

Leith Davis, “Memory Studies and the Eighteenth Century”

In “Whither memory studies?” the afterword to *Memory in Culture* (2011), Astrid Erll contends that if we want to understand the various crises of the present, “we must naturally look at certain mental, discursive, and habitual paradigms that were formed in long historical processes – via cultural memory” (2011, p. 172). Erll’s comments have become even more relevant since their original publication, as cultural memory has moved overtly into the political arena. The 2016 Brexit referendum, for example, has made the national past a contentious problem in Great Britain, while the 2016 presidential campaign of Donald Trump has also generated divisive perspectives on national history in the United States. Other nations, too, are seeing their national pasts reflected back to them in competing ways. The field of memory studies can help us better understand the intensity and pervasiveness of the past in our present era by reminding us, as Ann Rigney suggests, “how stories about the past emerge as common points of reference and, in the process, help to define collective identities” (2012, p. 17). Moreover, in the current debates about the status of the Windrush generation in Britain, the legacy of Enoch Powell, and the fate of Civil War statues in the southern United States, to name just a few examples, memory studies can also intervene by pointing out how particular events “refer not so much to what one might cautiously call the ‘actual events,’ but instead to a canon of existent medial constructions, to the narratives and images circulating in a media culture” (2008, p. 392).

While the study of the essential constructedness of the national past in all eras is relevant, scholarship of the eighteenth century has a particularly important role to play as it was this period that saw the development of the institution that has become so closely

identified with cultural memory: the modern nation state (Anderson, 1991). It was also during the long eighteenth century that many of the key events took place that have subsequently been shaped into sites of memory (and counter-memory) in the modern nations of Great Britain and the United States and their associated territories: the 1688 Revolution; the 1707 Union of England and Scotland; the Jacobite civil wars; and the American Revolution, just to name several examples.

The objective of this article, therefore, is to consider the relevance of memory studies for scholars of eighteenth-century literature, and, conversely, the relevance of eighteenth-century literature for the field of memory studies. I begin with a brief evolution of the rise of contemporary memory studies, then move on to consider two important new directions the field is currently taking as it changes to consider issues of mediation and to question the exclusive identification of cultural memory with the nation. I note how eighteenth-century scholarship has already contributed to those new research directions and how it might further contribute. My overarching intention is to encourage more eighteenth-century work that will focus attention on the initial creation and subsequent re-inscription and dissemination of what might seem to be entrenched national memories.

The History of Memory Studies

Tracing the history of memory studies is complicated by the fact that the study of memory goes back as far as classical times. Kurt Danziger suggests that “Plato and Aristotle engaged in speculations about memory that have attracted comment and discussion right up to the present,” although he also notes that “People have not always

remembered in the same way, and their most valued ways of remembering have not always been the same” (2008, p. 6).¹ The development of memory studies, in other words, does not follow a chronologically straight path. It involves switchbacks, loops, moments of stasis and of repetition. Part of the task of conceptualizing modern memory studies includes analyzing how the field is distinct from but also still parallels more historically distant systems of what Danziger refers to as “mnemonic values.”²

in *The Art of Memory* (1966), Frances Yates traces ideas about memory from the Greeks to the Renaissance, raising the issue of why there was still a magical interest in memory in the Renaissance, despite the advent of printing. More recently, in her exploration of *Memory*, Anne Whitehead has taken that question further, considering memory from classical times to the twentieth century. Whitehead begins her study by focusing on memory as a response to technological changes in writing, examining the “connection between memory and the means used to record that memory” (2008, p. 15) from the time of Plato up to the fifteenth century. Following the criticism of Paul Ricoeur (2004) and Frances Ferguson (1996) and beginning with the writing of John Locke and continuing through the Romantic era, however, Whitehead identifies a shift to a focus on “the relation between memory and the self” (p. 50). In this era, she suggests, “memory is concerned with the personal and is inherently bound to identity. Through memory, then the past of the individual can be revived or made actual again, in the sense of being brought into consciousness” (pp. 6-7). Danziger also discusses what can be seen as a historical shift in “mnemonic values” in this period as he suggests that in “eighteenth- and nineteenth-century mnemonics,” memory becomes both “a vehicle for the exact reproduction of some precisely defined informational input” or, in a more

affective vein, an opportunity for “the adequate representation of a lived experience” (2008, p. 86–87; 104). This notion of memory as “personal” or “lived experience” was to play a pivotal role in the theories of Henri Bergson and Sigmund Freud at the turn of the twentieth century.

In addition to Freud’s and Bergson’s ideas of subjective memory, however, the early twentieth century saw an alternative focus for memory: a consideration of collective memory. It is from this idea that the contemporary field of memory studies derives. An acknowledged pioneer of this change was the Hamburg cultural historian, Abraham [Aby] Moritz Warburg (1866-1929). According to Christopher Johnson, Warburg sought to convey in his lectures and essays on iconography in works of art “how images of great symbolic, intellectual, and emotional power emerge in Western antiquity and then reappear and are reanimated in the art and cosmology of later times and places, from Alexandrian Greece to Weimar Germany” (2016).³ Between 1924 and his death in 1929, Warburg worked on a “Mnemosyne Atlas,” consisting of over 1,000 powerful and recurring images from antiquity to the twentieth century.⁴ Ernst Gombrich notes how for Warburg, the circulation and re-circulation of these images in different historical contexts constituted a form of “social memory” (2011, p. 105).

At the same time that Warburg was working on his elaborate picture atlas and a general theory of “social memory,” the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) was considering the ways in which specific group memories were formed. In *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (published originally in 1925), Halbwachs took issue with the concept of individual memory, instead examining how individual memories are shaped, acknowledged and expressed only within the context of social frameworks

(*cadres*) such as one's family, religious community and work. In Halbwachs' view, "memories as psychic states subsist in the mind in an unconscious state and . . . can become conscious again when recollected" (1992, p. 39). For Halbwachs, each individual's memories are "a part of an aspect of group memory, since each impression and each fact, even if it apparently concerns a particular person exclusively, leaves a lasting memory only to the extent that one has thought it over—to the extent that it is connected with the thoughts that come to us from the social milieu" (1992, p. 53). Notably, Halbwachs' notion of "*mémoire collective*" also includes the aspect of forgetting, as he indicates that "society tends to erase from its memory all that might separate individuals, or that might distance groups from each other. It is also why society, in each period, rearranges its recollections in such a way as to adjust them to the variable conditions of its equilibrium" (pp. 182-83). Halbwachs was killed in Buchenwald in 1945, and *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* was not published in English until 1980. It quickly went out of print, however, and it was not until 1992, after memory studies had gained in interest and popularity as a field, that Halbwachs' work began to be disseminated more widely in Anglo-American academic circles.⁵

Part of the revival of interest in Halbwachs' research can be attributed to the work of two German scholars the 1980s: Jan Assmann, an Egyptologist, and Aleida Assmann, a literary scholar. Jan Assmann revised Halbwachs' opposition between lived social "memory" and a more objective and written "history," proposing instead the terms of "communicative memory" and "cultural memory." The former, suggested Assmann, has a "limited temporal horizon" that is confined to the living memory of the group experiencing the memory, while he defined "cultural memory" as the memory that

becomes fixed when “living communication crystalliz[es] in the forms of objectivized culture – whether in texts, images, rites, buildings, monuments, cities or even landscapes” (2008, p. 128). Jan Assmann’s *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (1992), published in English in 2011 as *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, presents case studies for this theory of cultural memory, considering how systems of writing provided “forms of objectivized” cultural memory in the Egyptian, Israeli, Hittite and Grecian societies.

In *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives*, also published in English in 2011, Aleida Assmann also builds on the foundational work of Halbwachs, focusing on memory in Western society from the classical to postmodern eras. She further divides Halbwachs’ notion of “*mémoire collective*” into different categories: “stored” memory, which consists of “an amorphous mass of elements” and “functional memory” “which emerges from a process of choosing, connecting and constituting meaning” (2011, p. 137). In such a way, she accounts for the possibility of change within the cultural memory of a group, as “stored” memories can be activated and shifted to “functional memory.” Notably, like Halbwachs, both Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann focus on how memory is expressed in multiple collectivities, not exclusively the nation.

It was without doubt, however, the work of French historian Pierre Nora that propelled memory into the full-fledged “studies” status that it now enjoys. Nora’s monumental *Les lieux de mémoire* involved almost 120 contributors and was published between 1984 and 1992 in three parts distributed over seven volumes. Whereas previous

historians of France were concerned with chronological progress or the history of *mentalités*, Nora focused on the ways in which the nation known as France was a product of multiple specific sites of collective memory. In the English translation of his work, Nora offered the following definition of a *lieu de mémoire*: “any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community” (Nora & Kritzman, 1996). In Nora’s view, the modern era is characterized by the acceleration of time and the loss of what he calls *milieux de mémoire*, a state of living memory. *Lieux de mémoire*, he suggests, serve as substitutions for that loss of living memory; they are sites of condensed meaning that connect people in the present to an ever-distant past, their function being “to stop time, to inhibit forgetting, to fix a state of things, to immortalize death, and to materialize the immaterial—all in order to capture the maximum possible meaning with the fewest possible signs” (Nora & Kritzman, 1996). Nora describes how sites of memory are identified, drawn forth and then collectively recalled in such a way that they resonate beyond their immediate moment. First, “moments of history” are “plucked out of the flow of history,” then, second, they are “returned to it,” but in an altered state so that they are “no longer quite alive but not yet entirely dead, like shells left on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded” (Nora & Kritzman, 1996). Nora’s ideas changed as the massive project unfolded, progressing from a rigid sense of *lieux de mémoire* as actual sites in Part One to a theoretical interest in different kinds of cultural memory in the second and final parts. By the conclusion of *Les lieux de mémoire*, Nora had reached a broader perspective on his project, seeing sites of memory as “symbolic points of reference that serve as dense

repositories of historical meaning and hence as communal orientation points in negotiations about collective self-definitions” (Rigney, 2012, p. 132).

Nora’s work was translated and distributed widely in Anglo-American academic circles. A three-volume abridged English translation of *Les lieux de mémoire* consisting of 46 of the 132 articles appeared in 1996 as *Realms of Memory*; the introduction had already been published separately as an article in the journal *Representations* in 1989. Although Nora indicated that his work on *lieux de mémoire* only pertained to the specific situation of France, once translated, his theory was rapidly adapted to multiple geographical regions, time periods and disciplines. As Michael Rothberg affirms, “Although emerging from a commitment to the exceptionality of France’s relation to its national past, the approach pioneered in *Les lieux de mémoire* has proven highly exportable as a model for the consideration of diverse memory cultures” (2010, p. 3).

Nora’s work both responded and contributed to what he himself recognized as a “passion” for memory at the time (Mitzal, 2003, p. 2).⁶ Scholars have retrospectively attempted to explain why the study of memory proved so popular at that particular historical juncture. A number of factors that might have contributed to the “boom” in memory studies have been indentified, including: the passing of the generation of Holocaust survivors (Hirsch and Smith 2002, pp. 3-4), the expansion of new technologies and the sense that we are now living in a “post-cultural” period (J. Assmann, 2011), the impact of feminism on rethinking established ways of understanding history and subjectivity (Möckel-Rieke, 1998); and, in the academy, the post-structuralist questioning of standard “linguistic, narrative and cultural” formulations of knowledge (Olick, 2008). Scholars have also interpreted the uses of the “obsession” with memory in different ways.

While Andreas Huyssen suggests that the “obsession” with memory might very well be a “bulwark against obsolescence and disappearance” that helps “counter our deep anxiety about the speed of change and the ever-shrinking horizons of time and space” (2003, p. 23), Aleida Assmann adopts a positive attitude to the focus on memory, contending that, rather representing a loss of connection to the past, the memory boom is an indication of fact that memory has been “reclaimed by society” rather than being relegated to “historical scholarship” (2011, p. 5).

The singular growth of memory studies from the publication of *Les lieux de mémoire* onward has attracted criticism along the way. Early negative perspectives ranged from warnings that “there might be something inauthentic and unhealthy about the canonization of memory” and that “an addiction to memory can become neuroasthenic and disabling” (Maier, 1993, p. 141) to concerns that the term memory “is depreciated by surplus use” and that “memory studies lack a clear focus and have become somewhat predictable” (Confino, 1997, p. 1387). These apprehensions have not disappeared over time. Jeffrey Olick cautioned in 1998 that the field of memory studies was “non-paradigmatic, transdisciplinary, centerless”; in the retrospective account he wrote twenty years later, he suggested those characteristics were still applicable (Olick, 2008, p. 22).⁷ As his comments suggest, however, much of the criticism of memory studies is connected to the field’s huge success and its mobility. In contrast to Olick’s concerns, Mieke Bal argues for the use value of the flexibility and mobility of memory studies, suggesting that memory has now become a “travelling concept,” constantly moving “between disciplines, between historical periods, and between geographically dispersed academic communities” (2002, p. 24).

Even as it has become more mobile over the past several decades, however, memory studies has also become more defined as a field.⁸ It has transformed into an object of scholarly study, as indicated by the recent increase in books that attempt to trace the genealogy of the field and anthologies that seek to define a critical canon of memory studies. Collections like *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (Erll & Nünning, 2008), *The Collective Memory Reader* (Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, & Levy, 2011), and the recent *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies* (Tota & Hagan, 2016) have been complemented by monographs which also focus on memory as a methodology such as Astrid Erll's *Memory in Culture* (2011), Patrick Hutton's *The Memory Phenomenon in Contemporary Historical Writing: How the Interest in Memory Has Influenced Our Understanding of History* (2016), Marek Tamm's *Afterlife of Events: Perspectives on Mnemohistory* (2016), and Martin Pogačar's *Media Archaeologies, Micro-Archives and Storytelling: Re-presencing the Past* (2016), just to name a few examples. The fact that academic presses such as Palgrave Macmillan and Routledge have series devoted to varieties of memory studies has served to further legitimize and promote the field, as has the appearance of journals such as *History & Memory* and *Memory Studies* and the formation of an international Memory Studies Association.⁹ The relevance of the field across a wide spectrum of humanities research is also indicated by the selection of the theme of "Negotiating Sites of Memory" for the 2015 MLA Conference held in Vancouver, inspired by what then president Marianne Hirsch referred to as "Pierre Nora's provocative concept of *lieux de mémoire*" (Hirsch, n.d.). As Hirsch's statement suggests, Nora's work has itself become a *lieu de mémoire* in

the history of memory studies, arguably occluding the contributions of other scholars of memory.

While the reasons behind the original turn to memory may still be a subject for debate, what remains clear is that the “boom” is still booming, despite the fact that the state of the world has changed exponentially from the earlier manifestation of the “passion” for memory.¹⁰ The focus on memory has in fact provided one stable point in a time of constant change, perhaps because, as Erll presciently commented in 2011, in the conflicted world in which we currently live, “we cannot afford the luxury of not studying memory” (p. 172). But as is also clear, memory studies as a field has travelled and evolved from its earlier manifestations in ways that “exceed” and “challenge” Nora’s original concept of memory sites (Hirsch, 2016).

In the next section, I consider two important developments that are impacting the field of memory studies today. First, I consider the new focus on materiality and mediation. Second, I explore the way scholars of memory studies have also begun to question what has heretofore been seen as a logical association between memory and the nation. Eighteenth-century scholarship has played and can continue to play a crucial role in the expansion of research in both these areas, I suggest, as it can provide a greater historical perspective on the relationship between media and memory and, at the same time, highlight how the nation came to subsume both global and local affiliations in the creation of what Benedict Anderson refers to as “imagined” national communities (Anderson, 1991).

Media and Cultural Memory

In his original formulation, Nora paid little attention to the specific circumstances through which “symbolic significance” was conveyed, but his ideas have since been sharpened by a scholarly focus aimed at connecting media and cultural memory. As Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith have suggested, memory is “always mediated” as it is “the product of fragmentary personal and collective experiences articulated through technologies and media that shape even as they transmit memory” (2002, p. 5). Anne Rigney, too, has argued for an understanding of memory that takes into account how the affordances of a specific medium affects the way that a site of memory circulates; she also how selection and reinscription take place in the transference of that memory “through various media” (Rigney, 2005, p. 17). Rigney has postulated a new conceptualization of sites of memory as dynamic processes rather than static products (Rigney, 2012) and raised questions about the ways in which memory has been transferred by means of different media during different historical periods. The development of a focus on media and memory in memory studies, then, has gone hand in hand with a need for greater awareness of “historical developments in the material means of memory transmission” (Olick & Robbins, 1998, p. 113).

Scholars working to historicize the mediation of cultural memory have adopted two different approaches, either taking a wide chronological perspective on the relationship between cultural memory and media change or focusing closely on mediations of cultural memory from one particular historical era. Looking at works that adopt both of these perspectives, it is evident that, while there have been important scholarly contributions by scholars of the eighteenth century, there is still much work to be done to uncover how memory and media intersect in this important historical period.

In terms of longitudinal studies of the questions of mediation and memory, Aleida Assmann's *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives* investigates "the media that provide the material support underlying cultural memory" (A. Assmann, 2011, p. 11). Offering a series of rich readings of authors including Shakespeare, Bacon, Swift, Lamb, Wordsworth and Carlyle, Assmann traces the shift from the classical and Renaissance concept that texts contain universal messages that can be passed on to readers in future generations to a modernist conception of the irrecoverability of the past. Assmann acknowledges the eighteenth century as an important period when literacy rates rose and print culture expanded, resulting in a shift in metaphors of memory and ideas about how it worked. Assmann's discussion of the eighteenth century is limited to representative canonical texts that respond to the changes in print culture: Swift's "Tale of a Tub" and Alexander Pope's "An Essay on Criticism," for example. Assmann concentrates on the Romantic era as a turning point when memory developed a more individualistic perspective, bypassing many of the complexities characterizing the relationship between memory and media in the eighteenth century.

Like Assmann's, studies by Whitehead and Danziger (mentioned above) also hurry over the eighteenth century, seeing it as a conceptual stepping stone between Renaissance and modern conceptions of memory. Whitehead's *Memory* shifts from a focus on memory as a reflection of media practices to a focus on memory as a reflection of subjectivity in the eighteenth century. Of the nine chapters in Danziger's *Marking the Mind: A History of Memory*, only one chapter considers eighteenth-century memory, and even in this chapter, Danziger's account often seems to collapse the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries together. But there is

much more to be studied about media and memory in the eighteenth century within this longer term perspective, given the fact that memory was such a crucial topic for eighteenth-century writers (Komáromy, 2011) and that the media landscape of the eighteenth century was undergoing such profound changes. It was, after all, in the eighteenth century that, as Clifford Siskin and William Warner indicate, “print” came to take “center stage” within the “already existing media ecology of voice, sound, image, and manuscript writing” (2010, p. 10), with wide-ranging implications for mnemonic values. James Mulholland suggests that, “As material relations change, so does a culture’s imagination of textuality, and . . . the re-examination of media—oral and written—during the Enlightenment raised anew long-lived questions about the nature of print” (2013, p. 2), and this re-examination also impacted notions of cultural memory.

In contrast to works in the field of memory studies that present a longer view of the history of cultural memory in relation to media change there are other critical works that focus on the mediation of cultural memory in specific historical periods. A number of these more historically specific studies concentrate on the modernist and contemporary eras, corroborating either directly or indirectly critics’ arguments that cultural memory is a modern phenomenon (Crownshaw, Kilby, & Rowland, 2010; M. Rothberg, 2009; Terdiman, 1993). The early modern period is also well represented in terms of works that consider cultural memory and media (Gordon, 2013; Schwyzer, 2004; Tribble & Keene, 2011); these works focus in particular, as did Whitehead, Assmann and Danziger, on the connection between memory and the advent of the printing press. In terms of studies focused on specific eighteenth-century topics, there is an established and substantial body

of work that explores mediation, book history and print culture , and cultural memory in the eighteenth century is also a growing area of study. Fruitful connections with memory, for example, have been made in scholarly works examining slavery and Britain’s imperial project (Bordin & Scacchi, 2015; Kaplan & Oldfield, 2010; Mallipeddi, 2016; Morris, 2015) and those considering the legacy of particular literary figures such as Jane Austen (Dow & Hanson, 2012; Dryden, 2013; Looser, 2017; Troost & Greenfield, 2000), Robert Burns (Alker, Davis, and Nelson, 2012) and Shakespeare (Halsey & Vine, 2018). Moreover, there are also number of works on eighteenth-century studies that do not articulate a direct connection with the wider field of memory studies, although they do concern memory. Adam Fox and Daniel Woolf (2002), for example, consider how material relations influence “community memories” of the “past,” but they do not specifically align themselves with memory studies. Nevertheless, there are, relatively speaking, fewer works on eighteenth-century topics that foreground the connection between media and memory than works on contemporary or early modern topics that make that connection. Of these, Harold Weber’s *Memory, Print and Gender in England, 1653-1759* figures importantly as it considers the “technologies of storage and transmission [that] govern both the form and content of what individuals and societies can remember” (2008, p. 2). Dermot Ryan’s *Technologies of Empire: Writing, Imagination and the Making of Imperial Networks, 1750-1820* also connects mediation and cultural memory as it explores writing as “a set of practices embedded in and facilitating other social and material activities” (2013, p. 4), while both Neil Guthrie (2013) and Murray Pittock (2013) have discussed non-print mediations of Jacobite memories. A significant cluster of research also directly links media and cultural memory

in the context of the American colonies and transatlantic circulation (Stabile, 2004; Straub, 2017), influenced by that pioneer of transatlantic memory studies, Joseph Roach (Roach, 1996). Rather than compile an exhaustive list of works that can be connected to memory studies either directly or indirectly, however, the bigger point I wish to make is that by further exploring how the changing media landscape of the period impacted (and was impacted by) changing ideas of cultural memory and, more importantly, by explicitly connecting their work with the growing field of memory studies, eighteenth-century scholars can offer a nuanced perspective on media and memory in their period and also have a significant impact on the field of memory studies in general.

In fact, eighteenth-century scholars are uniquely positioned to contribute to the historicization of the mediation of memory. Their work calls into question the temporal and medial division between the contemporary era and the past suggested by Nora in his assertion that the existence of *lieux de mémoire* in the modern era reflects the fact that we no longer have *milieux de mémoire*, or “real environments of memory” (Nora & Kritzman, 1996, p. 1). In the present, we are left, he suggests, merely with mediations, “traces” where memory “crystallizes and secretes itself” (Nora & Kritzman, 1996, p. 1). Eighteenth-century scholars can disrupt this model but pointing out the ways in which it is not just the modern era that is archival; a dynamic between living memory and a process of archivization was a factor in the articulation of memory in the eighteenth century, too. Although print came to take “center stage” during the eighteenth century, it did so only within a media ecology that also included manuscript and oral cultures (Siskin and Warner, 2010; p. 10). The power and impact of print was to a large extent determined by its refraction through other media as works of print were created,

disseminated, discussed and consumed through oral and manuscript sources as well as through other genres of print (Fox, 2000; McDowell, 2017). The contemporary construction of the memory of William of Orange's conquest of England as "Glorious" and "bloodless," for example, depended as much on hearsay and eyewitness accounts in letters and journals as on the contemporary circulation of works like the *Declaration of His Highness William Henry . . . of the Reasons Inducing him, to appear in Arms in the Kingdome of England* in print and in performance (Davis, forthcoming). Jacobite memories were passed down not only in stories of individuals who encountered Charles Edward during his flight after Culloden; they were also compiled in manuscript collections like Robert Forbes' *The Lyon in Mourning* and they appeared in altered form in printed popular narratives of Charles Edward's escape such as *Young Juba* and *Ascanius* (Davis, 2016). Similarly, face to face meetings and songs as well as printed petitions (Warner, 2013) helped to forward the aims of the American Revolutionaries at the end of the eighteenth century. "Real environments of memory," in other words, have been impacted by material and textual mediations for much longer than Nora suggests. As scholars of the eighteenth century, we have an obligation to point out how specific memories from our period, many of which continue to shape contemporary debates, were initially constructed and have been re-inscribed over time through a range of media.

Memory Beyond the Nation

Another important development in the field of contemporary memory studies involves moving beyond the idea of the nation: both recognizing the counter-memories that exist within national borders and considering how memory travels beyond borders

and between memory sites. Writing in the 1980's in France, Nora took the connection between the nation and cultural memory for granted. His work focused on exploring the vast numbers of ways in which the memories of a nation could be curated and disseminated, including schools and churches, archives and libraries as well as books and other modes of artistic representation. Despite setting out to produce a more complex notion of what constituted the French nation (and, by extension, other nations), Nora did not raise the question of how cultural memory became associated with the unit of the nation in the first place. In "Remembered Realms: Pierre Nora and French National Memory," Hue-Tam Ho Tai comments the way this has limited Nora's perspective: "For all of Nora's embrace of polyphony and polysemy, the French nation of *Realms of Memory* is a given rather than a problem or project. The contests and conflicts that are so amply documented in the collection are not about France per se but about the nature of its national identity. The overall effect is, while there may be many perspectives on France (monarchic, republican, Catholic, among others), they have only one object" (2001, pp. 9-10). Because his work has been so influential on the growth of the field of memory studies, Nora's exclusive focus on sites of *national* memory has proliferated, with the result that it has occluded a focus on other kinds of memory, both more local and more global. While Halbwachs' theories of cultural memory (and, later, Jan Assmann's and Aleida Assmann's extensions of Halbwachs' theories) allowed for various kinds of non-national collectivities, scholars following Nora's lead have rushed to find examples of varieties of national cultural memories. Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney suggest that as a result, "the nation state" became "the natural container, curator, and telos of collective memory" (2014, p. 1). Moreover, as Ho Tai also notes, Nora did not take "the experience

of empire into his consideration of how the French nation and national identity were constructed, or assess its role in French collective memory” (2001, p. 910). He looked within the borders of the nation rather than considering connections between France and its colonial past and present.

Scholars responding to Nora’s limited national perspective have turned to consider how counter-memories operate within national sites of memory as well as to examine sites of colonial memory. Indra Sengupta’s collection *Memory, History, and Postcolonialism*, for example, stresses the “need to emphasize the hybrid character of *lieux de mémoire* in order to grasp the complexity of colonial/postcolonial sites of memory” (2009, p. 7). In an attempt to conceptualize this hybridity, Jay Winter suggests regarding every site of memory as “a palimpsest, an overwritten text, with patterns emerging that varied from the intention of the authors” (2009, p. 167). Winter’s image of the palimpsest, however, implies a unidirectional change with one layer being written over by another layer of memory. In contrast, Monica Juneja suggests a more flexible visualization to counteract the focus on the nation, describing cultural memory as “a social field continually being traversed by memories that can potentially overlap, intersect, and contest—a field where the state and the community are not necessarily positioned in an oppositional relation to each other, but interpenetrate, where relations of power and adjustment operate within both, and at many levels” (2009, p. 36). Such an perspective on cultural memory allows for an understanding of memory as more nuanced and multi-directional.

In an important intervention in moving the discourse of cultural memory “beyond the framework of the imagined community of the nation-state,” Michael Rothberg has proposed “a new model – or models—of remembrance,” replacing Nora’s figuration of *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory) with *noeuds de mémoire*, or “knots of memory” (2010, p. 7). The metaphor of “knots,” he argues, recognizes that “all places and acts of memory are rhizomatic networks of temporality and cultural reference that exceed attempts at territorialisation (whether at the local or national level) and identitarian reduction.” “Performances of memory,” he suggests, work in complicated ways. They may have “territorializing or identity-forming effects,” but such effects are neither exclusive nor permanent; instead, they are flexible, depending on the context in which the memory is performed, and they are also “open to re-signification” (p. 7). Rothberg also raises the question of agency in the process of remembering the past, suggesting that “sites of memory do not remember by themselves—they require the active agency of individuals and publics. Such agency entails recognizing and revealing the production of memory as an ongoing process involving inscription and reinscription, coding and recoding” (pp. 8-9). And as Alison Landsburg indicates, the processes of decoding and reinscribing can also be transferrable between groups through the dissemination of forms of mass media. She refers to this phenomenon as “prosthetic memory” (Landsburg, 2004).

The recent collection *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales* exemplifies this turn to a more expansive and fluid kind of cultural memory, as editors Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney share with Rothberg an aim to move memory studies “beyond methodological nationalism” (2014, p. 12). In their assessment, “Globalized

communication and time-space compression, post-coloniality, transnational capitalism, large-scale migration, and regional integration: all of these mean that national frames are no longer the self-evident ones they used to be in daily life and identity formation. As a result, the national has also ceased to be the inevitable or preeminent scale for the study of collective remembrance” (p. 13). Similarly, in *The Transcultural Turn: Interrogating Memory Between and Beyond Borders* editors Lucy Bond and Jessica Rapson observe that “even the most seemingly nationalistic examples of memory are implicit reactions to (or rather, against) the global culture in which contemporary commemorative practice takes place” (2014, p. 19). By focusing predominantly on questioning the association of cultural memory and the nation in the present, however, De Cesari and Rigney and Bond and Rapson reinforce the notion that cultural memory is a phenomenon of the modern time period

Once again, scholars of the eighteenth century can play a vital part in providing a more nuanced historical understanding to memory studies, this time by drawing attention to the tensions between the national, global and local that existed in an earlier time period, and focusing on how the nation state came to be the dominant repository and vehicle of collective memory. They can point out how, over the course of the long eighteenth century, the British nation emerged as the most powerful vehicle of “territorializing or identity-forming effects,” separating itself out from the articulations of more local identities as well as from more general collectivities such as religious and economic groupings and provincializing linguistic and culturally different areas in the process (Colley, 1992; Kaul, 2009; Marshall, 2008; Wallace, 2010; Wilson, 2003; Yadav, 2004). It is also crucial for eighteenth-century scholars to point out, however, how, at

same time that the nation was being consolidated as the dominant repository of memory, its hegemonic power was also called into question by the articulation of counter-memories both within and beyond national borders. An example of this kind of hybridity that both contributed to and questioned the consolidation of the British nation can be found in the work of the Scottish Highlander, James Macpherson. Macpherson's *Poems of Ossian* both memorialized and overwrote the actual experiences of Gaelic Scots within the post-Culloden British nation; in a similar complex manner, his *History and Management of the East India Company* both asserted British values while questioning the manner in which the company which employed so many Britons abroad had been represented in history.

By putting pressure on sites of national memory, eighteenth-century scholars can contribute to an investigation both of how cultural memory helped shape the collectivity of the nation and of how the growing focus on the nation in turn helped form ideas of cultural memory during this dynamic era. Further consideration of the way that national memories were conceived of in the first place, then inscribed and re-inscribed can offer a greater understanding of the origin of some of the national memories that are so pervasive in current debates. When individuals like Boris Johnson tweet about looking forward to a “glorious Brexit,” for example, drawing upon the erstwhile identification of the 1688 Revolution as the “Glorious Revolution” (Elliott, 2017), eighteenth-century scholars should hasten to point out the ways in which, not only is this interpretation of events a conscious construction effected through various mediations over several centuries in order to consolidate British national and imperial power, but also that the

notion of 1688 as “glorious” reflects a perspective that is not shared by many, including Irish Catholics.

Conclusion

In our current period of political divisiveness in which some turn to what are referred to as times of national “great”-ness, it is indeed salutary to remember that *lieux de mémoire* are not “fixed entities or finished products” (Rigney, 2012, p. 19), but ever-changing processes; they can be recalled and remediated in different ways for different interest groups -- not only to amplify differences but also to generate empathetic connections. As Mieke Bal suggests, “Art—and other cultural artifacts such as photographs and published texts of all kinds—can mediate between the parties to the traumatizing scene and between these and the reader or viewer. The recipients of the account perform an act of memory that is potentially healing, as it calls for political and cultural solidarity in recognizing the traumatized party’s predicament” (Bal, Crewe, & Spitzer, 1999, p. x). Studying the construction and re-inscription of memory has never been as important as it is in the present moment, when we live in a perpetual present tense in which, as Dmitri Nikulin suggests, “memory” has now come to replace reason as a way of explaining “a historical, political, or social phenomenon” (2015, p. 5). The entrenched memories of the nation that have become a crucial part of the contemporary political landscape – and indeed the concept of cultural memory itself as we recognize it today – have their origin within the context of the shifting media landscape and the consolidating nation-state of the eighteenth century. By examining the different interests - local, national and global -- that have been brought to bear on *lieux de mémoire* during

an early stage of the articulation of modern national identity, eighteenth-century scholars can focus attention on the mediations of cultural memory in the past, reflect further on the constructed nature of memory in the present, and exert a positive force on the future use of cultural memories in the service of collective empathy rather than divisiveness.

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¹ Danziger points out that “There is probably no other psychological object that can be traced so far back without even a change in its name” (2008, p. 6). Nicholas Russell also asserts that, “we can trace the notion of group memory to the earliest texts in Western civilization, in Archaic Greek culture” (2006, p. 792).

² Danziger suggests that, “the social context of memory is marked by what one might call mnemonic values that give direction to the process of remembering . . . These mnemonic values change according to place and time” (2008, p. 6).

³ See also Johnson (2012).

⁴ Dissemination of Warburg’s ideas was made complicated by the fact that he suffered from mental illness that disrupted his career. He was hospitalized in 1921, but he was released in 1924.

⁵ Olick notes that “A particular gap in the Anglo-American literature . . . concerns the intellectual-historical context of Halbwachs’s work, including the complexities of its reception (2008, p. 23).

⁶ As Jeffrey Olick and Joyce Robbins confirm, from the publication of *Les lieux de mémoire* onward, “both the public and academia” became “saturated with references to social or collective memory” (Olick & Robbins, 1998, p. 107).

⁷ Dmitri Nikulin’s assertion in *Memory: A History* that “memory is used in so many different ways and in such heterogeneous contexts that it becomes overused to the point of being almost obliterated” also repeats Confino’s earlier concerns about the lack of focus of memory studies (2015, p. 4).

⁸ Olick (2009) suggests that such studies lay “the foundation for a field divided into clear areas, in which the results of diverse studies can be systematically related to each other, and from which a more coherent identity can emerge” (p. 252).

⁹ Palgrave features a “memory studies” series while Routledge publishes a “Studies in Memory and Narrative” series. *History & Memory* (published by the University of Indiana Press) was established in 1989; *Memory Studies* (published by SAGE) was established in 2008 and is now published in association with the Memory Studies Association (<https://www.memorystudiesassociation.org>).

¹⁰ Jeffrey Olick (2007) posits that, from an academic perspective, the focus on memory was also a response to “the wave of so-called ‘turns’ in the social sciences of the 1980s – linguistic, narrative and cultural. In theory classes, we were reading structuralist and post-structuralist writings on discourse and the problem of meaning; in political sociology we were problematizing legitimation in a post- Marxist, culturalist manner; and even in discussions of organizational behavior and social movements, we were noting the power of storytelling, movement ‘narratives’ and organizational ‘cultures’ (19).