Introduction

Dark Trophies of Enlightened War

Combat Stress and the Enemy Dead

Ever since the emergence of professional standing armies in early modern Europe, military personnel have been expected to treat the bodies of the enemy dead honourably. Of course, such courtesies have at times been extended almost exclusively to enemies of high rank. Nevertheless, there are standards of civilized behaviour in war which forbid the soldier to maltreat the dead body of an enemy. To mutilate or desecrate corpses on the battlefield, or to collect and keep body parts, as some indigenous societies practised in the form of scalping or headhunting, would seem thoroughly malicious and reprehensible to military personnel and civilians alike. These sorts of behaviour, together with other stereotypically primitive practices such as cannibalism and human sacrifice, comprise the stock Western image of savagery.

When international humanitarian law began to develop in the second half of the nineteenth century, it formalized these norms and made the maltreatment of enemy remains illegal. The Geneva Conventions of 1949 directed that the war dead be identified and buried in marked and properly maintained graves so as to permit their repatriation after hostilities have ended. The Conventions also defined looting or despoiling of dead bodies as war crimes and required that steps be taken to ensure that the personal effects of the dead return to their next of kin. Military authorities view maltreatment of the dead on the part of their personnel in the same way as other violations of the laws of war, such as torture or the killing of prisoners. That is, they regard them as not only wrong but counterproductive in almost all circumstances, because they undermine support for the war effort at home, strengthen the determination of the enemy, and put their own side at risk of reprisals.

To the extent to which the causes of this type of misconduct have been investigated at all, the maltreatment of enemy remains is generally considered a type of deviance, or a symptom of a transient psychological disorder, brought about by the stresses of battle. When these stresses are prolonged and intense they can lead individuals to make abnormal decisions, or to engage in acts which appear aberrant in peacetime. Service personnel who refer in their memoirs to having witnessed or carried out such misconduct often account

for it in this way in retrospect, as a symptom of the extreme psychological pressures experienced by soldiers in warfare, on account of traumatic events such as the death of comrades (see, for instance, Sledge 1981).

In the United States Army, maltreatment of enemy dead is currently viewed, in a similar way, largely within the framework of abnormal psychology. Military psychologists have developed a classification in which the behavioural symptoms of combat stress fall into two main types. On the one hand, stress in battle can give rise to positive or adaptive reactions such as acts of heroism and self-sacrifice, heightened loyalty to comrades and tolerance of hardship. These can contribute to a soldier's successful performance of his role. There are also negative or maladaptive reactions to combat stress. These dysfunctional reactions comprise, first, a group of behavioural disorders called battle fatigue, which includes depression, anxiety and exhaustion, among other symptoms. The maladaptive responses also include a second group of reactions called misconduct stress behaviours. These range from forms of indiscipline such as self-injury, alcohol and drug abuse, and fraternization between ranks, to serious criminal offences such as murdering prisoners or non-combatants, torture, rape, looting, and murdering one's superiors (Ritchie et al. 2008; United States Department of the Army 2003).

The *U.S. Army Combat Stress Control Handbook* outlines fifteen or so offences as examples of misconduct stress behaviours. One of them is the mutilation of enemy dead, which it describes as follows:

4-6. The Misconduct Stress Behavior of Mutilating Enemy Dead
a. This practice has been prohibited by civilized nations as a violation of the Law of Land Warfare but may still be approved in some regions of the world. Collecting scalps, ears, gold teeth, and so forth as trophies can still become common practice (as in the island battles of the Pacific in WWII) as signs of racial hatred and dehumanization against a stubborn and merciless enemy.
b. Leaving deliberately mutilated bodies (especially with facial and genital mutilation) for the enemy to find is less common, but also occurs as bitterness increases. Despoiling or pillaging the dead is, of course, a war crime and is punishable by court-martial.

Note
Mutilating the dead must be prohibited, since it dehumanizes both those who do it and those who condone it. It tends to provoke reprisals, alienate world and home front opinion, and contribute to guilt and post-traumatic stress symptoms when the soldier returns home (United States Department of the Army 2003: 60; see also United States Department of the Army 1994).

According to army psychiatric doctrine, stress reactions need to be rapidly identified, and preventative measures taken, on the grounds that they can become the psychiatric syndrome known as post-traumatic stress disorder if they are left untreated (United States Department of the Army 2003: 91–102). A study of veterans of the Vietnam War has offered support for this view, finding an association between participation in acts such as mutilation of the dead and the later development of this disorder (Hiley-Young et al. 1995).

Of course, military psychiatry and military law recognize that misconduct is not always caused by combat stress, and that war crimes can be committed by soldiers who

have never been exposed to such stresses and simply possess 'antisocial norms' or deviant personality characteristics. In military law, combat stress is therefore not a defence in criminal cases, but evidence of extreme stress can be an extenuating factor when setting punishments (United States Department of the Army 2003: 63).

Mutilation of dead bodies seems, then, to be recognized in the military as a recurrent type of misconduct, but a common consensus among military psychiatrists, soldiers and civilians is that it is in most cases a temporary behavioural disorder related to stress in battle. Such assumptions have led some authors to suggest that these practices can occur in any society in times of violent conflict, and in this sense are universal, although they have been socially permissible only in some societies and periods of history (see, for instance, Chacon and Dye 2008).

Aims and Methodology

As we saw, the *U.S. Army Combat Stress Control Handbook* identifies two motives for the ill-treatment of the dead. In some cases, soldiers have disfigured bodies and left them for the enemy to find, with the aim of terrorizing or demoralizing the enemy. More commonly, the *Handbook* states, the dead have been mutilated for 'trophies'. In this book, I explore the history and meaning of this latter practice, an aberrant form of collecting which I will call military trophy-taking.

Most of the material on which I draw relates to Britain, France, Germany, South Africa, Australia and the United States, and specifically to their colonial histories. Very little is known of the prevalence of trophy-taking in the armed forces of these or other states in wartime, nor of the meaning it might have to those who engage in it. It is certain, however, that behaviour of this sort has occurred among a small minority of soldiers over the past century or two in European and North American armed forces, just as have other violations of wartime norms, despite the regulations forbidding them and the condemnation of the majority of service personnel (Bourke 1999; Bryant 1979: 298-303).

I focus in this way on trophy-taking partly because this enables me to supplement soldiers' accounts of such behaviour with other kinds of supporting evidence. War veterans sometimes refer in their memoirs to having witnessed or perpetrated such acts, and much of the material I discuss in this book comes from sources such as these. However, there are certain methodological problems associated with the use of veterans' memories of war experiences. In many cases, events are described many years after they occurred, and it is often impossible independently to corroborate these recollections, as A. Young (1995) observed in his study of veterans of the Vietnam War undergoing treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder.

However, independent evidence of the occurrence of trophy-taking in the armed forces comes from a number of sources, including museology and forensic anthropology. A subfield of forensic anthropology deals specifically with the identification and analysis of human remains, usually skulls or crania, brought home illegally by military personnel mostly from the Pacific War and Vietnam War (Bass 1983; Gill-King 1992; Maples and Browning 1995: 27–29; Sledzik and Ousley 1991; Taylor, Roh and Goldman

1984; Valentin and Miller 2004; Willey and Leach 2003). These publications contain photographs and illustrations of such remains, which it would be gratuitous to reproduce here. This book refers to a number of photographic images of this sort, all but one of which are in the public domain, and their sources are clearly indicated for the benefit of readers who wish to view them. Some human remains appropriated as war mementos have also found their way into museum collections. In recent years, archaeology and museology have faced demands by indigenous peoples for the return of ancestral remains some of which are known to have originated as battlefield souvenirs collected by nineteenth-century colonial soldiers (Harrison 2008a; Riding In 1992a, 1992b; Thomas 2000).

In short, military trophy-taking is an activity which generates material objects, and some of these have continued to circulate, and to be used for a variety of different purposes, long after the end of the conflicts in which they originated. Some of these objects have had long and complex post-war social lives, to borrow Appadurai's (1986) term, quite independent of their military origins, and their peacetime careers are in some respects their most important and significant attributes. Such objects not only constitute forensic evidence of trophy-taking, but the many uses to which they may be put after they are taken from the enemy dead also call for examining.

Trophy-taking and Race

A further reason I restrict my subject matter specifically to military trophy-taking is so that I may take advantage of some of the methods and perspectives developed in anthropological studies of indigenous warfare. There is, of course, a substantial ethnographic literature concerned with societies in which the taking of heads or other body parts as trophies was a normal and socially acceptable accompaniment of warfare. In some societies it was a central element of warfare, and enemy body parts had an important ritual value and could be carefully preserved, treasured and exchanged. Anthropologists have interpreted such practices by relating them to their social and cultural context; for instance, to indigenous understandings of masculinity, fertility or power (Harrison 1993; Hoskins 1996a). Unfortunately, the types of warfare fought by the professional militaries of modern states have tended implicitly to appear by contrast as technical, impersonal and instrumentally rational activities moderated by law. I hope this book will show such dichotomies to be misleading. An adequate understanding of military trophy-taking requires exploring the ways in which it is embedded in the wider milieus in which it occurs. As we will see, important keys to its explanation are to be found in anthropological studies of the cultural symbolism of warfare in indigenous societies.

In the chapters that follow, it will become evident that the history of this practice has been linked inseparably with the history of racism since the emergence of concepts of race in the second half of the eighteenth century. A striking feature of military trophy-taking from that period onwards is that it has been carried out, at least among European and North American military personnel, almost exclusively against enemies whom they have represented as belonging to 'races' other than their own. Among these personnel, it has almost always occurred as a specifically racialized form of violence,

and could arguably be considered a type of racially motivated hate crime specific to military personnel in wartime. Despite its illegality, it is nevertheless an expression of ideologies which have enjoyed wide acceptance and legitimacy over much of the past two centuries.

This, then, appears to be an unusual and distinctive type of war crime, in that military personnel almost never commit it against enemies they perceive as belonging to their own 'race'. Soldiers who have perpetrated this offence appear to have drawn a marked distinction between two categories of enemy: those they perceive as belonging to their own race, and those perceived as belonging to another, with the key difference between them lying in the ways their bodies could be treated after death.

In the cultural backgrounds of soldiers who commit these offences, there appear to be strongly internalized prohibitions against maltreating the remains of racially close enemies. These learned inhibitions appear powerfully effective in themselves, so much so that they do not require policing or external sanctions even in the most stressful and bitter conflicts. Military trophy-taking therefore seems to be evidence of an important, but perhaps insufficiently recognized, feature of ideologies of race: namely, that they intuitively structure attitudes and behaviour towards the dead body. It would be surprising if they did not, because they are, after all, ideologies which naturalize social inequalities by misrepresenting them as founded in the physical body and in human biology. The bodies of those whom one accepts as members of one's own 'race' therefore appear in certain key respects sacrosanct, even when they are one's enemies in war. These co-racial enemies may certainly be fought and killed in battle, but after death it seems their bodies become inviolable.

Expeditionary Trophy-taking and the Metaphor of the Hunt

In this respect, military trophy-taking has a number of striking similarities with a pattern of trophy-taking described by anthropologists in some indigenous Amazonian, Southeast Asian and Melanesian societies. This pattern, which I will call expeditionary trophy-taking, has as its key feature a sharply defined distinction between close and distant enemies, in which people regard only their close enemies as fully human or akin in nature to themselves. McKinley (1976) provides an insightful and succinct account of what I call expeditionary trophy-taking, though he does not employ this term. In this pattern, it is perfectly permissible to kill close enemies, but it is forbidden to take the heads of people so close to home. Heads or other body parts are taken only from enemies who are socially (and perhaps also geographically) remote and classified as semi-human or subhuman, or as denizens of the wild. The Iban of Borneo, for instance, practised headhunting against distant strangers whom they called by a term translatable as 'not-people' (McKinley 1976: 108). In New Guinea, the Marind-Anim, who called themselves *anim-ha*, or real humans, took heads only from non-Marind, the *ikom-anim*, or strangers, whom the Marind seem to have regarded as subhuman, existing only to serve as victims for their annual headhunting expeditions (Van Baal 1966: 676–96). Among the Jivaro of Ecuador, too, the people from whom heads were taken were 'generally total strangers. One immutable rule of head-hunting is that its victims must

be Jivaros, but Jivaros of a different tribe with whom no known links of kinship exist, who speak a different dialect and whose patronyms are unknown' (Descola 1996: 275).

This, then, is a pattern in which trophies are taken only from members of a culturally defined category of strangers or foreigners, on territory away from home. Often, the expedition is represented as a sacred, ritualized journey or quest. In this respect, it has features in common with pilgrimage, and even with certain forms of tourism (cf. Graburn 1989, 2000; Nash 1989; Pannell 1992). As we will see, it has significant commonalities in particular with what has come to be known as 'dark tourism' or thanatourism, involving journeys to sites of death (Lennon and Foley 2004; Sharpley and Stone 2009). As a personal mission to bring relics home to family and kin as symbols of achievement and success, a trophy-taking expedition often has the character of a rite of passage into manhood (see McKinley 1976).

Raiding of this sort is also often equated with the hunting of animals, though metaphors of fishing or harvesting are sometimes employed as well, perhaps together with tropes of hunting (Davison and Sutlive 1991; Harner 1972: 186, 189; Hoskins 1996b: 23). Expeditionary trophy-taking seems to occur only in societies in which men, or most men, hunt and hunting is understood as an iconically male pursuit. In effect, cultural models of predation or, more broadly, of consumption, are extended into the domain of warfare, and used as models on which violence towards members of a socially constructed category of remote enemies can be patterned.

In short, this is a form of warfare in which certain categories of enemies are strongly dehumanized or depersonalized, and represented as animal quarry, not merely to be killed but also, in some sense, consumed. In the mythology of the Asmat people of western New Guinea, the ancestors instituted the practice of headhunting as a replacement for the hunting of wild pigs, so that human game became a substitute for animal game (Zubrinich 1999). Similar conceptions seem to have been held by the Mundurucu in Brazil, who carried out headhunting raids of up to a thousand miles against outsiders whom they looked upon as game animals to be hunted for sport (Murphy 1957: 1026).

Competing Representations

Expeditionary trophy-taking is connected, then, with social classifications in which a group of people represent certain other groups as subhuman or animal-like, belonging perhaps to the realm of nature, or to the wild. But to view it simply as a reflection of these categorizations would be a misinterpretation. Rather, the warmaking is a key part of a system of social practices by which such classifications are sustained and reproduced. When men in these societies take trophies from distant enemies, they do not do so because they classify these enemies literally as animals, any more than those indigenous peoples who metaphorize trophy-taking as fishing or harvesting think their enemies are fish or vegetables. Expeditionary trophy-taking is a cultural practice, distinctive to some kinds of societies in which men hunt animals, in which the humanness of some chosen category of people is masked or denied.

In some societies which practised this type of warfare, such as the Melanesian community of Avatip (see Harrison 1993), it was rare in practice for fighters to take the heads of strangers. Much more commonly, the attackers and the victims were all too closely connected by clanship and kinship, and the assailants' purpose was, as it were, to make their victims distant, to generate estrangement and produce a category of people as enemies with whom to fight. At Avatip, an essential part of the preparation for headhunting raids was the performance of special rituals and magic by the hereditary war-magicians. These symbolic acts temporarily suspended the fighters' normal identities, and placed them in a dangerous state of ritual potency in which the fighters were said to have become the hunting dogs of their war-magicians. In this transformed condition, they were unaccountable and potentially homicidal to anyone else, not only to their victims but even to their own wives and children.

These ritual practices suspended and denied the fighters' normal relations with their victims, and replaced them with predatory violence. In this way social actors created group boundaries, at least for a certain period, and thus, in a sense, brought the groups themselves into provisional existence. In war, they attributed to themselves and their opponents a less than fully human status – the role of hunter and his dogs on the one hand, and of quarry on the other. But this was predicated on an underlying assumption of their natural mutual kinship and relatedness, an assumption which required special ritual acts to suspend it. It could not be suspended permanently, because normal ties of sociability were always in the end regenerated. Ritualized warfare and headhunting in societies such as Avatip, then, did not simply express a particular scheme of social classifications, but involved the contextual activation of some schemes and the temporary abrogation of other, contrary ones. These forms of violence involved acts of social reclassification or counter-classification in conflict with models of sociality characteristic of non-ritual contexts. Powerful cultural metaphors equated warfare with hunting, but these were also at odds with other understandings of sociality, and together these formed an arena of competing representations (Harrison 1985, 1989, 1993, 2005).

Colonial Metaphors of Hunting and War

I argue in this book that the misconduct stress behaviour of mutilating enemy dead for trophies and the practices of ritualized warmaking I have just outlined are in a certain sense the same phenomenon under different names. They are outward expressions of powerful and compelling underlying metaphors in which war is represented as similar to the hunting of animals, metaphors which play in both cases a role in creating and maintaining fundamental social boundaries.

Although military trophy-taking might seem a rare and obscure form of deviance, it is significant for social theory because it offers important evidence of the power of metaphor in structuring and motivating human behaviour. A theory associated with the cognitive linguist George Lakoff proposes that metaphor is a powerful influence on thought and action, and that human reasoning takes place largely in terms of cognitive or conceptual metaphors. These are analogies which enable the mind to build up representations of complex domains of knowledge by using as scaffolding other domains

that have a simpler, more familiar or more easily grasped conceptual structure. Drawing on these ideas, I discuss in the following chapter what I call metaphors of social practice. These are conceptual metaphors in which one form of social behaviour is understood and experienced partly in terms of another, or one domain of social existence is made to lend meaning and coherence to a second. I argue that representations of war as a hunt are a widespread social practice metaphor in which cultural models connected with the hunting of animals are projected or transferred into the context of warfare and shape behaviour there.

Chapter Two then traces the history of this metaphor in European military cultures from the Middle Ages up to the colonial period. In European societies, hunting was long considered an essential part of military training and education, and for centuries the military retained a strong tradition of hunting as a recreation, certainly among its higher-ranking personnel. In the cultures of early modern Europe a dichotomy also emerged between civilized war, which aspired to be both rational and humane, and primitive war, which was characterized by dark, irrational practices such as cannibalism and headhunting. Such savage customs were often compared to the instinctual behaviour of predatory animals such as wolves or bears. Savages were therefore peoples who could be understood as doubly animal-like: first, because of the natural ferocity they were understood to manifest and, second, because they were - in the eyes of some colonial soldiers - legitimate objects of trophy-hunting and similar forms of savagery themselves. This second sort of savage violence, or counter-violence, could be justified as reprisal for the first.

In Chapters Three and Four, I discuss relations between eighteenth-century Europeans and American Indians in this light, showing how both groups drew upon the domain of human violence towards animals for their cultural models of human violence. I explore some of the ways in which this underlying commonality between them influenced the frontier conflicts in North America at the time. In particular, I argue that it led to settler militia groups developing forms of reprisal and atrocity derived partly from Indian practice, and partly from the collecting practices of Enlightenment natural science.

I said earlier that military trophy-taking has been closely connected with the emergence of concepts of race. The particular forms taken by this misconduct seem in fact to have changed over time in accordance with changing understandings of race. In Chapters Five and Six I focus on the second quarter of the nineteenth century, when evidence began to appear of the collection and use of human skulls as war mementos in the Euro-American militaries. I show how this was closely connected with developments in Victorian medicine, psychology and anthropology in which the collection, measurement and classification of skulls became central to scientific understandings of human difference.

One of the key rituals of conquest and domination in the culture of nineteenth and early twentieth-century colonialism was the hunting of native game animals for trophies. Many colonial soldiers, particularly officers, were predisposed to view war as a sort of blood sport or game hunt, equating their indigenous enemies with animals (Cartmill 1993; Ritvo 1987). Chapter Seven discusses the use of human skulls as war mementos and trophies by nineteenth-century British soldiers in Africa. At one level, such treatment of the enemy dead was of course repugnant to most Victorians, evoking

images of primitive headhunting. However, I argue that these practices of trophy-taking emerged through an appropriation of developments in science in which significant human differences – between the deviant and normal, between the criminal and the law-abiding, and between races – were increasingly assumed to be expressed in the skull, in variations in its shape and supposed degree of development. Aberrant and atavistic though these colonial military practices appeared to many contemporaries, they were local expressions of the growing transnational authority and prestige of scientific rationality.

I explore these topics further in Chapter Eight, in relation to the collection and study of American Indian crania by nineteenth-century phrenologists and craniologists in the United States. In Chapter Nine I discuss the collection and use of enemy skulls and other bones as trophies by soldiers and their supporters in the American Civil War. Although this practice was condemned by many at the time as the behaviour of 'savages', I argue that it was, again, a local symptom of the shifts taking place after the Enlightenment in the ways in which human diversity was conceptualized.

In the next two chapters, I discuss the internalization of colonial hunting imagery: that is, the use of such imagery in representing racial divisions within the colonial nation itself. First, Chapter Ten examines the role of hunting imagery in racial spectacle lynchings in the southern United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Chapter Eleven focuses on the symbolism of racial boundaries in the European theatres of the two world wars. It discusses the controversial employment of non-white soldiers by France and Britain in their wars with Germany, and also shows how some of the atrocities of Nazi racial science drew upon collecting practices long established on the colonial frontiers, applying them to the establishment of racial boundaries at home.

The remaining chapters of the book discuss the conditions under which enemy body parts are treated as war trophies, and the uses to which these objects may be put after the war, focussing on the Pacific War, the British counter-insurgency wars in Malaya and Kenya, and the Vietnam War. In all of these conflicts, military trophy-taking was related to highly racialized perceptions of the enemy, and the pervasiveness of hunting imagery in the ways these wars were represented and experienced.

Powerful and compelling cultural schemas associating masculinity, war and hunting have thus motivated some servicemen, under certain conditions, to treat enemy remains as trophies. These later chapters also seek to answer a further question such behaviour raises: namely, why the behaviour seems to disappear rapidly from public recollections and commemorations of war, even when it appears to have occurred relatively widely and many service personnel have brought human trophy objects home, or sent them home, to their families as gifts and war mementos. I argue that these memorial objects appear to transgress cultural distinctions between persons and things in such a way as to resist assimilation into the social relations of their collectors and, ultimately, into collective memory.

Between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, military trophy-taking occurred most often in frontier warfare, and especially in contexts such as jungle warfare, where conditions were such that military operations lent themselves particularly readily to being experienced as a sort of hunting expedition or safari, with the enemy figuring as more like an animal than a human opponent. The history of this form of misconduct is

entwined with the history of colonial warfare, against non-European others who could often be viewed as at or beyond the margins of the human.

The practices of soldiers serving in colonial wars thereby sometimes came to resemble those of indigenous peoples for whom expeditionary trophy-taking was a normal and accepted part of war. The use of enemy body parts as war trophies, whether it happens to be defined culturally as an honourable achievement, a stress-related behavioural disorder, a war crime, or in some other way, seems to be motivated by very similar symbolic associations between war and hunting, and between enemies and quarry. It can in principle occur in any conflicts in which such imagery of human predation upon animals plays an important ideological role.

Trophy-taking is therefore neither a hallmark of 'primitive' war, nor a private stress reaction to which fighters everywhere are susceptible in battle. Rather, it is a symbolic practice in which the cognized boundaries between humans and animals, expressed in the activity of hunting, are shifted into the domain of human relations, and made to serve there as a model for violence between social groups. These conceptual transpositions are perhaps most likely to be made by men for whom hunting represents an important component of their social identity. Whether they hunt for subsistence or for recreation does not seem to make much difference. More important is that they conceptualize war and hunting in such a way that they can experience war as a kind of game hunt and also, perhaps, that hunting can appear to them a type of warfare carried out against animals. That is, they understand both activities as violent and deadly contests of power. Incidents of trophy-taking in war may therefore occur among men from such backgrounds whether these practices are socially acceptable or not. Where these acts are unacceptable, as in the armed forces of contemporary nation states, they may appear to be a type of behavioural disorder or misconduct, but they nevertheless originate in the same metaphorical concepts in both cases.