



PRACTICING HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY

Locating Memory: Tracing the Trajectories of Remembrance

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In October 2001 on a damp morning the remains of nine men executed and buried in Mountjoy jail in Dublin were exhumed and re-interred at Glasnevin cemetery.¹ The streets of Dublin were lined with thousands of people who watched the passing of the funeral cortege. The event was witnessed by tens of thousands, as it was broadcast live on the national television network. The coffins, draped in the Irish tricolor and awarded full state honors, were paraded publicly from the prison to the Catholic Pro-Cathedral in central Dublin. There was a concelebrated requiem mass before the bodies were transported for burial to the cemetery in Glasnevin. There, the Irish *Taoiseach* (prime minister) delivered a graveside oration. Three rounds of ammunition were released and the *Last Post* and national anthem were played. Although there was some controversy surrounding the day's events, by and large the ceremony was deemed a fitting, dignified, and noble occasion of reconciliation and remembrance. The men concerned were Irish Republican Army volunteers, executed under British authority eighty years earlier at Mountjoy jail during the 1920-1921 War of Independence.² Their bodies had been buried in the grounds of the prison and their re-interring at Glasnevin cemetery had been disputed over subsequent decades. The final symbolic recognition of their sacrifice through the performance of a state funeral on a rainy autumnal day in 2001 reinforces the significance of the dead in the arousal of the collective and personal memories of the living.

In his oration the prime minister claimed that: "The big powers had said that it was for the small nations that the First World War was fought. The people of Ireland were determined that the principle of national self-determination must also be extended to the Irish nation."³ The lexical juxtaposition of the First World War with the question of Irish independence reminds us of the real proximity in time and space of the global conflict that was the Great War and the local conflict that was the Irish independence movement. The overlapping of these powerful political moments would be crucial for the development of a memorial landscape

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in Ireland to those who died in the Great War. Where the dead are concerned, Katherine Verdery reminds us that “Remains are concrete, yet protean,”⁴ and geographers, concerned with social memory, increasingly have been examining the many forms in which commemoration of the dead gets played out. While war memory forms one important strand in this literature, other types of memory-making sites (e.g., heritage tourism, industrial landscapes) also have become the focus of attention. In particular, geographers have been keen to emphasize the spatiality of collective social memories and this has recently been supplemented by a concern with the performance and staging of memory in specific historical-spatial contexts. In the first section of this article I consider the relationships between time, memory, and its representation. The second part of the article examines the role of space in the imbrication of memories and the final section of the article returns to the remembrance of war dead and offers a few brief instantiations of the differing interpretations of the role of the First World War in the development of a modern memory.

Time, Remembrance, and Representation

The translation of meaning across space and time is central both to the rituals of everyday life and to the exceptional moments of remembrance associated with birth, death, and other key events in personal and collective histories. Memory as re-membering, re-collection, and re-presentation is crucial in the mapping of historical moments and in the articulation of identity. As Jonathan Boyarin has put it, “memory is neither something pre-existent and dormant in the past nor a projection from the present, but a potential for creative collaboration between present consciousness and the experience or expression of the past.”⁵

The 1950 work of Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, was the first critical attempt to give some sort of definition to the idea of social memory. Moving away from highly individualized and psychological notions of memory, for Halbwachs, collective or social memory was rooted in the belief that memories of the past among a social group, tied by kinship, class, or religion, links individuals in the group with a common shared identity. Social memory, therefore, is a way in which a group can maintain its collective identity over time and it is through the social group that individuals recall these memories.⁶ While Halbwachs is right to socialize the concept of memory, Charles Withers has observed that his analysis is “rooted in that concern for continuities evident in the *longue durée* tradition of French *Annaliste* historiography and in acceptance of a rather uncritical, ‘superorganic’ notion of culture.”⁷ So too, Halbwachs ideas could be further historicized to embrace the notion that the very concept of the “social” has a history and, indeed, geography.

Since Romanticism, the art of memory has been ideologically separated from history in Western historiographical traditions. Memory is

treated as subjective, selective, and uncritical while history is seen to be objective, scientific, and subject to empirical scrutiny.⁸ Pierre Nora suggests that with the demise of peasant societies, true memory, “which has taken refuge in gestures and habits, in skills passed down by unspoken traditions, in the body’s inherent self-knowledge, in unstudied reflexes and ingrained memories,” has been replaced by modern memory which is self-conscious, historical, and archival.⁹ The primordial memory of peasant societies has been replaced with the archival memory of contemporary, modern societies. Recent work on social memory has emphasized the discursive role of memory in the articulation of an identity politics and in particular the role of elite and dominant memory, mobilized by the powerful, to pursue specific political objectives.¹⁰ The distinction between “authentic” and modern memory is particularly persuasive when connected with a style of politics associated with the rise of the national state. The development of extra-local memories is intrinsic to the mobilization of an “imagined community” of nationhood,¹¹ and new memories necessitate the collective amnesia or forgetting of older ones.¹² In particular, where elites are concerned, Paul Connerton suggests that “it is now abundantly clear that in the modern period national elites have invented rituals that claim continuity with an appropriate historic past, organizing ceremonies/parades and mass gatherings, and constructing new ritual spaces.”¹³

In a compelling study of the emergence of a nationalist politics in Germany, George Mossé investigates how the “new politics” sought “to draw the people into active participation in the national mystique through rites and festivals, myths, and symbols which gave concrete expression to the general will.”¹⁴ Resisting analyses that focus primarily on the political and economic transformations that precipitated the evolution of the nation-state, Mossé’s study shifts the historical emphasis toward the cultivation of a collective memory by concentrating on the aesthetics and symbolism central to German nationalism. He claims that, “it [nationalism] represented itself to many, perhaps most people, through a highly stylized politics, and in this way managed to form them into a movement.”¹⁵ As such the role of re-membering the past—the putting together of its constituent parts into a single, coherent narrative—has been profoundly significant for the emergence of a popular nationalist identity. The deployment of the body as an analogy of the nation-state, a genealogy of people with common origins, co-exists with a claim that the state acts as a guarantor of individual rights and freedoms that transcend historical time and the constraints of the past. Paradoxically, in the context of national identity, social memory as mediated through political elites both legitimates and denies the significance of remembrance of things past.

While at its most basic level, memory can be said to operate at the scale of the individual brain and thus we avoid a concept of memory that suggests it has a superorganic quality, it is also necessarily the case that

memories are shared, exchanged, and transformed among groups of individuals. In this sense there are collective memories that arise from the inter-subjective practices of signification that are not fixed but are re-created through a set of rules of discourse and practices that are periodically contestable.¹⁶ In the case of naming streets to commemorate Martin Luther King Jr., Derek Alderman has examined how African Americans struggled to control and determine the scale of streets in which King would be remembered and thus the scale at which King's memory would find public expression.¹⁷ He notes that the issue of scale was "open to redefinition not only by opponents to his political/social philosophy but also people who unquestionably embraced and benefited from this philosophy."¹⁸ In the collective memorialization of the American Civil War, the construction of public statues, rather than reflecting the serious division between pro- and anti-slavery lobbies in the United States, was gradually perceived "as part of a healthy process of sectional reconciliation—a process that everyone knew but no one said was for and between whites."¹⁹ The context of signification in this case was the reconciliation of northern and southern whites in the rules of a discourse that denied black memory and thus blurred the South's defense of slavery. This visual interpretation of the Civil War, however, did not exist completely uncontested and there were three statues erected that represented blacks. Two of these monuments displayed a single black soldier among a group of combatants. The third—the Shaw memorial—erected in Boston in 1897 and designed by the sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens, depicted the commander Robert Gould Shaw surrounded by his regiment of black troops. This facilitated "opposing readings of its commemorative intent"²⁰ and underlines the periodic capacity for memories to be contested in the public sphere.

There is considerable literature emphasizing the politics of memory especially where dominant groups in society are concerned *vis-à-vis* their shaping of interpretations of the past. Yet it is increasingly clear that the social process involved in memorialization is hotly contested with respect not only to form and structure but also to the meaning attached to the representation. Popular memory can be a vehicle through which dominant, official renditions of the past can be resisted by mobilizing groups toward social action, but also through the maintenance of an oppositional group identity embedded in subaltern memories.²¹ The deployment of local and oral histories in the formation of group identities can be a powerful antidote to both state and academic narratives of the past, especially where marginalized groups are concerned.²² The controversies surrounding the remembering of the Holocaust through the conversion of death camps into "memorial" camps to the genocide of the Second World War is a case in point. In Auschwitz, for instance, the competing aspirations of Polish nationalists, communists, Catholics, and Jews to control the representation of the Holocaust have influenced the physical structure of the site and the meaning attached to it by these various groups.²³ Similarly,

with respect to commemorating the Civil Rights Movement in the American South, Owen Dwyer observes that the memorial landscape challenged representations of the American past that were exclusively white and elite in emphasis. At the same time, however, the memorial landscape obscured and made silent the role of women as activists, organizers, and vocal supporters of the movement.²⁴ Thus, even in a subaltern context, there can be debate about inclusivity and the power to represent. Rather than treating memory as the manipulative action of the powerful to narrate the past to suit their particular interests, a fuller account might follow Raphael Samuel who suggests that one “might think of the invention of tradition as a process rather than an event, and memory, even in its silences, as something which people made for themselves.”²⁵ The capacity people have to formulate and represent their own memories, nonetheless, is regularly constrained by their access to economic, political, and social power. As Daniel Sherman reminds us, “commemoration is also cultural: it inscribes or reinscribes a set of symbolic codes, ordering discourses, and master narratives that recent events, perhaps the very ones commemorated, have disrupted, newly established, or challenged.”²⁶

Museums can act as sites for the inscription of historical interpretation. In his discussion of the Wolfson Gallery of Trade and Empire in the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, London, James Duncan traces how the historical narrative represented through the museum’s exhibition provoked a set of diverse responses. In attempting to represent Britain’s empire in ways that were “self-reflective, ambivalent, and ironic” Duncan argues that “[t]he net effect of this is to shift the dominant narrative structure from pride to shame.”²⁷ In a series of exhibits that directed attention toward the positive impact of bringing the empire back home through the migration of peoples of color from the colonies to Britain, to a series of galleries which traced the exploitative, unequal, and violent behavior of British colonists across their empire, Duncan claims the exhibition “refashion[s] the social memory of trade and empire as a story of banality and evil.”²⁸ Such a re-membering of the historical record through the museum’s representation of Britain’s imperial past aroused some hostile responses in the popular press. Critics accused the exhibition of ignoring the many positive effects of trade and empire both for Britons and their colonial subjects. Others claimed the exhibition to be little more than an exercise in historical propaganda designed to (re)present the empire and its history in negative terms. Leaving these criticisms aside, Duncan observes that the exhibition continued to endorse a dualistic (black/white) way of staging history by narrating the relationship between Britain and its colonies through the lens of racial category, albeit with the balance of power shifted in the account towards the effect of the imperial project on the “colonised.” The attempt to re-mold popular memory at the National Maritime Museum, nevertheless, does mark an effort to confront some of the difficult historical questions thrown up by attempts to display this

period of Britain's past. If memory is conceived as a recollection and representation of times past, it is equally a recollection of spaces past where the imaginative geography of historical events is in dialogue with the current spatial setting of the memory-makers.

Space, Remembrance, and Representation

The role of space in the art and the act of memory has a long genealogy in European thought. In the ancient and medieval worlds, memory was treated as a visual rather than a verbal activity, one which focused on images more than words. The immense dialectical variation and low levels of literacy perhaps account for the primacy of the visual image over other types of representation. Images, like the stained glass window and other religious icons, came to embed a sacred narrative in the minds of their viewers. They became mnemonic devices in religious teaching where sacred places became symbolically connected to particular ideal qualities. Networks of shrines, pilgrimage routes, and grottoes—sites for commemorative worship—formed a sacred geography where the revelations of the Christian God could be located, remembered, and adored.²⁹ A mapping of the narrative of Christianity through a predominantly visual landscape formed the basis of memory work through the Middle Ages.³⁰

During the Renaissance and Enlightenment the conception of memory-work altered in scale (to the astral) and focus (towards the scientific rather than the religious), and was expressed at times architecturally by viewing the world from a height.³¹ It was during the period of Romanticism that a more introspective, personal, and localized view of memory came into focus. Memory in this guise came to be seen as the recovery of things lost to the past, for instance, the innocence of childhood and childhood spaces and memory-work was divorced from any scientific endeavor to make sense of the world or the past. The role of memory shifted scale to the individual and this perhaps created the pre-conditions for divorcing history from memory and for separating intellectually the objective spatial narratives of history from the subjective experience of memory-places. But, as Samuel persuasively argues, the links between memory and history are significant because “far from being merely a passive receptacle or storage system, an image bank of the past, [memory] is rather an active, shaping force; that it is dynamic—what it contrives symptomatically to forget is as important as what it remembers—and that it is dialectically related to historical thought, rather than being some kind of negative other to it.”³²

By thinking of memory as dialectic of history, in constant dialogue with the past, we begin to see how the separation of history from memory becomes more problematic. This is particularly the case in relation to the spatiality of history and memory. The gradual transformation of a sacred geography of religious devotion to a secularized geography connected with

identity in the modern period destabilizes the rigid lines of demarcation drawn between objective/subjective narrations; emotional/abstract sources of evidence; local/universal ways of knowing. Treating memory as a legitimate form of historical understanding has opened new avenues of research where subjective renderings of the past become embedded in the processes of interpretation and are not seen as merely counterpoints to objective facts. Nation-building exercises; colonial expansion of the non-European world; and regional, ethnic-, and class-identity formation all embrace an imaginative and material geography. These are made sacred in spaces of remembrance and they are continuously remade, contested, revised, and transmuted as fresh layers of meaning attend to them. Geographers, historians, anthropologists, and cultural theorists are increasingly paying attention to the processes involved in the constitution, performance and routing of memory-spaces, and especially to the symbolic resonances of such spaces to the formation, adaptation and contestation of popular belief systems. But, as Karen Till has reminded us, “[W]hile the memory literature is replete with spatial metaphors, most scholars neither acknowledge the politically contestable and contradictory nature of space, place, and scale, nor examine the ways that social memory is spatially constituted.”³³

Halbwachs observed that the most successful group memories are ones with a “double focus—a physical object, a material reality such as a statue, a monument, a place in space, and also a symbol, or something of spiritual significance, something shared by the group that adheres to and is superimposed upon this physical reality.”³⁴ In his discussion of the iconic status of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, Roland Barthes claims a “double movement [where] architecture is always dream and function, expression of a utopia and instrument of convenience.”³⁵ Similarly, when speaking of iconic landscapes, geographers have noted their dual presence as material spaces experienced through the visual and other senses while simultaneously operating as social symbols.³⁶

In the recent debate concerning the location of a memorial to Arthur Ashe in Richmond, Virginia, Jonathan Leib traces how the politics of race informed the discussion. In a desire to remember the Richmond-born tennis star, philanthropist, and social activist, “both African-American supporters and much of the traditional white Southern population in Richmond tried to define and redefine their separate heroic eras (civil rights versus Civil War) within the same public space.”³⁷ The proposal to locate the statue on Monument Avenue, the South’s grandest Confederate memorial landscape, brought to the surface the deep tensions that the space represented to black and white occupants of the city. Both groups objected to the location. For African Americans, this avenue, which is located in a white, prestigious neighborhood remote from many black children’s everyday experiences and representing white Confederate ideology, seemed inappropriate for, what they regarded as, a hero of civil

rights. By contrast, whites opposed the location on aesthetic grounds. They claimed that a statue of a casually dressed Ashe would be “out-of-place” among the statues to Confederate soldiers in full military dress. Ashe’s monument would detract from the coherent symbolism of the avenue. There was the added argument that Ashe had not achieved enough in his life to be located adjacent to Confederate soldiers. While whites acknowledged him to have been an excellent tennis player who should be commemorated in the city, they also held the view that the achievements of a sports star could not be compared with the acts of heroism of a Confederate soldier. This line of reasoning aimed to diminish Ashe’s humanitarian works, his educational philanthropy, and his general political activism. While the city council did decide eventually to erect the Ashe memorial on Monument Avenue, Leib concludes “that the meanings of monuments and the landscapes in which they are situated are never settled and are always open to contestation.”³⁸ In the case of Arthur Ashe, space was absolutely central to the conflict.

The links between nation-building projects and the memory spaces associated with them have been analyzed as a form of mythology—a system of story-telling in which the historical, cultural, and situated appears natural, innocent, and outside of the contingencies of politics and intentionality. Drawing from semiology and linguistics, such work claims that “the apparent innocence of landscapes is shown to have profound ideological implications...and surreptitiously justify the dominant values of an historical period.”³⁹ Geographers have explored extensively the promotion of specific landscape images as embodiments of national identity.⁴⁰ Historians, in particular, have paid attention to the evolution of particular festivals, rituals, and public holidays in the evolution of the “myth” of nationhood.⁴¹ Others have explored the social relations underpinning a particular landscape. For example, Carl Schorske’s exploration of the nineteenth-century redesign of the Ringstrasse in Vienna as a “visual expression of the values of a social class”⁴² meshes a discussion of the economic and political with the aesthetic in the re-conceptualization of the urban form. While David Harvey’s analysis of the Basilica of Sacré-Coeur in Paris refashions our understanding of that space by emphasizing its connections with the tumultuous class politics of that city in the nineteenth century, it also reminds us that what the basilica stands for is not readily clear from the representation itself.⁴³ Toby Moore’s recent study of the emergence of memorial landscapes dedicated to the textile industry of the American Piedmont region refocuses attention on the relevance of political economy to the interpretation of such landscapes. Through an examination of the transformation of cotton mills and mill villages from spaces of production to spaces of consumption, Moore highlights the ways in which these new landscapes omit references to labor conflict that characterized life in some of these factory towns. He concludes, “[W]e may also have failed to appreciate how important the role of economic restruc-

turing and redevelopment play not only in preservation but memorialization.⁴⁴ The materiality of a particular site of memory sometimes masks the material-social relations under girding its production by focusing the eye on the aesthetic independent of the less-visible ideas (social, economic, and cultural power relations) underlying the representation. It is often, then, in the realm of the ideas, however contested and contradictory, that the meaning of memory spaces are embedded. What idea or set of ideas is stimulated by memories made material in the landscape?

The emphasis on visual interpretations of the memory landscapes that under-pinned medieval sacred geographies continues to animate discussions of landscape interpretation today. The treatment of a landscape as a text that is read and actively reconstituted in the act of reading, since the “context of any text is other texts”⁴⁵ including conventional written texts as well as political and economic institutions, reinscribes the visual as the central action of interpretation.⁴⁶ While offering a far more nuanced understanding of the act of reading any landscape and the possibility of decoding the messages within any space, the text metaphor may overemphasize the power to subvert the meaning of landscape through its reading without necessarily providing a space in which to change the landscape itself through practices.⁴⁷ In the context of the First World War for instance, the desire to forget, erase, and bury the memory of the war among veterans may have run contrary to the desire to remember, erect, and exhume the memory of the war among non-combatants. The focus on the metaphor of the text also tends to underestimate the aural dimension of texts where, in the past, reading was a spoken activity. Reading texts aloud where the sounds, rhythms and syntax of the words are performed and collectively absorbed directs attention to the social nature of interpretation that embraces senses other than the purely visual. Treating the memorial landscape as a theatre or stage broadens the imaginative scope of interpretation by suggesting that life gets played out as social action and social practice as much as it does in the reading implied by the text metaphor. As Denis Cosgrove argues “landscapes provide a stage for human action, and, like a theatre set, their own part in the drama varies from that of an entirely discreet unobserved presence to playing a highly visible role in the performance.”⁴⁸ This notion of landscape as theatre could be further extended not solely as the backdrop in which the action takes place but as actively constituting the action. The stage acts more than the context for the performance—it is the performance itself.

Cultural geographers have begun to address the role of performance in the constitution of memory spaces. Drawing on Nigel Thrift and John-David Dewsbury’s observation that performance is “a means of carrying out a cultural practice—such as memory—thoroughly,”⁴⁹ they are taking seriously the role of bodily and non-bodily practices in the making of memorial landscapes. From public festivals to heritage sites, the significance of material and symbolic performance in the creation of sites of

memory is being investigated. In the context of the Jim Crow South, for instance, Steven Hoelscher provides us with a fascinating account of the performances of whiteness enacted through the Natchez Pilgrimage in Mississippi. Established in the 1930s and shaped by influential local white women, the pilgrimage involved excursions through “the restored antebellum landscapes”⁵⁰ of Natchez’s social elite. Rather than just viewing the architecture of these stately mansions, the homeowners and the women of the Natchez Garden Club performed the past as “she [the southern lady] metamorphoses from stage set to actor, functioning as the principal contact between hosts and guests.”⁵¹ The centrepiece of the pilgrimage was a series of colorful tableaux depicting chapters from the history of the Old South. With participants dressed in period costume, the aim was to create an atmosphere of an older “contented little world” of upper class, white life. Where black people did participate in this performance it tended to be in backstage roles preparing for the pageant or as servants represented in a benign relationship with their white masters. Holscher claims that such a characterization of racial history emphasizes “the strategic role of such memory displays in hardening the racial categories that at one time were much more fluid in Natchez.”⁵² Through the ritualized choreographies of race and place, the performance of whiteness evident in the Natchez Pilgrimage highlights how participants understood their roles and literally acted out their parts for public consumption. Hoelscher’s focus on the key role of performance in this context underlines the importance of taking individual and shared agency seriously in the analysis of memory landscapes.

In relation to southern California’s rancho landscape, Dydia DeLyser similarly exposes how a social memory, born out of the popularity of Helen Hunt Jackson’s novel *Ramona*, was embedded in the practices of individual tourists visiting that landscape. Through analyzing tourists’ behaviour, DeLyser concludes that they “do shape the landscapes they visit and do contour our always-emergent social memories.”⁵³ By emphasizing the practices and performances involved in the making of collective memory, geographers have begun to analyze the spatiality of memory through a broader lens than the textual and this has aided in the identification of the role of agency in the constitution of memory places.

Notes on Remembering the First World War

This article began with a description of a ritual of remembrance of the dead played out in Dublin a few years ago. The idea of life as drama played out through spectacle is particularly helpful when considering the memory of war. Where spectacle is concerned, “It could take on the sense of a mirror through which truth which cannot be stated directly may be seen reflected and perhaps distorted.”⁵⁴ To make sense of the drama of intense physical conflict and the human losses attendant to it requires

both dramatic and silent modes of remembrance. That romantic notions of memory seemed inadequate to deal with the losses of the First World War is evidenced by the fact that enormous collective and individual efforts were made to articulate that sense of loss through public performance. From literary texts that had widespread circulation to the massive war cemeteries created in France and elsewhere, the very technology of modernity that facilitated such a massive loss of life also facilitated acts of mass commemoration.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, to represent such events was to try to make sense of them while at the same time engaging in the very crisis of representation that the pain of war engendered.

While the First World War has generated a vast academic literature on war and memory, much of the discussion of the memory of it has been conceptually informed by Paul Fussell's highly influential book *The Great War and Modern Memory*. Fussell claimed that the conflict marked a watershed in European conceptions of war where the old certainties and formulaic languages of duty and heroism were replaced by ironic, negative, and darker visions of war. Drawing primarily from literary sources, Fussell's book tracks the languages of ironic modernism that were found in the prose, novels, and poetry of the war's literary soldiers. These forms of representation marked what he considers the emergence of modern memory.⁵⁶

Fussell's work has laid the theoretical foundations for a variety of studies of remembrance. These works have emphasized how the experience of war by soldier-writers led to an interpretation of the conflict that was far removed from the "high diction" and patriotic rhetoric that informed older generations of writers, generals, and political leaders.⁵⁷ Critics of Fussell's perspective, however, have pointed to the unrepresentative nature of his sources, which they claim are based on the evidence of white, Anglo-American males with literary aspirations who served on the front lines.⁵⁸ Feminist historians have queried whether the war proffered any real radical changes in value systems and they have highlighted the ambivalent gains enjoyed by women in the inter-war years.⁵⁹ Recent scholars have suggested that conservatism and tradition persisted in the inter-war years and that, in many ways, the war represented continuity rather than radical discontinuity in terms of popular memory.⁶⁰ In a penetrating discussion of Canada's remembrance of the war, Jonathan Vance elucidates how an official public memory and an unofficial private one were frequently intertwined. He claims that "Canadians were concerned first and foremost with utility: those four years had to have been of some use."⁶¹ They did this by emphasising tropes of duty, righteousness, sacrifice, and redemption that helped heal the wounds of battle. Rather than deploying an ironic response, Canadians embraced more traditional forms of remembrance.

The most trenchant critique of Fussell's position is found in Jay Winter's analysis of sites of memory. While Winter does not seek to underestimate the significance of modernism to the early twentieth century more generally, and to the war in particular, he also is convinced that the

language and practices of tradition—religious motifs, romantic forms, classical designs—continued to find expression and value in the years following the conflict. He is skeptical of a radical break thesis because he claims “To array the past in such a way is to invite distortion by losing a sense of its messiness, its non-linearity, its vigorous and stubbornly visible incompatibilities.”⁶² He also is persuaded by the fact that although ironic and cynical representations of war could convey anger and despair, they could not heal. It was precisely the capacity of the language of tradition to provide a sense of solace for grieving families and friends that underpinned many of the sites of memory. Overall, perhaps, it is the co-existence of traditional *and* modernist modes of representation—the desire to simultaneously remember and to forget—that marks war as a particular form of memory-work, and one that is laced with contradictions and disputes. As I suggested at the beginning of this article, in an Irish context the existence of a nationalist movement coupled with the post-war treaty arrangements colored responses to the war. The choice of spaces to remember Ireland’s war casualties was fraught with difficulties. To place the Great War within a historical narrative of an independence struggle posed immense difficulties for Ireland’s memory-makers and both abstract and traditional forms of remembrance found expression in the built environment and in textual memories of the war.⁶³

Conclusion

In the past decade geographers have paid increased attention to the role of social memory in the practices and representations of everyday life. In this article I have attempted to provide an overview to the scope of this geographical inquiry and, particularly, to emphasize the spatial dimension to memory-work. By deploying the metaphor of stage, I have wished to emphasize the performative as well as the representational in the making of our collective, public memories. As Stephen Daniels and Denis Cosgrove have claimed “Spectacle and text, image and word have always been dialectically related, not least in theatre itself, and this unity has been the site of an intense struggle for meaning.”⁶⁴

Throughout this discussion, the interrelationships between the word, the public performance of remembrance, and the politics of collective ritual have been underlined. I have sought to stress that the analysis of visual representation alone masks some of the deeper fissures that have informed the public performances of social memory. Our attention is thus redirected toward the manner in which the landscapes of social memory—the texts, theatres, museums, and landscapes—become the process of memory construction and performance rather than its outcome. That this process involves inscription and erasure, consensus and conflict, joy and pain, reflection and action speaks to the dilemmas that the public performance of remembrance entails.

Notes

1. There were actually ten men's bodies exhumed but Patrick Maher, at the request of his family, was re-interred in a cemetery in his home county of Limerick.
2. The men executed were Kevin Barry, Thomas Whelan, Patrick Moran, Patrick Doyle, Bernard Ryan, Frank Flood, Thomas Bryan, Thomas Traynor, Edmund Foley, and Patrick Maher.
3. Bertie Ahern's (2001) graveside oration at Glasnevin cemetery Sunday, 14 October 2001. The text of the speech was published in full in the *Irish Times* on 15 October 2001.
4. Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999): 28.
5. Jonathan Boyarin, *Remapping Memory: The Politics of Timespace* (London: University of Minnesota Press 1994): 22.
6. Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (New York: Harper Row, 1950).
7. Charles J. Withers, "Place, Memory, Monument: Memorializing the Past in Contemporary Highland Scotland," *Ecumene* 3 (1996): 326.
8. Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Routledge, 1978).
9. Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," *Representations* 26 (1989): 13.
10. There is a vast literature covering this theme but included as some of the most important are Patrick Hutton, *History As an Art of Memory* (Burlington, Va.: University of New England Press, 1993); David F. Krell, *Of Memory, Reminiscence and Writing* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1990); George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1990); David Middleton and Derek Edwards, eds. *Collective Remembering* (London: Sage, 1990); Pierre Nora, ed. *Realms of Memory Vol. II: Traditions* (Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1997).
11. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: On the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1989).
12. On the idea of the invention of national traditions, see the seminal work by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
13. Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989): 51.
14. George Mossé, *The Nationalization of the Masses* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1975): 2.
15. Mossé, *The Nationalization of the Masses*, 214.
16. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990).
17. Derek Alderman, "A Street Fit for a King: Naming Places and Commemoration in the American South," *Professional Geographer* 52 (2000): 672-84.
18. Derek Alderman, "Street Names and the Scaling of Memory: The Politics of Commemorating Martin Luther King Jr. within the African American Community," *Area* 35 (2003): 171.
19. Kenneth Savage, "The Politics of Memory: Black Emancipation and the Civil War Monument," in John R. Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994): 132.
20. Savage, "The Politics of Memory," 136.
21. Richard Johnson, *Making Histories: Studies in History-writing and Politics* (London: Hutchinson 1982).
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