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**Abstract** In the essays by Middleton (2002) and Rowe, Wertsch and Kosyaeva (2002), the subject is the indeterminacy of memory and the intertextuality of narratives of history, conceived as non-linear and contested. These authors offer new perspectives on our understanding of memory, in its official and unofficial narrative forms, as its move between the personal and social in historical consciousness and representation. Both these essays explore the implications of memory as it is traced through experience.

They examine the discontinuities, as well as continuities, of memory that emerge in politically and historically situated cultural lives. First, I briefly summarize the major points in each article, discussing their contributions and questions raised, and how they articulate with other relevant works. Then I delineate some common themes they share, and suggest their wider significance.

**Key Words** culture, history, language, memory, narrative

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## The Uses of Memory

The essays by Middleton (2002) and by Rowe, Wertsch and Kosyaeva, ethnographically rich and theoretically provocative, address memory, narrative and history as political and moral actions, yet they avoid the tendency to examine representations of the past either as 'social charters'—purely strategic assertions promoting special interests—or as invented traditions whose images inevitably buttress new hegemonies. Memory and the past are fabricated for purposes of power and strategies, but there is no easy or neatly predictable outcome to these purposes.

In the first essay, Middleton (2002) argues that the study of memory as a cultural phenomenon reminds us that what it is to remember and forget can focus on intentional representations of past experience (monuments and memorials, memoirs and autobiographies, historical narratives and commemorative ceremonies). One can also study memory as social accomplishment in the collective build-up of tradition and reputation, thereby exploring interrelationships between narratives of individual and collective experiences. This leads to questions regarding how practices of vernacular and official history impact upon the politics of individual identity and social coherence. Yet the

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past also features in unintentional ways in how we conduct our lives. 'Changing modes of narrative and figurative representations in text and monument impress on us contrasts of historical and ideological priorities of times past and present' (Middleton, 2002, p. 80). Also, changing modes of production and collection of artifacts bear unintentional witness to continuity and change. The past is thus built into the discursive and non-discursive ordering of the lives we live.

Middleton's article makes a valuable contribution to recent converging interests in anthropology, history and psychology in the way people use and organize discourse not solely to remember, but also to forget (Connerton, 1989; Stoller, 1997; Werbner, 1998). Middleton utilizes an interactionist, or transactional, analytical framework focusing upon the ways we establish memory as a relevant concern in our lives, so that 'remembering and forgetting emerge as interdependent features of communicative action' (p. 81). This focus, upon the immediate interactive/performative context and also upon historicity, suggests that to remember and to forget need 'not be viewed as antithetical processes' (p. 81). This focus enables analysis to proceed beyond rigid binaries and dualistic conceptions of individual and collective agency in culture, and to transcend linear chronological schemes of memory, narrative and history. Historicity here is a matter neither of time passing nor of representing a reified thing out there.

Middleton draws upon the work of Vygotsky and Bakhtin, examining the social organization of memory in communication action. This frame enables him to analyze how dilemmas of change and continuity figure in ways people use socio-cultural resources in analyzing their lived experience (histories) in more nuanced fashion than would be possible with strictly cognitive or normative approaches. In particular, he examines the way dilemmas of succession and change figure in the discursive use of remembering and forgetting in speech acts, though he importantly points out problems with purely instrumental theories of language and with treating memory as no more than a matter of correspondence between experience and representation. In one brief example of speech, text and memory at the Iran-Contra hearings, it is shown how memory is indeed important, but not as a linear process or reified capacity in and of itself. Rather, the important point here is not that the process and content of memory are at issue, but that they were discursively mobilized by Oliver North in his replies to questions at his hearing. Here, memory is not merely the content or sum total of parts of the past, but rather it is selective. North's notion of a 'refreshed memory' is critical to the way his audience might accept or not his claims as plausible and sincere.

This analysis in some respects recalls the methods of game theory and speech act analysis. The discursive use of refreshed memory triggers immediate and strategic consequences, and sets up an exchange: it places North's immediate reply to cross-examination as an answer in and for the present, one that has no definitive relation to an actual, monolithic past. Here ambiguity is strategically deployed in the social use of memory, in the interdependencies of remembering and forgetting. Here knowledge in the past is interactionally flagged as incidental rather than intentional; thus the tension between incidental and intentional knowing is made the issue. The wider issue of experience as incidental vs intentional is at stake in the more immediate interactive organization of this exchange (Middleton, 2002, pp.84–85).

Thus we order and take meaning from arbitrary boundaries. But how do boundaries become significant transitions where events and experiences become marked, labeled, as watersheds in public and private lives? In another brief example of micro-analysis of discursive strategy, Middleton argues that the very notion of 'new millennium' is an arbitrary calendrical transition (p. 86). This framework lends itself well to the study of installations of civic amenities and commemorative activities, celebrations and computer bugs as the organization of experiences, although wider structural constraints must also be addressed. It should be added, however, that this process is not entirely arbitrary; it is, rather, socially constructed, imbued with shared and contested meanings. Discussion of the intentionality and arbitrariness of communicative ceding of past actions and events provides a way of establishing the significance of experience as permanent or subject to change.

In sum, through examination of everyday practice, Middleton shows how dilemmas of succession and change are live issues in communicative action. This provides a way of studying memory as a cultural phenomenon in discursive action, albeit from a somewhat atomistic perspective of social action. The primary emphasis here is upon the formulation of continuity and change as something that is established as a communicative concern. But for how long is this true? And for whom and why? The wider structural and historical contexts are not fully developed. Nevertheless, the article offers useful insights into the value of dilemmas and ambiguities in the selecting of histories of practice and presenting the past. The consequences of the past are not some passive accumulation of experiences, but in effect are emergent (Giddens, 1984), generated in the communicative interplay of experience as incidental and intentional and individually and collectively relevant. This approach thus avoids circular arguments of

cause/effect or individual/ vs institutional constraints in communicative events.

The second essay, by Rowe, Wertsch and Kosyaeva (2002), analyzes several types of encounters among vernacular and official narratives about history, as these come into dialogic contact in history museums. These authors argue that the history museum acts as a public forum where personal lives may be linked more or less closely to collectivities through encounters among narratives produced by the museum and its visitors. There is analysis of exhibits at two museums and visitor talk in one museum, and discussion of the possible relationships among narratives in the negotiation of public memory. The authors call for developing a set of ideas about relationships among narratives when examining these issues. There is need to juxtapose, but also specify the connections among, a wide array of narratives and contexts. The authors employ a distinction between vernacular and official cultures, drawing on Bodnar's (1992) analysis of public memory, and 'official' and 'unofficial' (so-called 'folk') culture (Bakhtin, 1986), and, more implicitly, on other resistance theories of dissonant discourses or 'hidden' transcripts (Abu-Lughod, 1986; Boddy, 1989; Scott, 1990). The authors examine big official narratives by history museums and their relationship to little vernacular narratives told by visitors as they engage with an exhibit.

Yet Rowe et al. offer some critical refinements of these theories by observing that what constitutes the 'proper' way to engage with an exhibit may be a point of contention within the 'official' museum culture itself. Thus the vernacular and official cultures themselves are neither rigidly opposed nor internally homogeneous categories. The representatives of different departments, disciplines or social groups may make very different claims as to what the museum's goals are and what are the most effective means of engagement with visitors that will realize those goals. Thus this article shows the contested and contingent nature of 'official' as well as vernacular accounts of history, although these linguistic-derived models do not, in my view, exactly fit in the case of museum exhibits, whose narratives are not limited to verbal or textual expression. But Rowe et al. do show how, in the museum, there are multiple, competing accounts of learning, goals and the scope of the discipline with which the museum is concerned.

Rowe et al. present a very articulate, systematic study of several cases, although one wonders how representative or 'typical' these are, how they selected these data and cases (as opposed to ignoring others), and whether one can convincingly generalize from them. The authors firmly 'plot' their cases along a neat trajectory or range of meanings

that, in the end, they impose as yet another narrative device; this process should be reflexively acknowledged. For example, the authors might reflect on the implications of their data analysis more broadly for the conception of disciplinary knowledge and writing as a system of collecting, comparing and classifying impressions. Their analysis of three examples is valuable, however, in shedding light on the multiple ways in which the narrative relationships of museum exhibitions can play out in both intended and unintended consequences. The article thus contributes to studies of the museum and community relationship (Karp & Lavine, 1991; Stocking, 1985), the art-culture system (Clifford, 1988; Halle, 1993), and more: it connects these domains to wider issues of memory, narrative and history (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1992, 1993; Hess, 2001; Stoller, 1997; Werbner, 1998).

Based upon their participant-observation and interviewing of spectators in interactive situations at the museums, Rowe et al. identify three different outcomes: visitors sometimes produce personal narratives that serve to complement and enrich the official narrative, and to link one more closely with it in exercises of public memory; visitors sometimes use the official narrative of an exhibit as little more than a starting point for personal reflection, reminiscence or performance of a particular type of more or less authoritative self, moving out of a public into a private sphere of memory; and, finally, these processes can serve as entry points to relatively authoritative vernacular positions within the public memory sphere by providing illustrations (albeit with a sub-text of subtle commentary based on their own more personal experience) of the official cultural narrative.

From these observations, the authors posit four types of possible relationships among official and vernacular cultural narratives in the public sphere of history museums, and identify two ways in which museums, as cultural leaders and authoritative producers of official cultural narratives, employ vernacular cultural narratives in their development of exhibits and one way in which they might invite vernacular cultural narratives into museums in an attempt to reach out to visitors or to make room for visitor meaning-making activity. At the Nahon Goldmann Museum, vernacular cultural narratives were invited to enter into dialogue with official ones in the physical and narrative spaces of the museum to give the official personal meaning, but without fundamentally challenging it. In the exhibit entitled 'Meet Me at the Fair' at the Missouri History Museum, vernacular cultural narratives are explicitly employed to make the official more accessible, to the extent of revising it to give it more currency among a changing museum-going population in the St Louis region. In both of these

cases, vernacular cultural narratives are harnessed by producers of official culture on their own terms for purposes of persuasion and inclusivity in the service of creating imagined communities. The authors also identify two ways in which visitors as active consumers produce their own vernacular cultural narratives through dialogic contact with the official cultural narrative of the Missouri History Museum's exhibit 'Unseen Treasures: Imperial Russia and the New World'. In the first, elements of official narrative representations serve as jumping-off points for private memory practices or performances of self that operate on grounds of vernacular culture, outside narrative boundaries of official culture. In the second, visitors also draw on personal experiences, but not for the purpose of escaping the public memory sphere or the grounds of official narrative; rather, they use personal experiences to illustrate, support or potentially deny the truth or authority of the official account. But here this reader must ask what, exactly, does dialogue really mean? Is this merely a gloss, or a metaphor based upon a dyadic conversation model, extended here to embrace much wider processes that may not in fact be analogous to conversation?

This article's main contribution is that it draws attention to, and invites further reflections on, how diverse narratives and viewpoints (or, more accurately, vantage points) mutually engage with each other, producing neither clear-cut hegemony nor complete subversion. It illustrates how several kinds of relationships may emerge from these juxtapositions in an intertextuality that denies perfect closure. Discussion of the role of narratives in memory, history and identity benefits from this systematic analysis of how narratives come into dialogic contact, although imposing too rigid a typology here raises questions rather than providing a 'final word'. The question raised is: are official vs vernacular narratives the best metaphors to use here? After all, mnemonic devices at exhibits are not so much speech- or verbally based, but often visual, tactile and aural: as in ritual and performance, they often occur through embodiment (Stoller, 1997) and mimesis (Taussig, 1993). Rowe et al. do make the important point, however, that popular and personal memories go beyond official and national narratives and produce their own commemorations in uneasy dialogue with them. Indeed, their boundaries become blurred and their vantagepoints relativized.

Both these articles' theoretical concern is with subjectivities in the making through nostalgia, suppressed or verbally textualized and non-verbalized, monumentalized (exhibited) memory, through remembering the present, and through rupture with the past. The advance in

analysis here comes from a focus on continuing struggles whose outcomes are yet unresolved. Taken together as a whole, these cases raise wider issues in the uses of memory, narrative and history. The challenge of realism in representation is to make sense of the subject-narrator's own complicated view of what one is doing, or what happens when one talks or writes about institutions, places and people. The wider questions here, therefore, are: Whose narratives of history are more 'real', and when? How are they received, and what subsequent actions do they provoke? Do they matter, and how? It is impossible to know completely another's thoughts, reactions or intentions, but as Herzfeld (1997) observes, there are ways of exploring their practical consequences, and these vary from setting to setting. Middleton shows how a given narrative is effective not because it reveals all, but rather because listeners and/or readers recognize common social devices and rhetoric in portrayals of people, places and events. Memory, like personal narratives in general, is caught up in complexities, ambiguities and contradictions. The Middleton article conveys less of the social and cultural constraints, and more fully the individual motivations, in which issues of personal narrative memories are manipulated and contested. What needs to be explored here is what they can tell us about the preoccupations of our own research and writing. Rowe et al. deconstruct the tensions between museum memory work and the conflict between generations and ethnic groups over remembering and forgetting in the St Louis museum exhibits. This is carefully contextualized within a broad theoretical review of time, memory and narrative, although there is little analysis of the resulting short- and long-term social and cultural transformation, which would shed new light on relations between memory, counter-movements, power and political change. These authors place greater emphasis upon the different kinds of contact between narratives in history museum settings themselves. Both articles articulate well with each other, and enrich discussions in three major domains of inquiry: memory, personal narrative and history.

## Memory

When do people remember, under what conditions, and with what effects? How is the past incorporated into the present? How does it orient possible futures? And how do personal memories articulate with public memories? Memory's contribution to anthropological and other disciplinary critiques of power is that it reveals the ever more broadly contested nature of power and culture. Simultaneously, as Werbner



(1998) observes, memory's moral force is becoming more uncertain, more indefinite and ambiguous. But memory need not, indeed should not, remain a purely private matter.

The political and moral problematics of memory have received increasing attention, particularly in studies of postcolonial societies (Fabian, 1996; Malkki, 1991; Mbembe, 1992; Mbembe & Roitman, 1991; Stoller, 1995; Tonkin, 1991; Van Donge, 1998; Werbner, 1995). In the study of culture more generally, memory is multidisciplinary: it links the interests of psychologists, anthropologists and historians. Psychologists have traditionally studied how individuals remember. Anthropologists have studied what individuals remember and how this is affected by what it is acceptable to recall. They have focused on the relationship between individual and social memory. Historians have studied what people remember of past events, since many of their sources take this form. More recently, however, they have begun to see their own work, also, as one kind of remembering, which, in the end, is not fundamentally different from other kinds of reminiscence. This view is elaborated in the work of American cultural historian Hayden White (1973). Psychologists distinguish between short-term, or working, memory and long-term memory; and it is their views of long-term memory that are most important to anthropologists (Bloch, 1996, p. 361). Long-term memory is itself further divided into episodic memory, which relates to individuals' experiences during their lifetimes, and semantic memory, which relates to individuals' decontextualized knowledge.

In its classical anthropological formulation, culture consisted of shared knowledge that different members of a society stored in their long-term memory. In more recent critical reformulations of the culture concept, there is the recognition that such knowledge is not always consensual or unitary. A number of writers have argued that the psychological and anthropological sides of memory cannot be separated. Bartlett (1932), a Cambridge psychologist who was influenced by anthropologists such as W.H.R. Rivers and who was subsequently to influence Gregory Bateson, demonstrated that what people remember of a story is influenced by their way of seeing things, a way that has been created by their culture (Bloch, 1996, p. 362). Thus culture filters what is remembered, and new information is unlikely to challenge people's ingrained preconceptions since it will only be retained in a form that accords with these preconceptions. Durkheim saw knowledge as closely linked to the organization of society; and Halbwachs (1992), a French student of Durkheim's, stressed that the art of remembering was always social because what was recalled had to be socially

approved and constructed through a process of interaction and accommodation of which individual participants were not fully aware. Similarly a number of writers have developed the idea of distributed memory. This means that social memory of a group may be distributed unequally in the minds of its members, but that this distributed memory can be brought together at moments such as rituals. Frederik Barth (1987) made a similar point when he argued that in certain societies rituals can first serve to organize distributed memory, then fix certain representations and meanings, which subsequently inform perception and future performances. In the articles by Middleton and Rowe et al., it is shown that, in effect, the reverse can occur: memory can be dispersed and fragmented.

British-based social anthropologists, such as Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown and, later, Leach, tended to stress the pragmatic side of memory, arguing that what people recalled in social contexts was used to legitimize institutions or to back a claim to status or rights. They also paid attention to selective forgetting, which they called 'structural amnesia'. Laura Bohannan (1952) demonstrated how, among the Tiv people of Nigeria, only ancestors relevant to the present situation were evoked from past, while others were forgotten. This social construction of memory continues to receive attention by scholars who stress that all narratives of the past must be understood in terms of the society in which they are told. For example, such factors as construction of person and the kinship system affect such stories (Bloch, 1992; Dakhliya, 1990; Kilani, 1992).

Many scholars have pointed to the importance of material culture as a way in which societies deliberately choose to encode memory (Connerton, 1989; Taussig, 1993) but also forgetting (Werbner, 1998). For example, monuments are made to commemorate an event or a person, but the outcome of these intentions (e.g. how successful they are) was until recently often assumed to be in accordance with the intentions of the powerful (Cole & Ross, 1977; Kuchler, 1987; Munn, 1986). More recently, there has been greater attention to the ways in which spectators respond actively to these mnemonic devices and memorials, and, in some cases, resist or modify their intended effect. Werbner (1998), for example, sheds light on distinctively postcolonial transformations in memorial complexes and related shifts in the politics of identity to conceptualize diverse outcomes of memory work, such as certain broad extremes of memory, which he calls 'anti-memory' and immediate memory (p. 73). These are important for movements between personal and collective memory, which have become increasingly contested and problematic. The Middleton article

in this issue, similarly, is more preoccupied with 'remembering what has to be forgotten from the past' (Werbner, 1998, p. 74), the selectivity of memory. In other words, we say that anti-memory is imagined as buried or even repressed remembrance. Is the accomplishment of memory to seem as if it were forgotten, almost beyond recovery, and yet somehow recovered? The article by Rowe et al. also represents a move in this direction. Forgetting, or at least modifying, the intentions of memorials, monuments and exhibits is as much a part of memory-making as remembering. Anti-memory may serve ends of the nation-building regime, of the state in the making, or it may become the defensive or subversive drive of subalterns asserting selves against the state or its dominant elites (Werbner, 1998, p. 74).

In other words, forgetting in selective memory is all the more controversial. To forget becomes as powerfully meaningful and contested as to remember. While the founding moment is depicted as singular, there is no single form for fixing the national imagination forever. Rather, the ideological effectiveness of the exhibit is the semblance it gives of singularity in the actual presence of plurality. It is, however, the subject of 'contradictory appropriations in and of which the imagined singularity of national formations is constructed daily' (Balibar, 1991, p. 89). The museum exhibits as analyzed by Rowe et al. similarly produce ambiguous, contradictory and plural formations in narratives by spectators' responses that are fluid and transformative. These authors show that, despite very carefully crafted narratives in the structuring of their exhibits, museum professionals are not the only producers of narratives in the museum; visitors as active consumers of museums are also constructors of meaning, generating a wide variety of narratives (Rowe et al., 2002, p. 102).

These articles also address those memories that people themselves work to suppress, conceal or deliberately avoid in their usual public practice. Middleton pushes this idea a stage further through his analysis of how personal and official vernaculars or discourses come into conflict in the making of political subjectivity. In local and individual vs official/institutional interpretations, dilemmas and conflicts, Middleton shows what dilemmas and conflicts arise, what triggers recounting of memories on the part of different parties to interaction, which are otherwise kept publicly in check. The question raised here is: which events do which people choose to narrativize, and why? This drives home the importance of studying memory as public practice, both moral and political, through which political subjectivity is contested (Connerton, 1989; Werbner, 1998). Both articles in this issue contribute to efforts to correct the tendency to represent memory in a

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linear fashion, merely in terms of past or present, as if it were no more than retrospection about the past, or even a reflection of the present. Instead, they draw our attention to memory work as future-oriented. Implicit here is the question: memory toward what end, the intentionality of those in power or those not in power? In this regard, the essays articulate with the important influence in anthropology of Paul Connerton's *How Societies Remember* (1989), in which the focus is upon commemoration and habit, with efforts toward a more interactive model of Durkheim's collective representations and memory. Like Connerton, the concern of both Middleton and Rowe et al. is to bridge the individual and the group. The relation between individual and group is dynamic and interpenetrating.<sup>1</sup> Thus the analytical separation of individual and social memory is meaningless (Stoller, 1997, pp. 57–59). To consider the formation of social and cultural memory, one must consider how memories are constructed and conveyed through commemoration and reminiscence-related activities. These may be verbal and non-verbal, for example tale-telling, rituals, court testimonies, museum exhibits, spectator and audience responses.

## Personal Narrative

The personal need not, indeed should not, be solely individual. The articles by Middleton and Rowe et al. also evoke the broader concerns of reminiscence-related personal narratives. Ronald Mannheim (1989) and Barbara Myerhoff (1982), in their studies of aging and life-course narratives, have analyzed reminiscence as part of the narrative quest in efforts to give greater voice to normally muted or less represented categories of people, for example the elderly and ethnic minorities. These also constitute efforts to bridge the subject-object (researcher self and researched other) dichotomy, and promote critical self-reflexive ethnography. In the past, many regarded reminiscence by the aged as a pathology or sign of dementia. Now this view is much discredited. Reminiscence of aged persons is now viewed as a rich source of multiple voices in ethnography. It thereby balances other accounts, offers opportunity for exploration, and inner and cultural experience are presumed to be united, thereby inverting deficiency models (Mannheimer, 1989). More problematic is these theorists' argument that reminiscence offers narrators or researched subjects a way of transcending the situation of being passively acted on, and enables them actively to approach authorship in ethnography. Such views have assumed that multiple selves emerge from these narratives.

While they do not explicitly respond to these life-history narratives,

Middleton and Rowe et al. provide a corrective to this viewpoint in showing that the self can never be known completely, and we can only develop insights into different perspectives generating ideas. For Rowe et al., narratives are approached as speech genres (Bakhtin, 1986; Vološinov, 1973) that serve not only communicative but also cognitive functions. They are types of cultural tools or mediational means that afford and constrain human communicative and cognitive activity in various ways. So by narrative here, the authors mean a way of knowing about the world, but this also stands apart from what Bruner (1990) terms 'paradigmatic' ways of knowing. It is characterized by three essential elements: it relies on emplotment, the recounting of a series of events in some temporal order (has beginning, middle and end); the sequence of events may be emplotted in a variety of ways, but they are grasped together as a whole; and this grasping together is judged not according to its realism or correspondence to extra-narrative reality, but according to the overall sense of narrative or 'narrative truth'. Part of what makes cultural institutions like museums powerful forums for the creation of imagined communities is 'that they are potentially ideal public spaces where personal, private or autobiographical narratives come into contact with larger-scale, collective or national narratives in mutually inter-animating ways' (Rowe et al., 2002, p. 99). Thus, 'studying these types of narratives means studying them in dialogue with each other', but not necessarily as completely multiple voices equally represented. Middleton's and Rowe et al.'s juxtaposition of narratives lends itself well to recent dialogic and 'multiple voice' concerns in anthropology and literary criticism, but nonetheless suggests that 'dialogic' can be taken too literally, and that the intertextuality of narratives does not mean they are always equally represented or representative, for historical hegemonic processes also figure into these narratives, above and beyond the individuals who are party to them.

## History

These two articles pave the way for larger debates. In social history, critical studies and across the social sciences, interest is being directed toward the work of memory in public life (Antze & Lambek, 1996; Boyarin, 1991; Connerton, 1989; Gillis, 1994; Jewsiewicki & Mudimbe, 1993; Langer, 1991; Mosse 1990; Nora, 1989; Rowlands, 1996; Stoller, 1997; Terdiman, 1993). Politicized memory, now at the heart of post-structural studies of culture and narrative, raises the question: how is the past articulated? As Stoller (1997, p. xvi) observes, on the one hand

there are histories from above, constituted by historical texts that are read and reread, interpreted and reinterpreted. But there are also histories from below that are embodied in objects, song, movement and the body. The articles by Middleton and Rowe et al. reveal that these divisions are not always clear-cut, and it is in a social and historical sense that a representation of personal motives, desires and experience must be plausible.<sup>2</sup>

Recently, scholars have called for a critique of power that deploys a theoretically informed anthropology of memory and the making of political subjectivities (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1992, 1993; Herzfeld, 1997; Stoller, 1997; Werbner, 1998, p. 2). Middleton's careful micro-analysis examines memory as rhetorical strategy mobilized to persuade each other about the possibilities of the present. These possibilities are always uncertainties, however. Rowe et al. show how memories are framed not solely by events of the past, but also by uneasy relationships of individuals and groups to the larger community.

Thus while neither of these articles addresses wider historical consciousness directly, both evoke the recent resurgence of interest in historical anthropology, with its stress on the dialectics of social life (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1992, 1993; Kelly & Kaplan, 1990, p. 120). The essays here do not regard memory and narratives as a mere reflection of transcendent or immutable tradition, but expand these concepts to include more dynamic practice, intended to transform, rather than reproduce, environments in which they occur.<sup>3</sup> But intentions and outcomes cannot be taken as givens; rather they must be carefully deconstructed. Narratives are always fluid and ambiguous, and represent not a complete but a fragmented image of signifying practices. In these essays, the connections between the personal and the collective, the private and the public, are negotiated. There is the making of the story of memory, with some hints also of discovery procedures. Memory is transformed, but unfinished, unfixed. The question that needs further exploration is: what has to be disregarded in memory, and why? In these articles, the past is perceived to be unfinished business, becoming the present and the future.

## Conclusions

To remember something is not just to repeat it, but to reconstruct, even sometimes to create, to express oneself, and other parties to life and history as well. Middleton and Rowe et al. show the importance, respectively, of intentionality and unintended consequences. This focus

moves us beyond texts and discourse, toward more dynamic approaches. Recent cultural critiques point out the need to consider culture in relation to history. Both articles in this issue address how personal and collective memories are expressed and sustained, or repressed, and their relation to each other. They suggest that memory, like culture, has plural manifestations. They do not easily collapse into a unitary representation. The employment of cultural exhibitions, public hearings, media documentaries and calendrical festival spectacles to underpin systems of authority are central aspects of the production of culture. Yet the assertion of authority can be subverted in subtle ways.

### Notes

1. Connerton (1989) and Stoller (1997) identify several landmarks that produce recollection and stimulate thought (e.g. commemorative rituals). Connerton distinguishes three types of memory: personal, cognitive and habit. Psychiatrists have focused on personal memory of one's life history; psychologists have probed our ability to reveal certain extensive facts and stories to delimit universal cognitive directions; and some anthropologists have drawn on habit to explore ritual and other embodied forms of commemoration. For example, Stoller analyzes Songhay spirit possession rituals as having the capacity to reproduce a certain performance as an embodiment, rather than in visual or textual form. The main idea in this perspective is that our memories are never purely personal, cognitive or textual.
2. On the other hand, as Herzfeld (1997) points out, belief may ultimately be private, hence the difficulty of verifying beliefs. Memory-related narrative genres include personal narratives, which presumably people are expected to believe or to consider plausible. While difficult to verify, these can be presented in forms that will make it socially awkward for audiences to challenge them.
3. Many scholars have repudiated the old idea that 'traditional' practices such as ritual, performance and verbal art narratives are always subservient to custom, that is, confined to their formal structural processes, or to solemn enactment of the interests of the status quo, or that their sole function is to perpetuate the social system, especially when their integrity is threatened (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1993, p. xvi). Rather than abandoning concern with these processes altogether, many anthropologists now seek to historicize them.

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