

Reading the Past Against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies

BARBIE ZELIZER

To remember is defined as the ability to recount something that happened in the past.

Yet the act of remembering has many shapes, currencies, and valences, each of which prompts a slew of questions. Some of these questions have to do with memory itself: Which memory? What kind of memory? How complete a memory? How authentic a memory? Other questions focus more on the activity of remembering: Who remembers? Why remember? How does one remember? And for whom is remembering being accomplished? These questions, and others, underscore the incompleteness that characterizes our understanding of how memory works. And that incompleteness becomes no less compelling when we consider what has been left out of the study of memory by virtue of its being left out of memory itself—the omissions, rearrangements, strategic moments of forgetting.

Our literature, poetry, mythology, and drama have been peppered with personalities who personify this compelling facet of human activity. Through memory, internal selves have connected with ex-

ternal environments, pasts with presents, random experiences with unconscious routines. Memory has connected us with the larger world on many levels, linking the lived with the folkloric, the children of tomorrow with the ancestors of yesterday, the personal lives of individuals with the shared experience of the collective.

This essay addresses one recent move in memory studies—that which examines the shared dimension of remembering. Used intermittently with terms like “social memory,” “popular memory,” “public memory,” and “cultural memory,” collective memory refers to recollections that are instantiated beyond the individual by and for the collective. Unlike personal memory, which refers to an individual’s ability to conserve information, the collective memory comprises recollections of the past that are determined and shaped by the group. By definition, collective memory thereby presumes activities of sharing, discussion, negotiation, and, often, contestation. Remembering becomes implicated in a range of other activities having as much to do with identity formation, power and authority, cultural norms, and social interaction as with the simple act of recall. Its full understanding thus requires an appropriation of memory as social, cultural, and political action at its broadest level.

This essay argues that the move from individualized to collective action in the study of memory has given the act of remembering an all-new cast of characters, activities, and issues. Substantially changing our understanding of how

Barbie Zelizer is Assistant Professor of Communications at Temple University. This essay was completed while the author was a research fellow at the Freedom Forum Center for Media Studies at Columbia University. The author thanks the Center for its assistance, and Jane Hodges for helping to locate materials. The author also thanks Michael Glick, Larry Gross, Pamela Sankar, Michael Schudson, Robert Snyder, and Robin Wagner-Pacifici for reading drafts of the essay.

memory works, contemporary memory studies possess the kind of aura that often accompanies the remake of movie classics: They feel right, timely, familiar, in pace with contemporary events and issues. But they also rest somewhat uneasily. At times seeming oddly vacant and inauthentic, they somehow make one yearn for the original.

Much of this has to do with the nascent character of contemporary memory work and the fact that it is still unfolding as this is being written. It may also have to do with the shape of memory studies, as they have grown. For in substituting individual memory with its social, collective cousin, we may have moved too quickly, giving contemporary memory studies the feel of a blended family grown too large too fast. We may have adopted tenets of study that are ill-fitted to the dimensions of remembering that we find. Perhaps it is time, then, to reconsider the pathways that memory studies have taken on their way to popular expansion.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY STUDIES

Consider, first, the birthplace of contemporary memory studies. The original extended family of memory studies was that of psychology. Psychologists regarded the act of remembering as a psychological process or cognitive device that helped individual people retrieve information from the past. Memory was thought to reproduce events in personal, lived forms as they had happened or with some explainable aberration. From scholars as wide-ranging as Freud and Proust, we learned much about memory's accuracy and its evocative force. In most views, memory was assumed to fade as it gained distance from the focus of its recollection, its authority lessening as time passed.

Yet already by the early 1930s, notions of memory as merely a tool of re-

trieval were proving insufficient. Henri Bergson contended that memory made time relative. It acted as a meeting-ground between past and present, evoking all past perceptions that were analogous to present ones, so that the sum result of memory work was "[prolonging] the past into the present" (1988, p. 210). In 1932, Frederic C. Bartlett's classic book *Remembering* argued that memory was a type of constructive activity, the enunciation of claims about the past through shared frames for understanding. Using a series of psychological experiments to explore the conditions that altered remembering, he concluded that memory could not proceed without some kind of social framework. Memory was also likened to an art. Frances Yates (1966) described a system of mnemotechnics, or the technique of impressing "places" and "images" on memory, that employed an intricate system of artificial memory created by the Greeks to retain internally large amounts of knowledge.

These explorations into the nature of memory did not put to rest a fundamental uncertainty about the status of memory itself, however. How did the power of memory persist over time? How did memory act as evidence for things and events of the past? How did it prove or disprove remembered events? Was the issue of proof even a relevant issue? Were other issues more important than proof in determining the value of memory?

Within the last decade or so, the study of remembering as we know it has changed to accommodate even questions such as these. It has blossomed under the watchful, and often creative, eye of the academy, largely following upon the renewed recognition of the work of French scholar Maurice Halbwachs (1992), a student of Durkheim. In this more recent vein of thought, scholars have come increasingly to see memory as a social activity, accomplished not in the privacy of one's own gray matter but via shared consciousness with others. The study of memory now ex-

tends considerably beyond psychology, to anthropology, sociology, literary studies, communication, and history. In pace with the constitution of the social sciences themselves, which have influenced the interdisciplinary nature of much of memory's analysis, the study of collective memory has virtually erased interdisciplinary boundaries. Journals in many fields—including the *Journal of American History*, *History and Anthropology*, *Representations*, and *Communication*—have published special issues on the topic. Begun in 1989, *History and Memory: Studies in Representation of the Past* solely addresses it. This has made the study of memory a place where scholars of different kinds can meet. It has created a shared forum for dissimilar minds, all of whom use different tools to poke about in it.

The development of new modes of inquiry into memory has had the most direct effect on the one academic field traditionally privileged to tell the story of the past—history. Traditional historians—who have “been concerned above all with the accuracy of a memory, with how correctly it describes what actually occurred at some point in the past” (Thelen, 1989, p. 1119)—have viewed contemporary memory studies with some degree of distrust, suspecting that they are attempting to encroach upon history's authority. Arguing that memories should give way ultimately to the more heavily-weighted mode of historical accounting where they can be tested against other sources that will work against their “passive, noninferential, and unverified” nature (Mink, 1981, p. 234), they have claimed that memory studies upset that progression. Less traditional historians have allowed for a more complex relationship, arguing that history and collective memory can be complementary, identical, oppositional, or antithetical at different times. For instance, Jan Vansina (1965) and other oral historians have long argued that memory constitutes the most authentic version of the past. People create versions of a harmonious past in response to various devel-

opments that make them feel uncomfortable in the present, such as the too-rapid changes of industrialization (Bodnar, 1989). The French *Annales* school of social and intellectual history has similarly brought memory into the forefront of its attempts to link historical inquiry with other disciplines, notably sociology (that is, Braudel, 1980).

From the perspective of memory studies, then, the most promising discussions in the academy have granted a fluidity to the distinction between history and memory. Memory has been seen as “sometimes retreating, sometimes overflowing” in its relationship to history (Le Goff, 1992, p. 54). History at times has assumed a chameleon-like role, taking on some of memory's characteristics. In Bernard Lewis' work, for instance, we hear of “remembered history”—that roughly equivalent to the collective memory; “recovered history”—that recuperated from an earlier rejection by the collective memory; or “invented history”—history with a purpose, whether it be devised, interpreted, or fabricated (1975, pp. 11–12). Among those who favor collective memory over traditional modes of historical accounting, turning points in historiography have themselves come to be regarded as “fundamentally related to changes at various levels of collective memory” (Friedlander, 1993, p. 38). In each of these cases, scholars in memory studies have agreed that collective memory is both more mobile and mutable than history. They have thus come to refer broadly to its being a kind of history-in-motion which moves at a different pace and rate than traditional history.

The challenge to history's privileged place in telling the story of the past has also been complicated by popular culture, for popular circles have not only applauded the interest in collective memory but have helped shape it. Perhaps due to our advancing proximity to the close of the millenium, popular culture has increasingly begun to look backward for its themes. As Andreas Huyssen

(1995, p. 6) has contended, "novelty in our culture is ever more associated with memory and the past rather than with future expectation." Popular representations of memory have thus been rapidly growing. One short-lived popular magazine called *Memories*, begun in 1988, classified the memories of the American population by decades and brought its readers a reassembled melange of key events, phrases, personalities, and issues of times gone by. Television programs like *Homefront*, *thirtysomething*, and *The Wonder Years* have all presented themes reconstructing some significant moment in the past, with the program proceeding as a kind of dialogue between the past and its presentist reconstruction. Films such as *Schindler's List*, *Dances with Wolves*, and *JFK* have aggressively taken over the box office, shunting aside the futuristic visions that had topped the sales in earlier decades.

All of this suggests new impulses in the appropriation of memory as both a concept and activity. Collective memory thrives on remaking the residue of past decades into material with contemporary resonance; it is "filled with reused and reusable material" that at heart offers resources for making sense of the past (Irwin-Zarecka, 1994, p. 7). Much of how we act in the present has thus come to be seen in accordance with our constructions and memories of past experience. Memory, argued Halbwachs (1992b, p. 40), has given us a way of constituting the past within the present. It is a process "not of retrieval but of reconfiguration [that] colonizes the past by obliging it to conform to present configurations" (Hutton, 1988, p. 314).

This means that while traditional scholarship on memory presumed that memories were at some point authentic, credible recountings of events of the past, we do not regard this as necessarily the case. In distancing themselves from personal recall, collective memories help us fabricate, rearrange, or omit details from the past as we thought we knew it. Issues of historical accuracy and authenticity are

pushed aside to accommodate other issues, such as those surrounding the establishment of social identity, authority, solidarity, political affiliation. This is because, as Robin Wagner-Pacifici (in press, p. 1) has contended, "collective memory vibrates" in its every form. It is uncertain and everchanging by nature.

Those vibrations are at issue here, for they suggest the degree to which the study of collective memory inverts the original premise through which the cogency of memory was assumed to fade with time. Unlike individual memory, the power of collective memory can increase with time, taking on new complications, nuances, and interests. We need only consider how narratives about the U.S. Western frontier have changed as new voices, notably those of Native Americans, have made public their claims. By stressing memory's vibrations, then, contemporary memory studies a priori assume movement, motion, and ultimately a dissipation of the notion that one memory at one place and one time retains authority over all the others. Memory studies presume multiple conflicting accounts of the past. The important issue becomes "not how accurately a recollection fitted some piece of a past reality, but why historical actors constructed their memories in a particular way at a particular time" (Thelen, 1989, p. 1125). This recognition of conflicting renditions of the past by definition necessitates a consideration of the tensions and contestations through which one rendition wipes out many of the others. Memory becomes not only the construction of social, historical, and cultural circumstances but a reflection of why one construction has more staying power than its rivals.

The study of collective memory, then, is much more than the unidimensional study of the past. It represents a graphing of the past as it is used for present aims, a vision in bold relief of the past as it is woven into the present and future. It is no surprise that collective memory has been touted for acting as "a general cat-

egory of knowledge" (Schwartz, 1990, p. 81). For new givens in memory studies have forced us to reassign our sensibilities concerning the act of remembering. They have made the past a product of our collective memory, rather than the other way around.

So where does this new approach to memory leave us? It tells us that interest in collective memory is growing both within and outside of the academy. It demonstrates that collective memory study offers a different, less traditional view of the past. And if nothing else, the new study of memory is not yet ready for the second-hand shop. It is no coincidence that the majority of articles and books used for this essay bear publishing dates within the last decade. But what has it demonstrated about the ability of collective memory to act as a finding aid to the past? Why is it, or should it be, any more fruitful a tool than individualized memory? This essay argues that the answer to that question is still not evident. For collective memory studies are still in the dressing room, waiting to be brought onto the front racks and display windows of academic thought.

PREMISES FOR COLLECTIVE REMEMBERING

Despite the novel and ever-growing nature of contemporary memory studies, we *have* developed certain premises about collective remembering. At its most fundamental level, collective memory suggests a deepening of the historical consciousness that becomes wedged in-between the official markings of the past and ourselves in the present. The study of collective memory thus offers an added layer through which to consider the past, and ourselves as reflected through it.

Contemporary scholarship has developed on the back of six basic premises, each of which articulates different levels of political, cultural, and social organization around the act of recollecting. Each

premise accounts for many instances of collective remembering, rather than *all* such instances; each also suggests a range of practices, much like vibrations, through which we accomplish memory work, rather than one set template for practice. Together, these premises suggest much about the directions in which collective memory studies have grown: For it may be that the nature of collective memory is ill-suited to the tenor of scholarship that has grown around it. A lack of fit seems to have developed, whereby memory studies have failed to draw attention to the very characteristics of collective memory that are at its essence. This is not because the scholarship is wrong, but simply because the limitations of scholarly inquiry itself have made capturing the essence of what we mean by collective memory difficult. And when that core itself continually vibrates and changes around the premises through which we have generated its study, we face even greater difficulties in understanding how it works.

Collective Memory is Processual

Perhaps the greatest challenge to our knowledge of the workings of memory concerns the ways in which we now understand the activity itself of remembering. From the viewpoint of contemporary memory studies, remembering is no longer seen as a finite activity, with an identifiable beginning and end. Rather, it is seen as a process that is constantly unfolding, changing, and transforming.

Unlike the individualized study of memory, which regarded memory as an act constituted at one point in time and space, contemporary memory studies view memory as a process continually evolving across many points in time and space. Remembering is processual action by which people constantly transform the recollections that they produce. These transformations are not incidental but instead constitute collective memory's defining mark. Centrally "inscribed in the logic of a system . . .

memories confront each other, intermingle, fuse, or erase each other, according to the destiny of the societies whose identity they help to define" (Wachtel, 1986, pp. 216-217). As Robin Wagner-Pacifici and Barry Schwartz, sociologists who tracked the commemoration of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, admitted:

at a given point in time, we could find no way to 'decode' it, no way to articulate its relation to society. Only by accounting for its inception and development over time did we come to know how the memorial's symbolic structure expresses or emerges from the society's values and remembrance of the war (1991, p. 383).

In its skeletal state, remembering threads a linkage between two distinct activities, recollection and commemoration, both of which offer nodal points on the way to constituting what we call memory. Recollection is the act of establishing a relationship with some event, issue, or entity of the past. Yet even here the content of memory is a useful stepping-stone to confronting larger issues about memory work. For John Bodnar, for instance, oral interviews with individuals about the past are conducted "not only to discover what people remembered but also to discover how they went about the process of organizing and creating their memories in the first place" (1989, p. 1201).

Most studies of collective memory have focused on the activity of commemoration. Commemoration reproduces the past for present-day aims, by bringing the original narrative of the community into focus (Connerton, 1989, p. 35). In so doing, it both stabilizes and clarifies memory. In Durkheim's (1965, p. 420) view, it allows the society to "renew the sentiment which it has of itself and its unity." Through commemoration, collective memory "receives an anchor from which it cannot easily drift. It serves the need of a community to resist change in its self-conceptions" (Hutton, 1988, p. 315). Like recollection, commemoration does not insist on any shared, direct experience for its participants; one does

not need to have participated in a war in order to celebrate Veteran's Day. Commemoration, as Schudson (1993) has argued, need not be located within formal commemorative markers. It can be de-textualized to include all creations that have duration over time, including the human being. It can live on in individuals, as the Kennedy assassination did in the names of Walter Cronkite or Dan Rather, or Watergate did in the names of Jeb Magruder or Gordon Liddy. In fact, Watergate has persisted in memory despite the fact that it was an uncommemorated event in the formal sense, with no holidays, museums, or monuments to mark it (Schudson, 1992).

In both commemoration and recollection, memory's collective dimensions have forced us to reassign group loyalties, constituting new groups as wide-ranging as the neighborhood book club and the nation-state. Such new groups have in turn rearranged the text of memory as it was initially instantiated. In the case of Holocaust memorials, for example, they extended the memorial outward to reflect the larger contemporary culture as well as mark the event of the past. For that reason, former citizens of East Germany changed the parameters for recollecting Jewish victimage by the Nazis, turning the museum at the concentration camp of Buchenwald into a marker of the rise of Communism over Fascism (Young, 1993).

The processual nature of memory allows us to account for transformations that occur within the act of remembering. Some of these transformations have concerned the less-examined inverse cases of both commemoration and recollection. What happens, for instance, when commemoration is implemented by overturning earlier commemorative work? The bringing down of the Berlin Wall is surely one such example. Or what about cemeteries left untended? History books redone? Canons in university curricula changed? In each case, earlier persistent memories crumble through contestation, leaving memory

work to be conducted amidst the ruins of earlier recollections.

The most common transformation of memory concerns what has been regarded generally as memory undone—amnesia or forgetting. How memories are erased, forgotten, or willed absent has come to be seen as equally important to the ways in which memories are set in place. As Halbwachs (1992b, p. 172) himself argued:

A recollection is the richer when it reappears at the junction of . . . frameworks, which in effect intersect each other and overlap in part. Forgetting is explained by the disappearance of these frameworks or of a part of them, either because our attention is no longer able to focus on them or because it is focused somewhere else. But forgetting, or the deformation of certain recollections, is also explained by the fact that these frameworks change from one period to another.

Unlike the study of individual memory, where remembering at times seems to resemble an endurance test that equates more memory with better memory, the study of collective memory values the negation of the act. Forgetting is "the substitution of one memory for another" (Davis and Starn, 1989, p. 2). It is considered not as a defect or deficit practice but a valued activity that is as strategic and central a practice as remembering itself. Forgetting reflects a choice to put aside, for whatever reason, what no longer matters. American journalists conveniently "forgot" about the problems that accompanied news coverage of Lee Harvey Oswald's murder, because they needed to do so in order to construct that coverage as a high point of television journalism (Zelizer, 1992). Forgetting is also seen as a "given of domination" and the collective response to it (Boyarin, 1992, p. 2). By forgetting about the newly-established surrounding nation-state in the Maghreb region of Southern Tunisia, for example, individuals refused to link their own history with that of a state that kept them on the fringes of nation-building (Dakhli, 1993). Europe's amnesia about World

War II was both willed and strategic: beneath the surface, "the lava of memory" smoldered, to erupt whenever a Bitburg commemoration or Waldheim election took over the public stage (Miller, 1986, p. 30). As a nation, Americans have been cast as slightly more amnesiac than other populations (Kammen, 1991).

Sometimes, amnesia occurs without synchrony with the larger group. Ronald Reagan, for instance, tried to force the group into forgetting before it was ready. His 1982 appraisal of the Vietnam War, when he declared that the public was "beginning to appreciate that they were fighting for a just cause" (*New York Times*, November 11, 1982, p. 1), provoked a public outcry from those not willing to accept his willed forgetting of the controversy surrounding the war. Similarly, his trip to Bitburg and feeble omissions of the role played by Hitler's S.S. suggested that he had rearranged memories of the Second World War in a way that failed to match that of the larger social group (Hartman, 1986). His rearrangement of group memories surrounding both events in history provoked indignation rather than consensus.

Memory's transformative nature underscores our inability to fasten memory work long enough to generate consensual notions about it. In a sense, then, memory appears to vibrate in excess of our ability to anchor it in discourse. This makes some consideration of process not only crucial to an understanding of how collective memory works; rather, process becomes a precondition for the sharing of memory across groups.

Yet have we sufficiently captured the centrality of process in our discussions of memory? It may be that by virtue of the nature of inquiry itself, our analysis has imposed a certain static nature to understandings of memory work, freezing our discussions to one point in time and place. Faced with the difficulty of capturing its processual nature, we therefore may not yet have come full circle in recognizing the various ways in which

collective remembering remains a fundamentally processual activity.

Collective Memory is Unpredictable

One element that contemporary memory studies have clearly taught us is the unpredictability of collective memory. Collective memory is not necessarily linear, logical, or rational. It can take on any of these characteristics but it does not depend on any of them for its constitution. In many cases, memories pop up precisely where they are least expected.

This has had considerable repercussions on our ability to study memory in its collected form. We cannot predict the instances in which memory takes on new transformations. We are also unable to prepare for which parts of the past become significant dimensions of a recollection, which personalities are most effective in activating memory, or which contemporary circumstances serve to engender new rewritings of the past. How many of us were able to predict George Bush's invocation of World War II to explain away the U.S. invasion of Iraq? In short, memory's unpredictability appears to have significantly restricted our inquiry, for we are unable to predict many of those circumstances in which memory takes on new footholds.

Thus, memory work brings together unusual bits of the past in unpredictable ways. Recollections of post-Vichy France have repaired more actively to contemporary attempts to uphold national dignity than to consensual recollections of the French experience in wartime (Rousso, 1991). Collective memories of AIDS have taken new turns as the names of Elizabeth Glaser and Kimberly Bergalis have complicated common understandings of the disease. The activity of beheading, glorified during the French Revolution for reasons of expediency, has been recodified as a contemporary address to the increasing presence of violence in high political echelons (Janes, 1991). Recent commemorations of D-

Day conspicuously left out Russian participants, marking the Russians' unsettled standing of 1994 as much as the historical reality of 50 years earlier (Schudson, 1995). The Nazi-hunting experiences of Simon Wiesenthal have brought the threat of forgetting to the forefront of contemporary consciousness in ways that have positioned the response to the absence of memory as visibly as the original activities that motivated remembering.

The unpredictability of memory is compounded by the fact that it is not necessarily static or stable. As Fentress and Wickham (1992, p. 59) have noted, collective memories are "not stable as information" but "at the level of shared meanings and remembered images." Yet the question remains "for whom?" The memories of common people are often appropriated by elites, professionals, and other cultural brokers. In most cases, power wins out. And even then, on the way to appropriation, memory works erratically. Consider, for instance, the pallidness of the American character that has emerged from U.S. history textbooks, which have portrayed each national conflict as ultimately reasonable and without passion or prejudice (Fitzgerald, 1980).

Unanticipated changes in the ways in which we appropriate the form of remembering have been most pronounced when dealing with issues of time and space. While such changes at times occur in patterned ways, they too underscore the unpredictability of memory work. This is paradoxical, for traditional studies of memory always assumed the accuracy of a recollection to be dependent on its predictable linkage with time and space. As historian David Thelen (1989, p. 1119) remarked, his traditional colleagues "expect the accuracy of a memory to be shaped by the observer's physical proximity in time and space to the event." Yet it is precisely these commonsensical assumptions about memory, on the one side, and time and space, on

the other, that are undone in contemporary memory studies.

Memory and Time

One of the most peculiar traits that have come to characterize the form of collective memory has been its relationship to time. The study of collective memory has had little to do with the passage of time in its expected form. Rather, collective memory is predicated upon a dissociation between the act of remembering and the linear sequencing of time. Chronology, dismissed by David Lowenthal (1985, p. 221) as "history-book time," is of value insofar as it provides a contrast to the interrupted nature of memory. Time's *recreation* is so central that studies of collective memory are often constituted by their very invocation of nonsequential temporal patterning. Time becomes a social construction, the target of strategic rearrangement. Because "every relic exists simultaneously in the past and present . . . what leads us to identify things as antiquated or ancient varies with environment and history, with individual and culture, with historical awareness and inclination" (Lowenthal, 1985, p. 241).

In fact, the role of collective memory in helping communities deal with time is more than just central. When taken to the extreme, the linkage between communities and time helps them to undermine themselves. Time undoes its ability to shape communities by virtue of its never being able to stop shaping them; similarly, the group runs the risk of losing its common framework if time becomes so subjectified that it no longer can offer a shared past linked with real-life events. It is here that collective memory proves most useful, for it holds both time and the group at abeyance from each other and gives them a frame in which to interact. Collective memory allows the group to use time in a fruitful way at the same time as it allows time to function to the group's benefit. Collec-

tive memory thereby repairs the excesses built into the time-community link.

Thus, Abraham Lincoln has been remembered differently by subsequent generations of Americans; earlier images of a folksy Lincoln gave way to a portrait of a remote and dignified individual (Schwartz, 1990). France's inability to deal with the Vichy experience has played out in various phases over the decades since World War II, all of which underscored the replay of the past to suit present aims (Rousso, 1991). Statues in the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. have reflected the changing divisions in the country at the time they were commissioned, thereby marking successive phases of the nation's collected memory (Schwartz, 1982).

The temporality of memory is rearranged to accommodate the needs of certain groups by several mechanisms. One practice is what I call retrospective nominalization. This refers to the renaming of early events, issues, or places in accordance with other events, issues, or places that have occurred in later years. For instance, the Holocaust became known as the Holocaust only during the seventies, some thirty years following the events that motivated that name. Similarly, World War I was given that label only decades after the war had ended, once the Second World War came into collective consciousness. Before then, it had been called the Great War. This means that at the same time as the use of the old secures and solidifies the new, the new helps assign and reassign meaning to the old. Time, then, and its concomitant traits of sequentiality, linearity, and chronology, become used up as resources for the establishment and continued maintenance of memory in its social, collective form. Yet this understanding of memory assumes a far more cyclical and nonlinear relationship to time than has been traditionally assumed.

Collapsing commemoration is another way to rearrange time. Here, commemorative dates or holidays are used to remember more than one event at the

same
has
Jewi:
of Av
even
in Je
tion
of th
Jewis
Bar
even
(Vale
patte
gious
simil:
erate
tural
instal
poral
event
repe:
anoth
of th
which
First
11) h:
a way
beria
as in
over
which
ated.

And
the fo
its re
Wach
ervati
ancho
occu:
even t
finitiv
house
space
bounc
Am
Fran
to our
tween
demor

same time. For instance, Lucette Valensi has demonstrated how one date on the Jewish calendar—the ninth of the month of Av—has come to commemorate many events ranging over hundreds of years in Jewish history, including the destruction of the First Temple, the destruction of the Second Temple, the fall of the Jewish kingdom of Palestine, and the Bar Kochba revolt. In memory, these events were collapsed into the same day (Valensi, 1986, p. 285). Similarly, the patterning of ritual time, by which religious or magical rites are repeated in similar temporal circumstances, has generated temporal parallels in different cultural systems. Easter and Passover, for instance, are celebrated at a similar temporal point within the larger cycle of events which they are responsible for repeating (Connerton, 1989, p. 66). Still another example surrounds the erection of the tombs to the unknown soldier, which were set in place following the First World War. As John Gillis (1994, p. 11) has pointed out, these tombs offered a way to remember everyone “by remembering no one in particular.” In this case, as in others, memory work succeeded over time by undoing the activity with which it had traditionally been associated.

Memory and Space

Another issue central to the study of the form of collective memory has been its relationship to space. In Nathan Wachtel's (1986, p. 212) view, “the preservation of recollections rests on their anchorage in space.” That anchorage occurs through monuments, artifacts, even texts, which themselves bear a definitive relationship to space. From a house to a neighborhood to a nation, space has always helped define the boundaries of memory.

Among contemporary scholars, Frances Yates (1966) contributed much to our understanding of the relation between space and memory, when she demonstrated that one of the first steps

in achieving the mnemonic in the classical art of memory was to imprint on memory a series of *loci*—places or spatial building blocks. Although she dealt with personal memory, her work nonetheless involved binding memories to places in one's imagination. A more recent rendition of the relationship between memory and space has been Pierre Nora's notion of “sites of memory,” or *lieux de memoire*. These mnemonic sites—burial places, cathedrals, palaces, battlefields—embody concrete traces of the past. Instrumental to consensual notions about the past, they help define memory itself. This is because unlike history, which Nora (1989, p. 22) claimed is motivated by events, “memory attaches itself to sites.”

Monuments and memorials provide rich examples of the ways in which space has assured memory's preservation. Works by James Young on Holocaust memorials (1993, 1994) and Karal Ann Marling and John Wetenhall on Iwo Jima (1991) illustrate how space helps preserve collective memories. In the latter case, the flag-raising on the island has been reconfigured in iconography as wide-ranging as sculpture, postages stamps, memorials, and bond drive posters. More generally, museum-related activities have become themselves a paradigm for remembering. Flea markets, the restoration of old urban centers, and whole museum villages all offer spatially-grounded treatments of the past that have broadened into a key paradigm of contemporary culture (Huyssen, 1995).

In some cases, memories have persisted through the illusion of space. Halbwachs (1992a) himself showed how people used one simple spatial location—the Holy Land—to generate distinct modifications of memory over time; the biblical Holy Land was really no more than a schema imagined during the Middle Ages and superimposed on the terrain of what was then called Palestine. Other illusions have engendered other effects. Jonathan Boyarin (1992), for instance, argued that Jewish memory has persisted without occupied space.

Rather, the collective memory of the Jews has been tied to a place—Israel—where few of them live. Similarly, considerations of outer space have provided a territory on which to map out our projections of power and authority (Kauffman, 1994). Yet such considerations have been set forth on an occupation of space which few have actually experienced.

Here, too, there has been rearrangement. We can easily call to mind instances in which the physical borders of nation-states have reflected contained narratives about the past that those nations produce. The contested status of memories of the land in contemporary Israel is a case in point (Katriel, 1994; Zelizer, 1993b). Yet Eastern Europe—both in its days of spatial inflexibility and its more recent days of flux—is a revealing example of how space has failed to contain the leakage of contesting memories within its terrain. Recent battles between Serbs and Croats in the former Yugoslavia bring to mind the oft-cited story of fighting children who are unable to agree on their punctuation of the same event. Each begins narration of the event at the point at which the other struck.

Moreover, the relationship to space often reconfigures remembering in distinctly unanticipated ways. As Andreas Huyssen (1993, p. 250) has argued, "is it not a constitutive strength of memory that it can be contested from new perspectives, with novel evidence, from the very spaces it had blocked out?" In fact, the space of memory thrives by being subject to diverse interpretations. It becomes, as John Gillis (1994, p. 14) has demonstrated, both more global and more local at the same time—global by virtue of the symbolic meanings attached to sites like Auschwitz, Chernobyl, or Hiroshima, and local thanks to the resurgence of interest in family, ethnic, or other particularistic memories. In effect, the collective memory redefines space as we have come to reference it in popular usage.

All of this suggests that collective

memory is at best unpredictable. It can occur in untoward shapes, around unsuspecting personalities and issues, and at surprising times and places. Patterning that does occur does so around variant coordinates that bring certain kinds of memory together and keep others apart. For instance, the point at which memory can no longer be made relative might differ significantly in events like the Holocaust and the Kennedy assassination, but might bring Holocaust recollections and memories of atrocities in Bosnia into close quarters.

Not surprisingly, however, the study of memory has not sufficiently captured its unpredictability. In its own search for repeatable patterns that help us make sense of how memory works, inquiry has focused more on memory's predictable elements. Laying claim to patterns has not only allowed us to map out the workings of memory but also to control its often erratic nature. Yet such a perspective has captured only part of memory work, and may have sideswiped much that is essential to its shaping.

Collective Memory is Partial

Yet another basic premise in our understanding of collective memory concerns its partiality. No single memory contains all that we know, or could know, about any given event, personality, or issue. Rather, memories are often pieced together like a mosaic. This influences not only their internal validity but also their relative cogency vis a vis each other. Ultimately, collective memories can be tested most effectively against other memories, and less effectively against any absolutist past. Here, too, however, there are limitations, as the Holocaust makes evident.

The partiality of memory has powerful repercussions on what we think we know about the past. We can easily recall attempts to remake the past in ways that tell only part of the story. Fourth of July celebrations during the early 1800s look unfamiliar to those of us accustomed to

parades down Main Street and firework extravaganzas. The working-class pursued leisure activities rather than practices expressing loyalty to the nation-state, German immigrants frolicked at local beer-gardens, and native-born groups in Milwaukee listened to orators espouse civic values (Bodnar, 1992). The celebrations were partial displays of what independence meant to the different communities responsible for commemoration; yet together they comprised a somewhat fuller range of how America came to celebrate its birthday. Each, moreover, was related to the fundamental fact that the Fourth of July only became a national celebration after America's sense of a heroic past had begun to slip away (Bodnar, 1992). Similarly, recent commemorations of the 25th anniversary of Stonewall—commonly seen as the beginning of contemporary gay consciousness—displayed the struggles to claim an authoritative voice in collectively remembering the event. They also showed how partial were the recollections that ensued. At question were both the identity and number of people who claimed to have been present during the 1969 police raid on the gay bar. In each case, memories constituted partial representations of the past; when brought together with other similarly partial recollections, however, they were able to provide a more complete construction of what happened.

Significantly, however, it is rare that a continuum of memories reproduces an event in its entirety. That is to say, the partiality of memory is almost never fully resolved, regardless of how many recollections are put together to that effect. Consider, for instance, retellings of the assassination of John F. Kennedy, where recollections by the family, the government and other official bodies, journalists, independent researchers, and other interested citizens have generated a pastiche of memory which has had the peculiar effect of generating more, rather than fewer, questions about what happened (Zelizer, 1992). Less volatile

events, too, are characterized by a similar incompleteness that persists despite vigorous attempts to launder the inconsistencies of memory. Yet partiality has its useful side. It helps us move forward. We need only think about the shape of medical research and its ability to generate new resolutions to old problems in order to understand the fundamental functionality of a partial approach to the past.

Often, but not always, the partiality of one recollection is complemented by that of another. Thus, David Lowenthal (1985, p. 271) recounted how the ivy on Harvard College buildings was defended because it was thought to lend Harvard Yard a picturesque unity with its distant past, despite the fact that the ivy dated only from the 1880s. Only during debates of the 1980s over whether to keep the ivy did this point emerge. Likewise, the debate over the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in Washington, D.C. reflected two sets of equally partial recollections—those wishing to commemorate lives lost in the war and those striving to erect a monument to U.S. patriotism. Neither conveyed all that was remembered about the Vietnam War yet both found expression in the monument to it that resulted (Bodnar, 1992). In other cases, memories have existed in a temporal continuum with the memories that they have replaced. Anniversaries, for instance, fill a special need in cases in which the institutionalized memories they embody substitute for lived memories that have faded (Schudson, 1995). On another continent, the ideology of social banditry and honor that has long encapsulated popular visions of the Sicilian Mafia emerged through a matrix of partial recollections, representations, and mythologies that date back to the 13th century (Fentress and Wickham, 1992).

Sometimes, memories gain resonance only when they are pieced together beyond the group that engineered their construction. In an evocative treatise on the workings of Holocaust memory in different nations, Judith Miller demon-

strated how each country developed a specific cultural lore about its actions vis a vis the Nazis that limited its own accountability: Austria perpetuated a portrait of itself as Hitler's first victims rather than his most enthusiastic allies; the Netherlands, which lost 75% of its Jewish population to Hitler, promoted the story of Anne Frank over a more sober picture of bureaucratically-minded individuals who helped the Nazis efficiently register the Jews; and the Soviet Union neutralized Jewish suffering in its memories because its ideology prevented it from recognizing that Jews had suffered disproportionately simply because of their religion (1990). None of these recollections was a wholly accurate, or valid, representation of the past. Yet each worked for its shapers because the memories played a central role in upholding their dignity. In the presentation of self to one's own group and to that of others, the partiality of memory work often benefits those who shape it.

Memory's partiality plays odd games with the authority of a given recollection. In certain circumstances, such as the Holocaust, memory's partiality has had little effect in muting a tale's cogency. Tony Judt (1992), for instance, argued that the countries of Western Europe have shown a shortage of memories based on World War II, pinpointing Germany as the only culprit and elevating resistance activities to the level of myth, while the nations of Eastern Europe have displayed an excess of memory. In each case, continuity has depended on a systematic interpretation of the past on the part of its members. Similarly, while both the British and American publics regarded the Second World War as important, they have remembered that event in strikingly different ways that are as revealing of contemporary political ideology as they are of the past they try to recapture (Scott and Zac, 1993). In other instances, memory has come to function somewhat like a collective construct. The narrative tapes of Studs Terkel (1984), for ex-

ample, have produced documents about the past that are constructed through the recollections of an array of participants. Anthologies, television retrospectives that present reassembled pieces of an event or issue, and oral histories have all generated similar accounts. Their recollections offered partial views of the past that, when brought together with other recollections, assume a collective authority derived from their assembled presence. Alone, the recollections lacked the authority to persuasively tell their version of the past but in repertoire with other voices, they worked as collective memories.

Yet how successful have we been in capturing the partiality of memory? Other than lodging memories within the recognized boundaries of predefined groups, we may have understated memory's partiality in our scholarly inquiry. For inquiry tends to search for the complete picture in the circumstances that it explores. And the partiality with which memory work tends to go public may have undermined its own recognition by the academy.

Collective Memory is Usable

The move from individual to group memory has also rattled givens in our understanding of the function of memory. It has brought the issue of purpose to the forefront of our analysis. For collective memory is always a means to something else. Rather than be taken at face value as a simple act of recall, collective memory is evaluated for the ways in which it helps us to make connections—to each other over time and space, and to ourselves. At the heart of memory's study, then, is its usability, its invocation as a tool to defend different aims and agendas.

It is significant that in moving away from the individualized dimension of remembering, we have not yet agreed on where to house the functions of collective remembering that we find. Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz (1991) point to the

social, political, and cultural functions of remembering. Such trajectories underscore the wide-ranging uses to which memory can be put. While it could be argued that none exists independently of the other, each signifies a slightly different orientation to the act of remembering.

The *social trajectory* of memory studies refers primarily to tracking the constitution and reconstitution of social groups around issues of memory. Memory in this sense extends the act of remembering for recall's sake into a consideration of the use of memory to shape belonging, exclusivity, social order, and community. Other activities also come to mind, but even such an idiosyncronic list captures the spirit and range of the areas of social practice upon which memory impacts. Remembering becomes a marker that signals social existence and all that such existence invokes.

In this view, remembering helps communities stick together in certain ways and break apart in others. Collective memory provides narratives about the past, artifacts that signal central events of the past, and ways of meaningfully signifying the past through fashion, architecture, holidays, and legal charters. The trick here is to effect belonging for certain individuals or groups and exclusivity for others, making a certain level of differential address a necessary accoutrement of memory. Thus, Easter-oriented television programming acts as a cue to remember for those who observe the holiday, while it goes relatively unnoticed by members of other religious communities. Remembering is tied up also with issues of social order, where it brings together the past, present, and future in some meaningful way for members of the group. Whether it be the Depression of the 1930s, the Nazi occupation, or Hiroshima, the past "enables us to know what is worth defending and preserving in [society], and what should be overthrown or destroyed" (Chesneaux, 1978, p. 11). National celebrations of Mother's Day thereby began in Europe and

America on the eve of World War I as a way of valorizing motherly sacrifice while reinforcing the gendered nature of commemoration (Gillis, 1994).

The social consequences of memory are similarly wide-ranging. Schudson (1993) has argued that collective memory has significant social effects under two conditions: when personal or institutional reputation is bankable, as in the marketplace, the sciences, or the arts; and when collective identity is mobilizable, as in war or ethnic conflict. This, to me, seems to draw in just about every situation in which we invoke collective memory, suggesting that some degree of social effect is inevitable. Yet the social study of memory has a bias. It threatens to overdo what Schudson (1993), following Geertz, has called the "memory for" dimension of remembering. This "presentist" approach, which views memory as constantly shifting, facilitates the misinterpretation of historical data by viewing it through its own categories. It undoes history and risks tottering the establishment of continuity and stability, seen as instrumental for the group's identity (Schwartz, 1982, p. 393). When pushed to the extreme, then, presentism undermines all historical continuity. If social continuity is implied by a group's collective appropriation of the past, the act of remembering must then be linked with other areas of practice that extend beyond the social, with its presentist bias. This takes the very study of memory into political and cultural arenas of practice.

The *political trajectory* of memory studies might be defined as all activities that affect the political at its broadest and narrowest levels, including those concerning identity, continuity, stability, repression, and political power. Each type of practice gains its authority from some cumulative, rather than presentist, dimension of memory work.

The establishment and maintenance of political identity emerges as supreme here. Political traditions are validated through some sense of a stable past. Thus, work on collective memory in Rus-

sia (Tumarkin, 1987, 1991), Africa (Dakhli, 1993), or China (Schwarcz, 1991; Hung, 1991) has involved the reconstruction of the past in ways that resonate with the present. Political memory reflects "the concrete conceptualization of the experience of a people," with the nation-state's founding, affording a useful focus by which the political community can structure its recollection of the past (Smith, 1985, p. 21). In this case, memory work does not end with simple recall. Rather, "in the founding are lodged common symbols, images, and memories, that, when taken together, constitute the identity of a people and give them an orientation in time and space" (Smith, 1985, pp. 262-3). In language remembrance is also accomplished for political ends, as Hannah Arendt (1958, p. 204) demonstrated in showing that there can be no remembrance without speech. Speech, she said, is needed to materialize and memorialize all actions, however tentatively.

Often, the link between memory and identity disrupts group goals of cohesion, such as continuity or stability. One group's political glue becomes the unravelling of another. In studies of repression, for instance, memory silences the voices of those who seek to interpret the past in contradictory ways. Studies of China have aptly demonstrated the ways in which power struggles intrude upon all memory work, however innocuous it may seem (Hung, 1991). The wavering status of the memory of Lenin illustrates how specific political memories have been judged dangerous to the larger political unit (Tumarkin, 1987). And perhaps the most eloquent voice has been that of Milan Kundera (1981, p. 3), who claimed, in another political milieu, that "the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting." In each case, the stability created by memory changes, is altered, and is ultimately historically contingent. And it is within such mutability that one comes to manage the resonance of memory. Eventually interest in memory becomes a con-

sideration of power and a reflection of the ways in which power has historically been assigned. As Connerton (1989, p. 1) wrote, "control of a society's memory largely conditions the hierarchy of power." Le Goff (1992, p. 54) similarly argued that "to make themselves the master of memory and forgetfulness is one of the great preoccupations of the classes, groups, and individuals who have dominated and continue to dominate historical societies." In using the past to forge identity, then, one remains part of the "community of memory" (Bellah et al., 1985, pp. 152-155) by playing off of memory's mutability. Dependence on shared frames of reference about the past in effect helps one hold onto one's identity in ways that are meaningful not only to the individual but to the collective. And the meaning that each holds does not necessarily have to be the same.

This has been the case not only for large-scale political collectives but for smaller-scale groupings, such as interest groups or professions. Michael Schudson (1993, p. 11), for instance, argued that the premium on revisionism in historiography creates an incentive to disestablish conventional renditions of the past. This dynamic has legitimated certain professional groups, such as journalists and professional historians. In making it their professional business to muck about in the collective memory, such groups have ended up validating themselves as well as the memories they invoke. By definition, then, memory work is at some level always political.

A third area of practice on which the act of remembering impacts is the domain of culture. The *cultural trajectory* of memory studies has conceptualized memory as meaning-making activity. Recollections are seen here as "a kind of refuge, a place to which a people may repair for warmth and inspiration" (Smith, 1985, p. 263), or, alternately, a place of disrepair. Both positive and negative cultural implications decode the act of remembering as an act lending meaning to the larger surround and

one's place within it. Debates about the past take place within a larger cultural framework. They do not occur at random.

How is the past made to matter? Whether it be the conversion of European castles into expensive bed-and-breakfasts or the recreated experience of the Pilgrims in the museums of Plimoth Plantation, different folks make the past meaningful by employing different strokes. For some, the moral imperatives surrounding notions of justice, distinctions between right and wrong, and integrity are uppermost. These recognitions of debts to the past take many forms. For example, the careers of Jimmy Carter and William Safire were themselves carriers of Watergate's collective memory (Schudson, 1992). Reputation, so solidly examined by Kurt and Gladys Lang (1988), is itself a carrier for memory. For others, the issue of a recollection's accuracy has given way to how a memory feels at the moment of its reconstruction (Thelen, 1989). We need only consider debates about the ability of film to retell history, in events as wide-ranging as the U.S. frontier narrative, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, or Vietnam.

The emphasis on meaning in the cultural study of memory waylays the insistence on accuracy. Not surprisingly, the proliferation of popular cultural forms has been key here. From comics to popular films, popular culture has assumed an active presence in the shaping and reshaping of memory. George Lipsitz (1990), for instance, has argued that popular culture has precipitated a crisis of memory, in which all identity construction comes to rest at least in part on memory work. This has changed expectations of what vessels of memory ought to do. As historian Michael Frisch (1986, p. 8) offered in his discussion of remembering Vietnam:

Films like *The Deerhunter* and *Apocalypse Now* said almost nothing about the real history and impact of the war. But they have an enormous amount to teach, in all their pre-

tentious posturing, about how we have been encouraged to deal with 'such' a traumatic collective experience.

Memory's congruence with the events that it represents becomes secondary to the larger issue of making sense of the public's relationship with those representations. *JFK* the movie matters less as historical representation and more as a way of making sense of the incongruities emerging from the story of Kennedy's death (Zelizer, 1992). The work of German painter Anselm Kiefer constitutes as much an attempt to deal with the past as the offering of an aesthetic experience (Huyssen, 1995).

Making the past matter involves easing a fundamental tension between the customary and the unusual that characterizes memory work. While remembering as an activity tends to preserve some customary dimension of a memory—as in the lighting of candles on the Jewish Sabbath or the wearing of the color green on St. Patrick's Day—the content of memory itself often dwells upon the unusual, spectacular, or extraordinary. Memory work proceeds on the assumption that a manageable link can be created between the two. And in cases in which this fails, we are left with incongruous and lingering questions that highlight our unease at being asked to remember. The recent attempt to stage a Woodstock revival, for instance, represents unsuccessful memory work. When the festival's organizers failed to draw in crowds of people, they wondered where they had gone wrong. Perhaps the tension between that memory's customary and extraordinary dimensions was not sufficiently resilient to capture its potential rememberers. At times, too, the link is refuted by those amongst whom its resilience should matter most. Holocaust deniers would fall into such a category, in that their claim that the Holocaust never happened is itself a form of memory (Vidal-Naquet, 1992).

In her anthropological work on memory, Mary Douglas explored the ways in which institutional memory work

offers an intricate interweaving of patterned remembering *and* forgetting. Institutions, she said, create categories by which new items of knowledge are categorized and stored for further use:

Just as each different kind of social system rests on a specific type of analogy from nature, so the memories ought to be different too. . . . Coherence and complexity in public memory will tend to correspond to coherence and complexity at the social level (Douglas, 1986, p. 80).

Memory work, then, ultimately impacts upon and is impacted by other surrounding structures for meaning-making.

Yet here, too, we seem to have made insufficient headway in addressing all the purposes that memory serves. Is it because its multi-purpose nature is too wide-ranging to be encompassed by one analytical framework? Or, in some sense, do memory studies themselves dissociate our understanding of memory from its functional role in social, political, and cultural action?

Collective Memory is Both Particular and Universal

Collective memories are peculiar in that they can be simultaneously particularistic and universal. That is, the same memory can act as a particular representation of the past for certain groups while taking on a universal significance for others: One need only consider the difference resonated by the term "Auschwitz" for survivors of that concentration camp versus that assumed by contemporary scholars in genocide studies. The significance of memory rests in interdependence between the two, yet a group can subscribe to one meaning without actively emphasizing the other.

To an extent, this follows from the rather basic fact that everyone participates in the production of memory, though not equally. Some people actively construct memories, while others perform activities that are crucial to their transmission, retention, or contestation.

Memories have been lodged in the groups that populate work settings (Orr, 1990; Bodnar, 1989). They have comprised the cultural lore of professional groups, like journalists (Zelizer, 1992, 1993a), politicians and writers of history textbooks (Schudson, 1992), or artists (Lang and Lang, 1988). Memories have been found within the territorial spaces of ethnic groups, as in John Bodnar's explanation of ethnic memory among Mennonites, Swedes, and Norwegians in America, each of whose "memories of the ethnic past were grounded ultimately in the social reality of the present" (Bodnar, 1992, p. 75). Lucette Valensi's compelling discussion of Jewish memory argued that memory among Jews has taken on specific qualities: "With their dispersal, the Jews became a people of memory. To be Jewish is to remember" (1986, p. 286). And memories have been found at the margins of other groups. In *Social Memory* James Fentress and Chris Wickham (1992) tracked the group memories of several marginalized groups in Britain, including women, the peasantry, and the working class. The issue of marginalization in their study is key, in that it underscored the negotiation activities by which each of these groups struggled to gain a voice in shaping memory. And in so doing, the past as they knew it was irretrievably altered. Communities have even grounded their very maintenance on the act of remembering. From lineage memory in North African villages (Dakhli, 1993) to the memory of monuments in Tiananmen Square (Hung, 1991), memory acts as a social, cultural, and political glue.

It does so via the tension between its particularistic and universal dimensions. This is possible because one of the fundamental ironies of collective memory is that its collective nature is not necessarily unified. As Irwin-Zarecka (1994, p. 67) has argued, the term "collective" suggests an ideal rather than a given. Consider, for instance, the role that specific events play in remembering. From the Prohibition to the Gulf War, the

moon landings to Omaha Beach, events give memory a platter on which to serve historical accounting. They tend to shatter or reinforce a certain moral, cultural, or political consensus, as in discourse surrounding Watergate (Schudson, 1992), the emergence of the Masada tale in Jewish memory (Schwartz, Zerubavel, and Barnett, 1986; Lewis, 1975), or retellings of the Kennedy assassination (Zelizer, 1992). A particularly large body of work has focused on war and memory. For instance, the ways in which we remember World War I has illuminated memory's vagaries (that is, Ekstein, 1989; Fussell, 1975). Fussell claimed that the very "act of fighting a war becomes something like an unwitting act of conservative memory," in which everyone "tends to think of it in terms of the last [war] he knows anything about" (1975, p. 314).

Yet the relationship between the particular and the universalistic has another dimension, for the particularistic event is enveloped by a universal aura that attaches itself to much memory work. That is to say, memory in turn gives events a platter. This universal dimension of remembering fashions events into generalizable markers about suffering, joy, commitment, and endurance. The photograph of a small boy being herded by German soldiers out of the Warsaw Ghetto, his hands raised above his head, has come to symbolize the indignities of war. Likewise, decorative street lights and storefront displays in December have come for many to symbolize the holiday season, regardless of their religious persuasion. Events in effect become boiling points for the eruption of memory industries. World War II, to take an obvious example, is recalled not just as an event but as an interweaving matrix of intersecting agendas and memories—about Bitburg, Leni Reifenstahl, Iwo Jima, and Primo Levi. While each name is connected to the same large-scale event, each also conjures up different orders of the past and, by implication, the present and future.

Vibrations between the particular and

the universal are remarkably evident in the memories adopted by elites, where powerful groups have manipulated the tensions to their advantage. Attempts to make so-called "official" history have come to be seen as little more than the memories adopted by the dominant culture (Wachtel, 1986, p. 207). The scholarship of Pierre Nora (1984–6) on France, Charles Maier (1988) on Germany, or Michael Kammen (1991, 1992) on the United States has contributed to documenting an increasingly intricate repertoire of practices by which nationhoods have creatively established and fertilized their collective selves over time. Pierre Nora's (1984–6) multi-volume set, for instance, provided an inventory of the monuments, holidays, commemorations, and symbols that comprise French national memory. In each case, history has had different resonances for different groups under a system's administration, presenting many conflicting recollections and memories that link up with the manipulation of memory's particular and universalistic dimensions.

Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) are among the most-cited contemporary scholars to argue that many national traditions were in fact invented so as to consolidate specific versions of nationhood. Their edited collection surveyed a range of British national traditions, including the monarchy, and persuasively demonstrated that each was set in place in conjunction with the aim of national unity. So-called "national memories" were far from national but were instead the fruits of labors on the part of the aristocracy, monarchy, clergy, intelligentsia and upper-middle classes. Other scholars have made similar claims. For instance, the recovery of the lost glories of Muslim Spain required a construction of Spanish Islam as non-discriminatory and tolerant, despite the fact that it was neither (Lewis, 1975). The concept of "the British people," grown cozy by repetition, has been declared a racist construction that did little to include the people of color (Popular Memory Group,

1982, p. 213). Recent attempts by German revisionist historians to rearrange the place of the Holocaust in German national memory have been labelled a strategic manufacture of a cleaner, more comfortable national identity that had little to do with what happened during wartime (Habermas, 1993).

This shared presence of both universal and particularistic dimensions of remembering has been difficult to capture in scholarship on contemporary memory studies, however. Perhaps because the nature of inquiry typically filters out that which is least relevant to the focus of analysis, we have tended to address one or the other dimension of memory. Rather than capture both particularistic and universal dimensions, we have not yet illuminated either their simultaneous presence or the ways in which one leads to the other. Equally important, we do not yet know how one pushes the other out of collective consideration.

Collective Memory is Material

One of the most marked characteristics of collective memory is that it has texture. Memory exists in the world rather than in a person's head, and so is embodied in different cultural forms. We find memory in objects, narratives about the past, even the routines by which we structure our day. No memory is embodied in any of these artifacts, but instead bounces to and fro among all of them, on its way to gaining meaning.

Memory studies assume that evidence of the past exists in every mode of public expression in everyday life—in wedding celebrations, clothes, gestures, household artifacts, reputations, art exhibitions, public memorials, and television retrospectives. These artifacts, made similar by their endurance over time, not only presume that collective memory is unlike individual memory by virtue of the fact that it is external to the human body; they also suggest that it is through such forms that memory is collected,

shared, contested, or neutralized. As Pierre Nora (1989, p. 13) has argued, "modern memory is, above all, archival. It relies on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image."

This means that collective memory often resides in the artifacts that mark its existence. Cultural forms, such as monuments, diaries, fashion trends, television retrospectives, museum openings, and fashion shows, all house memories in a durable fashion, anchoring the transient and variable nature of memory itself. This makes the materiality of memory user-friendly. It also makes cultural forms a necessary part of memory's analysis.

In between one's head and the world, therefore, is a repertoire of different agents of mediation—media that help us to remember. As these media—invoked here in the broadest configuration and not just in reference to the mass media—have helped organize information at a point contemporaneous to the event, so too have they helped organize information at a point somewhat distant from the event. In the view of John Nerone and Ellen Wartella (1989, p. 87) media offer sites for "the creation of social memory." Yet how and in what shape media help—and hinder—the activity of remembering has not been made sufficiently clear.

For instance, acts of memory often rest with language, where they are articulated and given meaning. Bernard Lewis claimed that the earliest expressions of a community's collective memory have tended to be language-based—chants sung by tribes during cattle round-ups, sagas of the Icelanders, Homeric epics of the ancient Greeks (Lewis, 1975, p. 43). The preference for a "language first" mentality persists in the contemporary age, too, where the proliferation of "gate" terms to signify political scandals—as in "Billygate," "Irangate," "Koreagate"—designates the continued resonance of

Watergate for Americans (Schudson, 1992).

Yet memory looks for other carriers, and its enunciation has thereby gone beyond language. Vansina (1985) showed how much of African collective memory is preserved in rituals acted out by the group. Connerton (1989) discussed the ways in which playing the piano, learning to type, or court etiquette at Versailles have all depended on the transmission of some shared memory. He also argued that memories have been encoded in bodily practice, skillfully demonstrating that habitual gestures, postures, and movements in effect constitute a mnemonics of the body. Lowenthal (1989) examined the ways in which landscapes and other material artifacts of place have offered a social memory of sorts. Kammen (1992) discussed images of the past as seen in American painting, while Stallybrass (1993) located the shared memories of a Renaissance England in clothing.

Memory has taken on various forms in conjunction with the medium acting as its vessel. Some scholars have argued for memory's fundamentally oral nature, and for the fact that early forms of remembering were associated with oral sources and the oral tradition (for example, Yates, 1966). Others have maintained that a passage from orality to writing has facilitated the abandonment of what Le Goff (1992, p. 55) called "ethnic memory." In the contemporary age, memory has come to be seen as depending on an array of media technologies, from radio, cinema, and computers to the printed press. Externalizing memory outside of the human brain has thereby engendered diverse alternatives for its embodiment elsewhere.

The most obvious memory function in each case has been that of transmission. Media technology has been constituted as an aid to the act of recollection by virtue of the fact that it facilitates access to group memory. But the study of memory calls into focus another use of

media—its function of storage. The storage of information about the past provides "a means of marking, memorizing, and registering events" (Le Goff, 1992, p. 60), thus directly impacting upon issues of legitimation. Just as "public memory is the storage system for the social order" (Douglas, 1986, p. 70), so do the media offer memory its own warehouse. This becomes even more the case when we consider the extent to which we today record the event even as it is taking place. What this has not made explicit, however, is the degree to which even storage produces a recycling of historical knowledge. Maier (1988), for instance, demonstrated how the creation of a historical museum in West Berlin forced Germans to figure out where Jewish history fit alongside their own.

Relevant here is the visual dimension of memory. Visual records stabilize the transient nature of memory itself, which, not unlike reality, is subject to continued reconstruction. From art to cinema to television to photography, the visual dimension of memory aids in the recall of things and events past. Here, too, the reconstructive potential is enormous yet generally unspoken, a fact which has generated a seemingly endless number of debates, all of them renditions of the same song. The painting of George Washington crossing the Delaware River, painted by Emmanuel Leutze in 1851, "elevated a minor episode of the American Revolution to a mythic event" (Lowenthal, 1985, p. 307). The amateur recording by dressmaker Abraham Zapruder of the shooting of John F. Kennedy became probably one of the most debated filmic sequences in American history (Zelizer, 1992). Photographer Joe Rosenthal's memorable image of the flag-raising on Iwo Jima suited the national temper for remembering the battle below Mt. Suribachi—no bloodshed, the triumphant waving of the Stars and Stripes, the sculptural calm. Nonetheless, others closer to the event disputed both the representativeness and

the authenticity of the photograph. Foremost among the disputers were the planters of the first flag, whom Rosenthal failed to capture on film (Marling & Wetenhall, 1991).

And sometimes too, the visual record of memory has an uncomfortable power over those with keys to access it. Two examples show this, both of them concerning the liberation of concentration camps in 1945. During the 1980s, when called upon to recreate their experiences liberating the camps decades earlier, American liberators did an odd thing. Without being asked to do so, one by one they produced photographs that had been hidden in basements, back pockets, vaults; taken by a single member of their military unit and shared among the other members, the photographs offered graphic evidence of their having "been there" to liberate the camps. While the photographs in a sense offered a way to ground narratives of the past, their invocation demonstrated that the liberators preferred the group memory, as recorded visually, over their own individual recollections (Zelizer, unpublished manuscript). Similarly, following the liberation of the camps, the British Ministry of Information collated footage of the Allied troops entering Bergen-Belsen and Dachau. Due to their graphic presentation of atrocities, the images were stored in a vault at the British Imperial War Museum until the mid-1980s, when they were released as part of a film for PBS' *Frontline* (*Memory of the Camps*, 1985). This suggests that visual records at times display a power too difficult to bear at points within the unfolding of memory. As contemporaneous documents, both failed, while as pieces of memory, they worked (Zelizer, forthcoming).

The materiality of memory has posed somewhat of a problem, however, for contemporary memory studies. How does one account for the primacy of one artifact of memory over another? Whole-village recreations of times past have certainly offered one way to address the

primacy of memory, but most academic inquiry tends to rest with books rather than museums. This has had the curious effect of making the materiality of memory into an obstacle to scholarship on memory work.

THE FUTURE OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY STUDIES: UNCOLLECTING MEMORY'S COLLECTIVE NATURE

Each of these premises points to territory still uncharted in contemporary memory studies. The presently-travelled routes may not remain intact, for it may be that memory's own collective nature is responsible for memory studies having taken up such wide-ranging, yet insufficiently-travelled, routes of expansion.

For instance, in adopting new assumptions about memory, we have generated new questions that gnaw and trouble. We still do not know where and among whom social memory is most actively operative. We still lack precise knowledge as to how remembering is accomplished for different social groups. How do the memories of different groups intersect? How do we handle the ultimate subjectivity of collective memories? And are there points at which the mastery of memory obstructs a fruitful appropriation of its content?

One central area in which collective memory studies bear rerouting is in the scope of its study. The collective nature of memory has grown so broad that it now seems to include all thoughts, sentiments, and actions about the past that are not recognized as traditional history. In moving beyond its individualized domain, memory has come to be as ever-present as oxygen molecules, lurking behind every nook and cranny of everyday

life. This has begun to position collective memory as a "catch-all" category.

That theoretical impulse is a dangerous one, for it threatens to undo the analytical specificity of the concept. Even if it is collected, shared, negotiated, and constituted by the group, collective memory needs to retain its uniqueness as a category of knowledge. Perhaps the nuances that separate "public memory" from "cultural memory" from "collective memory," and so forth, should be more closely probed. Perhaps focussing more actively on specific collected memories—whether they be those of specific groups or those about specific events—would counter the leakiness of our scholarship.

In so doing, we may address yet a second problem with collective memory studies. They possess insufficient conceptual clarity. Why is it, for instance, that many memory studies are still plagued by a lack of definition as to what collective memory is, beyond admitting that it is *not* individualized? Why do we not yet know when remembering is being used as simple recall and when it is being used to affect a slew of other activities? And why are we not sufficiently bothered by this conceptual murkiness? It may be that in our rush to territorialize this newest frame for studying the past, we haven't paid sufficient attention to what the foot soldiers have been doing along the way. Much of this has to do with the fundamental lack of fit between the characteristic traits of collective memory and our ability to explore them. We need to examine more closely the terms that have become the footholds of our scholarship.

Paradoxically, these two problems tell us to undo much that is special about collective memory itself. They advise us to slow down, tighten up, narrow our focus—when collective memory's most useful trait has been to open up new spaces from which to think about the past. It is within this paradox, however, that the future of memory studies seems to lie—in its vibrations, in a dual perspective that both broadly defines memory as akin to an array of social, political, and cultural practices yet narrowly restricts its analysis to the most grounded forms. Is it not possible to think broadly but practice narrowly?

This is not to say that all social memories, because they are collective in nature, must necessarily become uniform. Rather, our understanding of collective, or social, memory will always hinge upon some recognition of the issue "whose memory." We have the opportunity to produce scholarship which recognizes that we all behave in the context of many narrative histories of the past. And central to that opportunity is the evocative premise that ties our memories in with the world around us.

The past, said Harold Pinter, is "what you remember, imagine you remember, convince yourself you remember, or pretend you remember" (cited in Lowenthal, 1985, p. 193). The memory work that determines the texture of public life is ongoing. We need to recognize that its study will always be, at some level, a reading of the past against the grain. But there is still much to gain in its cultivation.

REFERENCES

- Arendt, H. (1958). *The human condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bartlett, F. (1932). *Remembering: A study in experimental and social psychology*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Bellah, R., Madsen, R., Sullivan, W. M., Swidler, A., & Tipton, S. (1985). *Habits of the heart: Individualism and commitment in American life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bergson, H. (1988). *Matter and memory*. New York: Zone Books [orig. pub. 1908].
- Bodnar, J. (1989, March). Power and memory in oral history: Workers and managers at Studebaker. *Journal of American History*, 75(4): 1201-1221.

- Bodnar, J. (1992). *Remaking America: Public memory, commemoration, and patriotism in the twentieth century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Boyarin, J. (1992). *Storm from paradise: The politics of Jewish memory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Braudel, F. (1980). *On history*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Chesneaux, J. (1978). *Pasts and futures, or what is history for?* London: Thames and Hudson.
- Connerton, P. (1989). *How societies remember*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Dakhli, J. (1993). Collective memory and the story of history: Lineage and nation in a North African oasis. *History and Theory*, 32(4): 57-79.
- Davis, N. Z. & Starn, R. (Eds.). (1989, Spring). Memory and counter-memory. Special issue of *Representations*, 26.
- Douglas, M. (1986). *How institutions think*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press.
- Durkheim, E. (1965). *The elementary forms of the religious life*. New York: The Free Press [orig. pub. 1912].
- Ekstein, M. (1993). *Rites of spring: The great war and the birth of the modern age*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Fentress, J. & Wickham, C. (1992). *Social memory*. Oxford, England and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Fitzgerald, F. (1980). *America revised: History textbooks in the twentieth century*. New York: Random House.
- Friedlander, S. (1993). *Memory, history and the extermination of the Jews of Europe*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Frisch, M. H. (1986). The memory of history. In S. P. Benson, S. Brier, & R. Rosenzweig (Eds.), *Presenting the past: Essays on history and the public* (pp. 5-20). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Fussell, P. (1975). *The great war and modern memory*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gillis, J. (1994). Memory and identity: The history of a relationship. In *Commemorations: The politics of national identity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Habermas, J. (1993). A kind of settlement of damages: The apologetic tendencies in German history writing. In *Forever in the shadow of Hitler? The original documents of the Historikerkreis* (pp. 34-44). Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.
- Halbwachs, M. (1992a). The legendary topography of the gospels in the Holy Land. In *On collective memory* (pp. 193-235). Chicago: University of Chicago Press [orig. pub. 1941].
- Halbwachs, M. (1992b). The social frameworks of memory. In *On collective memory* (pp. 37-189). Chicago: University of Chicago Press [orig. pub. 1951].
- Hartman, G. H. (Ed.). (1986). *Bitburg in moral and political perspective*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Hartman, G. H. (1994, Spring). Public memory and its discontents. *Raritan*, 13, 2-40.
- Hobsbawm, E. & Ranger, T. (Eds.). (1983). *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Hung, W. (1991, Summer). Tianamen Square: A political history of monuments. *Representations*, 35, 84-142.
- Hutton, P. (1988). Collective memory and collective mentalities: The Halbwachs-Aries connection. *Historical Reflections/Reflexions Historiques*, 15(2): 311-322.
- Huyssen, A. (1993). Monument and memory in a postmodern age. *Yale Journal of Criticism*, 6(2): 249-261.

- Huyssen, A. (1994). *Twilight memories: Marking time in a culture of amnesia*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Irwin-Zarecka, I. (1994). *Frames of remembrance: The dynamics of collective memory*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Janes, R. (1991, Summer). Beheadings. *Representations*, 35, 21-51.
- Judt, T. (1992, Fall). The past is another country: Myth and memory in postwar Europe. *Daedalus*, 121(4): 83-118.
- Kammen, M. (1991). *Mystic chords of memory: The transformation of tradition in American culture*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Kammen, M. (1992). *Meadows of memory: Images of time and tradition in American art and culture*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Katriel, T. (1994, February). Sites of memory: Discourses of the past in Israeli pioneering settlement museums. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 80, 1-20.
- Kauffman, J. L. (1994). *Selling outer space: Kennedy, the media, and funding for Project Apollo, 1961-1963*. Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press.
- Kundera, J. (1981). *The book of laughter and forgetting*. New York.
- Lang, E. L. & Lang, K. (1988, July). Recognition and reknown: The survival of artistic reputation. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94(1): 79-109.
- Le Goff, J. (1992). *History and memory*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lewis, B. (1975). *History: Remembered, recovered, invented*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Lipsitz, G. (1990). *Time passages: Collective memory and American popular culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Lowenthal, D. (1985). *The past is a foreign country*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Maier, C. (1988). *The unmasterable past: History, Holocaust, and German national identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Marling, K. A. & Wetenhall, J. (1991). *Iwo Jima: Monuments, memories, and the American hero*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Memory and American history. (1989, March). Special Issue of *The Journal of American History*, 75(4).
- Memory of the camps*. (1985). Film broadcast of PBS *Frontline*. Executive Producer: Sidney Bernstein.
- Middleton, D. & Edwards, D. (Eds.). (1990). *Collective remembering*. London: Sage Publications.
- Miller, J. (1986, November 16). Europe's amnesia about the Holocaust. *New York Times Magazine*, p. 16.
- Miller, Judith. (1990). *One, by one, by one*. New York: Touchstone Books.
- Mink, Louis O. (1981). Everyman his or her own Annalist. In W. J. T. Mitchell (Ed.), *On narrative* (pp. 233-239). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- Monumental histories. (1991, Summer). Special issue of *Representations*, 35.
- Nerone, J. & Wartella, E. (1989). Social memory. Special issue of *Communication*, 11(2).
- Nora, P. (1984-6). *Les lieux de memoire*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Nora, P. (1989, Spring). Between memory and history: Les lieux de memoire. *Representations*, 26, 13-25.
- Orr, J. (1990). Sharing knowledge, celebrating identity: Community memory in a service culture. In D. Middleton & D. Edwards (Eds.), *Collective remembering* (pp. 169-189). London: Sage.

- Popular Memory Group. (1982). Popular memory: Theory, politics, method. In R. Johnson, G. McLennan, B. Schwarz, & D. Sutton (Eds.), *Making histories: Studies in history-writing and politics* (pp. 205-252). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Rousso, H. (1991). *The Vichy syndrome: History and memory in France since 1944*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Schudson, M. (1992). *Watergate in American memory: How we remember, forget and reconstruct the past*. New York: Basic Books.
- Schudson, M. (1993, May). Culture of, culture for, culture with: Toward a sociology of collective memory. Paper presented to International Communication Association, Washington, D.C.
- Schudson, M. (1995, in press). Dynamics of distortion in collective memory. In D. Schachter (Ed.), *Memory and memory distortion*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Schwarcz, V. (1991, Spring). No solace from Lethe: History, memory, and cultural identity in twentieth-century China. *Daedalus*, 120(2): 85-112.
- Schwartz, B. (1982). The social context of commemoration: A study in collective memory. *Social Forces*, 61(2): 374-402.
- Schwartz, B. (1990). The reconstruction of Abraham Lincoln. In D. Middleton & D. Edwards (Eds.), *Collective remembering* (pp. 81-107). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Schwartz, B., Zerubavel, Y., & Barnett, B. (1986). The recovery of Masada: A study in collective memory. *Sociological Quarterly*, 27(2): 147-164.
- Scott, J. & Zac, L. (1993, Fall). Collective memories in Britain and the United States, In *The Public Opinion Quarterly* Vol. 57, pp. 315-331.
- Smith, B. J. (1985). *Politics and remembrance: Republican themes in Machiavelli, Burke, and Tocqueville*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Stallybrass, P. (1993, April). Worn worlds: Clothes, mourning, and the life of things. *The Yale Review*, pp. 35-50.
- Terkel, S. (1984). *The "good war."* New York: Ballantine.
- Thelen, D. (Ed.). (1989, March). Memory and American history. *Journal of American History*, 75(4): 1117-1129.
- Tumarkin, N. (1987). Myth and memory in Soviet society. *Society*, 24(6): 69-72.
- Tumarkin, N. (1991, June). The great patriotic war as myth and memory. *Atlantic Monthly*, pp. 26-44.
- Valensi, L. (1986, October). From sacred history to historical memory and back: The Jewish past. *History and Anthropology*, 12(2): 283-305.
- Vansina, J. (1965). *Oral tradition: A study in historical methodology*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Vidal-Naquet, P. (1992). *Assassins of memory*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Wachtel, N. (1986, October). Memory and history: Introduction. *History and Anthropology*, 12(2): 207-224.
- Wagner-Pacifici, R. & Schwartz, B. (1991, September). The Vietnam veteran's memorial: Commemorating a difficult past. *American Journal of Sociology*, 97(2): 376-420.
- Wagner-Pacifici, R. (in press). Memories in the making: The shape of things that went. *Qualitative Sociology* (Special Issue on Collective Memory).
- Yates, F. (1966). *The art of memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Young, J. (1993). *The texture of memory: Holocaust memorials and meaning*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Young, J. (1994). *The art of memory: Holocaust memorials in history*. New York: Prestel-Verlag.

- Zelizer, B. (1992). *Covering the body: The Kennedy assassination, the media, and the shaping of collective memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Zelizer, B. (1993a). Journalists as interpretive communities. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 10(3): 219-237.
- Zelizer, B. (1993b). Pioneers and plain folks: Cultural constructions of "place" in radio news. *Semiotica*, 3/4, 269-285.
- Zelizer, B. (Forthcoming). *Snapshots of memory: The image, the word, and the Holocaust*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Zelizer, B. (unpublished manuscript). Finding aids to the past: Photographs, liberator testimony, and the camps of World War II.