IRELAND, THE GREAT WAR AND THE GEOGRAPHY OF REMEMBRANCE

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On a grey, wet Sunday in October 2001 the bodies of nine men executed and buried in Mountjoy gaol in Dublin were exhumed and reinterred at Glasnevin cemetery.[1] Thousands of people lined the streets of Dublin to watch the passing of the funeral cortege, while tens of thousands witnessed the event as it was broadcast live on the national television network. With full state honours, the coffins, draped in the Irish tricolour, were publicly paraded from the gaol to the Catholic Pro-Cathedral in central Dublin where a concelebrated requiem mass was held before the bodies were transported for burial to Glasnevin cemetery. A graveside oration, delivered by the Irish *Taoiseach* (Prime Minister), was accompanied by the sounding of three rounds of ammunition and the playing of the *Last Post* and national anthem. While some controversy surrounded the day's events, by and large the ceremony was deemed a fitting, dignified and noble occasion of reconciliation and remembrance. The men concerned were Irish Republican Army (IRA) Volunteers executed eighty years earlier, under British authority, at Mountjoy gaol during the War of Independence 1920–21.[2] Their bodies had been buried in the grounds of the prison and their re-interring at Glasnevin cemetery had been mooted over subsequent decades. The final symbolic recognition of their sacrifice through the performance of a state funeral on a rainy autumnal day in 2001 reinforces the significance of the dead in the arousal of the collective and personal memories of the living.

In the Taoiseach's oration he claimed that: 'The big powers had said that it was for the small nations that the First World War was fought. The people of Ireland were determined that the principle of national self-determination must also be extended to the Irish nation.'[3] The lexical juxtaposition of the First World War

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[1] There were actually ten men's bodies exhumed but Patrick Maher, at the request of his family, was re-interred in a cemetery in his home county of Limerick.

[2] The men executed were Kevin Barry, Thomas Whelan, Patrick Moran, Patrick Doyle, Bernard Ryan, Frank Flood, Thomas Bryan, Thomas Traynor, Edmund Foley and Patrick Maher.

[3] Bertie Ahern's (2001) graveside oration at Glasnevin cemetery, Sunday 14 October 2001. The text of the speech was published in full in the *Irish Times*, 15 October 2001.

with the question of Irish independence reminds us of the real proximity of the global conflict that was the Great War and the local conflict that was the Irish independence movement. The overlapping of these powerful political moments would be crucial for the development of a memorial landscape in Ireland to those who died in the Great War. Where the dead are concerned Verdery reminds us that 'Remains are concrete, yet protean,'[4] and it is precisely the protean nature of the rituals of remembrance dedicated to Irish men and women killed in the First World War that is the central concern of this study. This book situates efforts to publicly remember those who sacrificed their lives in the war within the context of a set of competing narratives of cultural identity evident in Ireland in the years preceding and following the war. This context acted both as a theatrical stage in which remembrance took place and a temporal stage in which rituals of public commemoration would be marked, rehearsed and repeated in the decades following the war.

Time, memory and representation

The central preoccupation of Al Pacino's late twentieth-century documentary movie *Looking for Richard* is making sense of a play written four centuries ago about an English king who reigned for two years. As an exercise in translation, Pacino's treatment of the play brings into sharp relief the challenges and possibilities presented by attempting to re-enact, re-stage, re-interpret and re-memorise an historical drama. The interpretation and performance of the play by an American cast, the location of the play in New York city and the conversations held between the cast, Shakespearean specialists, construction workers, high-school students and taxi drivers all underpin the questions that the movie raises about how the meaning of past events can be conveyed to contemporary audiences. The adverb of present time – Now – which dramatically introduces the opening speech of the play, delivered by Gloster, immediately unfetters the temporal chain of sequence usually deployed to evoke time's past and past times. To remember the past is to remember it now and each rehearsal of *Richard III* arises from the perspective of 'Now', and Pacino's search for meaning is one moment in that quest for meaning. From discussions of iambic pentameters, the internecine intrigue of the English court, the psycho-political and sexual motivations of the characters, the costuming of the actors, the War of the Roses, Pacino's documentary film makes transparent both the process of interpretation and the interpretation itself as it is represented by this particular cast. In so doing it makes visible the complex relationship between the context and text in any rendition of the past.

The translation of meaning across space and time is central both to the rituals of everyday life and to the exceptional moments of remembrance associated with

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[4] K. Verdery, *The political lives of dead bodies: reburial and postsocialist change* (New York, 1999), 28.

birth, death and other key events in personal and collective histories. Memory as re-collection, re-membering and re-presentation is crucial in the mapping of historical moments and in the articulation of identity. As Jonathan Boyarin has put it 'memory is neither something pre-existent and dormant in the past nor a projection from the present, but a potential for creative collaboration between present consciousness and the experience or expression of the past'.[5]

Maurice Halbwachs' work *On Collective Memory* was the first critical attempt to give some sort of definition to the idea of social memory. For Halbwachs, collective or social memory was rooted in his belief that common memories of the past among a social group, tied by kinship, class or religion, link individuals in the group with a common shared identity when the memories are invoked. Social memory is a way in which a social group can maintain its collective identity over time and it is through the social group that individuals recall these memories.[6] But, as Withers has commented, this analysis itself is 'rooted in that concern for continuities evident in the *longue durée* tradition of French *Annaliste* historiography and in acceptance of a rather uncritical, "superorganic" notion of culture'.[7] While Halbwachs is right to socialise the concept of memory his analysis fails to historicise memory and embrace the notion that the very concept of the 'social' may itself have a history and indeed a geography.

Conventionally the 'art of memory' since Romanticism has been ideologically separated from history in Western historiographical traditions where memory is subjective, selective and uncritical while history is objective, scientific and subject to empirical scrutiny.[8] With the demise of peasant societies, Nora suggests that true memory 'which has taken refuge in gestures and habits, in skills passed down by unspoken traditions, in the body's inherent self-knowledge, in unstudied reflexes and ingrained memories'[9] has been replaced by modern memory which is self-conscious, historical and archival. More recent work on social memory has emphasised the discursive role of memory in the articulation of an identity politics and in particular the role of elite and dominant memory, mobilised by the powerful, to pursue specific political objectives.[10] The distinction between 'authentic' and

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[5] J. Boyarin, *Remapping memory: the politics of timespace* (London, 1994), 22.

[6] M. Halbwachs, *On collective memory*, ed. and trans. L. Coser (Chicago, 1992). It was originally published in French as *La mémoire collective* (Paris, 1950).

[7] C. Withers, 'Place, memory, monument: memorializing the past in contemporary Highland Scotland', *Ecumene*, 3 (1996), 326.

[8] F. Yates, *The art of memory* (London, 1978).

[9] P. Nora, 'Between memory and history: les lieux de mémoire', *Representations*, 26 (1989), 13.

[10] There is a vast literature covering this theme but included as some of the most important are P. Hutton, *History as an art of memory* (Burlington, VT, 1993); J. Le Goff, *History and memory*, trans. S. Rendall and E. Clamen (New York, 1992); D. Krell, *Of memory, reminiscence and writing* (Bloomington, 1990); G. Lipsitz, *Time passages: collective memory and American popular culture* (Minneapolis, 1990); D. Middleton and D. Edwards, eds., *Collective remembering* (London, 1990). P. Nora, ed., *Realms of memory: Vol. 11: Traditions* (Chichester, 1997).

modern memory is particularly persuasive when connected with a style of politics associated with the rise of the national state. The development of extra-local memories is intrinsic to the mobilisation of an 'imagined community' of nationhood,[11] and new memories necessitate the collective amnesia or forgetting of older ones.[12] In particular, where elites are concerned Connerton suggests that 'it is now abundantly clear that in the modern period national elites have invented rituals that claim continuity with an appropriate historic past, organising ceremonies/parades and mass gatherings, and constructing new ritual spaces'.[13] In a fascinating study of the emergence of nationalist politics in Germany, Mossé investigates how the 'new politics' 'attempted to draw the people into active participation in the national mystique through rites and festivals, myths and symbols which gave concrete expression to the general will'.[14] Resisting analyses which focus primarily on the political and economic transformations which precipitated the evolution of the nation-state, Mossé's study shifts the historical emphasis towards the cultivation of a collective memory by focusing on the aesthetics and symbolism central to German nationalism. He claims: 'it [nationalism] represented itself to many, perhaps most people, through a highly stylised politics, and in this way managed to form them into a movement'.[15] As such, the role of re-membering the past – the putting together of its constituent parts into a single, coherent narrative – has been profoundly significant for the emergence of a popular nationalist identity. The deployment of the body as an analogy of the nation-state, a genealogy of people with common origins, co-exists with a claim that the state acts as a guarantor of individual rights and freedoms that transcend historical time and the constraints of the past. Paradoxically, then, in the context of national identity, social memory as mediated through political elites both legitimates and simultaneously denies the significance of remembrance of things past.

While, at its most basic level, memory can be said to operate at the scale of the individual brain and thus avoid a concept of memory that suggests it has a superorganic quality, it is also necessarily the case that memories are shared, exchanged and transformed among groups of individuals. In this sense there are collective memories which arise from the inter-subjective practices of signification that are not fixed but are re-created through a set of rules of discourse that are periodically contestable.[16] This can be seen, for instance, in the collective memory of the American Civil War as expressed through the erecting of public statues. Rather than reflecting the serious division between pro- and anti-slavery lobbies in the United States, they were gradually perceived 'as part of a healthy process of sectional reconciliation – a process that everyone knew but no one said was for and

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[11] B. Anderson, *Imagined communities: on the origins and spread of nationalism* (London, 1989).

[12] On the idea of the invention of national traditions, see the seminal work E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, eds., *The invention of tradition* (Cambridge, 1983).

[13] P. Connerton, *How societies remember* (Cambridge, 1989), 51.

[14] G. Mossé, *The nationalization of the masses* (New York, 1975), 2.   [15] *Ibid.*, 214.

[16] J. Butler, *Gender trouble*: *feminism and the subversion of identity* (London, 1990).

between whites'.[17] The context of signification in this case was the reconciliation of northern and southern whites in the rules of a discourse, which denied black memory and thus blurred the South's defence of slavery. This visual interpretation of the Civil War, however, did not exist completely uncontested and there were three statues erected to represent blacks. Two of these monuments displayed a single black soldier amongst a group of combatants. The third – the Shaw memorial – erected in Boston in 1897 and designed by the sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens, was of the commander Robert Gould Shaw surrounded by his regiment of black troops. This facilitated 'opposing readings of its commemorative intent'[18] and underlines the periodic capacity for memories to be contested in the public sphere.

There is a considerable literature emphasising the politics of memory, especially where dominant groups in society are concerned, *vis-à-vis* their shaping of interpretations of the past. Yet it is increasingly clear that the social process involved in memorialisation is hotly contested with respect not only to form and structure but also to the meaning attached to the representation. Popular memory can be a vehicle through which dominant, official renditions of the past can be resisted by mobilising groups towards social action but also through the maintenance of an oppositional group identity embedded in subaltern memories.[19] The deployment of local and oral histories in the formation of group identities can be a powerful antidote to both state and academic narratives of the past, especially where marginalised groups are concerned.[20] The controversies surrounding the remembering of the Holocaust through the conversion of death camps into 'memorial' camps to the genocide of the Second World War is a case in point. In Auschwitz, for instance, the competing aspirations of Polish nationalists, communists, Catholics and Jews to control the representation of the Holocaust there has influenced the physical structure of the site and the meaning attached to it by these various groups.[21] In this sense, rather than treating memory as the manipulative action of the powerful to narrate the past to suit their particular interests, a fuller account might follow Samuel who suggests that one 'might think of the invention of tradition as a process rather than an event, and memory, even in its silences, as something which people made for themselves'.[22] The capacity which people have to formulate and represent their

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[17] K. Savage, 'The politics of memory: black emancipation and the Civil War monument', in R. Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: the politics of national identity* (Princeton, 1994), 132.

[18] *Ibid.*, 136.

[19] R. Johnson, G. McLennan, B. Schwarz and D. Sutton, eds., *Making histories: studies in history-writing and politics* (London, 1982).

[20] See, for instance, K. Armstrong and H. Benyon, eds., *Hello are you working?! Memories of the thirties in the north east of England* (Durham, 1977).

[21] See A. Charlesworth, 'Contesting places of memory: the case of Auschwitz', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 12, (1994), 579–93; J. E. Young, *The texture of memory: holocaust memorials and meaning* (London, 1993); H. Langbein, 'The controversy over the convent at Auschwitz', in C. Rittner and J. K. Roth, eds., *Memory offended: the Auschwitz convent controversy* (New York, 1991), 95–8.

[22] R. Samuel, *Theatres of memory*, vol. I (London, 1994), 17.

own memories, however, is regularly constrained by the discursive field in which they operate and literally the space in which their pronouncements, both figurative and literal, are made. As Sherman reminds us, 'commemoration is also cultural: it inscribes or reinscribes a set of symbolic codes, ordering discourses, and master narratives that recent events, perhaps the very ones commemorated, have disrupted, newly established, or challenged'.[23] If memory is conceived as a recollection and representation of times past, it is equally a recollection of spaces past where the imaginative geography of previous events is in constant dialogue with the current metaphorical and literal spatial setting of the memory-makers.

Space, memory and representation

The role of space in the art and the act of memory has a long genealogy in European thought. In the ancient and medieval worlds memory was treated as a visual rather than a verbal activity, one which focused on images more than words. The immense dialectal variation and low levels of literacy perhaps account for the primacy of the visual image over other types of representation. Visual images like the stained glass window and other religious icons came to embed a sacred narrative in the minds of their viewers. They became mnemonic devices in religious teaching where sacred places became symbolically connected to particular ideal qualities. Networks of shrines, pilgrimage routes and grottoes, sited for commemorative worship, formed a sacred geography where the revelations of a Christian God could be remembered, spatially situated and adored.[24] A mapping of the narrative of Christianity through a predominantly visual landscape formed the basis of memory work through the Middle Ages.[25]

While during the Renaissance and Enlightenment the conception of memory work altered scale (to the astral) and focus (towards the scientific rather than the religious), and was expressed at times architecturally by viewing the world from a height,[26] it was during the period of Romanticism that a more introspective, personal and localised view of memory came into focus. Memory in this guise came to be seen as the recovery of things lost to the past, the innocence of childhood and childhood spaces, for instance, and this divorced memory work from any scientific endeavour to make sense of the world or the past. It transformed the role of memory to the scale of the individual and perhaps created the preconditions for divorcing history from memory and separating intellectually the objective spatial narratives of history from the subjective experience of memory places. But as Samuel persuasively argues, 'far from being merely a passive receptacle or storage system, an image bank of the past, [memory] is rather an active, shaping force; that it is dynamic – what it contrives symptomatically to forget is as important as

[23] D. Sherman, *The construction of memory in interwar France* (London, 1999), 7.
[24] M. Carruthers, *The book of memory: a study of memory in medieval culture* (Cambridge, 1990).
[25] B. Kedar and R. Werblowsky, eds., *Sacred space: shrine, city, land* (New York, 1998).
[26] Yates, *The art of memory*.

what it remembers – and that it is dialectically related to historical thought, rather than being some kind of negative other to it'.[27]

By treating memory as a dialectic of history, in constant dialogue with the past, we begin to see how the dualistic thinking underwriting the division of history and memory becomes more problematic. This is particularly the case in relation to the spatiality of history and memory. The gradual transformation of a sacred geography of religious devotion to a secularised sacred geography connected with identity in the modern period destabilises the rigid lines of demarcation drawn between objective/subjective narration; emotional/abstract sources of evidence; local/universal ways of knowing. Treating memory as a legitimate form of historical understanding has opened new avenues of research where subjective renderings of the past become embedded in the processes of interpretation and not as a counterpoint to objective facts. Nation-building exercises, colonial expansion in the non-European world, regional, ethnic and class identity formation, all embrace an imaginative and material geography, made sacred in the spaces of remembrance and continuously remade, contested, revised and transmuted as fresh layers of meaning attend to the spaces. Geographers, historians, anthropologists and cultural theorists are increasingly paying attention to the processes involved in the constitution and routing of memory spaces, and especially to the symbolic resonances of such spaces to the formation, adaptation and contestation of popular belief systems.

In particular, studies have focused on the role of commemorative spaces and memory making in the articulation of national identity. In the context of the United States, the intersections between vernacular and official cultural expressions have been demonstrated to create a series of commemorative sites and rituals which attempt to combine some of the divergent sources of memory (e.g. local, ethnic, gender) with nationalising ones. The vocabulary of patriotism is particularly important 'because it has the capacity to mediate both vernacular loyalties to local and familiar places and official loyalties to national and imagined structures'.[28] Similarly, because of the divergent allegiances generated by specific sites of memory, they operate multivocally and are read in divergent and at times contradictory ways. The commemoration of the American Civil War points to the underlying fissures evoked by remembrance of a divisive episode in a state's history. The spatiality of memory is not only mirrored in the physical distribution of commemorative sites but also in the interpretative apparatus embedded in them. For instance, the commemorative statue to General Lee in Richmond, Virginia focuses on his role as an American hero who fought out of loyalty to his home state and obscures the larger political and racial politics which undergirded the war.[29] The

[27] Samuel, *Theatres of memory*, vol. I, x.

[28] J. Bodnar, *Remaking America: public memory, commemoration and patriotism in the twentieth century* (Princeton, 1992), 14–15.

[29] For a discussion of Civil War monuments see S. Davis, 'Empty eyes, marble hand: the Confederate monument and the South', *Journal of Popular Culture*, 16 (1982), 2–21; G. M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: defeat, the lost cause, and the emergence of the new South* (Oxford, 1987); H. E. Gulley,

equestrian statue on Monument Avenue was part of a larger speculative real-estate venture where an expensive residential subdivision of property was laid out along the long avenue. Linking business, art and memorywork, the 'legitimation of Lee in national memory helped erase his status as traitor, as "other", leaving otherness to reside in the emancipated slaves and their descendants, who could not possibly accept Lee as their hero'.[30] The controversy surrounding the siting, design and iconographic effect of the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Washington DC is also an exemplary case. The public's ambiguous response to America's role in the war was further highlighted in attempts to commemorate the event. The heated debate underpinning the choice of design and designer, combined with the siting of the memorial along the Mall – a thoroughfare of national remembrance – reveals the regional, ethnic, social and gender tensions that this act of memorialisation brought to the surface.[31]

Discussions of nation-building projects and the memory spaces associated with them have been analysed as a form of mythology – a system of story-telling in which that which is historical, cultural and situated appears natural, innocent and outside of the contingencies of politics and intentionality. Drawing from semiology and linguistics such work claims that 'the apparent innocence of landscapes is shown to have profound ideological implications . . . and surreptitiously justif[ies] the dominant values of an historical period'.[32] Geographers have extensively explored the promotion of specific landscape images as embodiments of national identity.[33] Historians have paid attention to the evolution of particular festivals, rituals,

'Women and the lost cause: preserving Confederate identity in the American Deep South', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 19 (1993), 125–41; J. J. Winberry, 'Symbols in the landscape: the Confederate memorial', *Pioneer America Society Transaction*, 5 (1982), 9–15; J. J. Winberry, ' "Lest we forget": the Confederate monument and the southern townscape', *Southeastern Geographer*, 23 (1983), 107–21.

[30] Savage, *The politics of memory*, 134. The latest episode in the memorialising of Monument Avenue is found in J. Leib, 'Separate times, shared spaces: Arthur Ashe, Monument Avenue and the politics of Richmond, Virginia's symbolic landscape', *Cultural Geographies*, 9 (2002), 286–312.

[31] For a full discussion of the controversy see R. Wagner-Pacifini and B. Schwartz, 'The Vietnam Veterans' Memorial: commemorating a difficult past', *American Journal of Sociology*, 97 (1991), 376–420; M. Sturken, 'The wall, the screen and the image: the Vietnam Veterans Memorial', *Representations*, 35 (1991), 118–42.

[32] J. S. Duncan and N. G. Duncan, 'Ideology and bliss: Roland Barthes and the secret histories of landscape', in T. Barnes and J. S. Duncan, *Writing worlds: discourse, text and metaphor in the representation of landscape* (London, 1992), 18.

[33] See, for instance, the special issue of the *Journal of Historical Geography*, 'Creation of myth: invention of tradition in America', ed. J. L. Allen, 18 (1992), 1–138; M. Azaryahu, 'From remains to relics: authentic monuments in the Israeli landscape', *History and Memory*, 5 (1993), 82–103; M. Heffernan, 'For ever England: the Western Front and the politics of remembrance in Britain', *Ecumene*, 2 (1995), 293–324; Withers, 'Place, memory, monument', 325–44; R. Peet, 'A sign taken from history: Daniel Shay's memorial in Petersham, Massachusetts, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 86 (1996), 21–43; M. Auster, 'Monument in a landscape: the question of "meaning" ', *Australian Geographer*, 28 (1997), 219–27; M. S. Morris, 'Gardens "Forever England":

public holidays and so on in the evolution of the 'myth' of nationhood.[34] Others have explored the social relations underpinning a particular landscape. Schorske's exploration of the nineteenth-century redesign of the Ringstrasse in Vienna as a 'visual expression of the values of a social class'[35] meshes a discussion of the economic and political with the aesthetic in the reconceptualisation of the urban form. While Harvey's analysis of the Basilica of Sacré-Coeur in Paris refashions our understanding of that space by emphasising its connections with the tumultuous class politics of that city in the nineteenth century, it also reminds us that what the basilica stands for is not readily clear from the representation itself.[36] The materiality of a particular site of memory sometimes masks the material social relations undergirding its production by focusing the eye on its aesthetic representation independent of the sometimes less visible ideas (social, economic, cultural power relations) underlying the representation. It is often then in the realm of ideas, however contested and contradictory, that the meaning of memory spaces is embedded. What idea or set of ideas are stimulated by memories made material in the landscape?

The emphasis on visual interpretations of the memory landscapes that undergirded medieval sacred geographies continues to animate discussions of landscape interpretation today. The treatment of a landscape as a text which is read, and actively reconstituted in the act of reading as the 'context of any text is other texts',[37] including conventional written texts as well as political and economic institutions, reinscribes the visual as the central action of interpretation.[38] While offering a more nuanced understanding of the act of reading any landscape and the possibility of decoding the messages within any space, the text metaphor may overemphasise the power to subvert the meaning of landscape through its reading, without necessarily providing a space in which to change the landscape itself. Hegemonic and subaltern readings, in other words, may take precedence over hegemonic and subaltern productions.[39] In the context of the First World War, for instance, the

landscape, identity and the First World War cemeteries on the Western Front', *Ecumene*, 4 (1997), 410–34; D. Atkinson and D. Cosgrove, 'Urban rhetoric and embodied identities: city, nation and empire at the Vittorio Emanuele II monument in Rome, 1870–1945', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 88 (1998), 28–49.

[34] Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The invention of tradition*. See also R. Porter, ed., *Myths of the English* (Cambridge, 1992).

[35] C. E. Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: politics and culture* (London, 1979), 25.

[36] D. Harvey, 'Monument and myth', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 69 (1979), 362–81.

[37] J. S. Duncan, *The city as text: the politics of landscape interpretation in the Kandyan Kingdom* (Cambridge, 1990).

[38] For a full discussion of the text metaphor see T. Barnes and J. Duncan, eds., *Writing worlds: discourse, text and metaphor in the representation of landscapes* (London, 1992); J. Duncan and N. Duncan, '(Re)reading the landscape', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 6 (1988), 117–26; J. Duncan and D. Ley, eds., *Place/culture/representation* (London, 1993).

[39] D. Mitchell, *Cultural geography: a critical introduction* (Oxford, 2000).

desire to forget, erase and bury the memory of the war among veterans may have run contrary to the desire to remember, erect and exhume the memory of the war among non-combatants. The focus on the metaphor of the text also tends to underestimate the aural dimension of texts where, in the past, reading was a spoken activity. Reading texts aloud where the sounds, rhythms and syntax of the words are collectively absorbed directs attention to the social nature of interpretation which embraces senses other than the purely visual. Treating the landscape as a theatre or stage broadens the imaginative scope of interpretation by suggesting that life gets played out as social action and social practice as much as it does by the reading implied by the text metaphor. As Cosgrove argues, 'landscapes provide a stage for human action, and, like a theatre set, their own part in the drama varies from that of an entirely discreet unobserved presence to playing a highly visible role in the performance'.[40] This notion of landscape as theatre could be further extended, not solely as the backdrop in which the action takes place but as actively constituting the action. The stage acts more than as the context for the performance; it is the performance itself.

The idea of life as drama played out through spectacle is particularly helpful when considering the memory of war. Where spectacle is concerned, 'It could take on the sense of a mirror through which truth which cannot be stated directly may be seen reflected and perhaps distorted.'[41] To make sense of the drama of intense physical conflict and the human losses attendant on it requires both dramatic and silent modes of remembrance. That romantic notions of memory seemed inadequate to deal with the losses of the First World War is evidenced by the fact that enormous collective and individual efforts were made to articulate that sense of loss through public performance. From literary texts that had widespread circulation to the massive war cemeteries created in France and elsewhere, the very technology of modernity that facilitated such a massive loss of life also facilitated acts of mass commemoration.[42] Nonetheless, to represent such events was to try to make sense of them while simultaneously engaging in the very crisis of representation that the pain of war engendered. This book is precisely concerned with the variety of ways in which the First World War was represented – the silent and noisy spaces of remembrance which constituted the Irish context.

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[40] D. Cosgrove, *The Palladian landscape: geographical change and its cultural representations in sixteenth century Italy* (University Park, PA, 1993), 1.

[41] S. Daniels and D. Cosgrove, 'Spectacle and text: landscape metaphors in cultural geography', in Duncan and Ley, *Place/culture/representation*, 58.

[42] For studies dealing with mass commemoration see for Britain A. Gaffney (1998), *Aftermath: remembering the Great War in Wales* (Cardiff, 1998); A. Gregory, *The silence of memory: Armistice Day 1919–1946* (Oxford, 1994); A. King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain* (Oxford, 1998); for Australia see K. S. Inglis, *Sacred places: war memorials in the Australian landscape* (Melbourne, 1998); for France see A. Prost, 'Monuments to the dead', in Nora, ed., *Realms of memory*, vol. II, 307–32; D. Sherman, *The construction of memory in interwar France* (London, 1999).

Remembering the First World War

While the First World War has generated a vast academic and popular literature, much of the discussion of the memory of it has been sparked by the thesis originating with Paul Fussell's book *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975). Fussell claims that the conflict marked a watershed in European conceptions of war where the old certainties and formulaic languages of duty and heroism were replaced by ironic, negative and darker visions of the human spirit. Drawing primarily on literary sources, Fussell's book tracks the languages of ironic modernism that are found in the prose, novels and poetry of the war's literary soldiers.[43]

Others have followed this line of argument and have exemplified, in a variety of national contexts, how the direct experience of war by writers as combatant soldiers translated the war in a fashion far removed from the 'high diction' and patriotic rhetoric that informed the older generation of writers, generals and political leaders.[44] Critics of this position have pointed to the unrepresentative nature of Fussell's sources, that is, based on the evidence of white Anglo-American males with literary aspirations who served on the front lines.[45] Feminist historians have queried the thesis that the war proffered radical changes in value systems and they have highlighted the ambiguity of the gains enjoyed by women in the inter-war years.[46] Studies of women's experience during the war similarly reveal the challenge to feminine identity that the war both demanded and tried to restrict, and how this process was negotiated in complicated ways.[47] Drawing from more mundane literary sources than those influenced by modernist theses, recent scholars have suggested that conservatism and tradition persisted in the inter-war years and that in many ways the war represented continuity rather than radical discontinuity.[48] In a brilliant discussion of Canada's remembrance of the war, Vance powerfully elucidates how an official public memory and an unofficial private one were frequently intertwined in Canada's articulation of a social memory, and writes that 'Canadians were concerned first and foremost with utility: those four years had to have been of some use.'[49] They did this by emphasising the very tropes of duty, righteousness, sacrifice and redemption that modernists have depicted as spent forces.

[43] P. Fussell, *The Great War and modern memory* (Cambridge, 1975).

[44] M. Eksteins, *Rites of spring: the Great War and the birth of the modern age* (New York, 1989); S. Hynes, *A war imagined; the Great War and English literature* (London, 1991).

[45] L. Hanley, *Writing war: fiction, gender and memory* (Amherst, MA, 1991).

[46] M. Higonnet, J. Jenson, S. Michel and M. Weitz, eds., *Behind the lines: gender and two world wars* (London, 1987).

[47] S. Ouditt, *Fighting forces, writing women: identity and ideology in the First World War* (London, 1994).

[48] See R. M. Bracco, *Merchants of hope: British middlebrow writers and the First World War, 1919–39* (Oxford, 1993); D. Englander, 'Soldiering and identity: reflections on the Great War', *War in History*, 1 (1994), 300–18.

[49] J. F. Vance, *Death so noble: memory, meaning and the First World War* (Vancouver, 1997), 9.

The most trenchant critique of the modernist thesis is provided by Jay Winter in his fascinating analysis of sites of memory. While Winter does not seek to underestimate the significance of modernism to the early twentieth century more generally and to the war in particular, he is also convinced that the language and practices of tradition – religious motifs, romantic forms, classical designs – continued to find expression and value in the years following the conflict. His scepticism of a radical break thesis resides in the historiographical point that 'To array the past in such a way is to invite distortion by losing a sense of its messiness, its non-linearity, its vigorous and stubbornly visible incompatibilities.'[50] And he also contends that although the ironic and cynical representations of war could convey anger and despair at the huge loss of life, they could not have healing power. It is precisely the capacity of the language of tradition to provide a sense of solace for grieving families and friends that provided it with its popular impetus in the creation and maintenance of sites of memory dedicated to the war. Winter's concern is to highlight some of these across a variety of national contexts. It is perhaps the coexistence of traditional and modernist modes of representation – the desire to simultaneously remember and to forget – that marks war as a particular arena of memory that is laced with contradictions and disputes. That the public expression of grief was interspersed with the private and that the spaces normally used for public actions also became the spaces for very private mourning muddied the role of space in the articulation of private and public lives.

Geographers and others who have examined the creation of landscapes of memory for soldiers have highlighted just how many debates surrounded such acts of representation and how contested the images and practices of remembrance have been.[51] This book is concerned with examining the articulation of remembrance in a society itself in political and cultural turmoil during and immediately after the war. The narrative of war commemoration in Ireland was consistently in dialogue with the narratives attendant on the national question. The war did not represent in Ireland an opportunity for the divergent voices of Irish nationalism and unionism to unite. Unlike the suffragist movement in Britain, for instance, which rallied behind the war for its duration, in Ireland the war ironically became

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[50] J. Winter, *Sites of memory, sites of mourning: the Great War in European cultural history* (Cambridge, 1995), 5.

[51] K. Till, 'Staging the past: landscape design, cultural identity and *Erinnerungspolitik* at Berlin's Neue Wache', *Ecumene*, 6 (1999), 251–83; J. Bell, 'Redefining national identity in Uzbekistan: symbolic tensions in Tashkent's official public landscape', *Ecumene*, 6 (1999), 183–213; H. Leitner and P. Kang, 'Contested urban landscapes of nationalism: the case of Taipei', *Ecumene*, 6 (1999), 172–92; B. Osborne, 'The iconography of nationhood in Canadian art', in D. Cosgrove and S. Daniels, eds., *The iconography of landscape* (Cambridge, 1988), 162–78; B. Osborne, 'Figuring space, marking time: contested identities in Canada', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 2 (1996), 23–40; B. Osborne, 'Warscapes, landscapes, inscapes: France, war, and Canadian national identity', in I. Black and R. Butlin, eds., *Place, culture and identity* (Quebec, 2001), 311–33; S. Cooke, 'Negotiating memory and identity: the Hyde Park Holocaust Memorial, London', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 26 (2000), 449–65.

part of the vehicle through which the disparate voices of identity politics found expression.[52]

From the recruitment campaigns in the early years of the war to the commemorative rituals following the armistice, Ireland's role in the war was consistently interpreted through the lens of the conflicting tropes of identity on the island. Individual grief could not be separated from the larger canvas in which memory was mobilised. The neat binaries of victor and vanquished, enemy and friend, Christian and heathen, public and private, individual and collective collapsed during the war and in the years following it. And this collapse found expression in the very spatiality of memory. The sites in which collective memory could be rooted became in themselves the sight-lines through which the conflict would be viewed. The divisions in the national imaginary, present before the war, were heightened and accentuated as the memory of the war was materialised in rituals, memorials and literary texts in the post-war period. And these divisions did not operate solely at the scale of the social group but they also encompassed a schizophrenic attitude of mind for the individual. That there was a rebellion on Irish soil during the war, a war of independence in the years immediately after the armistice, partition of the island in 1921, and a subsequent civil war in the Irish Free State, all testify to the complex local circumstances which underpinned efforts to create a landscape of remembrance.

Yet despite these conflicting narratives of identity there were public acts of commemoration and it is unravelling the debates surrounding these that is the principal concern of this book. The following five chapters will be concerned with the *stages* of memory both in the sense of the theatrical metaphor where the spectacle of life and the work of memory is enacted, but also in the temporal sense of transmutation of meaning over time. There were stages of reaction to the war, from the innocent optimism of new recruits volunteering in 1914, followed by periods of pessimism and depression surrounding long phases of stalemate, to the post-war grieving of veterans and bereaved families. In Ireland the war represented opportunity and postponement; quiet support and loud dissent; active participation and passive observation; victory and defeat. In what was to become the Irish Republic, the hyper-spectacle that animated the memory work of many other countries – the proliferation of monument, memorial and ceremony, the literature, the annual parade, the historiography – did not take hold to the same extent. It is precisely this ambiguity between remembrance and forgetting that is the subject of this book.

The following chapters each deal with a particular aspect of memory making and each attempts to identify how the idea and act of remembrance in an Irish context was articulated in complex ways. This is not to engage in an exercise of national exceptionalism. It is to make the case that a geography of remembrance

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[52] K. Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge, 2000); I. McBride, ed., *History and memory in modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001).

is important even within the universalising languages of bitter irony or painful sorrow. I have selected a number of critical moments in the making of popular memory and in that sense this book does not represent a strict chronology of remembrance nor is it exhaustive. Instead it seeks to narrate the commemoration of the war through a selection of key episodes. These largely took place in the first two decades after the war when much of the memory work was established. As a contextual framework, however, Chapter 2 provides the backdrop for the war in Ireland. Situating the war in its political and cultural context, this chapter examines how an army was recruited on the island and how persuasive images were circulated to entice Irish men into the army in the shadow of the highly variable levels of loyalty to the union of Britain and Ireland. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 each take a strategic episode of remembrance activity – the parade, the memorial, the literary text – and explicates the debates and acts of memory work that were performed in the years following the war. Each of these is placed in the context of the changing political geography of the island with particular focus on the narratives of commemoration in what would become the Irish Republic. This book will mobilise some of the divergent approaches to spatialising memory in the north of Ireland (pre- and post-partition) as a counterpoint to the patterns which emerged in the south. Rather than offering a comprehensive account of the politics of memory in Northern Ireland, these comparisons will serve to highlight the significance of geography to the construction of memory on the island. Chapter 6 juxtaposes Ireland's remembrance of the war with its memorialisation of the 1916 Easter Rebellion. Due to the significance attached to the rebellion in historiographical and popular terms, an analysis of its role in the mapping of national memory will serve to spotlight the different debates attendant on its remembrance, particularly as celebrations reached their apotheosis during the fiftieth anniversary. Overall, commemorating one war in the wake of a rebellion, a guerrilla struggle and subsequent civil war, and in the shadow of a newly emerging state, all played upon the manner in which the First World War could be forgetfully remembered in Ireland.