Introduction

In May 2004, in the midst of the 'war on terror', President George W. Bush dedicated the National World War II Memorial on the Mall in Washington, DC. As he stood before a vast crowd of veterans and journalists, Bush declared:

> At this place, at this memorial, we acknowledge a debt of long-standing to an entire generation of Americans, those who died, those who fought and worked and grieved and went on. They saved our country and thereby saved the liberty of mankind.[1]

Originally conceived in the late 1980s, but delayed for several years due to disputes over the design and location, many veterans and politicians saw this memorial as a long-overdue expression of national gratitude to the World War II generation. Occupying space next to the reflecting pool, the memorial consists of fifty-six pillars arranged in a circle, each of which carries the name of an American state or territory. A pair of arches marked with the words 'Atlantic' and 'Pacific' (the two theatres of conflict) stand facing each other just outside this circle; close by are bronze tablets engraved with scenes of all the places at which Americans had fought: on land, sea, in the air and on the Home Front. On one wall 4,000 bronze stars commemorate the 400,000 Americans killed in the war (one for each 100). Significantly, the memorial stands on the same axis as the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. The symbolic message is clear: If the Washington Monument points to the nation's origins in the War of Independence and the Lincoln Memorial commemorates the man who 'saved' the nation during the Civil War, the memorial to World War II declares that the United States of today was born of the successes and sacrifices of 1941–1945.

This was the first national commemorative structure dedicated to World War II in the United States. It represents the culmination of two

[1] G.W. Bush, 'Remarks at the Dedication of the National World War II Memorial', 29 May 2004, available at: http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=72638&st=world±war±II±memorial&st1 (Accessed: 23 August 2008).

decades of concerted cultural investment in the war years, an investment that has firmly established World War II as the 'Good War': from President Reagan's emotional homage to D-Day veterans in June 1984, to Tom Brokaw's 1994 celebration of the 'Greatest Generation', to the blockbusting cinematic work of Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks. Yet we would be remiss to assume that, before the National World War II Memorial, and before post-9/11 patriotic fervour, those Americans who endured the twentieth century's second global conflict were neglected by memorials; it would be remiss of us to assume that the 'debt' of acknowledgement had not, at least in part, already been paid. Indeed, across the Atlantic, thousands of monuments, plaques, stained-glass windows and other commemorative signposts mark the European landscapes upon which American service personnel fought and died. Moreover, post-war Europe has witnessed many other forms of American commemorative activity, from the battlefield pilgrimages of veterans to the political theatre of presidents. And crucially, these diverse commemorative activities have not just been the product of the last twenty years; rather, such activities have been underway since the very end of the war. This book tells the story of this commemoration; it is a story of Europeans and Americans, a story of contest and compromise, a story of transatlantic cultural politics. Above all, it is a story of how allies in war became allies in memory.

Landscapes of transatlantic war memory: East Anglia and Normandy

At the centre of this story are two distinct regions of Europe, both of which experienced an American military presence during the war, albeit in different ways. The first is East Anglia, the wartime home of the United States Eighth Air Force, the organisation responsible for the American contribution to the Allied strategic bombing campaign against Germany from 1942 to 1945. Jutting like a fist into the cold North Sea, this area of eastern England is predominantly rural and agricultural. It is a mix of landscapes: from the fens of Cambridgeshire and Norfolk, to the windswept plateau of north Suffolk, to the gentle rolling hills of the Suffolk-Essex borderlands.

East Anglia took its name from the Angles, fifth-century invaders from north Germany who, in time, gave their name to an emerging social and political identity: the *English*. By the Middle Ages, and despite suffering other 'foreign' invasions – by Danes and Normans – it was among the wealthiest agricultural regions in England, a fact demonstrated by the large number of solidly built churches that still stand sentinel amongst

the fields and lanes. These are the monuments to medieval wealth, built as statements of local pride and prestige. East Anglia remained important well into the seventeenth century; it was here, in the Eastern Association, that the fenman Oliver Cromwell would raise the New Model Army. It was also from here that many Puritan migrants to North America originally came. Indeed, the vast majority of those Puritans who settled in New England departed from homes within a sixty-mile radius of the Suffolk market town of Haverhill.[2] Some of these migrants gave rise to the most famous of early American families: Thomas Hooker, founder of the colony of Connecticut, was from Essex; John Winthrop, governor of the Massachusetts Bay Company, Puritan leader and celebrated author, was Suffolk born and bred; the Lincoln family line reached back to the village of Hingham in Norfolk.[3]

With the coming of Enclosure, and then the Industrial Revolution, East Anglia lost much of its political and economic significance. By the late nineteenth century, the region had, in the words of one local historian, 'stagnated'.[4] Many of its agricultural labourers left for the outposts of Empire, and many of its farms were left to the weather and weeds. Yet it was this very stagnation that also gave the region its *cultural* significance: In the age of Empire and industry East Anglia became the inspiration for an idealised and nostalgic vision of Englishness, a landscape of peace, pasture and picturesque peasantry. It was in Suffolk that British landscape painting found its two most celebrated exponents – Thomas Gainsborough and John Constable. By the turn of the twentieth century, the region was also explored by countless writers and poets who likewise looked on the landscape with a certain wistfulness. From the wanderings of Henry James in 'old Suffolk' to the pastoral poetry of Rupert Brooke, East Anglia – in which the industry of modernity was so noticeably absent – became the perfect place in which to find and imagine the English past.[5] Little wonder that Julian Tennyson (great-grandson of Alfred) could declare, after a ramble along the Stour in 1939:

> As I walked I felt I was the first person ever to have visited that lovely stretch of country since John Constable, and that the Stour Valley, so perfectly English, was

[2] D. H. Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 31.
[3] See J. F. Muirhead, *American Shrines on English Soil* (London: the Doorland Agency, 1924), esp. pp. 55–69.
[4] R. Parker, *A Common Stream* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), pp. 201–221.
[5] H. James, *English Hours* (London: William Heineman, 1905), pp. 302–315. Brooke lived for a time at Grantchester, just outside Cambridge, see R. Brooke, *The Complete Poems* (London: The Echo Library, 2006).

yet specially preserved and set apart as belonging to a different age and an earlier England.[6]

The American military began arriving in East Anglia just three years after Tennyson's nostalgic ramble, and by the eve of D-Day there were approximately half a million GIs in the region.[7] This American 'occupation' was an unprecedented event in British history. No friendly power had ever assembled its military might on the territory of an ally in quite this way before. Moreover, the bases built to accommodate this occupation demanded the largest civil engineering project ever witnessed in Britain. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the American presence left a lasting impression on the East Anglian landscape and on East Anglian communities. Amongst the most visible reminders of this presence are the ruined remains of runways, many of which still litter the landscape of Norfolk and Suffolk; these are the relics of air war. But the other visible reminders of the wartime American presence, reminders at the very centre of the story told by this book, are memorials, hundreds of which have been built in East Anglia over the last seventy years. Studying these memorials, their origins and purpose, offers a glimpse into how those who experienced air war dealt with its nature and aftermath. This book, then, interrogates these memorials; it examines the commemorative legacy of the European air war.

But an examination of this legacy provides something extra: For the erection of *American* memorials on the landscape of rural *England* also offers the opportunity to explore how people from two different nations – but sharing a common language – worked together to produce commemorative representations of war. These memorials offer, in short, the chance to examine the development of an Anglo-American commemorative culture, a development given added interest by the political circumstances of the post-war period and, in particular, the creation of the transatlantic 'special relationship'.

The second region at the centre of this study is Normandy, in north-west France. This region is significant for two key reasons. First, the Allied invasion of Normandy in June 1944 was a critical moment in the history of the war. This was the point at which the Allied armies returned to the mainland of continental Europe in force. Moreover, one historian suggests that the American soldiers who waded ashore on the beaches of Normandy were the vanguard of a new era of Euro-American cultural and

[6] J. Tennyson, *Suffolk Scene* (Bury St. Edmunds: The Alastair Press, 1987), p. 16. First published in 1939.
[7] D. Reynolds, *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain, c. 1942–1945* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000), p. 109.

political contact.[8] Studying what these soldiers (and others) did to commemorate their arrival thus has particular significance. The second reason for the Normandy case study is equally straightforward: This region has witnessed extensive commemorative activity. To be sure, this activity has not only been an American affair, and representatives of the other allies have frequently been as active as their American counterparts.[9] Yet, by the early twenty-first century, and as the United States embarked upon an increasingly unilateral 'war on terror', the story of D-Day had been 'Americanised'. As Marianna Torgovnik has remarked, while 'Britain has its Blitz [and] the French have the Resistance […] The United States has Normandy and the D-Day beaches'.[10] Evidence of this American interest in D-Day abounds. Take, for example, the critical and commercial success of Steven Spielberg's 1998 production *Saving Private Ryan* and his 2001 television series *Band of Brothers*. Take, also, the construction and dedication of the National D-Day Museum in New Orleans in 2000 and the National D-Day Memorial at Bedford, Virginia, in 2001.

Examining American commemoration in Normandy thus enables us to see from where (and when) this contemporary American-centred perspective of D-Day emerged. At the same time, such an examination also provides a useful point of comparison with activities in East Anglia, for there are distinct differences in the precise form and content of the American memorials built in eastern England and those erected in north-west France. Regional differences also exist regarding the nature and purpose of the various commemorative ceremonies and anniversary events. The Normandy case study thus gives rise to another thread running through the narrative of this book: the specific forms and function of Franco-American commemoration connected to the European *land* war.

The agents of transatlantic commemoration

This book examines commemoration as an act of communal remembrance, dependent upon the agency of social collectives and centred on the construction of public representations of the past. As such, commemoration is the dynamic group activity that enables the construction of collective memory; it provides a mediating space – physical, psychic,

[8] R. Pells, *Not Like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated and Transformed American Culture since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), p. 40.
[9] See M. Dolski, S. Edwards and J. Buckley (eds.), *D-Day in History and Memory: The Normandy Landings in International Remembrance and Commemoration* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2014).
[10] M. Torgovnik, *The War Complex: World War II in Our Time* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 25.

political – for individual memories and experiences. Seen in this light, the construction of collective memory is a process, an ongoing project, responsive to the concerns of those involved, shaped by the contemporary context and informed by the dominant discourses of the moment. And the contours and constituents of this historically specific project are thus exposed during acts of commemoration. This book, then, is a survey of these contours; it explores the production of commemorative representations connected to the American military – in post-1945 Europe – in order to uncover the attitudes, assumptions and politics implicit to these representations. In doing so, it identifies the presence of transatlantic networks of memory formed by representatives of four different groups of commemorative *agents*: American military elites; American veterans; local European community leaders; and the officers of government agencies (mainly American, but sometimes European). All the activities discussed in this book were, at root, the work of networks formed by individuals drawn from one or more of these groups.

For American military elites (senior members of the officer class), the acts of commemoration initiated in the final stages of the war or in the immediate post-war period were a means to negotiate the trauma of battle, memorialise those killed, bolster patriotic sentiment, celebrate military loyalties and represent the death and destruction of conflict with culturally and politically meaningful symbols. For these agents, fully committed by class and profession to both the rhetoric and reality of patriotic duty, the task was to construct a set of symbols that communicated traditional American military values in order to normalise the experience of war by subsuming it into an established discursive framework. As we shall see, the commemorative forms to which these elites turned ultimately had origins in a modern appropriation of the Classical tradition, a tradition Americanised in the post-Civil War and post-World War I eras: heroism, patriotism, martial sacrifice, masculine camaraderie and unit pride all came to the fore in this activity.[11] In the immediate post-1945 period, therefore, American military elites embarked upon an effort to construct what I term *military memory*: a normalising narrative constructed from 'above' and designed to impose order on disorder. Crucially, the form and content of this narrative complicates the idea that World War II helped 'put an end to the traditional languages of commemoration which flourished after the Great War'.[12] Indeed, a

[11] S. M. Grant, 'Raising the Dead: War, Memory and American National Identity', *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 11 (2005): pp. 509–529.

[12] J. M. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 9. See also J. R. Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press,

heroic rhetoric of remembrance which some thought had been lost in the mud of Flanders and the Somme – a rhetoric produced in the era of Victorian nationalism and grounded in a secularised understanding of Christian 'sacrifice' – enjoyed an intense resurgence in and around the memorials erected to American airmen in East Anglia, and to American soldiers in Normandy.[13] For Americans, geographically detached from the fighting of World War II, and not exhausted demographically by the deaths endured during the Great War, 'traditional' ideas of patriotic sacrifice still had cultural currency in the 1940s.

Even many years later, American veterans re-energised elements of this traditional vocabulary when they assumed responsibility for the discourses and dynamics of commemoration. At the same time, the post-1970 commemorative activities of the American veterans' community were subtly different from those initiated by wartime military elites. As such, whilst the memorials these veterans built often bore the imprint of the normalising narrative first established by military elites – much of which was entirely in tune with the patriotic sensibilities of those signed-up members of the veterans' community – they were also expressions of contemporary identity shaped by the evolving psychological concerns of human life cycle. Put differently, whilst these memorials were dedicated to the dead, they also marked the presence of survivors, of the living.

Significantly, these efforts to construct post-1945 military memory and post-1970 veterans' memory frequently were assisted by local European community leaders, both civic and religious; this was (and still is) the third key interest group. First and foremost, such assistance was a genuine expression of grief and gratitude, and the sites duly created were most certainly initiated as places of mourning. Yet, once involved, French mayors and English vicars adapted the structures of American commemoration for purposes of their own and in accordance with discourses of commemoration domestic in origin. In the immediate post-war period, for example, contemporary European attempts to negotiate the cultural and political rupture caused by the war frequently complicated acts of ostensibly 'American' commemoration. Thus, this study explores how *community memory* – a complex mix of regional and national concerns often defined by local elites – inflected the construction of military memory and, later, veterans' memory.

1993), pp. 12–13; R. Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. by T. S. Presner and others (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 322.

[13] B. Bushaway, 'Name upon Name; the Great War and Remembrance', in R. Porter (ed.), *Myths of the English* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 136–167.

Crucially, the demands of contemporary transatlantic politics shaped this process of inflection. This was especially the case for representatives of the fourth key interest group: government agencies. Indeed, during the Cold War, the political imperatives of their memorial mission so preoccupied the federal organisation responsible for supervising *all* overseas American war commemoration – the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) – that they frequently sought to prevent other groups (especially American veterans) from undertaking any commemorative activities at all. Even in the 1980s, the Cold War concerns of the moment continued to dominate the Commission's commemorative mission with the result that they remained reluctant to authorise the construction of 'private' memorials for fear that these would muddy the clarity of their political message. For this interest group, the purpose of commemoration was to construct an *official memory* expressive of contemporary American nationalism but that would nonetheless be responsive to the local European context and to transatlantic politics. The commemorative activities of European governments responded to similar political concerns in an attempt to help achieve foreign and domestic policy objectives. In 1958, for example, just two years after serious disputes emerged between London and Washington over the Suez Crisis, an Anglo-American friendship group dedicated an officially sanctioned memorial to the US military in St. Paul's Cathedral; here was a clear attempt to bolster and celebrate the much vaunted special relationship. In Normandy, meanwhile, the organisation established in 1945 to oversee the commemoration of the D-Day landings – the Comité du Débarquement – likewise appropriated American commemoration to the discourses of domestic politics as well as to meet the demands of regional reconstruction; for post-war Gaullism, American memory, much like American money, was available for the work of reconstruction. Here too, emphasis was placed on Franco-American political links and cultural connections; on the joint revolutionary and republican tradition; on 'liberty' and Lafayette.

The story of American commemoration in post-war Europe is thus a story of different interest groups, each of which engaged in commemorative activities in order to construct a vision of the wartime experience framed by their own political, cultural and economic concerns. But, as this book demonstrates, the result was not always or only a commemorative competition in which different interest groups engaged in dispute and disagreement. Indeed, representatives of the different groups frequently joined efforts in order to achieve their ambitions. At times, moreover, these collaborative networks of memory were explicitly 'international'. As such, this book explores the ways

and means through which Americans and Europeans, soldiers and civilians, veterans, French mayors, English vicars and agents of the American government worked together, and, at times, antagonised each other, as they sought to define – physically and rhetorically – the forms in which the war would be remembered. The result was *transatlantic* commemoration.

In doing so, I hope this book offers a fresh perspective on the commemorative response to World War II and a fresh perspective on post-1945 transatlantic relations. Several recent studies have offered valuable insights into the western European experience of war, experiences often commemorated in ways stubbornly 'national'.[14] Elsewhere, the American way of remembering conflict – and especially World War II – has received considerable scholarly attention.[15] Yet few studies have examined in detail what happened when, after 1945, this American 'way' encountered the landscape and, most importantly, the *people* of Europe.[16] This book is a study of that encounter.

[14] See J. M. Winter and E. Sivan (eds.), *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); N. Wood, *Vectors of Memory: Legacies of Trauma in Postwar Europe* (New York: Berg Publishers, 1999); F. Cappelletto (ed.), *Memory and World War II: An Ethnographic Approach* (New York: Berg Publishers, 2005); R. N. Lebow, W. Kansteiner and C. Fogu (eds.), *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); S. R. Suleiman, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); S. Wahnich, B. Lášticová and A. Findor (eds.), *Politics of Collective Memory: Cultural Patterns of Commemorative Practices in Post-War Europe* (London: Lit Verlag, 2009); J. W. Muller, *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); J. Echternkamp and S. Martens (eds.), *Experience and Memory: The Second World War in Europe* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2010); P. Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation: Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[15] G. K. Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995); Torgovnik, *The War Complex*; J. Bodnar, *The "Good War" in American Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010); P. D. Beidler, *The Good War's Greatest Hits: World War II and American Remembering* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998); D. Goebel and D. Rossell, *Commemoration in America: Essays on Monuments, Memorialization and Memory* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013); J. L. Merriwether and L. M. D'Amore, *What We Remember: The American Past Through Commemoration* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2012).

[16] Notable exceptions include V. Depkat, 'Remembering War the Transnational War: The U.S.-American Memory of World War I', in U. J. Hebel (ed.), *Transnational American Memories* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), pp. 185–213. See also the excellent work of David Seitz and Kate Lemay: D.W. Seitz, 'Grave Negotiations: The Rhetorical Foundations of American World War I Cemeteries in France', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Pittsburgh (2011); K. Lemay, 'Forgotten Memorials: The American Cemeteries in France from World War II', unpublished PhD thesis, Indiana University (2011).

Structure and approach

The book is divided into two parts, each of which explores the commemorative rhythms present during a particular phase of activity. Part I covers the phase that witnessed the agents of American military memory and of official memory embark upon acts of commemoration as a means to restore order, bolster patriotic sentiment, normalise the death and destruction of war and celebrate the ideals of American 'democracy' and 'freedom'. But this phase also saw local communities influence and inflect these American projects, Europeanising them for their own purposes. Thus, Chapter 1 introduces the pre-1941 history of those commemorative agents who, in the years to come, were involved in transatlantic war commemoration, whilst Chapter 2 then moves to consider post-1945 activities in eastern England. In particular, Chapter 2 shows how the acts of commemoration initiated by American military elites were the cultural response to the peculiar nature of the European air war; battlefield markers dedicated to the disappeared dead. But the chapter also demonstrates how these markers were 'anglicised' by the involvement of East Anglian communities, and by the use of English commemorative conventions. In doing so, post-war American commemoration was assimilated into a newly emerging transatlantic political discourse – the special relationship; or rather, this discourse was assimilated *into* acts of commemoration.

Chapter 3 discusses similar activities in Normandy, but with an emphasis on the tensions between the agents of military memory, community memory and official memory (both French and American). Here too, we consider the extent to which the problems of post-war France, and the tensions of post-1945 Franco-American relations, produced significant challenges to transatlantic war commemoration, especially during the rites and rituals that accompanied the annual D-Day ceremonies in Normandy. Nonetheless, if these acts of transatlantic commemoration sometimes saw diplomats and dignitaries clash, they rarely offered challenges that localised networks of Franco-American memory were unable to negotiate or outflank. Some local Norman communities even went so far as to initiate their own monuments in memory of their liberators. In tune with the current historiography of Franco-American relations, therefore, this chapter complicates the idea of the 1960s as a decade of pervasive French anti-Americanism.[17]

Part II – Chapters 4, 5 and 6 – turns attention to the post-1970 period, the era during which the dynamics of transatlantic commemoration were

[17] R. Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (London: University of California Press, 1996), esp. pp. 131–153.