Strategies of Memory:
History, Social Memory, and the Community

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JOHN C. WALSH and Steven High find in their recent research note on "Rethinking the Concept of Community" that "community seems to occupy an omnipresent but ambiguous place in the narrative structure of historians". To rectify this and to stimulate debate, they present a model of three essential aspects to "community": interaction, imagination, and process. The construction of communities is a social process, reproduced in the interactions of social networks, and represented by signs and symbols in the imaginings of individuals internal and external to the community.[1]

This element of "imagination" can be linked to Benedict Anderson's notion of the nation as an "imagined political community". Although the nation is larger than a single physical community and thus all its members cannot be known to each other, it is still conceived as a "deep, horizontal comradeship" regardless of its inequities and hierarchies. This vision of a shared group is necessarily "imagined" and is defined not by its actual correlation to any "real" group identifiers, but by the style in which it is imagined.[2] This definition of community can be extended to all types of groups that possess a sense of shared identity and history based on material or social constructs such as geography, ethnicity, or gender. Such a community's collective values, beliefs, and practices are expressed through the creation and retention of particular narratives about the past: its social memory.

The modern scholar most credited with beginning the study of social memory is Maurice Halbwachs, whose notion of the "collective memory" is

1 John C. Walsh and Steven High, "Rethinking the Concept of Community", *Histoire sociale/ Social History*, vol. 32, no. 64 (November 1999), pp. 255, 272.

2 Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 6–7.

best seen in his posthumous work *The Collective Memory*. The notion of collective memory was taken up mostly by psychologists concerned with social cognition and the mechanics of memory in the 1950s and 1960s. Jacques LeGoff picked up where the psychological literature left off and brought together psychological and historical perspectives of memory in a series of works published between 1977 and 1981, translated and reprinted in English in 1992 as *History and Memory*. Since then there has been a steady increase in studies that examine the importance of social memory in the "imagining" of the community.[3]

A branch of the larger literature on social memory includes the study *Social Memory* by James Fentress and Chris Wickham, who consciously take a different tack from Halbwachs. They term their approach "social" rather than "collective" memory to "elaborate a conception of memory which, while doing full justice to the collective sides of one's conscious life, does not render the individual a sort of automaton, passively obeying the internalized collective will".[4] More importantly for the context of this essay, Fentress and Wickham examine the differing uses of social memory for differing communities: peasants, the working class, the "nation", and women.

Social memory can be generally understood as the shared narratives of a community's past, which are essential to its identity and cohesion. Fentress and Wickham explain that memories have "specific grammars" built of shared concepts and can be analysed as narratives and guides to social identity. Memories are selected for their relevance to individuals; shared memories (and the process of articulating them, in whatever form) take shape within the framework of meaning of the group. This in turn helps shape the group's identity and informs how individuals see the relevance of various experiences. Events and actions are distilled into simplified forms that can be easily transmitted. Stripped of context, social memory becomes a transmission of meanings and ideals rather than empirical facts: it is "not stable at the level of information; it is stable, rather, at the level of shared meanings and remembered images".[5] What is vital is not whether social memories are accurate in any factual sense (if indeed "facts" about the past can exist at all) but how people select, transmit, and agree upon their shared memories. John Gillis notes that "identities and memories are not things we think about, but things we think with".[6] This points to the importance of the

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3 Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, translation of 1950 ed. (New York : Harper & Row, 1980); Jacques LeGoff, *History and Memory*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); for a good survey of other branches of this literature, see also Jeffrey Olick and Joyce Robbins, "Social Memory Studies: From 'Collective Memory' to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices" *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 24 (1998), pp. 105–140.

4 James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1992), p. ix.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 46–9, 59, 88.

6 John R. Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 7. Gillis divides "public memory" into early modern (to 1780s), "national" (to 1960), and present "post-national" phases.

"function of commemoration" — the meanings and identities that are transmitted and reinforced in social memory through public and private practices of great variety, from Remembrance Day ceremonies to stories told at family gatherings.

Walsh and High note that, to understand the ideological components of a community, we need to look at that community's interaction with large-scale historical processes (war memorials are a good example) which breed discussion and debate and provide focus for the community's "competing discourses".[7] Larger socio-cultural factors may exert influence on the shape of these discourses, but the forms they take are community-specific. At the same time, Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen note that "large-scale historical processes" do not necessarily occupy a prominent place in the social memory of a given community. They found that the ordinary American's highest engagement with the past comes not from top-down, "official" history, but from involvement with his or her own past and that of the community (which could be defined along racial lines). This "connectedness" was most strongly found in personal accounts and in interaction with museums and other repositories of social memory.[8]

Social memory is thus dynamic, negotiated between the individual and the community, between personal experience and wider historical events. Paying attention to social memory can offer researchers a more nuanced and accurate picture of a particular community. However, social memory is not only a useful measure of community identity and attitudes for outsiders, but also a potential source of strength, resistance, and re-creation of identity for the community itself. This use that social memory has for a given community is a crucial aspect of the studies considered here. Using the widest sense of the "imagined community" (which includes groups formed around shared political, material, and social factors) this essay looks at works that address three major aspects of social memory in the community: the politics of memory, material memory, and the memory of marginal groups. Taken together they outline the "strategies of memory" that communities use for identity and survival and offer guidelines for scholars interested in integrating social memory studies into their work.

Politics of Memory

The use of memory for the identity of the community (from as small as a few people to as large as a nation) highlights the very political nature of history and memory. How events are remembered, what commemorations are made, by whom, and for whom is an important inquiry for the study of any community. The concurrent processes of forgetting or silencing are also present

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7 Walsh and High, "Rethinking the Concept of Community", p. 271.

8 Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pp. 38–39; see, for example, Tables 1.2 and 1.3, pp. 20–21.

whenever such publicly authorized social memory is made material, in monuments, museums, and textbooks.

Fentress and Wickham stress that groups can have very different views of the relative importance of past events. This is especially evident in the often great divergence between narratives of rural or isolated communities and those of professional historians accustomed to the timelines of "national" histories. National memory is the most widely held and most contested form of social memory. The political rhetoric of national identity depends on the past as the legitimizer and the source of the ideals, success, character, and boundaries of the "nation". It can be spontaneous or manipulated, directed at internal or external audiences, and full of internal divisions and controversies. Its articulation primarily belongs to social elites and involves the dominant frames of identity, formed and transmitted by governments, schools, the media, and academics. However, as the "substructure of national historic consciousness", the discourses of social memory are also available to most people regardless of social status.[9]

Richard Johnson and G. Dawson note that history and "historical argument" operate as a political force through the "construction of traditions" and can be inherently conservative. As well, "all political activity is intrinsically a process of historical argument and definition", and political domination involves control over historical definition. History is then a stake in the "constant struggle for hegemony".[10] In this context, Roberta Pearson employs a concept of "commodified public memory". Memory is "public" in that powerful institutions producing and circulating representations of history ensure that such become the ubiquitous and dominant (especially in reiteration, as in the school curriculum). It is commodified because it is used to sell: directly, as products (which can include ideas and the nation itself); and indirectly, in the gain of grants, recognition, and other intangibles to the narrating group (I would argue cultural hegemony is one such outcome).

The politics of memory should be considered not only for the social relations in a community but for its economic patterns as well. A good example of this can be found in *Making Salmon*, Joseph Taylor's environmental history of the salmon fishery and fish culture in the Pacific Northwest. This study highlights the importance of "institutional memory" — the narratives of success and failure in the past that inform present research and policy decisions. For example, the denial and erasure of the pre-1960 failures of salmon culture allowed a progressive, non-complex narrative to be employed by government agencies in the decades following. At stake was the legitimacy of the entire project of "making salmon".[11] Taylor finds that the conflict among

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 9 Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, pp. 127–129.

10 Richard Johnson, G. Dawson, and the Popular Memory Group, "Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method" in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds., *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 79.

11 Joseph E. Taylor, *Making Salmon: An Environmental History of the Northwest Fisheries Crisis* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), p. 251.

salmon farming advocates, fishers, environmentalists, government, business, and aboriginal peoples concerning whose interests should be served in fish culture involved a contest for social legitimacy. Thus, claims on historical knowledge of the failures of fish culture and future solutions have been made through simple stories, dividing the worthy from the unworthy. Taylor notes bluntly that "legislators and voters have shunted aside those groups who have not appeared white or wealthy enough to deserve the fruits of salmon".[12] His solution is for all the groups involved to give up their simple stories (their social memories of salmon) and take part in the making of complex histories, an approach that does not assign blame but assesses each group's own part and responsibility in the destructions and decline of the salmon ecology.

An example of national memory at work in Canada consists of the commemorations of the Great War in literature, songs, stories, and, most importantly, monuments to the fallen. These were an essential part of the creation of the memory of the war and helped fashion a "useable past" for future generations of Canadians and Canadian identity. In *Death So Noble*, Jonathan Vance examines the role of Canadian commemorations of the Great War in the building of national memory.[13] He notes that the only solution to the need to remember the tragedy and sacrifice of the war without wallowing in its horrors was to construct a myth of the "just war": the war was necessary; the soldiers were heroes; and to die was an honourable sacrifice for the nation. This national memory of World War I was used to bring the nation together and to promote homogenization. Yet the myth had different kinds of meaning for different groups (for example, First Nations could use their service to show their fitness for citizenship). The myth may have been used to bolster the social order by some elite groups, but its success lay in the needs it fulfilled in ordinary Canadians for consolation, explanation, inspiration, even entertainment. To counter the myth meant that the loss of the fallen and the four years of war were pointless.

In most communities and nations in the West there was universal opinion that war monuments were linked to the community's future and should be a permanent part of its fabric. However, Daniel Sherman notes in "The Nation: In What Community?" that opposing groups of veterans and community leaders often had differing visions of whom and what the monuments were for and what they should look like, and thus ultimately what the "nation" was that was being represented and spoken to through such commemorations.[14] Philip West, Steven Levine, and Jackie Hiltz contend that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., can be read as a text "subject to as many

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12 *Ibid.*, p. 253. See chap. 8, "Taking Responsibility".

13 Jonathan F. Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), pp. 9, 110.

14 See Daniel Sherman, "The Nation: In What Community? The Politics of Commemoration in Postwar France" in Linda B. Miller and Michael J. Smith, eds., *Ideas and Ideals: Essays on Politics in Honour of Stanley Hoffmann* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), pp. 277–299.

variant readings as the war itself" from its apolitical format. They note that war memorials may seem to be archetypal "artifacts of official memory" but, because they only acquire meaning as the sites of human interaction (in commemorative services or even simple observation), they too are contested as groups compete for control of the memorials' interpretations.[15] War memorials are a good example of the complicated boundaries of the political and the material. Because as time passes the contexts within which the memorials were made change and disappear, aspects of memory that such monuments attempt to invoke can be suppressed, brought to the fore, rejected, or forgotten. What is transmitted in social memory is thus highly dependent on context and the meanings that survive in the texts or "sites" of memory.

Material Memory
The memory of a community, people, or nation also has a material presence as well as a mental one, as war memorials demonstrate. Monuments, museums, festivals, and commemorations of all kinds help make up the social memory of a community. The identity of a community is developed, deployed into symbols, and displayed for the community, as well as those outside it. Such material displays themselves become a part of the identity of a community in their turn. Shared "sites of memory" in ideology, oral and written narratives, the material and natural environment, and ritual are in themselves the "imagining" of the community. If such sites are lost, it is difficult or impossible for the community to maintain its identity. In *Theatres of Memory* Raphael Samuel stresses that history is not the invention of the historian, but a social form of knowledge and the work of "a thousand different hands". Thus there are many kinds of "cliographers", not just the archivist, the librarian, and the historian — collectors, songwriters, and local history buffs are equal makers of history. Samuel contends that the "texts" that constitute the memory of a society are also as diverse: literature, ballads, crockery, place names, geographical features, and other sites of memory serve to challenge the idea of what was important to people of the past. Spectacle — pictures, paintings, and popularly understood images — are also an essential source of "unofficial knowledge".[16]

The use of such "texts" as a memory device, and as an irreplaceable part of memory itself, can be extended to the whole material world of objects, images, and the built environment, as well as landscape. The memory "held" in artifacts and geography can be thus considered together as material memory. A useful theoretical tool for conceptualizing the components of material memory is Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire* ("places" or "sites of memory"). The history of a modern nation is made of an array of these sites, which have

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15 Philip West, Steven Levine, and Jackie Hiltz, *America's Wars in Asia: A Cultural Approach to History and Memory* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), pp. 6–7.
16 See Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* (London: Verso, 1994), introduction, "Unofficial Knowledge", pp. 3–48.

been invested with "enduring and emotive symbolic significance". These symbolic elements of social memory are divided by Josep Llobera into four types of "sites of memory": symbolic (commemorations, anniversaries, emblems); functional (manuals, autobiographies, associations); monumental (cemeteries, monuments, buildings); and topographic (archives, libraries, museums).[17]

Although Daniel Traister agrees with Fentress and Wickham that social memory is not dependent on writing or a literate culture, he contends that in North American society culture "is also stuff that you have to look up" in books and in the institutions in which people expect to find such sources (libraries, archives, museums) — "a culture's recollections depend on its collections". The sheer survival of works, and especially their survival in libraries, contributes to their claims to cultural significance and holders of cultural memory. Traister argues that the acquisition of works (and who does this — librarians, collectors, scholars) is important to the transmission of cultural memory in texts — the gap between the published and collected (and the "conventional collected" and "unconventional uncollected") "has consequences for what 'we' can remember and teach".[18]

The built and natural environments are also vital elements in the transmission of social memory. Key is the sense of place that is essential to memory and identity: here we are; this is our place. The identification of a people with a place is also rooted in memory, and the two cannot be separated: this is the place where we have always been. Memory is transmitted and renewed by pointing to the features of the landscape. Thus social memory is essential to creating a feeling of belonging to a place, and place in turn is essential in transmitting social memory.

Memory is often attached to specific elements of the landscapes (such as that skirmish at that hill) and are essential elements of a stable identity. Inside human settlements the squares, streets, and other physical sites become markers of memory as well as of the landscape. The memorial plaques and historical cairns that mark the sites of battles, first accomplishments, and other such events are a common example of geographical memory in modern Canadian society. These are not simply versions of history texts, relating some fact, but also secure the physical landscape as history, causing a rock or plain or valley to hold memory and to be memory itself.

In "Remembering Pasts and Representing Places: The Construction of National Identities in Ireland", E. Lyons and P. Devinewright examine the role played by historical places in the construction of national identities. The

17 See Pierre Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire*, 7 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1984–1992.); Josep R. Llobera, "The Role of Historical Memory in Catalan National Identity", *Social Anthropology*, vol. 6, no. 3 (1998), p. 333.

18 Daniel Traister, " 'You Must Remember This...'; or, Libraries as a Locus of Cultural Memories" in Dan Ben-Amos and Liliane Weissberg, eds., *Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999), p. 203.

values and feelings associated with four prominent Irish places when viewed by a test group relate to the significance of the places in maintaining national identity.[19] The symbolic significance of historical places has a large role in maintaining a positive, distinctive national identity and providing a sense of continuity with the past.

Material memory can also have an inherently social aspect. Elsa Barkley Brown and Gregg Kimball find in their study of Richmond, Virginia, that people carry "invisible landscapes" in their minds, laid over the physical landscapes they inhabit. A moral geography of urban space is detected: certain spaces were considered by inhabitants to be safe and respectable and "moral", which meant the people and activities found there were as well. Forbidden, dangerous, and "immoral" areas (such as the red light district or slum) were inscribed in the minds of the public as invisible boundaries of identity, defining the people who lived inside them.[20] These representations varied with gender, race, and class and were fluid as they were adopted or contested by different groups. This highlights the necessity of sensitivity to the different cultural constructions of geographical memory. It could be said that there were many "invisible landscapes" in Richmond, ones not necessarily shared or congruent across social groups, yet all laid over the same geographical spaces.

The loss of aspects of the physical environment is also a threat to the material memory of a community. Helen Cox and her colleagues examine the loss of memory and identity for local communities inherent in the loss of the landscape that was flooded for the St. Lawrence Seaway project. Laura Cameron finds that the draining of Sumas Lake, a major tidal lake in British Columbia, acted as an "anti-memory device" for the people who lived around it.[21] Sandra Pannel discovers that the forced removal (evacuation) of an Indonesian community disrupted the social memory and thus the identity of the villagers by removing their geographical roots in the landscape. The removal meant a loss of the general identification with the village and its environs, as well as of the identities of smaller groups and families forged through ownership and location in certain houses and fishing in certain reefs. As well, the kinds of employment and even types of food that were available

19 See E. Lyons and P. Devinewright, "Remembering Pasts and Representing Places: The Construction of National Identities in Ireland", *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, vol. 17, no. 1 (1997), pp. 33–45.

20 See Elsa Barkley Brown and Gregg D. Kimball, "Mapping the Terrain of Black Richmond", *Journal of Urban History*, vol. 21, no. 3 (1995), pp. 296–346.

21 See Laura Cameron, *Openings: A Meditation on History, Method, and Sumas Lake* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997); Helen M. Cox *et. al.*, "Drowning Voices and Drowning Shoreline: A Riverside View of the Social and Ecological Impacts of the St. Lawrence Seaway and Power Project", *Rural History*, vol. 10, no. 2 (1999), pp. 235–257. Cameron finds that the memories of First Nations and newcomers, who did not necessarily form a homogeneous community, often differed significantly. See also Cameron's online multimedia site for *Openings*, with extra sources and analysis, http://www.mqup.mcgill.ca/opening/welcome.html.

changed drastically in their new location.[22] Thus the removal of a people from its geographical location consists of a disruption of memory and identity based on social practices, economic production, and the material framework (houses, landscape). The remodelling of a geographical area works against memory, creating a dislocation from the past.

Implicit in the possibility of identity loss is its resistance through strategies of memory. Beth Wenger notes that remembering the history of a location (as for the Jewish community of New York's Lower East Side) can be a "complex process of invention and suppression" as certain aspects of the experience of the past are retained, forgotten, or highlighted out of proportion to their original importance to serve the present needs of the community.[23] Jon Mitchell finds that "nostalgia" can be a practical tool for maintaining identity, to counter imposed rival narratives, and as a basis for an improved future through claims to rights and traditions. In the same vein, Josep Llobera argues that even a culture that is under siege may survive in its material memory.[24] However, Janet Carsten notes that more attention should be paid to the process of forgetting, arguing that this can be a positive strategy of identity as well. She finds that the acquisition of relationships in the present and future is of greater importance to the South East Asian migrants of her study than links to dead forebears. Forgetting thus should not be seen solely as a negative consequence of migration and dislocation, but as a way to form new identities.[25]

In light of these different effects of material memory, Earl Lewis calls for the reinterpretation of place as "cultural home" rather than geographic location. Immigrants establish lives in new places that retain aspects of their old locations, forming associations and performing commemorations from their previous or original homes and nations. This builds a bridge between the loss of identity possible in the loss of "home" (as for displaced communities) and the potential retention of memory and identity pursued by immigrants. Not only are communities "imagined", but place itself is "an imagined belonging" and "though often fixed, was always transportable". People can move away from a place "only to reclaim it in their new locations, forming clubs and associations that marked their ties".[26] Performances of social memory can recreate "place", just as the "place" of material memory can hold and transmit social memory.

22 Sandra Pannell, "Did the Earth Move for You? The Social Seismology of a Natural Disaster in Maluku, Eastern Indonesia", *Australian Journal of Anthropology*, vol. 10, no. 2 (1999), pp. 129–144.

23 B. S. Wenger, "Memory as Identity: The Invention of the Lower East Side", *American Jewish History*, vol. 85, no. 1 (1997), p. 27.

24 Jon P. Mitchell, "Nostalgic Construction of Community: Memory and Social Identity in Urban Malta", *Ethnos*, vol. 63, no. 1 (1998), pp. 81–101; Llobera, "The Role of Historical Memory", p. 340.

25 Janet Carsten, "The Politics of Forgetting: Migration, Kinship and Memory on the Periphery of the Southeast-Asian State", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1995), p. 331.

26 See Earl Lewis, "Connecting Memory, Self, and the Power of Place in African American Urban History", *Journal of Urban History*, vol. 21, no. 3 (1995), p. 352.

David Lowenthal agrees that these links with the tangible past furnish associations that are essential to individuals, communities, and nations. However, he argues that attempts at historical preservation and reconstruction in fact create something new, as our own context, expectations, and ideas of the past and present contrive to alter meanings and create new ones with the fabric of history. The most careful attention to context can never be completely faithful to the original: "even as we strive for fidelity to the past we create something new that reflects our habits and preferences". Lowenthal also suggests that we actively shape our material environment in the present to conform to illusory pasts that "gratify our tastes".[27]

This conscious recreation of historical landscapes is critiqued by Gordon Waitt and Pauline McGuirk in "Selling Waterfront Heritage: A Critique of Millers Point, Sydney". This article explores a heritage tourism project to revitalize a Sydney waterfront area of a redundant port and nineteenth-century wharves. The presence of artifacts dating from the area's early European history and the sanction of the Royal Australian Historical Society gave legitimacy to claims of the place to convey part of Australian national identity. These claims of national identity are appropriated, communicated, and amplified within representations of the tourism industry's brochures and guidebooks, as well as the plaques and exhibits at various sites in the area. The authors argue that aspects of the site's history that threaten the "national imaginings" were either suppressed, trivialized, or silenced. The site privileges "official over vernacular histories, elite over the proletariat, men over women, Anglo-Celtic over indigenous peoples, glorious decisions over the ignoble, and an egalitarian ideology over extant social relationships".[28] With this construction of a particular, conservative, and easily "digestible" past, conflicting and challenging elements of Australian national identity can be cast aside, leaving dominant social norms unchallenged. Thus, if social memory is inscribed in the material environment, manipulation of that environment in the tourist industry to privilege a particular version of history is a serious threat to the transmission of the social memory of groups that do not share the dominant experience or point of view.

Memory on the Margins
The notion of memory as strategy for cultural identity and survival thus also applies to those groups in a community or nation — workers to women — who have traditionally been marginalized. Attempts to create or retain sites of memory can be a strategy against the oppression, assimilation, and extinction of community identity. D. Levy finds that nation-states no longer enjoy the same hegemonic power over the means of collective commemoration,

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27 David Lowenthal, "Past Time, Present Place: Landscape and Memory", *Geographical Review*, vol. 65, no. 1 (1975), p. 36.
28 Gordon Waitt and Pauline McGuirk, "Selling Waterfront Heritage: A Critique of Millers Point, Sydney", *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie*, vol. 88, no. 4 (1997), pp. 349–350.

and "official" memory has become an increasingly contested terrain as opposing groups seek to present historical narratives that suit their political aims for the future. This turn to revisionism and the elevation of social memory to public debate outlines the fluidity and contestation involved in building "official memory" and recalls the similar debates in Canada begun with Jack Granatstein's *Who Killed Canadian History?*[29] Like war memorials, which represent for the most part official memory, this "memory on the margins" can be explored as another type of politics of memory, often combining or moving between traditional narrative forms and the sites of material memory.

The key element in Fentress and Wickham's discussion of peasant/rural social memory is the "community of resistance" founded in centuries-old stories of revolts and local resistance to religious or cultural hegemony of the larger state. These memories are related to contemporary conditions at various times in the community's history, reinforcing its identity (for example, as Protestants in a Catholic state).[30] Resistance is also a factor in working-class social memory, seen by Fentress and Wickham as inescapably political due to the historic opposition of labour and capital. Urban working-class social memory is more permeable to outside influence and is less "coherent" than peasants' memories from the higher degree of employment migration and new immigrants.

Here Fentress and Wickham stress that the coherence of the community is important for working-class social memory: the continuity of the family, employment, and the nature of employment culture (such as mining or fishing) are vital to working-class community cohesion. Social memory centres on a workplace, a town (or section of a town, especially for immigrant minorities), or an occupational group. Fragmentation of experience occurs: the "community" here is not the working class but "factory workers" or even workers of a particular factory or workplace. Divisions by kinship, by gender, and by worker/non-worker also occur. Fentress and Wickham note that, because of this fragmentation, the official "community" (in terms of political or geographical boundaries) is often constituted by outside authorities.[31] They are not specific as to who these authorities are, but municipalities, provincial and federal governments, and surveyors' offices all have a stake in naming a community without belonging to it.

29 See D. Levy, "The Future of the Past: Historiographical Disputes and Competing Memories in Germany and Israel", *History and Theory*, vol. 38, no. 1 (1999), pp. 51–67; Jack L. Granatstein, *Who Killed Canadian History?* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1998); see also two responses in the *Canadian Historical Review*: A. B. McKillop, "Who Killed Canadian History? A View from the Trenches", *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 80, no. 2 (1999), pp. 269–299; Bryan Palmer, "Of Silences and Trenches: A Dissident View of Grantatstein's Meaning", *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 80, no. 4 (1999), pp. 676–686.

30 Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, p. 83.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 120.

A crucial aspect of social memory is its gendered nature. Janice Haaken argues in her study of psychology and women's memories that remembering is a gendered activity, "a product both of gendered social locations and of those collectively organized fantasies and beliefs about gender that dynamically shape what aspects of the past are likely to be preserved".[32] Unfortunately, Fentress and Wickham's discussion of women's memory is woefully inadequate. Rather than developing a theory from empirical studies, as for national or working-class memory, they present several barriers to even discovering a social memory of women. They speculate that the hegemony of the masculine voice over narrative itself obscures and may even prevent any "authentic" female voice to be heard. They ask if sex-segregated societies (such as nunneries) might be the only ones to produce a "hierarchy of meaning" that is essentially female. They also note that "public" events can be commemorated and performed, but the private sphere (assumed to be that of women) is more difficult.[33]

Grappling with these problems is important, but the assumption that Fentress and Wickham make here is that women are somehow separated from social groups so completely as to render them invisible. Thus women are not peasants, part of the working class, or the nation — which are thus revealed as male-only groups in their analysis. This gender divide is not only a product of the authors' own androcentric vision but is also revealed in most of the works that attempt to generate "general" theories of social memory. This lack of perspective casts serious doubts upon the study of social memory in its entirety, if work continues without a sustained attempt at understanding its gendered nature. This divide also highlights the importance of strategies of memory for women, most immediately understood in the massive feminist project of the reclamation of women's history. Any serious consideration of the role of social memory in the community would have to take into account the historical marginalization of women from positions of authority in the community and the differences that experience might make for the social memory of women.

Fentress and Wickham do note that women are very often the holders and transmitters of family history and "run" key life-cycle events (births, deaths). Women often had a crucial role in the retention and transmission of social memory, as noted in Sandra Perlman Schoenberg's research note on older women and their role in community cohesion by maintaining the community's social memory.[34] In "Brazilian Plantation Family Stories" Adriana Piscitelli finds that there are distinctive ways in which women and men recall events of family histories, and shifts in the character of social memo-

32 Janice Haaken, *Pillar of Salt: Gender, Memory, and the Perils of Looking Back* (London: Rutgers University Press, 1998), p. 12.

33 Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, pp. 137–139.

34 Sandra Perlman Schoenberg, "Some Trends in the Community Participation of Women in Their Neighborhoods", *Signs*, vol. 5, no. 3 (supplement 1980), p. 263.

ries can be traced to changing gender roles.[35] Women's memories also are often more concerned with the local, the private, and the personal rather than "public" events. Much more work remains to be done on the gendered aspects of social memory, especially for racialized women and women of aboriginal descent.

When looking at social memory through the experience of aboriginal peoples, we discover themes of silencing, exclusion, destruction, and assimilation as essential parts of social memory in white settler societies. In nations without statehood (like the First Nations in Canada), the cultural aspects of identity are especially important. The material elements of memory (artifacts, texts, images, performances) are essential to a national memory that sustains the identity of a "nation" that does not have the state institutions of memory (especially education). The "commodified public memory", which is the most popularly accessible and most often generated by hegemonic groups, is both a barrier to and an outlet for this form of national memory. As Roberta Pearson points out, the present inclusion of American Natives as heroic actors in public memory sites such as the Battle of Little Big Horn only means a partial end to the exclusion and vilification of aboriginal peoples in colonial history. This inclusion presently does not counter the traditional casting of white authorities such as Custer also as heroes, even though the narratives carried in aboriginal social memory indicate otherwise.[36]

Chris Healy notes that to describe the absence of Aboriginal perspectives in Australian social memory as "silence" does not credit the active effacement of Aboriginal existence in colonial histories, which is a "violent task of memory-work". It is not a silence but a silencing.[37] Dee Horne reminds us: "While all histories are cultural constructions, settler versions of history often marginalize or trivialize the histories of those they have colonized." Horne looks at First Nations' narratives as acts of "rememoration" which disrupt colonial histories and draw upon First Nations' social memories. She compares this "rememoration" to Fentress and Wickham's definition of commemoration (the action of speaking or writing about memories.) Rememoration is "commemoration from a position of having been silenced" and is an act of resistance: struggling against the exclusions and excisions of the present colonial narratives and presenting a possible way to renegotiate identity and history. This rememoration is necessary for cultural self-determination — "the less communities remember, the more colonizers can impose their rules of recog-

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35 See Adriana Piscitelli, "Brazilian Plantation Family Stories" in S. Leydesdorff, L. Passerini, and P. Thompson, eds., *Gender and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 180–184.

36 See Roberta Pearson, "Custer Loses Again: The Contestation Over Commodified Public Memory" in D. Ben-Amos and L. Weissberg, eds., *Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999).

37 Chris Healy, *From the Ruins of Colonialism: History as Social Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 45.

nition and assimilate" the community. She cites Karl Deutsch's description of how group assimilation requires the reduction or destruction of "competing information that members of a community recall from an unassimilated past"; if memory is lost, no self-determination is possible.[38]

Fentress and Wickham note that "memory conforms to interpretation": when a memory does not conform to a "text" or given interpretation, the parts that do not match in the person's memory or experience tend to fade, leaving only the interpretation. This is dangerous for aboriginal peoples, Horne notes, as the dominant interpretations act to erase memories (and thus a locus of resistance) from the colonized group, leaving only the narrative of the colonizer. Rememoration is thus essential, to bring out an interpretation that retains these conflicting memories — "without that memory, which implies continuance rather than nostalgia, we are doomed to engulfment".[39]

Different "cultural rules of recognition" are very important here, since even widely acknowledged aspects of First Nations culture can be dismissed by colonial culture, based on colonial rules of what is legitimate. This is the point of H. S. Sharp's comparison of aboriginal and non-aboriginal memories of particular events. He concentrates on the creation of meaning — not so much how the memory of an event is reconstructed, but how the same event or "facts" in memory get assigned different meanings which are profoundly culturally based.[40] This relates to Horne's discussion of cultural rules of recognition — what "whites" may see as the "right" kind of meanings or interpretations to take from the event do not necessarily match those of aboriginal peoples who were also there. Yet because of the cultural hegemony of the settler society, the meanings that aboriginal peoples may derive from shared memories will often be excised, ignored, or trivialized. Thus what may seem to be a shared social memory between aboriginal and non-aboriginal groups in a community may be shared only on the surface. Discovering the potential to build social memories that are shared in meanings as well as simple recognition would be an important contribution of social memory studies to race relations in Canada.

This gulf is not only between aboriginal and white society, but is also prominent in the experience of minority immigrant and sojourner groups. White settler society is implicated in the silencing of social identity and memory of these groups in the Canadian studies of Himani Bannerji and May Yee. Both works look at the possibility of finding and articulating an identity (especially for women) that is not assigned by colonial discourse,

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38 Dee Horne, *Contemporary American Indian Writing: Unsettling Literature* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), pp. 89, 93.

39 Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, p. 35; Paula Gunn Allen, quoted in Horne, *Contemporary American Indian Writing*, p. 85.

40 See H. S. Sharp, "Memory, Meaning, and Imaginary Time: The Construction of Knowledge in White and Chipewyan Cultures", *Ethnohistory*, vol. 38, no. 2 (1991), pp. 149–175.

that is authentic to their "own" voice, and of finding a way through knowledge of the roots of oppression in the past to change it in the future.[41]

Strategies of Memory
The studies of social memory presented here are important tools for answering Walsh and High's call to rethink the concept of "community". The study of social memory exposes multiple layers of "communities" that can overlie geographical boundaries. These multivalent communities can often be charged with conflict as various groups use their own narratives to vie for claim to the "true" identity of the community. The possibilities for community definition, cohesion, and survival inherent in social memory make its study a vital part of the social history of Canada. Several strategies are possible for the historian who is interested in incorporating this important aspect of identity into his or her work. Methods of determining individuals' participation in social memory practices, such as Rosenzweig and Thelen's survey of "past-related activities", can be important tools. Studies that analyse the creation and transmission of the social memories of an individual community such as Jun Jing's *The Temple of Memories* are particularly useful.[42] An examination of the politics of memory should be considered not only for the social relations in a community but also its economic patterns, as Taylor's work on "institutional memory" in the salmon industry demonstrates.

It is important to remember that material memory is the tangible basis of community identity, just as the narratives of social memory are its mental component. The attempt to retain the material memories of a community (such as remembering the "disappeared" Sumas Lake in Cameron's study through pictures and stories) is part of a strategy to retain identity. The artifacts of a community — or their absence — should thus be examined. The difference between the active remembering and retention of material memory and the active forgetting of aspects of shared experience should be seen as linked to whether the community was formed willingly by migrants to a new location or as a result of forced evacuation. The loss of landscape analysed by Cameron and Cox respectively in the Sumas Lake and St. Lawrence Seaway projects of development and "progress" can also be seen as part of an involuntary, externally imposed attack on material memory and community identity. Any consideration of the social memory of Canadian communities should take this dynamic of memory and forgetting into account.

Rememoration must also be seen as a strategy of recovery, resistance to assimilation, and the rebalancing of power for marginalized groups in settler

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41 Himani Bannerji, *Thinking Through: Essays on Feminism, Marxism, and Anti-Racism* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1995); May Yee, "Finding the Way Home Through Issues of Gender, Race, and Class" in Himani Bannerji, ed., *Returning the Gaze: Essays on Racism, Feminism and Politics* (Toronto: Sister Vision, 1993).

42 Rosenzweig and Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*; Jun Jing, *The Temple of Memories: History, Power, and Morality in a Chinese Village* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

societies. The ideas of rememoration and cultural rules of recognition can be used successfully across boundaries of ethnicity and gender. In fact, the project of rememoration for minority immigrant and sojourner peoples can be linked to that of (white) women's history in Canada and the history of the working class as well. An important line of inquiry, then, would be to see the similarities and differences in the transmission and silencing of social memory across these groups, in the face of a hegemony that can be more fully described as a white, masculinist, middle-class settler society.

These elements of celebration, fragmentation, and denial of memory reveal the hidden gender, race, and class boundaries in universalizing theories of social memory — and thus those of "community". They challenge us to develop a theory of social memory that can more realistically accommodate these disparate streams of memory and memory practice. If the community that is "imagined" is to have any correlation to the community in which ordinary people live out their daily lives or to be of any use in historical and policy studies, a sustained development of this very important element in community formation is certainly warranted.