CHAPTER I

Introduction: What is Cultural Memory?

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Cultural memory theory is a framework which elucidates the relationship between the past and the present. At its most basic level, it explains why, how, and with what results certain pieces of information are remembered. Despite its origins in historiographical scholarship, however, in recent years cultural memory has been applied with increasing frequency to the study of the Classics, most notably in Gowing's (2005) and Gallia's (2012) exploration of memory under the Principate as well as the edited volumes by Galinsky (2014), (2016a), and (2016b). As the organisers of the 'Roman Cultural Memory' project, we are glad to count ourselves part of this emerging wave. We held three conferences to promote intersections between memory theory and Classics research, the first in November 2016 at King's College London, the second in June 2017 at the Université Paris-Est Créteil, and the third in March 2018 at the University of São Paulo. With few exceptions, the chapters in the volume, which concern cultural memory in Republican and Augustan Rome, initially took shape as papers during the former two conferences; the fruits of the latter event will be compiled into a separate volume entitled 'Cultural Memory under the Empire'.

While organising these conferences, we were most often asked 'What is cultural memory?' After initially directing enquirers to guidebooks on this topic, foremost among them the magisterial *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* edited by Erll and Nünning (2008), we soon found that there is a gulf between reading about cultural memory theory and actively applying its concepts to the Classics. Although we believe that the contributions in this book successfully bridge that gulf, we nevertheless understand the necessity of explaining, in brief and easy-to-follow terms, what cultural memory can mean to Classicists. In what follows, therefore, we will outline the major developments making up this theoretical framework.

We had begun by defining cultural memory in terms of remembering 'certain pieces of information'. Maurice Halbwachs, whose scholarship acts

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as a precursor to cultural memory studies, emphasises that these 'pieces' are preserved beyond the individual level: entire societies typically share a 'collective memory'.[1] Distinguishing between these two types of memory proves simple: as Paul Ricoeur notes, memories attributed to one person – '*my* memory' – are classified as 'personal' memories, while those belonging to a group – '*our* memory' – are considered 'collective'.[2] As Halbwachs observes, however, for the scholar of memory demarcating 'memory' from 'history' is equally crucial: the former allows us to reconstruct the past as a lived experience, while the latter presents the past in a less 'natural' and more abstract way.[3] History is a list of dates, names, and events, but memory is the experience of these very deeds and personalities, which, when recalled, evokes residual emotions.

Halbwachs' theory of 'collective memory' laid the conceptual foundations for 'cultural memory' in three key ways. First, by defining shared memory as the product of experience rather than inheritance,[4] he shifted discourse on memory out of its previous biological framework and into a cultural one.[5] In addition, by asserting that personal experiences coalesce into memories shared by entire communities, he highlighted that 'every individual memory constitutes itself in communication with others'.[6] Finally, by emphasising the role of physical objects in evoking shared memories, he highlighted that recall is typically triggered by the presence of symbolic stimuli. In short, collective memory (a) can be deliberately constructed, (b) is organised within social networks, and (c) perpetuates itself through meaningful artefacts.

These tenets (a, b, c) were integrated by the Egyptologist Jan Assmann into the earliest definition of 'cultural memory'. He perceived cultural memory as a deliberately constructed memory (a), which is not only centred around a myth dictating the identity of the community (b) but also transmitted by 'specialists' through relevant artefacts (c).[7] When transferring this framework from Ancient Egypt to a Roman context a prominent example of a cultural memory is the idea that Rome was founded by descendants of Aeneas. This narrative was indeed consciously constructed through representations ranging from a 47 BC *denarius*, which features Julius Caesar's profile on one side and the image of Aeneas carrying Anchises on the other,[8] to Virgil's epic *Aeneid.* This memory is moreover fundamental to the martial aspect of Rome's national identity, for it enabled the Romans to

[1] See Halbwachs (1925).   [2] Ricoeur (2000) 152–63.   [3] Halbwachs (1950) 118.
[4] Other twentieth-century scholars such as Jung (1954) conceived of memory as a heritable trait which could be passed down genetically.
[5] Assmann (1988) 9.   [6] Assmann (1988) 10.   [7] Assmann (1992) 56.   [8] BMC/RR.31.

claim descent from the famed warriors of Troy. Details associated with the main memory were also constantly re-enacted throughout antiquity in rituals performed by 'specialists', most notably the Pontifex Maximus, who guarded the *Di Penates*. These statuettes, moulded to resemble two youths (Dion. Hal. 1.68), were said to have been the very objects transported by Aeneas during his flight from Troy,[9] and so their careful conservation served as a constant reminder of Rome's origin.

Assmann also defined cultural memory on the basis of what it is *not*; its antithesis is 'communicative memory', which is informal instead of deliberate, short-term (three or four generations) instead of long-term, and based on personal experiences which everyone in the community transmits instead of selected specialists.[10] Indeed, while communicative memory relates to the transmission of memories in everyday life through orality, cultural memory refers to objectified and institutionalised memories that can be stored, transferred, and reincorporated through 'focused speech' from one generation to the next. The most straightforward way in which these memories can be passed down is through texts, which when read and interpreted as a canon, form a *mémoire volontaire* ('chosen' or 'voluntary' memory).[11] By thus emphasising written material, Assmann echoes Konrad Ehlich's definition of a text as a *wiederaufgenommenen Mitteilung* ('message taken up again later') which gains meaning from its wider context or *zerdehnter Situation* ('extended situation').[12] While all chapters in this volume acknowledge this framework, contributions such as those of Steel and Thorne break new ground by articulating the interface and overlap between cultural and communicative memory in Rome. The significance of this overlap is highlighted by Astrid Erll who offers a corrective in viewing 'communicative' and 'cultural' memory – as Jan and Aleida Assmann define these terms – not as a simple dichotomy but rather as two mental frames for thinking about the past, for 'in a given historical context, the same event can become simultaneously an object of the Cultural Memory and of the communicative memory'.[13] She goes on to locate the real distinction not in terms of chronological distance but as a mode of how a community conceives of an event at any given moment as 'near horizon' (communicative memory) or 'distant horizon' (cultural memory). The former frames the past in a more personal way, whereas

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[9] This episode is related at Verg. *Aen.* 3.147–50. On the Pontifex Maximus and the public *Di Penates* see Lott (2004) 87.
[10] On the differences between cultural and communicative memory see Assmann (2008).
[11] Assmann (1992) 4.   [12] On these terms see Ehlich (2007) 11.   [13] Erll (2011) 31.

the latter frames the past event more as a shared part of foundational history for a group's identity.[14]

Working alongside her spouse Jan Assmann, Aleida Assmann, a scholar of literature, similarly drew attention to the permanent character of texts. The cultural memory accumulating within them forms a 'memory reservoir' (*Speichergedächtnis*).[15] Part of this reservoir is drained out into a 'functional memory' (*Funktionsgedächtnis*) and circulated within societies in accordance with present necessities.[16] Both of these types of memory make up 'cultural memory', which does not only derive from a 'stored' symbolic heritage, but also relies on functionalised media which transport cultural knowledge within societies.[17] These media are not limited to texts, but include rites, monuments, celebrations, objects, sacred scriptures, and other mnemonic triggers which call up the meanings of the past.

Pierre Nora had provided the foundation for these 'mnemonic triggers' by defining *lieux de mémoire* ('sites of memory').[18] Nora himself built upon Aby Warburg's *Pathosformeln*, a concept denoting visual symbols in Western European art which evoke emotional responses.[19] However, his sites of memory are more broadly defined: despite their name, they do not only include images or monumental locations but also historical figures, dates, texts, and even actions. In an ancient Roman context, possible sites of memory pertaining to Julius Caesar's assassination would therefore include Brutus, the Ides of March, Suetonius' account of the deed, and making sacrifice at the Temple of Divus Iulius. Not unlike Halbwachs' collective memories, these sites apply on a societal level; Nora originally explained his concept through examples relevant to the French nation, such as the burial of Sartre and the pilgrimage of Lourdes.[20] Moreover, just as Halbwachs underscored the difference between 'memory' and 'history', Nora emphasises:

> Memory and history, far from being synonymous, appear now to be in fundamental opposition. Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long

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[14] Erll (2011) 32. See in particular the discussion of Thorne in this volume who takes up Erll's framework.

[15] Assmann (1995) 177.   [16] Assmann (1995) 183–5.   [17] Assmann and Assmann (1994) 120.

[18] For a full exposition of the *lieux de mémoire* see Nora (1984–92).

[19] Warburg (1932) contains the relevant thesis on Botticelli, first published as a dissertation in 1893.

[20] As a result, Nora's theory on 'sites of memory' has been criticised for its nation-centeredness; see Ho Tai (2001).

dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past. (Nora (1989) 8)

Nora's sites of memory should nevertheless be clearly distinguished from Halbwachs' collective memory. Sites of memory are primarily of relevance in societies where widespread *milieux de mémoire* ('environments of memory') no longer exist.[21] For example, after Rome's first century BC civil wars the political and social matrix of the 'Republic' had been replaced by that of the 'Principate' and so few people could personally share in its collective memory. Sites of memory therefore act as 'artificial placeholders' for collective memories which no longer exist.[22] As Lewis (1988) demonstrates, a Roman citizen who had travelled up the *Via Caecilia* to Amiternum would have been confronted with inscriptions commemorating Catiline. In these artefacts he would recognise the historical significance of the defunct Republic, but not feel the same emotions which one of Cicero's audience members, being part of a world in which the collective memory of the Republic was still extant, felt upon listening to his prosecution. This narrative of decline is, however, the key weakness of Nora's approach, for it presupposes that older 'authentic' memories are more desirable than newfound identities. As Nora laments, globalised and democratised societies are particularly dissociated from their pasts: the 'ancient bond of identity' has been broken as technological advancements 'accelerate'.[23]

Recent scholars tend to criticise Nora's monolithic view of memory. James Fentress and Chris Wickham suggest that there is no such thing as a 'standard past'; instead, communities deliberately form 'oikotypes' for themselves by deciding which accounts of the past are acceptable and which are not.[24] Moreover, Nora's idea of memory as shared by entire nations is reductionist, since even within nations small-scale subdivisions tend to generate 'vernacular memories'.[25] These perspectives on the past are derived from their creators' first-hand experience, which often differs from that of society at large; it is not difficult to imagine, for example, that the foreigners expelled by Augustus during the grain shortage would have had a different opinion of their treatment than the Roman majority as embodied by Suetonius, who praises this act as conducive to public welfare

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[21] Nora (1989) 7.
[22] Erll (2011) 23. Sites of memory are one of the most frequently discussed and queried concepts in this volume. See (amongst others) Dinter, Delignon, Beckelhymer, Hartman, Palmer, Roy, and Schörner. Langlands pushes into new territory by mapping sites of exemplarity.
[23] Nora (1989) 8.   [24] Fentress and Wickham (1992) 7.   [25] Bodnar (1992) 13–14.

(Suet. *Aug.* 42.1–3). Similarly, Ann Rigney suggests that in addition to the narrative of 'plenitude and loss' in which memories are resurrected from the past and 'lost' or 'hidden' memories are recovered, we should also employ a social- constructivist model that takes as its starting point the idea that memories of a shared past are collectively constructed and recon- structed in the present.[26] In so doing, she rejects the false dichotomy which Nora promotes between 'real' and 'false' memory, instead embracing the diverse types of memory – cultural, communicative, vernacular – in interaction.[27]

As these discussions highlight, moreover, scholars are relatively uncon- cerned with 'why' or 'with what results' certain types of memory come into being. The general consensus supports Jan Assmann's assertion that the key function and effect of cultural memory is the concretion of identity.[28] Current debate in the field instead centres upon *how* cultural memory is organised. Building on Assmann's concept of 'fixed points', which refer to specific events around which cultural memory anchors itself, Laura Basu suggests that memory is also stabilised through historical figures, who for this reason are termed *dispositifs* ('apparatuses').[29] From an ancient per- spective, Cato the Elder constitutes one such *dispositif*; he serves as the human embodiment of Roman identity by espousing its values of conser- vatism, wisdom, and erudition. Astrid Erll shifts the focus away from memory as an intra-societal phenomenon, opting instead to focus on 'developments of transcultural memory' which transcend belief systems as well as temporal and spatial imaginaries.[30] She indicates that the legend of Homer has become a 'mnemohistory' which contributes not only to the identity of a restricted group of 'Hellenes', as in antiquity, but also to that of Western civilisation in general.[31] In so doing, she responds to the scholarship of Alain Gowing, who defines 'mnemohistory' as a subset of memory which relies primarily on textual evidence.[32]

Debates on the *how* of cultural memory have yielded further theories on the methods by which it perpetuates itself. Along with Rigney, Erll highlights the role of different media as vehicles for representing past events over and over again, thus transmitting cultural memories across generations. A further vehicle is exemplarity which Roller has described as

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[26] Rigney (2005) 13–14.
[27] See Eckert and Steel amongst others on this volume on the blurring of the boundaries between cultural and communicative memory in Roman culture.
[28] Assmann (1992) 16.
[29] Basu (2012) 1–18. See Vuković's discussion in this volume and also Hartman.
[30] Erll (2018b) 276.   [31] Erll (2018b) 277.   [32] Gowing (2005) 7.

a cultural phenomenon encompassing a particular set of social practices, beliefs, values and symbols. Exemplarity manifest in four stages: (1) an initial historical *action* that is performed before a witnessing audience; (2) an *evaluation* in which the action is judged an example (either positively or negatively) by the primary audience; (3) *commemoration* in which the action is recalled as a monument (either verbal or physical) by a later audience; and (4) *norm setting*, whereby later audiences accept (or re-inscribe) the deed as a paradigm of proper or improper behaviour according to the Roman *mos maiorum*.[33] Nevertheless, exemplarity can also be a cultural arena for contesting values, norms, and axiological-deontological discourses in general. Thus the term 'perpetuation' which I use above is always itself disputatious and founded in sociopolitical powerplay, and constitutes a diversionary occlusion of agency and domination.

An *exemplum* as such is a commemorative medium that presents the past in the form of stories that are short, morally charged, and memorable, allowing them to be easily retold. A representative example is the story of Mucius Scaevola, who plunged his hand into a fire to demonstrate Roman courage to the Etruscan king Porsenna. This tale, first told in the textual medium by Livy (2.3–13), was converted into two different media during the early modern period. It was depicted in painting form by Peter Paul Rubens and his apprentice Anthony Van Dyck in the early seventeenth century, and also rendered in the medium of music by Francesco Cavalli, who wrote the opera *Muzio Scevola* in 1665. Remediations of these very remediations then occurred: a group of three composers wrote a different version of *Muzio Scevola* in the early eighteenth century, and a nineteenth-century craftsman reproduced Rubens' and Van Dyck's painting as an engraving. Cultural memory is therefore perpetuated in the form of ideas recycled and reinterpreted across different media; as Erll and Rigney observe, 'The concept of remediation is highly pertinent to cultural memory studies. Just as there is no cultural memory prior to mediation there is no mediation without remediation: all representations of the past draw on available media technologies, on existent media products, on patterns of representation and medial aesthetics' (Erll and Rigney (2009) 4). Langlands applies remediation to 'sites of exemplarity', a term she has developed from the phrase 'sites of memory'. She distinguishes a site of

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[33] Roller (2018) 4–8. For *exempla* as elements of cultural memory, see also Hölkeskamp (2004) 169–98. Langlands (2018) 16–46 offers a broader, ethical definition of *exempla* and highlights the variability of the moral categories on display which allows for situation ethics, the situational sensitivity necessary to judge correctly and act morally (112–27). See also the discussions of exemplarity of Jewell, Langlands, Hartman, Tempest, and Thorne in this volume.

exemplarity from its individual mediations or retellings ('exempla'). Each new telling that derives from a site of exemplarity which she defines as an amorphous repository of sedimented cultural knowledge about an exemplary figure and deed, lodged partly in texts and monuments and partly in people's minds, thus constitutes a remediation in that it reinserts this knowledge into a medium in which others can access it.[34] She also recognises that remediation changes the force of the knowledge that it reinserts whether knowingly, deliberately, despite denial, exploitatively, or otherwise: to blank such change of import is the engine of all brands of conservatism. Thus keeping a prayer form literally exactly as it was a millennium ago ensures that it means, indeed must mean, something vastly different now. Accordingly, if cultural memory (and possibly even cultural memory studies) aim to provide a stable, unchanging, and even eternal foundational model for societies, then we should not forget that they define their societies and their discipline as adherence to and promulgation of conservatism. If we unblock the analysis that sees all representations as primarily versions, that is toujours déjà variations without-an-original, we come to understand that Vitruvius' own intervention, to cite but one example, his claim to systematize, codify, and fix, itself necessarily unseats fixity, displaces codification, and challenges systematization. We thus come to appreciate the politics which arise from dissentient, divergent, cultural memories.

Focus on different vectors of transmission for cultural memory is emblematic of the current *Zeitgeist* of cultural memory studies. Karl-Joachim Hölkeskamp does not only draw attention to the sequential transfer of memory phenomena from one medium to another but explores how multiple co-existing representations interact through 'intersignification'.[35] To return to our original example of the *Di Penates*: the emotions which Romans experienced upon viewing public rituals did not exclusively derive from reading about history, viewing frescoes of Aeneas carrying them to Rome from Troy, or hearing hymns about these gods' powers, but from their cumulative experience of these different representations. In Hölkeskamp's words, 'rituals and performances . . . [give] new and renewed meaning to monuments'.[36] Indeed, 'spaces' themselves play a crucial role in passing down cultural memory: just as Aleida Assmann identifies the 'rebirth' of

[34] Langlands (2018) 166–86. See amongst others Biggs, Hartman, Langlands, Moser, Palmer, and Thorne in this volume.
[35] Hölkeskamp (2018) 422–3. Roller (2013) has coined the term 'intersignification'. See the discussions of Biggs, Shaw, and Moser in this volume.
[36] Hölkeskamp (2018) 465.

the Jewish people after the Holocaust as a product of Israel's exist-
ence, we would attribute the recovery of Rome after the internal wars
of the Late Republic not to individual 'sites of memory', 'fixed
points', or *dispositifs*, but rather to the survival of the *res publica* –
the 'human core' of Roman-ness which remained even after the
political system had changed.[37]

As this summary highlights, cultural memory theory is at heart
a discussion on the relationship between the past and the present. As
mentioned above, its scholars seek to answer why, with what results, and
especially *how* cultural memory is transmitted so as to provide a 'stable,
unchanging, and even eternal' foundational model for societies.[38] This
means that cultural memory is characterised, to some degree, by internal
oppositions: it is a mutable phenomenon but transmits ideas which are
meant to be permanent, is experienced by individuals but is fundamentally
collective in nature, and fuelled by commemoration but shaped by deliber-
ate choices to omit or distort certain aspects of the past.[39] Nevertheless,
these complexities only add to the flexibility of cultural memory theory as
a methodological framework and ensure its enduring appeal. Contributors
have thus embraced the complexity of cultural memory theory and truly
engaged with the framework by challenging its tenets. Indeed, this compil-
ation does not simply place cultural memory and the Classics side by side,
but rather integrates the two. The volume's focus has allowed us to examine
in detail the particularities of how the Roman Republic and the Principate
of Augustus negotiate cultural memory. We have been able incorporate
post-Assmann advances in memory theory into a series of theoretically
aware case studies, many of which break new ground and provide fresh
directions for the field of memory and at the same time highlight the
intricacies at the heart of Roman culture. While Classics in general can
hardly be accused of media-blindness one of the virtues of the volume is that
it allows us to think deeply about the media by which cultural memory is
transmitted. Contributions query not only how a monument becomes a site
of memory (Delignon), how poetry becomes monument (Beckelhymer),
and how memories of an idealised past are restored by antiquarians
(Leonardis) in the cultural centre Rome. They also look further afield
outside Rome (Bruun), in the provinces and margins to illustrate how
monuments could be re-used (Moser), re-built (Schörner), and re-coined
(Roy). In this vein, remediation emerges as one of the most prominent and
fruitful approaches throughout this volume (Biggs, Hartman, Langlands,

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[37] Cf. Assmann (2018) 287–300.   [38] Russell (2018) 178.   [39] Flower (2006) 2.

Moser, Palmer, Thorne). In addition, applying concepts such as Basu's *dispositif*, to aspects central to Romanness such as exemplarity (Langlands, Hartman, Tempest, Thorne), canon building (Corbeill, Dinter), and religious ritual (Vukovič) allows us to tease out the inherent conflicts and inconsistencies which keep cultural memory evolving.

As mentioned above, 'cultural' and 'communicative' memory can exist side by side in ancient Rome and are not temporally stratified as Assmann's framework posits. In regard to Sulla for example (Steel, Eckert) these different commemorative regimes can be tied to particular political stances. 'Official' memory is encoded in objective forms like laws, inscriptions, and monuments that tend towards the honorific, while 'communicative' forms of memorialisation go along with the victims and the defeated, at least for a while, as they are shut out of the official, objectified forms. However, in the long run, it is the anti-Sullan discourse that dominates the memorial space of the imperial age; as we will see even 'seditious' demagogues often received a second lease of life as ideological role models (Jewell). The boundaries between 'cultural' and 'communicative' memory are blurred even further in Rome where monuments may be erected for contemporary events and where later generations reinterpret and reconstruct the ancient monuments they find in order to make them make sense here and now (Beckelhymer).

In a similar vein, in the age of Augustus, Ovid offers an irreverent, somewhat subversive re-presentation of key legends and events related to the reign of Servius Tullius and more or less overtly turns these re-interpretations into parallels for and comments on similar elements in Augustus' self-mythologising (Šterbenc Erker). This shows how ancient legends sedimented in and transmitted via monuments can get written over and reinterpreted to meet the exigencies of the present – again, cultural memory is constructed of elements that can only be assembled and interpreted in the present, in the light of present understandings and concerns. After asking when exactly and how a specific location becomes a lieu de mémoire and what it means to be excluded from the cultural memory of Rome (Delignon), a remediation of the idea of the lieu de mémoire explores the relationship between an inscription that is reported in a literary text as being in a certain location and the actual inscription itself in that location (Palmer). Images on coins on the other hand present obvious selections and re-framings of legendary or historical events that serve political and social needs in the present (Roy). Here as in the exploration of aristocratic Roman urban memory culture or re-dedications outside the metropolis in Athens the past is always re-presented by the present to serve its