THE POLITICAL INSTRUMENTALITY OF CULTURAL MEMORY
A CASE STUDY OF IRELAND

FARREL CORCORAN

Abstract

This article examines how cultural memory relates to political communication, especially in polities where the stability of political structures cannot be assumed. It argues that the dominant thrust of political communication research is to emphasise the synchronic dimension in political culture at the expense of the diachronic. This makes it more difficult to discern the role played by political actors who can achieve control over the shaping and parsing of the reservoir of stored meaning that is embedded in cultural memory. The diachronic dimension in political communication can be examined most clearly at those "sites of memory" where the slow formation of ideology, consensus and collective identity takes place. These reflections on the relationship between time, memory and the exercise of political power are worked out in a case study of contemporary Ireland, where moves in the late 1990s to end the conflict in Northern Ireland have yielded political structures that are still quite unstable, where the past surges into the present in scenarios quite unlike what is often described as the flattening of time and memory assumed to be at the heart of late modernity.

Farrel Corcoran is Professor and Head of the School of Communication, Dublin City University, email: farrel.corcoran@dcu.ie.

Introduction

Relating to the past is an integral part of contemporary human existence, though the manner in which this happens differs between societies and differs also between different epochs in the history of the Western world. Too often, our Western emphasis on linearity blocks recognition of the cyclical in human affairs and how reconstituted memory plays an important part in the creation of contemporary socio-political reality. The emphasis on linearity is a comparatively recent phenomenon in human evolution, related to the emergence of industrialisation and the consequent rationalisation of social life over the last three centuries. By contrast, in ancient Greece and Rome, collective memory was held in the highest esteem and enshrined centrally in both educational and religious systems. As late as twelfth century Europe, immense social authority was invested in memory rather than writing, which was still regarded as merely a support for oral memory, not its replacement. Francis Yates (1978) has explored the foundations of this authority in the fascinating detail of the art of memory that formed medieval and early Renaissance mnemonics. When we look at the place of collective memory in contemporary Western societies, all the evidence seems to suggest that collective memory is no longer a significant social force, that it plays very little role in either private or public life. Its active time-binding power seems to have collapsed. Memory studies suggest a number of reasons for this.

Part of the general experience of living in an age of insistent change is that the modern present is experienced as sharply separated from the past. Youth culture often functions as a sensitive seismograph of the rate of erosion of traditional norms, values and memory caused by modernisation. Harvey (1990) links this with the process of "time-space compression" resulting from a speed up in the pace of life which shortens time horizons and expands the present. Expanding communication technologies affect people's deepest experiences of time, cultural memory and space in everyday life, although in spite of this, as Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) argue, traditions are enthusiastically reinvented under certain conditions of great insecurity where social change is threatening.

There is another approach to the demise of memory which looks at historical change in communication systems and argues that the inexorable penetration of print culture since Gutenberg has pushed back the once dominant power of collective memory in many European cultures. Coinciding with the Reformation, printing made it possible to dispense with the use of Christian or Classical images for mnemonic purposes and made the transmission of information more efficient. Printing fostered a move from an image culture to a word culture, "a movement more compatible with Protestant bibliolatry and pamphleteering than baroque statues and paintings sponsored by the post-Tridentine Catholic church" (Eisenstein 1993, 36).

Politics in the printing era was less likely to conform to classical models, as those who had been in a position to influence public opinion were transmuted from being orators in public squares to editors of news sheets and gazettes. The displacement of the pulpit by the periodical press, now read "in sullen silence" in the new kinds of communal gathering places in bookshops, beer clubs, coffee houses and reading rooms, had a huge impact on the secularisation of Western Christendom. But it also had a more universal effect on the weakening of local community

memory. Contemporary memory research notes how attention to memory is aligned with large shifts in historical epochs, from antiquity, with its reverence for the past that never fully departs, with its ancestors and gods, to modernity's emphasis on the future, however haltingly imagined as faith in progress and innovation, to late modernity's peculiar return to a revaluation of memory in the heritage industry and its related culture of nostalgia. Perhaps, as Frederick Jameson has suggested (1991), the heritage industry represents the far reaches of commodity fetishism, where we find the atrophy of real history and the production of the homogenous "empty time" of the capitalist present. Andreas Huyssen (1995) links contemporary state manipulations of collective memory with a crisis in the ideology of modernisation and progress and the perceived threat to memory posed by a postmodern world of ubiquitous electronic communication, with its intensely retinal, rapidly-moving, televisual memory.

Memory and Modernity

This paper is about political communication and how it relates to collective memory. It is asking how we should theorise the role of collective memory in public affairs under the conditions of late modernity and argues that the assumed flattening of time and memory across the industrialised world must be re-examined to detect where, and under what conditions, cultural memory plays a strong role in the ideological struggles that form the basis of political praxis. These conditions may include post-colonial political adjustments, as in Ireland, or post-Communist adjustments, as in Eastern Europe. Nations-in-formation are almost self-consciously involved in the creation of new grand narratives that bind together ideological notions of time and space (Anderson 1983) and this new consciousness becomes deeply satisfying, binding together into a strong collective identity a new experience of time, self and the world.

This paper examines the reconstitution of the past through collective memory and the manner in which the past plays a political role in the present. It argues that political communication theory puts an undue emphasis on the synchronic social dimension of the connective structures of political culture, at the expense of the diachronic dimension. This makes it more difficult to see the enormous role that is played in politics by social actors who can achieve dominance over others in the struggle to appropriate the past by controlling cultural memory. Success in this endeavour brings influence over the shaping and the parsing of the reservoir of stored meaning that is activated in a political community. Attention to the diachronic in political communication, therefore, particularly in those special "sites of memory" where the dynamic work of memory can be studied in its intensified forms, allows us to discern another dimension of political power that is insufficiently studied: the slow formation of ideology, with all its contradictions, and its symbiotic relationship with collective identity. This paper is both a reflection on cultural memory and politics and a case study that explores the connections between time, memory and the exercise of political power.

A number of questions present themselves for analysis. How are collective memories ordered into meaningful narratives that have a role outside the private sphere, where they develop particular selection and framing techniques that win influence in the public sphere and in civil society? These narratives are not just

constructed in the academic work of historians but also in the collective, intersubjective processes that form the connective tissue in the elaborate structure of every culture. What role is played by various media in firstly circulating messages laden with historical memory and then managing the inevitable struggles over interpretation that take place in popular culture when buried collective memory is resurrected? How does the mediatisation of cultural memory function in the transmission of power between social or communicative forces, on the one hand, and the administrative system on the other, manifested in political parties or movements that direct their efforts towards controlling the state and the apparatus of government (Habermas 1992, 72).

Gramsci's (1970) key concept of hegemony, related to the production of "consent" in civil society, is crucially important for analysing the power of memory, because it forces us to examine the relationship between cultural processes and political power. But it has to be said that the role of cultural memory in this relationship is frequently neglected in the Cultural Studies tradition, though the work of the Popular Memory Group (Johnson et al. 1982) is a notable exception. It is also rare to find memory foregrounded in political communication theory, which is largely Anglo-American and tends to be organised around the notion of a system, within which four main components interact: political institutions, media institutions, audience orientations to political communication and communication-relevant aspects of political culture (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995). Most of this interaction is viewed from a synchronic rather than a diachronic point of view. When diachronic perspectives are sometimes admitted, they tend to focus on tracking changes in the relationship between the media and political parties, the evolution of publicity processes in national political systems, the growing influence of American practices on European political campaigns, changes in the organisation of political news gathering in public service television stations and so on. "Political culture" is defined in ways that exclude collective memory from the system and concentrate instead on legal, normative and structural constraints that have evolved in particular societies to govern relationships between political agents, the media and citizens. Political communication theory tends to ignore the diachronic, because it is largely produced by scholars from the U.S. and Britain, stable democracies where historiography is largely uncontentious and collective memory is relatively inert and uncontested.

There is clearly a need to extend the number of political formations to which theoretical propositions might apply beyond the large Western democracies, so that the applicability of dominant approaches to the study of political communication processes can be tested in new environments. This would also act as a stimulant for the formulation of new theoretical approaches which are based on political experience in a wider set of societies, including non-Western societies but also those countries within "the West" (e.g. Britain and Ireland; Eastern Europe) where new forms of democracy are not yet consolidated. One such approach being tested in this paper involves investigation of the political instrumentality of cultural memory in a part of Europe Ireland — where the stability of political institutions cannot yet be taken for granted.

Memory Research

In recent years, academic fascination with cultural memory as an organising concept can be seen in several areas of the social sciences and humanities, including media studies, literature, film, history, cultural studies and philosophy (Fentress and Wickham 1992; Connerton 1089; Rosenstone 1995; Middleton and Edwards 1990; Sturken 1997; Vansina 1985; Radstone 2000). This may be because of what some commentators see as a crisis in the ideology of modernisation, a weakening of modernity's faith in progress and its rejection of memory in favour of forward-looking forgetting. The contemporary intellectual foregrounding of memory may also be related to what is often perceived as a threat posed to memory by the emergence of a postmodern world of urgent instancy and simultaneity, driven by the ubiquitous power of globalised communications, in which modernity's established temporal order and blind faith in progress and objectivity collapse.

With the revival of interest in the work of Maurice Halbwachs (1992), scholarly attention is now firmly fixed on memory as representation, actively produced in the present, and therefore open to ideological struggle and dispute. As memory comes to be understood in terms of signifying processes associated with the present, the social organisation of remembering and forgetting is seen to have important institutional aspects, involving especially the power of the state, the media, the educational apparatus and, more recently, the heritage industry. Memory is seen not as a lost reality to be recovered, but as a text to be deciphered, or as an active, ideological process of meaning construction always influencing the consensual "common-sense" of the present. This includes the operation of social amnesia, forcefully explored by Rowe and Schelling (1991) in a Latin American context.

We focus here on the state-nation relationship and the ideological unity of collective memory, in situations where political structures are unstable. We take as our starting point the work of Pierre Nora (1998) on the pluralist and fragmented forms of late modern national memory in France, which explores the relationship between nation, identity, memory and state power. This is a particularly apt approach to understanding the dynamics of political communication in countries whose political formation is still unstable and where efforts to consolidate a new democratic order are ongoing, as in Eastern Europe and in the north-western corner of the European Union. Here "the past" is not yet politically and historically inert, as might be the case in polities that have experienced institutional stability over very long periods of time. Of particular interest is Nora's notion of "sites of memory" (*lieux de memoire*) where there is a dialectical relationship established between a "first degree" understanding of original historical events, where there is direct person-to-person communication over the course of a few generations, and a "second degree" retrospective, that relies heavily on the storage capacity of texts and social institutions, embodying sentimental or political understandings as memories are reconstructed, revised and deployed in the production of contemporary popular culture.

Pierre Nora's starting point is that we no longer live in a world suffused with memory — where it could be sensed practically every where, from religious ritual to culinary practices to sexual taboos. Nor do we live in a world fully committed to overarching ideological narratives: the Revolution of the Proletariat, the March of the Nation, the Glory of Empire, the Triumph of Western Civilisation. There are

lieux de memoire, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de memoire*, real environments of memory.

> *The remnants of experience still lived in the warmth of tradition, in the silence of custom, in the repetition of the ancestral, have been displaced under the pressure of a fundamentally historical sensibility ... We speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left. The acceleration of history confronts us with the brutal realisation of the difference between real memory — social and unviolated, exemplified in but also retained as the secret of so-called primitive or archaic societies — and history, which is how our hopelessly forgetful modern societies, propelled by change, organise the past* (Nora 1989, 78).

Nora's *lieux de memoire* are the remains of a memorial consciousness that has barely survived into this late modern age which, deeply absorbed in its own transformation and renewal, inherently valuing the new over the ancient, the young over the old, the future over the past, has abandoned memory. These sites are not unlike those sacred landscapes identified by anthropologists (Vansina 1985, 46) as ritually important places for story-telling and evoking memory among tribal people in many parts of the world. In the modern world, memory sites can include particular landscapes in geographical regions, but also monuments, anniversaries, commemorative ceremonies for wars or revolutions, festivals, eulogies, significant public edifices, cemeteries, old prisons, sanctuaries, monarchy rituals, museum exhibitions, archives, cathedrals, places of pilgrimage, war memorials, national flags, rituals associated with cults of the dead, including State funerals. These can all be seen as "the boundary stones of another age, illusions of eternity … moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned, no longer quite life, not yet death, like shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded" (Nora 1998, 12).

Pierre Nora's reflection on the relation between history and memory marks a valuable methodological contribution to the exploration of the political role of memory for present purposes. It stresses the conscious attempt to investigate historical symbols, the means by which residual images of a collective past have been socially constructed and then politically deployed. Of particular interest for this paper is his analysis of "great events" and the contemporary proliferation of spectacular non-events, immediately charged with heavy symbolic meaning at their point of origin, organised by the state and deploying the power of television and radio, many of them stillborn attempts to create a spectacular link with the past.

In Ireland, the incompleteness of the decolonisation process at the centre of Irish nationalism since the nineteenth-century and the persistence of a small but very active physical force tradition within that whole project right into the 21st century, has generated a historiography that is conflictual, that operates by "running a knife between the tree of memory and the bark of history" (Nora 1989, 10). Collective memory of the events of the popular uprising of 1798, or the Great Famine of 1847, or the Rising of 1916, all recently commemorated in anniversaries as sacred events in the national tradition, is no longer passed on univocally, its meaning intact. This is sometimes difficult to understand for an observer based in a culture where historiography is less contentious.

It takes more than different styles of historiography, of course, whether these are relatively consensual or polemical, to explain why collective memories in some countries tend to be inert while others seem to play an active role within the public sphere. We must also consider the stability or otherwise of the political system in the present. In some situations, contentious differences that are integral to major turning points in a collective history lose their initial political energy and are no longer experienced as social divisions. Memory of these turning points survives into the present but in a metamorphosed form, having undergone a profound transformation into a type of cultural memory that unites rather than divides and forms the basis for political consensus. In democracies where political institutions and systems have been stable for long periods, states that might have originated in bitter social divisions (the American War of Independence and the Civil War; the English Civil War and abolition of the monarchy; the French Revolution) collective memories have lost their initial political pertinence and are experienced as inert cultural residue within contemporary consciousness. These once politically charged periods in the past are now experienced as an amorphous temporal block, no longer politically dynamic. This is not the case in all democracies.

Two conclusions emerge from the discussion so far. The thrust of Anglo-American political communication research, which establishes the dominant paradigms for all political communication research, is highly synchronic, rooted in an academic fascination with the short temporal rhythms of electoral campaigns. It allows very little space for considering the political effectivity of collective memory, which operates in larger temporal rhythms. On the other hand, memory research continually refers to the ideological and political dimensions of collective memory but tends to focus on this as an offshoot or consequence of the exercise of power (for example, memory of the Vietnam war or the Holocaust). It is less robust in bringing ideology construction into the centre of contemporary political analysis, to deepen our understanding of the ground where Government and Opposition struggle to increase their legitimacy with the electorate. The objective of this paper is to argue for a rapprochement between memory studies and the analysis of political communication, so that one can fill in the gaps in the other and theorising about political communication can develop a diachronic dimension.

What is needed is detailed explication of the instrumentality of memory as it is controlled, shaped and deployed in contemporary democracies, brought into the centre of the struggle between political parties and implicated in the ideological projects of governments. Any such exploration is also going to focus on the crucial role played by the media in reviving and reconstituting memory within a process that is intensely political. How is memory politically administered as the medium for situating the past in the present and legitimating it within public consciousness? Answers can be found in those spectacular *lieux de memoire* where the role of the state and the media are paramount in generating a dynamic social force around a particular issue and there is a struggle for the heart and soul of public opinion: large, state-sponsored commemorations and inaugurations of national memorials. Nora (1989) describes these as prosthesis memory, because they depend heavily on external props, such as media technologies and media texts. Prosthesis memory is not yet so fully needed where communicative memory is still alive, where for instance the "remembering organism" is a group of veterans who keep alive in their own way memories of the war they fought or the battle they won.

Irish National Memory

In this section, we turn to a consideration of how memory, and its management by political agents, is central in a country where political institutions are still highly unstable. A major change in collective memory of the birth of Irish political independence began to take place in Ireland in the period from the 1970s to the 1990s. This corresponded to the declining influence in public life of the communicative memory of the men and women who experienced directly the events of 1916-22. It also corresponded to the twenty-year period of state censorship of broadcast material that focussed on "the Troubles" in Northern Ireland. What is interesting about state-organised prosthetic memory, which includes the power to administer censorship as well as to organise spectacular mnemonic events in public life, is how actions that are politically designed to create public consensus often result in generating further social division. This instability in prosthetic memory can be seen as we analyse a particular *lieux de memoire* in recent Irish politics in the form of the state funeral that took place in Dublin in October 2001. Funerals have always been potent rituals in the history of nationalism in various European countries including Ireland, and they sometimes function also as defining moments in international political communication, where perceptions of enemy regimes can be remythologised, as in Cold War rhetoric in the U.S. focussed on spectacular State funerals in the Soviet Union organised after the deaths of Josef Stalin, Nikita Khruschev and Leonid Brezhnev (Corcoran 1983).

The state funeral being analysed here was a carefully orchestrated, spectacular, public ritual, one of the major events in the political calendar of 2001. Its function was to serve as a powerful instrumental vehicle for collective memory as it struggled to underpin socio-political cohesion. The bodies of ten men executed by the British government in 1920 during the Irish War of Independence were disinterred from the prison yard where they had been hanged, and reburied with full State, Church and military honours, in the Patriots' Plot inside Glasnevin Cemetery, itself a very significant *lieux de memoire* in Ireland, beside the bodies of other historical figures who played a role in the struggle for Irish independence. Both the temporal (reburial after 80 years) and the spatial dimensions in this event produced a huge, though not univocal or homogenous, resonance in the Irish political psyche. The funeral cortege made a solemn, five-hour journey across Dublin and the nation's television screens, pausing in silence or with solemn military music at significant historical sites connected with the origins of the State.

The funerals of the ten men executed in 1920, a highly charged symbolic event because of the "unfinished business" at the core of British-Irish relations, took place against a background of dangerous instability in the new political institutions just established in Northern Ireland as a result of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, supported by both Irish and British governments and ratified in referenda on both sides of the Irish Border. By October 2001, passions on both Nationalist and Unionist sides in Northern Ireland were raised to higher than normal levels. The Unionist parties were threatening to kill off the new political arrangement by withdrawing their consent to participation with their old enemies, Sinn Fein, in the government of Northern Ireland unless the IRA began to decommission its weapons. The Executive was collapsing, the Assembly was locked in stalemate, the North-South Ministerial Councils were not functioning. Would the British Government trigger

an official Review of the whole Good Friday Agreement, assume Direct Rule from London or call fresh elections? The IRA for its part, was reluctant to decommission while the British Army made slow progress in demilitarising the most Republican areas of Northern Ireland and the British Government made slow progress on reforming the police force, to rid it of its sectarian reputation. The week before the State funeral saw the centre of Dublin host a major twentieth anniversary commemoration of the death of ten IRA hunger strikers, who had challenged Margaret Thatcher's refusal in 1981 to grant them the status of political prisoners by adopting the tactic that had been used effectively in the Irish War of Independence as well as several other national struggles, especially India. The past was haunting Dublin in a number of dimensions that October.

The instability of the new political arrangements in Belfast provided the potent context in Dublin for the controversy that raged over a period of several weeks, centred on whether the state funerals being organised by the Government were a long over-due, fitting mark of honour for fallen heroes, or a cynical move by the Government to ensure its re-election the following Summer, or an aggressive gesture by the Republic of Ireland that would further inflame political relationships on a very divided island and therefore once more postpone political consensus in Northern Ireland. All this took place in a media environment characterised by difficult adjustments to the recent cessation of twenty years of state censorship of broadcasting that effectively had contained the expansion of Sinn Fein's role in national politics. Censorship initiated at a time when both the Irish and the British governments wanted to contain the IRA ideologically by cutting off what Margaret Thatcher famously described as "the oxygen of publicity," inevitably had produced a wider spiral of self-censorship within Irish radio and television. This had chained out to include national newspapers, even though they were not subject to the legal constraints imposed on broadcasting. Censorship had an enormous impact on how the media rendered the past intelligible, particularly memory of events that led up to the struggle for independence in the early decades of the twentieth century and events that followed on from the notion of "unfinished business." In other circumstances, memory of the executions of 1920 would by now have evolved from being communicative memory, rooted in meaning exchange between relatives and supporters in direct contact with each other across two or three generations, to become cultural memory, stretched in narrative strings over longer temporal rhythms. With more stable political structures, politically charged periods in the past would by now be experienced as inert cultural residue, no longer politically dynamic, perhaps to be revisited in the prosthetic memory system of a docudrama or a heritage centre. This is not (yet) the case in the structure of feeling that is Irish nationalism.

The central icon in this mythic funeral drama is Kevin Barry, the first of the ten men to be hanged in 1920 during the height of the war of Independence (or Anglo-Irish war), six months before the truce with Britain was agreed. Barry was a 19 year-old university student in Dublin and part-time IRA volunteer, arrested after a botched ambush of a British Army truck collecting bread from a bakery a few hours before he was due to resit the last of his medical examinations. His youth, his middle-class background, his nonchalant disregard for the formalities of the military court that condemned him to death, the international campaign to save him from the gallows that included the leader of the British Labour Party, J. H. Thomas (who read into the record of the House of Commons Barry's sworn affidavit concerning

his treatment in detention), his adoption as a *cause celebre* in the influential Hearst newspaper chain across the US — all guaranteed that his name would survive in popular memory more than the other nine men buried with him inside Mountjoy Jail. The most powerful vehicle of popular memory of Kevin Barry was undoubtedly the well-known ballad penned by an anonymous Irishman working in the Clyde shipyards, popularised in the sonorous rendition by American singer and left-wing activist Paul Robeson, a song still familiar to many Irish people over the age of 40 who learned it as children in school:

In Mountjoy Jail one Monday morning
High upon the gallows tree
Kevin Barry gave his young life
For the cause of liberty …

Both the endurance of popular memory, and also its frequently troubled nature as it unfolds through time, can be seen as late as January 2002 in the controversy surrounding the depiction of Barry's execution onstage in a regional dramatic production in Cork and objections to touring the play in Northern Ireland for fear that it would "give offence."

Struggle for Meaning

How does cultural memory become an active ingredient in contemporary politics? Part of the logic of agreeing to a State funeral was the fear that if the funerals were private, the families would be unable to prevent various contemporary political and paramilitary groups, broadly referred to in the media as "the Republican movement," from co-opting the funerals to their cause. Cultural memory would certainly be given a political instrumentality, but at the margins of the political system. In such a scenario, it is likely that the majority of the population would have very little awareness of the event, as the media would not be centrally involved. But if the funerals had the potential for achieving mainstream political objectives, what choreographer would control them and who would reap the political advantage that was potentially available?

When the government announced the date of the State funerals — 14 Oct 2001 — Opposition parties immediately pointed out that this was also the week-end of the annual convention of the main Government party, a political ritual normally staged as a powerful public relations exercise with massive television exposure. The Government would reap huge electoral benefit from its prominent association with the State funerals, especially among the growing section of the electorate, including first-time voters, tempted to support the Sinn Fein party now released from the restrictions of media censorship. Sinn Fein originated in the early 20th-century nationalist struggle for independence, which it successfully led. At the end of the 20th-century, the party had survived as the core political movement still supporting armed rebellion against continuing British control of Northern Ireland. It then played a central role in bringing about the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, which brought an end to the military campaign of the IRA and a realignment of the tripartite relationships between Ireland, Britain and Northern Ireland.

The fact that the reinterment of Kevin Barry with full Church and State honours was taking place only six months before a General Election, concentrated minds rapidly across all political parties. Opposition leaders were less interested in the

subtleties of choreographing the rituals of prosthetic cultural memory than in whether and how they would participate in a funeral ceremony which many believed should not go ahead, least of all on the same weekend of the annual convention of the main Government party, a funeral timed, planned and controlled in every detail by the Government.

Meanwhile, in the weeks leading up to the funeral, both print and broadcast media were examining the historical record of the executions and regenerating the memory of Kevin Barry among a new generation of Irish youth for whom the memory link to the events of 1920 was far weaker than what it was for their parents. Older people still had recent communicative memory of those times, as well as access to the famous ballad while it was still sung with passionate intensity. The teaching of history of schools had been firmly de-nationalised since the 1970s, a change legitimised by the emergence of a new group of "revisionist" historians in universities and the rise of some of their students to positions of authority in the media. The implementation of the regime of censorship in broadcasting in the 1970s, which not only silenced Sinn Fein and other groups, but generated a widespread culture of self censorship across most of the media, helped to cauterise national memory still further.

It quickly became apparent, in the lead up to the State funeral, that not only did some of the population have a clear memory of the events of 1920 leading to the foundation of the state and some did not, but there was no unanimity within that memory system about the meaning of Kevin Barry in the political environment of 2001. Nationalism, as a structure of feeling, had by now seriously fragmented, after its long passage from its 19th-century origins to its political and military expression in the Independence movement, through the ideological consequences of the partitioning of Ireland and the long decades of "the Troubles" in Northern Ireland. Acceptance of the inevitability, and ultimately of the desirability, of partition had entered deeply into public consciousness as the dominant "common sense" in many parts of Ireland south of the Border, but now a strong anti-partitionism was unleashed with vigour into the public sphere through the un-censored voice of Sinn Fein.

The particular *lieux de memoire* examined here embodies and expresses this fragmentation very clearly. On the one side, there was the official positioning of Kevin Barry within an interpretative framework that linked him directly to the mainstream consensus that existed between most political parties and the dominant media that supported the Good Friday Agreement. In the Requiem Mass in Dublin's Pro-Cathedral, concelebrated by bishops, Archbishops and the Vatican's Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland, Cardinal Cathal Daly concentrated much more on the present than the past. Rhetorically stitching the two together, he told the congregation (which included the President of Ireland, the Taoiseach/ Prime Minister, Ministers and Opposition politicians) that the true inheritors of the ideals of the men and women of the Independence movement were those "explicitly and visibly" committed to implementing all aspects of the Good Friday Agreement. He went on to warn that "many will be laying claim to be the legitimate and only heirs of the men we reinter today ... Some will claim that the mantle has passed to them of being the men and women whose duty it is to complete the unfinished business of 1916." The unfinished business the Cardinal emphasised was not the termination of British influence in Ireland but social justice in both parts of Ireland and the

current political project of building peace in the Northern Ireland. Standing in front of the ten coffins that had now been carried by soldiers through the streets of the capital city to a place of honour before the high altar, the leader of the Catholic Church was firmly excluding the traditional "unfinished business" of Republican politicians and paramilitaries, which had been driving their continuation of the armed struggle to achieve a united Ireland eighty years after the country was partitioned.

In his graveside eulogy, the Taoiseach stressed the democratic mandate for the use of arms by Kevin Barry and the other volunteers, emphasising that it was grounded in the general election of 1918 and the declaration of Independence issued by the separatist parliament (Dail Eireann) that was established in 1919. Standing in the Patriots' Plot in the National Cemetery, one of the most sacred places in the nationalist cultural memory, where highly charged patriotic eulogies had been delivered throughout much of the previous two centuries, the Taoiseach was firmly grounding his speech, televised to the nation, in the memory of all the "Patriots, Statesmen and soldiers, all those who contributed in many different ways to the march of the nation." Kevin Barry was doing "precisely what Englishmen would be doing under the same circumstances and under the same provocation... What was involved was a national uprising, a collision between two governments, one resting on consent, the other on force."

This eulogy was rhetorically structured around a realisation that his national television audience would be fully aware of the existence of two other, radically opposed ideological positions, adhered to by two other groups of people who would take radically different views of this State funeral. One was the "revisionist" group who would regard Kevin Barry as no more than a criminal or "terrorist" in late twentieth-century terminology, automatically associating him with "terrible deeds … the actions of tiny minorities that happened long after his death." The other group included those who wanted "to stretch the democratic mandate of 1918 far beyond its natural term," that is, those paramilitary groups who were continuing the armed struggle right up to the present time.

Each of these viewpoints had been very firmly expressed in the weeks preceding the funeral, but particularly the revisionist one, because of its easier access to the media and the senior positions achieved as media commentators by some of its most prominent exponents, united in the project of dismantling the national structure of feeling that had survived intact as an unquestioned dominant ideology into the 1970s but not far beyond them. Its rise to a new hegemonic position in Irish culture from 1970 to 1990 can be tracked in the large differences between the resources (symbolic and material) committed to the fiftieth anniversary commemoration of the Rising in 1966 and the peremptory, almost embarrassed marking of the seventy-fifth anniversary in 1991, while the conflict in Northern Ireland was still raging with ferocious intensity. The revisionist position was crudely expressed in the newspaper headline "Bury terrorism with Kevin Barry," and the even more crude attempt to associate Barry with the UVF, the Protestant paramilitary group that had rejected the peace process in Northern Ireland and in October 2001 was continuing its ethnic cleansing policy of terrorising Catholic workers. In its most sophisticated expression, the revisionist position argued that literally digging up the past in this way was an exercise in selective memory: how were the other dead being remembered, those executed by the Free State in 1922/ 23 during the Civil

War? How were we remembering those Irishmen who had gone "to fight for the honour of small nations" as part of the British Army in World War I? Revisionists also promoted the argument that the State funeral was risking further alienation of Unionists and Loyalists in Northern Ireland, who would see the Barry reinterment as an exercise in atavistic Republican triumphalism.

The polar opposite view to revisionism found expression too, but it had far less privileged access to newspapers, radio and television, despite the lifting of censorship, and was regarded by the media as irredeemable, outside even the most liberally stretched concept of consensus about what would be reported about Northern Ireland. Among those who rejected the Good Friday Agreement was the breakaway group, Republican Sinn Fein, whose president Ruairi O Bradaigh complained that the Government had "hijacked" the memories of the ten executed men by organising a State funeral for them. "Their memory cannot be hijacked by politicians who are attempting to calm the Irish people into believing that the British occupation of the Six Counties is normal and the National Question has been resolved by means of the unworkable agreement of 1998." O Bradaigh claimed that the families of the executed men had rejected the notion of moving the bodies in 1922 and again in 1943, preferring that they remain buried inside the prison "until the Republic was restored."

Conclusions

The State funeral of Kevin Barry and his comrades clearly became an important *lieux de memoire* in a period that some have defined as "post-nationalist" (Kearney, 1997). As a five-hour television spectacle, and as a month-long media controversy, it fully activating a cultural memory that had been relatively dormant but was now powerfully alive. It was no longer a unified memory, however, no longer able to deliver a common interpretative framework within which to discern an agreed meaning for the residues that originating events leave on contemporary recollection. By contrast, the Queen's annual visit to the Cenotaph in London activates a relatively unified, untroubled collective memory for British citizens, as do the celebrations of Bastille Day in France and the Fourth of July in the United States. Because of the "unfinished business" rooted in the settlement agreed at the end of the War of Independence and then fought over in a bitter Civil War, cultural memory in Ireland remains contentious.

Maurice Halbwach's original contribution to memory studies was his emphasis on how the tensions of the present moment determine the force and the shape of cultural memory. The Battle of Masada, between Jewish defenders and Roman conquerors, took place in 73 AD and had no impact on Jewish collective consciousness, even at the level of a commemoration, until the rise of Zionism in the early 20th century and the popularisation of a heroic poem called "Masada" by a Ukrainian immigrant to Palestine in 1927. Since then, Masada has become a key symbol of Jewish resistance and resilience, with immense popular appeal (Halbwach 1990, 32-34). Present conditions shape the selective memory of past events. A 2,0000-year-old event is moved into the very core of Israeli identity.

And so it is with Kevin Barry, though the political instrumentality of memory works differently in this case. The televising of the State funeral in 2001 has more in common with the fiftieth anniversary celebrations in 1966, heavily dependent

on week-long television programming, live and recorded, than with the muted, minimalist fifteen-minute observance of the seventy-fifth anniversary in 1991, but only a little more. The Kevin Barry funeral does not amount to a return of the repressed in Irish culture, after a quarter century of censorship and revisionist polemics, but it does signify the opening up of a discursive space that had been under pressure for a long time. This has not had a major impact on Unionist opinion in Northern Ireland, despite some comments there that the sweet smell of economic success south of the Border over the last eight years had tempted the Government to reclaim ground lost in the revisionist battle for ideas, symbols and memory, especially through the reinterment of Kevin Barry. It will probably be seen to have had a loosening effect on the institutional framework within which the struggle over meaning between different memory carrier groups takes place, particularly inside media organisations.

Kevin Barry (and metonymically, a lot of the nationalist view of the world) "fell from grace" initially in 1989 when the Irish Times published an article defining him not as a hero but a vicious murderer. This was reinforced by an intensified attack on nationalist memory of Barry by the same journalist in 1999. These were some of the key moments in the revisionist re-framing of republicanism as "evil." The State funeral can be seen as a counter-revisionist move, which will certainly alter the way politicians and media commentators talk about "the nation." Whether it will yield any long-term electoral advantage to the Government party over Sinn Fein remains to be seen, though both parties secured significant increases in their number of parliamentary seats in the General Election that took place six months later, in the Summer of 2002. It also remains to be seen whether it will function to hasten the embedding of Sinn Fein, newly arrived out of decades of censored media representation and belief in armed struggle, into mainstream politics.

Behind public talk is the structure of collective identity as it is shaped by public discourse, that is, the collectively patterned meanings and structures of emotional and cultural expectations that anchor individual security in the modern world and provide a sense of capability. Memory is social and fluid and continuously constructed. It is a significant object of study because it is deeply connected to the contemporary sense of the self that provides bonds attaching people together. Collective identity is an effective source of individual support and a resource for resolving future social and political problems. Identities are socially created in specific historical circumstances and however intangible they may seem to analysts, they can and do act as the motive forces in history (MacDonald 1993, 7).

The canon of political communication research at present is indifferent to the need to study collective memory, perhaps because the geolinguistic structure of research in this area establishes the dominance of Anglo-American academic input. Certainly American theory is more concerned with the spatial than the temporal aspects of political communication, operating as is still tends to do within a dominant "transmission" paradigm of persuasion rather than a culturalist or ideological paradigm that is more open to diachronic analysis. The cultivation of public opinion via the mass media modifies people's awareness of space (the bridging of distance between events and spectators via global media systems) and time (emotional involvement in the urgency of actuality via live television transmission). How this may affect collective memory needs to be taken into account in political communication theory. In situations were new democracies are being consolidated,

there is a particular need to understand the role of what Nora calls "prosthesis memory" and others call "technologies of memory" (Sturken 1997), where political authority over the framing of the past moves from the professional historian to the complex dynamics of the shaping of public opinion. This is best studied in those sites of memory that reflect non-consensual interests in divided societies, especially sites organised by State administrations or other political actors in order to generate public consensus and build ideological identity.

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