



University of Brighton

CENTRE FOR RESEARCH
IN MEMORY NARRATIVE
AND HISTORIES

*Memory, Narrative and Histories:
Critical Debates, New Trajectories*

edited by Graham Dawson

*Working Papers on Memory, Narrative and Histories
no. 1, January 2012*

ISSN 2045–8290 (print)
ISSN 2045–8304 (online)

Centre for Research in Memory, Narrative and Histories,
University of Brighton

January 2012

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Introduction

Graham Dawson

Memory, Narrative and Histories: Critical Debates and New Trajectories is the first in a new series of occasional Working Papers to be published by the Centre for Research in Memory, Narrative and Histories at the University of Brighton. Drawing on the University's long-standing research strengths in humanities, arts and social sciences, and emphasising the plural 'histories', the Centre engages with multi- and interdisciplinary research on the complex relationships between present and past; dealing, for example, with subordinate and marginalised histories, archive practices, and the complexities of popular memory. Research collaboration draws on scholarship in a range of disciplines including history, cultural studies, literary studies, sociology, cultural and human geography, visual studies, performance studies, critical theory, psycho-social studies, and narrative theory.

The Centre promotes dialogue about the methodological, epistemological and theoretical issues at work in the study of memory, narrative and the making of histories, resulting in an institutional locus which embraces creative and critical practice, and encompasses academic, professional and community development. It explores the relations, and facilitates links, between academic scholarship and the work of other practitioners and stakeholders involved in making histories, in representing the past, and in producing forms of remembrance and commemoration. Reflecting these emphases, the Centre's key areas of interest are identified as: Archives and Histories; Life Writing/Creative Writing; Community History; Cultural Memory; Oral History and Life History; and Public History.

The papers collected in this publication were originally delivered at the Centre's Launch Symposium on Memory, Narrative and Histories which took place on the Falmer site of the University of Brighton on 6th December 2008, attended by over sixty people. The aim of the symposium was to act as a catalyst, stimulating discussion amongst researchers and postgraduate students across the University, and with colleagues from the University of Sussex and wider afield, about developments in and across these linked fields of activity. By encouraging critical reflection on evolving traditions, new directions and future possibilities, the symposium was envisaged as a way of setting an agenda for the Centre's work.

Seven speakers, all experienced researchers and practitioners in one or more of the Centre's key areas of interest, were invited to provide a personal overview of recent trends, current debates, and new trajectories within their field. In the first session, Public History and Community History, Hilda Kean of Ruskin College, Oxford, spoke about 'People and their Pasts. Aspects of Public History Today'; and Glenn Jordan, of the University of Glamorgan and Butetown History and Arts Centre in Cardiff, delivered an illustrated talk on 'History, Memory, Cultural Politics: A People's History Project in Cardiff Docklands'. The second session, Archives and Histories, involved Andrew Flinn of University College London speaking on the theme of 'Archives and their Communities'; and a paper by Dorothy Sheridan of the University of Sussex, 'Archive Fever and Archive Struggles: Tensions in the Creation, Care and Use of Archives with Stories from the Mass Observation Archive'. In the third session, Life History, Life Writing, Creative Writing, Margaretta Jolly from the University of Sussex spoke on the theme of 'Life History and/vs. Life Writing'; and Michelene Wandor, writer and Royal Literary Fund Fellow, drew on examples from her own writing to explore 'The Voices of Creative Writing, Past and Present'. In the final session, Carrie Hamilton of Roehampton University gave a paper on 'Cultural Memory and the Emotions: Exploring the Connections'. The symposium concluded with a plenary drawing out key themes of the day led by a respondent, the Centre's director, Graham Dawson.

Five of these papers have been developed for publication and are collected here. In her paper, Hilda Kean considers how to move debate on Public History-making away from an emphasis on 'professional' historians reaching out in accessible ways to 'the public'. Such formulations assume that history is a given rather than a process and maintain the division between the so-called 'professional' and the 'amateur'. Kean suggests that thinking about the ways in which people engage with their pasts – and develop such engagement in various forms – may provide us with a different and more dynamic starting point for historical practice which breaks down rather than reinforces current divides.

Andrew Flinn examines the impact of some recent developments with regard to the production of history and the role of the archivist. In particular, drawing upon an AHRC-funded research project, 'Community archives and identities: documenting and sustaining community heritage', he considers the growth of independent community archives and heritage initiatives. While firmly rooted in older traditions of history from below, History Workshop and identity politics, such initiatives have also emerged in new forms; partly as a response to technological change but also due to greater awareness of, and challenge to, the partiality of orthodox national historical narratives. His paper identifies a related challenge to professional authority, also enabled by technological change;

namely, the growth of user-generated content whether it be of archival material uploaded to community sites, or descriptions and tags added by users to heritage-institution catalogues. Flinn argues that, although the archive profession once ignored these initiatives and many remain concerned about the challenge of the crowd to the expert, and of replacing 'I think' with 'we think', others are now exploring ways in which a transformed profession might seek to support and embrace these developments as a way of diversifying and democratising archives and the histories that are, in part, written from them.

Mass Observation set out to document the everyday in all its minute detail and to ensure that so-called 'ordinary people' had the opportunity to record their own history. Considering both the original initiative that created the Mass Observation Archive in the 1930s and the contemporary Mass Observation project, Dorothy Sheridan identifies a complex triangular relationship between the archive creators (who include the author-contributors), the archive collectors and curators, and the archive users (within and beyond the academy). Her paper explores some of the resulting tensions and reflects on the ensuing struggles for representation and possession.

How do the fields of oral history, life history and life writing relate? Using Alistair Thomson's notion that oral history has undergone four 'paradigm transformations', Margaretta Jolly traces shifts in the shared histories and passions that link these areas of enquiry. Her paper also investigates persisting disciplinary faultlines between literary-based and historically-based traditions of research, and considers what they can tell us about the difficulties in integrating oral and written life-story work, with reference to Guatemalan activist Rigoberta Menchu's story. How do interdisciplinary ideals hold up against the realities of institutional and professional pressures? Digital life-story telling, a form of audiovisual literacy and Thomson's fourth paradigm transformation, logically brings oral and written methodologies together. But, Jolly argues, we have yet to provide an adequate synthesis of life history and life writing.

Turning finally to research on memory, Carrie Hamilton's paper examines the importance of emotion in analysing forms of 'collective memory' and individual life stories. Arguing that the relationship between memory and emotion is not often spelt out or theorised, Hamilton explores the links between them in the context of the recent 'turn to affect' in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Her paper draws on memory studies, cultural theories of emotion, the history of emotions and oral history, as well as her own research on memory and emotion in relation to political subjectivities in the Basque country and Cuba.

A number of common themes run across and between these papers. Firstly, they share a preoccupation with the social relations of knowledge production, and an interest in transforming modes of professional and institutional authority – whether that of the academic

historian, the archivist or the museum curator – through practices that draw professionals into collaboration and negotiation with historical practitioners situated in wider cultural locations (variously characterised as 'the public', 'the community', 'the people').

A second theme is the continuity between transformative practices of this kind in the early twenty-first century and previous projects – whether the History Workshop movement centred on Ruskin College after 1967, Mass Observation in the 1930s, or popular history initiatives of the early twentieth century – which are constituted as reference points, inspirations or traditions, creatively adapted to meet changed circumstances and emerging needs. In this respect, the particular influence of Raphael Samuel – teacher, writer, pioneer of the Ruskin-based History Workshop, founding editor of *History Workshop Journal* – is evident throughout these papers. This is a sign of the continuing vitality and motivational power of Samuel's vision of a democratic, participatory and liberatory culture of history-making. It is also an indicator of unfinished business within the cultural politics of 'the past', involving an ongoing process of challenge to the appropriation of history, whether by the state, by the academy, or by professional interests. Such challenges manifest in diverse ways: they may assert the centrality of history-making to the experience of class and other social oppressions; they may celebrate the depth and vitality of 'amateur' history-making (nowhere more evident than in the extraordinary growth of genealogy, rooted in popular fascination with the family as narrative); or – as Raymond Williams urged – they may work to build counter-hegemonic 'alternative traditions' that draw new lines of connection between the present and the past, reconstructing received histories the better to contest the present and the future.

It follows that, thirdly, these papers embody a common commitment to enhancing intellectual exchange and dialogue across the faultlines of affiliation, discipline and practice that may divide us into discrete enclaves – as public or community historians, as interested in archives or memories, as practitioners working under the banner of life writing or oral history, as historians or literary critics or cultural analysts. In engaging debates, perspectives and approaches that often have rather different and disconnected starting points, the papers help us to see and think about the links between these various endeavours, and thus the possibilities of transformative practice.

The five authors have taken various approaches to translating their spoken paper into publishable writing; some retaining the more informal and discursive style of the original, others developing their talk into a more formally elaborated written paper. Both styles are embraced in the ethos of this new series, *Working Papers on Memory, Narrative and Histories*. Inspired by the mode of publication – the so-called *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* – adopted in the 1970s by the now defunct (and greatly missed) Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the

University of Birmingham, this series will provide an in-house vehicle for publishing papers from our Centre's symposia, conferences and other public events; 'work-in-progress' and occasional papers; and other fruits of the Centre's research activity and collaborative work with academic, professional and community partners. Each number in the Working Papers series, edited and presented to the highest scholarly standards, will be published as a bound paper booklet (available from the Centre for Research in Memory, Narrative and Histories, c/o CRD, Faculty of Arts, University of Brighton, 58-67 Grand Parade, Brighton, BN2 0JY, UK), and simultaneously in pdf format on the Centre's website <<http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/mnh>>, with a view to facilitating ongoing debate. All contributions to this first number have been read, and revised in the light of editorial comments, by myself and another member of the Centre's Steering Group. I am grateful to Mark Bhatti, Paddy Maguire, Lucy Noakes and Deborah Phillips for their assistance and input.

Cultural memory and the emotions: Exploring the connections¹

Carrie Hamilton

The study of cultural memory has much in common with the cultural study of emotion. Both are areas in which cultural theorists, historians and others in the humanities reconceptualise phenomena traditionally associated with the social sciences and sciences, in particular psychology and neuroscience. Memory and emotion are also fundamentally concerned with the relationship between the personal and the political, the private and the public, the individual and collective. For historians such as myself, the study of memory and emotion additionally poses challenging questions about evidence, reliability and authenticity. How can we know that the memories recorded in a life story are accurate reflections of past events, or that the emotions they express represent how people *really* felt in the past? I argue that most contemporary cultural research on memory rests upon a set of assumptions about emotions, in particular that those things that people remember best are experiences associated with strong emotions. However, the inter-relationship between cultural memory and the emotions is often not explicitly theorised. In this paper I want to outline a few of the areas where a further theorisation of the memory/emotion relationship could be beneficial and offer some possible routes for exploration.

Before I continue, I should say that there are areas I am *not* going to cover in any detail. These are precisely where the overlap between emotions and memory is most obvious, namely trauma and nostalgia. Both these concepts are defined simultaneously as forms of memory and as emotions: trauma as a form of severe emotional shock or pain whose traces remain with the subject; nostalgia as the bittersweet feelings associated with the recall of a certain moment or epoch in the past. Trauma in particular has been the focus of extensive research and debate and indeed has been fundamentally important to the development of memory studies generally. Rather than revisit these debates, I want to expand the focus here beyond trauma and nostalgia to examine other ways that memory studies engage with the emotions.

If trauma, and in particular an interest in the problems of representation presented by the memories of survivors of conflict and genocide, most notably the Holocaust, constitute one impulse behind

¹ This paper was delivered as a talk and is therefore more informal in places than if it had originally been written for publication.

the contemporary 'memory boom' in the social sciences and humanities, a second is an interest in individual remembering and so-called 'collective memory'. It is worth returning for a moment here to the work of the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, often cited as the founder of the concept of 'collective memory'. In his posthumously edited volume *On Collective Memory*, Halbwachs argues that social groups (the primary examples he uses are the family and religious communities) have 'the capacity to remember'.² While collective memory is often used today with reference to the landmark historical moments or events that constitute the shared history of a certain collective (most often a national or ethnic group), we should recall that Halbwachs recognised the concept as a metaphor.³ Individual memory, he argued, is always formed within group contexts and is therefore inseparable from the wider memories of other individuals in the group. These memories, especially when they involve repeated patterns, such as family dinnertime gatherings, collapse into one another through time and are constantly 'compose(d) anew'.⁴ At the same time, certain memories will leave their mark on the group as a whole.⁵ With the example of the family, Halbwachs presents a case of collective memory formed through direct and regular contact among group members. In his work on religious collective memory, he moves beyond the small group whose members know each other personally, to a larger community whose connections are made through a shared set of beliefs and traditions, passed from one generation to the next in the form of texts and practices.⁶

With the rise of 'memory studies' in the social sciences and humanities since the late twentieth century, scholars have both critiqued and adapted Halbwachs's theories of 'collective memory'. Some have warned that the metaphor is sometimes taken too literally to imply that groups remember in the same ways as individuals. Others have said that Halbwachs's research privileges the group at the expense of the individual.⁷ But what has gone rather unlooked in commentaries on Halbwachs – at least among those using his concept of 'collective memory' – is the fundamental importance for Halbwachs of *emotion* in constructing and cementing collectives. In his essay on the collective memory of the family, Halbwachs argues that upon entering a family an individual's position within that family is determined not by his or her individual feelings but by the pre-existing rules and customs of the family. It is these that hold the family together. Indeed, Halbwachs's theory of

² Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 54.

³ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*.

⁴ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, p. 61

⁵ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, p. 68.

⁶ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, pp. 84-119.

⁷ James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. ix.

family feelings is markedly functionalist, as is, one could argue, his idea of collective memory generally. The point I wish to make here, however, is that for Halbwachs emotions and memory were intimately connected in the family, serving to hold it together in space and across time and generations. As the French sociologist Laurent Fleury has written:

Maurice Halbwachs's originality was to pose the tight link between the sociology of emotions and the sociology of ritual, because the sociology of ritual [...] turns out to be inseparable from ritual practices and their socializing function, rediscovering in this way the idea of *forms* and *frames*, which is central for posing the terms of the learning of memory.⁸

This indissoluble connection in Halbwachs between emotions and the role of memory and ritual commemorative practices suggests one reason for the implied, but often unexplained, importance of emotion in studies of collective memory. A further investigation of this link might also help to explain the widespread belief that the 'recuperation' of collective memories of war, conflict and other injustices is a necessary part of emotional healing, that is, collective remembering is a way of countering collective pain.

Another context in which memory and emotion overlaps is found in 'memory work' devised by the German feminist scholar Friga Haug. The uses of this methodological approach to women's experiences and emotions through their memories remain largely unexplored in memory studies in Europe and the Americas, although Haug's work has proven more popular among feminist social scientists in Australia and New Zealand. Whereas in most memory studies, memory is an object of study, in 'memory work' memory becomes a methodology. Memory work involves small groups of women recording and then analysing in written form a range of experiences associated with particular emotions, from anxiety and fear to happiness, and has been used by Haug in particular to explore female sexuality. Although the methodology limits 'memory work' to work with small groups, its theoretical framework, in which memory is a dynamic rather than static phenomenon, always linked to a range of experiences and emotions and subject to change, is of use beyond this immediate context. Particularly attractive from the perspective of a feminist approach is its emphasis on memory as a form of agency and empowerment. As Haug writes:

⁸ Laurent Fleury, 'Maurice Halbwachs: précurseur d'une sociologie des émotions', in Bruno Péquignot et al., *Maurice Halbwachs: le temps, la mémoire et l'émotion* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007), p. 64.

Our task is to use memory work [...] to enable a different past to emerge in order to make possible a different present and with it a different course of action in the future. Hence memory work is both a sociological method that is designed to produce knowledge about women's socialisation, and at the same time a method that will enable individual women who have been drawn into the research process to live in a more conscious manner and to make them more capable of acting for themselves.⁹

The examples I've given so far – Halbwachs and Haug – draw primarily on the European sociological tradition. Further research into the relationship between memory and emotion requires a consideration of the ways in which emotions are conceived in different disciplines and indeed within those disciplines. In anthropology, for example, where a whole subfield of ethnography and emotion has developed since the 1970s, debates continue about the relative value of 'universalist' or 'biologist' interpretations of emotions, on one hand, and culturalist interpretations, on the other. While the first interpret emotions as common human experiences and expressions originating in the brain and the body, the latter emphasise the socially and culturally constructed nature of emotions and in particular their place in discourse and language. The emphasis on discourse, some argue, tends to ignore the point that emotions are expressed through the body, and recent attempts to move beyond the universalist/culturalist binary emphasise the interconnectedness of cultural meaning and bodily expression.¹⁰

In the study of history, in addition to concerns about authenticity and reliability already mentioned, the association of emotion in the political sphere with mass support for fascism and other authoritarian and violent political movements has made some political historians wary of the study of emotion in history. As Barbara Rosenwein argues, when emotions are interpreted as a dangerous force in politics, historians and other scholars are more likely to place value on a 'rational' approach to politics.¹¹ But the very division of political movements into 'rational' and 'emotional' is problematic; it tends not only to turn political crowds into hysterical mobs, but also to underestimate the importance of emotional attachments as mobilising forces in *all* political movements. In the remainder of this paper, I will draw on my own research into the history and memory of political movements in the Basque country and Cuba to

⁹ Friga Haug, 'Memory work: The key to women's anxiety', in Susannah Radstone, ed., *Memory and Methodology* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), p. 157.

¹⁰ Maruska Svasek, 'Introduction: Emotions in anthropology', in Kay Milton and Maruska Svasek, eds., *Mixed Emotions: Anthropological Studies of Feelings* (Oxford and New York: Berg 2005), pp. 11-12.

¹¹ Barbara H. Rosenwein, 'Worrying about emotions in history', *American Historical Review* 107 (2002), pp. 821-3.

suggest some ways in which contemporary theories of emotion can help to shape memory studies. I want to suggest that oral history, with its attention to memories, the performance element in oral history and the inter-subjective aspect of the interview, is particularly well positioned to help us explore the relationship between memory and emotion.

In interviews with women who were involved in both the radical Basque nationalist movement and feminist organisations in the 1970s,¹² a common theme emerged: nationalism was identified with the heart and feminism with the head. These bodily metaphors at first appear to represent a basic emotional/rational binary. But they are somewhat complicated by the fact that in their use in these interviews they pose a challenge to common associations of women and feminism as 'more emotional' than men and the world of politics. As an explanatory model, the conflict between a rational, theoretical feminism, on one hand, and an emotionally engaging and heartfelt commitment to nationalism, on the other, was evoked by narrators to explain the relative success of nationalism in mobilising both women and men in contrast to feminism, which always remained a secondary political cause.

But it is not only that nationalism and feminism are differentiated in the interviews through reference to rationality and emotion and different feelings. *Memories* of the two movements are also expressed emotively in very different ways. In spite of their claims that nationalism was an 'emotional' movement, narrators actually recounted memories of nationalist activism rather matter-of-factly, even when recalling difficult or painful events – including experiences of arrest and torture or the death of loved ones. This may be because such stories correspond closely to a collective radical nationalist rhetoric of struggle, suffering and sacrifice and are therefore unlikely to be spontaneous. I am not suggesting that such memories are not painful for the speakers; rather, following William Reddy, I argue that they are examples of the social nature of individual feelings and also of the dangers of reading what he calls 'emotives' either as expressions or denials of 'true feeling', individual or collective.¹³

Memories of feminism, in contrast, were often expressed with mixed feelings. These ranged from joy at memories of organising with other women and the creative tactics often used by feminist groups, to anger and disappointment at the failure of radical nationalism to recognize feminism as an autonomous and legitimate political project. These emotions were not only expressed in words, but also through laughter, a rise in the voice, or a flat refusal to continue discussing the issue. A number of scholars have argued that laughter is a particularly important

¹² These examples are taken from my book, *Women and ETA: The Gender Politics of Radical Basque Nationalism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

¹³ William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 107.

expression of subjectivity.¹⁴ In recollections of feminist activism, laughter can have different meanings. It may indicate a memory of a joyful moment when a new sense of collective identity was coming into being, when women were organising independently in new ways or drawing on new areas of experience, including sexual identities and intimacies. Alternatively, laughter may mark a defiant response to the ways in which male comrades treated feminism – and feminists – as a bit of a joke. In relation to other memories, laughter can be ironic or mocking – as with the narrator who recalls that in her anti-Francoist family ‘my mother always obeyed what my father said. That was, was sacred. [...] My father, of course, was macho like the whole society.’¹⁵

My examples here suggest that laughter can be a clue to the ambiguities and ambivalence of women’s feelings and memories about changing gender relations. Additionally, such memories point to the challenges of combining different forms of political activism and suggest that politics itself can be experienced as an emotional conflict. Feminism and nationalism evoked for narrators a variety of often conflicting feelings, including love, affection, hope, anger and disappointment. These competing feelings not only varied among individuals, depending on factors including class, ethnicity, gender, age and individual experiences; they also changed historically through the course of a lifetime and in the context of wider historical circumstances. While the radical nationalist movement continued as an active political force at the time of the interviews in the mid 1990s, the feminist organisations in which several narrators had been active had largely disintegrated, as had the energy and mobilisation of Basque and Spanish second-wave feminism, which was at its peak between the mid 1970s and the mid 1980s. If I were to conduct further interviews today, no doubt nationalism, and even feminism, would evoke different emotional responses among narrators than they did a decade ago. Expanding, to incorporate the dimension of emotion, the fundamental insight that oral history is not about what happened in the past but about the past-present relationship, we can suggest that the association of different political movements or events with certain emotions will change depending on the context in which the interview is held. Borrowing from Raphael Samuel, I suggest that emotion, like memory, ‘is historically conditioned, changing colour and shape according to the emergencies of the moment’.¹⁶

Exploring the emotions associated with particular political movements, and how these change and move across a range of oral history interviews, we can use another of the strengths of oral history, its attention to the importance of subjectivity and inter-subjectivity,

¹⁴ Luisa Passerini, *Autobiography of a Generation: Italy 1968* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1996 [1988]), p. 68.

¹⁵ Hamilton, *Women and ETA*, p. 33.

¹⁶ Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: vol. I, Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London and New York: Verso, 1994), p. x.

without claiming to represent the narrators' 'true feelings'. As Reddy argues, emotional sincerity is itself a historical concept: 'Because of emotives' powerful effects and the likelihood that individuals will develop a set of "skills" in exploiting these effects, sincerity must be considered a specialized skill in its own right, that develops only in certain historical and political settings'.¹⁷ If we accept that feelings, like memory, are not best measured in terms of accuracy or sincerity, the way is open for oral historians to explore the historically changing meanings of different emotions, and their relationships to political movements and other social and cultural phenomena.

My second example comes from interviews collected between 2004 and 2007 as part of the Memories of the Cuban Revolution Oral History Project.¹⁸ Here again I will focus on the gendered dimension of memory. As in the case of fascism, mass support for revolutionary socialism has often been associated with dangerous political emotions, mass hysteria and so on. This is particularly clear in studies of Cuba and Fidel Castro that rely on Max Weber's concept of 'charismatic authority'. The problem with this model is that it tends to pathologise political emotions and rely on a distinction between unhealthy, emotional attachments to dictators and healthy, rational democratic commitments. This distinction both ignores the extent to which democratic movements rely upon emotional appeals and underestimates the complex of emotions involved in revolutionary movements, including not only adoration of leaders but also the feelings associated with collective organising and solidarity. In our interviews, memories of the mass mobilisation surrounding the Cuban Revolution during its early years in the 1960s are often expressed using the trope of the love story. Some narrators tell of being seduced by the madness of the moment, others speak of falling in and out of love with the Revolution, while still others speak of the Revolution as a romance. These memories draw on a series of wider contemporary and historical narratives, from Che Guevara's famous declaration that 'the true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love'¹⁹ to the tradition of national romance in Latin America going back to the nineteenth century.²⁰ The question for historians, I suggest, is not whether political love is a good or bad feeling, sincere or manipulated, but rather why love itself proves such a popular trope in memories of the Revolution. I argue that love's association with emotional extremes

¹⁷ Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, p. 107.

¹⁸ The project is funded by the Ford Foundation and Swedish development agency SIDA, and is directed by Professor Elizabeth Dore at the University of Southampton, co-hosted by the Cuban National Centre for Sexual Education (CENESEX) in Havana. Names of interviewees have been changed to protect their anonymity.

¹⁹ Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, 'El hombre nuevo' [1st pub. as 'El socialismo y el hombre,' *Marcha* (Montevideo, 1965)], in Leopoldo Zea, ed., *Fuentes de la cultura latinoamericana* (Mexico City: Fondo de cultura económica, 1993), pp. 321-33: 331. My translation.

²⁰ Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

– from the giddiness of early romance and ‘falling in love’ to the intense feelings of betrayal and disillusionment when love goes wrong – makes it an attractive metaphor for both political commitment *and* opposition.

In one interview, Juana, who was in her twenties by the time of the Revolution in 1959, describes her experiences in the 1960s as akin to living in a ‘fairy tale’ that revolves primarily around key male figures who feature as mythic heroes in her narrative. She recalls meeting several of them personally and weeps when she speaks of the death of Guevara. Juana’s loving and mournful recollections of Guevara and the early years of the Revolution are examples of a gendered memory of the Cuban Revolution. I do not mean by this that Juana suffers from a form of ‘false consciousness’. Much of her story, including her successful intellectual career, contains examples of the benefits to women of increased gender equality under the Revolution. Moreover, even her brief references to her relationship to her partner, Yolanda, and the history of homophobia in Cuba, show an awareness of the negative aspects of the Revolution’s sexual politics. But Juana’s description of the Revolution as a ‘love story’ adds a complexity to this history of gender and sexuality in Cuba. It suggests that even for a narrator aware of the wider material changes in women’s lives, and the history of the persecution of homosexuals, the Revolution remains a masculinised memory, and a romantic one at that.

If it is difficult to imagine a Cuban memory of the past fifty years that does not revolve around the Revolution of 1959, it is still worth asking why certain parts of that memory are emphasised at the expense of others. Why is Juana’s account of the Cuban Revolution a predominantly male affair? Can her interview help us to answer the question, posed by Selma Leydesdorff, Luisa Passerini and Paul Thompson, ‘How are stories forgotten, and is it possible to learn more about how a male-defined collective memory is shaped’?²¹ I believe it can, and that emotion plays an important role in this answer. In her more recent work on love in history, Passerini argues that people need a narrative to understand the emotions they feel.²² The romantic love story, with its personal and political pedigree, provides a narrative that both speaker and listener can understand: a story of a commitment that goes beyond the strictly rational, that is both beautiful and unique, something that does not require further explanation. I am not suggesting that the heterosexual love story has a universal appeal or cannot be taken apart and analysed for its gender and sexual politics. But I do suggest that what Passerini would call ‘love discourse’ functions to naturalise social relations of

²¹ Selma Leydesdorff, Luisa Passerini and Paul Thompson, ‘Introduction’, in Selma Leydesdorff, Luisa Passerini and Paul Thompson, eds., *International Yearbook of Oral History and Life Stories*, Vol. IV, *Gender and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 6.

²² Luisa Passerini, ‘Emotions Between History and Psychoanalysis’. Paper presented at the History and Psychoanalysis seminar series, Institute of Historical Research, University of London, 17 October 2007.

power, including gendered and sexual relations, giving the story meaning and resonance for the speaker above and beyond her personal historical experience.

These brief examples point to some of the ways in which individual memories, especially as expressed in oral history interviews, become attached to or associated with certain emotions, which in turn have wider political meanings in a given historical context. As such, they suggest that turning out attention to emotion may be one way of continuing the ongoing investigation into the relationship between individual memories and 'collective memory'.

Notes on Contributors

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