken into consideration.

The aforementioned children could therefore be seen as a milder version of Agamben’s *Muselmann* (the inhabitant in extremis of the concentration camp), that is, to quote Edkins again, as “particular

instances where the person is symbolically and politically dead, but remains alive, physically” ([7], p. 130). The production of texts such as *Empty Cradles* and *Oranges and Sunshine* turns biopolitically “missing” people into “a crucial site at which sovereign power is challenged” ([7], p. 131). The *linear time* of sovereign authority (*homogeneous, empty time* for Benjamin [12] and *chronological time* for Agamben [8]) is suddenly disrupted by *trauma time* (*messianic time* for Benjamin and *operational time* for Agamben): sovereign social order falters, only to be restored soon afterwards, when linear time is once again resumed. As J. Edkins explains:

The smooth *linear time* of the state, and its stories of past and future, have been thrown into question by the intrusion of *trauma time*. Traumas, by definition, are events that are incapable of, or at the very least resist, narration or integration into linear narratives or, in other words, into homogeneous linear time. Trauma is not experienced in linear time; there are no words, no language, through which such an experience could take place. A traumatic event cannot be integrated into our symbolic universe [...]. It cannot be narrated. It is re-encountered through flashbacks that return to the scene, or re-told in accounts where the trauma is re-lived, moment-by-moment. [...] Traumatic events are only experienced, if we can call it that, when the past, which has not yet “taken place”, intrudes into the present and demands attention ([7], pp. 132–33, Emphases in original).

What these texts manage to do, then, is to acknowledge the void (either as lack or excess) at the heart of our symbolic order without striving to minimize or justify it. As Agamben would put it, they “remain faithful to that which having been perpetually forgotten, must remain unforgettable” ([8], p. 40). Similarly, to rely on Santner’s terms [13], it might be argued that, in attempting to bring to the surface and bear witness to these atrocities, Humphreys’ memoir and Loach’s film explore the “miracle” of the move from *homo sacer* to the *neighbour*, this being understood as the acknowledgement of an encounter with the real, with a singular “other” that is also constituted around a lack or an excess, but which nonetheless demands that we should open ourselves up to this alterity in the spirit of love, neighbor-love [14]. The neighbor is, as explained by Edkins: “*the personhood that is missing in sovereign politics*—and yet available in everyday life. The neighbour is the missing person in my account: it is precisely the lack or gap between the neighbour-person and the social role he or she is supposed to play in the social or symbolic order that constitutes the neighbour as loveable” ([7], p. 137) (Emphasis in original). Taking all of these ideas into account, it could be concluded that these two texts portray these children as missing people who ask for our love, who demand that their plight should become visible, that linear time should be disrupted so that their traumatic lives can come to the surface and take the upper hand, if only for a short while, so that they can seek justice.

As a result of these deportation schemes, all of these children became utterly vulnerable, exploited, and often also sexually abused. Trauma, shame and heart-wrenching loneliness were constant elements in all of the migrant stories Humphreys listened to. As she states in her memoir, “The most repeated line in all the interviews was ‘I’m nobody’” ([2], p. 114); these were “people whose genuine pain and hurt came from having been abandoned by their country” ([2], p. 115); children who had been deprived of love and affection since, as one of them exclaimed, “I can’t remember anyone putting their arm around me, giving me a cuddle, showing me that they cared” ([2], p. 75). Jim Loach’s film also highlights these feelings of utter abandonment and loneliness, especially when Margaret interviews the

Bindoon boys who, like Agamben's *Muselmann*, have unconsciously assimilated the condition of bare and empty life that prompts them to say: "I'm nobody now. Nothing at all", "Who's gonna look after me? I'm nobody" [15]. Everybody failed them, without exception, and they consequently internalized all of this hatred and shame: they "got very depressed, and felt alone and empty", "not entitled to feel love" ([2], p. 71). All of these traumatic stories took a severe toll on Humphreys: she did not take a holiday for seven years; she missed many of her kids' birthdays; in the early 90s she hemorrhaged and had to be immediately taken to hospital; she lost weight, could not sleep, and ended up with post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms, which hampered her family and professional life for some time. By contrast, the British government was still most reluctant to admit what had happened. In 1993 John Major told parliament that "any concern about the treatment of the children in another country is essentially a matter for the authorities in that country" ([2], p. 352), and effectively washed his hands of this matter. It was only in 1998 that the House of Commons finally decided to carry out an inquiry, the outcome of which led them to fund the "Child Migrants Trust" and offer these victims some kind of national apology years later.

3. Jim Loach's *Oranges and Sunshine*

As Cath Clarke explains, Jim Loach was working on the ITV drama *Bad Girls* when he first visited Humphreys in her Nottingham office. He felt "gobsmacked" ([6], p. 2) by the stories she told him and her courage and determination. "I found that dilemma very compelling," says Loach, "and very relevant to 2011. Working mothers, working parents—it's a circle all of us try to square" ([6], p. 2). Humphreys' main concern was that Loach would make a sentimental, Hollywood movie, in which she would be shown as "a crusading force of nature" ([6], p. 2). Loach's film did not do anything of the kind. *Oranges and Sunshine* offers a faithful reading of Humphrey's ordeal as told in her memoir. Significantly enough, the beginning of the film shows Margaret undertaking one of her most painful tasks as a social worker: to take a baby away from her incapacitated mother so that the local authorities can look after it properly. Whereas, as is suggested by the film, Margaret's intervention will somehow contribute to providing this child with a better life, the aforementioned government's organized deportation of children in care from the United Kingdom to Australia only brought about much pain and sorrow. *Oranges and Sunshine* captures on the big screen the plight of some of these child migrants, who were deprived of their former lives, emotional ties and identities by being launched to Australia, that is, to the other side of the world, and by being placed in an unknown and unfriendly space, which could only aggravate their trauma of stolen memories and estranged and desecrated lives, to the point that they ended up having no idea who they really were. As Jim Loach claimed, this is a film about identity, about what makes us who we are and how we cope with it. In keeping with the films made by his father, internationally-acclaimed director Ken Loach, known for his naturalistic, social realist directing style and for his socialist attitude, which are evident in his film treatment of social issues such as homelessness (*Cathy Come Home*) and labor rights (*Riff-Raff* and *The Navigators*), Jim Loach's film succeeds in creating a disturbingly realistic atmosphere, and has Emily Watson giving one of her "unshowy, grippingly real performances" ([6], p. 2), which compels spectators to see everything through her eyes and partake, however vicariously, of the enormous suffering she went through during her quest.

Cinematography and mise-en-scene are often used in the film to bring to the fore the shame and traumas that this British “Stolen Generation” is still trying to work through, together with Margaret Humphreys’ unrelenting courage in the face of absolute opposition on the part of both British and Australian authorities. Many scenes take place inside cars on the move, cars which take people who desperately go from one place to another in search of names, of clues, very often to get no answers. As regards open spaces (in particular the beach and the pier), although they can at times have some soothing effect upon the victims, it is nonetheless clear that they cannot offer them the peace they lack and so desperately need. Institutions of all kinds (medical, political, religious) are given special attention too. One of the most interesting scenes in the film is that in which Margaret visits the man confined in a psychiatric hospital. The hospital is shown as a gloomy and confining place. Margaret is accompanied by the nurse, who informs her that this man has been acting out his childhood trauma for years. It was only after listening to Margaret on the radio that he could remember the traumatic event that was to change his life forever. As has already been explained, it is only when this belated hyperarousal/re-enactment of the trauma occurs that the amnesiac circle which blocks the victim’s psyche can be broken. Since the traumatic event is not fully acknowledged at the moment when it occurs, but is repressed and locked in the unconscious, its after-effects imply a return of the repressed in the form of unexpected and ceaseless acting-outs of the trauma, which will keep on haunting the victim for the rest of his/her life. If the traumatized individual wants to work through his/her trauma, s/he must be able to articulate/verbalize what happened, that is, must establish some critical distance between him/herself, the traumatic event and its loss so that these phantoms can finally be specified and mastered ([16], pp. 65–66). However, this is a long and difficult process, since the re-enactments of the trauma inexorably bring about terribly painful, and humiliating, memories that the victim is ashamed to relive again. Shame makes the victim feel afraid of being rejected by the people s/he loves and the community s/he belongs to ([17], p. 126; [18], p. 62), and the victim’s immediate reaction to this loss of face is that of covering and concealment. The more the mourner exposes her/his grief, the more aware s/he becomes of the vexatious feelings attached to it, and thus the more s/he resists facing them. Trauma and shame are closely linked notions, and shame can often become a barrier that prevents working through [19,20]. This is why the existence of an empathic and supportive witness with whom the individual can feel confident enough to talk is of the utmost importance. Margaret knows this, and this is why she comes to the hospital to listen to this man’s heart-breaking testimony. She and the nurse walk through the dark corridor that leads to the entrance of the porch where this encounter will take place. Interestingly, it is on this portico, that is, partly in the open and outside the building, that this man’s confession is possible, and light comes through a door in the background, as if celebrating the fact that this victim is at last going to be able to verbalize what happened to him in the past, a necessary step for his much needed healing working-through process. However, it must be noted that this is a barred portico, and that, as this man begins to talk, this background light gets hazy and diffused, which somehow suggests that, in spite of Margaret’s help, this trauma will leave perennial marks on this victim. It is by no means accidental that he cannot actually finish up the sentence to say he was brutally raped. He feels ashamed, abandoned and neglected by everybody. Two nurses walk towards the door, totally oblivious to what is going on the porch, as he begins to speak. A medium shot shows Margaret and this man sitting together on a bench and, as their conversation progresses, close-up shots give prominence and moral authority to both the victim and the witness.

Last but not least, the camera cuts away from one scene to another. As is well known, cross-cutting is an editing technique often used in films to connect actions occurring, either at the same time or at different moments, in different locations. In this case, the actions are not simultaneous, and cross-cutting is used to establish parallels and contrasts. The film cross-cuts between the traumatized man's confession, Margaret's feelings of anguish and impotence when she goes back to her hotel room right after she has listened to him, and Margaret's post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms when she returns home for Christmas and watches on TV the altar boy singing the "Ave Maria". Margaret is suffering vicarious trauma; she can't help connecting this angelic boy on TV with this man's brutal rape. Viewers are clearly encouraged to compare the different shots and both characters' emotions. Just as Margaret is this man's empathic witness, Margaret's husband becomes, during their phone conversation, the recipient of the paralyzing anguish that oppresses Margaret when she reaches her hotel room, overwhelmed by this man's grisly testimony and the other bloodcurdling stories contained in the files she carries in her arms. And neither can the light coming through her window reassure her that this nightmare will some day be over. Finally, the length of time between cross-cuts also contributes to slowing down the rhythm of the scene. This man's confession is somehow postponed, which adds tension while creating a strong emotional effect.

Not even are the medical professionals able to show some empathy for the wrenching pain of these victims. On another significant scene Margaret is guided by a nurse, who takes her into the room in which she is to break the sad news to Jack that, although they finally managed to find his mother, they were a bit too late, since she had died the year before. Jack has been totally unable to overcome the traumatic loss of his mother; he has always felt an indescribable emptiness inside which has prevented him from leading a normal life and being a good husband and father, and is still in need of psychiatric treatment. However, once again, this health institution lacks any kind of sensibility. The first room Margaret is offered is far too small and suffocating, with bunk beds and a broken blind. The next one she is led to is even worse, since the window gives on to a wall, which clearly echoes the indifferent attitude shown by all kinds of official institutions towards these child migrants, to whose plight they systematically turned a blind eye and a deaf ear. Margaret does not give up until she is offered a room with a beautiful view, a vase of flowers, and a mirror (there are lots of mirrors in the film, which clearly point to the identity crises undergone by these people; the rear view mirror onto which Jack's face is projected when he and Margaret go in search of his mother in England is another case in point). Beauty, Margaret wants to believe, might somehow help alleviate Jack's pain and turn this tragic moment into a less shattering event in his life. As soon as Margaret sees Jack, she hugs and kisses him. She does her best to provide him with some of the love and affection he was denied as a child. Close up shots encourage spectators to identify with both characters' feelings during their heart-breaking conversation. Then another close up shot frames the flowers in front of Jack and Nicky's mother's grave, and then the tomb inscription: "Always in our thoughts", which clearly highlights the importance of preserving one's family ties and memories in order to build up one's identity. A medium shot now shows the two siblings, disconsolately crying and hugging each other, and surrounded by tombs in the middle of the silent cemetery, which seems to preside over the city below. Only Margaret keeps them company, but at a distance, as a clear sign of respect.

The media are not particularly interested in airing this scandal either. Margaret is unjustifiably attacked by the woman who interviews her on the radio, and the TV set within which she is placed is

far too big and intimidating, all the more so when the camera chooses to show it through a high angle shot. Likewise, government and church agencies are totally indifferent to the inexcusable suffering they have inflicted upon these child migrants, and Margaret and her husband are completely on their own in their struggle to redress the damage done. A voice-over is superimposed at the end of the scene previously discussed: some government official alludes to the particularly convoluted historical context of those years to justify the child migrant schemes. Once again, Margaret and her husband are completely alone. They reach this government building in a black London cab, and must go through a gate to enter the precinct. What they have to face up to once they get into the building is no more reassuring. They are both made to sit on one side of a big oval table, in front of a collection of representatives of several political and religious agencies who, significantly enough, find it difficult to look this couple in their eyes. Moreover, a big portrait of the British Queen is hanging on the wall opposite them, thus making it clear that what they are confronting and questioning is a national and imperial enterprise. It must be noted that close up shots are only used to show Margaret and her husband's faces, which clearly grants them the moral authority that the other people in the room are deprived of. These official representatives will only offer the Child Migrant Trust some help providing they can be trustees and control the trust movements, which Margaret adamantly rejects. The meeting has been a complete failure, and they leave. The camera now moves from top to bottom to show the impressive dome over their heads. Human beings are only tiny and insignificant specks by comparison. It is only political power and national interests that matter. In contrast, the camera now frames a statue with open arms presiding over the majestic staircase. This, together with the fact that one of the few women present at the meeting catches up with them and appeals to Margaret's motherhood, somehow leads spectators to harbor some hope. Against all odds, this hope will soon be shattered: this woman reminds Margaret of her condition of mother only to tell her to mind her own business and stop meddling with this unfortunate past episode. Once again, the camera likes Margaret's face better, as the close up shot that reveals her stupefaction and incredulity when hearing this makes clear. The scene in this official building could in turn be related to the one that takes place at the refectory of Bindoon college, when Margaret sits in front of all the brothers, who do not dare to look at her, let alone to speak to her. There is a deafening silence, only broken by Margaret when she defies and scolds them by saying: "Have I disturbed you, brothers? Have I frightened you? What have you got to be frightened of? Grown men like you" [15]. Bindoon college is shown as an overwhelming and sinister place, difficult to reach and impossible to escape. At the entrance there is yet another impressive dome over a huge staircase, which renders the figures of Len, one of the Bindoon boys, and Margaret utterly insignificant as they slowly climb it. Religious institutions are no better: the ones who had the moral duty to provide these children with care and affection only used them as cheap labor force they could ill-treat and sodomize.

As this film clearly shows, the alleged unspeakability of trauma is related to its shattering effect, not only on the subject, but also on the community as a whole. Acknowledging political and social atrocities also implies acknowledging the fact that our community is anything but harmonious and perfect ([18], pp. 1–7). Besides, shame is not only a noun (a "state of being") but also an action ([17], p. 25). The cruelty and indifference shown towards these child migrants by both the British and the Australian authorities, whereby they tried to cover up their own shame by looking away, relegated these victims to absolute oblivion. This lack of recognition, together with the inhumanity shown

towards them, is one of the factors that undoubtedly contributed to reinforcing their feelings of shame, self-hatred and paralysis, to the point that many of these victims ended up believing that they were nobody and deserved nothing. Prime Minister's John Major' refusal to apologize to these child migrants could thus be seen as an act of shame. The release of *Lost Children of Empire* and *The Leaving of Liverpool* brought these atrocities to light, and offered the victims the opportunity to become visible and audible, to denounce what had shamefully remained hidden for decades, and to try to establish connections with some of the relatives they lost sight of when they were only children. However, as can be concluded after reading Humphreys' memoir and watching Loach's movie, it is not enough to listen to the victims. The last scenes of the film, in which black and white photographs of these innocent children are shown, together with the epilogue, denounce that the search for their lost families still goes on, and demand that these victims should also be offered an official apology and some kind of material and psychological reparation. The past cannot be changed, but it is only when past sins are properly atoned that the present can become more bearable and a better future is somehow possible.

4. Conclusions

As this analysis has tried to show, trauma theories can be quite useful when it comes to studying texts that attempt to denounce the atrocities resulting from the enforcement of colonialist policies, no matter when or by whom, but providing that these theories expand the event-based trauma model that was initially put forward by such important scholars as Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub [21,22], among others, with a view to regard trauma, as Michael Rothberg would put it, as "collective, spatial, and material (instead of individual, temporal, and linguistic)" ([23], p. 228). Specific socio-historical factors must always be taken into consideration, since the traumatic histories of subordinated groups can only be understood when pitted against the histories of the groups holding power. Moreover, these theories should also be able to go beyond ever-lasting victimization in order to make room for rather more healing and empowering processes, which can alone pave the way for renewed life and expectations. While, as is shown by Humphreys' memoir and Loach's film, many of those child migrants will never be able to overcome their traumatic past, many others are fighting to rebuild their lives by creating ever-growing links with the relatives they left behind many years ago. To conclude, the two texts discussed here testify to the need for narratives that, not only strive to come to terms with the injustice and suffering inflicted by colonial policies, but also bring to light collective traumas, being these understood, in Jeffrey C. Alexander's words, as "harmful or overwhelming phenomena which are believed to have deeply harmed collective identity" ([24], p. 10). Trauma is nowadays understood as a very complex phenomenon: it can debase individuals and whole groups but, when properly acknowledged and confronted, it can also lead to a rather more resolute sense of identity and community. Postcolonial literary and filmic texts like the ones discussed here undoubtedly contribute to disclosing this complexity by delving into the social, political and cultural aspects concomitant with trauma, while also demanding some kind of justice and reparation on the part of society as a whole.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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