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GRAHAM HUGGAN

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CHAPTER 16

REMEMBERING BACK

Cultural Memory, Colonial Legacies, and Postcolonial Studies[1]

MICHAEL ROTHBERG

The field of postcolonial studies has had a paradoxical relation to cultural memory. On the one hand, the most influential monographs, anthologies, companions, and guidebooks to postcolonial studies have largely left the category of memory out of their theory and practice of the field. A scanning of the indexes of field-defining books, such as Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), Kwame Anthony Appiah's *In My Father's House* (1993), Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994), and Gayatri Spivak's *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999), along with influential anthologies and textbooks, such as Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin's *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (1995), turns up almost no mention of memory.[2] Conversely, memory studies has largely avoided the issues of colonialism and its legacies, both in its founding texts and in many of its more recent assessments. Even a cutting-edge and comprehensive compendium such as Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz's *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates* (2010) contains no entry for postcolonial studies and only scattered references to colonialism, although it foregrounds related debates in the politics of memory.[3]

1. I am grateful to Graham Huggan for comments on early drafts and to Cristina Stanciu for research assistance.

2. Spivak's *In Other Worlds* (1988b) does not have an index, but memory as such is not an explicit concern there either. In all of the books mentioned above, only *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* includes 'memory' in its index. There it appears three times, with two references pointing to an extract from Derek Walcott's *The Muse of History* and the final one to Dipesh Chakrabarty's influential essay 'Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History'.

3. Colonialism also appears only marginally in Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy's large anthology of writings on collective memory (2011). More attention to postcolonial studies is given in the introduction to Michael Rossington and Anne Whitehead's useful collection of source texts *Theories of Memory* (2007).

Despite this surprising deficit of references, it can easily be argued that issues related to cultural memory make up some of the core concerns of postcolonial studies. One of the signal controversies that accompanied the emergence of postcolonial studies as an interdisciplinary academic field in the late 1980s and early 1990s, for instance, concerned the meaning of the 'post' in postcolonial studies. Influential essays by Kwame Anthony Appiah (1993), Anne McClintock (1992), and Ella Shohat (1992), among others, questioned the temporality of the 'post' and its relation to other 'post' discourses, especially postmodernism. At stake in such debates was whether the moniker 'postcolonial' suggested a clean break from the colonial past—a meaning very few scholars have actually embraced—or whether the 'post' indicated some other relation to colonialism, either a temporal 'hang-over' or 'lag' or, alternatively, an oppositional 'against' or 'in response to'. As the 'post' debates indicate, the self-critical reflection of postcolonial studies on its own conditions of possibility, which has always accompanied the development of the field, has concerned above all that field's fundamental relation to the *disjunctive temporality* of colonial legacies—colonialism's ability to colonize not just space, but time as well. Such disjunctive temporality also indicates the field's proximity to debates in memory studies, where concern with the relative weight and 'mixture' of past and present in a temporality beyond any notion of linearity or 'homogenous empty time' has been an originary and ongoing source of productive dispute.[4]

To get a first sense of the potential overlapping concerns of postcolonial studies and memory studies, consider such matters as: the erasure of the pre-colonial past by the invasion of colonialism, the reappropriation of that past by anti-colonial struggles, and its subsequent reconfiguration by postcolonial regimes; the cultural legacies of colonialism in the postcolonial present embodied in matters of language and education; the nostalgia for empire or pre-contact conditions in film, literature, and scholarship; the production of memoirs and autobiographical essays by leading scholars in the field (including Appiah, Diawara, Said, Spivak, and Suleri); and the rereading of the archives of imperial dominance by contemporary historians and critics. The understanding of such phenomena—taken both from the postcolonial world and the world of postcolonial studies—ought to benefit from an analytic lens honed by memory studies, but both that field and postcolonial studies itself have in the past largely avoided such an approach. Nevertheless, the easy enumeration of such phenomena signals that further reckoning with the relation between cultural memory, colonial legacies, and postcolonial studies is certain to be fruitful for scholars in a variety of fields.

Indeed, such a project is especially timely because both cultural memory studies and postcolonial studies are presently showing an increased convergence around shared

4. Walter Benjamin's critique of 'homogenous, empty time' (Benjamin 1968: 261) is a commonplace in both postcolonial studies and memory studies, an overlap perhaps traceable in part to Benedict Anderson's appropriation of the term as a way of talking about the time of the nation (Anderson 2006). Bill Schwarz emphasizes that modern memory is defined above all by its disjunctive temporality and 'perpetual dysfunctions' (Schwarz 2010: 42).

themes and problems. If the founding texts of cultural memory studies were surprisingly silent about the significance of colonialism and its after-effects, a current turn toward various forms of transnational and transcultural memory practices has begun to bring questions of empire and globalization to the forefront of the field.[5] Meanwhile, although the initiating texts of postcolonial studies do not employ an explicit vocabulary of memory, a turn toward practices of remembrance can be seen among postcolonial scholars in recent years. Numerous essays and monographs since the turn of the millennium have studied the impact of colonialism, decolonization, and postcolonial recalibration on conceptions of the colonial and pre-colonial past, and on practices of remembrance by the colonized and the colonizer as well as their postcolonial and post-imperial avatars.[6]

This chapter attempts both to explain the missed encounter that attended the formation of the fields of memory studies and postcolonial studies in the 1980s and 1990s and to map out productive sites of overlap between them as they grow increasingly proximate to each other. I first briefly describe the field of cultural memory studies and point out its failure to address colonial legacies, and then turn to the ways in which anti-colonial and postcolonial thinkers have addressed the presence of the past without necessarily employing the term 'memory'. In a subsequent section, I provide a literary example of what imperial memory looks like from a postcolonial perspective, a perspective that also suggests the usefulness of a media studies approach to remembrance. I end by turning to the context of the Algerian War of Independence in order to recommend a 'multidirectional' model attuned to the transnational and transcultural politics of memory. The emerging proximity of postcolonial and memory studies helps to shed light on both fields as discourses that seek to mediate the past in the present: while memory studies predominantly investigates the cultural mediation of temporality, postcolonial studies predominantly attends to the cultural and political mediation of imperial and neo-imperial violence. The benefit of considering these two overarching forms of mediation together lies in a new understanding of how violence fundamentally shapes the temporality of modern memory and how regimes of memory help propagate and potentially resist violence through the creation of unexpected solidarities.

5. In addition to work cited elsewhere, see Assmann and Conrad (2010); Crownshaw (2011); Levy and Sznaider (2010); Rothberg (2009).

6. One of the earliest attempts to synthesize memory studies and postcolonial studies—albeit from a particular disciplinary and area studies perspective—comes in Werbner 1998. As Werbner writes at the end of his introduction: 'Here lies the challenge of our contribution: *Memory and the Postcolony* locates politicized memory at the very heart of postcolonial studies' (15). Although much work has taken up this challenge in the years since then, I would not say that postcolonial studies as a whole has embraced this vision of the field. But see Huggan (2002) as well as the following collections: Mageo (2001); Hargreaves (2005); and Sengupta (2009). Recent monographs emerging from a variety of disciplines and areas include Cole (2001); Winston (2001); Woods (2007).

Cultural Memory Studies and the Avoidance of Colonialism

I begin by surveying three of the most significant points of departure for contemporary memory studies in order to assess their possible articulations with a postcolonial lens. The study of cultural memory has a variety of sources and draws on diverse theoretical predecessors, but its most obvious beginning in the modern period lies in the work of the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, a student of Durkheim. Writing in the 1920s, Halbwachs considered what he called 'collective memory' in relation to 'social frameworks' (*cadres sociaux*) (see Halbwachs 1992). He argued that social forces shape even seemingly individual memories by providing a framework or 'language' through which subjects recall their pasts. Emphasis on the shaping forces of social frameworks opens the study of memory to politics, for—as those working in the Halbwachsian tradition argue—those forces wed the articulation of memory to the interests and conflicts of the present. The frameworks of memory rely in turn on the existence of groups of various kinds: individuals exist not in isolation but in a series of interlocking communities—families, religions, regions, professions, civil society organizations—that contour their social identities and consequently their practices of remembrance. As this incomplete list of groups in which Halbwachs locates the social frameworks of collective memory attests, he did not weld collective memory to any privileged scale of social life, but located it in groups 'up to and including the nation' (J. Assmann 1995: 127). Indeed, for Halbwachs, subjects always belong to diverse groups and thus also possess multiple schemata of collective memory. Yet, at the same time, he understood groups as relatively homogenous and closed entities. Such a conceptualization ultimately limits (without by any means foreclosing) Halbwachs's usefulness for a memory studies interested in questions of colonialism and globalization, since these are conditions that dislocate the organically defined groups that interested Halbwachs and that continue to interest many students of memory today.

When—in what might be the most important founding gesture of contemporary memory studies—Pierre Nora reanimates the Halbwachsian heritage of collective memory by connecting it to the classical tradition of *loci memoriae*, he also strongly reterritorializes Halbwachs's attention to multiplicity through a defining emphasis on the *nation* as the ultimate modern 'social framework'. Nora's massive collective project on *Les Lieux de mémoire*—seven volumes in the original (1984–92)—brilliantly explores 'sites of memory' that preserve and reproduce French identity in the face of the eroding flux of modernity.[7] Nora depicts modernity as a force that tends to wipe out the organic

[7] Pierre Nora (ed.), *Les Lieux de mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984–92). In English: *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*, 3 volumes, under the direction of Pierre Nora, edited by Lawrence D. Kritzman, translated by Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996–8); and *Rethinking France*, under the direction of Pierre Nora, translated by Mary Trouille (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001–6).

communities in which Halbwachs situated collective memory and to replace them with a compromise formation based on cultural monuments or 'sites' of various sorts (from war memorials to cookbooks and novels to the geography of Paris). In other words, Nora energized the study of cultural memory despite declaring the death of 'real' collective memory as it had been conceived until then.

Notwithstanding Nora's avowed interest in a 'polyphonic' approach (*Realms*, 1.xxiii), his project ultimately puts forward a starkly limited conception of the nation purged of its imperial adventures and minoritarian inflections (a further carry-over of Halbwachs's organicism into a late modern moment). Despite an emphasis on the local and the heterogeneous—on what volume 3 of *Les Lieux de mémoire* calls 'Les France'—the project has surprising absences. Perry Anderson has pointed out that the effect of the project's admitted 'Gallocentrism' and its unease with certain social divisions has been that 'the entire imperial history of the country … becomes a *non-lieu*' of memory, subject to forgetting. As Anderson asks with respect to one of the turning points of the era of decolonization: 'What are the *lieux de mémoire* that fail to include Dienbienphu?' (P. Anderson 2009: 161–2).[8] Despite its debt to new directions in critical historiography, the project under Nora's direction ends up reproducing a reified and ironically celebratory image of the very nation state it set out to deconstruct, as even Nora seemed to recognize in his afterword 'The Era of Commemoration' (*Realms*, 3.609–37).

Although less well known in the English-speaking world than Halbwachs and Nora, the German scholars Jan Assmann, an Egyptologist, and Aleida Assmann, a literary critic, provide a systematization of the study of collective memory that draws on and adds nuance to the approaches of Halbwachs and Nora, without, however, eliminating the problems associated with a predominantly metropolitan-oriented account. The Assmanns' contribution begins with a distinction between two forms of collective memory: they suggest that Halbwachs's use of the term refers to what they call 'communicative memory', 'varieties of collective memory that are based exclusively on everyday communications' (J. Assmann 1995: 126). What they call cultural memory, on the other hand, represents 'an externalization and objectivation of memory', which is 'evident in symbols such as texts, images, rituals, landmarks and other "lieux de mémoire"' (J. Assmann 2010: 122). While communicative memory has a duration that the Assmanns specify as 'three interacting generations or 80–100 years', they believe canonical cultural memory has a 'typical time-range … [of] 3000 years' (J. Assmann 2010: 122). Although obviously indebted to Nora, the concept of cultural memory does not suppose the narrative of the decline of 'authentic' memory that limits Nora's perspective. Unlike Nora, the Assmanns are also more forthright about the fact that cultural memory, as they use it, refers to *canonical* memory—those monuments (broadly understood) of a given civilization that have a shaping force over a long duration (see A. Assmann 2008). Like the theory of *lieux de mémoire*, the Assmanns' theory of cultural memory provides important tools for understanding

[8] See also Rothberg, Sanyal, and Silverman (2010).

and ultimately deconstructing the configurations of nationalist and imperial power embedded in representations of the past. However, despite their acknowledgement that official archives and repositories of memory 'have their own structural mechanisms of exclusion in terms of class, race, and gender' (A. Assmann, 2008: 106), their theory has not generally sought to uncover alternative archives or seek out non-canonical memory traditions, although recent work by Aleida Assmann suggests that this path may become more central to their work as it continues to develop (see A. Assmann 2009).

Each of the major figures in the development of cultural memory studies provides resources for thinking productively about the politics of the past in colonial and postcolonial contexts, but this brief survey also suggests some of the reasons why this important intellectual tradition has largely remained marginal to the concerns of postcolonial studies. Indeed, taken together, Halbwachs's organicism, Nora's purified national frame, and the Assmanns' preponderant focus on canonical archives suggest that throughout the twentieth century—the era of colonialism's apotheosis, collapse, and reconfiguration in neo- and postcolonial guises—cultural memory studies may have inadvertently done as much to reproduce imperial mentalities as to challenge them. In particular, the emphasis of so much memory studies on the construction of continuity over time and the coherence of cultural groups—whether defined as small-scale, national, or civilizational—appears in the postcolonial mirror as a kind of fetishism that disavows the structural dislocations produced by an imperial world system. Communities of memory in metropolitan locations have always been shadowed by apparently distant colonial realities, but memory studies (with some exceptions) has yet to investigate what such a situation entails for the memory cultures of either the colonizer or the colonized.[9] A memory studies available for the understanding of colonial and postcolonial realities would require more than just attention to the shaping force of the present and the accretion of power-laden memory in national and civilizational canons of memory, although these latter would certainly play a significant role. It would also require an understanding of the relations between memory, identity, and violence—the trauma and rupture produced by conquest, occupation, and genocide—as well as techniques for recovering the traces of non-dominant pasts.[10] Despite its limits, memory studies can contribute important insights into the mediation of trauma and violence to postcolonial studies, for not all forms of violence are experienced, integrated, or remembered in identical ways.

9. Fredric Jameson (1990) has helped conceptualize the way that colonialism 'shadows' modern metropolitan daily life.

10. The field of trauma studies, which overlaps with but is not identical to memory studies, offers greater attention to the dislocations of violent histories. Yet, as critics have pointed out in recent years, it too has largely disavowed engagement with colonialism and its legacies and has thus failed to engage with structural, systemic forms of violence. For an influential volume on trauma and memory, see Caruth (1995). For a postcolonial critique of this version of trauma studies, see Craps (2010).

Decolonizing the Past: From Anti-Colonialism to Postcolonial Studies

Although the absence of reflection on colonialism in cultural memory studies may help explain the neglect of memory as an explicit issue in postcolonial studies, the anti-colonial source texts of postcolonialism are in fact deeply and urgently engaged with the problem of memory as with its twin—forgetting. Such engagement arises from a recognition common to all movements of decolonization—that the struggle against colonialism involves, in part, a struggle over collective memory. Both dimensions of collective memory theorized by the Assmanns are key here: colonialism involves a break in the intergenerational communicative memory of a colonized group at the same time as it involves the imposition of a foreign canon of cultural memory. In other words, colonialism ruptures both the past-present continuities embedded in the practices of everyday living and the larger symbolic systems that give shape, continuity, and coherence to cultures over time.

Whatever their political differences, anti-colonial theorists such as Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and Amilcar Cabral share a sense that memory constitutes one of the significant fronts in the struggle against empire. As Fanon writes in *The Wretched of the Earth*, 'Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it. This work of devaluing pre-colonial history takes on a dialectical significance today [i.e., in the anti-colonial struggle]' (Fanon 1968 [1961]: 210). Cabral similarly recognizes the past as a stake in colonial and anti-colonial processes: 'The colonialists usually say that it was they who brought us into history: today we show that this is not so. They made us leave history, our history, to follow them, right at the back, to follow the progress of their history' (Cabral, quoted in Young 2001: 288). For Cabral, this destructive dimension of colonialism necessitates that cultural praxis join armed struggle for independence and reclamation of productive forces as axes of the fight for national liberation: 'A people who free themselves from foreign domination will be free culturally only if, without complexes and without underestimating the importance of positive accretions from the oppressor and other cultures, they return to the upward paths of their own culture … Thus, it may be seen that if imperialist domination has the vital need to practice cultural oppression, national liberation is necessarily an act of *culture*' (Cabral 1973: 43). The act of culture Cabral imagines as part of national liberation is also an act of collective memory: a 'return' not to some essential identity but to a historical itinerary that colonialism displaced without fully erasing. Similarly, Fanon, while sceptical that 'the past existence of an Aztec civilization' or 'all the proofs of a wonderful Songhai civilization' will benefit Mexican or Songhai peasants in the present, nevertheless considers the 'passionate search for a national culture' in the collective memory of a decolonizing society an essential moment of struggle (Fanon 1968 [1961]: 209).

In his powerful polemic *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950/1955), Fanon's teacher Césaire also embraces the claims of cultural memory against the violence of colonial

erasure. For Césaire, the colonial project relies on a 'forgetting machine'. As he writes in a bitterly ironic passage from his anti-colonial pamphlet,

> Before the arrival of the French in their country, the Vietnamese were people of an old culture, exquisite and refined. To recall this fact upsets the digestion of the Banque d'Indochine. Start the forgetting machine!
>
> These Madagascans who are being tortured today, less than a century ago were poets, artists, administrators? Shhhhh! Keep your lips buttoned! And silence falls, silence as deep as a safe! Fortunately, there are still the Negroes. Ah! the Negroes! Let's talk about the Negroes! … About the Sudanese empires? About the bronzes of Benin? Shango sculpture? (Césaire 2000 [1950/1955]: 52)

While strategically staging a potentially nostalgic and idealized vision of pre-colonial cultures, Césaire also anticipates Fanon and Cabral in stating clearly that the anti-colonial project does not entail a simple nativism or 'return' to the past (despite the title of his most famous poem, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*): 'It is not a dead society that we want to revive. We leave that to those who go in for exoticism … It is a new society that we must create' (2000 [1950/1955]: 52). Yet, for all three of these anti-colonialist theorists, the new postcolonial society will be one that remembers—recalls and reconfigures—resources that predate the imposition of foreign domination. In drawing attention to the 'cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary possibilities wiped out'—in 'see[ing] clearly what colonization has destroyed'—the theory of anti-colonial practice made memory a tool in the struggle against the colonial 'machine' (2000 [1950/1955]: 42–3).

In the move from the moment of anti-colonial struggle to a postcolonial present in which most former colonies have attained formal independence (if without the full 'national liberation' Cabral and others called for), the problematics of temporality shift. In its institutionalized form, postcolonial studies draws on the classic anti-colonial texts discussed above and addresses many of the same questions of violence, erasure, and reconstruction, but without the same urgency surrounding the moment of decolonization. Rather, postcolonial studies provides a long view that helps explain the tenacity of colonialism beyond formal colonization, but also the instabilities that have always resulted from (and made possible) resistance to empire. Insights about memory can assist in clarifying both the shaping of mentalities over the *longue durée*, which takes place through the production of the Assmanns' cultural memory, and the opposition such imposition engenders, which emerges in various forms of counter-memory.[11]

[11] The term 'counter-memory' derives from the work of Michel Foucault, although many uses of it do not necessarily follow Foucault to the letter (cf. Foucault 1977). Counter-memory is closely allied to the genealogical approach Foucault develops in his critical reading of Nietzsche. For the French philosopher, 'counter-memory' functions to strip history and memory of their metaphysical trappings: their investment in a teleological notion of time and a sovereign notion of subjectivity. The forms of discontinuity Foucault associates with genealogy and counter-memory do indeed run against the grain of the Assmanns' canonical understanding of cultural memory. Often, however, counter-memory is used in a less philosophical, more explicitly political context to refer to forms of memory that oppose hegemonic constructions of empire and nation but do not necessarily oppose teleology and sovereign subjectivity.

The academic field of postcolonial studies generally traces its origins to the 1978 publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Without explicit invocation, Said describes *avant la lettre* the Assmanns' concept of canonical cultural memory and reveals—as the two German scholars themselves generally do not—its implication in colonial power relations. Drawing on Foucault's notions of the archive and discursive formation, Said reveals how centuries of knowledge production about 'the Orient' have constructed geo-cultural regions as targets for European (and later US) colonial intervention. He argues that scholarly investigations and cultural texts have 'enclosed' the Orient in a theatrical representational space: 'the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined. On this stage will appear figures whose role it is to represent the larger whole from which they emanate. The Orient then seems to be, not an unlimited extension beyond the familiar European world, but rather a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe' (Said 1978: 63). Although Said does not use such terminology, this is a stage constructed out of, and in turn constructing, the canons of cultural memory:

> In the depths of the Orientalist stage stands a prodigious cultural repertoire whose individual items evoke a fabulously rich world: the Sphinx, Cleopatra, Eden, Troy, Sodom and Gomorrah, … and dozens more … The European imagination was nourished extensively from this repertoire: between the Middle Ages and the eighteenth century such major authors as Ariosto, Milton, Marlowe, Tasso, Shakespeare, Cervantes, and the authors of the *Chanson de Roland* and the *Poema del Cid* drew on the Orient's riches for their productions, in ways that sharpened the outlines of imagery, ideas, and figures populating it. (1978: 63)

This 'repertoire' of early Orientalist 'stagings', along with scholarly reference works such as the *Bibliothèque orientale*, helped conveyed 'Orientalism's power and effectiveness, which everywhere remind the reader that henceforth in order to get at the Orient he must pass through the learned grids and codes provided by the Orientalist' (1978: 67). In so doing, they also helped set the stage for conquest of precisely those 'staged' and 'enclosed' lands.

Said's field-defining critique of the cultural memory of empire provides a crucial corrective to memory studies scholarship that considers canons and archives to be outside the field of power. Yet as the many revisions and correctives that followed suggest, Said may have fallen prey to canonical cultural memory's self-conception as an enclosed system of knowledge. Said's generative model of Orientalism soon seemed to have foreclosed all oppositional cross-currents and acts of resistance, both within the 'west' and especially in the colonized lands themselves, as he himself came to admit. In reflecting back on his project in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said would contribute to a more flexible model by stressing a 'contrapuntal' reading strategy dedicated to uncovering 'intertwined and overlapping histories' (1993: 18). Now the very canons of cultural memory, as well as the intertextual and intermedial links that help constitute them, are turned against empire, although Said's vocabulary stresses 'narrative' and 'stories' over 'remembrance' as such: 'my basic point [is] that stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their

own history' (xii).[12] Similarly, in the well-known move of 'writing back' to empire, postcolonial writers revise the European canon, simultaneously confirming and displacing the colonial cultural memory it underwrites.[13]

In the essays of Homi Bhabha collected in *The Location of Culture* (1994), Said's contrapuntal technique emerges as fundamental to the colonial encounter and, more generally, to the logic of cultural production. Bhabha only occasionally discusses memory as such (although a more recent lecture addresses 'global memory' and traumatic violence),[14] but his frequent references to the thought of Walter Benjamin as well as his attention to questions of temporality signal an ongoing interest in the '"in-between" space' of a 'past-present' that resembles memory (Bhabha 1994: 7). As Susan Bassnett's essay in this section of the volume demonstrates, this past-present hybrid is also a figure of translation: 'Translation is an act that takes place between languages and cultures, hence it is an intercultural process, but it is also intertemporal since the original came into being somewhere else at some other moment in time'. Although seemingly wedded to canonical notions of the 'original' and the past, translation and memory—especially when thought through a postcolonial lens—share a transformative potential that links them with novelty and resistance. For Bhabha, the potential of culture lies in its ability to 'creat[e] a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation' (7).[15] Postcolonial and minoritized cultural production acts, that is, as a form of counter-memory—a resignification of the past in the present—that unsettles canonical cultural memory.

Even more radically, Bhabha's work repeatedly reveals how the very attempt to instantiate canonical cultural memory runs up against a structural 'ambivalence' and 'hybridity'. The work of missionaries, for instance, sought to bring 'the Word of God and Man—Christianity and the English language' to the colonized, but such an attempted implantation of the canon ran up against the structural hybridity of cultural translation, as the colonized rewrote the sacred texts in their own terms (1994: 32–3). Working with the structuralist distinction between the subject of the *énonciation* and the subject of the *énoncé*, Bhabha suggests that the very attempt to institute a canonical 'pedagogic' message or *énoncé* runs up against the dislocating necessity of the contingent 'performative', which defines every act of *énonciation* (1994: 36, 148). In more recent work, he connects this model explicitly to the issue of memory. He draws on Benjamin to suggest that cultural memory in its oppositional guise seeks not simply to resurrect a repressed past but to 'displace the angle of vision' through which we approach history. It thus makes

12. In some of his late work, Said turned even more explicitly to memory in the telling of his own life story (1999) and in exploring remembrance as both a source of conflict and contest and as a potential resource for the production of solidarity and the imagination of coexistence (2000).

13. If most postcolonial critics have moved away from this seemingly 'reactive' mode of 'writing back', it remains an important part of the genealogy of postcolonial studies and an important dimension of postcolonial literatures.

14. See Homi Bhabha, 'On Global Memory: Thoughts on the Barbaric Transmission of Culture', lecture given at the Townsend Center for the Humanities, University of California, Berkeley, 14 April 2008. Available online: accessed 18 December 2010.

15. For more on cultural memory and translation in postcolonial contexts, see Brodzki (2007).

possible a 'new relation to the past' based not on 'resemblance' but on 'recognition' of our ethical implication in traumatic violence ('On Global Memory').

Like Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, the final theorist of postcolonial studies I touch on here, draws much more significantly on poststructuralist critique than the humanist Said. At the same time she returns us to Said's less 'ambivalent' reading of the colonial archive. Although far less totallizing than Said's initial vision of Orientalism, Spivak's consideration of colonialism's 'epistemic violence' throughout her work doubles as a critique of canonical cultural memory. In her most famous essay, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (1988a), as well as in her engagements with the subaltern studies school of historians, Spivak rigorously cautions against the assumption of a too easy counter-memory of the lives of colonized subjects; her emphasis instead is on the erasures colonial memory regimes foster. In 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography', for instance, she rejects the presumption that contemporary scholars can capture the 'voice-consciousness' of the subaltern (see Spivak 1988b). Meanwhile in 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' she demonstrates at length how 'the palimpsestic narrative of imperialism' overwrites subaltern histories, thus leading to her infamous and frequently misunderstood conclusion—later recontextualized in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*—that 'the subaltern cannot speak' (Spivak 1988a: 281, 308).[16] As two astute commentators on Spivak's work have suggested, the silence of the subaltern has to do with overlapping traditions of canonical cultural memory: 'Spivak's archive is a diachronic "palimpsest" whose textual layers enfold not only the synchronic court documents of British legal power/knowledge, but also the texts of Hindu antiquity, themselves palimpsestic layers of mistranslation and errant commentary' (Shetty and Bellamy 2000: 28). Spivak's project is thus a deconstruction of hegemonic archives, but a deconstruction that does not readily offer the subversive possibilities proffered by Bhabha; rather, her work ceaselessly maps the contours of imperial cultural memory as an ongoing version of what Césaire had called a half-century earlier the 'forgetting machine' (2000: 52).

Literature and the Media of (Post) Colonial Memory

No less than the anti-colonial and postcolonial theorists discussed here, postcolonial writers have also explored the ruptures produced by the imposition of imperial cultural memory and the erasure of pre-colonial histories. Such ruptures produce new constellations, as when colonial pedagogy elicits what Alison Landsberg (2004) calls in another context 'prosthetic memories' of the colonizing country—think of the infamous French colonial education in which children from the colonies learned about 'nos

16. See also Spivak (1999).

ancêtres, les Gaulois' (see Ha 2003). The Antiguan/American writer Jamaica Kincaid explores the institution and unravelling of such prosthetic memories in her brilliant and much-anthologized essayistic deflation of imperial culture, 'On Seeing England for the First Time' (1991).[17] In Kincaid's essay, the cognitive dissonance of reading at school in Antigua about daffodils and the 'white cliffs of Dover' results in a disabused view of Britain during the author's first visit to the metropole as an adult (1991: 35, 40; cf. A. Assmann 2009: 163). Although amusing in its ironies, the stakes of such cultural memory are also deadly serious. As Kincaid writes, 'the reality of my life was conquests, subjugation, humiliation, enforced amnesia. I was forced to forget' (1991: 36). One of her examples is the provenance of place names, such as 'Hawkins Street' in St John's, Antigua, where she grew up. John Hawkins, she points out,

> was knighted after a trip he made to Africa, opening up a new trade, the slave trade. He was then entitled to wear as his crest a Negro bound with a cord. Every single person living on Hawkins Street was descended from a slave. John Hawkins's ship, the one in which he transported the people he bought and kidnapped, was called The Jesus. He later became the treasurer of the Royal Navy and Rear Admiral. (1991: 36)

Kincaid's essayistic practice, like its novelistic counterpart, both maps the complicity of memory and forgetting in colonial and metropolitan *lieux de mémoire*, such as Hawkins Street or the cliffs of Dover, and dialectically reads those *lieux* against themselves through a practice of counter-memory that stages the colonized 'remembering back' to empire (just as, in an earlier moment, many postcolonial texts were understood as 'writing back' to empire: cf. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989; also Bassnett on translation as rewriting in this section of the volume).

Indeed, one way to read Kincaid's essay is as an illustration of what Nora's *lieux de mémoire* project would look like when viewed from the 'displaced angle' (Bhabha 2008: n.p.) of colonized vision. Visiting post-imperial England decades after having been introduced to its overweening power through education and the everyday consumption of goods 'Made in England' (1991: 33) during the colonial period, Kincaid observes a Nora-esque alienation from 'authentic' national memory among the residents of the metropole: 'There were monuments everywhere; they commemorated victories, battles fought between them and the people who lived across the sea from them, all vile people, fought over which of them would have dominion over the people who looked like me. The monuments were useless to them now, people sat on them and ate their lunch. They were like markers on an old useless trail, like a piece of old string tied to a finger to jog the memory' (1991: 37–8). Here Kincaid produces a double profanation of imperial cultural memory, exposing both the forgetting of violence that always underwrote it and its contemporary, postcolonial 'uselessness'. The 'contrapuntal' performance of memory

17. On Kincaid and cultural memory, see also A. Assmann (2009: 163–5). Here Assmann explores briefly how colonial and postcolonial contexts have the potential to reshape thinking about cultural memory by foregrounding 'contrasting and irreconcilable narratives' and 'contestation' over memory sites (161).

in the present—Kincaid's, but also that of the casual diners—undermines the pedagogical message of the greatness of empire the monuments were originally intended to produce. As Bhabha would predict, the necessity of iteration in the performance of cultural memory—'there were many times of seeing England for the first time', writes Kincaid (1991: 34)—proves to constitute both the force of that memory and the 'site' of its weakness. And yet, as Spivak might warn, even the undoing of imperial memory does not necessarily lead to the emergence of a 'subaltern' memory in the public sphere. Kincaid's essay ends with a fantasy of destruction, unmitigated by the recovery of any kind of alternative Antiguan archive: 'I wished every sentence, everything I knew, that began with England, would end with "and then it all died; we don't know how, it just all died"' (1991: 40). While the anti-colonial moment of Césaire, Fanon, and Cabral still seemed to offer the possibilities for a 'liberated' cultural memory, Kincaid's disabused postcolonial memory can only gesture towards the wished-for 'death' of ongoing colonial hegemony.

If the activist possibilities of earlier eras seem absent here, Kincaid's essay is nonetheless suggestive for furthering the project of a postcolonial memory studies. In particular, her essay anticipates the contemporary convergence of memory studies with media studies and suggests how such a pairing can contribute to our understanding of colonial and postcolonial cultures, while also pointing out potential lacunae in studies of cultural memory. Kincaid's deconstruction of metropolitan cultural memory refers not only to particular images and stories, but to a host of *media forms* through which imperial power makes itself felt: the map of England, canonical poetry, street names, royal crests, ship names, biblical texts. In a study of the afterlife of the 1857 Indian uprising or 'Mutiny', memory studies scholar Astrid Erll draws on the concepts of 'premediation' and 'remediation' developed by the media theorists Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin and applied to the work of remembrance by Ann Rigney.[18] For Erll, 'it is the "convergence" of medial representations which turns an event into a *lieu de mémoire*', and that convergence takes place through two fundamental processes of 'intermedial network[ing]': in 'premediation', existing media images and narratives 'provide schemata for new experience and its representation'; conversely, in 'remediation', the now-constituted event circulates through a variety of media forms, so that 'what is known about an event which has turned into a site of memory … seems to refer not so much to what one might cautiously call the "actual event," but instead to a canon of existent media constructions' (Erll 2009: 111). As Erll's work would predict, Kincaid's essay hints at both the 'premediation' of colonial memory and the remediation of 'England' as colonial power. Religion 'premediates' the 'transportation' medium of the slave trade—as in Hawkins's ship the *Jesus*—while English culture seems to premediate all of Antiguan colonial life: from table manners and clothing (her father's inappropriate felt hat: Kincaid 1991: 33) to literature's depiction of weather and urban lifestyles. Similarly, acts of remediation are everywhere in the essay, from Hawkins's slave-depicting crest to the commemoration of the slave trade in street names. Erll's work helps us notice the specific media that

18. See Erll (2007, 2009). Erll draws on Bolter and Grusin (1999) and Rigney (2005).

transport colonial meaning even into the postcolonial period, and thus establishes pre- and remediation as two of the material forms taken by the 'post' in postcolonial. But Kincaid supplements this story by putting greater emphasis than does Erll on the forms of *power* that articulate with those media. Thus, what interests Kincaid about Hawkins, for instance, is not only the media that carry his image across time, as he once carried slaves across the abyss of the Middle Passage; she also notes that he 'later became the treasurer of the Royal Navy and Rear Admiral' (Kincaid 1991: 36). Memory lives on through its circulation in media forms, but premediation and remediation are themselves made possible through articulation with the channels of economic and military power.

The French-Algerian Connection: Media, Memory Activism, and Multidirectionality

Although indelibly contoured by economic and military power—the driving forces of empire—cultural memory cannot be reduced to these factors. Indeed, Erll's attention to the circulation of memory in media forms suggests new ways of thinking about the activist potential of memory in struggles against empire. To illustrate such potential I turn in this final section of the chapter to one particularly dense knot of memory in the era of decolonization and suggest that it is memory's relative autonomy from determination by power or limited notions of group identity that constitutes its value as a resource for resistance. While, in her chapter for this volume, Elleke Boehmer uses the 'anti-colonial life' of Nelson Mandela as an emblem of postcolonial 'theory-in-practice', I draw here on a particular 'anti-colonial conjuncture'—the struggle against French colonialism in Algeria—to illustrate the simultaneously theoretical and activist potential of cultural memory work.

As we have seen via the texts of anti-colonial activist-intellectuals, imperialism interrupts the development of colonial societies, but the process is by no means one-way, as Césaire in particular theorized with his notion of the *choc en retour* or 'boomerang effect'.[19] Even before the postcolonial migrations that radically transformed the texture of life in places like Great Britain and France, the free or coerced flow of people, goods, and ideas accompanying colonial expansion created new constellations of histories and temporalities. Such flows constitute and institute memory's 'multidirectionality', a dynamic in which multiple pasts jostle against each other in a heterogeneous present, and where communities of remembrance disperse and reconvene in new, non-organic forms not recognizable to earlier theorists of memory like Halbwachs and Nora. Like empire, memory is both disjunctive and combinatorial: it both disassembles and

19. On Césaire's notion of the *choc en retour*—a way of explaining how imperial violence returns 'home' to the metropolis, see Rothberg (2009: chapter 3).

reassembles. This 'multidirectionality' of memory in the colonial/postcolonial age does not come with a guaranteed political vision—indeed it tends to trouble the 'camp' mentality that seeks to corral politics into a simplified identitarian topography—but it is also an unavoidable component of political struggle and a potential resource in ongoing movements for decolonization and justice in today's globalized world.[20]

The Algerian War of Independence (1954–62) was one of the most brutal and bloody wars of decolonization, but the excess of violence that accompanied it should not blind us to the cultural dimensions that informed the fight, in particular the forms of collective memory that served as sources of mobilization among a range of participants.[21] Like the French war in Indochina before it, as well as other wars of decolonization in the 1950s and 1960s, the Algerian War was fought against the backdrop of World War II, an event etched, however unevenly, in the minds of combatants on all sides of the struggle, many of whom took part in both wars. Indeed, from the very inauguration of the post-war era, World War II and Algerian struggles for independence have been interlinked. On 8 May 1945, a demonstration in the Algerian city of Sétif took place to mark the end of the war and to call for decolonization. After several dozen *pieds noirs* were killed in ensuing violence, the French army took part in reprisals that included the massacre of thousands (if not tens of thousands) of Algerians. At least in the formerly colonized world, that massacre has forever soldered together the liberation of Europe from fascism and the reluctance of liberated Europe to let go of its own forms of extreme violence—a connection that leaves clear traces in the writings of Césaire, Fanon, and Cabral.[22] The memory of Sétif and of massacres in Madagascar and elsewhere as well as their links to European barbarism 'at home' would echo through anti-colonial struggles. For metropolitan anti-colonial activists, their engagement frequently arose out of and further propagated memories of the world war and, specifically, the Nazi persecution of Jews.[23]

Response to and memory of the massacre of peacefully demonstrating Algerians in Paris on 17 October 1961 demonstrate the multidirectional dynamics of media and memory activism. When the FLN called for a march in the heart of the French capital to protest a racist curfew and show their strength in the metropole, the French police responded with violence, killing dozens and arresting 11,000 protestors, who were rounded up and taken to makeshift camps in sports stadiums at the edges of the city. The police response was directed by the prefect Maurice Papon, who, it later transpired, had collaborated with the Nazis in the deportation of Jews from Bordeaux; but even before those revelations inextricably linked the 1961 events to the Holocaust, contemporary

20. See Paul Gilroy's critique of 'camp' mentalities in *Between Camps* (2000). Also relevant to the project of joining memory studies and postcolonial studies are two other books by Gilroy: *The Black Atlantic* (1993) and *Postcolonial Melancholia* (2006).

21. Most of the examples in the following paragraphs are explored at greater length in Rothberg (2009: chapters 6–9), but they are all recast here for present purposes.

22. On the Sétif massacre, see Benot (2001).

23. For an oral history of French anti-colonial activists that emphasizes in many cases memory of the Nazi period, see Evans (1997: esp. 31–72).

observers already experienced 17 October as 'premediated' by the round-up of Jews in Paris. For instance, a week after the event, the New Left newsweekly *France-Observateur* published an article by the Algerian-French writer Henri Kréa called 'Le racisme est collectif, la solidarité individuelle' ('Racism is collective; solidarity individual'), which was accompanied by a photograph of Algerians being held in the Palais des Sports. Underneath the image a caption reads, 'Cela ne vous rappelle rien?' ('Doesn't that remind you of something?') (Kréa 1961: 14–15). The caption clearly references the round-ups of Jews during the Nazi occupation and, in particular, the infamous July 1942 *rafle du Vel' d'Hiv'*, in which thousands of 'foreign' Jews were arrested by French police and held in a velodrome before being deported to Auschwitz. Premediation plays a significant role here, for the photograph resembles a famous image thought to be of Jews imprisoned by the Nazis in the Vel' d'Hiv', which would have been known to many Parisian readers of *France-Observateur* through its inclusion in Alain Resnais's 1955 camp documentary *Nuit et brouillard* (*Night and Fog*). Although, decades later, that image turned out to have been misidentified—it actually depicts suspected *collaborators* held after the war—the remediation of the image in Resnais' film as well as its premediation of similar images during the Algerian War demonstrates the powerful links that accrue between media forms and acts of memory.[24]

In fact, the dynamics of mediation and memory surrounding this event went on to acquire further layers of complexity. In addition to the implicit visual reference to the 1942 *rafle*, one of Kréa's Algerian interviewees refers to *Exodus*, the 1960 Otto Preminger film based on Leon Uris's novel about Jewish refugees from Hitler on their way to Palestine, which was showing at the time in Paris and which the interviewee uses to juxtapose audiences' sympathy for Jewish victims with their relative indifference toward Algerians (Kréa 1961: 15). Even more interesting, the *form* of Kréa's article—interviews with Algerian workers—seems to call upon another film just opening in Paris at that time, Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin's *cinéma-vérité* experiment *Chronique d'un été* (*Chronicle of a Summer*, 1961). *Chronique* was the only film released during the Algerian War that made reference to the conflict—albeit briefly and cryptically—and, in addition to interviews with workers and African students, it also featured at its centre an unprecedented testimony by an Auschwitz survivor, Marceline Loridan, a testimony that emerges from discussions of decolonization and racism and allegorically stands in for the many censored testimonies of Algerians (and French activists) tortured or held at that time in detention camps.

Chronique d'un été's role in mediating the Algerian struggle through juxtaposition with what was only then beginning to be understood as the 'unique' Holocaust is even more striking in another *France-Observateur* response to the October 17 massacre. Marguerite Duras's 'Les deux ghettos' (The Two Ghettos) also uses the interview form, this time juxtaposing discussions with two Algerians and a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto, whom Duras dubs 'M' (a possible echo of Marceline) (Duras 1961: 8–10). Again images play a role, as the cover of the newsweekly displays parallel images of an Algerian

24. On the mistaken identification of this image, see Lindeperg (2007: 59).

and a Jew wearing a yellow star. The text of the interviews itself draws connections between the plight of Algerians and Jews, but offers a more differentiated picture of the relation between these different forms of violence than the title and photographs suggest. Such connections were not unique to the metropolitan resistance. Not only did the FLN itself also recognize the strategic usefulness of such analogies, as the research of Jim House has demonstrated, but individual FLN combatants also experienced the events themselves as untimely echoes of the recent past. House quotes an FLN document in which an Algerian 'report[s] to his FLN superiors what he saw when he was taken to the *Palais des Sports*: "There we made a macabre discovery. The [*Algerian*] brothers were lying on the ground, their heads split open and limbs dislocated. All these horrors were comparable to those endured by the Jews in the Nazi concentration camps"' (House 2010: 30).[25] Strikingly similar connections are also made in another text that seems to remediate *Chronique*, William Gardner Smith's novel *The Stone Face* (1963), the first novel to treat the Paris massacre, which also features a female Holocaust survivor whose name begins with 'M' at its centre and adds still another resonant multidirectional link: in nuanced and differentiated fashion, the novel constellates both the Holocaust and the Algerian revolution with the struggle for civil rights in the United States.

Whatever the historical accuracy of such comparisons (or even the sources of such images, as in the *Nuit et brouillard* case), what emerges from the October 1961 moment is a strong sense of the *mobilizing* nature of cultural memory, its ability to create solidarities through the very channels of the media and regardless of the 'immediacy' of one's own experiences. This lesson continues into the afterlife of October 17 memory. After having been suppressed by the French state, downplayed by the communist left in favour of its own losses during the temporally proximate Charonne violence, avoided by Algerian families, and instrumentalized by the nascent Algerian state, memory of October 17 re-emerged in migrant youth movements in the 1980s. Interestingly, though, the transmission of the events to this 'post-memory' generation happened in non-organic fashion.[26] As House and MacMaster write, 'these descendants of Algerians often came across 17 October via the resilient counter-memories of French former anti-colonial activists rather than memory transmission within their own families' (2006: 19). Those French activists were in turn precisely the generation motivated by their own sense—either directly experienced or inherited—that the Algerian events disturbingly echoed the Nazi period. In the most recent remediations of October 17, such as Michael Haneke's *Caché* (2005), the Holocaust/Algeria link remains as a haunting subtext even as new multidirectional links—Abu Ghraib and the invasion of Iraq—come to join the decades-old constellation. As this brief genealogy suggests, the activation of memory can produce

25. See also House and MacMaster (2006).

26. Marianne Hirsch initially coined the term 'post-memory' to refer to the aesthetic production of children of Holocaust survivors. Since then, in her work and that of others, it has grown in scope to refer more generally to second (and subsequent) generations who live in the shadow of some defining, often traumatic event that they did not directly experience. For the invention and genealogy of the term, see Hirsch (2008).

immediate, short-term resistance, but it can also set the stage for longer-term struggles carried out over generations.

Conclusion: New Visions of Solidarity

The French-Algerian example stands at an angle to 'classical' considerations of cultural memory, while also supplementing postcolonial accounts in interesting ways. Taking into account the transnational and transcultural dynamics of empire disrupts models of memory premised on the boundedness of groups and nations and provides a 'displaced angle' on the canons of cultural memory. Anti-colonial and postcolonial practices of memory reveal the intimacy of metropole and colony—the 'tensions of empire' identified by Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper (1997)—as well as civilization and barbarism. Memory emerges not only from the closed field of organically defined groups and the sacred sites of national monumentality, but also in the very tensions and ruptures of imperial conquest and traumatic violence that dislocate space, time, and identity. Such insights also render the boundaries of postcolonial studies itself uncertain since, as the French-Algerian example illustrates, acts of memory overrun boundaries between 'Europe and its Others' or 'the west and the rest'. Even more radically, the multidirectional nature of memory—its spiralling, echoing tendencies—makes it difficult to know what the 'proper' terrain of a postcolonial memory studies could ever be. The haunting presence of Nazi genocide in both foundational texts such as Césaire's *Discourse* and in the activist memory work of the FLN and its French allies, along with the traces of colonial violence that can be found in some responses to the Holocaust, suggests the possibility of new directions: future projects in memory studies and postcolonial studies will want to remain open to surprising forms of difference and unexpected visions of solidarity.

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