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The Imagined After: Re-Positioning Social Memory Through Twentieth-Century Post-Apocalyptic Literature and Film

Amanda Ashleigh Wicks
Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

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THE IMAGINED AFTER:
RE-POSITIONING SOCIAL MEMORY THROUGH
TWENTIETH-CENTURY POST-APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE AND FILM

A Dissertation

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Amanda Ashleigh Wicks
B.A. University of Florida, 2005
M.A. Florida State University, 2009
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For Mom and Dad, who gave me the words

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ABSTRACT

Maurice Halbwachs first proposed a collective approach to memory in the early twentieth century, but the vast majority of subsequent scholarship investigates memory's social properties from a theoretical point of view. This project instead proposes that memory functions as a social phenomenon in significant and real ways, primarily understood through the social relations that arise within social frameworks, which provide a structure against which people's memories come together to form important memory-narratives that configure individual and social consciousness. Once people transform memory from individual thought-image into socially structured language, memory takes on social properties. Memory relies upon social frameworks to form and maintain memory-narratives, but also on sites and objects to create a more tangible connection to the past through such narratives. With the growth in such external memory in recent years, i.e. museums, memorials, etc., people cannot remember the past to the degree they once could. In other words, people have come to rely more on things than on people to reconstruct the past in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Consequently, people cannot remember the past to the extent they once did. Post-apocalyptic literature and film intervene by addressing the heightened anxiety people feel regarding the changing experience of memory. This project examines how such unique narrative provide the necessary spaces through which to better understand the social nature of memory, as well as the threat external memory imposes upon acts of remembering and forgetting. They utilize the imagined future space, one often devoid of people (social frameworks) and places (geographical signifiers) to show memory's underlying social characteristics and how changes to social frameworks occasion changes to people's mnemonic capability.

INTRODUCTION

"What you have discovered is a recipe not for memory, but for reminder."
– Plato, *Phaedrus*

Where once theory reigned supreme in understanding memory, neurological research can now pinpoint the distinct parts of the brain involved in the numerous memory systems that comprise a person's overall memory.[1] Given that neuroscientists, psychologists, and others involved in cognitive research understand the biological process behind memory, they use that knowledge to assert how the act of remembering signifies a subjective experience.[2] Such a claim makes sense considering how deeply memory is involved in constructing and sustaining a person's identity.[3] Without memories of the past, people would not possess any sense of their development over time, let alone their place in the world; as important as any initial experience may be, equally important is a person's ability to remember that experience so they can maintain a timeline. Without an understanding of what happened yesterday, the present would be a continually confusing and even frightening experience. In light of the integral nature of memory and identity, as well as the brain's role in that relationship, it comes as no surprise, then, that cognitive studies concentrates on the line of reasoning that memory occurs as an output of a single mind as opposed to an assemblage of minds. For, even if two people share an experience, a simple verbal exchange reveals how their memories of the event will differ based on their individual perspec-

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[1] Daniel Gilbert explains, "In the nineteenth century, knowledge of brain function was based largely on observation of people…who were the unfortunate subjects of one of nature's occasional and inexact neurological experiments." *Stumbling on Happiness* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 12.

[2] For a comprehensive explanation regarding the brain's role in remembering, see "Introduction," in *The Memory Process*, ed. Susan Nalbantian (MIT Press, 2012).

[3] According to Maurice Halbwachs, "We preserve memories of each epoch in our lives, and these are continually reproduced; through them, as by a continual relationship, a sense of our identity is perpetuated. *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 47.

tives. Memory appears to be such an intensely subjective action, because people cannot access another's memories without first doing so through the social means of language. According to the scientific research that comprises cognitive studies, memory can be theoretically social, but it is first and foremost practically individual.

Yet, the act of remembering entails greater social involvement than has heretofore been fully explored. Since the 1980's, collective memory (which also goes by the designations cultural memory and public memory) has formed an important humanities-based branch of cognitive studies, one that explores either the cultural manifestations of memory, or how people who share a group identity collectively remember the past. Despite Maurice Halbwachs' renowned work on collective memory, which posits that remembering emanates from social rather than individual forces, cognitive science tends to view this argument in a theoretical light, as opposed to an actual possibility. Working from a sociological perspective, Halbwachs contended that social frameworks (what he termed *les cadres sociaux*) form a mnemonic background against which memories reemerge. So, while individuals can certainly recollect the past of their own volition, this act becomes augmented with company and in many ways even depends upon the presence of other people since, according to Halbwachs, people didn't store memory individually. Even "autobiographical memory is…rooted in other people."[4] In many ways his claims worked against the traditional psychoanalytic model at the time, which posited people as a storehouse for memory, an argument that continues to this day within neuroscience. It wasn't until the 1980's, however, that cognitive studies scholars began expanding upon Halbwachs' claims, investigating the ways in which small or large groups remember the past. In discussing collective memory, though, such scholars continue presuming a theoretical model, which contends that subjective memories make

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[4] Lewis Coser, "Introduction," *On Collective Memory*, 24.

their way into a collective understanding of the past, as opposed to socially structured memories that remain with the individual and arise in the presence of others. Remembering, in the former instance, denotes a subjective process with social implications that can affect how groups bring together the disparate recollections of their common past. There's more to remembering than meets the mind, though.

Halbwachs hit upon the point early on that memory was first and foremost a reconstruction, arguing, "We shall better understand the nature of this *reshaping operation* as it applies to the past…if we do not forget that even at the moment of reproducing the past our imagination remains under the influence of the present social milieu."[5] Here, Halbwachs' description, "re-shaping organization," strikes at the heart of how memory represents or re-presents the past, since no memory is a faithful rendition of past events; the 're' in 'represent' signifies a reconstructive action that supplements the initial event with a wealth of imaginative, misremembered, and at times flat out erroneous information. Memory might appear to pertain to the past but in actuality it shares far greater affiliations with the present linked as they are through the 're' bound up in memory. People remember the past based on their knowledge of the present, oftentimes changing what they remember as a result. While Halbwachs was not the first person to assert memory's reconstructive nature, he did frame the process through a sociological lens, claiming, "What makes recent memories hang together is not that they are contiguous in time: it is rather that they are part of a totality of thoughts common to a group, the group of people with whom we have a relation at this moment, or with whom we had had a relation on the preceding day or days."[6] Memories "hang together" because they are part of the (continuously) reconstruct-

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[5] Halbwachs, 49 (my emphasis).

[6] Ibid., 52.

ed story of the past people tell each other, and for which they depend upon shared interaction across multiple groups. The act of representing the past through memory – an act that primarily occurs in any narrative reconstruction of the past – functions socially, because any act of telling structures memory through language and produces something to be shared rather than kept private. Language becomes the means of transmitting memories from one person to another, and once bound up in this communicative medium, memory takes on social properties, moving past the subject point of view and entering the purview of the social.

Since memory never arises as a faithful representation of the past, it shares more in common with the concept of narrative, since each act of remembering reconstructs the past and alters the original reality. Daniel Gilbert, Harvard College Professor of Psychology at Harvard University, best explains how memory involves a great deal of imagination, stating:

> [T]he elaborate tapestry of our experience is not stored in memory – at least not in its entirety. Rather, it is compressed for storage by first being reduced to a few critical threads, such as a summary phrase…or a small set of key features…Later, when we want to remember our experience, our brains quickly reweave the tapestry by fabricating – not by actually retrieving – the bulk of the information that we experience as a memory.[7]

Citing television programs as his primary analogy, Gilbert explains how storing an entire TV series takes up an enormous amount of space on a computer or other storage device, and so, too, would a person's memory were it stored with such an attention to specifics. Traditionally, people's initial awareness in an event limits their mnemonic specificity of that event, because at the time of formation memory stores the important details – what Gilbert describes as "a few critical threads." In other words, memory functions individually as an aggregate of the past, collecting generalized information (even when people believe they specifically remember minute details) that, if properly transferred from short-term to long-term storage, can later be retrieved.

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[7] Gilbert, *Stumbling On Happiness*, 79.

Memory's sociality – the coming together of multiple memories in the physical presence of other people – provides a greater picture than would any one individual's and involves imagination to a greater extent than people often acknowledge.

So while memory is certainly an individual phenomenon, it is also – equally, importantly – a social one. People clearly experience memory on a personal level but many memories that take place individually – or "routine" memories – will fade over the course of time, because they often occur without a true social framework to maintain their existence. Even autobiographical memory "tends to fade with time unless it is periodically reinforced through contact with persons with whom one shared the experiences of the past."[8] According to neuroscience, the brain acquires and encodes memory before transferring it from short-term to long-term storage, in which some memories will not survive due either to improper encoding or transference. If the brain properly stores explicit memories (as opposed to implicit memories), a person should be able to consciously retrieve them at a later time.[9] Neuroscience can only explain the "where" and not the specific "what." Scientists can locate the areas of the brain involved in acts of remembering, but they cannot point to a particular transmission between neurons as a specific memory. Could it be that memory failures occur less because of some fault of the brain and more because people's interaction with one another has in some way changed? How does memory function socially? And how important is that particular characteristic to recollective acts? This project seeks to answer these questions in order to get closer to a more comprehensive understanding of memory's sociality. As involved as brains are with memory and as subjective as memories can often be, it is important to understand memory's social underpinnings, because people function as stimuli,

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[8] Coser, 24.

[9] Explicit memories refer to memories of events in which a person would have been aware, as opposed to implicit memories, which arise in traumatic or more extremely negative emotional situations, and often denote an unawareness both at the initial event and later when it arises unbidden in memory.

prompting memories to arise in one another and playing an important part in narrativizing memory.

Acts of narrativization – that is placing something like a memory or experience into language – arguably transforms that something into a sharable entity, and so memory takes on increasingly social properties once people and their respective social groups begin the work of reconstructing the past through language. It's true that people can narrativize memory on their own; however, this tends to occur unconsciously in order to provide people with a timeline of their past and doesn't involve language to the same extent. Understanding memory as a narrative reconstruction of the past, as well as people's role in generating that narrative, brings to light the important contribution that literature, film, and other cultural narratives make to the contemporary conversation of memory. The same narrativizing act that occurs with memory also takes place in literature and film. One of the questions central to this project, therefore, revolves around how culture narrative forms provide a unique space to better understand memory's social characteristics. Additionally, the scholarly and popular interest in memory that has manifested in recent years parallels the rising presence of apocalyptic and post-apocalypse works. These two subjects dovetail for good reason given that both subjects propose the looming possibility – and ever-increasing threat – of an end. Within post-apocalyptic literature, that end both occurs and somehow does not since what should be the end only instigates a new world, but it is never the full renewal promised in the original apocalyptic myth. For memory, anxieties surrounding the seemingly rampant experience of forgetting in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries speak to the possible end of memory. Post-apocalypse works furnish a distinct yet complementary space to work through attendant fears concerning memory, and propose a way beyond the traditionally individualistic approach to recollecting the past.

Post-apocalypse works typically propose a world absent of people or with severely altered social frameworks. As often happens in such narratives, without people memories disappear. Memory relies upon other people to sustain it, as much as it relies on outside stimuli, such as spaces and objects, to assist people in transmitting the past in a more tangible way than language. Over the course of the twentieth century, memory has increasingly come to exist outside of social frameworks and this creates problems when it comes to people's mnemonic capability. Like the spaces and objects that contain and transmit memory, social memory is itself a form of external memory but one that promotes interaction and revision, relying upon language and socially structured narrative forms in order to transfer memory between and among generations. (I utilize the term *social memory*, as opposed to *collective memory*, throughout this project in order to call attention to memory's social nature in ways that move beyond a collective notion of memory. *Collective memory* bespeaks a set of assembled recollections of the past, whereas *social memory*, I argue, details the intrinsic social qualities that produce memory, including language, narrative, and social frameworks. Any use of *collective memory* refers to another scholar's work with that specific concept, since it tends to be the traditional term within cognitive studies.) External forms of memory that situate memory in objects, artifacts, and museums, and encourage interaction with such spaces and objects only, changes the relationship people have with memory by removing the underlying social component. Memory requires all three – people, spaces, and objects (or media) – in order to survive into the present and neglecting the role people play in any act of remembering impairs people's ability to remember. Any changes to memory's social component in which space or objects takes on greater importance will necessarily impact memory's biological function, which is readily seen in the growing difficulties people have remembering their past. Humans are fundamentally social creatures who rely on one another in

numerous ways; overlooking memory's social component creates problems because it ignores one of the most key characteristics of humanity. Shifting memory away from social frameworks removes the dynamic quality from memory, transforming its potentiality as a phenomenon that encompasses elements of myth, history, culture, sociality, and subjectivity, and relegating it to an artifact-like object that seemingly perpetuates proximity to the past but which in actuality really conveys distance.

People appear to experience memory loss to a greater extent in the late twentieth century, which only amplifies fears from earlier centuries about people's ability to retain and therefore access the past. Consequently, the preoccupation with remembering and its opposite, forgetting, exists to an unprecedented degree, because the past seems increasingly cutoff from the present. That degree of isolation has prompted deep anxieties about how memory functions, though science continues to point to the individual as the site of memory. Changes to memory's underlying sociality affect the way it manifests in individuals, both mentally and physically, and suggests a different approach to the problem of forgetting in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The way that forgetting has developed over the last half of the twentieth century does not only pertain to an individual inability to recall aspects of the past; it also signifies a shift when it comes to who bears the burden of perpetuating the past to future generations, as well as what designates privileged memory for groups ranging from the micro, i.e. family, to the macro, i.e. nation.[10] *Forgetting*, as opposed to the command *forget* or the past tense *forgot,* implies a process, and it appears that the late twentieth century, with its heightened sense of speed, change, and "compression," as well as the rise in external memory bounded less to social frameworks and more to

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[10] By 'privileged memory,' I refer to those national or collective events that have been consciously retained as opposed to those that are willingly forgotten. Kenneth Foote further elaborates on this concept in regards to space, explaining that when a shameful event takes place often there is an impetus to forget and disassociate that space with the event. See *Shadowed Ground* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997).

specific physical sites, entails a process of forgetting.[11] As a result, people's relationship with

and experience of memory has been radically transformed, causing the past to seem increasingly

inaccessible.

While neurobiology and even psychology continually posit memory as an output of the

psyche, how can we better understand memory's social component(s)? How does the growth in

external memory, i.e. spaces and objects, shift the burden of the past away from social frame-

works? How does a change to memory's social nature contribute to the rise in forgetting? While

it may seem strange to think of a traditionally neurobiological action like forgetting as a reaction

to changes in social interaction, it becomes clearer when discussing the necessity of repetition

when it comes to memory. Repetition is one of the primary actions for strengthening memory,

and such endeavors do not always take place alone. People tend to remember what they continu-

ally recall to the mind, or reencounter by interacting with other people in their various social

networks.[12] In fact, acts of recollection most often involve someone else (speaking about a

shared experience) or revolve around someone else (a memory involving a shared experience),

pointing to memory's fundamental social component. People certainly remember things that

have taken place without other people, but they do so through socially constructed frames that

assist in narrating memory. Much like language, memory is a socially embedded, socially struc-

tured, and socially experienced phenomenon; therefore, changes to memory over the years im-

pact the social structures that form them, in turn suggest greater consequences for society at large.

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[11] By "compression" I mean "time-space compression," a term David Harvey introduces in *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

[12] Besides repetition, people tend to remember those events that convey a strong emotion. Robert Sapolsky explains, "For better or for worse (and it can be both), highly arousing emotional experiences are also well remembered." See *Memory and Emotion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 7.

Forgetting, therefore, can be seen as a consequence of changes to social frameworks, i.e. social spaces, and the ways in which people interact on a repetitive basis.

This project investigates how late twentieth and early twenty-first century post-apocalyptic novels, graphic novels, and films address growing real-world anxieties concerning the changing nature of external memory. Additionally, they examine the relationship between memory and social space in recent years, and the heightened sense that people's mnemonic capability has not just diminished but significantly changed. Space and memory, as well as memory and place, share a long and storied history. Increasingly, investigations into the associations between memory and space construct stagnant notions of both, when in actuality both concepts exhibit dynamic properties. I push the boundaries of this connection between memory and space by exploring how memory functions as an output of social relations and the equally if often overlooked social nature of memory, as well as how people have become increasingly reliant on external forms of memory, i.e. places of memory. As post-apocalypse works continually reveal, once released from being stored in external sites, memory becomes resituated in the community, the body and, once more, the mind. This project seeks to uncover why exactly post-apocalypse works emphasize people as the most important means to memory given that spaces and objects do preserve the past to a great extent. Drawing upon both cognitive studies, spatial studies, and literary criticism, this interdisciplinary project examines the ways in which particular issues pertaining to memory emerge once individuals' social relationship to memory changes, and the connection those changes share with alterations to the concept of space and place in recent years. Furthermore, I propose that literature, more than a representation of memory, *does* more by functioning as a key means to study memory in the twentieth century, thereby exhibiting a more practical usage than scholarship may otherwise afford it.

The Spaces of Memory

Anxieties surrounding the act of remembering and the increasing difficulty people experienced when attempting to remember that began in the nineteenth century only amplified in the twentieth century. The verbosity with which people discuss memory – a term that currently appears to be more popular than history in terms of referencing the past – takes place on a seemingly unprecedented scale nowadays. Although the prevalence of museums, memorials, archives, and other sites dedicated to preserving the past would suggest that memory exists to an unprecedented degree, in actuality their presence bespeaks memory's absence. The intensified degree of verbosity surrounding memory in the twentieth century comes about because of the ways in which people's connection with the past has been dramatically altered, which impacts memory as both a concept and experience. As Pierre Nora maintains, "We speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left," in which people's loquaciousness attempts to hide or make up for the absence of the actual thing: memory.[13] For Nora, the problem stems from a transition from practical to symbolic memory in recent years, wherein symbolic memory (most readily apparent in museums and memorials or *lieux de memoire*) functions as an empty gesture that suggests the past's full presence but which really signals its lack. "These *lieux de memoire*," he argues, "are fundamentally remains, the ultimate embodiments of a memorial consciousness that has barely survived in a historical age that calls out for memory because it has abandoned it."[14] Memory has always exhibited both properties, so it is not that memory has become more symbolic and therefore less practical in recent years, but that its symbolism, once bound to specific social frameworks, has been disconnected from them. In other words, there "is so little of it left," because of the way memory has come to exist beyond social frameworks, which help create and

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[13] "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 7.

[14] Ibid., 12.

sustain it. Memory exists externally in a host of physical sites that take on the burden of remembering the past; such changes impact the social frameworks that structure memories, and subsequently people's ability to retain memories.

Fears in recent years that people cannot remember the past to the extent they once could parallel earlier fears in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, but they also signal another shift. Much cognitive scholarship points to temporal alterations as the primary reason for changes to mnemonic capability, wherein the development of historical time became the primary means of understanding the past, and the sense that time appeared to speed up had long-lasting consequences on people's memories. As much as temporality plays an important part in any discussion of memory, changes to space and place contribute in equally significant ways. Space's importance when it comes to memory becomes clearer when considering social memory, or memory that arises from social relations before being "housed" in the individual mind. Much in the way that social relations produce the dynamic entity that is space, they also produce memory and memory spaces.[15] By removing the social element intrinsic to the memory/space relationship and relying heavily on what I call memory places, people experience greater difficulty remembering the past. Their mnemonic capability and capacity diminish, because they rely on external sites to store memory once situated primarily in people.

Understanding how memory has shifted from social spaces to physical places helps explain why memory appears to have changed so much in the latter twentieth century. Interestingly, during a period in which temporality served as the central focus when it came to memory, Alfred

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[15] My definition and understanding of space comes from Henri Lefebvre's work, where he argues that space exhibits dynamic properties because of its underlying social characteristics. Lefebvre writes, "(Social) space is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather, it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity – their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder. It is the outcome of a sequence and set of operations, and thus cannot be reduced to the rank of a simple object." See *The Production of Space,* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 73.

Devau, a French journalist, attests to space's importance; writing in mid-nineteenth century Paris, he observes, "the burden of memory is displaced to architecture which relays highly selected views of the past to successive generations, telling them who they are and where they are coming from."[16] This line of thought, in which places come to function as memory either by wont of design or by housing artifacts and other relics of the past, begins to demonstrate a problem that only grows in the twentieth century. Devau's language signals a transformation when it comes to who or what maintains memory. That "the burden of memory" becomes "dis-*place*d" reveals the significant shift from one site (people) to another (places), and foreshadows the problems that arise when physical sites take on the task of remembering.

The terms *space* and *place* represent very different concepts, and it is worth pausing momentarily to define their usage for the purposes of my project. *Space* here denotes a fundamentally social and dynamic concept, one reminiscent of Yi-Fu Tuan's definition. For Tuan, "if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause" in that it takes on properties of stasis, security, and stability by wont of its connection to a bounded locale.[17] Space represents more than movement; it also refers to the social process(es) and relations that it represents and by which it is created. Much like language and social memory, space is socially constructed in that it depends upon the social framework that produces it; its "constructed" nature bespeaks its malleability and change, though, rather than something that is fixed and constant.[18] Different social groups create different spaces, and the addition or removal of a person or people to any social

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[16] Esther da Costa Meyer, "The Place of Place in Memory" in *Spatial Recall*, ed. Marc Treib (New York: Routledge, 2009): 178.

[17] *Space and Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 6.

[18] Roland Barthes parallels the construction of maps (and the particular language involved in such construction) to language, and I am indebted to his reading of space: "The city is a discourse and this discourse is truly a language." See "Semiology and the Urban," in *Rethinking Architecture* (London: Routledge, 1997), 166.

framework necessarily alters the space it creates. *Place* becomes the articulation of space in that it represents a bounded, (more) stable locale; this is not to suggest that place always becomes restrictive or stagnant, but unlike the more fluid concept of space, it remains dependent upon a delimited physical area rather than a specified social group.[19]

In *Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard investigates how people imbue sites of dwelling, such as the home, with memory, and in doing so he pushes the connection between memory and place to an emotional level.[20] Unlike the mnemonic techniques the ancient Greeks used to improve their artificial memory by imagining spaces that "store" memory, emotional memory can arise from people's interaction with particular places. For Bachelard, who utilizes the term *space* although his concept has more in keeping with *place*, sites of dwelling embody memory. Place, in this instance, triggers memory to a degree in keeping with the five senses; smell has often been deemed the strongest sense to prompt memory, but it becomes clear through Bachelard's work how place also exhibits that ability. Upon returning to a familiar place from childhood or moving through a location that one hasn't visited in some time but where the experience tended towards a more affective quality, a person's memory can return in unbidden ways. In discussing memory and place, Bachelard returns again and again to the stultifying effect that takes place when emotional memories become associated with places. "Memories are motionless," Bachelard writes, "and the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are."[21] Bachelard affiliates place with pause by suggesting that it stops time and "fixes" memory, much in the way memory becomes contained by mental spaces. Such an interpretation foreshadows the

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[19] *Site* mediates between the two in that it denotes an area that pertains to the specifics of place while simultaneously encompassing the largess (and at times flexibility) of space.

[20] Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994) 5.

[21] Ibid., 9.

growing problem of external memory in the late twentieth century. By relying on places of memory rather than people, individuals change the way that memory functions, as well as their own recollective ability. Although places of memory (museums and memorials in particular) often encourage interaction, it is not the same type of exchange that would take place between members of a social framework. Place may serve as a stabilizing repository for emotional memory, but it alters the way people themselves function as memory spaces through communication and interaction.

Situating recollections, as it turns out, pertains to more than the physical space of buildings, sites, and land that either house memory in some way or trigger it by reminding people of events that have taken place there. In other words, when it comes to memory and space, it is important to consider the social characteristics of both concepts, because social frameworks "situate" memory and create memory space, an unbounded area produced by social relations that contributes to and in many ways protects the memory of a particular group. Reading space in the last thirty years means considering the social relations and actions that occur in space and even produce it. Once positioned as a concept "radically counterposed to time," space was often associated with pause and stasis, however, much geographical scholarship in the late twentieth century has worked to remedy this way of thinking.[22] No longer the passive, static concept – the container for time – it was once believed to be, space has instead come to be viewed as an integral component of social life, both affecting and being affected by social relations.[23] As such, it represents

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[22] Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE Publications, Ltd., 2005), 21. For examples, see Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1974); Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies* (London: Verso, 2011); and Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

[23] Geography scholar Doreen Massey argues how important social relations are in producing space and place, which coincides with Maurice Halbwachs' work on collective or social memory, thereby illustrating the dynamic nature of both concepts.

a much more dynamic and social concept, echoing in many ways the notion of social memory. Doreen Massey illustrates space's dynamism, explaining, "[W]hat is at issue is not social phenomena *in* space but both social phenomena and space as constituted out of social relations."[24] Rather than existing *a priori* to social action and acting as some kind of container for those actions – what Massey refers to as "social phenomena in space" – space affects and is affected by social relations, particularly those pertaining to class, gender, and race. Since social relations produce, shape and influence space at the same time that they are impacted by space, a more dynamic relationship surfaces between the two. "Thinking of social space in terms of the articulation of social relations" means recognizing the spatial nature of social experience and the social nature of space.[25] The space to which Massey refers is never finished or stable; rather, it is always being reshaped because "social relations are never still," and they consistently influence and reform the space around them.[26] As a result, "[s]ocial change and spatial change are integral to each other."[27]

Memories, too, influence and are in turn influenced by social relations, as I began discussing earlier in this introduction. Halbwachs briefly studied under Henri Bergson, and became concerned with the way that Bergson's conception of memory burdened the individual, because of the sheer weight of the past each person carried with them. "Bergson believed that all of our past experiences are retained by memory; the events of our daily life are stored, complete and entire, in the unconscious and are available for future recollection," reflecting Freud's earlier

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[24] *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 2 (my emphasis).

[25] Ibid., 120.

[26] Ibid., 2.

[27] Ibid., 23.

work on the subconscious.[28] The early work of late nineteenth and early twentieth century phi-

losophers and psychologists continue to influence how people regard memory today. Yet, Freud

and Bergson overlooked the fundamental sociality of memory, an error that continues to this day

in neuroscience. The retention Bergson proposed represented an enormous burden to Halbwachs,

who believed that carrying around every moment of every day would saddle individuals with an

ever-accumulating weight as time and experience collected in the space of the mind. Halbwachs

argued that memory is "not stored inside of us," instead locating it within our relationship with

the various groups we encounter over the course of our life.[29] Erika Apfelbaum clarifies:

> [I]ndividual memory is nevertheless a part of an aspect of group memory, since each im-
> pression and each fact, even if it apparently concerns a particular person exclusively,
> leaves a lasting memory only to the extent that one has thought it over – to the extent that
> it is connected with the thoughts that come to us from the social milieu.[30]

Memories are not stored inside individuals' memory banks to be recalled at will; rather a "sche-

ma" of past events and experiences acts as a frame of reference and "suitable stimuli" triggers

memories based on that schema.[31] Social relations –interactions with other people – serve as the

repetition that triggers memory, and helps people recall past memories either of similar interac-

tions, similar types of people, or similar situations. Memories are always intertwined with other

people, since "much of what we remember about the personal past is suffused with others' mem-

ories – which are themselves suffused with *other* others' memories."[32]

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[28] Anne Whitehead, *Memory* (London: Routledge, 2008), 125-126.

[29] Ibid., 126.

[30] "Halbwachs and the Social Properties of Memory" in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. Su-sannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 85.

[31] Whitehead, *Memory*, 126.

[32] Mark Freeman, "Telling Stories" in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010): 263

The notion that all memory, even what scientists describe as "autobiographical memory," derives first and foremost from social memory may seem like an odd claim, but much like language, space and other socially constructed frames of reference, memory, too, begins with the group. "It stands to reason…that autobiographical memory tends to fade with time unless it is periodically reinforced through contact with persons with whom one shared the experiences of the past," and in this way it becomes clear how people situate memories, thereby functioning in the way physical spaces now do: as locations of memory.[33] People themselves represent memory space, which arises through communication, interaction, and the social relations that fortify memory in the mind. Apfelbaum maintains, "Individual experiences, even of the most private, personal, and intimate nature, are the result of an *ongoing dynamic social process*; they are inscribed in a given physical, sociohistorical environment, stored in memory and recollected through continuous interchanges with significant others or significant groups."[34] Memories are individual insofar as people are members of different groups, so no one person holds the same memory because no one is a member of the exact same groups. Much in the way they produce space, social relations generate memory; social memory comes out of the social space constructed by different communities both large and small, and engages individuals through that space on a different level than the predominantly static notion of external memory.

Looking at the social nature of memory and space reveals the ways in which each concept has agency. Yet the productive nature of both gets called into question when memory moves outside of the social sphere into places of memory or external memory. Mnemonic "challenges" of the twentieth century stem from the transition from social spaces (people) to places of

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[33] Lewis Coser, introduction to *On Collective Memory* by Maurice Halbwachs (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992): 24.

[34] "Halbwachs and the Social Properties of Memory" in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, 85 (my emphasis).

memory (museums and the like). External memory, a term developed within architectural studies, suggests that the task of remembering has become displaced on physical sites located outside social frameworks, and in turn the mind.[35] Now, instead of acting as a dynamic force on the individual and in turn being acted upon by the individual, memory becomes encapsulated by places, altering not only the way it functions but peoples' immediate access to it. Evident in the growing mnemonic function of architecture that Devau mentions above, as well as the memorializing work of museums, archives and other sites meant to preserve and portray the past on a communal scale, places have become the new form of memory in the twentieth century, altering the way people interact with it and prompting heightened levels of forgetting.[36] Although place and memory have shared a long history with one another, each strengthening the other to a greater degree, the reliance on places of memory rather than on people for memory changes the nature of memory. Speaking of buildings, Marc Treib finds, "[W]hether intended or not, architecture and designed landscapes serve as grand mnemonic devices that record and transmit vital aspects of culture and history."[37] That buildings function as "mnemonic devices" is not in and of itself problematic, but that people now rely so much on external sites, wherein the social interaction that produces memory narratives gets cast aside, alters the way they themselves remember. External memory, which ranges from writing to museums (and other physical sites) to digital media, remains an important part of the memory process, for each external form works alongside social frameworks and through language to form memory. When it comes to museums, the objects

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[35] Marc Treib, "Yes, Now I Remember: An Introduction" in *Spatial Recall*, ed. Marc Treib (New York: Routledge, 2009): xii.

[36] Pierre Nora famously described the twentieth century as one "obsess[ed] with commemoration," readily visible in France's attempts to mark particular historical events through sites or memorials that function as symbolic memory and not practical memory. See "The Era of Commemoration" in *Realms of Memory III*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998): 609.

[37] Treib, "Yes, Now I Remember: An Introduction," xii.

housed within them and the access to the past they promote creates a larger cultural connection to the past; however, external memory becomes problematic when the memory narrative moves away from social frameworks, so that it encourages a one-sided (or solitary) interaction with the past that strips memory-work of the important relations that constitute it. Moreover, the version of the past presented most generally reflects the ideological interests of a certain group in charge of constructing the memory narrative. As Aleida Assman points out, "One problematic effect is the high potential for manipulation by the media which may restage the past according to marketing strategies or the demands of specific groups."[38] Social groups always construct memories to reflect their present interest, but in doing so they require participation from their group memories across time and generations. On the other hand, narratives that encourage consumption over participation work against memory's important social and revisionary components.

For places that function as sites of memorialization, memory becomes representation without the dynamic 're' so imperative to a continual engagement with the past. Representative memory in such instances presents a version of the past pre-constructed and available for public consumption. Although memory places do not discourage interaction, they restrict and define the ways that people interact with the past, as opposed to the unobstructed interaction of social spaces, which encourage continuous re-presentation. Although Kenneth Foote argues that sites of extreme violence and tragedy become an active means of interpretation regarding the past, thereby resisting such notions of stasis, I question how over time such sites become stagnant because memory is stored away from the social frameworks that constitute it and therefore forgotten to a

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[38] "Re-framing memory. Between individual and collective forms of constructing the past," in *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, eds. Karin Tilmans, et al. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 37.

degree.[39] The "interaction" people have with such places becomes one-sided; they consume the past rather than engage with other people to formulate memories about the past. Museums present a particular version of history, one in keeping with the objective nature of history, and that remains problematic insofar as memories require a continual process of social narrativization. By engaging with other people in their social frameworks, individuals not only repeat memories but also alter that repetition. While it might seem as though such alteration – changing the memory with each act of remembering – impedes the work of memory, it remains a necessary part of recollection, much like forgetting remains a necessary part of memory. Places of memory not only diminish the interaction that takes place between person and memory, but it removes to a degree the social interaction required to sustain social memory.

The prevalence of external memory in physical sites and objects signals the lack of natural memory in the twentieth century. Pierre Nora suggests that the recent inundation of museums, archives and lieux de mémoire or "sites of memory" exist because "there are no longer…real environments of memory."[40] Nora explains how *lieux de mémoire* function:

> *Lieux de mémoire* originate with the sense that there is no spontaneous memory, that we must deliberately create archives, maintain anniversaries, organization celebrations, pronounce eulogies, and notarize bills because such activities no longer occur naturally. […] Conversely, if the memories that they enclosed were to be set free they would be useless.[41]

Memory does not function the way it once did as a result of being stored in places located outside social frameworks. According to Nora, that place and memory have an increasingly fragile relationship remains a direct result of the influence of history. What people consider memory is actually history. Memory is organic, according to Nora, whereas history is analytical, critical,

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[39] For more information, see Foote, *Shadowed Ground*.

[40] "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," in *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 7.

[41] Ibid., 7.

and often destructive in its quest to reconstruct the past, pointing to an apocalyptic relationship between history and the past.[42] Nora positions history and memory as opposites, arguing that history has overtaken memory so that memory now acts as "nothing more…than sifted and sorted historical traces."[43] As a result, there is no substantial or "spontaneous" connection to memory. The result of history's "takeover" suggests that individuals no longer have the relationship with memory that they once did. By relying on external sites to store memories that would originally have existed first and foremost through social frameworks and later come to be situated in the mind, people do not have the memories they once did.[44] Assman argues, "Communication between eras and generations is broken when a particular store of common knowledge disappears," and this takes place to an increasing degree because people do not engage with their social frameworks as they once did.[45] If, as Nora proposes, "lieux de mémoire have no reference in reality," then the memories associated with such sites do not have a true reference in the mind, one capable of being consciously retrieved in the presence of others. By "storing" memory outside of social frameworks, by removing the repetition of social relations that recalls memory, people forget the past. Andreas Huyssen contends:

> [Memory] represents the attempt to slow down information processing, to resist the dissolution of time in the synchronicity of the archive, to recover a mode of contemplation

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[42] Interestingly, Nora's definitions of memory and history have much in common with Bergson's work on duration and space. Whereas duration is pure experience (what Nora views as memory), space is thought and pause (history according to Nora) because the individual cannot analyze in the middle of pure experience but must first stop to think.

[43] Ibid., 8.

[44] Nora's argument contains issues, namely his nostalgia for a past that presented one version of history rather than constantly rethinking and rewriting the past. Multiple viewpoints of history are negative for him, and he views the historian's authority – their memory – as a foundation for strong history. Since postmodernity challenged the idea of metanarratives and advocated for multiple viewpoints, Nora's dissatisfaction stems from the developments in the late twentieth century.

[45] *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization*, 4.

outside the universe of simulation and fast-speed information and cable networks, to claim some anchoring space in a world of puzzling and often threatening heterogeneity, non-synchronicity, and information overload.[46]

The abundance of memorializing sites in the twentieth century demonstrates how the period has shifted the individual's connection to their social frameworks, as well as the memories that arise from their interaction with said social frameworks. Moreover, the transition from social to historical consciousness, or from memory to history, which began in earlier centuries alters memory in the twentieth century. Memory now operates as myth in that it connects individuals to places or sites, which act as "prop[s] for memory," but it removes the social, objective components so imperative to sustaining social memory.[47] Post-apocalyptic literature and film explore the growth in places of memory, as well as highlight memory's social nature in order to warn readers about the increase in memory loss over the course of the last century. The apocalyptic event at the margins of each narrative destroys life to some degree, and by leaving characters in a world without people to corroborate and modify their memory narratives, memory itself disappears, revealing how imperative people are to any recollective act.

Memory Narratives

As a socially constructed narrative similar in many ways to memory, literature constitutes a distinctive form that provides a unique approach to exploring memory, as opposed to non-fiction or scientific writing. Literature is the creative stomping ground of the real and the imaginary, often crossing between the two and blurring boundaries, so that readers gain an awareness and understanding into issues and experiences to a degree unavailable in scientific studies.

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[46] Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories* (London: Routledge, 1995) 7.

[47] Peter Carrier, "Places, Politics and the Archiving of Memory" in *Memory and Methodology* ed. Susannah Radstone (Oxford: Berg, 2000): 42.

Where scientific writing often elucidates the neurobiological process that is memory, it cannot fully access the nuances of memory's underlying social nature and narrative structure, which emerge more clearly in literature. It is not that literature is a unique form for memory to the exclusion of other studies, but that it provides insight into memory and its workings in a way that more theoretical or practical scholarship does not.[48] Whether it arises through character's recalling their past to readers, or in the way that literature accesses a particular past for readers, literature and memory share much in common when it comes to narrative form, subject matter, and style. Literature draws upon imaginative resources that often come into play in any recollective act. Moreover, since memory is a social phenomenon that becomes situated in the psyche, literature is able to access and emanate memory's sociality by way of the various narrative forms it draws upon. Literature follows patterns of social understanding much in the way memory follows patterns of social understanding, and each draws upon mythical and historical elements to construct a narrative. This is not to suggest that memory is fictional in the way literature is, but it is certainly not the strictly factual representation of the past many people assume it to be; in fact, memory's imaginative quality does not detract from the truth it attempts to purport, because it codes it in socially structured patterns. Furthermore, literature can be read as a type of cultural memory much in the way scholars, such as Timothy Parrish, have aligned it as a type of cultural history.[49]

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[48] To some extent, memory exists in all literature. In terms of the variety of memory narratives in literature, I am here thinking of Proust's *Swann's Way*, James Joyce's *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, to name just a few.

[49] In *From the Civil War to the Apocalypse* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), Parrish argues that much postmodern historical fiction can be read as a form of history, since both draw upon narrative tropes to convey the past. In doing so, postmodern authors seek to challenge historical metanarratives by offering another point of view regarding the past.

That memory continues to be taken up within literature and examined in more distinctive ways than non-fiction works speaks to literature's narrative form. As with literature, memory encompasses a narrative function. Despite popular opinion that supposes memory records events and plays them back verbatim, memory best exemplifies a narrativizing process, one situated from a present perspective. "Remembering is basically a reconstructive process," collective memory scholar Aleida Assman explains, "it always starts in the present, and so inevitably at the time when the memory is recalled, there will be shifting, distortion, revaluation, reshaping."[50] Memory continually "processes" the past in order to highlight certain facts, blur others, and create a narrative thread to help make sense of innumerable details. Author Paul Murray best summarizes the task of narratives, explaining, "The truth is messy and chaotic and all over the place. Often it just doesn't make sense. Stories make things make sense, but the way they do that is to leave out anything that doesn't fit. And often that is quite a lot."[51] Even though Murray discusses literature, his point applies equally to memory. As much as memory would seem to be a rather faithful rendition of past events, in actuality it falls prey to the mental task of comprehension, which creates an overarching narrative that "leave[s] out" quite a bit in order to have past events fit with socially determined understandings of experience.[52] In discussing how people come to understand their experience, Paul Connerton contends, "[I]n all modes of experience we always

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[50] *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization*, 19. He goes on to say, "In the period between present action and future recall, memory does not wait patiently in its safe house; it has its own energy and is exposed to a process of transformation."

[51] *Skippy Dies* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2010), 556.

[52] Reinhart Koselleck proposes, "The historical nature of man, or, in epistemological terms, historical anthropology, has inserted itself in between the two poles of our thought: continuous repeatability and continual innovation," in that if everything were new, humans would never be able to learn anything from their actions, and if everything repeated then they would never be surprised. See "Repetitive structures in language and history," in *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, eds. Karin Tilmans, et al. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 52.

base our particular experiences on a prior context in order to ensure that they are intelligible at all; that prior to any single experience, our mind is already predisposed with a framework of outlines, of typical shapes of experienced objects."[53] As socially constructed forms of understanding, narratives require editing in order for an event to work as a story or memory narrative; while humans can take on this task alone, they still draw upon the particular forms that have been socially coded in order to contextualize their experience.

In the past, memory has often been positioned against history, as if the two concepts existed at opposite ends of the fact/fiction spectrum. In fact, memory became subordinate to history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, since history appeared to represent a more objective and therefore factual representation of the past. Over the latter half of the twentieth century, cognitive scholars have challenged the memory/history binary, explaining how the two approaches to the past share much in common and narrating the past need not be so "either/or."[54] Although she does not purposely embroil herself in the history/memory debate, Marianne Hirsch describes memory "as a form of counter-history," oscillating as it does between testimony and imagination, and in turn fact and fiction.[55] Hirsch's designation implies that history does not follow any kind of narrative form itself, a point that Hayden White has contested in his work; in recent years, scholarship has blurred the boundaries between history and memory, since each relies on the other to a certain extent and each term's designation has taken on specific characteristics of the

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[53] *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 6.

[54] Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz propose that "memory research constitutes not a rejoinder to historical (and other) inquiry, but its – awkward – ally." "Introduction: Mapping Memory," in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 9.

[55] *The Generation of Postmemory* (New York: Columbia UP, 2012), 15.

other.[56] Memories, especially oral memories, have been used in recent years to supplement historical investigations, but because memories are harder to verify than physical evidence, they are often considered untrustworthy, a point that increasingly comes under contention from cognitive scholars. Memory embraces many elements involved in conveying the past, including history and myth, and for these reasons literature serves as a form most reflective of memory narratives. Positioned as they both are as narratives, literature and memory comprise a conducive force when it comes to exploring the ways in which people recall and recount their past, as well as the difficulty they often have doing so.

As much as literature has proven to be an ideal visionary and expressive arena to think about and through memory, the post-apocalypse genre specifically has become the ultimate memory narrative in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, functioning both as a form for memory, as well as a form for studying memory. Much like Baudelaire and Proust wrote about and through memory and its representations and contemporary authors, such as Kurt Vonnegut, Toni Morrison, and Jonathan Franzen, continue this memory work, post-apocalypse authors also perform various kinds of memory work. By imagining future razed spaces, these authors not only underscore the importance between memory and social space, as well as memory and place, they also highlight memory's social nature. Where the vast majority of literature engages with memory as a psychic or psychological phenomenon, post-apocalypse works reassert its sociality, calling attention to its social nature. By engaging and addressing real-world concerns regarding forgetting, and the numerous issues that arise as a result of changes to memory in the twentieth

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[56] In *The Content of the Form* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), White argues that although history and literature appear to exist on opposite ends of the spectrum, they actually share much more in common at the level of narrative. The factual nature of historical investigation notwithstanding, White maintains that historians succumb to narrative form in much the same way that prose or fiction writers do. Therefore, history becomes structured as a narrative, which takes on increasingly literary tropes.

century, contemporary post-apocalyptic novels, graphic novels, and films speak to the difficulties people have mnemonically connecting with their past. Despite the prevalence of memory in myriad narrative forms, nowhere is the anxiety surrounding the relationship to memory and the growing problems regarding forgetting more often explored than in post-apocalypse works of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Apocalypse literature emerged when the ancient Greeks, Egyptians and Hebrews transcribed their apocalyptic prophecies; however, it only developed as a fictional narrative, one that moved away from an entirely religious connotation, beginning with Mary Shelley in the early nineteenth century.[57] It wasn't until the early- to mid-twentieth century that post-apocalypse works began appearing, as authors concentrated more exclusively on what occurs after a devastating event in order to critique various scientific and technological developments, which, they imagined, would lead to that *after*.[58] Post-apocalypse works continue to be lumped in with apocalypse narratives, despite different generic elements taking place in such narratives, distinctions I will focus on more extensively in the first chapter. It is worth noting the difference between the two, though, because the prevalence of post-apocalypse works in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries reveal mounting public fears concerning *the end*, which in turn furnishes an exploration and critique of the changing relationship people have with memory. That the rise in memory comes about at the same time public interest regarding the apocalypse and post-apocalypse has also risen is no mistake. Both concepts exude themes of decline, endings,

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[57] Mary Shelley's 1826 novel *The Last Man* has often been credited as the first novel dealing with the eradication of civilization. Notably, Thomas Campbell and Lord Byron each penned poetic representations of the same subject before her novel was published. For more information, see Saul Friedlander, "Themes of Decline and End in Nineteenth-Century Western Imagination" in *Visions of the Apocalypse*, ed. Saul Friedlander (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985): 61.

[58] By imagining the consequences of man's actions, these narratives safely pose questions from the future that are applicable to the present, thereby serving as either a) warning, or b) exhortation to correct present-day behavior.

and even a desire to exert some kind of control over the past; studying memory in light of the post-apocalypse, therefore, yields productive insights into how each topic assists in examining the other.

Post-apocalypse works take up where apocalypse narratives leave off by examining the devastated *after* following a catastrophic event, rather than the time leading up to or taking place during the apocalypse. By situating the narrative after the disaster has occurred, post-apocalypse works produce a unique investigation into memory as it relates to space and place. Positioning characters in a razed after devoid of recognizable spatial meaning, post-apocalypse works explore the social relationship between memory and space, a relationship that undergoes severe alteration in the wake of the imagined apocalyptic event. In doing so, they highlight the ways in which memory has changed as a result of changes to temporality *and* space, a line of inquiry often overlooked in earlier work on memory. Post-apocalyptic literature and film's future setting provides an essential frame through which to better understand the ways in which forgetting is intrinsically linked to the redefinition of place, and the dependence and destruction of social space. Without people to imbue space with meaning, or without people to create the social spaces needed to produce and sustain memory, memory fades and characters' connection with their pre-apocalyptic past begins to unravel. In this way, post-apocalypse works underscore memory's social characteristics, and provide a greater understanding of social memory.

In keeping with the primary purpose of the apocalypse genre, post-apocalypse works attempt to make meaning out of issues concerning the present by looking ahead to their imagined outcome. Elizabeth Rosen, who examines the postmodern concept of the apocalypse, notes, "The apocalyptic impulse is, in effect, a sense-making one."[59] By shifting present-day political and cultural issues, such as the rise in forgetting and the changing nature of memory, to the future,

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[59] *Apocalyptic Transformation* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008), xiii.

such narratives attempt to offer a nuanced perspective than other literary works that analyze contemporary issues. Working against realist tendencies in literature, the estranging effect at the center of the post-apocalypse works generates new insight into problems of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Post-apocalypse works, concerned as they are with life following the destructive event, provide especially useful insights into contemporary issues because they focuses so exclusively on *what* rather than *how*. By projecting narratives into a future at once familiar and unfamiliar, post-apocalypse works unsettle readers so that present-day problems become more comprehensible than they would be in non-apocalypse literary works that demonstrate the same sense-making purpose. In examining contemporary post-apocalypse works, I contend that not only do such narratives address the fears concerning the amplified sense of forgetting in recent years, but they also reposition memory and space in effective ways to offer a new understanding into the association between the two.

As I discussed earlier, post-apocalypse works have become embedded in popular conscious for good reason; the prevalence of such works, besides highlighting a general fascination regarding *the end*, speaks to a present-day concern regarding the changing relationship with memory as a result of the changing relationship with space and place. The resurgence (and popularity) of apocalyptic thought in the twentieth century comes about, in part, as a response to the effects of time-space compression, wherein time accelerates and space shrinks so that people's understanding of their subjectivity, their immediate social groups, and their larger sense of community (and nation) radically change. Renowned apocalypse scholar Lois Parkinson Zamora argues, "The resurgence of apocalyptic modes of thought and expression is a predictable reaction to social disruption and temporal uncertainty, and explains in part its currency in our own popu-

lar vocabulary."[60] While Zamora does not reference time-space compression explicitly, the "social disruption and temporal uncertainty" she mentions are conceivably by-products of the changes to time and space, and speak to the growing apocalyptic consciousness seen in recent years. Moving beyond the looming threat of the apocalypse, though, the late twentieth century has seen a surge in narratives that begin *after* the catastrophe, thereby challenging the notion of conclusion embedded in the apocalypse. The post-apocalypse genre has grown out of the apocalypse genre and indicates secular changes to the original revelatory meaning the term denotes within religious circles. The attention now paid to the end of the world involves an interesting development in that *the end* does not necessarily signify finality. Following a series of real-world "apocalypses" that signaled the end of the world but did not conclude with any true end, the post-apocalypse work emerged as a modern-day working through of anxieties surrounding not only the demise of mankind but the demise of memory, and the kind of dystopian (rather than utopian) space apocalyptic events now reveal.[61]

By turning to a range of post-apocalypse works, including novels, graphic novels and films, I demonstrate how they function as the ultimate memory narrative in the twentieth century. Unlike other literature that delves into the topic of memory from the present looking to the past, post-apocalypse works take place in an imagined future, which serves to critique readers' present. That critique centers on the way memory has become located outside of important social frameworks that constitute it; in each post-apocalypse work, society has crumbled on many different levels. Memory operates as trifecta that depends upon the existence and interaction between people, places, and objects; without social frameworks to undergird memory and without the forms

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[60] Lois Parkinson Zamora, *Writing the Apocalypse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 11.

[61] More recent examples include the films *Zomebieland*, *2012* and *Contagion*; the television series *The Walking Dead*; and novels *World War Z*, *The Passage*, and *Super Sad True Love Story*.

of external memory that mankind came to rely on, readers realize how memory operates as a social phenomenon, how important people are to recollective acts, and finally how forgetting arises without the necessary social interaction to substantiate memory. My project, therefore, investigates the intersections between the post-apocalypse and memory at a time when both have emerged as major global concerns in intellectual and popular spheres. Post-apocalyptic space – the imagined after conceived by authors and filmmakers alike – provides a lens to better comprehend the social nature of memory, and the dangers attendant upon removing memory from such a framework to external places dedicated to preservation. Set in the future rather than the present, the temporal upending provided by the post-apocalyptic narrative frame reveals the consequences of mankind's actions when it comes to recent mnemonic developments.

In my first chapter, "The Imagined After: Post-Apocalyptic Spaces," I begin by examining the importance of the post-apocalypse as a distinct narrative device used to explore social memory. Scholarship in numerous disciplines continues to conflate the two terms, despite real-world developments that distinguish between apocalyptic thinking and post-apocalyptic thinking. Post-apocalypse works take place exclusively in the realm of *after*, and contain significant generic differences from apocalypse works, which take place before or during a catastrophic event. In positioning the post-apocalypse as a distinct sub-genre of the apocalypse, I reveal how it concentrates on the connection between social frameworks and memory, as well as the growing problem external memory creates when it comes to acts of remembering. Where the apocalypse genre came to concentrate almost exclusively on temporality and the threat it posed, the post-apocalypse genre moves beyond that concern to re-incorporate the original apocalyptic myth's spatial characteristics. More important, I argue, are the imagined future spaces, which problematize the experience and concept of memory. I concentrate on Angela Carter's novel *Heroes and*

Villains (1969) in the first chapter in order to speak to the tradition of post-apocalypse works, and how they function as a particularly unique "memory narrative" of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. *Heroes and Villains* reveals the way places change when a population no longer exists to inhabit them. Dependent as comprehension is on the social frameworks that form and perpetuate it, the altered places in the novel disclose memory's absence in the face of society's absence. Incorporating Pierre Nora's seminal work on space and memory, "Between Memory and History: Lieux de Memoire," as well as recent mnemonic scholarship in architectural studies, I argue that considerable changes to place result in the decay or complete disappearance of memory, and how post-apocalypse works explore fears associated with the complete annihilation of not only civilization but memory as well.

Chapter Two, "From Sociality to Externality*:* The Changing Nature of Memory," explores memory's underlying and imperative social component. I argue that memory functions as an interplay between social frameworks, places, and objects; when either one of those components falls by the wayside or when the latter two take on a greater role then the nature of remembering changes. Post-apocalypse works provide a unique narrative space to examine the threat memory incurs in the wake of a devastating event that alters or completely ravages social frameworks. Rather than looking to the individual's psyche or mind as the primary seat for memory, post-apocalyptic literature and film propose that memory originates from communities. In exploring the ways in which people create memory through social relations and rely upon social frameworks to maintain those memories, I show how post-apocalypse works produce specialized insight into the workings of memory at the social level and highlight the importance of Maurice Halbwachs' work on memory. From that argument, I move to examine the ways in which memory has been externalized from social frameworks more and more in the last century.

Margaret Atwood's novel *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and Paul Auster's novel *In the Country of Last Things* serve as my primary focus in this chapter, because each investigates smaller forms of external memory, ranging from writing to objects. Each of these "sites" remain embedded within a social structure, and the absence of that structure highlights the ways in which memories fail, remain as they do on people. These new types of external memory change people's capacity for memory, and remove the necessary social framework that grounds memory to the group. Both works, and the larger genre from which they emerge, address anxieties pertaining to forgetting by considering how people "store" memory in sites outside of the community.

Continuing the investigation into memory's sociality, the third and fourth chapters concentrate on the necessary roles that people play when it comes to contributing to and perpetuating memory across time, space, and generations. "New Forms of External Memory: The Dangers of Digital Memory," my third chapter, posits how recent developments in the field of memory, i.e. digital memory, act as a contemporary form of external memory, altering the way that people interact with one another, which carries over to how they remember. Additionally, the chapter looks at what occurs in the absence of any social structure, thereby suggesting a connection between isolation and insanity, further underlining social frameworks' important role in the act of remembering and even identity. David Markson's novel *Wittgenstein's Mistress* (1988) plays off of the "last man" apocalyptic tradition, and in doing so underscores how people situate memory, and how people's mnemonic capability fails without social frameworks to continue the important memory work bound to social relations. Robert Kirkman's graphic novel *The Walking Dead* (2009) continues in the vein of the Markson's work but does so with a group rather than a single protagonist. In doing so, Kirkman moves towards a more hopeful conclusion by showing readers how in the wake of apocalyptic destruction, people become spaces of memory, creating commu-

nity and communal memory through a collective space of interaction. Whereas physical sites often act as sites of memorialization and therefore stagnation, memory takes on an increasingly social and animated quality in the absence of traditional spatial relations once it's returned to social frameworks. In this way, the graphic novel proposes the possibility of a real and engaging relationship with memory based on social interaction.

The fourth chapter, "Future Social Spaces: Children as Living Memory-Narratives" argues that social groups maintain mnemonic narratives of their development over time, and the absence or failure of any one generation to continue this narrative work has serious implications for memory in general. In equating children's bodies as both linear narrative temporalities and spaces, I contend not only that memory depends upon a social component but also that it requires the spaces of people in order to work best. I draw upon Ben Marcus' novel *The Flame Alphabet* (2012) and Alfonso Cuaron's film, *Children of Men* (2006), because each work posits children as a form of "future space," in which they play an important part for their respective social frameworks' memory-narratives; each novel shows how children's redefinition or absence brings about the redefinition and ultimately the destruction of memory. Moreover, the fourth chapter investigates how memory operates for other temporalities besides the past. The threat children pose in the former, and the lack of children in the latter speaks to their importance when it comes to extending memory beyond a present temporal frame. With Marcus, I focus on how memory operates as a narrative, thereby emphasizing the important work that comes out of communication and how mnemonic narratives serve as the underlying "glue" of a social framework; when children upend that narrative or refuse to participate in it, it cannot survive beyond the present. *Children of Men* on the other hand reveal the important role children play within their respective social groups, and how their absence brings about a loss of memory, because memory no longer

looks toward the future.. *The Flame Alphabet* and *Children of Men* propose different temporal and spatial relationships with memory that occur through children, and continue the overall memory work of the post-apocalypse work by asserting how important social frameworks are to maintaining memory.

The final chapter, "Forgettable Endings: Traumatic Memory as Destructive Memory," analyzes two novels that question the necessity of memory after an event as traumatic and destructive as the apocalypse. In Denis Johnson's *Fiskadoro* (1985) and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006), characters either cannot remember or willingly seek to forget the event that destroyed life as they know it. In this instance, their memory, which borders on the traumatic, serves to harm their struggle to survive, and in many ways points to the idea that forgetting can be a positive action. As James Berger suggests, "Apocalypse and trauma are congruent ideas, for both refer to shatterings of existing structures of identity and language, and both effect their own erasures from memory and must be reconstructed by means of their traces," and I press this association by investigating how reconstructing the past does not always generate recuperative results.[62] Despite the necessity of memory, some acts of forgetting can be useful. In both novels, forgetting comes to be an adaptive technique, which questions the fears surrounding forgetting in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century by suggesting that forgetting does not have to be the anxiety-ridden problem it now seems. Drawing particularly on recent work in neurobiology, I argue that forgetting is not always the failure it's taken to be, and show how a certain subset of post-apocalypse works operate along this line of thought.

Overall, in exploring a variety of post-apocalyptic literature and film, as well as attending to the numerous ways that this particular genre approaches, questions, discusses, and analyzes

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[62] *After the End* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 19.

the social nature of memory in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, my project seeks to push the bounds of literature. As cultural, i.e. social, forms that engage memory on a social level, post-apocalyptic literature and film provide an introspective, narrative investigation into memory by serving as a form *of* memory, as well as a form *for* memory. Readers get closer to the experience and the concept of memory as a social phenomenon thanks to the narrative structure that literature and film draw upon, a structure that mirrors memory's reconstructive nature. With each imagined future space, the problems attendant to memory – the rise in memory loss, the threat of forgetting, the issue surrounding external memory – become clearer. More than presenting new understandings of memory, though, authors and filmmakers alike propose an approach to memory that emphasizes the collective, social nature of its origins, and reminds readers through myriad critiques about the dangers of removing memory from the necessary social frameworks that create, construct, and transmit an understanding of the past.

CHAPTER ONE
The Imagined After: Post-Apocalyptic Spaces

"It is chiefly order that gives distinctiveness to memory. […] In this way, the order of the localities would preserve the order of the things."
– Cicero

The concept of the post-apocalypse seems paradoxical, for the apocalypse already contains within its meaning the *before* and *after* that frames the catastrophic event. Originating in ancient Greece, the term *apokalypsis* referred to a transition from one world to another or from one mode of consciousness to another, and therefore denoted a revelation.[63] How, then, can there be a *post* to the apocalypse? Significant changes to *apocalypse*'s connotative meaning over the last two centuries directly contributed to the emergence of the post-apocalypse as a concept and narrative genre distinct from the apocalypse. As the apocalyptic tradition moved away from religious spheres, colloquial usage of *apocalypse* discarded the transitory feature once embedded in the term and focused either on the threat of the annihilating event or its occurrence.[64] Such a focus positioned *apocalypse* in conclusive terms, thereby reflecting the shift from an overarching sense of progress that marked the beginning of the twentieth century to crisis by the mid-twentieth century.[65] Subsequent developments, such as the scientific discovery of entropy in the late nineteenth century, the major wars in the twentieth century, and the development of weapons

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[63] For a comprehensive history of the apocalyptic myth and its religious literary development, see John J. Collins, ed, *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism: Volume 1* (London: Continuum Press, 2000).

[64] Piotr Sztompka explains, "What is left is the uncertainty and unpredictability of the future seen as entirely contingent, open to change and random developments. This undermines the other premise of the idea of progress, orientation towards the future." *The Sociology of Social Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 34.

[65] See Peter Freese, "From the Apocalyptic to the Entropic End: From Hope to Despair to New Hope?" in *The Holodeck in the Garden* ed. Peter Freese and Charles B. Harris (Champaign, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 2004), 341.

capable of worldwide destruction, all contributed to the popular belief that the apocalypse signi-

fied finality rather than renewal. The *after* inherent to *apocalypse*'s original meaning fell by the

wayside and became situated in *post-apocalypse*, a term focusing almost exclusively on a catas-

trophe's aftermath and the world that arises therein. At its most basic divide, then, the split be-

tween *apocalypse* and *post-apocalypse* occurs at the generic level, dividing the apocalyptic myth

into works that either concentrate on the apocalyptic threat or the post-apocalyptic life that fol-

lows when the annihilation of civilization fails to generate "The End," but rarely the entire apoc-

alyptic myth as it once existed.[66]

Knowing the original apocalyptic myth, though, isn't *post-apocalypse* simply a misno-

mer? Is the term *post-apocalypse* even necessary? In a word, yes. *Post-apocalypse* serves as an

important cultural marker for how the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries comprehend

and represent the world's end or its non-end, as the case often turns out to be. It is a term that, by

concentrating on the world that follows the end, reasserts the importance of space, a key compo-

nent to the original apocalyptic myth and a central feature in the apocalyptic literary tradition.[67]

Apocalypse literature used to "disclose a transcendent reality which is *both temporal*, insofar as

it envisages eschatological salvation, *and spatial*, insofar as it involves another, supernatural

world."[68] The apocalyptic myth balanced time and space in the form of the new world because

destruction generated creation, an action which extended time and renewed space. Now, however,

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[66] In fact, a second split occurs within the secular apocalyptic tradition. Critics D.H. Lawrence, Northrop Frye, and Frank Kermode, tend to gravitate towards one of two categories, either investigating the term's negative or positive connotation but ignoring the fact that the two work in tandem. See David Ketterer, *New Worlds for Old* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974).

[67] While some apocalypse literature still incorporates religion to some degree, most post-apocalypse works maintain a secular tone. For examples of more religious twentieth century apocalypse literature, see Walker Percy, *Love in the Ruins* (New York: Picador, 1999).

[68] See Michael Barkun, *Apocalyptic Literature: A Reader* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 20, emphasis mine.

apocalyptic works forego the myth's spatial after in order to concentrate on temporality in two specific manners: First, the threat temporality imposes *upon* subjectivity and second, the threat *to* temporality. Beginning with the Enlightenment, inventions attempting to quicken (and ease) a range of tasks resulted in the general sense that time moved faster, emphasizing the division between past and present.[69] What had once been understood as lived or natural time became measured or historical time, which had a fundamental effect on memory because it impacted people's ability to process time and form complete memories.[70] Scholars note how a past that seemed uncertain at best and nonexistent at worst altered memory; people were increasingly unable to remember the past because the entire concept of the past came under dispute.[71] The speed with which people experienced their life only escalated in the twentieth century, so that "the uncertainty of relation with the past became especially intense."[72] Temporal changes upended people's connection to the past, thereby upsetting the entire concept of linear time; without a past, the future did not seem as certain as it once did, resulting in time's increasingly menacing quality. Richard Terdiman elucidates the problem: "For underwriting the great classics of modernist thought is a perception of temporal dislocation, in which the connections between past and pre-

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[69] David Harvey notes how inventions like the chronometer shifted people's temporal perspective and experience, so that time moved ever more swiftly towards the future. See *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990), 252.

[70] Bill Schwarz argues, "The intellectual practice of history, in its emergent forms, was in part devised as a counter to the wayward, indeterminate workings of modern memory, [which] establish[ed] the principles of historical time as the definitive component of temporality." "Memory, Temporality, Modernity" in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. Susannah Radstone (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 43.

[71] For scholarship about the memory crisis in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Richard Terdiman's *Present Past* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Susannah Radstone's "Working with Memory: An Introduction" in *Memory and Methodology*, ed. Susannah Radstone (Oxford: Berg, 2000); and Bill Schwarz's "Memory, Temporality, Modernity" in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. Susannah Radstone (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010).

[72] Richard Terdiman. *Present Past* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 1.

sent become a source, not of succor, but of heightened anxiety, and in which the sensation of the loss of the past predominates."[73] Given that real world events continuously involved a threat to time *and* a threat from time, temporality became the dominant focus for twentieth century apocalyptic literature and film. As temporality rose, spatiality fell away. The post-apocalypse is unique to twentieth century, therefore, because rather than concentrate on the threat posed by the world's imminent end, it purposefully moves beyond that end.

Post-apocalypse works began emerging in the mid-twentieth century, when authors reexamined how the apocalyptic myth functioned within a modern context. Although the twentieth century seemed incapable of producing an idyllic new world, neither did the calamities experienced during that period furnish a final ending either; acting in the apocalyptic vein, the war initiated a shift in consciousness, which revealed mankind's *after* because surviving such an experience meant that catastrophe did not always produce conclusion.[74] Reflecting this continuation, post-apocalypse works resituate the rebirth inherent to the original myth by imagining an after space to the world's end but rarely one that embodies utopian ideals.[75] While post-apocalypse works do not ignore time in order to focus exclusively on space, they do typically ignore the time leading up to the disastrous event – oftentimes going so far as to remain completely ambiguous about what exactly caused the near-annihilation of mankind – so they can explore what follows

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[73] Schwarz, "Memory, Temporality, Modernity," 42.

[74] WWII fundamentally changed subjectivity, according to Jay Winter. Regarding the break, he states, "[W]e are in another world," thereby suggesting a rebirth, although not necessarily the positive one witnessed in the apocalyptic myth. See *Remembering War: The Great War between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 18.

[75] Examples include Pat Frank's *Alas, Bablyon* (1959); Walter M. Miller, Jr.'s *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1959); and Barry Hannah, "Eating Wife and Friends" in *Airships* (1978)

in the wake of a cataclysmic event.[76] Similar to the original term, then, *post-apocalypse* signifies

a remainder. As a contemporary development, the post-apocalypse is a narrative device that be-

gins at the end, since the world does not end within the narrative bounds of literature and film.

Pat Frank's popular 1959 post-apocalyptic novel *Alas, Babylon* states the underlying presump-

tion of most post-apocalypse works: "Out of death, life; an immutable truth."[77] Each act of de-

struction necessarily inaugurates an act of creation; authors, filmmakers, and other artists utilize

that imagined after for a variety of purposes.

Where apocalyptic literature and film concentrate on the looming end and its occurrence

in order to critique the means that brought about the world's end, post-apocalyptic literature and

film concentrate on what the imagined after can teach readers or audiences. Even if the new

world that emerges in the wake of the world's "end" pertains less to a literal space and more to a

new perspective, the post-apocalypse genre underscores the importance of such an after to better

understand the contemporary world and even to correct seemingly detrimental present-day be-

havior. In fact, the popularity of exploring and critiquing the contemporary world through its im-

agined non-end can be seen in the growing prevalence of post-apocalyptic literature and film

found on bookshelves and in theaters in recent years.[78] In post-apocalypse works, oftentimes the

world following from apocalyptic destruction is extremely altered or at times nearly destroyed.

That alteration leads to people's absence, thereby revealing the fundamental role people play in

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[76] Post-apocalypse works tend not to dwell on the catastrophe itself, because the event is not nearly as important as *what* it reveals.

[77] *Alas, Babylon* (New York: Perennial Classics, 1999), 281. Many critics describe Frank's novel as an apocalyptic novel, but since the vast majority of the novel takes place after a nuclear holocaust, I believe it makes an important contribution as one of the first post-apocalyptic novels.

[78] Examples include novels: *The Stand* (1978), *He, She and It* (1991), *The Passage* (2010); television series: *The Twilight Zone (*1959*), Firefly* (2002)*, Walking Dead* (2010)*, Revolution* (2012); films: *Terminator* (1984); *Zombieland* (2009)*, The Book of Eli* (2010)*, This is the End* (2013).

terms of memory. More than a cultural phenomenon that weaves individual memory into the larger fabric of nation or culture, memory exhibits important social qualities, which post-apocalypse works examine in the typically near-barren space that emerges from the world's near-destruction. The post-apocalypse genre emphasizes space and in doing so employs the apocalypse myth's new world trope in order to highlight the importance and necessity of social space for memory. *Post-apocalypse*, therefore, denotes a distinct narrative space, one which thinks through the changing nature of memory. Post-apocalyptic literature and film explore the connection that people have to various social spaces and physical places, positing that changes to these locales have long-lasting effects in the mind. In locating the specific generic qualities of post-apocalypse works, in particular their emphasis on social interaction and the attendant difficulties of interacting with social space following an apocalyptic event, I identify how post-apocalypse works pay specific attention to memory's collective nature in order to underline how sociality generates memory, and memory in turn generates sociality. In many ways, the crisis at the margins of post-apocalyptic literature and film pertains to memory, rather than a catastrophic event that threatens physical annihilation. The post-apocalypse genre addresses rising concerns regarding the changing nature of memory in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as memory continues to move outside of social frameworks and become "lost" or forgotten.

Although this chapter primarily focuses on the emergence of the post-apocalypse genre as a distinct development within contemporary apocalyptic thinking and the way that the future spaces at the heart of such works yield greater insight into the issue of memory in recent years, it is first worth concentrating on the significant changes to the concept of the apocalypse over the course of the twentieth century, since they have directly contributed to the emergence of the post-apocalypse in popular consciousness. The transformation from religious to secular apoca-

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lyptic thinking in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries held substantial consequences for the way that popular consciousness came to grasp the end of the world, as well as mankind's part in that end. That similar sense of crisis that loomed over the twentieth century and affected *apocalypse*'s meaning also permeated memory, marking a staunch divide between present and past and signaling an inability on people's part to accurately and fully remember the past. Memory underwent significant changes during this period, moving away as it did from natural time towards historical time, thereby exhibiting a similar transition. That both subjects experienced alterations during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is no mere coincidence; the shift in apocalyptic thinking with regard to subjectivity held immediate implications for people's relationship and access to the past, focused as both were on destruction. In other words, the rise in and change to thinking about the world's end reflected a similar rise in the verbosity surrounding memory, concentrated as it was on the possible end of memory.

The Threat of Temporality

The original apocalyptic myth comprises destruction; however, it is the type of destruction that inaugurates creation, thereby communicating hope as opposed to despondency. In the Book of Revelation, one of the most famous examples of apocalyptic literature, the deleterious events that John of Patmos recounts do not result in finality, but instead serve as a precursor to rebirth and renewal. Following whatever dystopian events occurred to bring about "the end of the world," a utopian space would instead emerge, ushering in a new era. The term originally encompassed dystopia *and* utopia, for it represented neither one nor the other but both, progressing as it did from despair to hope. The vast majority of early apocalyptic writing pertained to religious thinking, so the utopian world associated with the apocalypse had much to do with ful-

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filling God's promise in some earthly way and rewarding those who had been good. In many ways, early apocalyptic thinking served as a warning to correct immoral behavior, since it promised a reward, and that corrective characteristic remains a central feature within apocalypse and post-apocalypse genres to this day.

Beginning with the Enlightenment and intensifying with the numerous, destructive scientific and militaristic developments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, *apocalypse* moved away from a religious context and towards a more secular bent. That shift transformed the apocalypse into a major catastrophic event that signifies a doomsday scenario. Indeed, contemporary rhetoric now conflates *apocalypse* with *eschaton* or the last event, perpetuating a discourse of crisis and finality that reflects the growing anxiety about the world's end, as well as mankind's direct role in that end.[79] Popular usage now concentrates primarily on the term's dystopian characteristics, which can be readily seen in *Time Magazine*'s and *Newsweek*'s choice to utilize *apocalypse* when reporting on recent disasters.[80] Both weekly news periodicals employed the term in such a way that aligned it with a sense of despondency rather than revelation, thereby demonstrating not only a major shift in the term's meaning, but also the prevalence of secular apocalyptic thinking in popular consciousness.[81] Earthquakes, tornados, nuclear meltdowns, and

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[79] Much like eschatology, *apocalypse* focuses on endings, but unlike the conclusive end the eschaton represents, the apocalypse once incorporated "the age to follow." Lois Parkinson Zamora, *Writing the Apocalypse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 10.

[80] On July 1, 2002, *Time Magazine* investigated the rise of apocalyptic thought in U.S. national consciousness as a result of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and subsequent anthrax scares. Similarly, on its March 28, 2011 cover, *Newsweek* forebodingly declared, "APOCALYPSE NOW" due to the continued global economic downtown, the revolutionary protests in the Middle East, and the rash of natural disasters in 2010 and 2011, including the Haiti earthquake, the Indonesia tsunami, and the Japan earthquake resulting in nuclear crisis.

[81] Elizabeth Rosen questions "if we don't love apocalypses a bit too much." She reasons that "given that the world sometimes appears to be coming apart at its economic, political, and social seams," people nat-

civil as well as economic unrest across the globe all signify *apocalypse* in the twenty-first centu-

ry, rather than a less foreboding (and conclusive) designation.

Making the distinction between *apocalypse* and *eschaton* moves beyond a matter of se-

mantics; instead, it becomes an important maneuver to understand better the development of

apocalyptic thought over the course of the last century, especially as that mode of thought im-

pacts global consciousness to a greater extent. The myriad disasters that continue to affect coun-

tries around the world contribute to the fictional interest in how the world will end, and reflect

the rise in a strain of apocalyptic thinking that tends to discard the utopian consciousness imma-

nent to the original concept.[82] Demonstrative of this shift, apocalyptic writing adjusted "from

religious vision of the future to rational description of the present, from supernatural apocalypse

by divine power to secular transformation by science."[83] Apocalyptic literature in the twentieth

century began representing the looming catastrophic event or its actual happening, but never the

after that once followed, thereby producing a much more serious and somber look at the apoca-

lypse and changing people's interpretation of the term and concept.[84] Secular apocalyptic litera-

ture of the last two centuries almost solely focuses on violence, destruction, and the fear engen-

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urally turn to works that attempt to make sense of that chaos by looking towards a proposed end. *See Apocalyptic Transformations* (New York: Lexington Books, 2008), xi.

[82] Michael Barkun first developed the term *secular apocalypticism*, arguing, "The result in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been the rise of secular apocalypticism – belief systems that in every way are the functional equivalent of their religious predecessors, expressed in nonreligious idioms from which the supernatural has been purged." Yet, more than merely removing the apocalypse's religious elements, the secular apocalyptic tradition presents different belief systems, which reflect despair rather than hope. See "Politics and Apocalypticism" in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism: Volume 3*, ed. Stephen J. Stein (New York: Continuum, 1998), 446.

[83] Leigh, *Apocalyptic Patterns in Twentieth Century Fiction* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 13.

[84] Examples include Nevil Shute, *On the Beach* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010); Kurt Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* (New York: Delta Trade Paperbacks, 1998); Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow* (New York: Penguin, 2006); and Don DeLillo, *White Noise* (New York: Penguin, 1999).

dered by both in order to underscore the warning or corrective characteristic so central to the genre. This is not to suggest that all authors overlook *apocalypse*'s revelatory characteristic, but more often than not secular apocalyptic literature focuses on the threat posed by such an event.

The shift in secular apocalyptic thinking, as well as the attendant changes to apocalyptic literature and film, brought about a new understanding of mankind's role in the apocalypse. Mankind came to occupy the role once held by God or a deity figure within the apocalyptic tradition; however, rather than embodying destruction *and* creation (or threat and promise), mankind only represented and enacted destruction. Once world devastation became situated in the secular arena of mankind rather than the religious arena of God, the possibility of annihilation became much more real. Where earlier anxieties primarily revolved around natural disasters or widespread disease – events over which man arguably had limited control – the Industrial Revolution initiated the transition from a general sense of utopian-directed progress to crisis, which in turn produced fears concerning man's responsibility for the world's end.[85] That sense of crisis only grew between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when the use of mankind's creative possibility for destructive purposes not only produced humanist concerns about how people treated one another, but also suggested that humanity would be directly – inevitably – responsible for the world's end.[86] The end in apocalyptic literature and film, therefore, becomes a way to critique the means, and it's primarily for this reason that apocalypse works focus so exclusively on it. Apocalypse works' purpose differs from post-apocalypse works, because the former needs the

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[85] Sztompka contends, "[T]he concept of progress has been replaced by the concept of crisis as the letmotif (sic) of the twentieth century." See *The Sociology of Social Change,* 34.

[86] In fact, the initial hopeful undertone of the Enlightenment and the resulting project of modernity, which saw promise in science and reason, quickly turned sour when such discoveries were used for control, dominance, and power, particularly in WWII. Harvey clarifies, "…the Enlightenment project was doomed to turn against itself and transform the quest for human emancipation into a system of universal oppression in the name of human liberation." *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 13.

world's end or its threat to consume the vast majority of the narrative in order to effectively critique the behavior and actions which brought about the apocalyptic event.

In addition to mankind's increased responsibility for the end of the world, temporality took on greater focus in apocalypse works, especially considering how the latter often contributed to the former. In part, this arises through the contested nature of progress in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Progress concentrates on the time ahead because it denotes "directional movement" or a continual sense of "future-oriented" improvement, and so represents positive improvement for the most part.[87] Yet, apocalypse works view the temporality associated with progress and its devolution into crisis as a reason why the future heralds conclusion, as opposed to expectation.[88] Despite notions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that progress would lead to utopia – to a better world as a result of man's emphasis on rational and logical thinking – the nineteenth and twentieth centuries instead saw a transition to crisis, because progress either stagnated or indicated a darker side.[89] Although innovations marked much of the progress seen in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, those innovations were not always for the betterment of mankind. The speed with which things began to move did not permit adequate pause to consider the worth and the consequences of such inventions; rather than signifying improvement and advancement, progress in many ways came under the influence of mankind's hunger for power and control. As a result, temporality became a greater threat, which emerges as a common motif in apocalypse works produced in the early- to mid-twentieth century. Nevil Shute's *On the Beach*

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[87] Sztompka, *The Sociology of Social Change*, 34.

[88] Sztompka explains, "What is left is the uncertainty and unpredictability of the future seen as entirely contingent, open to change and random developments. This undermines the other premise of the idea of progress, orientation towards the future." *The Sociology of Social Change*, 34.

[89] In fact, critiquing progress serves as the one of the major themes in much apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic writing. For examples, see Stephen Benet's short story, "By the Waters of Babylon"; Kurt Vonnegut's novel *Galapagos*; and Paul Auster's novel *In the Country of Last Things*.

(1957) exemplifies the concern with crisis and mankind's role in initiating that crisis. Predominantly set in Melbourne, a city now "more in the style of 1890 then 1963," Shute posits the consequences to technological developments used for militaristic conquest.[90] Residents await nuclear fallout from a "short, bewildering war… that had flared all round the northern hemisphere and had died away with the last seismic record of explosion on the thirty-seventh day."[91] Shute's language describes the speed with which events took place, thereby speaking to the heightened sense of temporality and how time's end imposes a threat to humanity. The way in which the war "flared" refers to both the weapons used in this particular conflict as well as the particular haste exhibited in setting off the bombs. The novel distinguishes the pace and style of military planning utilized in WWII with the rapidity of the fictional nuclear war, since the use of nuclear weapons differentiates the war in *On the Beach* from previous military conflicts. In an age where time continues to move more rapidly while space shrinks, *On the Beach* suggests that progress vis-à-vis military actions has much greater and far-reaching consequences than ever before.

Those same questions regarding the changing nature of temporality also arose when it came to how people perceived and experienced memory. The imposition of a historical designation of time transformed what had once seemed like an inherent, inward chronology to a more constructed or imposed sense of temporality. Additionally, temporality's growing momentum in the early twentieth century further highlighted the "irremediable split in time" between the past

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[90] Shute, *On the Beach* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), 67. The country suffers from a petrol shortage, but electric plants still operate since the country was not physically affected by the bombs.

[91] Ibid.*,* 3-4. *On the Beach* distinguishes itself from other "nuclear war" or "atomic bomb" post-apocalypse works that concentrate on a populace immediately affected by the devastation. Instead, the novel focuses on those citizens in southern Australian awaiting the nuclear fallout from bombs dropped in the northern hemisphere, thereby unveiling an interesting psychological component to such works.

and the present, further stressing how people were forever severed from what had come before.[92]

Examining the emergence of the "spectacle" in the twentieth century, Guy Debord argues how changes in economic life have in turn created changes to social life, which results in a massive transformation to temporality. In *The Society of the Spectacle*, Debord explains:

> The pseudo-events which rush by in spectacular dramatizations *have not been lived* by those informed of them; moreover they are lost in the inflation of their hurried replacement at every throb of the spectacular machinery. […] This individual experience of separate daily life remains without language, without concept, without critical access to its own past which has been recorded nowhere. It is not communicated. *It is not understood and is forgotten* to the profit of the false spectacular memory of the unmemorable.[93]

"Pseudo-time," which individuals do not fully experience, produces problems in terms of how people grasp their lives in the present, as well as how memory maintains any kind of connection over the past. If events are not experienced because time moves too quickly for anyone to fully comprehend the present then memories of those events may become lost. Memories are, in part, representations of the past, because the lived experience differs from the event later recalled.[94] Yet, if individuals experience time differently as a result of capitalism's advancing stages, and in such a way that the original event "has not been lived," then their memories stand to be impacted to some degree. If individuals do not experience "pseudo-events" and are also unable to communicate them – to represent them creatively or otherwise – further issues arise, which get taken up and explored in post-apocalyptic literature and film, a point I will return to later. When communication comes under threat it serves to directly impact memory, based as it is on the communication of people within a specific social framework. Moreover, memory relies on repetition; if

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[92] Ibid., 23.

[93] *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black & Red, 1983), 157 (my emphasis).

[94] Memories are not simply representation, which suggests a level of stasis, but a lived experience (and re-experience).

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people cannot retain experiences to the extent they once did, it calls into question their ability to repeat these experiences with other members of their social groups.

The temporal changes taking place in the late twentieth century, including Debord's "pseudo-events," transform the way that social frameworks produce memory, and how individuals process that memory. *Time-space compression*, a term David Harvey coins and defines as "processes that so revolutionize the objective qualities of space and time that we are forced to alter, sometimes in quite radical ways, how we represent the world to ourselves," embodies these massive changes and also gives rise to forgetting.[95] Time-space compression has existed since the Enlightenment, but it isn't until modernity and on into postmodernity that significant changes in the experience of time and space fully emerge. Due in part to globalization, time-space compression denotes a remarkably smaller space across which politics, economics, and societies interact; Harvey explains, "As spatial barriers diminish so we become much more sensitized to what the world's spaces contain."[96] Open to the world in a way never before experienced, individuals are flooded with new cultures and interactions while simultaneously losing, in part, their grasp on their own space, be it local, regional, or national. This extends beyond more practical notions of space and includes memory space, a type of social space generated by social relations, which emphasize the shared experience of the past, be it through firsthand experience or generational connection. According to Harvey, "time and space…cannot be understood independently of social action," so it would follow that we experience changes in our social interactions and

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[95] Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 240.

[96] Ibid., 294. It is worth noting here that Massey complicates Harvey's concept of time-space compression, which assumes a specific subject position. She asks, "[T]o what extent does the currently popular characterization of time-space compression represent very much a western, colonizer's view? The sense of dislocation which some feel at the sight of a once well-known street now lined with a success of cultural imports…must have been felt for centuries, though from a very different point of view." *Space, Place, and Gender*, 147.

relations as well when we experience a change in time-space.[97] In other words, changes to time and space affect the way people interact with one another, which has subsequent effects on the memory space they produce. Time-space compression helps illuminate the increase in forgetting experienced in recent years, because as much as time-space compression would appear to open up the world in significant ways, the effects of time-space compression signify negative changes to the extent that they impact the way social groups interact with one another, as well as how they formulate and transmit memory. The effects of time-space compression can have "a disorienting and disruptive impact upon political-economic practices, the balance of class power, as well as upon cultural and social life."[98]

While the temporal changes involved in time-space compression remain relatively straightforward, the spatial changes appear to be far more complicated. Individuals become dislocated or alienated from their natural environment, because it shrinks. The outcome of accelerating time and shrinking space leads to a fascination with the new, seem primarily in the development of a "throwaway" culture; Harvey maintains, "In the realm of commodity production, the primary effect has been to emphasize the values and virtues of instantaneity…and disposability."[99] This emphasis on disposability extends to memories. The ease with which people "throw away values, lifestyles, stable relationships, and attachments to things, buildings, places, people" points to memory as yet another expendable item to be discarded.[100] Archives, museums, and memorials – all physical sites acting to staunch the flow of forgetting – are abundant nowadays, but they contribute to forgetting as much as they purport to stop it. These locales would seem to

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[97] Ibid., 223-225.

[98] Ibid., 284.

[99] Ibid., 286.

[100] Ibid.

suggest that people are interested in maintaining a connection to their past – both on a personal level and a larger, national level – and moving away from the disposability of culture. Yet, the "instantaneity" and "disposability" resulting from time-space compression instead demonstrates the ways in which memory does not get properly processed and "repeated," a necessary part of maintaining memory. People turn to external sites of memory because memory does not exist in social frameworks and subsequently the individual consciousness to the extent it once did. Instead of beginning as a result of social relations and being transferred to the individual for storage, organizations dedicated to the preservation of the past construct a more historical version that people can turn to in order to "remember." In many ways, museums and the like become the modern form of social frameworks, seeming to bolster memory and emphasize a connection with the past; however, places of memory turn a natural association with memory into consumable history. Consequently, people have a tendency to forget the past to a greater degree, because, as Debord notes, they do not first experience it properly, thereby altering the entire mnemonic process. People ground memory; they are natural memory spaces that promote a living connection with the past. If a memory is not properly experienced or even understood it cannot be later retrieved at will, recalled in the presence of others, and therefore shared with other people via the narrative forms memory traditionally takes.

As I discussed earlier, apocalyptic literature forgoes the spatial characteristic once inherent to the original myth in order to concentrate more extensively on the myth's temporal characteristics, thereby reflecting the important developments of the twentieth century. Due to the general sense of time's accelerating nature, along with the looming feeling that time's speed keeps people disconnected from their past to a greater extent, time takes on a greater focus, since it poses an overall threat to subjectivity and, through that, memory. Therefore, apocalypse litera-

ture both past and present reveals an underlying preoccupation with time at the thematic and linguistic level. Time takes center stage in the initial pages of Don DeLillo's 1987 apocalyptic novel *White Noise*, but it's an objective, measured time, bespeaking the sense of historical temporality that burdens the present. The diction repeatedly introduces temporal markers in order to convey an imposing cultural organization, thereby reflecting historical over natural time. Observing the arriving hoards of freshmen, Jack Gladney states, "The station wagons arrived at noon," later explaining how he's witnessed each new class arrive "every September for twenty-one years."[101] Like the hands of a clock marking time, the station wagons arrive at a specific moment, initiating the start of the fall semester; their place in time creates a temporal structure more in keeping with history than memory, organized as it is and revolving as it does around university life. Time is not the natural extension of subjective experience in Gladney's life, but something that comes from a larger source that affects – perhaps even dictates to a degree – how people experience temporality. Within *White Noise*, time doesn't seem like a natural extension of the self and so its threat becomes greater. Indeed, any natural reaction to the apocalyptic events that pepper the novel's pages only create confusion and even suspicion. It is only through authority that characters understand the events taking place around them; in this way, people rely upon the structures that larger, ideological social groups create, rather than what their own, personal social groups offer, thereby foreshadowing the kind of memory work that post-apocalypse works will eventually undertake.

As opposed to a more naturally experienced time, i.e. lived time, historical time imposes an outside social or political structure upon the mind and body that privileges objective over subjective comprehension. History becomes the temporal measurement constructed and maintained

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[101] Don DeLillo, *White Noise* (New York: Penguin, 1999), 3.

by ideological frameworks (in this case: the university system). Historical time subordinates mnemonic time and consequently memory appears more problematic, since it continuously falls prey to time's ebb-like disintegration. History, as the objective written account of the past, signifies a sturdier and therefore more dependable source. People rely more on history and its authoritative nature to comprehend the past, which DeLillo explores with *White Noise.* With history's privileged position, Gladney comes to prefer – indeed society as a whole in *White Noise* prefers – history over memory or authority over subjectivity. Arising primarily through the numerous objective yet authoritative sources that explain the befuddling events of the novel, history again and again signifies the ultimate means of comprehending the past. In one telling scene, Jack waits until the police give an official decree to evacuate their home after a train accident leads to a toxic spill. Although his children insist on leaving, Jack does not (indeed cannot) rely upon his senses to make the call and waits until he is ordered from his home. The authority figures in the novel lend time and experience the legitimate purpose and understanding that memory (or subjectivity) no longer seems capable of doing. Time's end, therefore, signals the ultimate threat because its demise undoes the ways by which people understand their world, themselves and, of course, their past.

Yet, important to note, is that history did not always refer to the objective explanation of the past it came to embody in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. History once referred to multiple stories and shared much in common with oral memories in that both sought to compile a shared understanding of the past through the act of telling. History eventually came to represent an "objective singular" approach to the past towards the end of the sixteenth century, one that took on an increasingly structured narrative form as historians and those in a position of intellec-

tual authority took on the task of explaining past events.[102] Reinhart Koselleck explains, "The step from a plurality of specific histories to a general and singular history is a semantic indicator of a new space of experience and a new horizon of expectation," wherein experience and expectation refer to the present and the future, respectively. Over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, history became indelibly linked to progress, which replaced spiritual expectations of the world's end by introducing new (secular) expectations linked to mankind's influence on the future, a future always forward-thinking. The future initially signaled a horizon against which man could continually make his mark; it wasn't until the destructive events of the twentieth century – namely WWI and WWII – that the connection between history, temporality, and progress began to transform into something far more foreboding than encouraging.

Signaling an impending end rather than continuation and possibility, the future posed an ominous threat, one taken up within apocalyptic works that discarded the revelatory feature once built into time and the necessary transition that takes place in the original myth. Time became important to such works in two ways: First, it posed a threat, i.e. the looming catastrophic event, and second, it came under threat, i.e. the end of time marked by that event. As an example of secular apocalypse literature, DeLillo's novel highlights the attention temporality receives when the spatial characteristic of the apocalypse genre – the after that necessarily follows – gets cast aside. Situated on the horizon and moving ever closer, the threat of destruction signifies a temporal, rather than a spatial, expectation, which gains greater speed as the event approaches actuality.[103] Since historical time becomes the means through which the past gets disseminated to the present, the threat of apocalypse primarily impacts that form, because the end of historical time

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[102] Ibid., 200.

[103] I am here indebted to Reinhart Koselleck's definition of expectation and experience with regard to space and time, respectively. See "Space of Experience and Horizon of Expectation" in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

in the secular apocalyptic literary tradition signals the end of Being. While it would seem that the end of memory would serve as the means that signals Being's end, since the two are so inter-twined at the level of subjectivity, history takes on greater importance because it serves as the dominant means of time and comprehension. When Jack's family flees to a nearby Red Cross shelter to escape an approaching toxic waste cloud, a man, acting as a modern-day apocalyptist, walks the barracks and shares his vision of the present moment. Speaking to the unifying sense of temporality (as a period or era) rather than spatiality (the town which the toxic cloud threat-ens), he says, "This is the most terrifying *time* of our lives. Everything we love and have worked for is under serious threat. […] The airborne toxic event is a horrifying thing. Our fear is enor-mous."[104] Here the "airborne toxic event" represents temporality's dual nature within apocalyptic literature: both as a threat stemming *from* time, as well as a threat *to* time. The apocalypticist's confession, "This is the most terrifying time of our lives," conveys a larger sense of community than the town threatened by the toxic cloud; temporality in this instance serves to encompass the United States and even the global world, for the impending sense of doom perpetuated by the toxic event affects more than Gladney's town and extends to a world-wide sense of annihilation.

In addition to encompassing two different kinds of problems when it comes to the threat of and to time, the end of time – the apocalypse – also threatens individuals in two ways: termi-nating any possibility of Becoming, as well as annihilating Being. By removing the possibility of becoming, individuals reach a place of stasis and therefore death.[105] The concept of the apoca-

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[104] DeLillo, *White Noise*, 155 (emphasis mine).

[105] Freese notes how many postmodern authors used entropy as a metaphor for humanity, and came to associate entropy with the ultimate apocalyptic event: "This re-accentuation of the Second Law explains why form the fifties onward ever more writers began to employ it as an appropriate paradigm of the hu-man condition, because now their very craft assumed the additional dignity of being the most effective antidote against the running down of the universe." In "From the Apocalyptic to the Entropic End: From Hope to Despair to New Hope?", 344.

lypse in the twentieth century fails to achieve a new space (world, consciousness, or otherwise) of renewal and rebirth because the end of temporality eliminates any possibility of new space. If time fails to yield a future then no future space can arise. Yet, the revelation inherent to the original apocalyptic myth does not disappear entirely; instead, it has been repurposed within post-apocalypse works, which concentrate primarily on the time *and* space following an apocalyptic event. Post-apocalypse works encompass the rebirth once promised by God but now enacted by humanity; rather than exuding the hope that attends such a promise, such works use their respective razed settings to advance an exploration concerning the social nature of memory, and how the way that people now engage their past actually promotes forgetting.[106] The post-apocalypse genre does not cast time by the wayside, but it becomes far less important since the genre emphasizes new spaces and places in the wake of the apocalypse.

Within post-apocalypse works, temporality no longer carries the substance it once did without the historical and social structures to organize and interpret it. In Margaret Atwood's novel *Oryx and Crake* (2003), the character believed to be the last human alive, Jimmy, wears a watch more for symbolism than any practical reason, since it has long since stopped working. He admits, "It causes a jolt of terror to run through him, this absence of official time. Nobody nowhere knows what time it is."[107] The double negative in the narrator's language, "Nobody nowhere," implies that everyone knows what time it is; yet, since Jimmy exists as the last human on earth (insofar as readers know), his solitary presence signifies time's absence. Similarly, in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, the narrator explains, "The clocks stopped at 1:17," but this knowledge does not convey any significance, because what exactly caused their suspension re-

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[106] The apocalyptic myth promised to punish the wicked while rewarding the good, and so embodied a strong element of hope.

[107] Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* (New York: Nan A. Talese, 2003), 3.

mains unclear for the novel's duration.[108] Without the historical and social context with which to convey and comprehend time, time's meaning ceases to carry the importance it once did before the apocalyptic event. Time becomes intrinsically linked to the social frameworks that impart specific meaning on time; without those frameworks, or when new frameworks arise in their place, time's meaning shifts and doesn't communicate the same information it once did before the apocalyptic event. Within *I Am Legend* (2007), Will Smith must pay attention to the movement of the sun rather than to any notion of time measured and delineated by clocks, because with the sun's setting comes the vampiric creatures that threaten his very existence. Those creatures pay no attention to historical time, which has disappeared in the wake of the biological apocalyptic event that takes place in the film. Both those creatures and Smith must rely on a more natural sense of time in their post-apocalyptic world. As a result, lived time reasserts itself as the dominant means of experience.

Angela Carter's novel *Heroes and Villains* (1969) goes beyond the more traditional move to upend historical time by eradicating all sense of time. The young protagonist Marianne remarks how "she never felt that time was passing for time was frozen around her in this secluded place where a pastoral quiet possessed everything and the busy clock carved the hours into sculptures of ice."[109] Time exhibits a "frozen" quality for Marianne, who was born after the apocalyptic event and doesn't understand what time once measured and why. In fact, within *Heroes and Villains*, time produces madness, especially for those aging members of Marianne's agrarian community. Within the new communities that have arisen in the wake of the mysterious calamitous event, people take on designations that embody their physical position in the community:

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[108] Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (New York: Vintage International, 2006), 52.

[109] *Heroes and Villains* (New York: Penguin Books, 1969), 1.

Professor, Soldier, and Worker. Outside of the community, the people who do not conform to new social designations and instead insist on surviving on their own, more primitive measures come to be known as Barbarians by community members. For the community, time poses problems as members grow older, especially those members involved in more intellectual pursuits. Professors and Workers alike tend to go mad and commit suicide, because time manifests threatening properties similar to life before the event. The narrator explains, "Suicide was not uncommon among Workers and Professors when they reached a certain age and felt the approach of senility and loss of wits, though it was unknown among the Soldiers, who learned discipline."[110] Those members who age feel time's weight to a greater degree than the Soldiers who by adhering to a more physical lifestyle do not focus on the way time threatens their mental capacity because they are too busy. The Barbarians as well do not fall prey to time because they engage with it on a more natural level. The Barbarians' leader, Jewel, explains to Marianne, "You don't usually get the time; you need a bit of leisure to go properly mad," suggesting that madness stems from mental awareness about time's passage.[111] Those focused on survival – a task that arguably consumes all sense of time – do not go mad because they are not aware of time's passage like those in the community, and they do not fall prey to historical time's isolating effects. Surviving, in this instance, staves off madness because those consumed with staying alive – with the physicality of life – are too busy to recognize time's impending threat, especially as that threat pertains directly to mental acuity. Historical time specifically, *Heroes and Villains* suggests, creates a problematic relationship with the past that alters more natural, lived time.

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[110] Ibid., 9.

[111] Ibid., 27.

In the absence of historical time, a more subjective experience of time emerges and with it comes an explanation of the past that arises through memory, thereby furthering the connection between memory and post-apocalyptic subject matter. The sheer popularity of the post-apocalypse and memory indicates an underlying connection that has until now been overlooked. Rather than existing as mutually exclusive subjects, the post-apocalypse and memory are integral topics to better understanding each other, since each addresses the threat memory issues impose upon subjectivity. Memory involves a destructive/creative process similar to the very binary found in the apocalyptic tradition, since each act of remembering involves a selective process that overlooks other memories.[112] It is not that by remembering one event a person automatically forgets another, but rather that the brain does not (indeed cannot) store every memory, since the past's sheer volume would overwhelm the mind. Instead, the human memory system selects and stores memory and, with each occasion of remembrance, edits and reconstructs memory, thereby enacting a process that is at once destructive and creative, mirroring in many ways the aims of the apocalyptic myth. The split between time and space seen in apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic thinking also mirrors how memory was once associated primarily with time but has since come to share interesting connections with social space. That post-apocalypse works functions as an ideal mode for the investigation of memory comes about, in part, because of the relationship each shares with social space.

The Spatial Nature of the Post-Apocalypse

Post-apocalypse works begin in the wake of the calamitous event and therefore under-score the importance of space by concentrating closely on setting. Less important, they suggest,

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[112] Bernard Armada explains, remembering entails "the simultaneous processes of creation and destruc-tion." See "Memory's Execution" in *Places of Public Memory*, eds. Carole Blair, et al. (Tuscaloosa: Uni-versity of Alabama Press, 2011), 216.

is the event that destroyed the world and the impending threat temporality posed as a result of that event; instead, the setting plays an integral role because it serves to reveal the kind of life and humanity that arises, thereby emphasizing the importance of social space. Within post-apocalypse works, space takes on greater importance because temporality no longer delineates civilization through historical significance; instead, people gain their sense of subjectivity and meaning from the social spaces they create and inhabit. Speaking to space's importance when it comes to subjectivity, *Heroes and Villains* presents a wide variety of people that emerge in the wake of civilization's end; Marianne's father explains the distinction between the old and new world:

> [E]veryone alive was interlinked, though some more loosely meshed into the pattern than others. Now it has all separated out; there are genuses of men, not simply *Homo faber* any more. Now there is *Homo faber*, to which genus we belong ourselves; but also *Homo praedatrix*, *Homo silvestris* and various others.[113]

Since space operates as a predominantly social phenomenon, in that it is produced through social relations, it directly affects how people gain their sense of subjectivity. Within *Heroes and Villains*, new categories arise in the mysterious event's wake and by ascribing themselves to a particular category characters come to better understand who they are. In addition to the Professors and Workers that comprise Marianne's community and embody the *homo faber* attributes, exist the Barbarians, who are "a perfect illustration of the breakdown of social interaction and the death of social systems" and, even farther down the chain, the Out People, a deformed type of people who occupy the outer edge and use the most primitive means to survive.[114]

In *Heroes and Villains*, the divisions between people inside and outside of Marianne's community better illustrate the role space and place play when it comes to memory, since each

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[113] Carter, *Heroes and Villains*, 9.

[114] Ibid., 24.

classification occupies and interacts within their particular social framework(s). Social interaction generates social space and that kind of space in turn becomes an area that defines those very social relations. As de Certeau suggests, "space is practiced place," in which movement, traversal, and social relations that occur in certain bounded sites produce space.[115] The civilized people (Professors, Workers, and Soldiers) as a whole encapsulate themselves in a community fenced off from the vast wilderness peopled by Barbarians, Out People, and threatening animals, such as wolves and lions, descendants of former zoo animals. In this way, the civilized people actually occupy a more restrictive form of social space; their social interactions share more in common with de Certeau's theory of place, which he defines as "an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability," since their agrarian community is stable, delineated as it is by wire fence.[116] So, even though within the overarching place that defines them as civilized people, those same occupants take on more nuanced designations because of their particular social interactions that occur within space. The Barbarians, on the other hand, inhabit space solely, because they constantly move from locale to locale in order to discover new sites with potential supplies necessary to survival. The separation between groups serves to divide memory; where before it was "interlinked," and so a natural extension of social interactions amongst different groups, it has become limited to each group within Marianne's world, since groups rarely interact the way they once did. Removed from specific social frameworks, characters' memories fail, thereby revealing the social nature of both memory and space. What becomes clear in the revelatory after so central to post-apocalypse works is memory's collective nature and its dependence on the very social frameworks that constitute it. Without these social

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[115] *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 117. For de Certeau, the boundary between space and place is by no means a concrete one, since the two concepts "constantly transform" into one another.

[116] Ibid.

frameworks – without the continual interaction of people in specific groups – memory fails and forgetting occurs, suggesting a unique reason behind the rise in forgetting in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, post-apocalypse works predominantly critique the changing nature of memory by imagining spaces that problematize the concept and experience of memory. Oftentimes, the absence of other people in such works underscores how important people are to forming and perpetuating memory. Many texts evoke a grim tone in order to convey memory's dimming, as with Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road* (2006), which opens with a description of the world that signals a slow fade into obliteration rather than the initial stages of regeneration: "Nights dark beyond darkness and the days more gray each one than what had gone before. Like the onset of some cold glaucoma dimming away the world."[117] McCarthy reworks the theme of vision bound up in the apocalyptic tradition; punctuating the sentence with terms like "darkness," "gray," "glaucoma" and "dimming," he expresses the visionary demise that follows mankind's destructive actions, rather than the revitalization. In an interesting connection between the individual and social space, the unnamed protagonist at the center of McCarthy's novel embodies and reflects the social space of the new world, because as it dies, so, too, does he. Although places, i.e. buildings and physical sites have been demolished, it is the absence of space – so bound to social interactions – that razes body and mind. The connection between person and social space becomes integral in the post-apocalypse genre; with the destruction of both to some degree, it becomes clear how much they produce and sustain one another. The man and his son maintain a fragile social framework, but given the harsh circumstances of the new world – starvation and the cannibalism it induces – their interactions with oth-

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[117] McCarthy, *The Road*, 3.

er survivors are limited and oftentimes dangerous. Without these connections, however, the man's memory of the past suffers and it becomes clear how important others are to maintaining memory.

The lack of traditional social space emphasizes memory's absence, connected as it is to specific social frameworks. As a result, post-apocalypse works join the growing number of scientific and creative work produced each year on memory and contribute in unique cultural ways to such memory work. Rather than exploring how memory functions by linking characters' memories to a shared and therefore recognizable past for readers, these works exist as futuristic memory works, wherein characters' memories of the past exist as readers' possible future. Post-apocalypse works pay particular attention to the relationship between time, space, and memory by presenting de-temporalized, razed places absent in many ways of social space in order to underscore how changes to time *and* space over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have impacted subjectivity, especially when it comes to memory.[118] Although post-apocalypse works take memory loss to the extreme by imagining a future disconnected in some way from present day temporal and spatial frameworks that serve to position and stabilize memory, they do so in order to explore how the redefinition and/or annihilation of social spaces causes annihilation of social memory, since social memory relies heavily on social frameworks. They also posit the growing connection people have to geographical places (museums, memorials, or other geographical designations like home), and how memory stored within such places cannot survive without social frameworks to sustain them.

Without the utopian world promised within religious apocalyptic myths, the imagined after within post-apocalyptic literature and film instead introduces a critique regarding present-day

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[118] These works alter specific sites (places), as well as more general notions of space. It is important not to conflate the two concepts, but equally important to recognize that post-apocalypse works deal with both types in a similar manner.

behavior by situating the outcome of that behavior in a familiar/unfamiliar futuristic setting. The post-apocalypse defamiliarizes the contemporary world so that audiences encounter both their world and not their world. With each catastrophe, the world becomes strange once more and people must navigate their way out of that strangeness in the same way that characters must, a point I will return to later in this chapter. In many ways, this binary mirrors the generic characteristic of *cognitive estrangement* first advanced by Darko Suvin, and readily found in most science fiction. *Cognitive estrangement* refers "to the creation of an alternative fictional world that, by refusing to take our own mundane environment for granted, implicitly or explicitly performs an estranging critical interrogation of the latter," while simultaneously "account[ing] rationally for its imagined world and for the connections as well as the disconnections of the latter to our own empirical world."[119] By presenting a setting grounded in familiar reality yet vastly different from that reality, post-apocalypse works provide the necessary critical lens through which to fully comprehend the particular issue at the heart of each narrative's critique. In other words, the familiar/unfamiliar duality deconstructs readers' perception of the world, enabling them to better comprehend the world they actually inhabit.[120] As a cultural form embedded in social codes that revolve around genres, motifs, and tropes, literature invites comparison with the real world, and the imagined spaces of post-apocalyptic literature are no different. Margaret Atwood's post-apocalyptic novel, *Oryx and Crake,* serves as a prime example of how the setting evokes a sense of the familiar and unfamiliar. The novel opens upon a beach, but instead of an idyllic space,

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[119] Carl Freedman, *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 16-17.

[120] William Sheick explains, "This deconstructive experience of crisis is necessary before reconstructive thought can begin." See "Post-Nuclear Holocaust Re-Minding" in *The Nightmare Considered*, ed. Nancy Anisfield (New York: Popular Press, 1991), 72.

readers confront an ominous setting that fails to convey the tranquility normally associated with the seaside:

> On the eastern horizon there's a greyish haze, lit now with a rosy, deadly glow. Strange how that colour still seems tender. The offshore towers stand out in dark silhouette against it, rising improbably out of the pink and pale blue of the lagoon. The shrieks of the birds that nest out there and the distant ocean grinding against the ersatz reefs of rusted car parts and jumbled bricks and assorted rubble sound almost like holiday traffic.[121]

Although the "greyish haze" looming on the horizon might readily represent pollution, the description "rosy, deadly glow" that immediately follows signifies something far more menacing. The color might evoke "tender" feelings in the narrator, but the use of the word "seems" implies that it has lost the meaning once associated with it and taken on more ominous properties in the new world. Nature, too, becomes threatening and even toxic, since birds "shriek" and the ocean "grind[s]"; instead of rolling against a natural landscape of sand and reef, the ocean comes against "rusted car parts and jumbled bricks," suggesting some larger disaster has occurred. Readers are therefore presented with a landscape that evokes familiarity while seeming uncanny, because some destructive force has altered the meaning and understanding of "beach."

The balance between familiar and unfamiliar remains a necessary component to post-apocalypse works. Unlike apocalypse works, which tend to take place in the present (rather than the future) and in a recognizable, mimetic world, post-apocalypse works must look to the future in order to fully convey their critique. If that future seems too bizarre or removed from readers' present world then the form fails to achieve its warning. In other words, if a novel strays too far from reality it tends to inhabit the genres of fantasy or science fiction, which still operate within the bounds of known social codes but more often than not present strange worlds with new social parameters and meaning. The 2007 Will Smith blockbuster *I Am Legend* achieves the necessary

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[121] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 3.

balance; set in a futuristic New York, Smith navigates parts of the city that would be familiar to viewers who live in or have visited it. In the opening sequence, the camera pans over architectural icon after icon but, despite their familiarity, this is not the same New York City with which viewers are familiar. A wide shot of the Flatiron Building reveals the abandoned streets, and deteriorating nature of the buildings; the typical (and familiar) hustle and bustle of the city remains absent. The shots evoke a strangeness and unfamiliarity that only becomes compounded when Smith enters the scene, driving a Ford Mustang – produce placement par excellence – and enacting the part of the wild stallion by "galloping" across the city's ruins. His traversal provokes a greater sense that something terrible has taken place. Ideally, the familiar/unfamiliar balance creates a literature of vision or what Katherine Hume terms an "augmented world," wherein readers are encouraged to make comparisons between the world presented on the page and the one they inhabit.[122] Paradoxically, the setting exists as readers' futures, whereas for characters it represents the past. What remains unknown or confusing about the past for characters actually comes across quite clearly for readers who understand references, contexts and meaning, and therefore can better internalize post-apocalypse works' critiques. The point behind establishing a familiar/unfamiliar tone in post-apocalypse works revolves around the critique each presents. Many apocalypse works use the ends to critique the means in order to show the devastating consequences of man's actions; however, post-apocalypse works go one step further by imagining what a world so terrifically altered from readers' or viewers' own teaches them.[123] Faced with

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[122] *Fantasy and Mimesis* (New York: Methuen, 1984), 84. Hume goes on to explain how literature of vision "invite[s] conscious comparison of our own vision of reality with that which we confront in the stories."

[123] Michael Dorris and Louise Erdrich find, "[T]he blighted future becomes for some writers almost an actual place, a shadowland that exists an instant away, a wretched but intriguing playground for the literary and semantic imagination." See "The Days After Tomorrow: Novelists at Armaggedon" in *The Nightmare Considered*, ed. Nancy Anisfield (New York: Popular Press, 1991), 54.

the ruins of civilization, readers come frighteningly close to the Lacanian Real, since each Event reveals the void existent behind mankind's ideologies but, more importantly, it reveals what happens to memory without people. In both *Oryx and Crake*, as well as *I Am Legend*, the infrastructure itself has not entirely collapsed; characters could peruse history books, visit museums, and engage with their past, but as both works suggest, these interactions would not yield the kind of connection to the past social interaction would. Therefore, besides denoting the rebirth intrinsic to the apocalyptic myth, the *post* in *post-apocalypse* criticizes those developments that threaten to undermine humanity by taking that threat past the point of occurrence.

As I mentioned earlier, post-apocalypse works do not signal a full return to the before/after dichotomy at the heart of the original apocalypse concept. They do, however, utilize the revelatory nature of the apocalypse's *after* in order to reposition the crucial spatial element to the apocalypse genre, and in doing so make important critical moves regarding memory in the last century. Despite the fact that *Heroes and Villains* introduces several different communities that have arisen in the wake of the apocalyptic event in which people create and retain memories formed within those environments, no memories exist of the time before except through documents and objects. These cultural objects fail to convey any meaning, though, removed as they are from their original frame. Operating as external memory, the documents, artifacts and other cultural works that the futuristic community retain fail without the original social framework to assist in the process of passing down the important information bound to the objects. In this way, external memory aids in memory insofar as it remains directly associated with a social framework that also contributes to the act of remembering. Once social frameworks place the burden of memory entirely only sites or objects of external memory, forgetting takes place.

As with many other post-apocalypse works, readers gain no explanation concerning what brought about the utter destruction they encounter in *Heroes and Villains*, because a gap appears to exist between collective memory before and after the event. Less important is the cause behind the end of the world, since post-apocalypse works concentrate on the important connection between memory and social space through the futuristic setting. The gap that exists between *then* and *now* leaves no memory behind except histories (which quickly become myths) and facts passed down in the texts and articles found. Certain members of the agrarian community in *Heroes and Villains* have been charged with the task of deciphering and maintaining what scraps of the past can be found. Marianne's father dedicates his life to "reconstruct[ing] the past."[124] He does so by pouring over books and past records in order to extract and therefore preserve meaning, but removed from its former context, language doesn't convey quite the same signification. Such a task does not yield useful knowledge, because without the proper context or necessary social frameworks, the remnants of the past only serve to confuse; the language of the past (passed down through memory, history and myth) does not convey any pertinent meaning.[125] Marianne's father encourages her intellectual pursuit; however, she finds "the dictionaries contained innumerable incomprehensible words she could only define through their use in [her father's] other books, for these words had ceased to describe facts and now stood only for ideas or memories."[126] Without the proper social framework, words no longer signify what they once did. Moving from the concrete concept of facts to the vagueness of "ideas or memories" suggests that the already fluid relationship between signifier and signified has dissolved because of a lack of

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[124] Carter, *Heroes and Villains*, 8.

[125] Halbwachs contends, "[V]erbal conventions constitute what is at the same time the most elementary and the most stable framework of collective memory." See *On Collective Memory*, 45.

[126] Ibid., 7.

signifieds. Without the objects to help articulate each word's meaning, the words themselves contain no meaning. It is interesting that Carter chooses the term "memories" to describe the growing indeterminacy surrounding language and meaning, since Marianne has no memories of the time before her current existence. While her father shares explanations, these do not carry the weight they once did, removed as they are from their original *cadres sociaux*

As unique additions to contemporary fictional and non-fictional memory work, post-apocalyptic literature and film complicate people's understanding of how memory operates by investigating the important social components that constitute memory. Positioning their narratives in the future, where the absence of social space or its alteration takes center stage, these works achieve new insight into memory's social nature. Without people and without the important social frameworks to not only interpret but first pass down memories bound to external sites or objects, memory fails. Therefore, in increasingly nuanced ways, post-apocalypse works continually return to memory and space in ways other works do not, because the particular generic features, as well as importance social space plays, emphasize what cognitive scholarship continually overlooks in recent years: that changes to temporality and space play an important role to the changes of memory. As the next chapters will explore, post-apocalyptic novels, graphic novels, and films each undertake specific types of memory work that probe, posit, and problematize the relationship between space and memory, as well as place and memory in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

CHAPTER TWO
From Sociality to Externality: The Changing Nature of Memory

"What makes…memories hang together is not that they are contiguous in time: it is rather than they are part of a totality of thoughts common to a group, the group of people with whom we have a relation at this moment, or with whom we have had a relation on the preceding day or days."
- Maurice Halbwachs

"Modern memory is, above all, archival. It relies entirely on the materiality of the recording, the visibility of the image."
- Pierre Nora

The imagined after of the post-apocalypse has long been an ideal space to investigate the contested and changing experience of memory in the twentieth century. The flurry of American films set in a post-apocalyptic future produced during the 1980s and 1990s positioned memory as a central thematic concern in their often-technologically advanced yet dystopian futures. In doing so, these films spoke to a looming unease about the supposed progress of the U.S., thereby partially reflecting a major trope seen in many apocalypse works. More tellingly, though, they reflected the challenges people faced when it came to remembering their past, and the anxiety surrounding those challenges. Films such as *Blade Runner* and *Total Recall* examine memory in light of identity and subjectivity, which arguably suggests a more individual approach to memory. Andreas Huyssen and Alison Landsberg separately note how *Blade Runner* raises questions about memory's future by questioning whether memory exists as "the locus of humanity," and examining the relationship memory shares with identity.[127] Do memories make people human? Do memories have a rightful owner? Or do "implanted memories have the capacity to alter iden-

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[127] *Prosthetic Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 35. Andreas Huyssen's work attests to the intersection of memory and apocalyptic thinking, writing, "The catastrophes haunting Los Angeles, that postmodern metropolis par excellence, and the fictional worlds of cutting-edge sci-fi films such as *Blade Runner* or *Total Recall* suggest more about the ways American culture imagines its future and deploys its memories than political projections about a new world order or a partnership for peace." See *Twilight Memories* (London: Routledge, 1995), 2.

tity and to challenge the privileging of biology?"[128] Post-apocalyptic film and literature provide a significant space to work through mnemonic questions at a time when memory began to seem more like an acquired image of the past stored in a person's memory bank, rather than a natural connection to the past. For Rachel, an android or Replicant, her belief regarding her humanness stems predominantly from the fact that she remembers her past. Memories in this instance create and sustain identity, but more importantly they become the mark for what delineates human; the loss of memory necessarily occasions the loss of identity and threatens a person's subjectivity.

The identity politics that surfaced within academia towards the end of the twentieth century impacted the burgeoning scholarly interest in memory; cognitive studies emerged when the interest in *identity* as a concept and *identity politics* as an ideology reached its height in the 1980s. Although "[i]dentity is part of memory discourse," which posits that because memory feeds into identity it is an individual phenomenon, social frameworks, too, influence the individual's sense of identity, constructing it in large part by way of a person's social interactions and movement between and among their respective frameworks.[129] In other words, social frameworks create a structure that affects the individual at the level of their memory, as well as their identity. The individual's mind functions as a locus for many different forms of social memory; according to Halbwachs, individual memory does not originate from the psyche but emerges from the coming together of multiple social memories, which removes the oppressive burden of the past from people, and shifts the impetus of remembering and forgetting to the collective, thereby creating a more dynamic model of recollection. If memories are intrinsically social phenomena and memory contributes to identity then identity is in part constructed out of the social contexts the

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128 Ibid., 35.

129 Kerwin Lee Klein, "On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse" in *Representations*. 69. (Winter 2000): 143.

individual inhabits and which contribute to their memories. Post-apocalypse works follow this line of thinking by suggesting how memory functions as an output of social relations, binding groups together across divergent times and spaces. Memories arise from the group before becoming housed within the individual, thereby demonstrating how memory is a subjectively experienced social process, and the role that people play in constructing one another's sense of identity. "[W]ithout other humans, an individual is denied access not only to such obviously social phenomena as language and customs, but also…to his or her own memory," because people, and the groups from which they emerge, structure memory, demonstrating how memory is simultaneously a biological function and a social process.[130] People's individual memories (their individuality as people) stem from their taking part in multiple groups; Constantina Papoulias clarifies this point, explaining, "Thus the particularity of memory is an effect of the coming together of several vocabularies of experience within each individual," which create an individual's unique memory.[131] In other words, no two people are alike, because no two people are members of the exact same groups; one person's memories will differ from another's simply because each belongs to different groups even if they share some groups in common.

Within *Blade Runner*, memory, divorced from any social framework, becomes a product anyone can acquire, even those not directly associated with the event being remembered. Therefore, even while these films seemingly focus on memory as an individual phenomenon by way of questions regarding identity and subjectivity, they couch their critique within the greater frame of social memory. Any discussion of memory and identity must also incorporate the social frameworks that factor into both. As Rachel begins to discover, her "memories" have been implanted

[130] Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture*, trans. Sara Young (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 15.

[131] "From the Agora to the Junkyard: Social memory and psychic materialities," in *Memory Cultures*, ed. Susannah Radstone and Katharine Hodgkin (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2010), 116.

in her; since they are not organically "hers," she begins to question not only her identity but also her humanness. Memory becomes immensely valuable and sentient non-human beings go to great lengths to procure "fake" memories so that they can integrate into society. In other words, memories become the means to belong. Memory here delineates members of a group, and while the individual members may not recall the event in the same way (therefore reinforcing their individuality), they will share memories of the event itself. Therefore, in addition to questions of identity and subjectivity when it comes to memory, these films also suggest how easily memory can be shared between people, calling attention to memory's underlying social characteristics. That kind of sharing becomes problematic within the films' post-apocalyptic worlds, complicating who has a right to memory. If someone does not originally experience an event firsthand then can they later say they "remember" it by way of their interaction with a variety of cultural forms?[132] These questions actually emerge later in cognitive scholarship when scholars question the nature of intergenerational remembering or memories of an event that one did not experience but one's family member (grandmother, great-grandmother) did.

The connections between the development of the post-apocalypse genre and the rising interest in memory remain unexplored at the scholarly level, but they are worth examining since both speak to each other in productive ways. Post-apocalyptic literature and film address the immense changes to memory in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries by imagining memory's end thanks to the complete alteration or at-times disappearance of societal structures, social spaces, and places. In recent years, memory has shifted from the external but social space of groups to the external space of museums, archives and memorials. As Pierre Nora contends, "memory has been torn" so that it now exists in more static locations that do not permit the indi-

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[132] Landberg's *Prosthetic Memory* addresses such questions, claiming that cultural works, such as films, literature, etc., function as "prosthetic" memory, thereby undoing questions of memory ownership.

vidual to engage with the past by way of the group.[133] Memory is now also stored in sites dedi-

cated to memory or *lieux de memoire* so the past emerges through an interface between individu-

al and exhibit, artifact, or object (including buildings themselves). Rather than existing within a

non-institutionalized social framework, people now "deliberately create archives, maintain anni-

versaries [and] organize celebrations…because such activities no longer occur naturally."[134] Ex-

ternal memory removes the necessary social framework by grounding memory in static locations

whose narrative of the past tends to derive from a particular rhetorical stance rather than the mul-

tiple voices that comprise social frameworks.[135] Museums can be multi-vocal, for, since the rise

of postmodernism, exhibits have done well in breaking free of presenting a master narrative of

the past; however, museums function predominantly as spectacle that stabilizes memory through

objects and specific narratives of the past that fail to take into account memory's revisionary na-

ture.[136] Memory depends upon the interaction of social frameworks, places, and objects in order

to survive the ravages of time; the removal of any one of these necessary components alters the

way that people remember their past and threatens memory's loss.

Attuned to the questions of memory at many different levels, but focused more exclusive-

ly on social memory and the problems that arise when memory exists exclusively in places and

objects, post-apocalypse works function as the ideal fictional space to comprehend memory in

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[133] "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," in *Representations*. 26. (Spring 1989): 1.

[134] Ibid., 12.

[135] As I've noted above, social memory is external but for the purposes of this project *external memory* denotes memory's location in museums and other mnemonic sites as opposed to memory situated in the group.

[136] Huyssen contends, "The museum itself has ben sucked into the maelstrom of modernization: museum shows are managed and advertised as major spectacles with calculable benefits for sponsors, organizers, and city budgets, and the claim to fame of any major metropolis will depend considerably on the attractiveness of its museal sites." See *Twilight Memories*, 21.

recent years. Post-apocalypse works stage a response to the seeming alteration or disappearance of memory in the twentieth century, and in doing so they shape the conversation about the future of memory.[137] Post-apocalyptic literature and film produce a unique fictional space, which thinks through how memory exists externally to a greater degree and the kinds of problems that arise because of that external relationship, especially when the physical sites (both buildings and people) memory has come to depend upon dramatically shift or disappear altogether. Additionally, post-apocalypse works introduce readers to places that no longer elicit geographical signification in order to examine the consequences of shifting memory to sites outside *les cadres sociaux*. In this way, they look beyond the common understanding of memory as a subjective experience and concentrate more exclusively on its sociality. By no means do these cultural works suggest that individuals do not have their own memories, but rather they examine how memory functions as a sociological phenomenon experienced subjectively. Post-apocalypse works carry on the collective memory work of Maurice Halbwachs through narrative form, which operates as a productive space to examine memory, functioning as it does as kind of narrative about the past.

Literary Memory-Narratives

One of the ways in which memory's sociality becomes immensely clear is through the narrative form that memory often takes. Memory depends upon the interaction between social frameworks, places, and objects (or media) in order to produce a narrative about the past. Social frameworks particularly construct memory into language, and in doing so produces memory-

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[137] Erll aligns memory and literature as two similar, selective processes, which include and exclude certain aspects of an event. He states, "The selected elements must be formed in a particular manner to become an object of memory. Such formative processes can be detected in many media and practices of memory; they are also – and in fact primarily – found in literature." See *Memory in Culture*, 145.

narratives that are innately social and therefore transmittable.[138] Places and objects serve as tangible sites or things that bolster memory across time; they are effectively the "reminder" Plato depicts in *Phaedrus* when it came to writing as a problematic mnemonic extension. Places and objects contribute to and augment memory-narratives, but they do not produce them since such an act requires social relations, which transfer experience into language. Being that language comprises a symbolic order that depends upon signification in which a shared structure of knowledge becomes necessary, its social properties contribute to memory's social nature. "Prior to signifying something, [language] signifies to someone," and this relationship frames memory through language, i.e. memory-narratives, as a social construction that can be continuously exchanged across differing times and spaces.[139] Memory-narratives pertain to a lived reality and so revolve largely around attempting to clarify the actuality of the past; however, since memory conforms to narrative structures in order to be communicated, elements of storytelling emerge and either hyperbolize, overshadow, or alter to some extent the recollected event through the act of telling. Memory-narratives continuously reveal that accessing the past does not necessarily entail accessing the truth of that past.[140] What materializes through memory-narratives does not conform easily to the definition of truth as an objective fact. As Jay Winter asserts, "Memory is history seen through affect," but while affect adds to the narrative of the past being constructed

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[138] I am indebted to Aleida Assman's work on collective memory: "By encoding [memories] in the common medium of language, they can be exchanged, shared, corroborated, confirmed, corrected, disputed – and, last but not least, written down, which preserves them and makes them potentially accessible to those who do not live within spatial and temporal reach." Aleida Assman, "Re-framing memory: Between individual and collective forms of constructing the past" in *Performing the Past: Memory, History and Identity in Modern Europe*, ed. Karen Tilmans et al (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 36.

[139] Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 66.

[140] I am here indebted to Lacan's work on truth in psychology, in which he argues, "[T]ruth is a value that (cor)responds to the uncertainty with which man's lived experience is phenomenologically marked." *Ecrits*, 63.

by social frameworks, it also stands to warp memory.[141] Memory embraces such fractures, though, since its very nature revolves around the unkempt, loose ends of the past; indeed, as Richard Terdiman notes, "Incongruity is the name of the mnemonic."[142] Inasmuch as social frameworks attempt to produce neat, coherent memory-narratives, their very acts of telling, re-telling, and by way of both acts revising, reinscribe memory's imperfect form, because memory is never stable.

Literature and film become ideal narrative spaces to take on memory work, because each serves as a form that reflects memory while simultaneously functioning as memory. In a cultural sense, literature and film stand in as the third component to memory: objects. In addition to so-cial frameworks which translate subjective memories into language and subsequently shared nar-ratives, objects transmit the past, bolstering memory-narratives by signifying about the past in a more tangible way. Books, movies, and other media forms aid social frameworks in transmitting the past from generation to generation, and reimagining that past in creative ways that draw upon memory. Astrid Erll finds that media shape the way people remember, maintaining, "Media of memory…bring about consequences in that they shape cultural remembrance in accordance to their specific means and measures."[143] Attesting to Marshall McLuhan's famous argument, "The medium is the message," Erll applies this same line of thinking to media and memories, arguing that media, such as photographs, television, film, etc., take a much more active role in construct-ing memories of the past by way of their various forms. Yet, the relationship between people and

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[141] Jay Winter, "The performance of the past: memory, history, identity," in *Performing the Past: Memory, History and Identity in Modern Europe*, 12.

[142] "Given Memory: On mnemonic coercion, reproduction, and invention," in *Memory Cultures*, eds. Su-sannah Radstone and Katharine Hodgkin (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2010), 188.

[143] Erll, *Memory in Culture*, 115.

media is not one-sided; with each reading or viewing, audiences can interpret the telling in new ways. Therefore, even though these forms appear stable because they have been produced and cannot (easily) be edited or changed once released, the memory "revision" so necessary to memory-narratives comes about due to the audience. In this way, by engaging with cultural works that pertain to memory – that are themselves a kind of cultural memory – people engage with memory on a social level, and take on important memory-narrative work, albeit in a different fashion. As opposed to discussing the past with family members, or discussing a past event with eyewitnesses, people engage with a form of social memory through reading and viewing. Moreover, objects also create an extension of the self, since "knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally, we regard our possessions as parts of ourselves."[144] In addition to supporting and even transmitting memory of the past, the things people carry or the objects they collect define them in important ways and contribute to the sense of self they project. This theory, presented by Russell Belk in 1988 is known as the "extended self," in which a person's relationship with the objects in their life revealed that person's character, personality, and subjectivity, while simultaneously supporting it. So, too, do objects create an extension for memory; as long as objects remain linked to specific social frameworks, they conduct meanings bound up in past events and experiences to members of those social frameworks. Divorced from social frameworks or in the hands of a different social frameworks, an object's meaning and significance change.

Paul Auster's novel *In the Country of Last Things* (1987) functions as a memory-narrative given that the novel's protagonist Anna has written her account of the post-apocalyptic United States in the form of a letter. Detailing what life in the United States has become in the

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[144] Russell W. Belk, "Possessions and the Extended Self," in *Journal of Consumer Research*. 15 (September 1988): 139-168.

wake of an apocalyptic event, Anna's record becomes her memories. Although she does not address another person directly, i.e. face-to-face, this act of shaping the past through language for the purpose of transmitting it, mirrors the social properties inherent in memory. Memory, in this instance, is not meant to remain a subjective part of her mind, but must be shared and in being shared becomes social. Still, Anna admits the problems bound up in her particular transmission, writing, "I don't expect you to understand. You have seen none of this, and even if you tried, you could not imagine it."[145] The absence of another person, which would form a social framework, to help her construct a memory-narrative hurts the narrative itself, which grasps at comprehension but cannot fully convey it. Anna's able to communicate because she utilizes socially structured forms and because she addresses her letter to an unnamed friend she's known since childhood. Halbwachs notes, "we find ourselves to be part of a group where our position is determined not by personal feelings but by rules and customs independent of us that existed before us," so much of what she initially shares with her friend relies on the time they spent together as friends.[146] In first referencing their shared memories and in doing so through a socially structured form, i.e. language, Anna highlights memory's social nature.

Anna's new memories fail to truly signify any meaning because of the damaged post-apocalyptic space she inhabits. Within Anna's United States, social frameworks no longer function the way they once did, having fallen apart in the wake of apocalyptic events. People turn on one another in order to survive, and so perpetuating any kind of relationship to construct meaning out of the past through memory does not occur. In that world, devoid of social frameworks to continue the important memory work that narrativizes the past, Anna must take on such work

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[145] Paul Auster, *In the Country of Last Things* (New York: Penguin, 1987), 1.

[146] *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 55.

alone but finds that she cannot report what she sees. Her inability to transform her memories into language and share them with another person comes about because of the dramatic changes that have taken place in the United States. Time moves so quickly as to allow no moment to pause and reconstruct the past. Anna explains, "Close your eyes for a moment, turn around to look at something else, and the thing that was before you is suddenly gone. Nothing lasts, you see, not even the thoughts."[147] If the thoughts cannot occur properly to begin with then the memories themselves will not return since Anna's mind cannot (and most likely will not) process her experiences properly. Where social relations typically produce space, here the absence of social relations alters the very space of the country itself, so that context, setting, and other important foundations against which to measure time, fall away. *In the Country of Last Thing*'s post-apocalyptic space does not permit the pause necessary to take the fragmented past and construct a cohesive narrative. The novel suggests that in a present as fragmented as the past, i.e. memory, meaning can never be achieved. Without time to measure experience and create a sense of development along a continuum, memory ends. Anna admits, "I've lost track, and nothing will ever set it right for me," which suggests a far more frightening thought that memory's end cannot be undone.[148] Her inability to form new memories comes about because of the absence of social frameworks in post-apocalyptic space. "Once a thing is gone, that is the end of it," Anna informs her friend, and that kind of all-encompassing and threatening absence refers to more than just things.[149]

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[147] Auster, *In the Country of Last Things*, 2.

[148] Ibid.

[149] Ibid.

The "last things," the title references pertains not just to objects, but also memory as well. With the end of memory comes the end of subjectivity, and memory here falls apart because social frameworks have disappeared, forever altering the known world.

Interestingly, the reader takes on an important role within *In the Country of Last Things*, bespeaking the way that cultural texts produce memory and work as memory-narratives. While Anna addresses her missive to an unnamed friend currently living outside the United States and therefore not experiencing life after the mysterious apocalyptic destruction that slowly devastates the country, the novel positions the reader as her friend. Often using the second-person voice to address her friend and never utilizing a name to specify who she means, Anna speaks to the reader, who steps in to form a kind of social framework with Anna. The novel acts as the object both endowed with (Anna's) memory and also transmitting memory, and the act of sharing that novel between character and reader creates a social framework, albeit a unique one. Speaking of a novel as transmitting a character's memory may seem problematic given the fictional construction bound up in a novel's form, but memory signifies much more than a narrative about the past. In many ways, it incorporates history, myth, and by extension imagination. By reading her letter, the reader becomes complicit in the memory work the novel attempts, acting as witness to another's memories, and sustaining Anna's memory-narrative through such witnessing. Her memories will be heard, and even while they may not be specific, they will reach someone and warn of memory's possible outcome should social frameworks continue to fall by the wayside. The loss of any one of the three foundations to memory – social frameworks, places, or objects – or the dependence on one over the others, not only disrupts memory but more importantly threatens to end it. Without any context for memory that so often befalls characters in the razed post-apocalyptic world, chaos ensues because memories no longer function as narrative representa-

tions of the past that unite people and cultures over time. In post-apocalyptic space where social frameworks are either absent or severely altered, and places have been totaled, memories become fused to things, thereby transforming memory into a commodity to be acquired and traded for a price.

Lost Things, Last Things

Unlike other post-apocalypse works that pertain to destruction on a global level, Paul Auster's novel *In the Country of Last Things* instead imagines a localized site of apocalyptic ruin insofar as it only affects the United States. In focusing on a more concentrated area, the novel unearths the fundamental role social frameworks play in protecting memory and produces unique insights into a social memory model. The absence of people and therefore social frameworks reveals the difficulty survivors have remembering the past, and suggests a more social approach to memory. If memory exists within the individual then survivors should encounter little difficulty recalling their past, but they do, thereby indicating memory's social nature. Where Freud once located memory in the psyche, work by Eric Kandel, Bessel van der Kolk, and other neuroscientists point to the individual as the site of memory by way of the brain. The brain and the psyche represent different mnemonic locations in the individual; whereas Freud worked from a more theoretical position that attempted to realize the hidden and visible connections between mind, body, and spirit, neuroscientists and cognitive psychologists have conducted numerous experiments over the course of the 20th century to pinpoint specific areas of the brain associated with memory.[150] One of the most famous memory studies ever conducted involves the patient H.M.,

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[150] In fact, "Freud represented *desire, instinct, dream, association, neurosis, repression, repetition, the unconscious* – all the central notions of psychoanalysis – as memory functions or dysfunctions." For more information, see Richard Terdiman's "Memory in Freud" in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010).

who lost his ability to form and store long-term memories in 1953 after doctors removed both temporal lobes in an attempt to stop his frequent and debilitating seizures. From this accidental discovery, H.M.'s doctors differentiated between short- and long-term memory, as well as the areas of the brain most associated with both. Yet, despite this important discovery, neuroscientists still only understand the brain's role when it comes to mnemonic activity, but not memory itself.[151] Since Freud, psychoanalysis has moved away from an individualistic perspective when it comes to memory, instead proposing social connections that emerge via language. According to Freud, memories occur when a person consciously or at times unconsciously recalls what their psyche had stored away.[152] Yet, his proposed therapy involved the act of narrating one's memory in front of a trained professional, who assisted when and where necessary. Lacan picked up on the possibilities of language when it came to memory, moving beyond an individual model. Language in this instance functions as "the symbolic which is constitutive for the subject," and by forming subjectivity, people are always-already socially constructed beings.[153]

As much as these experiments reveal a correlation between the brain, memory and identity, they do not specifically identify the physical property of memory. Joseph LeDoux, who studies the brain's emotional operations, explains how oftentimes mental activity is not limited to one area, and therefore cannot be measured the way other more corporeal processes can:

> [M]ental processes are not, strictly speaking, functions of brain areas. Each area functions by way of the system of which it is a part. For example, the visual cortex, a region in the rear of the cerebral cortex (the wrinkled outer layer of the brain), is crucially involved in our ability to see. If this region is damaged, you will for all intents and purposes, be blind.

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[151] Ibid., 182-186.

[152] Freud actually says, "our store of memories," suggesting that each person carried with them the immense and all-encompassing weight of their past experiences, although not all were available for conscious retrieval. For more information, see *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. VI*, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1960), 44.

[153] Lacan, *Ecrits*, 7.

> This does not mean that vision is localized to the visual cortex. It means that the visual cortex is a necessary part of the system that makes seeing possible.[154]

Although LeDoux does not address memory specifically in his analogy, it, too, cannot be physically observed. Witnessed only through neuronal activity, memory becomes another mental process measured through traces rather than substantial material evidence. The components that comprise memory – remembering and forgetting – cannot be studied except by way of their vestiges since "the phenomenon of forgetting is as unobservable as is [remembering]."[155] Scientists cannot determine memory in and of itself, but are only capable of locating the areas of the brain involved with acts of remembering and forgetting in some way.[156] Memory can only be observed through its effects and traces, and part of those effects emerge via language, specifically by way of memory-narratives, which attempt to structure the past so that it makes sense to the present.[157] Memory's social nature here takes on greater importance, since memory shaped through language constructs memory-narratives, thereby creating memory as a social phenomenon. While individuals certainly house memories and experience their lives in such a way that they can recall moments that occur outside of social frameworks, memory's true form is social because memory's most important function is to narrate the past. That narration can occur individually, but takes on greater power when performed socially.

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[154] *The Emotional Brain* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 76.

[155] Erll, *Memory in Culture*, 9.

[156] Amal Treacher maintains that scientists "show[…] no interest whatsoever in either the content of memory, or what is remembered and why," concentrating more on the location of memory. See "Children: Memories, Fantasies and Narratives" in *Memory and Methodology*, ed. Susannah Radstone (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 136.

[157] Aleida Assman explains, "It has often been maintained that we cannot approach the operations of memory directly, but are dependent on intermediary levels of reflection," which often include different forms of media. For more information, see *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 137.

Although it would seem that characters function as the main impetus for memory given the individual-based model proposed by neurobiology, in fact they have difficulty creating new ones and trouble accessing old ones, pointing to a more social model of memory. Characters are incapable of forming new memories because society does not exist the way it once did and without their membership in various social groups, people lack the ability to construct new memories. As a result, memory changes, becoming a dangerous phenomenon that offers no stable connection between past and present. The protagonist, Anna, who lives in an unspecified location in Europe travels to the eastern coast of the United States to find her brother, who made the same journey earlier but has not been heard from since. Anna's mission is to find her brother, but she quickly becomes ensconced in the apocalyptic world and its effects are immediate. She describes how looking to the past too much becomes a detrimental activity for many people:

> You drag yourself from sleep each morning to face something that is always worse than what you faced the day before, but by talking of the world that existed before you went to sleep, you can delude yourself into thinking that the present day is simply an apparition, no more or less real than the memories of all the other days you carry around inside you.[158]

Rather than serving as a narrative that unites present with past, memories take on qualities of dream-logic in the novel, because they occur as a predominantly individual experience.[159] Without social frameworks to verify, deny and even augment the memory – to create and transmit the narrative – individuals experience memory as a fragmented unreality that creates confusion. Survivors fall prey to their memories by "talking of the world that existed before [them]" so that any recollective act upsets the way they understand their present. Memories become apparitions that

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[158] Auster, *In the Country of Last Things*, 10.

[159] Halbwachs explains, "[I]f the series of images in our dreams does not contain true memories, this is because, in order to remember, one must be capable of reasoning and comparing and of feeling in contact with a human society that can guarantee the integrity of our memory. All these are conditions that are obviously not fulfilled when we dream." See *On Collective Memory*, 41.

appear as unreal as the present, because they exist as fantasies that survivors turn to in order to avoid facing the harsh realities of their present, rather than memory-narratives with a collective purpose to unite social groups' present with their past. Within the novel, memories become poisonous temptations that impact people's desire to live, in turn reflecting Halbwachs' "cult of the past," wherein nostalgia serves to keep people from living in the present moment.[160]

In addition to problematic long-term memories, people appear unable to form new memories, because they lack the social interaction necessary to do so. Having mostly turned inward and relying predominantly on thought rather than speech or other forms of social activity, people go mad. If memory serves as the foundation for identity and memory is contingent upon social frameworks then people lose their sense of identity and place in the world without social frameworks, thereby producing madness. Madness becomes a dominant motif in post-apocalypse works where numerous protagonists suffer mental instability as a result of their solitary status in the new world. Post-apocalyptic authors often use a protagonist's isolation and the subsequent madness it creates as a means to critique memory's disappearance by way of the breakdown in social frameworks and the reliance on external forms to convey the past. Speaking about the weather, Anna explains how "[E]verything happens too fast here, the shifts are too abrupt, what is true one minute is no longer true the next."[161] Here, the weather and the speed with which it changes serves as a metaphor for the accelerating nature of life in the twentieth century. Life occurs too quickly and creates an inability to retain information from one moment to the next. Although people may try to connect their present with the past in order to stabilize temporality, those connections no longer stand. As Anna continues to espouse about the new kind of weather

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[160] He writes, "…the cult of the past, far from binding the hearts of people to society, in fact detaches them: there is nothing more opposed to the interest of society." See *On Collective Memory*, 49.

[161] Auster, *In the Country of Last Things*, 25.

in the post-apocalyptic U.S. it becomes clear how the attempt to make sense of events (to utilize the past in order to understand the present) becomes a futile effort that only leads to insanity: "To correlate this with that, to make a connection between an afternoon cloud and an evening wind – such things lead only to madness. You spin around in the vortex of your calculations and then, just at the moment you are convinced it will rain, the sun goes on shining for an entire day."[162] The problem lies not only in any act of comprehension in a world moving too fast to permit it, but in the individual's lone role undertaking such an act. "The vortex of your calculations" bespeaks the solitary nature of life in the novel, as well as the solitary nature of memory without the social framework to guide and determine it, and so chaos ensues.

The post-apocalyptic world's solitary emphasis reveals a dominant theme in Auster's novel: absence. *In the Country of Last Things* revolves around absence in terms of both people (the lack thereof), as well as the meaning that physical objects and language once conveyed. Anna manages to eke out some kind of friendship with two other survivors – Sam and the Rabbi – but one evening she returns to their shelter to discover the Rabbi gone. She explains how, "Everything disappears, people just as surely as objects, the living along with the dead."[163] People's disappearance – their absence in this post-apocalyptic world – takes on far greater weight than if they had simply died, because of the uncertainty it produces in addition to the physical void. Rather than the certainty of his death, the uncertainty his absence leaves behind threatens to overwhelm her: "I mourned the loss of my friend, felt pulverized by the sheer weight of it. There was not even the certainty of death to console me – nothing more than a kind of blank, a ravening

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162 Ibid., 25-26.

163 Ibid., 114.

null."[164] Since the Rabbi formed a social framework with Anna, their memories together connected them in significant ways; yet, his disappearance creates an absence she describes in physical terms. Without him, those moments with him fade and create a lacuna in Anna's mind. People serve as a link to the past, performing important memory work for and within their various social frameworks. Their absence upends memory's narrative, disturbing the sequence between past and present, which gives rise to forgetting.

Post-apocalypse works also reveal the consequences to the current practice of storing memory externally in non-living sites and objects purported to transfer the past; the razed places that emerge in the wake of apocalyptic destruction highlights the problems surrounding contemporary memory practices since without immediate access to those sites or objects, memory disappears. External memory is not in and of itself problematic insofar as it remains intrinsically linked to a social framework. Social groups rely upon photographs, documents and other archival materials to augment their memories, and the use of these objects and artifacts in any act of memory – any act of narrative recollection – plays an important role for social frameworks. Yet, depending exclusively upon such items to perform the work once relegated to people and their respective social frameworks becomes increasingly problematic in the twentieth century. In other words, placing the act of remembering on objects rather than people changes the nature of remembering itself. Post-apocalypse works criticize the ways in which memories suffuse objects, endowing such things with an aura of the past that seems to suggest the past's presence but which only serves to signify its absence. By looking at how memory has become attached to objects rather than remaining a living narrative among social frameworks, these works posit the disappearance of memory altogether once those things disappear or shift in their purpose. Memo-

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[164] Ibid.

ries originate from social frameworks and may come to exist in externalized forms – museums, archives, etc. – but without a social framework to situate and perpetuate memory work, memory fails, because it is a social phenomenon and not an aura attached to objects and places that endows the past's presence.

As I argued earlier, memory depends upon three components – social frameworks, places, and objects – in order to survive into the present. If memory exists in museums to a larger extent than it exists among living people then problems arise, especially with regard to the act of narrativizing the past. At risk is the way in which "the high potential for manipulation by the media…may restage the past according to marketing strategies or the demands of specific groups."[165] Such an assertion does not mean that smaller social groups are not capable of the same behavior, wherein they produce a memory-narrative that reflects their common interests, since all social memory will reflect a social group's needs, desires, and interests from which it emerges. Yet, when it comes to external memory in places, such as museums and memorials, the likelihood of specific versions of the past being constructed without the continual revision necessary to sustain memory increases. It is not that museums and other forms of external memory are somehow inauthentic memory models, but that they strip memory of its collectivity in many ways. Even while museum-space and memorials clearly encourage visitors, thereby perpetuating a kind of collectivity since people experience these sites together, the narratives of the past each presents positions memory as a stable entity. With external memory sites, the past has been inscribed in physical ways upon the present. That act of inscription stabilizes memory to a large extent, thus undoing its very nature. Halbwachs concluded,

> "But precisely because these memories are repetitions, because they are successively engaged in very different systems of notions, at different periods in our lives, they have lost

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[165] Assman, "Re-framing memory," 39.

the form and appearance they once had. They are not intact vertebra of fossil animals which would in themselves permit reconstruction of the entities of which they were once a part."[166]

Simply by being a member of a social group, people understand these mnemonic changes, because the ways in which they participate with memory depend upon revision not representation. When people begin consuming memory-narratives without contributing in some revisionary way, memory no longer functions as memory. Even while social frameworks aim for comprehensive and ordered memory-narratives, memory is fractured and imperfect by its very nature; memory constantly changes and social frameworks embrace such changes by engaging with the past through social relations. In other words, by interacting with other members of the group, the memory of that group constantly changes, whether members are consciously aware or not. Again, memory depends upon social groups interacting with places and objects, but when places or objects take on greater significance and the important work social groups contribute falls by the wayside, memory changes.

People's interactions shift memory, because memory does not represent a stable and unchanging representation of the past. While museums and other sites dedicated to preserving the past can certainly revise the memory they house to reflect new developments or information, this tends to occur from a top-down model that prohibits a person not directly involved with curating the project from adding to it.[167] Memories have often been labeled "fallible" because they fall prey to the ravages of time, but memory does not always reflect the truth of the past, and indeed

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[166] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 47.

[167] Jay Winter explains, "When the Enola Gay exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, "The Last Act: The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II," was constructed painstakingly as history in 1995, it was attacked and rejected by people – ex-servicemen – who had their own history. And the 'witnesses' won." For more, see "Sites of Memory" in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 314.

only remains memory insofar as it can be revised for the purposes of the present.[168] As a result of

the growth in locations dedicated to preserving memory for individuals and groups, people do

not – or are not capable of remembering the past – the way they once did, because memory exists

externally in sites rather than externally through social spaces. While social memory is always

already external, its externality does not limit the individual's role in the act of remembering.

Instead, social relations promote continual input – continual "articulation" as Huyssen has said –

from all members of the group, since without such input memory does not occur in the first place.

Without the interaction between social frameworks, places, and objects, memory fails and

signifies nothing, as can be seen in *In the Country of Last Things*. Anna takes on a job as a scav-

enger, lucrative work in the novel's post-apocalyptic space, because all objects must be re-

thought for the new function they could contribute to the present. She describes the things she

finds, stating:

> There are pieces of this and pieces of that, but none of it fits together. And yet, very
> strangely, at the limit of all this chaos, everything begins to fuse again. […] What another
> has seen fit to throw away, you must examine, dissect, and bring back to life. A piece of
> string a bottle-cap, an undamaged board from a bashed-in crate – none of these things
> should be neglected. Everything falls apart, but not every part of everything, at least not
> at the same time. The job is to zero in on these little islands of intactness, to imagine them
> joined to other such islands, and those islands to still others, and thus to create new archi-
> pelagoes of matter.[169]

Anna here describes the revisionary nature of memory. As Halbwachs explained, memories do

not exist as perfectly formed relics waiting to be discovered and reconstructed to form a picture

of the past. Memory pertains directly to the present; indeed, its purpose revolves around a social

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168 Huyssen claims, "The fissure that opens up between experiencing an event and remembering it in rep-
resentation is unavoidable. Rather than lamenting or ignoring it, this split should be understood as a pow-
erful stimulant for cultural and artistic creativity. […] The temporal status of any act of memory is always
the present and not…the past itself, even though all memory in some ineradicable sense is depending on
some past event of experience." See *Twilight Memories*, 3.

169 Auster, *In the Country of Last Things,* 35-36.

group's purpose in the present, and since memories "have lost the form and appearance they once had," they must be stitched together – again and again – to form a memory-narrative reflective of the present. Here, too, Anna realizes that what items scavengers find must be blended together to form new, useful tools or objects. The trash she accumulates contains value not because of its connection to the past, but because of what it can offer to the present once it has been re-purposed. Separated from their original context, the items' meaning shifts and they become what the present needs. An object's meaning and importance remains tied to the social framework that produced it and that continues to interact with it, revealing the important connection between social frameworks, objects, and language. An object may come to signify something far different than it was originally associated with, because social frameworks will interpret it differently. Anna discovers "a collapsible telescope with one cracked lens; a rubber Frankenstein mask; a bicycle week; a Cyrillic typewriter missing only five keys and the space bar; [and] the passport of a man named Quinn," describing these finds as a "treasure."[170] To readers, her discoveries signify junk, but given that their context depends upon Anna's present and not the past itself, they become a metaphor for memory to a degree, since memory "successively engage[s] in very different systems of notions, at different periods in our lives."[171] Anna's willingness – her necessity even – to embrace these changes and not to cling to the objects for what they once represented, speaks to memory's fluid nature, which cannot be stabilized and frozen in objects. Familiar as she may be with their original purpose, Anna willingly lets go of that meaning, tied as it is to a past and subsequently defunct context.

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[170] Ibid., 36.

[171] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 47.

Absent Social Frameworks

People play a far greater and more important part when it comes to the formation of memories and their transmission over time than has heretofore been afforded it. Memory's effects and traces come about through *les cadres sociaux* or social frameworks, an idea first proposed by Maurice Halbwachs in the early twentieth century and one that established social groups as the primary source of memory. The individual and the brain in particular remain necessary components in the act of remembering, since, as H.M. initially revealed, without the use of certain areas of the brain memory fails. Yet, memory begins as an interaction between an individual and their respective social frameworks, and so memory is first and foremost social not individual. Memory moves from the external to the internal rather than from the internal to the external, relying on that external frame to perpetuate it. Writing about collective memory as a methodology, Constantina Papoulias argues that collective memory exhibits two key properties, and they are here worth discussing for the connections they propose to space. First, in speaking of its sociality, collective memory "stands for a public memory which is de-individualised in so far as it is produced by social institutions," and second, it "stands for an arena of exchange."[172] Even though her terminology differs slightly, Papoulias' definitions are important because they illustrate how social memory is composed of narrative and space, which function together and depend upon a social foundation that promotes interaction.[173] Initially, memory is "de-individualised" and does not belong to the individual because it does not originate from the indi-

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[172] Papoulias, "From the agora to the junkyard," 117.

[173] Although Papoulias' language may suggest a larger notion of collective memory than Halbwachs first proposed, memories are public in the sense that they best exemplify a narrative of the past, which are always structured by the social context through which they emerge. In recent years, the notion of cultural memory has arisen, which blurs the lines between public memory on a national or larger ideological scale and history. Collective memory, it is worth noting, is a particular way of understanding how memories in general are formed.

vidual; it begins within a social framework and emerges from the shared experience of narrating the past. Yet, this is not to suggest that individuals have no power or control over the memories they take on thanks to their interactions with the various groups of which they are a part. People do have a real effect on social memory by way of the "arenas of exchange" that take place because they do not passively remember the past in their social exchanges but actively engage with the narrative process of recollection.

Although public memorial sites, museums, archives and other spaces devoted to public memory could represent the social institutions that produce the "de-individualised" public memories and function as sites of exchange that Papoulias proposes, they do not permit the "very social bond through which the exchange of stories, conversations and other social acts become […] possible in the first place."[174] Public sites construct cultural narratives of the past, performing the operation once left to groups and removing the necessary social interaction that encourages (continual) exchange. Housed within such sites, "memory promises auratic returns" once associated with artwork and now taken up by artifacts and other objects that link past with present, offering some supposed measure of authenticity as a result.[175] Memory, therefore, takes on a greater symbolic role, producing a heightened degree of forgetting at the social level, which individuals eventually experience. Memory, as narrative recollections of the past that originates from a social group, no longer exhibits qualities in keeping with action, i.e. remembering and forgetting; instead, in recent years, memory signifies commemoration or a finality to the recollected narrative. Despite the fact that commemoration can include "a chorus of voices" that influence the narrative in some way, the work of museums and other such memory sites maintains a predomi-

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[174] Ibid.

[175] Klein, "On the Emergence of Memory," 129.

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nantly one-sided approach to the past that may keep the articulation and transmission noted above but strips memory of the discourse originally embedded in and emerging from social frameworks.[176] In this way, the development of external memory and the act of commemoration demonstrate how memory functions as a tool but not as a narrative process, thereby removing its key purpose.

Viewing the individual as the primary source of memory burdens them with the past. "Memory traces never leave the mind," accumulating instead and creating an immense weight for individuals, who cannot control what they remember or forget.[177] True forgetting becomes an impossible act within psychoanalysis because the mind represses memories rather than casting them aside. The notion of social memory, stemming as it does from a sociological background, moves beyond the individual as the principal impetus behind memory.[178] Memories fade, Halbwachs argues, not because of a natural action of the mind, but because of the important role social networks play with regard to mnemonic function. "Memory," he explains, "depends on the social environment," and once removed from whatever social environment contains their memo- ries, individuals lose touch with them.[179] People corroborate memory to a large extent and so memories fade without people. Memory doesn't function as a device that records the past; in-

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[176] Winter, "Sites of Memory," 317.

[177] Psychoanalysis perpetuates what Ian Hacking describes as a "dazzling…implausibility: the idea that what has been forgotten is what forms our character, our personality, our soul." See "Memory Sciences, Memory Politics," in *Tense Past: Culture Essays in Trauma and Memory*, eds. P. Antze and M. Lambek (New York: Routledge, 1996), 70.

[178] In fact, the trend in academic scholarship reflects that of the medical world in which both have moved away from psychoanalysis as a means of understanding the inner workings of the mind, instead choosing to focus on more cognitive-based research or other theoretical models for memory. For more information, see Paul Antze, "The Other Inside," in *Memory Cultures*, eds. Susannah Radstone and Katharine Hodgkin (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2010), 96.

[179] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 37.

stead, it serves as a narrative representation that continually undergoes revision, since people add to and edit the past. Like language, which transmits narratives, memory is socially structured and acquired. In representing the past, memory *re*-presents it, returning the past to the present but also changing it in some way because of memory's revisionary nature. Andreas Huyssen contends, "The past is not there in memory but…must be articulated to become a memory" and though he doesn't concentrate on the sociality of memory, I argue that any act of articulation takes place between people rather than individually.[180] Articulation can be a form of self-reflection, but by its very nature it involves an act of crafting thought into a communicative medium. Therefore, memories come into being as memories by way of their social component, which necessitates articulation and subsequently transmission. Halbwachs' model, therefore, clearly differs dramatically from psychoanalytic models of memory since it proposes a social, interactive approach that situates memory in the social relations of a group, as opposed to an introverted approach that locates memory in the individual mind.[181]

In the wake of the devastating events that brought about the downfall of the U.S. in *In the Country of Last Things*, society breaks down in all its myriad forms from the micro to the macro; people become survivors, a role which encourages a more solitary approach to daily life in that trusting other people could result in one's own demise. Concentrating on solitary rather than group survival, those residing in the U.S. find themselves scavenging for any and every object that might be useful. Their behavior reflects the contemporary craze to amass and save everything and the ability to do so thanks to the immense amount of storage digital databases have

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[180] Huyssen, *Twilight Memories*, 3.

[181] Wulf Kansteiner contends, "Collective memory is not history, though it is sometimes made from similar material. It is a collective phenomenon but it only manifests itself in the actions and statements of individuals," pointing to the 'articulation' that Huyssen mentions and stressing the importance of interaction between individuals. See "Finding Meaning in Memory," in *History and Theory*. 41.2 (May 2002: 180.

made available. Survivors' accumulative actions exhibit a more utilitarian purpose, but the commentary remains: in a world of "last things," with the threat of complete annihilation hanging overhead, comes the desire to save everything and the problems such desire entails.[182] Despite the existence of things that might bolster memory, memories begin to disappear without the routine interaction of people and with the growing mistrust and misuse that people have for one another. Anna explains:

> Everyone is prone to forgetfulness, even under the most favorable conditions, and in a place like this, with so much actually disappearing from the physical world, you can imagine how many things are forgotten all the time. In the end, the problem is not so much that people forget, but that they do not always forget the same thing. What still exists as a memory for one person can be irretrievably lost for another, and this creates difficulties, insuperable barriers against understanding.[183]

Post-apocalyptic space changes how people experience their lived world both in terms of space and time, as well as social relations. Life moves quickly and confusingly, and people cannot stop to process the past for the purposes of the present. As Anna recognizes, not everyone forgets the same things, thus creating disjointed memories of the past that serve no purpose in the present. Here, the present does not need to harken back to the past to understand itself. Attesting to Halbwachs' notion of memory and language, Anna finds, "In effect, each person is speaking his own private language, and as the instances of shared understanding diminish, it becomes increasingly difficult to communicate with anyone."[184] Language's social properties fall prey to the ravages of the post-apocalyptic world, and communication becomes impossible since the shared social structure upon which it is based contains so many varying absences. Since people each for-

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[182] Regarding the prevalence of museums that began in the 1980s, Huyssen maintains, "The success of the museum may well be one of the salient symptoms of Western culture in the 1980s; ever more museums were planned and built as the practical corollary to the 'end of everything' discourse." See *Twilight Memories*, 14.

[183] Auster, *In the Country of Last Things*, 88.

[184] Ibid., 89.

get different things, it becomes impossible for social frameworks to operate as true frameworks (both situating and producing memory), because the underlying symbolic order has been significantly altered. Memory's disappearance in *In the Country of Last Things* suggests a social memory model, since memories do not exist in the mind but remain attached to the requisite socialization that groups perform, and also underscores the important relationship between the individual, their respective social frameworks, and media that bolster the particular memory narratives.

Not all memories occur as a result of social interaction, though; some are experienced solely on behalf of the individual. Halbwachs located individual memory in dreams, arguing that these nightly forays into the mind provided insight into what memory would truly be like if an individual were outside a social framework. In this way, memory shares much in common with language, for a child cannot enter into language without the assistance of a hierarchal structure that guides it through the process of learning. While I do not mean to suggest that memory is learned, per se, it is certainly acquired like language.[185] Social frameworks structure memory by providing a sense of tradition taken up through narratives that the individual uses as a foundation for the memories they experience. Much in the way Hayden White views accounts of history as falling into narrative structures of meaning, so, too, do people structure their memories through familiar narrative frames.[186] Social memory, therefore, is a narrative process that emerges through the interaction of a group; the individual contributes to the act of narrativizing the past, and serves as a site to house that memory-narrative until future interactions arise.

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[185] People do "learn" the narrative forms that structure memory, though, since these narratives help them explain key moments and experiences.

[186] This explains one reason why those who undergo trauma have difficulty integrating memory of that event into their overall memory schema. The combination of shock and unfamiliar experience belies a traditional narrative structure.

Without the social frameworks to support the meaning typically found in objects and language, such meaning disappears, which contains immediate implications for memory. Anna describes the way people talk as "the language of ghosts," but her description encompasses more than language by representing any act of communication or communicative structure where meaning is exchanged.[187] Forms of communication, and the necessary social roles such communication entails, fail in the wake of apocalyptic destruction since people no longer interact except for the purposes of survival. The catastrophe that has affected the U.S. devastated life to such a degree that it destroyed traditional methods of interpretation. Anna explains, "The brain is in a muddle. All around you one change follows another, each day produces a new upheaval, the old assumptions are so much air and emptiness."[188] Here Anna articulates how meaning doesn't function as it once did, instead conveying "air and emptiness."

The work of memory requires a trifold interaction between a social framework, an individual and objects (or media) that transmit the past in some tangible way. Left with the objects but without the social frameworks to stabilize memory through language results in memory's unraveling. Anna discovers how words no longer transmit the meaning they once did because they have become divorced from the social frameworks, i.e. cultures, that once sustained such meaning. Having discovered that she can no longer board a ship to return home because they "aren't allowed to come in anymore – and if nothing comes in, nothing can go out," she inquires about the possibility of taking an airplane. Yet, in speaking that word, her meaning fails to transmit any communicative significance to the gentleman she questions: "What's an airplane? he asked, smiling at me in a puzzled sort of way, as though I had just told a joke he didn't under-

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[187] Auster, *In the Country of Last Things*, 10.

[188] Ibid., 20.

stand."[189] Even though Anna recalls an airplane and its meaning, the particular interaction she

shares with the stranger reveals how meaning depends upon shared information and the mainte-

nance of that participation. His confusion will eventually become Anna's confusion, as social

frameworks disintegrate, thus immediately impacting words:

> What still exists as a memory for one person can be irretrievably lost for another, and this creates difficulties, insuperable barriers against understanding. How can you talk to someone about airplanes, for example, if that person doesn't know what an airplane is? It is a slow but ineluctable process of erasure. Words tend to last a bit longer than thing, but eventually they fade too, along with the pictures they once evoked. […] But then, little by little, the words become only sounds, a random collection of glottals and fricatives, a storm of whirling phonemes, and finally the whole thing just collapses into gibberish.[190]

Memory represents a type of understanding, one that pertains to the past but has larger implica-

tions for the present, and the consequences for its disappearance are severe. The disappearance of

the object – an airplane – occasions the disappearance of meaning in a communicative way,

which directly impacts memory; Anna continues:

> It's not just that things vanish-but once they vanish, the memory of them vanishes as well. […]A thing vanishes, and if you wait too long before thinking about it, no amount of struggle can ever wrench it back. Memory is not an act of will, after all. It is something that happens in spite of oneself, and when too much is changing all the time, the brain is bound to falter, things are bound to slip through it.[191]

Since characters in *In the Country of Last Things* mostly engage with themselves as a result of

the solitary nature of the world, they forget to a far greater degree than they remember. The nov-

el, therefore, purports memory's social nature by way of social frameworks, since without social

frameworks, memory, language, and meaning all vanish. In this way, the novel warns readers

about the necessary role social frameworks play in the maintenance of memory.

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[189] Ibid., 87.

[190] Ibid., 89.

[191] Ibid.

In Margaret Atwood's novel *Oryx and Crake*, the protagonist Jimmy experiences how language changes without social frameworks. As the apparent sole survivor of the human race, Jimmy finds that words become harder to recall since they are no longer attached to a recognizable frame of reference: "From nowhere, a word appears: *Mesozoic*. He can see the word, he can hear the word, but he can't reach the word. He can't attach anything to it. This is happening too much lately, this dissolution of meaning, the entries on his cherished wordlists drifting off into space."[192] Detached from a signified, a signifier no longer communicates any meaning and so remains out of reach. Language is intimately tied to memory, for to articulate memory is to do so through language; without language or without language's connotative meaning, memories suffer and cannot be retained to the same degree they once were.

Throughout the novel, echoes of the past reemerge in Jimmy's mind, mirroring in a way a linguistic form of Tinnitis, in that its appearance signals its eventual erasure. In one such instance when Jimmy finds himself growing too nostalgic for the past, he suddenly finds himself overwhelmed by an excerpt from a book, "*It is important*, says the book in his head, *to ignore minor irritants, to avoid pointless repinings, and to turn one's mental energies to immediate realities and to the tasks at hand.* He must have read that somewhere. Surely his own mind would never have come up with *pointless repinings*, not all by itself."[193] The books Jimmy has read over time operate as cultural memory, and surface once again despite the fact that he lacks the physical object, as well as the social framework which produced it in the first place. Without those grounding forces, memory may slip in and out of his mind, but its presence confuses him. These last vestiges of memory signal the disconnect that exists between Jimmy's past and the post-

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[192] *Oryx and Crake* (New York: Nan A. Talese, 2003), 39.

[193] Ibid., 45-46.

apocalyptic present. Lacking the social groups to interact with and help him sustain memory, as well as the context (place and object) to situate memory, the nature of memory changes so much so that the novel suggests it will not survive. Jimmy finds, "There are a lot of blank spaces in his stub of a brain, where memory used to be."[194] These blank spaces occur primarily because he lacks the necessary social interaction to maintain his memories and his brain atrophies, becoming a "stub," as a result. Memory's absence cannot be undone in this instance, and as the last human in the world, Jimmy's eventual death will bring about the death of memory as memory-narrative. While the vast majority of *Oryx and Crake* involves Jimmy remembering his past and the events leading up to the world's destruction, the book suggests that without people with which to share those memories, they will not last long.

Before the apocalyptic event that left Jimmy as sole survivor, he met and fell in love with a young woman named Oryx. Having grown up in a poor village, Oryx was eventually sold into child prostitution and that transition from village to city upended her language skills. She describes to Jimmy how, as a young child, she spoke a different language than the one she does now: "She couldn't remember the language she'd spoken as a child. She'd been too young to retain it, that earliest language: the words had all been scoured out of her head."[195] That disruption has consequences on her childhood memories, and her ability to recollect her family. As a result of having been removed from her initial social framework, Oryx has no access to the symbolic structure that delineates members of her initial social framework. Without that language, she finds that memories of her family fade. Their disintegration certainly comes about through Oryx's distance from her childhood, since memories naturally fade over time, but more tellingly

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[194] Ibid., 2.

[195] Ibid., 115.

because her language skills changed to reflect a different social framework. Consequently, she admits to Jimmy, "I never think about it."[196] The loss of language, as well as the social groups utilizing that language, here occasions an inability to structure particular memories associated with those groups.

Destroyed Places

In addition to the disappearance of social frameworks and the memories that go with them, post-apocalypse works explore the important role place plays when it comes to acts of re-membering. Place, in this instance, stabilizes memory because it offers a background or associa-tion against which to store and retrieve it. In other words, people associate particular memories with a particular place, but they can also use spatial awareness to recall particular memories; for example, a person may remember reading a certain passage by recalling where on the page and in the book they read it. As a result, memory becomes sharper and more easily recalled when as-sociated with place and social space.[197] There also exist strong connections between memory and place on an emotional level. In the way that smell triggers the mnemonic function of the brain, place also produces a greater rate of remembrance, because the associations between place and personal memory share heightened emotional associations. This relationship works in two differ-ent ways: 1) the memories associated with a site will return when a person returns to that particu-lar site; and 2) memories about important places, i.e. home, will be stronger. Place plays an im-portant role, therefore, when it comes to recollecting the past; place works alongside social frameworks and objects to produce and sustain memory, and as I've been arguing in this chapter,

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[196] Ibid., 116.

[197] *On the Ideal Orator*, trans. James M. May and Jakob Wisse (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 219.

the destruction or severe alteration of one, or the dependence upon one more than the others, occasions significant changes to memory.

Memory shares intimate associations with space and place, but the alteration or destruction of place occasions the alteration or destruction of memories, and reveals the sociality of place. Place, in this instance, includes but is not limited to museums and other mnemonic sites that have become so popular over the twentieth century; also, it incorporates a locale that grounds social frameworks, in turn supporting memory to a degree. Without such places, and without the social frameworks to interact within them, memory does not function properly. Jimmy's lover Oryx recounts her trying childhood to Jimmy, wherein her family sold her to a pimp to make money for their village. The narrator illustrates the connection memories share with place: "There was nowhere Oryx wanted to go except home, but 'home' was becoming hazy in her mind. She could still hear her mother's spirit calling *You will come back*, but that voice was becoming fainter and more indistinct."[198] Home serves as both a place and a memory for Oryx, and as the memory fades, moving beyond the reach of her immediate social framework – her family – so, too, does the home itself disappear as she knew it at a certain time. In this way, readers see a prime example of the necessary relationship between social frameworks and place. Oryx's memories of home remain tied to the actual place of her home, and removed as she is from that spatial context, as well as her village's social framework the fainter that memory grows. So, even while Oryx's home has not been physically destroyed, being so physically removed from it deteriorates her memories and in a way causes a kind of destruction to the home itself.

Oryx and Crake interestingly presents two different types of space, one dystopian and the other post-apocalyptic. The severe changes that take place between the futuristic dystopia Jimmy

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[198] Ibid., 128.

inhabited and the demolished post-apocalyptic space he occupies in the novel's present tense only serve to underscore how integral place is when it comes to memory. The narrative divides Jimmy's present (the post-apocalyptic space) from memories of his past (the dystopia). Summaries of the novel explain that as Jimmy journeys through the demolished space he simultaneously journeys through memories of this past, revealing how traversing the remnants of his physical past call to mind specific memories. The devastated places trigger memory, although since he has no social framework to help maintain and preserve them, Jimmy's memories contain no promise of repetition. Time and again the narrator informs readers that Jimmy's memory is failing; upon reaching a resting place, "[h]e searches his mind for some lesson long-lost chart that would tell him: he knew that stuff once, but it's no use, the file folders are empty."[199] Place isn't enough for Jimmy, who lacks the social frameworks necessary to transmit memory. While place stabilizes (or contextualizes) memory for social frameworks, it is not enough to sustain memory. Memory relies upon social frameworks, places, and objects; without any one component, it fades from individuals' minds, as seen in Jimmy's experience.

Rather than denoting place through terms such as city, state, etc., *Oryx and Crake* presents a United States divided into scientific corporations that churn out product after product to appease people's vain nature. Dwelling sites revolve around these corporations, so people live in Compounds dedicated to sustaining employees affiliated with a particular scientific corporation. Those without the intellectual capacity to work at such organizations reside in cities, colloquially referred to as the pleeblands, a lower-class wasteland described as having "endless dingy-looking streets, countless vehicles of all kinds, some of them with clouds of smoke coming out of the

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[199] *Oryx and Crake*, 150-151.

back; thousands of people, hurrying, cheering, rioting."[200] Even before the apocalyptic event, the

pleeblands reflect a devastated earth taken to its breaking point by human excess.[201] The social

memories associated with these places undergo violent revision, as the consequences of excess,

i.e. over population and pollution, take their toll and destroy sites within the United States. Dur-

ing college, Jimmy dates a girl who "claim[s] to be able to remember [Texas] before it dried up

and blew away."[202] With Texas' absence, memories about that specific location disappear. The

loss of the place occasions the loss of memory, connected as the two are to one another. Even

though people should still be able to remember Texas despite its absence, they cannot. This be-

comes a matter not of temporal progression, which often limits memory to a three-generation

span, but something far more problematic. Given the timeline of destruction, the generation that

follows Texas' demise knows about the state as a fact, but not as a memory. Gone are geograph-

ical markers that convey any meaning; instead, they have been replaced by corporations who

overtake the concepts once signified by "state" or "city." Jimmy recalls his mother "snivel[ing]

about her grandfather's Florida grapefruit orchard that had dried up like a giant raisin when the

rains stopped coming, the same year Lake Okeechobee had shrunk to a reeking mud puddle and

the Everglades had burned for three weeks straight."[203] The memory of such places dies when

the place themselves do; while Jimmy's mother remembers her grandfather's orchards, she is

unable to truly share that memory with Jimmy as anything other than information. Although they

are both members of a specific *cadres sociaux* – family – in this instance, the lack of place com-

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[200] Ibid., 27

[201] This very problem prompts the reason behind the novel's apocalyptic event. Genius inventor Crake sees a way to start over, and destroys mankind in order to institute his own genetically engineered humans, who do not have mankind's "detrimental" characteristics, such as aggression, jealousy, etc.

[202] Ibid., 244.

[203] Ibid., 63.

promises the possibility of future memory. The narrative critiques problems of memory that arise as a result of radical alterations to place.

Even though externalized memory furnishes additional spaces and therefore enlarges memory's storage capability, it also transfers the impetus to remember to objects outside the mind, thereby diminishing memorial capacity.[204] As *In the Country of Last Things* and *Oryx and Crake* demonstrate, if such objects and sites are destroyed, or if they become removed from the social frameworks that created the memories contained within them, significant problems arise as to how memory functions. Post-apocalyptic literature and film highlight the social nature of memory by investigating what happens to characters' memories when social frameworks become absent, as well as when changes to places and objects of memory become significant enough to affect the way memory functions in the first place. Memory depends upon a system wherein the interaction of social frameworks, places, and objects creates memory-narratives of the past; its most important purpose concerns the social interaction produced by social groups, which narrativizes the past and continues to revise that narrative over time and subsequent generations. Places and objects help stabilize a social framework's memory-narratives by providing context, as well as bolstering memory by providing an extension of it. Memory exhibits characteristics in keeping with fluidity, because its significance pertains to the present rather than the past. If memory becomes stored in places and objects without the requisite and continued input from social frameworks to amend and modify memory, then its nature changes. Such acts – both narrativization and revision – point to memory's social properties, and suggest that, as much as memory occurs as an individual experience, it is a social phenomenon once it enters into lan-

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[204] Jan Assman explains, "externalized memory…facilitates a hitherto undreamed-of expansion in our capacity to store and retrieve information and other forms of communication, while simultaneously leading to a shrinkage of our natural memory bank." *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 9.

guage and becomes adapted for transferral. Alterations to memory in recent years stem not because of an individual's inability to retain memory in the mind, but due to the way that people's interactions with one another have changed, as well as the rise in and dependence upon external memory. Such changes affect the way the three components of memory interact with one another, removing the sociality necessary to rework memory, thereby bringing about an amplified sense of forgetting.

CHAPTER THREE
New Forms of External Memory: The Dangers of Digital Memory

"The worst part of holding the memories is not the pain. It's the loneliness of it.
Memories need to be shared."
– Lois Lowry, *The Giver*

James Howard Kunstler's novel *World Made By Hand* (2008) takes place in a post-apocalyptic future devoid of technology, because a catastrophic series of events, involving political strife, bombs, and plagues, left society weakened and without the tools or capability to reestablish the modern conveniences so many survivors once relied upon. People's primitive way of life leaves them the opportunity to reflect upon the immense changes that have taken place, and the way their previous lifestyle may have contributed to the demise of the United States. Robert Earle, the novel's protagonist, encounters an older gentleman one day, who remarks, "There's real strangeness in this world of ours. Back in the machine times, there was so much noise front and back, so to speak, it kept us from knowing what lies behind the surface of things. Now it stands out more."[205] The old man's observation calls to mind a short story published in the early twentieth century by Stephen Vincent Benet titled, "By the Waters of Babylon," wherein a young man traverses a devastated part of the countryside, now associated with the myths of gods long gone. He discovers on his journey that the gods who comprise his people's fables are in actuality mankind, and their technological advances brought about their destruction, because they interfered with basic human relations. In a vision the young man has he notices the always constant level of noise: "And always, as they labored and rested, as they feasted and made love, there was a drum in their ears—the pulse of the giant city, beating and beating like a man's

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[205] James Howard Kunstler, *World Made By Hand* (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 4.

heart."[206] The critique from both Benet and Kunstler pertains in part to the way technology disrupts life, creating a level of distraction that keeps mankind from recognizing more looming issues often involving technology itself. In *World Made By Hand*, Robert observes a similar kind of interference that machines pose, observing one day on a walk how, "In a car, I remembered, you generally noticed only what was in your head or on the radio, while the landscape itself seemed dead, or at least irrelevant. Walking, it was impossible to not pay attention."[207] The car, in this instance, not only mediates the relationship between Robert and the outside world to a certain degree, but goes further, inhibiting his ability to connect to that world by physically restricting his interaction with it, as well as diverting his attention to other tasks. Like their apocalyptic predecessors, post-apocalyptic literature and film has been concerned with technology and the outcomes of not only its presence but, more importantly, the ways in which it interferes with everyday living and subsequently memories.[208] In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, within post-apocalypse works, that critique has shifted from technology in general to digital media (and digital memory) in particular.

As this project explores, people appear to forget more frequently in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, giving rise to anxieties that they seem unable to recall the past at will. From simple moments of memory failure, such as walking into a room to complete a task and immediately forgetting the reason upon reaching it, to more significant memory loss that cannot be recovered, the individual and the brain continue to arise as the reason behind memory loss. As this project contends, though, memory depends upon the interaction of social frameworks with

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[206] Stephen Vincent Benet, "By the Waters of Babylon." *Tom's Place*.
http://www.tkinter.smig.net/outings/rosemountghosts/babylon.htm. Accessed December 12, 2013.

[207] Ibid.

[208] One of the most famous post-apocalyptic critiques concerning technology is Pat Frank's *Alas, Babylon* (1959).

physical places and objects to bolster the memory-narratives produced by those social frame-
works. Social memory suggests that memories arise through a person's interaction with their var-
ious social frameworks before coming to be housed in the mind; future interactions will spark
recollection, prompted as memory is by a social schema. Humans remain the most important im-
petus for memory, because they form memory into language, into a narrative that can be shared
and passed along over time and space. That people forget to a greater extent nowadays points not
only to neurological failures of the brain, as neuroscience continually argues, but also to momen-
tous changes to social frameworks. Places and objects act as extensions of a social framework
and its respective members, providing external memory that aids the narrativizing memory work
of the group. Simply put, external memory offers a way to store memory or invest memory in a
location or object, so that later recollection becomes easier. When associated with specific social
frameworks, be they large or small, external memory prompts acts of remembrance. The rise in
external memory continues to alter how people engage with their past on the level of memory,
though, because rather than using such sites as aids to memory, people rely more exclusively on
them. Removing memory's sociality by shifting the interaction between person and person to one
that occurs between person and object(s) changes the nature of memory and results in people's
difficulty recollecting the past.

In the way that written language, places, and objects function as external memory by stor-
ing and shifting the "burden" away from the individual, digital media, too, illustrates a form of
technological external memory, one that only continues to grow more prevalent as the twenty-
first century progresses. Digital media produce digital memory, which refers to the massive
amount of data now being stored (and capable of being stored) on a variety of digital sources,

thereby increasing an individual's mnemonic storage capacity.[209] Comprised as it is of subjective

and objective accounts of the past, digital memory has much in common with memories that are

collected even while it may simultaneously include social memories. Digital memory refers to

memories accessed through digital media and a range of technological devices, as well as indi-

cates that the past no longer need exist with any living person. In other words, digital memory

can store information to such a massive degree that a person need no longer be encumbered with

remembering if he or she understands how to access the information they need to remember. A

recent study asked college students to memorize a series of facts, in which half the group be-

lieved the facts would be available to them later. When asked to recall the facts, the half that be-

lieved they could access the information later fared about 40% worse than students who were

told no such aid would be available to them.[210] As it turns out, "If you think a fact is convenient-

ly available online, then, you may be less apt to learn it."[211] More than memorizing information

or retaining knowledge in the mind, though, people's social activity bespeaks a willingness to let

go of memory and let digital media take over the act of remembering the past. In this way, digital

memory harkens back to David Harvey's observation that postmodern consumer culture breeds

disposability.[212] While people do not necessarily dispose of their memories simply because they

exist in digital form, the ease with which people can shift the burden of remembering to digital

devices bespeaks a level of disposability. A recent study conducted at Fairfield University in

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[209] Ekaterina Haskins explains, "Because all new media objects are composed of digital code, it becomes possible to collect, preserve, sort, and display a vast amount of texts, drawings, photography, video, and audio recordings." "Between Archive and Participation: Public Memory in a Digital Age," in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*. 27 (2007): 408.

[210] Brandon Keim, "Search Engines Change How Memory Works," *Wired Magazine*. July 14, 2011. Accessed December 12, 2013.

[211] Ibid.

[212] See *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1999), 286.

Connecticut revealed how people who take pictures or visually document their experiences have greater difficulty remembering those experiences later. Termed the "photo-taking impairment effect," Dr. Linda Henkel explains how it weakens a person's mnemonic capacity, stating, "When people rely on technology to remember for them – counting on the camera to record the event and thus not needing to attend to it fully themselves – it can have a negative impact on how well they remember their experiences."[213] The experiences themselves may not fade from the mind because the photograph acts as aid, but the mediation that occurs between the original experience and the proof of that experience can interfere with memory. Susan Sontag, writing about the effect photography has on people's memory, asserts, "The problem is not that people remember through photographs, but that they remember only the photographs. This remembering through photographs eclipses other forms of understanding, and remembering."[214] As mnemonic objects, photographs aid the act of remembering, and in some ways mirror the reconstructive act involved in narrativizing the past; however, problems arise when people only remember the photograph and not the event itself. In such cases, a barrier manifests itself between the event and the memory, interfering with people's natural ability to recollect their own experiences and construct their memory-image into socialized forms like language to be shared. Photographs could serve as material memory-images, transferring what the mind purportedly "sees" into a tangible object that can be passed around among a social framework, and removing or altering the necessity language plays in narrativizing memory. Yet, as much as photographs augment memory in interesting ways, they still serve as objects that require social frameworks to understand them;

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[213] Sarah Knapton, "Taking photographs ruins the memory, research finds," *The Telegraph*. December 10, 2013. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/science-news/10507146/Taking-photographs-ruins-the-memory-research-finds.html. Accessed December 12, 2013.

[214] *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2003), 88.

set adrift from any foundational social context, photographs as memories themselves engender forgetting to a certain degree.

Using external storage "devices" to assist in remembering is not a development unique to the twentieth century. Writing has served as a form of external memory storage since antiquity; however, in *Phaedrus*, Plato notes Socrates' warning concerning writing, which states, "Those who acquire [writing] will cease to exercise their memory and become forgetful; they will rely on writing to bring things to their own remembrance by external signs instead of on their own internal resources."[215] Where before paper served as the dominant means to transcribe and transmit the past to future generations, humans now utilize technology to a greater degree to store and access information, and that utilization has already started to change how memory functions for a person. Clive Thompson, who investigates the effect technology has on people, maintains that external technological devices do not have a negative effect on people's short-term memory, because "we've begun to fit the machines into an age-old technique we evolved thousands of years ago."[216] Thompson explains how people have always relied upon other people for memory, especially short-term memory, terming the relationship "transactive memory," which he describes as "the art of storing information in the people around us." Rather than turning to a search engine or a smartphone for a needed piece of information, people would simply ask those around them.[217] Since the rise in digital devices and the storage capacity they offer, though, people have replaced their friends' and family's storage capacity with that of their digital

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[215] (New York: Penguin Books, 1973), 96.

[216] "Is Google Wrecking Our Memory?" *Slate.com.* September 20, 2013. http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/science/2013/09/are_search_engines_and_the_internet_hurting_human_memory.html. Accessed December 12, 2013.

[217] Ibid.

devices.[218] Thompson and others in his field do not see the negative implications such a development has, arguing that one object (smartphones) replaces another (people) without shifting the nature of transactive memory too greatly. I, however, argue that by acting as transactive memory, people play a contributive and important role to another person, forming a social framework as it were. Perhaps the transactive memories exchanged between two people pertain more to general knowledge than emotional memories (the foundation of a traditional social framework), but the exchange still exists. In other words, it comprises an important foundation of social interaction. If the vast majority of people turn to their digital devices to answer questions they once posed to another living individual then does that shift the nature of social frameworks and subsequently social interactions? And, equally important, does that shift the nature of a person's knowledge? Transactive memory indicates that people's mnemonic capacity has always been poor, thus their dependence upon other people; however, if everyone depends upon digital devices, does that not change their own ability to contribute to another's need for mnemonic assistance?

While digital memory may seem to expand the ability of a person's mnemonic capacity by enlarging the external storage capacity they once had access to, there are other serious implications to people's continued reliance on digital memory. The forms of digital storage dematerialize the very things they store; Russell Belk explains how:

> Today our information, communications, photos, videos, music, calculations, messages, 'written' words, and data are now largely invisible and immaterial until we choose to call them forth. They are composed of electronic streams of ones and zeroes that may be stored locally or in some hard to imagine cloud.[219]

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[218] Thompson elucidates, "We have begun to treat search engines, Evernote, and smartphones the way we've long treated our spouses, friends, and workmates. They're the handy devices we use to compensate for our crappy ability to remember details."

[219] "Extended Self in a Digital World," in *Journal of Consumer Research*. 40:3 (October 2013), 478.

The dematerialization of objects may not seem so overtly problematic, but since objects act as extensions of the self, "anchoring an individual's or group's memories" in a way that resists the inevitable change that occurs over a person's life then their materiality does remain important.[220] If the objects that augment a person's subjectivity and identity by extending it are not tangible – if they have in fact been dematerialized – what implications does that have for a person's subjectivity? To some extent, people define themselves through the things they collect in their life; if these things do not have a material presence then how does that affect people's sense of self? These questions do not have easy answers, and require further research to comprehend the outcomes of such behavior. Post-apocalypse works of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries do not explicitly attend to these more contemporary questions, but they do emphasize the important role people and the social frameworks they constitute play when it comes to memory. By warning of memory's failure as a result of people's absence, they underscore memory's sociality at a time when contemporary practices come to rely more on external memory, ranging from places to objects and finally digital memory. Post-apocalyptic literature and film combine a critique of technology by way of digital memory that emphasizes its impact on the social nature of humanity and in turn memory.

As a development over the course of the late twentieth century with far-reaching implications for both archival studies and cognitive studies, digital memory suggests a positive evolution when it comes to the possibility of memory in the twenty-first century. Yet, as much as digital memory might seem to enhance the capacity and capability with which memories are stored, it also transforms social memory in troublesome ways. I would first like to examine digital media and its contribution to digital memory to a greater degree before turning to Robert Kirkman's

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[220] Ibid.

graphic novel *The Walking Dead* (2009) and David Markson's novel *Wittgenstein's Mistress* (1988). Each of these post-apocalyptic novels incorporates a futuristic space in which technology does not exist, and so humans must rely on more primitive and antiquated skills in order to survive. The post-apocalyptic setting absent of technology becomes instrumental in fully comprehending the effects of digital media, as well as the importance of social frameworks to social memory. More than other post-apocalypse works, where social frameworks' alteration upsets the ability of survivors to remember their past, the novels examined here posit that without other people, memory disappears and madness surfaces. Social frameworks, as well as the places and objects they utilize remain necessary components to maintaining context and structure, without which survivors go crazy.

Accessing the Past

The move from paper to digital archives means more room, since the space needed to store paper documents no longer poses a problem. Consequently, historians, archivists and others involved in maintaining the past through (dematerialized) physical traces, can include more information than ever before in digital form. A digitized past takes on properties that make it seem more real for people in the present; D.L. LeMahieu explains that with digital memory, "The past will feel present in a way never before possible," because of the variety of digital media that exist to transmit that past.[221] In addition to reading about the past, people can experience numerous technologies that create affect, thereby making the past more tangible. Take for instance, the act of watching, as opposed to reading, Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech: the moment becomes sharper because people see and hear King, which imparts the past in a more physical

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[221] "Digital Memory, Moving Images and the Absorption of the Historical Experience," *Film and History*. 41.1 (Spring 2011): 84.

fashion for viewers. Thanks to unique digital forms like video and other visual media, sociality

can materialize in unique ways; videos create something like a face-to-face connection that takes

place between the viewer and the image, but one that limits the viewer's "interaction" to obser-

vation. Since such videos are now readily available via YouTube and other public websites, digi-

tal memories become far more accessible. In some ways, digital memory appears to overcome

the nineteenth century problem of memory's distance from the past by offering a memory that at

once represents and transfers that past. Yet, the reliance on digital media to store and pass on

memory becomes problematic, because it diminishes the cognitive capacity for memory, as well

as requires an interaction between a person and digital source rather than another person, thereby

altering or removing the role social frameworks play in constructing and maintaining memory.

Digital memory promises to protect "living memory," but in actuality the way people re-

gard their past depends on their relationship with the original living memory. As LeMahieu has

found, "The complete extinction of living memory, especially after hundreds of years, profound-

ly diminishes the emotional interest and intellectual curiosity of successors."[222] In other words,

the farther away second and third generations get from the first generation's living memory, the

less interest they have in that memory unless there's a strong group interaction that protects it by

passing it down.[223] Since social memory emphasizes interaction among generations, it stands to

preserve to a greater degree memories of previous generations; even though the original source

of living memory may pass away, the sharing of those memories with future generations ensures

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[222] Kansteiner, Wulf. "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies," 184.

[223] I'm here thinking of Marianne Hirsch's work on post-memory, in which subsequent generations ap-
propriate memories from earlier generations because of the extreme emotional impact (positive or nega-
tive) of the original memory. Although Hirsch tends to work from traumatic memories, heightened emo-
tional experiences can have a lasting impact on future generations who did not undergo the event
firsthand. See *The Generation of Post-Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

its survival. The popularity of historical novels and films would indicate an interest in the past regarding time periods before the generational span that marks memory, but the farther away one moves from living memory, the less affective it becomes. As Jay Winter argues, "Memory is history seen through affect," and once that affect fades, people's connection to the past shifts to a more historical or objective account, since an interest in the past does not always denote a mnemonic connection with that past.[224] The larger the social framework, however, the more difficult the task of interaction becomes, so digital memory does stand to provide a stronger connection to the past through a "live" interaction with media. Digital memory stands to preserve such moments and bring the past to life in a way that history books or other written records may not. By presenting the past in such affective terms, the interaction with media may come to supplant the interaction with living memory, and preserve "memory" for a longer extent.

In terms of smaller social frameworks, digital memory complicates the act of sharing to the degree that it mediates memories for individuals by requiring interaction with a digital source rather than a person. All memory is mediated to some degree, because the experience encoded in the mind will later be recalled and repurposed for the present day. The act of *re*membering is exactly that: a return that separates the individual from their past by way of memory. Yet, digital memory interferes in new ways with regard to the technologies utilized to transfer memory. The level of mediation digital memory produces alters the way individuals experience what Proust once delineated as *mémoire involontaire* and *mémoire volontaire*, and what cognitive neuroscience now terms *implicit* and *explicit* memory. *Mémoire involontaire* or implicit memory refers to the kind of memory that arises unbidden because of a sensory cue, whereas *mémoire volontaire* or explicit memory refers to memory that one consciously recalls. Explicit memory does not un-

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[224] "The performance of the past: memory, history, identity," in *Performing the Past: Modern Memory in Europe*, eds. Karin Tilmans, et al. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 12.

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dergo serious alterations as a result of digital memory; in fact, technology helps to expand explicit memory, because digital sources strengthen the types of memory that can be consciously recalled by increasing the way it is recorded.[225] Yet, the extreme mediated nature of digital memory significantly changes how people experience implicit memory; as Walter Benjamin notes, "The perpetual readiness of volitional, discursive memory, encouraged by the technique of mechanical reproduction, reduces the scope for the play of the imagination."[226] Although Benjamin doesn't link imagination to *memoire involontaire*, his point applies to the "imaginative" connection between senses and memory, which prompts an affective response to the past, as well as a revisionary (and at times imaginary) approach to memory-narratives. Furthermore, people don't experience memories firsthand to the extent they once did, because they rely on technology to record the experience for them, and so sensory triggers do not produce memory the way they once did. Regarding the pervasive sense of forgetting that hangs over the twentieth century, Eric Hobsbawn finds, "Most young men and women at the century's end grow up in a sort of permanent present lacking any organic relation to the public past of the times they live in."[227] Hobsbawn's emphasis on "organic relation" bespeaks the necessity of social frameworks – a living interaction among a group of people and objects or places, rather than the objects and places themselves – in an age where external memory produces memory failure rather than remembrance.

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[225] Speaking of memory and photography, Benjamin finds, "The techniques based on the use of the camera and of subsequent analogous mechanical devices extend the range of the mémoire volontaire; by means of these devices they make it possible for an event at any time to be permanently recorded in terms of sound and sight." "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Shocken Books, 1968), 186.

[226] Ibid., 186.

[227] *Age of Extremes: A History of the World 1914-1991* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 3.

The sheer volume of digital memories stored, as well as their endless reproduction and dissemination, alters the nature of memory by making it a tool. In this way, memory shifts from a practical position (used to recall and represent the past) to a symbolic one (used to control and disseminate particular versions of the past, especially as they relate to political groups), as Pierre Nora has argued in "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Memoire.*"[228] Memory functions symbolically for social frameworks, too, which utilize the past for the purposes of the group; however, shifting memory from specific social frameworks to the solitary interface of digital media heightens memory's political nature and its use as a rhetorical tool to create a specific version of the past.[229] Benjamin's discussion on the reproducibility of art here seems fitting with regard to the problem of digital memory; he finds, "Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be."[230] For Benjamin, questions pertaining to authenticity and aura arise when reproducing a work of art, because the reproduction does not contain the aura associated with the original. So, too, does the endless replication of memory – memory that does not actually exist in a person's mind but has always-already existed in some external form – remove the uniqueness of that memory (its "aura"), thereby transforming a process and narrative into a tool that purportedly invests the present with affective traces of the past.[231] Additionally, context

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[228] *Representations.* 26 (Spring 1989): 7-24.

[229] I am here indebted to Walter Dyer Hoefer's work on the apocalypse mythology in southern literature, because Hoefer points to the importance of ritual in creating and girding a community's memory. Ritual, in the vein of a tradition passed down from generation to generation, functions socially and politically for collective memory, and its obliteration has serious consequences for that memory. See *Apocalypse South* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2013), 105.

[230] "Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, 220.

[231] Klein argues that much of the fascination with memory and the emerging memory discourse taking place in the humanities and social sciences stems from the idea that "memory promises auratic returns

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becomes an important component of Benjamin's argument. Memory never remains in a specific time and space, because all acts of *re*-membering necessarily remove memory from such specificity; however, memory involves context, which social frameworks help establish by way of their interaction, as well as through their dependence on specific places and objects. Removed of that context, memory shifts to a more symbolic position.

In the wake of this development, memories become commodities to be bought and traded, since memory purports to transmit the past in a more affective way than history. Hence, the growing trend in the tourist industry of drawing upon the past for profit.[232] Acting as commodity, memories exceed their representative capability and increase the possibility of forgetting. In the way that a person taking a photo removes themselves from the experience of the moment – the setting, the action, etc. – in order to look through the camera eye and click the shutter, so, too, do digital memories pass down not a memory (a moment originally experienced) but something first mediated through an external form. Memories, as I explained earlier, are always mediated because their return involves a barrier between the individual and the past as originally experienced, but digital memories are doubly mediated. As Alison Landsberg suggests, memories and photographs conflict with one another because, "memories organize details in a meaningful way according to their significance, whereas photographs depict and record a spatial continuum."[233] The former suggests subjective presence while the latter suggests objective observance. While

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[because of] its traditional association with religious contexts and meanings." "On the Emergence of *Memory* in Historical Discourse," 129.

[232] More problematic, perhaps, than the growth of specific tourist sites dedicated to transmitting the past (in which some form of education takes place) are the gift shops that spring up around such sites. I am here thinking specifically of the numerous gift shops now located close to the National September 11 Museum & Memorial in New York City. Such shops sell "memories," especially with regard to traumatic events and national tragedies.

[233] *Prosthetic Memory* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2004), 16-17.

Landsberg draws on photographs in particular, this divide extends to other forms of digital memory: sound recordings, film, and websites, to name just a few. Digital memories may not fall prey to the warp of time, i.e. fading, altering, or altogether forgetting facts, because they technologically capture and preserve the past, but the mediated and political nature of the memory preserved moves away from the social role memory plays for groups of all types and therefore shifts the act of remembering itself.

While the development of digital memory would appear to benefit the act of preserving the past (and continual access to that past), there exist dangers when it comes to storing the past in this way. LeMahieu explains, "Digital memory will confront the future reader with evidence so thoroughgoing that it may actually obscure the past rather than illuminate it."[234] People require narratives of their past, but with the ubiquity of memorial information in the digital age, that narrative often becomes obscured. The amount of information available becomes so overwhelming that no clear narrative emerges. While such immense information can be useful to grasping a fuller picture of the past; instead, I argue, it interrupts the important narrativizing work for which memory exists. Conversely, if the work of museums and digital archives do create a narrative from the immense amount of digital sources available, social frameworks have no lasting input in that narrative. Bernard J. Armada argues that the expansion to the National Civil Rights Museum included a "vantage point" area, where visitors could inhabit the physical space James Earl Ray did when he shot Martin Luther King, Jr.[235] As a result, the memory that the museum promotes shifts from one of King and civil rights towards a focus on execution through King's assassin and his point of view, arguably exploiting the violence of the event rather than

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[234] "Digital Memory," 86.

[235] "Memory's Execution: (Dis)placing the Dissident Body," in *The Places of Public Memory*, eds. Carol Blair, et al. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010).

the loss it brought about. Moreover, in order to build the museum in the first place, those behind the project acquired the Lorraine Motel, which still had residents living there full-time. Jacqueline Smith, who was ousted from her home in the Motel, has since taken to protesting the museum for over twenty years, calling attention to the capitalistic nature of the museum and the way King's memory has been exploited for tourists. Memory comprises a large component of the tourism industry; sites, museums and tours dedicated to national tragedies have become a large part of capitalizing upon the past, and the public's interest in that past. As such, "dominant memories (or a mainstream collective consciousness) along with alterative (usually subordinate) memories" arise, so there exists an officially sanctioned narrative and subversive counterparts to that narrative.[236] With external memory, memory now exists as an interpretative process, a symbolic extension, a digital format, or a prosthetic experience, but rarely as a narrative concerning the past that grows out of the social interaction of a collective, and contributes to their present needs. The opening credits for the TV series *The Walking Dead* (2011), which is based on the comic book, do well to illustrate the narrative problems that arise when all that remain are the locations and objects that once belonged to a social framework. The sequence shifts quickly from shot to shot, each one focused on an empty location (a hospital, a house, a street, a city) or a broken object (photographs cracked in their frames, a teddy bear abandoned on the street). Although the message is clear – something has gone wrong – the narrative itself is frayed, strung together through places and things, which mean little without the people to invest them with signification and use them to construct a narrative of the past.

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[236] Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory* (New York: Knopf, 1991), 9.

Physiological and Psychological Changes

Digital technologies, such as cell phones, PDAs, tablets, and the like, encourage communication and therefore would seem to enhance exchanges across groups separated by distances and even time zones. Certainly, these devices make the task of communication easier and far more convenient than ever before. The instantaneity with which communication can occur on those devices makes life seem far more social in the twenty-first century, since people can access a host of social media platforms to share information about themselves, as well as keep up with other people's lives. Yet, inasmuch as these devices enhance contact with other people and seemingly broaden a person's social frameworks by helping them stay connected to members when they're not in a physical vicinity together, these devices actually breed a kind of isolation and individualism that has severe implications where memory is concerned. That individualism surfaces in multiple contemporary scenes that are becoming all too familiar: Whether it's in a coffee shop, wherein the vast majority of patrons are "plugged" into their laptops rather than interacting with one another face-to-face; or whether it's a group of friends out at a restaurant on their cell phones instead of engaging one another in conversation; or whether it's screen multi-tasking, wherein a person on a phone call distracts him- or herself from the conversation by interacting with another device, the choice to distract oneself from fully engaging with another person continues to grow. Martin Cooper, famous for making the first cellphone call in 1973, finds the behavior disturbing, protesting, "That's the equivalent of if a friend or loved one was talking to you, and in the middle of their sentence you pick up a newspaper and start reading it and not looking at them. You wouldn't do that, but people jump to attention for their cell phones all the time."[237] Cooper's analogy may be rather extreme, but the observation itself – that cell phones and other

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[237] Bob Greene, "Did cell phones unleash our inner rudeness?" CNN.com, April 10, 2011. Accessed December 11, 2013. http://www.cnn.com/2011/OPINION/04/10/greene.cellphone.cooper/

digital devices have changed the way that people engage with one another in public – is one that not only the public seems to be aware of (and lamenting in many cases), but that health research is beginning to explore. As odd a behavior as "cell phone addiction" may seem in light of other more serious addictions, such as drugs and alcohol, it is becoming a real problem.

The problem isn't merely a social one; it turns out that the way people interface with digital technology has physiological implications. In addition to posing several problems when it comes to the storage, encoding, and retrieval of memory in the last century, digital media alters the connection between the brain and heart of the very person engaging with it, which poses significant problems for how people interact with one another. A recent major scientific study led by Barbara Fredrickson found biological evidence regarding how technology actually alters people's neuroplasticity, which refers to the way that experiences alter neural pathways (the communicative pathways the body relies upon to cross great distances between brain and nervous system). The more repetitive a habit (in this case: the habit of interfacing with technology instead of a real person), the more that habit stands to modify a person's brain chemistry by increasing the need to fulfill the habit. It becomes a never-ending cycle. Insofar as people now engage with technology to a greater extent, they become less capable of identifying with other people, including an inability to produce or read facial expressions.[238] In terms of neuroplasticity, Fredrickson's findings reveal how the vagus nerve or the connection between the brain and the heart actually changes as you age. Scientists once believed vagal tone (the strength of the connection between brain and heart) was stable, but research now shows that it responds to neuroplasticity, i.e. changes in habit. Fredrickson likens a weak vagal tone to muscles that atrophy when not

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[238] Fredrickson explains how "[b]eyond these health effects, the behavioral neuroscientist Stephen Porges has shown that vagal tone is central to things like facial expressivity and the ability to tune in to the frequency of the human voice. By increasing people's vagal tone, we increase their capacity for connection, friendship and empathy." See "Your Phone vs. Your Heart" in *The New York Times* March 23, 2013.

used; similarly, if people do not interact with someone in a positive fashion on a regular basis, their ability to interact suffers. If they instead spend an increasing amount of time with a digital device, they become far less capable of healthy human socialization. This scenario occurs far more often nowadays thanks to the prevalence of technology. The number of people using a digital device has grown exponentially in the last ten years, and can be seen in nearly every public place. Human interaction is necessary, though. The more people socialize, the healthier their vagal tone will be, and in turn the healthier they will be:

> When you share a smile or laugh with someone face to face, a discernible synchrony emerges between you, as your gestures and biochemistries, even your respective neural firings, come to mirror each other. It's micro-moments like these, in which a wave of good feeling rolls through two brains and bodies at once, that build your capacity to empathize as well as to improve your health.[239]

Whether or not people want to consciously interact with one another, their neural pathways have been transformed by technology, thereby making it much more difficult to engage with other people to the same degree they once did. While Fredrickson does not work in collective memory, her team's findings are of great consequence when it comes to understanding the impact social frameworks have on a person's memory. If people are incapable of socializing with one another to the degree they once could because of changes to their neural pathways then the social framework breaks down and memories have difficulty registering or passing between people.

The amount of time people spend on their digital devices also impacts their ability to process memory. Recent research reveals how, in addition to altering the way the brain recognizes and responds to interfacing personally after interfacing technologically over a lengthy period of time, the brain actually has difficulty processing new experiences into memories because of the level of distraction it now encounters on a daily basis. Researchers from the University of Cali-

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[239] Ibid.

fornia at San Francisco have discovered that humans require a certain amount of downtime in

order to process their experiences into recognizable memory patterns that shape their behavior.

Returning to the principle of repetition, memory depends in part upon learned repetitions, but in

order to understand that an experience is actually a memory – in that it has been experienced be-

fore – people must first allow their brain to process the information accordingly. Using rats, the

researchers found that when the animals learned a new experience, their brain showed a great

deal of activity; however, "only when the rats take a break from their exploration do they process

those patterns in a way that seems to create a persistent memory of the experience."[240] Loren

Frank, a professor of physiology at the university explains how the research pertains to humans,

stating, "Almost certainly, downtime lets the brain go over experiences it's had, solidify them

and turn them into permanent long-term memories."[241]

While the growth in technology and digital memory certainly mark exciting progress in

terms of what can be retained and how, it also creates problems for people's mnemonic capacity

(and capability) by moving away from the organic interface established by the social framework,

a point that contemporary post-apocalyptic literature and film continues to address by underscor-

ing the importance of communities. Where *In the Country of Last Things* and *Oryx and Crake*

showed readers how memory's external forms via objects fail without social frameworks, the

novels that comprise this chapter's focus underscore the social framework's importance as a

space where memory thrives. *The Walking Dead* takes place immediately following an apocalyp-

tic event that transformed much of humanity into zombies, and the vast majority of the ensuing

chaos stems from a lack of verifiable information about the situation. The graphic novel situates

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[240] Matt Richtel, "Digital Devices Deprive Brain of Needed Downtime," *The New York Times*.
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/25/technology/25brain.html?ref=yourbrainoncomputers&_r=0. Ac-
cessed December 11, 2013.

[241] Ibid.

survivors in a world absent of electricity, thereby impeding communicative acts that once connected people across great distances. The larger sense of nation and nationality – the "imagined communities" that Benedict Anderson proposed – come under threat without the cultural tools, i.e. media, to connect them.[242] In *The Walking Dead*, that threat affects more than survivors' sense of belonging and community on a larger scale, because it impedes their initial ability to grasp the context of the situation. Without information easily produced and disseminated amongst a populace by a national media, or without the ability to communicate with other survivors in other parts of the country via social media, survivors have greater difficulty ascertaining the extent of the damage. When the protagonist Rick awakens from a coma, alone in his hospital room, he manages to stumble back to his house, where he meets a man and his young son squatting next door. The man, Morgan Jones, explains, "All media shut down after a few weeks. I haven't heard much of anything after that. If they found a way to stop it…they haven't made it here yet."[243] While it would seem that this inability to communicate on a larger scale hurts survivors (and it does to an extent), the graphic novel privileges acts of working together, as opposed to relying on past methods that once made life and communication easier. Morgan explains to Rick how the government advised survivors to move towards the cities for protection, but he decided to stay, because "I figured I'd be better off taking my chances here." That decision actually helps Morgan, because when Rick reaches Atlanta, where he goes to try and find his wife and son, he discovers the city has become overrun with zombies. By turning to his immediate social framework (himself and his son), Morgan reveals the necessity of immediate interface rather than a

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[242] Anderson's concept pertains to nationalism and that sense of belonging comes about across vast distances; he explains, "It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991), 6.

[243] Robert Kirkman, *The Walking Dead: Book Two* (Berkeley: Image Comics, 2007).

dependence upon a physically distant (and arguably absent) social framework for an answer. Although the situation in *The Walking Dead* breeds this kind of survival behavior, it underscores the important communicative role face-to-face interaction plays, a role that grows continuously overshadowed as technology alters the way people interact. In a world without technological and digital tools, people must come to rely upon one another again.

The Walking Dead and *Wittgenstein's Mistress* move beyond explaining the danger of forgetting ingrained in external memory by positing the return of a living, social relationship with memory based on a dynamic discourse of interaction and exchange. As such, these specific post-apocalypse works consider how razed spaces absent of technology (and the digital media so prevalent because of that technology) promote the return of *les cadres sociaux*, a concept sociologist Maurice Halbwachs first delineated in *On Collective Memory* (1925). In producing what I term "survival space," wherein survival becomes the motivating factor so that individuals become the spaces that once contained their memories, post-apocalypse works resituate memory through the social interaction of the group. In banding together as a social framework that produces a figurative bounded space through the physical presence of group members, as well as their linguistic exchange, the group becomes the site of memory. Memory requires the interaction among social framework, places, and objects; when those locations and things disappear, people must take on a greater role. Once more, people function as spaces for memory when the sites and objects they once invested with their memories fall away. Paul Connerton differentiates between two different kinds of interaction between memory and place: *memorial* and *locus*, and the latter is pertinent for understanding how places "house" memories for social frameworks.[244]

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[244] The memorial pertains to place-names, which linguistically mark a place, but also specify a type of behavior expected from that place and contain stories about events that transpired there. In this instance, *memorial* would refer not to *city* but to specific place-names, such as *New York City* or *London*, and not to

Locus designates a more general concept of place that situates memories; in this instance, house and city-street function as loci that contain memories of things that occurred in and at those sites. Returning to those locations prompts memory, because places in this instance take on mnemonic operations similar to the social framework. Once places have been destroyed or once their meaning has shifted, the memories associated with those locations changes, too, often disappearing entirely. The destroyed places that survivors traverse offer them little to no concrete meaning, because those locations belong to a different world – a different social framework – even if survivors originate or descend from that world. Since social relations produce social space, which contributes to the places in which people engage one another, it would make sense that the ruins survivors traverse elicits some kind of meaning to the former world; however, those places have been so fundamentally altered as to impede any kind of meaning-making that would come from social interaction. The relationship must shift back to the social framework so that people become the spaces they once relied upon for memory.

In post-apocalyptic space, a group's social relations, that is their movement through the destroyed space as one, unified social framework, constructs a mnemonic relationship based on the community. *The Walking Dead*, in addition to other post-apocalypse works, examines how the community resituates memory through a space of exchange that does not depend on the geographical signification of the former world, or the digital memory produced and perpetuated through technology, but on each other.[245] Since social relations produce social space and memories surface in that arena of exchange, it becomes clear how memory is always-already social.

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home but to someone's particular home. *How Modernity Forgets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 11.

[245] This traversal becomes a dominant motif in many post-apocalypse narratives, including Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, Alfonso Cuaron's film *Children of Men*, and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, to name just a few.

Individuals may function as *loci* for memory, but acts of recollection take place in the presence of other people. For the purposes of this chapter, I will concentrate on the broken but fundamental community in *The Walking Dead* and the absent community in *Wittgenstein's Mistress* in order to highlight how post-apocalyptic literature and film, unlike other memory narratives, pay particular attention to the importance of social relations in creating new communal "spaces" that foster memory. New memories arise through characters' interaction with one another, as well as other survivors they encounter along their journey. In *The Walking Dead*, the absence of traditional spatial designations like *home*, *city*, and *country*, what Connerton describes as *loci*, as well as the absence of technologies, leave open the possibility of a return to *les cadres sociaux*.[246] Therefore, as a pivotal development in memory narratives, post-apocalypse works reveal how the memorial practices of the last century have transformed the way people form and retain their memories, and instead resituate memory in the bonded social interaction of the group.

The Social Space of Exchange

Chronicling "the continuing story of survival horror," *The Walking Dead* opens in characters' past, which actually functions as readers' future, in keeping with the tradition of the post-apocalypse genre.[247] Readers encounter two police officers, Rick and Shane, who crouch behind their police cruiser, engaged in a shootout with a crazed gunman on the highway. The seven panels presented on the first page are staggered and slightly askew in their layout; compared with later paneling, they don't line up neatly, foreshadowing the unsettling events taking place on the

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[246] *How Modernity Forgets*, 11.

[247] Gerry Canavan explains how the zombie narrative blends temporality to a greater degree than other types of post-apocalypse narratives: "Both past and future, then, zombies turn out in this way to be coextensive with the present – they are the corpses of our friends and co-workings lurching aimlessly through the sterile environments we all once shared." See "We *Are* the Walking Dead": Race, Time, and Survival in Zombie Narrative in *Extrapolation.* 51.3 (2010): 441.

page. The panels don't provide much background information, but readers who come to the text aware of its subject matter – that of a zombie apocalypse – confront a scene that immediately possesses qualities in keeping with a pre-apocalyptic world, that is a world that will soon radically change. The close up of the gunman's face in the third panel (Figure 3.1) bespeaks Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection, because while he is human, his expressions and mannerisms suggest someone who is "opposed to I."[248] He threatens for greater reasons than the gun he wields; he threatens because he represents something Other to Rick and Shane, and in turn readers. The man is obviously not a zombie, yet his deranged expression, which comes across through a face stretched beyond its epidermal limits and a crazed right eye opened wide in horrific exaggeration, mirror many of the zombies that follow.
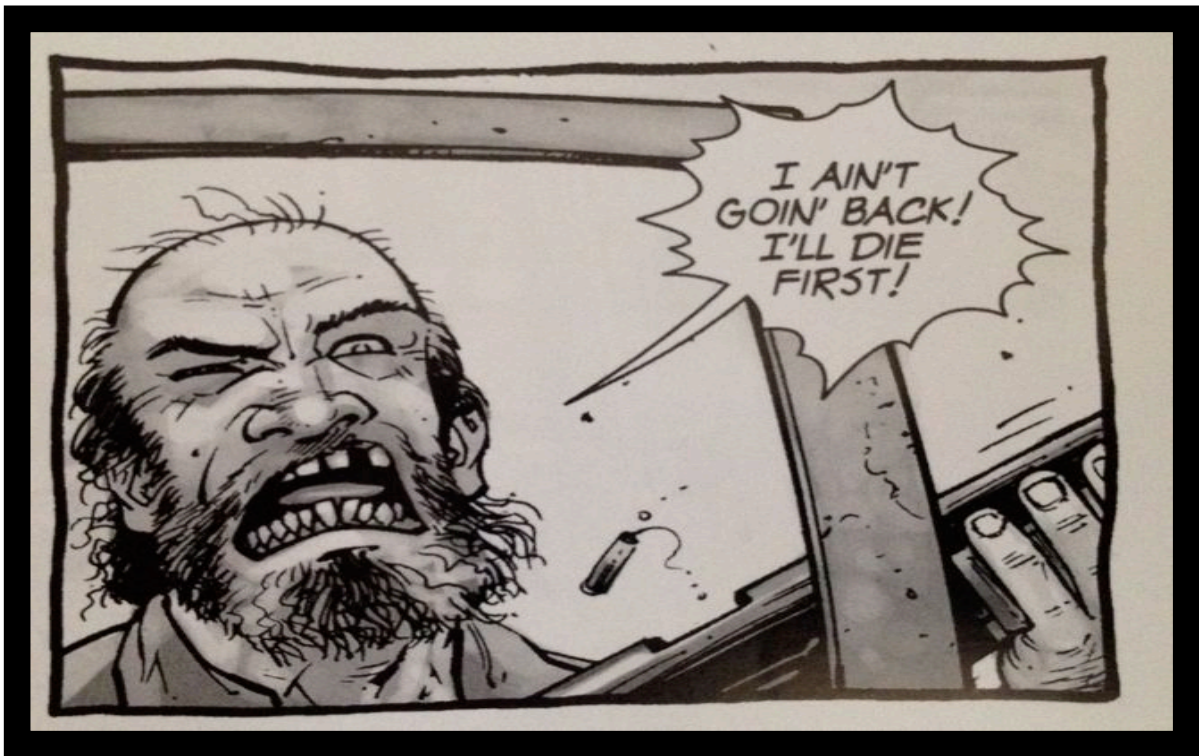

Figure 3.1 from *The Walking Dead: Book One*

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[248] *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection,* trans. Leon Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 1.

Here, Tony Moore, who served as primary artist for the first six issues of the series, foreshadows the looming question that haunts the graphic novel: Who exactly *is* the walking dead?[249] As an outgrowth of monster culture, the zombie represents much more than a rotting human corpse, serving instead as a metaphor for society's condition, humanity's condition or, as recent scholarship suggests, as a commentary on the dangers of capitalism and consumer consumption.[250] Zombies in *The Walking Dead* also represent the breakdown of the social framework on a larger scale, and the frightening implications created by an absence of memory. The zombies serve as a metaphor for a lack of connection to the social world. Rick and other survivors are unable to communicate with zombies, despite the fact that they are formerly human, which hyperbolizes the lack of communication between people in the real world. By pitting survivors against former-humans, the graphic novel emphasizes social frameworks – or rather social frameworks' breakdown following the apocalyptic event – and in doing so comments on the necessity of the social relations of the group when it comes to structuring social and individual memory.

Author Robert Kirkman alongside artists Moore and Charlie Adlard present *The Walking Dead* in black and white, reminiscent of old photographs, as well as black and white cinema.[251] Drawing parallels between their graphic novel and other cultural works associated with the past effectively places the narrative in the past. The graphic novel's first chapter, "Days Gone Bye,"

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[249] Moore acted as principal artist for friend and creator Robert Kirkman, but later left to attend to his own series, and was replaced by Charlie Adlard, who took a far more realistic approach to the art.

[250] Steve Shaviro contends, "In contrast to the inhumanity of vampire-capital, zombies present the 'human face' of capitalist monstrosity. This is precisely because they are the dregs of humanity: the zombie is all that remains of 'human nature,' or even simply of a human scale, in the immense and unimaginably complex network economy. Where vampiric surplus-appropriation is unthinkable, because it exceeds our powers of representation, the zombie is conversely what must be thought: the shape that representation unavoidably takes now that 'information' has displaced 'man' as the measure of all things." See *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection,* trans. Leon Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 1.

[251] Tony Moore served as the artist for the first book, while Charles Adlard took over that responsibility and has remained primary artist for all following books.

plays off the familiar saying "days gone by," and suggests not only the passing of time that the original phrase does but also the inaccessibility of that time once past. The use of "bye" rather than "by" implies that the changes between the past and the present have been so significant that the past now exists out of reach. Much like the way that pre-apocalyptic worlds differ so greatly for survivors in *Heroes and Villains* and *Oryx and Crake*, the past is also cut off from the present in *The Walking Dead* so as to represent a different world. Even though survivors all know about the world before the apocalyptic event, having been born and raised in that world, their separation from it remains so great that the past's meaning changes. The tasks that once mattered and metered out the day are gone. Once he reunites with his family and the other survivors they now travel with, Rick delivers an impassioned speech about the massive changes the world has undergone, exclaiming, "Do you think you're ever going to watch television again? Go to the bank? Buy groceries? Drop the kids off at school?! Ever?!"[252] Those activities may not seem to be very important, but in many ways they not only organize one's sense of temporality but they also constitute how one participates in life by way of social rituals. Rick vocalizes how the daily tasks that structured life before the world changed will never return. Having bonded together for the purposes of survival, the characters in *The Walking Dead* cannot help each other remember the past, since they did not know each other before the apocalyptic event; instead, they form a new social framework, which will produce new memories and spotlight people's importance when it comes to acts of recollection.

Utilizing a black and white format also lends the graphic novel a photographic sensibility. Rather than being presented in color, the black and white nature of the panels constructs a reality that moves away from the drawn and at-times cartoonish look a graphic novel can sometimes

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[252] Robert Kirkman, *The Walking Dead: Book Two* (Berkeley: Image Comics, 2010).

evoke. By stressing a photographic quality to his artwork, Adlard aligns *The Walking Dead* with something more realistic than a literary creation; at times, it seems as though readers are not reading a graphic novel, but something more realistic like photographic journalism. Graphic novels distinguish themselves from their comic book predecessors by presenting more realistic (and often darker) art, which Adlard achieves. Moore's drawings tend to exude a comic sensibility, because of the cartoon-like way he draws the characters, but Adlard shifts this with his style in the subsequent issues. The drawings become far more life-like, shaded to a greater extent than Moore's drawings, and therefore exude a darker, more lifelike quality (Figure 3.2). In this way, the text reflects the very mediation that occurs with digital memory, but positions the reader as the one separated from the "memories" presented on the page.

Figure 3.2 from *The Walking Dead: Book One*

The initial pages of *The Walking Dead* stress the importance a social framework plays in structuring memory. Rick awakens from a coma in the hospital to find himself all alone. As such,

he exists on the margins of any social framework or *les cadres sociaux*. *The Walking Dead* positions Rick on the outskirts of any meaningful social exchange and therefore beyond memory.[253] This 'beyond' mostly comes across through Rick's sparse dialogue at the outset of the text; over the course of the first twelve pages, as Rick discovers that zombies now populate the world and living humans are nowhere to be found, he mostly reacts rather than takes part in any kind of linguistic, social exchange. Since the zombies do not speak beyond primal, animalistic expressions emanating from the body, i.e. "Guh" and "Gak," they do not offer Rick the communal structure so necessary for recollection. Consequently, Rick's responses tend to mirror those of the zombies, emanating as they do more from his body than from any discursive system. Even Rick's exclamations eventually give way to a primarily physical reaction; upon spotting a woman's living corpse in a field (Figure 3.3), Rick cries rather than exclaims, since his body serves as the
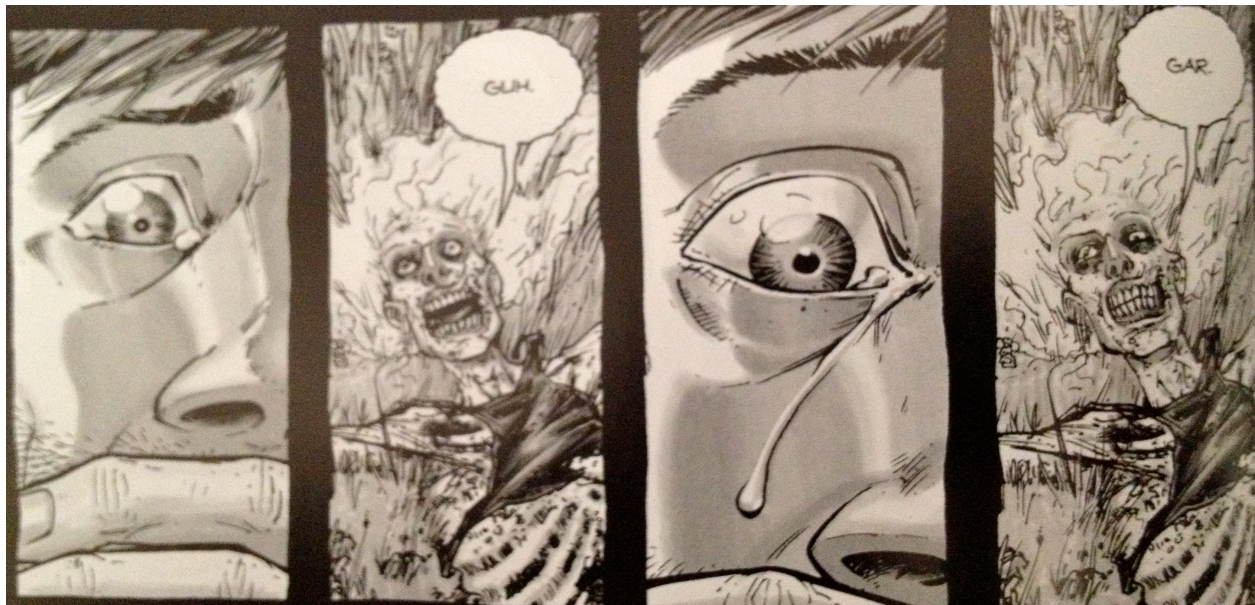

Figure 3.3. from *The Walking Dead: Book One*

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[253] Kansteiner explains, "Collective memories originate from shared communications about the meaning of the past that are anchored in the life-worlds of individuals who partake in the communal life of the respective collective." "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies," 188.

central means of expression (and communication) rather than his speech. In fact, he places his hand over his mouth, signifying how language fails not only in the wake of such destruction, but also when the necessary frame of a living group ceases to exist. When Rick does speak, which occurs mostly to himself, his language mirrors the sounds and utterances of the zombies, including "Ahh!" "HELP!!" and "Uh. Uh. Uh." The connection here between language's failure and memory's failure constitutes an important one, because although readers do not (yet) gain insight into Rick's inner thoughts – into his memories – the lack of language powerfully parallels the absence of memory when social frameworks break down or simply do not exist. Memories are social insofar as they typically pertain to other people, or they reemerge in another's presence. Sharing memories requires language to communicate them, which constructs memory into a socially embedded form. That language fails for Rick suggests that memories will as well, because he exists outside of any normative social framework in which to construct either.

Maurice Halbwachs asserted that if an individual were removed from their native environment and transported to an unfamiliar place, he or she would be unable to speak the language. Therefore, without anyone to communicate with using the language that comprises his subjectivity, Rick cannot access that particular linguistic system to the extent he once could. Even though he initially draws upon language to question the state of his surroundings, when he tries to engage the zombies for answers he slowly discards his verbal signifiers and eventually grows silent, relying more on reactionary exclamations than any true linguistic sign. Although it doesn't last beyond the opening sequence of the graphic novel, Rick takes on the communicative properties associated with the new social framework he's encountered: zombies; however, since that framework isn't composed of living people capable of meaningful interaction, it doesn't offer him any stable communicative structure. Rick finally makes his way back home from the hospi-

tal, and while exploring his house, the graphic novel emphasizes how important social exchange is when it comes to memory. Even though Rick recalls his wife and son, without anyone to substantiate that memory he cannot say with any certainty that he hasn't simply imagined his past. Upon returning to his house, he comes across pictures and remnants – many broken in the seeming panic that followed the epidemic – of his life with his wife and son, but without a living person or a social framework to verify his past, he remains in a state of utter confusion and cut off from those memories. Rick's assertion, "Nothing," upon exiting his house speaks less to what he hasn't discovered, and more to a failure on the part of memory.[254]

In the way that people lose their sense of language when removed from the social frameworks that constitute and disseminate tradition and meaning over time, they also lose access to their memories. Memory does not operate in the exact same way that language does, but the two share important social properties. As signifier, language acts as a particular communicative code that enables people within a set time and space, as well as across a delineated time and space, to engage in meaningful exchange. This exchange could be limited to small groups, such as a family, or larger social institutions, such as a club, town, or even nation. Memory, too, relies on codes comprehended, transmitted, and even transformed by groups of people over time. Memory's failure in the wake of a devastating apocalyptic event occurs time and again in post-apocalypse works where a distinct division exists between the past and the present. Even if survivors were born and raised in the time before the event, they still lose connection to that time and space, because it belongs to a different social framework, and as a result memories diminish. The harsh

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[254] Kirkman, *The Walking Dead: Book One*.

requirements of the new way of life, based primarily upon survival, alter the framework(s) from which people emerge, in turn altering them, as well as their memory.[255]

In a way that contrasts and yet simultaneously works alongside the social memory *The Walking Dead* proposes, *Wittgenstein's Mistress* utilizes the last man genre, originally made famous by Mary Shelley's novel *The Last Man* (1826), to explore the necessity of social frameworks when it comes to structuring memory, language, and subjectivity. Unlike other last man novels, the narrator and protagonist Kate discovers no bodies; instead, the entire population has completely vanished from the face of the earth. This absence, coupled with Kate's inability to keep facts straight, suggest that she may be mentally unstable and therefore unreliable as a narrator. Less important, I argue, is her position as an unreliable narrator or madwoman, and more important are the ways in which she reveals how social engagement and interaction structure the way people participate with their past, as well as their present.

Believing she is the last woman on earth, Kate presents a series of stripped down sentences, each a statement based in some way on her memory. The bare bones form of her language, devoid as it is of any extended background, explanation, or description, speaks to the failing nature of memory and language without social relations to strengthen those two facets of subjectivity. Kate often revises the statements she makes as she realizes her original assertion to be partly confused or entirely erroneous. Her revisions may not always be a conscious act on her part; as such, they represent the way that memories do not serve as a pure reflection of the past, but change to serve the needs and desires of a person in the present. On the one hand, memory functions biologically because the mind retains information and experiences without the individ-

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[255] In the popular post-apocalyptic novel, *War Day*, the narrator explains, "We are not the people we were on that sharp October day in 1988. […] So much of what I saw as basic to life is gone; what I counted valuable, worthless." This becomes a prevalent motif in post-apocalyptic narratives, where the division between "then" and "now" gets taken up within identity. Whitley Strieber and James Kunetka, *War Day* (New York: Hold, Rinehart and Winston, 1984), 3.

ual's prompting such memory storage; however, memory also functions as a social process in which groups in narrativizing acts that organize and structure events and experiences in order to provide the individual with a coherent sense, i.e. story, of temporality. Long before medical technology and the scientific field of neuroscience better comprehended the ways in which memory functioned, Halbwachs astutely observed how "everything seems to indicate that the past is not preserved but is reconstructed on the basis of the present."[256] Memory, i.e. a recalled event, experience, or emotion, does not exist in a "preserved" state; rather, individuals and groups continually revise their memories in order to reflect the present moment. Memories exhibit a dynamic composition, because they are not simply a faithful representation of the past, but a changing link that connects past and present generations while maintaining the past's traditions to a certain degree. Throughout the novel, Kate participates with the past through culture rather than her own memory, since what little she does share about her past seems to be rather traumatic. In this way, she unconsciously interacts with memory on a collective level by turning to socially shared forms of the past, i.e. culture. Instead of recollecting and engaging with the sorrowful moments of her life, she relies upon culture, interacting with her past by way of myriad facts she states and eventually revises as the novel progresses. Kate reveals memory's changing nature by changing her cultural recollections as she needs to: "Meantime I may have made an error, earlier, in saying that where Rupert Brooke died during the first World War was at the Hellespont, by which I mean the Dardanelles."[257] This moment occurs frequently throughout the novel, as Kate corrects herself again and again, revising the facts she relies upon. While these errors certainly speak to her unreliability as a narrator, more importantly they reveal how

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[256] *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 39-40.

[257] David Markson, *Wittgenstein's Mistress* (Champaign, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1988), 203.

memory constantly changes. Every time she amends her memory, Kate exhibits the revisionary properties bound up in acts of narrating the past.

By positioning Kate outside of any dominant social framework, *Wittgenstein's Mistress* reveals how a lack of social structure lends itself to insanity.[258] Kate often mentions a period in which she "was quite out of [her] mind," but asserts that she's since gotten over that time in her life.[259] Her madness may stem from the hinted but not overtly explained death of her son, or from the mysterious apocalyptic event that claimed all life on earth, but I argue that it primarily surfaces as a result of the absence of *les cadres sociaux*. Without a social framework, people go mad or at least exhibit mental instability; indeed, a threat of solitary confinement often becomes a powerful one in prisons, and other places where disciplinary behavior may be necessary. As she observes, "Generally I feel quite well, considering. Still, this other can happen."[260] This "other" hints at the abjection that literally surfaces through the body of the zombies in *The Walking Dead*, but here Kate contains both "I" and "Other" within herself. Since she has no one from which to draw her memories, she primarily focuses on facts about other artists, writers, and philosophers that she has picked up over the years. These are not facts about their works, however, but rather the people themselves, many of whom also have a history of mental illness. Madness in this sense takes on solitary properties, creating a sense of being along – outside more "normative" society – as well as resulting from the act of being alone.

For Kate, culture becomes a means of understanding and interpreting the past. She decides to write a chronicle of her time as the last human alive, what becomes *Wittgenstein's Mis-*

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[258] Insanity appears time and again as the leitmotif of apocalypse and post-apocalypse narratives for this very reason: the individual existing beyond the norms and bounds of social space.

[259] Ibid., 102.

[260] Ibid., 73.

tress, and in this way she practices a form of archival (and external) memory by including in her account innumerable cultural facts. Although her work is not digital, it reflects the contemporary practice to accumulate vast amounts of information about the past. She finds that while she can assemble the past, turning back to find anything would lead down a rabbit trail: "And doubtless if I did look back I would be distracted by other things I have written anyhow."[261] The book exemplifies how digital archival practices do provide a much more complete picture of the past while simultaneously obscuring the past. Since no clear narrative emerges from the immense data stored, memory does not permit the access to the past that it once did. Its function changes.

Kate turns to the literary texts, works of art, and classical symphony movements that comprised her world before the mysterious event wiped out life on earth. Yet, these objects, unmoored from the social frameworks that instilled them with meaning, become loose signifiers for her; she mistakenly states, "*Medea* was written by Luigi Cherubini, I might mention."[262] The objects change in the meaning they offer her and further confuse her efforts to remember. Kate takes to her typewriter to transcribe the myriad thoughts that come tumbling out of her mind without any social framework to structure them. In this way, she reflects the critique that "Memory is not a property of individual minds, but a diverse and shifting collection of material artifacts and social practices," where the cultural icons she consistently references stand in for material artifacts.[263] Yet, these informational "artifacts," i.e. culture, still do not provide her with anything secure, since, with civilization's absence, "culture is unstable and subjective, a fading memory of 'baggage' that teases [her] with false connections, 'inconsequential perplexities,' and

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[261] Ibid.., 123.

[262] Ibid.., 104.

[263] Klein, "On the Emergency of *Memory* in Historical Discourse," 130.

meaningless coincidences. It is a disorderly jumble."[264] In other words, without the social prac-

tices to fortify the material artifacts, those facts and artifacts become useless. Cultural facts re-

place her memory, but they still do not offer any clear connection to the past, removed as those

facts are from the context of the past. Kate writes, "Rainer Maria Rilke once wrote a novel called

The Recognitions, about a man who wears an alarm clock around his neck, which seems less like

a lie than just a foolish subject for a book altogether."[265] Readers familiar with *The Recognitions*,

though, recognize that Kate's assertion here is inaccurate, as William Gaddis wrote that novel, a

fact she claims earlier in her writing: "Actually somebody wore an alarm clock that very way in

a novel I once read. I would say it was in *The Recognitions*, by William Gaddis, except that I do

not believe I have ever read *The Recognitions* by William Gaddis."[266] She often misremembers

details about the particular artists, authors, or philosophers she recalls, and later corrects herself

when she discovers her mistake. Her tendency for inaccuracy speaks to the relation the novel

shares with Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophical work. In *Philosophical Investigations,* Witt-

genstein posits that the separation of language from ordinary context (in which the rules of lan-

guage apply and communicate meaning) creates philosophical problems.[267] Here, the individual

shares much in common with language as a specific utterance tied to the social framework or

context. The removal of the individual from the social framework creates problems at the mne-

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[264] Steven Moore, "Afterword," in *Wittgenstein's Mistress* (Champaign, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1988), 245

[265] *Wittgenstein's Mistress*, 196.

[266] Ibid., 27.

[267] He posits that communicative language has been overtaken by a system of language that moves away from true communication: "[W]e may perhaps get an inkling how much this general notion of the meaning of a word surrounds the working of language with a haze which makes clear vision impossible. It disperses the fog to study the phenomena of language in primitive kinds of application in which one can command a clear view of the aim and functioning of the words." See *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 3.

monic level, especially concerning forgetting, because facts become confused, and cultural (arti)facts replace memory.

Although she does not give much insight into her background, the little that Kate does remember and share are presented as if they, too, were cultural facts. For instance, she remembers a mirror by her dying mother's bedside, but does not elaborate on her mother, their relationship, or her response to her mother's death. Without social relations to help her encode and retrieve memories, Kate begins to look on her past in the way she looks upon the cultural facts she culls: pieces of information that do not reflect any particular emotion. This occurs, I argue, because she cannot truly access her memory without a social framework, and so her "memories" disappear, replaced as they are by statements that present details and data but no sentiment. She offers the reader the following: "In my mother's living room, in Bayonne, New Jersey, there were several of my own paintings. Two of those were portraits, of her and my father."[268] This statement elucidates Kate's artistic background, and perhaps her regional origins, but it does not get readers any closer to her inner thoughts. The jumbled nature of the facts presented, alongside the way they are presented, i.e. the constant ebb and flow of her thoughts in a stream-of-consciousness, presents a difficult text that mirrors the muddled nature of her mind outside the structuring influence of a social framework.

The Walking Dead also underscores the important role social frameworks play in preserving memory and transmitting it across time and space. Hoping his family has escaped, Rick heads towards Atlanta, coming across a horse in an abandoned barn along the way. On the road, he recounts his happiest memory to the horse in order to "get my mind off all the messed up shit I've seen recently." The art shifts from one large panel situating Rick and horse against the

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[268] Ibid., 34.

backdrop of the road to six smaller ones that zoom in on Rick's profile and highlight his solitary position. Moore depicts Rick against a white space to emphasize his removed from any social framework, and it is this absence of any other living person, of any organic, social interaction, that causes him to grow silent and leave his story unfinished. While his silence stems in part from the trauma of his situation and his inability to contemplate his son when his son may very well be dead, more importantly I argue his memories depend upon a social framework, and in that framework's absence, they fail. Astrid Erll contends, "[w]ithout other humans, an individual is denied access not only to such obviously social phenomena as language and customs, but also…to his or her own memory," and Rick's isolated condition emphasizes how necessary people are to memory.[269] In fact, the text's utter silence arises through Rick's journey alone to Atlanta, where he believes his wife and son may have escaped.

Rick discovers a band of survivors located on the outskirts of Atlanta, where they choose to momentarily reside before finding a more secure shelter. Atlanta does not offer them a safe haven, nor does it offer them a context for memory, since it has become overrun with zombies. Instead of relying on places and objects to understand their present situation, the group's members must depend upon one another, and in this way they become the spaces for their memory, embodying one another's recollections and representing the mnemonic schema Halbwachs found so important to the notion of social frameworks. The group of survivors gather around a campfire one night and discuss their respective pasts, sharing what they did and information about who they were before the world "ended." This moment of face-to-face interaction becomes the privileged – and required – form of communication in the graphic novel. Without the cell phones or other digital devices to turn to, people must rely upon each other for information. Despite the fact

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[269] *Memory in Culture*, 15.

that characters begin to die as a result of surprise zombie attacks or infection, the remaining characters carry on their memories; the deceased remain, having a presence in the present, not because they leave any part of themselves behind via an object, but because their memories survive in other people. Two sisters, Andrea and Amy, comprise a part of the group, but one night Amy dies when a rogue zombie bites her. Instead of Andrea carrying on her memory because of their familial connection, the group shares in that responsibility, showing readers how people can function as spaces of memory, enacting a kind of living material memory. As they stand by her gravesite, each member speaks a word of recollection about Amy; this moment goes beyond the traditional eulogizing that takes place at a memorial, and displays the social framework in action. Amy's memory does not exist in an object somewhere, nor does it exist as a part of history, because she's left no tangible legacy; instead, she exists in the people she once engaged with, and those people become Amy's material trace. Donna, another member of the group, elucidates the way people depend upon each other to a great extent in post-apocalyptic space, saying, "We all lean on each other…we all *need* each other."[270] Although she refers to people's requisite part in surviving, she illuminates the way people need each other in more fundamental ways when it comes to constructing and maintaining the past.

In the open space of nature, the group becomes a new physical space, a community forged through the necessity of staying alive and one that begins the work of meaning making through the shared experience of survival. Yet, that kind of meaning making – especially as it surfaces through narrative – changes in the wake of the apocalyptic event. In a telling moment that speaks to the mediated way people engage with their world, Rick and fellow survivor Tyreese converse about Rick's leadership role in the group. Tyreese admits, "I had you pegged

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[270] Kirkman, *The Walking Dead: Book One*.

as the hero cop, the way you've been handling yourself the past few days." Rick, shown in sil-

houette as he and Tyreese carry a dead zombie body to a field, says, "Lord, no. I was a regular

Barney Fife."[271] Rick's blacked out form erases any narrative position of the past he might em-

body; he is not the hero cop or Barney Fife in that moment, because he exists as an outline rather

than a fully formed person. Readers, therefore, cannot ascribe to him qualities in keeping with

either type of police officer. Tyreese looks to past narrative forms to explain their situation and

Rick's role. To him, Rick takes on the properties of a hero cop in an action movie, because their

situation seems as surreal as a movie, and he requires an explanation that fits a familiar narrative

form. Yet, this kind of explication eventually fades away as people's behavior blurs the lines be-

tween mediated narratives as the one they once read or watched, and their current life. Rick suf-

fers a breakdown because of the many deaths of his group, which include his wife and infant

daughter, so that he no longer exudes qualities in keeping with any of the former cop narratives

that Tyreese once drew upon to understand Rick. The media and narratives of the past do not ex-

plain their current existence, and the group must eventually accept the new way of life. In this

way, Kirkman plays with readers' narrative expectations. In the pages of *The Walking Dead*, no

characters are safe; a characters' prominence or central role as antagonist or protagonist does not

mean they will survive to another issue. Approaching the text as they might other zombie narra-

tives, readers come to expect certain patterns; however, *The Walking Dead* does not participate

in those patterns.[272] In this way, the form reflects the content, because it upends and shatters nar-

rative patterns of the past. As such, new narratives (new memories) arise with each new pub-

lished issue.

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[271] Ibid.

[272] Gerry Canavan explains how Rick's group is a "band of largely expendable survivors." The idea of killing off main characters and important characters carries through to the AMC television show. See "We *Are* the Walking Dead: Race, Time, and Survival in Zombie Narrative," *Extrapolation* 51:3 (2010): 436.

In the second book of the currently on-going series, Tyreese explains his particular goal in the wake of the zombie apocalypse, "We are trying to reestablish life –as it was. That's our goal. We don't want to become savages."[273] Yet, Tyreese must realize, as the others all come to do, that reestablishing life will not take place, because things have changed so greatly. Hershel, an older doctor recognizes, "Maybe we were just fooling ourselves until something happened that was big enough to make us stop and realize how crazy our world really is."[274] The craziness Hershel points to derives from the state of affairs before the zombie outbreak, but also the way people failed to interact with another. This problem of communication often arises in the graphic novel, where characters shout at one another in an attempt to be heard. The text often feels "loud" as a result of the multiple exclamation points, exaggerated facial expressions, and emboldened text. These are remnants of the communicative problems of the twentieth century, problems that also apply to the failing mnemonic capacity due to the existence of more external memory. Despite the shouting, though, meaning cannot be conveyed until characters learn to inhabit survival space and work together. During the moments when the group defends itself best, the text takes on a quieter tone and the aggressive means of communication isn't necessary.

Although neither novel explicitly references the problem of digital memory, by being set in post-apocalyptic spaces devoid of electricity and therefore technology, it becomes clear how people come to rely upon each other once more to assist in the memory work so important to social frameworks. Post-apocalypse works extend the technological critique found so often in apocalypse works, but do so in order to consider the consequence of technology on memory. The importance of the social framework manifests by way of its absence or breakdown; much in the

[273] Kirkman, *The Walking Dead: Book Two*. While many graphic novels work in a five-book arc, with each book comprising twelve issues, *The Walking Dead* is currently in its eighth book with more on the way.

[274] Robert Kirkman, *The Walking Dead: Book Three* (Berkley: Image Comics, 2010).

way that memory materializes through traces or effects, so, too, does the necessity of social

frameworks becomes visible in their absence. By concentrating on the breakdown of the social

framework in *The Walking Dead*, as well as that framework's absence in *Wittgenstein's Mistress*,

these post-apocalypse works elucidate the part people play in contextualizing memory, despite

the fact that so often neuroscience posits the individual as the impetus behind any recollective act.

The Walking Dead proposes people as embodied sites of memory, in which they function as

places once did, thereby aligning memory as a social phenomenon. Both novels serve as primary

examples of Halbwachs' theory of collective memory, and continue the line of memory work

embedded in the post-apocalypse genre.

CHAPTER FOUR
Future Social Spaces: Children as Living Memory-Narratives

They had lived not only their own years; but their memories, it seemed to them, began years before they
were born, in the lives of the grown-ups around them."
- Katherine Ann Porter, *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*

Inasmuch as memory exhibits individual properties that construct a person's subjectivity

and identity in order to contextualize their development over time, it is the act of narrativizing

memory and sharing that narrativization that makes memory a social phenomenon. People's so-

cial relations generate social space, which in turn becomes an interactive site where the group

can engage with their memories of the past and construct those memories into memory-

narratives. As the previous chapter argued, in the absence of geographical signifiers once found

in places, people become spaces for memory once again. As memory-spaces, people create social

memory, which depends upon the interaction of social frameworks to contribute to memory-

narratives in a variety of ways, often constructing, reconstructing, and augmenting such narra-

tives. Once structured into language, memory becomes a social phenomenon that links the pre-

sent to the past, and sustains social frameworks.[275] Therefore, as much as social frameworks pro-

duce memory-narratives, so, too, do memory-narratives produce social frameworks. Language

functions as the communicative force that transmits memory from person to person. Individuals

may have memory-images of their own experiences, but once they articulate those images to an-

other person, language transforms memory into a social property to be shared across time and

space, or, in other words, across future generations and different social spaces. According to La-

can, language constructs subjectivity, and so people are social beings from the time they enter

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[275] Halbwachs asserts, "No memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections." *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 43.

into language. Drawing upon a structuralist methodology, Lacan argued that "*the unconscious is the Other's discourse*," wherein a human's most deep desires and unconscious motivations can never be understood because it remains foreign even while comprising a central part of the subject.[276] Reading Other, however, in a social light reveals how each person encompasses a discourse in which the not-I or Other which emerged in postmodern theoretical criticism contributes in significant ways to subjectivity, and mediates between the conscious and unconscious. When people engage with their respective social groups on the level of memory, they assert its sociality, as well as the underlying sociality which defines their own subjectivity in important if predominantly unconscious ways. In other words, a person's access to his- or herself occurs in part through interactions with other people, and memory-narratives become an important part of that communicative exchange.

Structured as recollections are by social relations and the interaction of social frameworks, social memory exemplifies a form of communication, one that involves a linked sense of past, present, and future. Bolstering memory depends upon repeating communicative practices. "[A] person's memory forms itself through his or her participation in communicative processes," and these processes must entail continual interaction.[277] Memory becomes stronger upon repetition, so if people do not "repeat" memories by engaging in acts of remembrance with members of their various social frameworks then memory begins to fade over time. Memory spans about three generations, and once the generation closest to the original, living memory passes away, it becomes harder for subsequent generations to engage with that memory as memory; instead, the past's affective quality diminishes and a person's connection with it decreases.

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[276] "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'" *Ecrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton & Company 2006), 10 (italics original).

[277] Jan Assman, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilizations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 23.

As I concentrated on in the second chapter, when the burden of producing memory-narratives shifts away from social frameworks to non-living sites or sites that reflect a larger, institutional perspective regarding the past memory's social component diminishes. External memory undermines and alters memory's social nature, because it changes the way that people engage with memory-narratives by stripping them in many ways of their contributive role. Heretofore, external memory has referred to a location or object, i.e. a museum or biographical memoir that takes on the burden of the past, or digital memory. Yet, social memory, too, operates as a kind of external memory because of the relationship the individual shares with their various social frameworks. Jan Assman clarifies the exchange that takes place between a social framework and its members, stating, "From the individual's point of view, memory is a conglomeration that emerges from participation in different group memories. From the perspective of the group, memory is a matter of knowledge that is distributed among and internalized by each member."[278] For individuals, memory arises through social relations that constitute their particular social frameworks; individual members serve as a localized "site" of memory for those social frameworks.[279] Social memory continually requires and promotes "communication and social interaction," which include interactions among a group's members, or interactions involving larger ideological group-identities, such as 'region' or 'nation.'[280] Memory moves between member and the framework at large, transmuting with each shift from internal to external and back again. Unlike non-living sites of external memory, the externality of social memory does not have the same mnemonic effect on people; instead of prompting forgetting, social memory promotes re-

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[278] Ibid., 23.

[279] Halbwachs asserts, "No memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections." See *On Collective Memory*, 43.

[280] Assman, 23.

membering because social relations amongst group members retain the impetus to remember rather than transferring that action to a more static object or locale. These objects and locations form an important part of memory, but they must be used by social frameworks rather than in and of themselves.

When viewing social memory as a form of external memory, it becomes clearer how a group's members can themselves function as "sites" for memory. Members of every social group can act as embodied spaces for memory, thereby functioning as important temporal extensions of the memory-narrative process, since they perpetuate memory into the present and promise its futurity to some extent. As work in memory studies has shown, memory pertains to the present even though it remains most synonymous with the past. Equally important, but often unexplored, is memory's relationship to the future by way of group members. This chapter focuses on how children form living spatial extensions of social groups' memory-narratives. Children's presence bespeaks memory's future, since they will continue the work of their families, religions, and other social frameworks of which they are (and will be) a part. In exploring the spatial and temporal aspects that emerge when a person functions as a memory-narrative, memory's collective properties continue to become clearer.

Given the way that social memory continues to surface in post-apocalypse works, certain novels and film analyze how people function as memory-narratives, and the mnemonic disturbances that occur in their absence. Once more, post-apocalyptic space becomes an ideal site to think about how important people are when it comes to sustaining and perpetuating memory into the future. Without people but, more importantly, without children, communication suffers, affecting both social interactions and subsequently the memory-narratives once produced by those social interactions. *The Flame Alphabet* (2013) by Ben Marcus and Alfonso Cuarón's film, *Chil-*

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dren of Men (2006) both posit what happens to society when children disappear. The novel and film each approach the idea of children as a form of living external memory differently. Whereas *The Flame Alphabet* investigates the narrative function children serve when it comes to social memory, and the problems that arise when their role no longer warrants communication, *Children of Men* looks at the idea of children as future spaces of memory, and the devastation that emerges when they no longer exist as an extension of a social group's memory. Children's existence as a social group's loci of "future memory" becomes an imperative factor in extending memory beyond the present, so that it survives long after current generations have passed away. Their absence, as *The Flame Alphabet* and *Children of Men* consider, becomes a devastating loss for memory in that it interferes with and, in certain cases, completely destroys the act of communication necessary to perpetuating social memory, thereby contributing to the heightened sensation of forgetting predominantly found in post-apocalypse works. Although they differ in certain ways from other post-apocalyptic narratives, each of these works contributes to the overall discussion on space and memory that emerges so consistently in post-apocalyptic literature and film, but do so by incorporating temporality to a greater and more physical degree. Concentrating on children's roles in social frameworks illustrates the important relationship memory shares with the future.

The socially constructed narrative that memory creates becomes especially important for understanding how literary narratives get closer to addressing real-world concerns when it comes to the heightened experience of forgetting in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Literature exhibits the socially coded properties so important to narrative patterns. Whether literature exemplifies a particular generic style, or draws upon a familiar form through known literary devic-

es, it best handles pertinent social, cultural and political issues.[281] As this project contends, litera-

ture and, by extension, cultural post-apocalypse works *do* more than repeat social concerns about

memory in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries; they take on a more practical role –

one normally reserved for more scientific, i.e. factual writing – by revealing the importance of

social frameworks when it comes to memory, as well as positing a range of possible outcomes if

external memory continues to move away from social interaction towards a more static site. In a

time where the purpose of the humanities often gets called into question thanks to the growing

emphasis on practical, transferrable skills in higher education, these cultural works disclose a

greater function than has heretofore been afforded literary writing. Literature does something

more than reflect the time in which it was written; understanding how it contributes in unique,

narrative ways to contemporary issues and conversations, as well as the insights it produces as a

result, shifts literature from cultural work to cultural force.

Communication and Toxic Language

Social memory tends to be a structured type of recollection, because it organizes the

group around a collective past while simultaneously utilizing that past for the purposes of the

present.[282] The group's overarching narrative best exemplifies this type of structural work. Simi-

lar to other narratives involving an explanatory or interpretative purpose, memory-narratives in-

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[281] Interestingly, literature does this despite exuding qualities in keeping with solitude, since reading in-volves a degree of being alone with the work. Maurice Blanchot asserts, "The work is solitary: this does not mean that it remains uncommunicable, that it has no reader. But whoever reads it enters into the af-firmation of the work's solitude, just as he who writes it belongs to the risk of this solitude." See *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 22.

[282] "Kerwin Lee Klein contends, "Memory…becomes 'structural,' provided we use that word with suffi-cient flexibility to invoke both the nation of 'social structure' typical of recent social history and the no-tion of systems of difference common in the high structuralism descended from Saussurean linguistics." See "On the Emergence of *Memory* in Historical Discourse," *Representations*. 69 (Winter 2000): 129.

volve social codes. As I discussed earlier, memories are social insofar as they derive from partic-

ular frames that encourage interpretation, whereby social frameworks rely upon socially-

embedded narrative forms to interpret their past and structure memory into a coherent account.

Stephan Feuchtwang explains how "institutions trigger stories and mutual recognitions through

learned habits of interpretation, using background assumptions shared by some but not by others,

asserted in order to differentiate experience, its validation, and its recognition."[283] In other words,

social frameworks do more than create a living space of remembrance through social relations;

they also provide a frame of interpretation that structures memory in such a way that meaning

making becomes more comprehensible. People tend to conform to certain "patterns of action" or

narratives that they learn over time, and unconsciously apply these patterns either to their behav-

ior or to help explain the cause of a situation.[284] These narratives arise both through people's in-

teraction with various groups, and through other cultural forms that transmit familiar narrative

patterns.[285] In terms of other cultural forms, I am here thinking about the way people learn about

specific narratives from film, literature, etc. Either through genres (which create certain audience

expectations), or by applying an analogy between a cultural work and their own life, people draw

connections between narrative forms and their own experience. Narrative patterns, therefore, are

fundamentally social, because they arise from and disseminate amongst social frameworks; in

this way, they exhibit a transnational quality, since narratives are at once bound to ideologies of

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[283] "Ritual and Memory" in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. Susannah Radstone and Bill
Shwarz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 285.

[284] I am indebted to Steven Knapp's work on mnemonic patterns, which he differentiates between "nor-
mative" and "causal." The normative purpose of patterns outlines socially acceptable and unacceptable
behavior, whereas the causal purpose suggests a range of possible outcomes of a given situation based on
previous, similar events. "Collective Memory and the Actual Past" in *Representations*. 26 (Spring 1989),
123.

[285] Ibid.

gender, sexuality, race, nationality and class, inasmuch as they also transcend such categorizations.

Memories as they occur subjectively in an individual's mind (what Freud referred to as *memory-images*) do not conform to any comprehensible narrative structure; once members of a social framework begin structuring memory into language, memories begin to conform to particular social codes, which continues as members shape these memories into memory-narratives. Steve Knapp discusses the underlying narrative structure that forms memory, explaining,

> It seems clear that specific narratives at least sometimes play a role in shaping people's dispositions. […] And if dispositions are at least sometimes connected with specific narratives, then socially shared dispositions are likely to be connected with narratives preserved by collective memory.[286]

Although Knapp contends that there are two different types of narratives – individual and social – I argue that all narratives, including memory, arise through social relations, and condition how (and what) people remember. In fact, memories themselves function as narratives that organize and frame each group's sense of the past. Since narrative patterns arise through social relations, they deal with particular social codes unique to each group, which furnish individuals with a means of understanding themselves, their place in their social groups, as well as in a larger, i.e. national or global scheme.[287] In other words, the particular nuances of a social group – be it large or small – frame the way individuals encode their memory by structuring the many narrative forms memory can take.

In *The Flame Alphabet*, many members of the Jewish faith have turned to a more private form of worship, since the world they inhabit has become exceedingly anti-Semitic. Consequent-

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[286] Ibid.

[287] For more information about the various narrative structures individuals draw upon to encode and structure their memory, see Eviatar Zarubavel's *Time Maps*: *Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

ly, a branch of Judaism has emerged in which "forest Jews" take to private huts in twos (no other couple is aware of another hut's location) to listen to sermons delivered by a man called Rabbi Burke, who exists in a mysterious location to preserve the transmission's privacy.[288] The means by which this transmission reaches the hut involves underground wires, a listening device that takes on oddly human characteristics, and other methods that bridge a mystical/technological divide, all of which defy logical understanding. Sam, the narrator, describes the process:

> The technology of the hut was a glowbug setup. The hut covered a hole and the hole was stuffed with wire. From our own hole came bright orange ropes of cabling, the whole mess of it reeking of sewage, of something dead beneath the earth. This wiring was grappled to the listener, and the listener, called a Moses Mouth by Bauman, even while we were instructed never to refer to it, was draped over a radio module. I'm understating the complexity of this. But on a good day it just worked.[289]

Here, the basic premise makes sense in terms of technological transference: a wire takes a signal from one source and transmits it to another, but the terms, "glowbug setup" and "Moses Mouth," receive no further explanation and only confuse readers. These terms signify no object or concept that readers would be familiar; instead, the terminology is meant to disorient readers and further separate Jewish couple's activities, creating a private space for their interactions that the reader may know about, but which they won't fully comprehend. This passage exemplifies the particular socially coded context that frames communication, and in turn memory. Marcus reveals how without a membership into a community (or social framework), the meanings involved in that community cannot be transmitted to members outside the community. Much like language, memories and meaning associated with that social framework will not make sense to those who are not a member. Sam understands how he comes to hear Burke's sermon, but out-

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[288] The strict rules of the hut demand that only two people and no more can take part in the communication.

[289] Ben Marcus, *The Flame Alphabet* (New York: Vintage Contemporaries, 2012), 43.

siders – both readers and non-Jewish characters – do not have access to this knowledge even

when Sam explains it. Despite the fact that Marcus writes in English and readers familiar with

that language should be able to grasp his meaning (and they do to an extent) the repurposed use

of language signals a different, and ultimately strange, communicative system since it belongs to

another framework.

When it comes to hut worship, the emphasis remains on communication acquired and dis-

tributed among a pair rather than singularly. Rabbi Burke could transmit his message to one per-

son in each hut, but this particular system of disclosure requires a pair, because even though Sam

could enter the hut alone and, perhaps, hear Rabbi Burke speak, he needs the second living lis-

tener – Claire in this instance – to participate in the act of procuring and "storing" memory. Sam

and Claire each act as living sites not only for their family unit, but also for the Jewish religion,

and they necessitate a shared relationship in both of these groups in order to perpetuate the les-

sons and memories they receive. After Sam's wife Claire becomes too ill to participate in their

weekly worship sessions, Sam attempts to go alone, but finds that Rabbi Burke's transmission

barely comes through, emitting such a weak signal that he cannot hear it. Instead, he attempts to

wrap his body around the listener in an effort to strengthen the signal, his body performing what

the presence of his wife would have contributed. Even this act, though, fails:

> At one point I discovered that with my face pressed against the listener, more voices
> flowed through the radio, a tumble of speech from a man whose voice was far lower than
> Rabbi Burke's. A different man entirely, speaking in what sounded like Old English. The
> harder I pressed my face against the listener, smashing it into the wet flesh, the clearer
> this man's voice became, but it seemed I'd have to hurt myself to make his words audible.
> I'd need to break my skin, fracture my jaw, taking the listener inside my own face, and I
> could not bring myself to do it.[290]

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[290] Ibid., 78.

Rather than operating exclusively for "forest Jews," it seems as though the listener can pick up other signals from alternative lines of communication when the required pair does not inhabit the hut. These other transmissions suggest a wider understanding of social frameworks in that what remains intelligible for members of one social group will not be intelligible for members of another, since each operates within its own social codes. Sam feels as though if he were to get closer to understanding, he would first have to physically destroy himself to do so. The body as a site of external memory works in conjunction with the groups of which it is a member, but outside of those frameworks, communication and memory become threatening. Sam later complains to Claire about his time alone in the hut, saying, "Talking to myself is not a conversation! I have no counsel to keep. I'm *alone*. You are, too. How can you stand it?"[291]

Language can become a confusing, estranging thing when people encounter new members of other social frameworks. While it would seem that their interaction would produce a new social framework, at times the communicative barriers are too great, which *The Flame Alphabet* explores. In the novel, children's speech grows increasingly toxic for adults, poisoning and even killing them, depending on how much exposure they have to a child's verbal and written communication. Given the anti-Semitic nature of the United States in the novel, certain extremists begin blaming people of Jewish faith for somehow instigating language's menace. Sam often encounters opposition from a man named Murphy, who has made it his mission to unearth and destroy Jewish worship because he believes it has played a key role in bringing about the current toxicity of language. He attempts to find a cure for the problem, believing that the solution lies in the root of the problem itself: children. Sam reflects over Murphy's extreme proposal:

> "Murphy spoke of a vaccine derived from *children*. When he said that word he grew quiet, looked around as if we were being observed. He didn't like to believe this, he didn't

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[291] Ibid., 93 (italics original).

want to believe this, but if the *children* harbored the poison, then they no doubt contained the antidote to it as well. *No doubt.* It stood to reason. He mumbled on about blood, marrow, building tolerance, immunity, controlling the circumstances. This was a favorite word of his. *Circumstances.* It sounded so odd when he said it, one of those words designed to make forget other words, the whole language."[292]

Marcus' use of italics for certain words in Sam's recounting of Murphy's idea emphasizes how Sam interprets Murphy's character and purpose, being that the two belong to different social frameworks. While the content of what Murphy says may not seem overtly alarming because it appears as though he's reluctant to pursue this line of investigation, Sam construes Murphy's meaning differently, which can be seen through the feigned compassion he catches in Murphy's use of "*want*" and "*No doubt.*" Furthermore, "*Circumstances*" should not sound "odd" to Sam, and yet it does because Murphy belongs to a different social framework than Sam, and utilizes the term in a different fashion. Murphy's use of "circumstances" suggests a sinister causality between the apocalyptic-like event taking place and the reason behind it (children), one that requires equally sinister methods to research and combat. Even though Sam agrees that something wrong has occurred when it comes to children's speech, he does not believe that scientists should test children. Murphy, on the other hand, "felt that we should be drawing blood from our own kids, informally, gently, of course. […] It needn't cause any trouble. In the spirit of science."[293] The "spirit of science" indicates Murphy's disconnect between the care an adult or parent should have for children and the desire to research them in a methodical, systematic and (implied) inhumane manner, because he belongs to the scientific community responsible for discovering the cause and cure of the language problem. For Sam, coming from a religious background in which family takes on even greater importance, "circumstances" takes on a menacing quality, because

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[292] Ibid., 73.

[293] Ibid.

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he does not have the particular "social code" to comprehend its specific use, and it threatens to destroy his entire knowledge of language as a result.

The Flame Alphabet disorients readers much in the way that other post-apocalypse works do, because it blends together the familiar with the unfamiliar. Although *The Flame Alphabet* takes place in and around upstate New York, readers enter a very different world that manifests itself in understated ways. Marcus defamiliarizes readers by purposely failing to explain the significant differences that exist between the real world and his fictional one. Sam refers to several top philosophers, scientists, and methods throughout his telling, as if the names should ring a bell, but none of them are familiar; instead, they are constructed. The lack of explanation serves to add tinges of strangeness to a world that should be familiar, since it takes place in a known setting: New York. Keeping in mind that the novel is a work of fiction, readers realize the different social framework, in addition to the different social codes, that make up world in *The Flame Alphabet*.

In addition to avoiding explanations that would help situate readers, Marcus utilizes language to create the estranging (and sickening) effect that occurs throughout the novel. With Marcus, form echoes content, and so in a book that deals with language's toxicity and the problems of verbal and written communication as a result of such toxicity, readers begin to take on some of the symptoms that characters exhibit simply because of the bewildering and bizarre world to which language gives them access. One of the primary reactions that readers attest to, and to which reviewers keep returning, is the prose's ability to create a sense of sickness. Nicholas Lezard of *The Guardian* writes,

> What I found fascinating about this book, after its remarkable premise, which both invites and strongly resists allegorical interpretation, and the cold beauty of its prose, was my own reaction to it. I can put it no better than to say that this book got to me, and I started worrying whether Marcus had in fact achieved something darkly magical: the creation in

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readers of the very reaction he describes his characters having to language. In short, this book made me sick with anxiety, more so than I would have believed possible. I grew almost to fear it.[294]

Working from a Wittgensteinian perspective, Marcus uses words that should mean something familiar or at least comprehensible, but instead have been repurposed within a new context, one the novel never elucidates. As a result, words take on ominous meaning and threaten readers, creating the strange poisonous effect that occurs in characters, albeit to a lesser degree.

Interestingly, while Sam's interaction with Murphy suggests that inter-social framework communication (that is communication between members of different social frameworks) remains rife with problems of signification and connotation, as the novel espouses, similar problems also arise between members of the same social framework. The novel's apocalyptic event emanates from children's speech; their words have become sickening, and adults fall prey to language of any sort. Sam explains how one day his daughter Esther's language – be it written or verbal communication – produced increasingly injurious effects in both him and his wife Claire:

> [M]ost of what sickened us came from our sweet daughter's mouth. Some of it she said, and some of it she whispered, and some of it she shouted. She scribbled and wrote it and then read it aloud. She found it in books and in the mail and she made it up in her head. It was soaked into the cursive script she perfected at school, letters ballooning with heart-dotted *i*'s. Vowels defaced into animal drawings. Each piece of the alphabet that she wrote looked like a fat molecule engorged on air, ready to burst. […] The sickness washed over us when we saw it, when we heard it, when we thought of it later.[295]

While no one understands why children's speech hurts the way it does, or what caused this language problem, the effects are unmistakable: the listener withers, their energy waning more each day until they eventually die. Unlike the notion of "injurious speech," in which certain (violent) acts of interpolation injure the subject, the reality within the pages of *The Flame Alphabet* re-

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[294] "*The Flame Alphabet* by Ben Marcus – review" in *The Guardian*. April 30, 2013. http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2013/apr/30/flame-alphabet-lezard-review. Retrieved May 31, 2013.

[295] Marcus, *The Flame Alphabet*, 11.

veals that language's intent does not matter; instead, any form of language stands to injure the adults who encounter it, even "letters ballooning with heart-dotted *i*'s."[296] Referencing a common practice among elementary, middle and high school female students to dot their i's with hearts and so have handwriting that somehow exudes a "cute" quality, Sam shows how even the most basic and benign language does harm. The description that immediately follows this type of writing – "Each piece of the alphabet that she wrote looked like a fat molecule engorged on air, ready to burst" – shifts the tone of her writing from something cute to a corpse-like deterioration with severe implications for her parents and other adults.

Although Judith Butler's argument about the material effects of language predominantly pertains to "excitable speech" or hate speech and the censorship that ensues, her work becomes relevant to *The Flame Alphabet*'s take on language. For Butler, speech exists beyond the control of the speaker, so there exists a separation between speaker and speech.[297] Once language leaves the mouth – or pen – of a person, they have little control over how it will be interpreted and accepted. This distinction between speaker/speech mirrors in many ways Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy of language. Having studied philosophy as an undergraduate, Marcus' approach to writing involves a Wittgensteinian investigation into signification.[298] Wittgenstein investigated the two central properties – meaning and context – that form language, and famously declared that there were no philosophical problems, only problems that arise through the various "lan-

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[296] Judith Butler questions, "How might we account for the injurious word…the word that not only names a social subject, but constructs that subject in the naming, and constructs that subject through a violating interpellation?" See *Excitable Speech* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 49.

[297] "As excitable, such speech is at once the deliberate and undeliberate effect of a speaker. The one who speaks is not the originator of such speech, for that subject is produced in language through a prior performative exercise of speech: interpellations." Ibid., 39.

[298] As Peter Vernon states, within all of Ben Marcus' work exists, "an interest in both philosophy and innovation." See "Ben Marcus, The Age of Wire and String," in *The Yearbook of English Studies*. 31: (2001),118.

guage-games," which denoted the separation between meaning and context.[299] Marcus explodes

that very separation when it comes to both meaning/context and speaker/speech; the various

speech acts and forms of language that first constitute the problem of poisonous language in *The

Flame Alphabet* derive from the blurring and confusion of each relationship. No explanation ever

emerges about why exactly all language has turned into a damaging property. Whereas in other

post-apocalypse works, the reason has not mattered because the world that follows exists to teach

readers something, in *The Flame Alphabet* explanations come to harm those who attempt

them.[300] The poisonous element of language eventually permeates to other spheres in that any

kind of communication – from adults to children, speaking to writing – stands to physically ac-

cost and even kill people. Without the tools to communicate with one another (without the com-

munication that Assman contends is so necessary to constructing and maintaining social and in-

dividual memory) society begins to fall apart, dependent as it is on a shared past that loses poten-

cy once it cannot be shared or communicated. As a result, the novel reveals memory's collectivi-

ty, for memory should survive without social frameworks if it were solely an individual phenom-

enon, but without the help of other people to communicate, construct, and corroborate memory,

it becomes inaccessible.

Embodied Narrative Space

People rely on specific narrative forms that arrange and explain the past with regard to

both history and memory. In *The Content of the Form,* Hayden White points out how seemingly

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[299] "It is interesting to compare the diversity of the tools of language and of the ways they are used, the diversity of kinds of word and sentence, with what logicians have said about the structure of language." Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe et al. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 15.

[300] This, too, reflects Wittgenstein's stance on explanation: "Any explanation can be misunderstood," because explains are always ambiguous. Ibid., 17.

objective historical writing actually employs certain (literary) narrative techniques in order to make accounts of the past more comprehensible within the bounds of human experience.[301] As with any experience, memories become subject to the human desire for meaning; accordingly, they often undergo an act of narrativization, which serves as the primary means of mnemonic discourse. People consciously and unconsciously modify their memories to fit the mnemonic, i.e. narrative, patterns they have learned from their interaction with myriad groups, ranging from the microsocial, i.e. family to the macrosocial, i.e. nation, and every group size in between. In keeping with historical writing, fiction writing and other narrative forms, memories go through revision that may leave out non-relevant or unimportant information and highlight more pertinent facts, all while ascribing a particular, subjective point of view. People draw upon particular narrative schemas to represent, explain, and even transmit past experiences, because such schemas work contain social codes that assist in comprehension.[302] The importance of memory-narratives pertains predominantly to the transmission of memory across generations. Yet, in addition to memory-narratives, can people also function as embodied spaces for memory? "Despite the fact that it is always the individual who "has" memory, it is created collectively," but the individual's contribution should not be overlooked here.[303] While memory comes about through the social

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[301] White argues how narrative forms affect structure over content, explaining, "The form of the discourse, the narrative, adds nothing to the content of the representation; rather it is a simulacrum of the structure and processes of real events. And insofar as this representation resembles the events that it represents, it can be taken as a true account." See *The Content of the Form* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 27.

[302] Zerubavel claims, "Approaching the phenomenon of memory from a strictly formal narratological perspective, we can actually examine the structure of our collective narration of the past just as we examine the structure of any fictional story." *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past*, 13.

[303] *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 22. Assman continues, "This is why the term collective memory should not be read as a metaphor, because while the group itself does not 'have' a memory, it determines the memory of its members."

relations of a group, its members come to situate memory, housing it until such time as the social

framework instigates recollection. Moreover, people are not solely an amalgamation of their

lived experiences (memory-narratives) even when those experiences involve other people; in-

stead, the previous generations that comprise a social group also provide a background or history

against which people measure themselves and their role in the group. People contribute to this

background by becoming embodied forms of memory, acquiring previous generations' memory

at times and serving as the conduit to future generations.

Children especially play an important part in a social framework, because their presence

bespeaks memory's futurity. As Sam and Claire's daughter, Esther creates a future extension of

their particular family narrative. As the next generation in her family's lineage, her role includes

taking on those memories that involve her lived experience, as well as memories that came be-

fore her birth and contributed, in part, to her sense of self. In flashbacks, Sam explains how Es-

ther, a little girl that exhibits a maturity far beyond her years, does not enjoy interacting with

other children or adults and prefers the company of her parents, although even this she seems to

endure rather than appreciate. Esther, especially, has a strong aversion to any memory which

purports to represent something she experienced but which she cannot remember:

> Memories of any kind, for Esther, were similarly off-limits. Shed the skin and burn it,
> apparently. Memories that asked Esther to picture herself doing something she no longer
> recalled, like skating in a rope chain of children, when she was seven, down the traffic
> lines of an iced-over Wilderleigh Street. This was the week the elm fell to lightning and
> we built a snow fort circling the trunk. Or climbing a ladder stretched flat on the grass
> and pretending it was vertical, so that each time she let go of it she fake-tumbled to the
> bottom. Such images were an attack. They caused physical pain, and why did we insist on
> hurting her? […] *You people and your memories*, she'd said through a sneer.[304]

Esther refuses to engage with her parents on the level of social memory. Despite the fact that

they exist as a unified social framework that should assist each other in the task of remembering,

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[304] Marcus, *The Flame Alphabet*, 102 (italics original).

her parents' remembrances do not spark a recollection on her part. Even while she claims she cannot remember it, she more importantly refuses to even listen to her parents' memories of her. Their memories form an equally important part of her subjectivity (predominantly formed through language and memory), but she rejects them because they seem Other to her, an idea of herself bound up in the past and utterly foreign to who she is now. Esther's refusal stands to challenge the notion first proposed by Halbwachs and later taken up within collective memory studies that memories arise in the presence of and through the social relations with other people. Sam's act of remembrance involves a repetition that should trigger the memory for Esther, or at least an interest in hearing his memory of the event. But she doesn't. This comes about not because she cannot remember, but because she willfully resists remembering. Long before language becomes poisonous for adults, Esther realizes memory's harming potential, tied as it is to language, and she refuses to engage with the past in the way that her parents do.

Once speech leaves the speaker's mouth, he or she asserts little control over it, and memory evokes similar properties when it comes to Esther's disdain for remembering. The sharing of memory means two very different things for Sam and Esther, so that while he wishes to engage her in a loving father-daughter moment, she sees the dangers that lurk behind explanation and interpretation of any kind, reflecting the idea that memory is more of a "creative act" than a reflective one.[305] The act of remembering denotes an act of bringing something to the mind *again;* the *re* in *remembering* does not operate as a mirror, reflecting back the past event in total, but instead signifies a narrative act that reconstructs past events, stitching them together for the dual purposes of ordering and understanding. Even though, as I've been arguing, memory is a social process, the act of narrating the past implies an interpretative gesture. For Esther, memory

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[305] James L. McGaugh, *Memory and Emotion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 114.

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best exemplifies a game of telephone in which the players alter the sentence passed around the circle. Each act of remembering causes damage to the original memory, as well as to the person sharing and receiving it, and these revisions become dangerous because each revision alters the past to some degree. Memory revolves around fractured, imperfect recollections of the past, and it cannot offer Esther the stability she craves when it comes to the past, so she rejects using memory the way her parents and other adults do.

Esther asserts that the transmission of memory, whether she remembers it or not, poses her bodily harm the way that language comes to harm adults in the novel. Her hesitance when it comes to memory suggests that the forms of communication tied to language also affect memory, and she chooses not to engage in the memory work her parents desire. Although her parents attempt to continue the line of communication pertaining to both their memories of her childhood and how those memories fit into the larger narrative of their family, she withstands their efforts, thereby disrupting and potentially ending her family's memory narrative. Esther's position when it comes to memory suggests that memory poses violence against subjectivity, because it isn't the subjective, individual phenomenon it is so often purported to be. Its social nature contains within it dangerous properties that become clearer when adults begin succumbing to the violent effects of language. In the way that injurious speech acts require an act of interpolation, which Butler takes to be violent since interpolation refers to an alteration or insertion of some kind, so, too, does the act of remembering seem to not access the thing remembered, and somehow alter the person referenced as well.

In an earlier moment, before the language crisis breaks out, Sam's daughter, Esther, decries language's inability to fully access the thing it purports to represent. In one of many dia-

tribes against her parents' use of imprecise language, an argument that foreshadows the eventual

problem that breaks out, Esther complains when her father calls her "sweetie," responding,

> You think that a generic endearment will somehow show how you feel towards me, *talk me out of how I actually feel*. One word isn't going to do that, a word used for pets? How many people use that exact word to hide what they feel? It's like you're throwing up on me, actually. I feel like you just threw up on me.[306]

Similar to her particular attitude towards memory and its harmful nature thanks to the alterations

that take place between the original event and future acts of remembering, so, too, does generic

language – imprecise language used during socially appropriate moments – offend her. Prior to

the poisonous language epidemic, Esther picks up on the ways in which language hurts people,

precisely because of its vague nature. Language and memories, according to Esther, "lie."[307] De-

spite their inaccuracy at times, memories (and the communication that transmits them) remain an

essential component of humanity and society. "We are…our memories," as James McGaugh

points out.[308] Even though memories originate from social relations, they create a space that

forms subjectivity, i.e. a person, and that person comes to impact other spaces, i.e. people,

through the shared language of the past, i.e. memory.

Memory, like the toxic language that becomes an epidemic, takes on physical properties

that can hurt. Towards his narrative's end, Sam admits, "I'd like a more physical way to ex-

tract…memories, too, a surgery I could perform to finally release it, burn it down."[309] But

memory, in this instance, does not exist physically in the sense that it can be removed from a

person. Memory still operates as a socially structured and socially conditioned effect of social

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[306] Marcus, *The Flame Alphabet*, 102 (italics original).

[307] Ibid.

[308] *Memory and Emotion*, 2.

[309] Marcus, *The Flame Alphabet*, 261.

relations. Yet, the novel does not privilege Esther's point of view. At its end, family becomes the most important structure, and Sam awaits the return of his missing wife and daughter to begin the act of rebuilding their particular family unit. Despite his wish to "burn [memory] down," and despite Esther's protestations when it comes to acts of remembering, these are the glue that holds the social fabric of society at large and its smaller components (family, friends, etc.) together.

While *The Flame Alphabet* uses Esther as a warning when it comes to trusting memory explicitly without recognizing its narrative properties, it still emphasizes how imperative social frameworks are to memory in that the destruction of a framework leads to the destruction of that framework's memory. Sam explains, "One might argue that, absent of speech, deprived of all communication, a father dissolves. The title finally expires, and the man probably follows."[310] Here, the socially embedded construction "father" relies not only on the act of being a father – an act which necessarily fails because Sam cannot approach Esther without bodily harm to himself – but also the memories of being a father. Once he no longer has access to those memories, which occurs once the state sequesters all children and keeps parents from seeing them, that designation collapses. Additionally, Esther's presence defines his subjectivity as father. In other words, her place in their family's social framework designates him as father, and without her he finds that his subjectivity changes. After many years have passed and Esther has become an adult, Sam finds her once again and removes her to the hut he and his wife once shared. Having reached adulthood, Esther now experiences language toxicity and so the two cannot verbally communicate with one another; however, Sam realizes how her mere physical presence reinforces his fatherhood: "Now that Esther has returned to me, my fatherhood will be evident to her in

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[310] Ibid., 256.

even the small touches, and not a word will have to escape my mouth."[311] Gesture takes over for

verbal communication, conveying his fatherly sense of protection and care over his daughter. In

positioning children as the mysterious cause behind the apocalyptic catastrophe, *The Flame Al-*

phabet highlights the role they play in social frameworks when it comes to defining family roles

and each member's subjectivity to an extent. Children's presence and contribution to a social

framework promises to extend that framework's memory-narratives into the future. The absence

of people but more importantly, as *The Flame Alphabet* posits, the absence of children threatens

to undo memory altogether in significant temporal ways.

Children act as an important component to a social framework's memory-narrative. Here,

narrative does not mean a written (or spoken) version of a framework's memories, but a living,

embodied memory that arises through social relations and oral communication before coming to

be situated within an individual member. Children, I argue, not only represent but more im-

portantly concretize that future narrative, because they acquire not only their own memories

through their relations with different groups, but also the memories of those groups before their

time, and bridge the gap between *then*, *now*, and *soon*. Without children, the narrative of living

memory ceases to exist and social memory disappears. Post-apocalypse works involving children

are nothing new, but *The Flame Alphabet*, as well as Alfonso Cuarón's film *Children of Men*,

posit the necessity of living sites of memory rather than the forms of external memory that in-

volve non-living, static sites.[312] Without children as a living, narrative extension of social

memory, or without their presence as "future spaces" that embody social memory, forgetting

arises.

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[311] Ibid., 257.

[312] For other examples, see Chris Adrian, *The Children's Hospital* (New York: Grove Press, 2007); Geoff Ryman, *The Child Garden* (Easthampton, MA: Small Beer Press, 2011); and Kate Wilhelm, *Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang* (New York: Orb Books, 1998).

The Absence of Future Memory

Memory most often pertains to the past, but when it comes to memory-narratives the future takes on greater implications, because a social framework's memory-narratives extend beyond the past-present connection to insinuate memory's continuance with regard to future generations. Post-apocalypse works explore memory's temporal significance when it comes to the future, by imagining a drastically altered future, thereby warning readers about certain mnemonic practices in the present. Space and time work together to concretize social memory, since "[m]emory figures need to be given substance through a particular setting and to be realized in a particular time," and people function as the key means to understand the relationship between memory, space, and time.[313] Memories form as a result of the interactions of a specific group in a specific space at a specific time, which helps people differentiate one moment from another, and in turn one memory from another. Additionally, memories can be "realized" in the present through a social framework's member, who takes on this work by interacting with other members (space) and in particular moments (time). In this particular instance, both setting and time stabilize social memory by offering specific reference points, thereby augmenting the contextualizing work of social frameworks. *Children of Men* examines the important role children play by acting as embodied sites that acquire and carry on memories of their various social groups, in which the act of carrying on means transmitting memory into a future where older generations may no longer exist. In this way, children become sites for "future memories," because long after their parents and grandparents have passed away, they will carry on the burden of recollection. Working along a similar line of thought as *The Flame Alphabet*, *Children of Men* provides interesting commentary not only about children's role in a social framework, but also concerning how

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[313] Ibid., 24. For Assman, "memory figures" refer to the "interplay between concepts and experiences," wherein concepts signify a truth that substantiates a particular collective memory.

people embody memory and act as living spaces that perpetuate memory. As opposed to other post-apocalypse works that forewarn about the dangers of removing memory from social groups, the film reveals the temporal importance of memory in ways that look beyond the past-present relationship.

Most often thought of in relation to the past, memory instead signifies an active force with implications for the future; cognitive studies continually emphasize that memories are not rigid representations forever restricted by and fixed in a particular past.[314] Instead, understanding memory as a narrative of the past, one that continually undergoes revision and subsequently influences the present, becomes key to grasping the fluid nature of memory and its temporal significance.[315] Since memory often works as a timeline in which a sense of development over time emerges, it exudes both spatial and temporal elements, insofar as it combines Reinhart Kosselleck's concepts of the *space of experience* and the *horizon of expectation*, in which the former has already occurred and the latter has yet to take place. While Kosselleck does not discuss these concepts in light of memory, they are not only applicable but also quite pertinent. Although it may seem strange to speak of memories of and as an expectation, expectations are built into memories, especially with regard to how individuals' brains structure their sense of temporality into past, present, and future. Memories are not bound solely to the past, but directly related to the future through anticipation and expectation, because individuals use their memories of the

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[314] Mark Howe explains how memory does not perform "as if it were a passive video recorder. Rather, its content is influenced by our self-conceptualization at the time the event occurred, changes to our self-concept over time, as well as our self-concept at the time we are remembering our past selves." "Early Memory, Early Self and the Emergence of Autobiographical Memory," in *The Self and Memory*. Eds. Denise Beike, et al. (New York: Psychology Press, 2004), 45.

[315] Astrid Erll explains, "Despite the unavoidable heterogeneity of the terminology, there are two generally agreed-upon central characteristics of (conscious) remembering: its relationship to the present and its constructed nature. Memories are not objective images of past perceptions, even less of past reality. They are subjective, highly selective reconstructions, dependent on the situation in which they are recalled." See *Memory in Culture*, trans. Sara Young (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 8.

past to influence their behavior in the present and even the future. In other words, based on memories of previous experiences, we expect similar or different outcomes, and so expectations comprise an important component when it comes to how memories structure a person's sense of temporality. Andreas Huyssen maintains, "[M]emory discourses are absolutely essential to imagine the future and to regain a strong temporal and spatial grounding of life and the imagination in a media and consumer society that increasingly voids temporality and collapses space."[316] Future-directed memory, therefore, concerns the act of utilizing memories of the past for purposes in the future, similar to how memories are predominantly applied to situations in the present. For instance, people take down notes to remember things at a future time, suggesting a sense of change between the present act of writing and the future act of remembering.

More then contributing to their various social frameworks' memory-narratives, children themselves form a type of living, "external" space that embodies memory and physically realizes the important role people play in constructing memory-narratives. As I discussed earlier, social groups function as a form of external memory; so, too, can individuals serve as a type of external memory, since they acquire group memories and become living sites that perpetuate those memories. Despite the fact that memory may begin externally from individuals, it eventually comes to be situated within them. To put it another way, individuals act as sites that contain and convey social memories. Halbwachs observes, "One may say that the individual remembers by placing himself in the perspective of the group, but one may also affirm that the memory of the group realizes and manifests itself in individual memories."[317] The process of social memory operates as a dualistic kind of external memory in that memories first exist externally from individuals,

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[316] *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsest and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 6.

[317] *On Collective Memory*, 40.

emerging as they do through social relations; however, they eventually come to be housed within the individual, so that people become spaces of and for memory. This particular perspective pinpoints the individual brain as the site of memory, thereby maintaining to some degree findings in neurobiology, but argues that social relations become key to constructing and transmitting memory, as opposed to originating in and from the individual's mind. The brain still encodes, stores and retrieves memory, as science argues it does, but instead of originating from the mind, memories first come about through social interactions.

Children's role in a social framework – their function as a living site of future memory – becomes much clearer with their absence. Without children, the purpose of memory gets called into question, and it becomes evident how society collapses without the possibility of "future spaces" to carry on the particular mnemonic narratives it has created over time. As strange as it may be to consider children as "future spaces," since it would appear to strip them of any agency, people are mnemonic spaces. Much in the way that social relations produce spaces that permit that very exchange, people themselves, as embodied memories, create spaces in which memory gets shared. Without children to carry on such space – without the necessary future component that is so important to the concept of memory – society collapses, bound as it is to memory and the particular memory narrative(s) it has constructed. *Children of Men* primarily examines the chaotic breakdown of society that comes about from children's absence. With the snuffing out, so to speak, of the necessary bodily space that would continue sustaining the dynamic force of memory, comes the snuffing out of memory, as well as the way people engage with their past. In the film, it is not that children disappear or that they pose the threat *The Flame Alphabet* imagines, but that some mysterious biological condition has affected people's reproductive ability. Without any new babies to repopulate the planet, humanity slowly dwindles. Consequently, tense

political and economic situations in the majority of the world have led Britain to take extreme measures when it comes to immigration in order to preserve the resources they have left for their citizens.

The film centers on Theo, a divorced, middle-aged man, whose son died many years ago. Theo's ex-wife Julian, a rebel fighting against the forces of big government, charges him with accompanying a young pregnant woman, Kee, to the English coast side, where she has been promised safekeeping by a rumored utopian society. *Children of Men* begins with a blank, black screen, accompanied by voice overs detailing the political strife rampant around the world; in this way, the film commences with absence, further signifying the central absence in the film: children. It has been over eighteen years since the last child's birth. The void that children should be filling but are not interestingly forms an overwhelming presence in the film. Their absence is more than noticeable; it punctuates every scene, because the social, psychological, and even cultural effects of not having children are widespread, creating devastation, chaos, and despair. As Theo and his charge, Kee, whose pregnancy remains a mystery, make their way to the coast, they stop at a school. The eery silence that hangs over the space that should be filled with boisterous activity and energy becomes a greater kind of noise. Absence becomes a kind of presence in an interesting reversal because it constantly reminds survivors and audience members how key children are to society. Moreover, through the central lack of children, it becomes clear how the memories children would and should embody are also missing. Social memory depends upon a common narrative that extends from the past into the future, as well as the repetition of that narrative across different generations. Children, representing future generations, act as "sites" insofar as they acquire memories of the many groups to which they belong and continue to transmit such memories on into the future. Children in this way manifest the future in ways beyond the

metaphorical slogans with which they are often associated. "Children are the future" insofar as they exude the promise that memory will survive long after past generations have expired. With the absence of any possible future for memory – in other words without children – memory fails and forgetting emerges, further illustrating the important role (bodily) space plays when it comes to memory.

The slow extinction of mankind coupled with the inability to transmit memories to any future generation prompts the rise in forgetting, which again reveals the necessity not only of social frameworks but of the perpetuation of that social framework via interaction and communication when it comes to memory. This idea gets taken up not only in the film, but also in the advertising used to promote it. One of the posters used during the film's theatrical release states, "THE FUTURE'S A THING OF THE PAST," bespeaking how temporality has become a blur since children have become absent from the social fabric. If people embody time as they do memory then children represent the future to a greater degree, and their nonexistence in turn denotes the extinguishing of that future. Since children as future spaces no longer exist, memory becomes altered since it depends on a link between past, present, and future. Because of the lack of children in the novel, time takes on a different quality. In the novel, Theo explains, "We can experience nothing but the present moment, live in no other second of time, and to understand this is as close as we can get to eternal life."[318] Where before people may have thought about the future to a greater extent, its meaning signifies nothing due to children's absence. Without children, memories will not survive. Despite the best attempts of those in the book and in the film to maintain memories for any future purpose, these objects, artifacts, and sites become more akin to tombs than sites of interaction with the past.

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[318] P.D. James, *The Children of Men* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 11.

Returning to memory's temporal significance, memories shape and become reshaped by the present day, because individuals and social groups revise their memories over time in order to reflect or fit their behavior, actions or experiences in the present. Memory provides an over-arching narrative thread that links different experiences and expectations together, and therefore functions as a personal and public timeline that structures an individual's and a social frame-work's presence within a larger schema.[319] As I argued earlier, memory and the future share more in common than many realize. Memories of people, past events, and even experiences carry on into the future through the act of recollection, and while nothing can be explicitly saved, the act of recollecting a person, a group, or an event, maintains each one's presence to some extent, which is why memory has such implications for other temporalities than the past. Turning to September 11th as an example, the United States honors the victims of the terrorist attack, and so even though memories of that day pertain to the past, their existence in the present on into the future bespeaks greater temporal meaning. The impetus to "never forget," a call taken up in the wake of 9/11, implies that memory exists always-already in the future; if people will "never forget" what happened, memories of that day and the people directly affected by it, will always survive on into the future. As odd a phrase or concept as *memory of the future* may seem to be, since the term *memory* most often denotes a remembrance of things past, it actually refers to a sense of one's self (or one's social frameworks) extending beyond the lived moment, and in this way references expectation.[320] Neurobiologists point to the prefrontal cortex as a key site in the brain

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[319] "Being social presupposes the ability to experience things that happened to the groups to which we belong long before we even joined them as if they were part of our personal past." To be a part of a group means experiencing memory on a firsthand basis, but also acquiring memories from a time long past as well. *Time Maps*, 3.

[320] "There is an apparent paradox of memory being future-oriented – we are familiar with the injunction to remember, which implies memory in the future – and simultaneously a danger of commemoration-

when it comes to short-memory; scientists believe that the prefrontal cortex houses memory on a short-term basis until the brain encodes it for long-term storage. Additionally, the prefrontal cortex divides a person's sense of temporality into past, present and future.[321] That this section of the brain performs key functions pertaining to memory and temporality bespeaks an awareness when it comes to memory's necessity in other temporalities than the past.

Acts of remembrance and memorialization specifically presuppose that memory will survive into the future, and disclose the importance memory holds for other temporalities than the past. Memories of a person can remain long after they die; Jan Assman explains how "We say the dead will live on in the memory of others, as if this were some kind of natural prolongation of their life."[322] Any kind of memorialization attempts to maintain memory for a future group. In many ways, memorialization "preserves" memory, bespeaking properties of stagnation, as if memory could be frozen and protected for future transmission and acquisition. Indeed, the act of memorialization shares much in common with external memory in that both attempt to guard and protect the memory in question, but often do so without regard to the necessary, continued social interaction which will form and reform the memory. Yet, memorialization and maintaining memory through the repeated and indispensible interaction and communication of social groups signifies two different acts. In P.D. James' book *The Children of Men* (1992), on which the film

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obsession…or of taking memory only as an object of history." Dan Stone, "Beyond the Mnemosyne Institute" in *The Future of Memory*, eds. Richard Crownshaw et al. (New York: Berhahn Books, 2010), 28.

[321] David Ingvar, a Swedish neurobiologist, also studies how the frontal lobe and prefrontal cortex differentiate time for individuals and directly impact feelings of anticipation and expectation. See "Memories of the Future: An Essay on the Temporal Organization of Conscious Awareness" in *Human Neurobiology* 4.3 (1985): 127-136.

[322] *Cultural Memory and Early Civilizations*, 19. The memory/future dialectic here concerns a group's desire not to let memory of a person lapse into forgetting. Assman goes on to say, "In reality, though, this is an act of resuscitation performed by the desire of the group not to allow the dead to disappear but, with the aid of memory, to keep them as members of their community and to take them with them into their progressive present."

is based, the main character and narrator, Theo, comments on the inanity of writing a history that no one will ever read:

> All over the world nation states are preparing to store their testimony for the posterity which we can still occasionally convince ourselves may follow us, those creatures from another planet who may land on this green wilderness and ask what kind of sentient life once inhabited it. We are storing our books and manuscripts, the great paintings, the musicle scores and instruments, the artefacts. The world's greatest libraries will in forty years' time at most be darkened and sealed.[323]

Theo, without any awareness of doing so, speaks about the process of transferring memories from living sites (people) to external sites (museums) that sustain and preserve the past. Without anyone to interact with such sites, though, the purpose behind maintaining the past through historical and mnemonic traces gets called into question. Supposing that another sentient race might one day discover the remnants of earth does not mean that they will be able to adopt people's memories; instead, the history of the last men on earth will come to signify a myth, a warning tale. Narratives of the past depend upon specific social frameworks, and if people are too far removed from such frameworks, the past comes to mean something else entirely: a fable rather than a truth. Although the acts of memorialization Theo discusses seem like a worthwhile effort taken on behalf of a dying society, it instead signifies a futile effort because the removal of memory from the necessary social frameworks which construct and pass it along destroys the very memory in question. What James' work begins and what the film comes to echo are the dangers associated with memorializing – of removing memory from the social frameworks and bodily spaces that construct and maintain it – because memorialization stultifies a necessarily active, dynamic process. If people cannot interact with memory via one another, and if they rely primarily on objects that seemingly transmit the past, memory itself changes from a vigorous force on the present to something relegated to the past. The difference lies in memory's purpose.

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[323] *The Children of Men*, 4.

As much as memory involves a narrative of the past, its use predominantly pertains to the present and the future. Memorialization or other kinds of acts that stultify memory maintain a focus on the past, because they attempt to remove the revisionary component bound up in memory and acts of narrativizing memory.

Attesting to the rooted sociality of social memory, Assman explains how it remains "dependent on its bearers and cannot be passed on arbitrarily [...] In other words, it is related exclusively to the standpoint of one real and living community."[324] In this instance, the group forms a kind of space through the social relations that necessarily construct their existence as a group, and the continued permanence of memory depends upon the perpetuation of group space through interaction and communication. Moreover, although Assman doesn't specify, the "arbitrary" nature of passing on memory he mentions demonstrates the means by which a group may attempt to transfer memory in ways that remove the communication and interaction so pivotal to social memory. If social memory remains grounded to "one real and living community" in order to exist, its "relocation" to external memory sites upsets and even alters that memory. Transferring memory from a greater organic space to a more static type of space directly affects the memory involved. Groups may rely on forms of external memory, i.e. archival practices, museums, and memorials, to maintain memory over time, but without the social relations to fashion and sustain memory on reoccurring basis, memory fails and forgetting arises. Therefore, space arises in different forms – lived and interactive vs. fixed and one-sided. It is not that museums, archives and other types of external memory inhibit interaction, but they do not necessarily promote a dialogue either; the sense of memorial transference often tends to be biased towards extolling knowledge rather than encouraging exchange and memorial growth via a dialectic. Unlike other,

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[324] Ibid., 25.

more static sites of external memory, people spatialize memory in dynamic ways, because of the need for socialization in order to carry on memory.

The film goes one step further than the novel in that one of the government's missions involves isolating cultural works from their most important context: the public. Realizing that the chaos spreading around the world threatens major cultural works, such as art, music, and literature, the Ministry of Energy has been converted into the "Ark of Art" in order to provide a safe house for the world's cultural treasures. In an already fragmented and mostly razed world, what survives are not humans or other life forms (the original occupants in the myth about Noah's ark), but the important cultural works of the past – paintings, statues, and works of literature – that signify aesthetic and artistic moments of human greatness. That art has replaced life is telling and reveals what the government (and perhaps by extension, society) values. Yet, because they have sequestered away art due to the mayhem on the streets, no one has access to them and their meaning loses potency as a result. Cuarón specifically utilizes the setting of the Art of Ark to criticize external memory, as well as how institutions prohibit public access to such cultural memories in many ways. While the film has taken such restrictions to the extreme, the commentary remains: cultural works of art bound up in society are also off-limits to society because of the threat its members pose via theft, defamation, etc.

Theo embarks on a brief visit to the Ministry of Energy to visit his cousin and acquire papers for an illegal immigrant he must help transport to the coast. In the establishing shot (Figure 4.1) leading up to his meeting, which shows Theo approaching the Ministry of Energy via

Figure 4.1 from the film *Children of Men* (2006)

automobile, Cuarón chooses to utilize the Battersea Power Station, recognizable for being on the

cover of Pink Floyd's tenth album, *Animals*. Floating above the Battersea Power Station exists a

lone pig, reminiscent of the pig seen in *Animals*. Considering the underlying themes and subject

matters of *Animals*, i.e. the social and political criticism of Britain in the late twentieth century,

it's easy to grasp the same kind of criticism the film wishes to make. In *Children of Men*, the

contemporary "Ark" myth values things rather than people, and it is this attitude which has led to

the downfall of mankind; when humanity's achievements rather than humanity become the entity

worth saving then society has reached its end. Furthermore, that the government has replaced

more important, i.e. social, forms of meaning making with stagnant attempts at preserving the

past echoes larger problems in society. The government isolates cultural works whose significa-

tion comes from people's being able to interact with them, thereby impeding a social process; it

believes the cultural works it attempts to preserve hold cultural and even financial value, but

without people to engage with these works and interpret them, their meaning becomes stagnant.

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Upon entering the Art of Ark, Theo enters a clean, ordered space, one that stands in dramatic contrast to the disorder and confusion outside. In what appears to be a museum-like space, Michelangelo's famous statue, *David,* stands surrounded by two dogs rather than tourists and visitors (Figure 4.2). David's absent left calf reveals the damage apocalyptic events have caused.
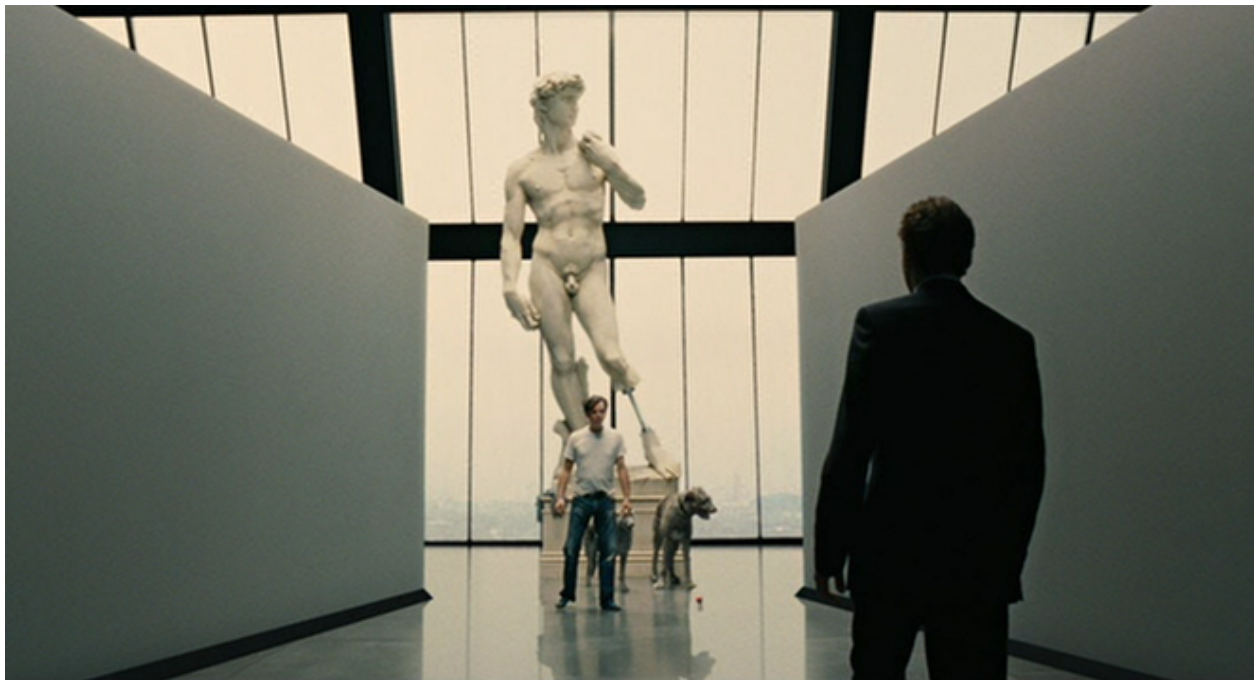

Figure 4.2 from the film *Children of Men* (2006)

Here, art becomes something to surround the wealthy and powerful in the final days, and not something to be shared. Unlike the biblical tale, wherein Noah preserved human and animal life, here the government concentrates its energies on preserving objects. The impetus to remember pertains not to other people, in this instance, but to the objects that seemingly transmit important aspects of the past. Yet, removed as they are from any social framework, these objects do not signify the past, since they have no one to signify to. Slavoj Zizek comments on the cultural icons that pepper Theo's visit to see Nigel, stating, "All of those classical statues are there but they are deprived of a world, they are totally meaningless, because what does it mean to have a

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statue of Michelangelo or whatever. It only works if it signals a certain world, and when this world is lacking it's nothing."[325] Here as in *The Flame Alphabet*, meaning and context separate, causing further confusion and chaos. Accordingly, as Zizek contends, it becomes nothing. It represents nothing because it exists outside of the social framework that not only produced it but also continued to study it and tout its importance. Meaning depends upon the social relations that produce signification and interpretation; these modes of understanding do not function if there is no one there to employ them, as the film suggests.

Theo's visit with his cousin, Nigel, reveals how social relations have fallen by the wayside, and eerily foreshadows the growing technological development of cell phones, smart phones, and other devices with which humans interact more than with one another, a point I discussed in Chapter Three. Nigel's son joins the two men at dinner, but in-stead of engaging in any kind of meaningful exchange, he is consumed with a futuristic video game. In fact, this one example comes about in various ways throughout the film; the futuristic setting reveals how technological advances have interfered with the way humans interact with one another. The game primarily exists on a small screen off to his right, which he interfaces with by way of wires connected to his fingers. With zombielike inattention to his surroundings, he focuses on the puzzle in front of him, manipulating the images with his fingers. When his father addresses him and asks him a question, he fails to respond because he does not hear him. Although the young man is no child, as a youthful member of this post-apocalyptic society, he stands to contribute to any of his social frameworks' recollective tasks. But his focus on objects rather than people – indeed, his inability to properly interact with people as manifested by his lack of social skills at the table – bespeaks the mounting problem with society in *Children of Men*. Focused as they are on ob-

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[325] *Children of Men* comments by Slavoj Zizek (in Bonus Features). *Children of Men*. Dir. Alfonso Cuarón. Universal Studios, 2006. DVD.

jects that transmit the past, or maintain their attention in the present, they cannot properly form memory-narratives and carry on the work of remembrance. Not only do people fail to relate to one another to the degree they once did, they no longer exist as the "spaces" of memory they once did. Their memories have been transferred outside of them, housed in cold "Arks" like the one Theo visits, and without access to them, without access to a socially sustaining narrative, society breaks apart. Without children to prompt the continued effort of sharing the past for purposes of the future, in addition to the growing reliance on technology to store the past, people's relationship with memory changes.

Although *The Flame Alphabet* and *Children of Men* approach the subject of children and memory differently, each serves to reveal the important role they play when it comes to memory-narratives, especially as such narratives carry implications for temporalities beyond the past. By serving as an extension of a social groups' memory narrative, as well as a "future space" that embodies memory, children reveal the different temporalities that operate within memory. No longer concerning a relationship between past and present, memory instead incorporates and affects the future. This futuristic kind of memory most clearly arises through children, and these post-apocalypse works warn that memorializing the past and the continued reliance on external spaces to house memory impact people's relationship with the past and their mnemonic capability. Therefore, in a way that moves beyond simply highlighting the importance of children in society, these cultural works specify not only how memory depends on social frameworks to a greater extent than many may be familiar with, but also how the sociality of memory comes about through children. Functioning as embodied sites of memory that contribute in meaningful ways to a social framework's future memory, children function as necessary components to understanding memory's sociality.

Forgettable Endings: Traumatic Memory as Destructive Memory

> "Without forgetting it is quite impossible to live at all."
> - Nietzsche

> "There wasn't any limit, no boundary at all, to the future.
> And it would be so a man wouldn't have room to store his happiness."
> – John Steinbeck, *East of Eden*

Post-apocalypse works purposely utilize the imagined after at the center of their narratives in order to address the changing nature of memory in recent years, as well as the attendant anxieties that change induces. Primarily, people seem to forget to a greater extent than they once did, and that rise in forgetfulness bespeaks a larger problem than mere absentmindedness. As the previous four chapters have detailed, significant alterations to the way that people interact with one another upend the foundational work that social frameworks do; additionally, the growth in external memory to store people's memories transforms memory into a more symbolic version of itself, a problem Pierre Nora illustrates in his seminal seven-volume work *Les Lieux de Memoire*. Forgetting, then, indicates a more serious problem. What if forgetting does not always signify the predicament presented in scientific and social scientific scholarship? What if forgetting actually denotes a positive, healthy means of disconnecting a person from a detrimental past? Despite the often-negative rhetoric surrounding the act of forgetting in recent years, certain post-apocalyptic literature and film extend the line of scientific, philosophical, and literary thinking that proposes value in forgetting. In this way, they continue the memory work that traditionally arises in other literary forms involving traumatic themes, as well as other investigations, which proposes forgetting as a necessary, beneficial response to the past.

The line of thinking that posits the past's negative effects on the present reaches back to Friedrich Nietzsche, who saw the past as "a great and continually increasing weight," which bur-

dened people by way of memory.[326] Finding that "the man without any power to forget" existed

in a flood of temporal progression that didn't offer any meaning or true happiness, Nietzsche

warned against the growing "historical" condition to preserve the past to an ever-greater ex-

tent.[327] This historical tendency has not waned in the twentieth century, where the interest in

memory and history – any connection to the past that establishes a sense of belonging within

time – has only grown, as have fears regarding an inability to remember and connect with the

past. Any act of forgetting now bespeaks a kind of cognitive malfunction, but the heightened

negative connotation associated with forgetting came about in direct relation to the rise of the

memory industry and the preservation it encourages. Since people seemed to engage the past on

an increasingly disposable level in the late twentieth century, the memory industry and the flood

of museums, memorials, and the like, attempted to staunch the "flow" of memory. Yet, their

presence actually encourages forgetting by dis-placing the burden of remembering on larger, na-

tional sites, as opposed to social frameworks. Nietzsche's work on forgetting came about long

before trauma became a known term with debilitating symptoms that manifested through the

mind and body, and yet the accumulation of history he proposes does suggest a traumatic bent in

the way the past becomes increasingly weighted for an individual. History's "return" in this in-

stance foreshadows an increasingly traumatic concept of memory; for those who can forget, the

past will not haunt them the way it could for those who remember and desire that action.

In addition to philosophy, within the literary realm, authors have long contemplated the

inability to forget and the problematic repercussions that result. Jorges Luis Borges' story,

"Funes the Memorius," depicts a man incapable of sleep and thought, since both require a means

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[326] *The Use and Abuse of History* (Indiana: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1957), 5. I do not suggest that Nietzsche was the first philosopher to question the past's seemingly negative role, but he was certainly a central figure in this kind of questioning.

[327] Ibid., 6.

of forgetting.[328] His life becomes an enormous weight that impedes his ability to participate to any normative degree with the present. Borges' character reflects in many ways Nietzsche's historical mode, and reveals the true impediment memory can create for a person when they have access to every moment of their past. That impediment only grows when the nature of memory contains a destructive or traumatic element, because the narrative thread connecting individuals to the past becomes a threatening force rather than a contextualizing one. Continuing the investigation into memory that defines a significant part of the genre, certain post-apocalypse novels question the necessity of remembering when those memories remain linked to a destructive past. In doing so, they explore the attendant problems that arise when a violent past begets violent memories, and question the necessity of remembering when doing so means recuperating such violence into the present. The apocalyptic events that rupture time and space in Denis Johnson's *Fiskadoro* (1987) and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) upend the mnemonic narrative thread that connects characters to the past. Without the social frameworks or even the cultural context bound to such memories, they become dangerous forces that impact characters in psychological and even physical ways.

As can be seen in numerous post-apocalypse works, characters begin to forget their past following the apocalyptic event or at times cannot remember anything about their past. Their forgetting arises due to the absence of the necessary social frameworks that would help contextualize and narrativize memory. Social frameworks generate recollective power; as other chapters have explored and explained, individuals experience memory subjectively, but people become imperative to aid the act of remembering, because their presence physically or figuratively triggers recollection. Memory is a social phenomenon insofar as people contribute to each other's

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[328] In *Labyrinths* (New York: New Directions Books, 2007) 59-66.

memories, and the narrative forms that structure memory come from socially embedded frames. Once it has been structured into language or constructed as a narrative account of the past, memory leaves the individual realm and enters the collective realm. This does not mean that individuals no longer have any control over their own memories, because they continue to contribute in important ways to their social frameworks, and through their interactions, reconstruct the past. Post-apocalyptic works pick on memory's sociality, and by positioning characters in a future without people or social frameworks that function in a normative manner, illustrate how the individual alone is not a locus for memory. In other words, the individual requires more then his or herself to remember, which arises through their social relations, the places they engage with, and the objects that transmit the past in more material ways. Yet, certain post-apocalyptic works posit the idea that such acts of forgetting can be beneficial. In other words, characters' inability to properly or fully recollect has beneficial tendencies when the past contains violence and devastation. Memory becomes a physical force in such instances, adopting characteristics in keeping with traumatic memory and escaping the mediation that often occurs with memory. No longer experienced *through* but rather experienced *as*, memory becomes a cataclysmic force, transmitting the very destruction of the past to characters that can remember the past. *Fiskadoro* and *The Road* each complicate the relationship people have with memory by positing a future wherein memory doesn't serve any healthy purpose.

Memory as Destructive Force

Set in a futuristic Key West renamed Twicetown because "during the End of the World it had been saved twice," *Fiskadoro* deals with a civilization in which collective and cultural memory of the past has been entirely erased, and the search to rediscover it becomes a futile

one.[329] The inhabitants of Twicetown and the surrounding areas in southern Florida live under a mysterious Quarantine, necessary after the fallout of the apocalyptic event that destroyed the vast majority of life in the U.S. As a result, residents face the kind of reality caused when a "Nuclear holocaust shatters everything, including cultures, ideas, myths, and languages."[330] The world following the mysterious apocalyptic event essentially begins again and, written from the point of view of a future people who recount the events depicted in the novel, *Fiskadoro* stands in as the post-apocalyptic origin myth. The time before the events in *Fiskadoro* no longer represents the past; instead, *Fiskadoro* functions as an amalgamation of memory, history, and myth, forming the foundation of the past for the future people. The people encourage a present-oriented focus in which they do not look too often to the past for meaning, but still they admit, "Can we help it if sometimes we like to tell stories that want, as their holiest purpose, to excite us with pictures of danger of chaos?"[331] The distance between the event the future people recount – the Quarantine – and their existence is too great, too many generations have passed, so that what once existed as a memory for residents of Twicetown, and later could be recounted objectively as history, has since been transformed into a myth.

Collective memory associated with the time before the end of the world no longer matters since it represents a world that no longer exists; connected as memory is to destructive events, *Fiskadoro* suggests that it, too, has become destructive and must be relinquished in order to concentrate on the present. For the one person who can remember the end – the lone survivor of the

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[329] Denis Johnson, *Fiskadoro* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1985), 202.

[330] Millicent Lenz, "Reinventing a World: Myth in Denis Johnson's Fiskadoro," in *The Nightmare Considered*, ed. Nancy Anisfield (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1991), 114.

[331] Johnson, *Fiskadoro*, 12.

apocalypse – her memories overwhelm her and keep her from living any meaningful life in the present. Grandmother Wright, the novel's oldest character remembers:

> That triumph of death over the world, the hordes of skeletons dragging the sacks of their skins behind them through the flaming streets, the buildings made out of skulls, the empty uniforms coming inexorably through the fields, the bodies of children stuck full of blast-blown knives and forks – the bottom of everything, the end of the world, a grey blank with nobody to remember it, the vision described, passed on, preserved by no one.[332]

When she was a younger girl, Grandmother Wright escaped Saigon at the end of the Vietnam War; when she remembers the apocalyptic event that ended life on earth save for her, "it was in that city that she saw it, in the city of her father's death [Saigon]."[333] Since no one else survived the blast, Grandmother Wright must turn to another, similar event in order to contextualize her memories of the apocalypse. In other words, she requires the social framework that her family and their place in Saigon provide to understand what she experienced during the apocalypse. The apocalyptic language – "hordes of skeletons," "flaming streets" – signifies a destruction bound up in the memory that could be transmitted if her memories were narrativized and shared with other people. The "vision" fails and must remain an individual experience rather than a collective memory. No one can describe or preserve the vision for two important reasons: Namely, because Grandmother Wright is the only survivor of the apocalypse in the quarantined area, and so without the social frameworks bound to the immediate experience to serve as a conduit, the memories cannot be properly transmitted. But, more importantly, because the destruction of the event remains bound to both the memory of that event, as well as the language used to communicate that event, such memories risks being transferred to any who hear it, thereby prohibiting any attempt that would pass it on to future generations.

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[332] Ibid., 71-72.

[333] Ibid., 72.

Apocalyptic memories become traumatic memories and having experienced the trauma of the apocalypse, any memory associated with that event as well as other traumatic moments of her past flood Grandmother Wright's present. Whereas many older individuals experience difficulty in retrieving both new and old memories because of an increased slowing of the hippocampus with age – the portion of the brain concerned with short-term and contextual memory - Grandmother Wright can do nothing *but* remember. Her traumatic memories shatter her sense of temporality and prevent her from participating in the present in any normative way. She lives "as if she forgot everything as soon as it happened," so that forming new memories becomes impossible because her memories of the apocalypse and life before it interfere with her present.[334] Memory becomes a destructive force for Grandmother Wright because of her position as witness; she, and characters like her in other post-apocalyptic works, appropriate the apocalyptic violence they witness into bodily form. Memory already displays affective qualities, and these become amplified in the wake of trauma. For those who remember and share such memories, they risk transmitting some degree of their destructive quality to future generations. Trauma, therefore, exposes memory's collective and affective nature, because if memory were truly an individual phenomenon then there would be no risk communicating memory to one another. Yet, bound in language, narratives of the past become affective traces of that past, and potentially threaten those who did not originally experience the traumatic event.

Recent work by Marianne Hirsch on what she calls "postmemory" highlights the collective property of trauma.[335] Arguing that subsequent generations to immediate trauma feel its effects in tangible ways despite not having experienced the original trauma of the survivor, Hirsch

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[334] Ibid., 32.

[335] For more information, see *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

investigates the ways that trauma arises through affect.[336] The first generation survivors can in physical and psychological ways transfer their traumatic memories – or rather the trauma of those memories – to the second- and third-generations. "Descendants of victim survivors," Hirsch explains, "connect so deeply to the previous generation's remembrances of the past that they identify that connection as a form of memory, and that, in certain extreme circumstances, memory can be transferred to those who were not actually there to live an event."[337] As Hirsch's work has shown, the connection between family members or generations can be so strong in terms of trauma that memory takes on a far greater affective component than with more normative, i.e. narrative memory. Werner Bohleber further explicates this assertion, stating, "Trauma and being overwhelmed by its remembrances was not only a concern for surviving [Holocaust] victims but also had specific consequences for their children and their children's children."[338] Memory, in such instances, exhibits physical properties that can be damaging to both survivor and second- or third-generation family members; post-apocalypse works pick up on this affective transference and warn about remembering when the damage to self and others can be so visceral.

As a member of a local intellectual group – the Society for Science – dedicated to discovering remnants of the past and piecing together an understanding of the past from such remains, Mr. Cheung, Grandmother Wright's grandson, views their meetings as "history class," but for "history" the group reads *All About Dinosaurs* and *The Sun Also Rises*, one a children's book the other a work of fiction, because they are the only remaining books the group has discovered. The

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[336] She defines postmemory as, "a structure of inter- and transgenerational return of traumatic knowledge and embodied experience. It is a consequence of traumatic recall but…at a generational remove." *The Generation of Postmemory,* 6.

[337] *The Generation of Postmemory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 3.

[338] "Remembrance, trauma and collective memory," in *International Journal of Psychoanalysis.* 88. (2007): 330

history they unearth are facts, but separated from any kind of context, they only serve to produce more confusion; after reading *All About Dinosaurs*, Mr. Cheung thinks, "The dinosaur tracks in England all went from west to east…By what light was this fact called 'knowledge?' Wasn't it just one more inexplicable thing to mystify them, didn't it subtract from what they knew, rather than add to it?"[339] Such a significant gap exists between past and present that the meaning surrounding such facts has changed. The social frameworks that understood how these facts contributed to a greater body of knowledge have disappeared and their absence warps the information Cheung and his group now attempt to interpret. Gaining any meaning from these facts becomes an ineffectual endeavor, because "absent a structuring narrative that compels belief, historical facts mean virtually nothing."[340] Narratives provide the organization necessary to understand the past – both in terms of memory and history – but these narratives arise through the work of social frameworks. Despite having a social framework ready and willing to take on the work of dissecting and disseminating the past, they cannot since they were not there for the original event and the one person who could transmit her memories – Grandmother Wright – has been silenced by her witnessing.

The Society for Science hears word that the Marathon Society for Knowledge traded a boat for a book that purported to explain the apocalyptic event, and travel down what remains of the Florida coast to hear the book read in public. What MSK discovered, however, is a history book about WWII and the Nagasaki bombing, although they don't know this. The past contains such violent events and each so like the other that making meaning out of them becomes an impossible task. In a move that depicts the past's affective nature upon the present, when the

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[339] Ibid., 47.

[340] Timothy Parrish, *From the Civil War to the Apocalypse: Postmodern History and American Fiction* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 234.

MSK's leader begins reading the book those listening start not only to feel the symptoms de-

scribed in it ("My eyes burned up" and "My eyes burst into flames") but to say and do the things

depicted before they hear them.

> 'I can't stand it!' someone shouted suddenly. […]
> 'That's just what it says in the book! Roderick Chambers said. 'Look here – you read it:
> '*I can't stand it!' someone shouted suddenly, and when Lieutenant Komatsu turned he*
> *saw Chief Petty Officer Umeda vomiting.*'[341]

As one horrified attendee realizes, "The book is telling us what to say."[342] Doomed to repeat his-

tory in ways they don't eve know, those interested in mining the past for meaning must stop

looking to the past for answers and instead concentrate on the present. The generation that comes

after Cheung's explain, "Thinking about the past contributes nothing to the present endeavor,

and in fact to concern ourselves too greatly with the past is a sin, because it distracts our minds

from the real and current blessing showered down us in every heartbeat out of the compassion

and mercy and bounty of Allah."[343] The violence bound up in the past risks being transmitted to

the present by way of memory and history, and cannot be recuperated within *Fiskadoro*'s post-

apocalyptic space.

As Cathy Caruth aptly summaries, "trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or origi-

nal event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the

way it was precisely not known in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on."[344]

So, too, does the trauma associated with an event or experience return to damage the individual

through memory after the initial event. Here, Martin Harries work on destructive spectatorship

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[341] Johnson, *Fiskadoro*, 153.

[342] Ibid.

[343] Ibid., 12.

[344] *Unclaimed Experience* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 4.

elucidates the affective quality of memory, and that quality's heightened nature after a traumatic event. Harries' book *Forgetting Lot's Wife*, which examines how modern acts of self-destructive viewing mirror the Biblical tale of Lot's wife; his concept provides an important addition to my argument regarding apocalyptic trauma and memory, since the *destruction* implicit to *destructive spectatorship* emerges from the act of witnessing. Unlike the immediate destruction of Lot's wife, however, destructive spectatorship for the modern viewer is not an instant annihilation. It is only later, through memory that the event returns and disrupts the individual. Harries disregards trauma theory for the majority of his work, but his concept of destructive spectatorship lends much to this project since he raises a compelling question:

> What happens when retrospection begins to look like, and to feel like, masochism, a choice to damage the self? We tell ourselves we have the responsibility to remember and to look back; we think less often about what it means that such looking back may simply cause pain.[345]

Although Harries frames his question as a choice over which the individual seemingly has control, a problematic maneuver for trauma survivors, he does make a valid point: When do traumatic and therefore destructive memories threaten to overwhelm the individual rather than help them recover? Individuals who have come through a traumatic event oftentimes feel alienated from themselves, as well as their various social frameworks, due to their memories of an event that took place outside the bounds of social relations. "Certain memories become obstacles that [keep] people from going on with their lives," and post-apocalyptic works question the benefit of remembering in such instances.[346] Focused as her mind has become on her past, Grandmother Wright has trouble encoding any new memories and cannot keep recent events in the space of her mind. For every moment of observation she may have about the present, that observation

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[345] *Forgetting Lot's Wife* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 21.

[346] Bessel van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart, "The Intrusive Past," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory,* ed. Cathy Caruth, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 158.

leads to memories of her past. Sitting with her grandson, Mr. Cheung, one afternoon, she listens to one of his music students give a brief recital, but this moment only causes her to remember when she first arrived in the United States: "Grandmother was sorry to have the concert end. Her grandson's aimless tootling comforted her by bringing back the visions she'd experienced when surrounded by Muzak only minutes after coming to Seattle from Manila."[347] Rather than using memories of the past to better understand the present – one of memory's signature purposes – Grandmother Wright finds that present moments only lead back to the past. Her memory's association remains heavily associated with the past, so that she cannot maintain much of a grip on the present. As such, remembering can represent a destructive act, especially if the memories continually position the viewer as a spectator to their past rather than an active member of their present.

Were Grandmother Wright able to construct a narrative out of her memories and pass it on to her grandson, Mr. Cheung, she would also pass along the destruction inherent to that past and her position as witness, and so the novel repudiates that maneuver. In this instance, the traumatic affective traces bound up in her memories cannot become a part of collective memory. Although they might serve as warnings about avoiding the behavior that led to the world's demise, they instead pose physical threats that could potentially damage other members of Grandmother Wright's social frameworks. It is not that all emotionally tainted memories are prohibited from entering collective memory, but that especially destructive memories become so difficult to narrate that constructing them into language often becomes impossible. Although *Fiskadoro* presents a controversial perspective about traumatic memory, the novel maintains that where destructive events are concerned, memories are best forgotten and not passed on. Despite the fact

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347 Johnson, *Fiskadoro*, 32.

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that she stands in the gap of absent collective memory and could well occupy a revered position within a community hungry for knowledge of the past, Grandmother Wright remains hostage to her past through her memory and incapable of sharing it with anyone, because the act of sharing would be as destructive as the original moment of witnessing. She exists, therefore, as a silent body of memory, victim to a past which continually haunts her mind and prohibits her from interacting with the present in any normative way. Although, "once she'd been a great talker," the apocalypse has silenced Grandmother Wright, so that while she makes noises, which bespeak her temperament, she doesn't form coherent words, further preventing her from sharing her memories. Yet, the novel would suggest that her silence is necessary in order to prohibit the past from being transmitted, and potentially injuring future generations. Having appropriated the apocalypse's destruction through the act of witnessing, Grandmother Wright's memories have been contaminated, barring her from recounting them for others.

The Road also raises questions about spectatorship and transference when it comes to traumatic memory. McCarthy's post-apocalyptic novel follows a man and his young son as they journey south through the charred ruins of the U.S. The pair attempt to survive the increasingly brutal elements, the ever-present threat of starvation, and the danger emerging as a result of the previous two: cannibalistic tribes. The man, who witnessed the apocalyptic event internalizes and in some ways appropriates the destruction inherent to that moment by means of spectatorship. Sight in this instance becomes a form of appropriation, which can readily become a crippling act in the post-apocalypse world for both character and even reader.[348] While it would seem that working through traumatic memories helps individuals overcome trauma, with regard to spectatorship, memory proves to be a problematic connection to an already unstable and destructive past. Memory entraps the witness in the past, because as spectator, the individual is at once com-

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[348] See Caruth's second chapter, "Literature and the Enactment of Memory," in *Unclaimed Experience*.

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plicit with destruction and hostage to it. The land itself even rejects sight; McCarthy describes the "[n]ights dark beyond darkness and the days more gray each one than what had gone before. Like the onset of some cold *glaucoma* dimming away the world."[349] In the word *glaucoma*, McCarthy figures the world as one incapable of sight – towards the past, towards the present – and therefore unable to recover because of their inability to truly see.

Sight and, more importantly, erasure become major themes throughout the novel, as the past continues to be erased: "They passed through towns that warned people away with messages scrawled on billboards. The billboards had been whited out with thin coats of paint in order to write on them and through the paint could be seen a pale palimpsest of advertisements for goods which no longer existed."[350] Looking too often to the past only enshrouds the man in a life that no longer exists and serves to distract him from concentrating on surviving. Therefore, he refuses to share details about the apocalypse with his son, for to pass on such a sight would surely damage the boy. Similarly, by not sharing specifics about the apocalypse in the space of the text, *The Road* denies the reader a chance to appropriate the violence associated with history. Denying the boy answers regarding the past may seem strange given the fact that the boy, as a survivor on the road, daily encounters the disaster through its remains, but it is the traumatic event which must be forgotten and not the after effects. The boy admits that he views things much differently from his father; he exudes a natural goodness towards survivors on the road that his father cannot because he has been turned by the violence of the past. The two encounter an old man named Ely on the road and share a meal with him. Upon parting with Ely, the boy wishes to leave him some food, recent provisions they discovered in an abandoned fallout shelter, but the man does not want to share. He tells the boy, "When we're out of food you'll have more time to think about it.

[349] McCarthy, *The Road*, 3 (my emphasis).

[350] McCarthy, *The Road*, 127-128.

The boy didn't answer…He looked back up the road. After a while he said: I know. But I won't remember it he way you do."[351] The boy attests to the subjective quality that individuals bring to memory, so that even though they both experienced the same event, the boy will remember it differently than this father. Yet, each depends upon the other's presence in order to remember.

The man and boy's meeting with Ely goes differently in the film than in the novel, however, and the sense of erasure so important to McCarthy's post-apocalyptic space takes a different turn. Sight offers no definitive answers in the film, where visibility does not and cannot equal meaning making for either the characters or the audience. As the man and boy part with Ely, the boy asks his father to give him a portion of the cans of food they recently found. When the father refuses, the son, referring to their nomenclature of "good guys," questions the man's ability to intuit survivors' true nature. *The Road* posits sight as something beyond physical visibility – an act undertaken with the eyes – and more in keeping with an inner sight, a sensibility intrinsic to the new way of being in the world. The boy complains, "You always say watch out for bad guys. That old man wasn't even a bad guy. You can't even tell anymore."[352] Having witnessed the end of the world, the man has internalized the damage associated with that past, and has trouble seeing people as anything other than "bad guys." The son, however, as representative of the future understands that physical sight does not offer the answers it once did. Rather, an inner sensibility, one that is not restricted by the eyes, comes to offer understanding in a way that physicality cannot.

By problematizing the nature of remembering, both *Fiskadoro* and *The Road* continue the "memory work" other post-apocalyptic works began, but each challenges the negative view surrounding forgetting in recent years. In doing so, they link the concepts of the post-apocalypse

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[351] McCarthy, *The Road*, 174.

[352] *The Road*, dir. John Hillcoat, 111 minutes, Dimension Films, 2009, DVD.

and trauma in order to propose a controversial approach to working through trauma: forgetting. Both novels suggest that forgetting comes to be a better choice than remembering given the inherent violence bound up to apocalyptic memory and its possible transmission across generations and time. Moreover, each examines trauma from a collective point of view, in keeping with the collective nature of memory at the center of the vast majority of the post-apocalypse genre. Within each novel, trauma comes to signify an event that takes place outside of a social framework, thereby prohibiting the traditional narrativizing, i.e. social, function bound up in memory. Much scholarship currently exists examining the collective nature of trauma in terms of large-scale tragedies, but post-apocalypse works present a unique understanding to trauma, one framed through the concept of collective memory itself.

Understanding Trauma through Collective Memory

Memory clearly involves a biological function because the brain plays a large role in storing and retrieving memory; however, memory also functions as a narrativizing tool by organizing and structuring past events and experiences in order to provide an individual with a coherent sense of temporality, as well as their place within that temporality. With regard to traumatic events, survivors exhibit great difficulty in narrativizing any memory of their experience. Trauma is experienced both too soon and too late, to borrow here from Cathy Caruth's definition in *Unclaimed Experience*, and so the brain does not process and store such memory as it would more normatively formed memories.[353] The survivor often fails to understand his or her experience, since a traumatic event does not merely linger as a shocking disruption in her past; rather,

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[353] Drawing from Freud's seminal text *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trauma primarily refers to "a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (Caruth 3). As such, it impacts memory, but has greater implications for survivors in the way it returns through flashbacks, nightmares, and the margins of consciousness, often confusing their sense of temporality and blurring past and present.

it forms an absence in the mind, one that is "*not known* in the first instance" and "returns to haunt the survivor later on."[354] The mnemonic absence comes about because of the absence of a social framework to assist in meaning making, a point I'll return to shortly. According to neuroscientific research, many traumatic events circumvent the cerebral cortex, which assists in defining and interpreting, so that "the event has affect only, not meaning. It produces emotions – terror, fear, shock – but perhaps above all [a] disruption of the normal feeling of comfort."[355] Memories experienced individually, I argue, produce affect, whereas memories originating from social frameworks produce meaning given that social codes assist in structuring memory. It is not that collective memories cannot, too, produce affect, because all memory involves affective traces to an extent, but by narrativizing memory, social frameworks help construct meaning into memory. Since a traumatic event evades meaning and subsequently meaning taking, explaining and sharing trauma by means of language becomes an especially difficult task. Trauma occurs outside of the language used to articulate memory, as well as outside the narrative patterns that structure memory, thereby existing beyond traditional means of communication. This inability to concretely make sense of and communicate an event causes lasting psychological damage for survivors in myriad ways.

Following a traumatic event, any memory associated with that experience registers primarily as implicit memory or memory that "we do not know we know," so that it cannot be recalled at will.[356] Neurobiologists Bessel van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart found that after individuals experienced trauma, "the memory of [their] experiences tended to be stored differently

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[354] Caruth*, Unclaimed Experience*, 4.

[355] E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 34.

[356] Susan Nalbantian, "Introduction" in *The Memory Process*, eds. Suzanne Nalbantian et al. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), 14.

and [may] not be available for retrieval under ordinary conditions: it becomes dissociated from conscious awareness and voluntary control."[357] Lying outside the particular social "web of meaning" so necessary in constructing an understanding of the past leads to the effects of implicit memory: flashbacks, repetition, and nightmares.[358] When it comes to explicit memory, individuals traditionally exhibit a certain level of control over what and when they remember; however, implicit memory does not involve such recollective power. Since individuals cannot control implicit memories, remembering trauma produces confusion, especially since many people do not realize what they remember is just that: someone else's memory. The affective trace embodied within implicit memory here threatens to physically overwhelm the person remembering, who does not control the memory beyond acting as witness. Such memories have less in common with memory as this project details, because they do not exist as comprehendible memory-images that can be shared through language and structured into narrative. They are still memories, but extremely isolated ones that threaten the underlying sociality found in other, more normatively formed memories. Grandmother Wright lives in her memories, inhabiting them in a very real sense so that she almost re-lives them on a daily basis. The present doesn't make sense to her because of her difficulty distinguishing between time, and in discussing her grandson's house, she admits, "Whatever room she escaped was always a war in itself, a harried landscape that could at any moment be blasted out from under her, revealing a world made of memories, most of them more real than these shifting walls."[359] The traumatic nature of her memory has

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[357] Bessel van de Kolk and Onno van der Hart, "The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma" in *Trauma: Explorations of Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 160.

[358] Clifford Geertz asserts that culture comprises various webs of meaning. For more information, see *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

[359] Johnson, *Fiskadoro*, 91.

impacted her ability to differentiate between past and present, and as a result her memories take

on a more affective quality without a social framework to help impart meaning. More than a hy-

perbolized emotional memory, traumatic memories have intense psychological repercussions.

Traumatic memory arises through the realm of the unconscious, because the brain and not social

frameworks attempts the work of comprehension and meaning making that cannot yet be accom-

plished and expressed through language.

In addition to damaging an individual's memory systems at a narrative level, recent neu-

roscientific evidence reveals how trauma physically damages the brain, revealing how trauma

impacts both primary mnemonic functions: biological and narrative.[360] The hippocampus plays

an integral role in the formation of new memory by storing memories in a short-term system,

where they will eventually become encoded and transferred to a system designated for long-term

memory.[361] Even though the process happens without conscious thought, not all memories will

be properly encoded or transferred to long-term storage so memory loss often occurs during this

phase. Additionally, the hippocampus encodes a frame of reference while processing memory

from short-term to long-term storage; severe trauma serves to "impair the neuronal structure and

function of the hippocampus," thereby impeding the brain's ability to form lasting memories and

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[360] Russell Meares, Emeritus Professor of Psychiatry at Sydney University, argues, "Moderate trauma will eliminate autobiographical and episodic memories, leaving the semantic and other systems intact," so while an individual can access general information (facts, statistics, etc.) she cannot recall her own history. See *Intimacy and Alienation* (London: Routledge, 2000), 49.

[361] Paul Matthews explains how the hippocampus stores initial memories "in a system…that is flexible but unable to maintain [new memories] intact for the longer term. This [short-term storage] system acts over time to encode long-term memories in a second system with more slowly formed, but more permanent connections." See "The Mnemonic Brain: Neuroimaging, Neuropharmacology, and Disorders of Memory" in *The Memory Process*, eds. Suzanne Nalbantian et al. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), 104-105.

contextualize memory.[362] In studying neurology, it becomes clear how memory's biological and narrative functions dovetail. By "encod[ing] a frame of reference," the brain attempts to create a temporal record of the event, which serves the narrative process by structuring the past into an organized account. Damage to the hippocampus, therefore, impedes the necessary narrative function of memory by hindering a person's ability to structure temporality into an orderly manner that assists in the act of *telling*. Since survivors are initially incapable of producing a narrative of the memory because they do not possess any normative memory of the event in the first place, the very nature of that memory becomes traumatic in its return. Instead, traumatic memory becomes conflated with reality so that it seems to occur in the present, since the traumatic event has compromised survivors' ability to contextualize events along a timeline, which denotes past, present, and even future.[363] In breaking down the brain's ability to properly code memories as memories, the past intrudes upon the present moment without any frame of reference on the individual's part. Within *Fiskadoro*, when Grandmother Wright "imagined, against her will, that triumph of death over the world…it was in the city of her father's death" or Saigon.[364] Grandmother Wright conflates the two catastrophes – the Vietnam War and the apocalypse - with one another, and in escaping the trauma of one returns to the trauma of the other, which she experienced firsthand. Without the ability to distinguish between temporality, these two events unite as one within the space of her mind. Traumatic memory doesn't function as narrative memory,

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[362] Jessica D. Payne, Lynn Nadel, Willoughby B. Britton and W. Jake Jacobs. "The Biopsychology of Trauma and Memory." *Memory and Emotion*, eds. Daniel Reisberg and Paula Hertel. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 77.

[363] Susan Brison, who studies trauma's lasting effect, explains, "Trauma undoes the self by breaking the ongoing narrative, severing the connections among remembered past, lived present, and anticipated future." See "Trauma Narratives and the Remaking of the Self" in *Acts of Memory*. Eds. Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999).

[364] Johnson, *Fiskadoro*, 71-72.

which arises through social relations, but rather shares more in common with Halbwachs' under-standing of personal memory, i.e. dreams, which don't exude a logical or structured order or temporality.

As "an impossible history," trauma exists as that which the traumatized cannot entirely possess.[365] Working through a traumatic disturbance requires an act of recuperation, wherein the individual attempts to recover into language those memories that exist outside the boundaries of consciousness.[366] The individual cannot accomplish this task along, and requires the help of a second-party to assist in remembering and ordering the experience. In this way, any act of narra-tivizing trauma involves the requisite social component bound up in more normative acts of memory, further supporting the idea that trauma occurs when an individual has an experience outside of their social frameworks. Yet, remembering and (re)integrating trauma into memory becomes problematic because traumatic memory differs from narrative memory, which "enables the story to be verbalised and communicated and to be integrated into one's own and others' knowledge of the past."[367] For survivors attempting to not only remember but share their trauma – to construct a narrative of trauma – they endeavor to form an account, asserting a narrative or-der where none originally existed in order to make sense of a moment beyond the immediate re-call of memory. That narrative order, however, does not pertain to traditional narrative memory. Working through trauma does not, as Pierre Janet originally asserted, require transforming trau-

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[365] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 5.

[366] Typically, working through trauma occurs as a verbal activity, in which a second party acts as witness and assists the survivor by listening to their experience. Talking structures the memory into language and narrative.

[367] Anne Whitehead, *Memory: The New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, 2008), 142.

matic memory into more normalized narrative memory that fits a recognizable social pattern.[368] It does, however, require a narrativizing act, albeit one that embraces the fragmented, disorienting and underlying incomprehensibility of the trauma, since "the story can never actually repeat or represent what happened."[369] In many ways, the type of narrative that emerges has less to do with the realist tendencies found in most memory-narratives because of the splintered nature of telling involved. Since the story – the memory – that emerges never fully represents the event, and instead contains within it the violence inherent to the event, post-apocalyptic works question the necessity of remembering such experiences in the first place. In doing so, they appear problematic in the light of trauma, which urges survivors to work through traumatic memory in order to overcome the event.

Fundamental to survivors' trauma narratives is a reworking into a larger communal consciousness of a traumatic event that may have first been solely experienced by an individual. As I mentioned earlier, working through trauma cannot be accomplished alone, and so community and culture must assist in the task of recovery. The relationship is twofold, however, for trauma narratives are important to cultural consciousness, because they "reshape cultural memory" by providing testimonies and details concerning traumatic events that might not otherwise surface.[370] The trauma narrative emerges out of "the need to tell and retell the story of the traumatic experience," which materializes from a desire "to make it 'real' both to the victim and to the

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[368] For more information on Pierre Janet's contribution to trauma, see Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

[369] Kaplan, 37.

[370] Laurie Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 5.

community."[371] The community often operates as listener to the traumatized, thereby acting as "the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time."[372] However, the community's position with regards to the traumatic experience does not end with listening; an instinct to "tell and retell" what remains beyond their comprehension emerges within a communal sense, and makes up an important part of trauma narratives: those written by second and third generation survivors, as well as by those in the community who were not directly involved in the event.[373] Such a need becomes apparent, I maintain, with authors who imagine a post-apocalyptic future. Their narratives demonstrate a structuring impulse – albeit a creative one – to make sense out of what has remained and continues to remain unintelligible by imagining the end of the world, as well as its *after*.

In briefly discussing trauma and its effects, I wish to complicate the understanding currently circulating about trauma, which views the experience from the perspective of individual memory. The concept of collective memory actually offers much more to the study of trauma than has heretofore been explored. Traditionally, studying trauma from a collective point of view tends to concentrate on the effect a larger traumatic scale, such as a national tragedy, has on groups of people. The role trauma plays remains the same as it would on a smaller scale, signifying an affective trace that returns to either hurt the people immediately involved, or residually impact those not directly involved but who acted as witnesses to the event via media. Complicating this connection between trauma and collective memory, though, how might the understand-

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[371] Kali Tal, *Reading the Literature of Trauma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1996), 21.

[372] Dori Laub, "Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening," in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, ed. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (New York: Routledge, 1992), 57.

[373] I here refer to cultural traumas that may not have been experienced firsthand, but were still felt in such a way that authors, artists, musicians, etc. needed to make sense of the event by generating a creative project that structures both the historical event, as well as the residual trauma.

ing of trauma be better explicated by way of collective memory? I wish to here push the bounds

between traumatic memory and collective memory in order to suggest that trauma is an experi-

ence that takes place outside of a traditional social framework. Trauma comes about because of

intense physical or psychological aggression that threatens subjectivity; an individual experienc-

es an event in such a personal way and without the support of a group that it upsets their ability

to make sense of and transmit their memory of that event. Since "*les cadres sociaux* are thought

patterns [and] cognitive schemata…that guide our perception and memory in particular direction,"

without them, people fail to make sense of their experiences and this becomes doubly so when a

person experiences a traumatic experience.[374] Trauma occurs, I contend, when an individual ex-

periences something against their will because of a hostile social framework or by being denied

access to the means to help construct and narrative the memory because of that social frame-

work's hostility.[375] People who undergo trauma do so in such an individualized way that their

memory becomes more aligned to the dream logic Halbwachs discusses than any account of

memory. This collective approach to trauma becomes clearer in fictional trauma narratives, espe-

cially the post-apocalypse novels that investigate the dangers inherent to transmitting traumatic

memory across generations.

Apocalyptic Trauma*

Trauma narratives, much like memory narratives or literature that performs memory work,

take a real life psychological and social phenomenon and explore it in greater detail within the

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[374] Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture*, trans. Sara B. Young (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 15.

[375] As with other social frameworks, hostile social frameworks can consist of two people (the victim and the perpetrator) or much larger groups, as in the case of the Holocaust, slavery, and genocide.

* A portion of this work appears in different form in Within Trauma, eds.

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bounds of fiction. Trauma narratives tend to reference real, historical events configured as trau-

matic, including, but not limited to, slavery, the Holocaust, wars, colonization and sexual abuse,

but they use the unique space fiction provides to work through these trauma in interesting ways

that don't reflect a traditional narrative form.[376] Using numerous literary tropes to reflect the dif-

ficulties surrounding traumatic memory, like the fragmentation and repetition, such narratives

often focus on the attendant communicative troubles that arise following a traumatic event. Giv-

en the prevalence of apocalyptic language and imagery used throughout such accounts, it seems

increasingly beneficial to turn the tables and read the escalating number of post-apocalyptic

works published since the late twentieth century through the lens of trauma studies. While this is

not to suggest that all post-apocalyptic works are traumatic or that all trauma narratives register

in the apocalyptic vein, the two overlap in ways that could expand the increasingly interdiscipli-

nary field of trauma studies, as well as memory studies. Contemporary post-apocalypse works

challenge memory as an individual phenomenon and, when it comes to trauma, narration as a

pathway to recovery.[377] The act of working through trauma by means of memory and testimony

—what psychoanalysis traditionally views as a constructive means to recover — instead be-

comes a violent act within post-apocalyptic space.[378] Traumatic memories act as a conduit to the

historical destruction inherent to the original traumatic event, thereby threatening damage to all

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[376] For more information on literary trauma narratives, see Anne Whitehead's *Trauma Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

[377] For other examples, see Denis Johnson, *Fiskadoro*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 1985); Margaret Atwood, *Orxy and Crake* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003); and James Howard Kunstler, *World Made By Hand* (New York: Grove Press, 2008). While not every text challenges memory to the same extent, each questions how useful memory is as a connection to a past that has been utterly devastated.

[378] Bessel van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart, "The Intrusive Past,"167. van der Kolk and van der Hart explain how "Psychodynamic psychiatry has always attached crucial importance to the capacity to reproduce memories in words and to integrate them in the totality of experience, i.e., to narrative memory."

who remember and transmit that memory.[379] Although it would appear that apocalyptic trauma must be recalled, reconstructed, and placed within narrative memory in order to help individuals regain a sense of identity and order, many post-apocalyptic works resist such actions in light of disaster, which according to Maurice Blanchot in *The Writing of the Disaster*, "is related to forgetfulness," because of the way the mind doesn't process such shocks the way it would more normatively formed memories.[380]

It seems fitting to read fictional post-apocalyptic works in light of trauma theory, for, as with other traumatic events, the imagined apocalyptic moment precludes immediate representation and understanding "and must be reconstructed by means of [its] traces, remains, survivors, and ghosts."[381] While it would seem that the shock associated with apocalypse – like any trauma – must be remembered, narratively structured, and shared in order to help characters regain a sense of identity and order, post-apocalypse works reject such a method. Post-apocalypse literature and film of the last forty years differ from their apocalyptic predecessors precisely in *how* memory functions within the imagined post-apocalyptic space. Unlike other trauma survivors, apocalypse survivors in contemporary literature eschew attempts to work through and overcome their shattered pasts. Within *The Road*, the man has been cut off from social frameworks that would help structure his memory, so his past reemerges through implicit memory and dreams;

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[379] Caruth, writing on Freud's notion of the death drive, reads a seemingly endless cycle of violence emerging in survivors' future decisions, which continues to lead them toward similarly destructive situations as their initial trauma.

[380] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1995), 3. Blanchot does not structure his study as a typical analysis, but instead uses his form to mirror the subject matter and in this way gets at the heart of disaster. Rather than outline a clear argument, Blanchot literally examines the task of writing the disaster; bullet points take precedence over complete paragraphs, thereby reflecting the fragmented nature of disaster and the ways in which narrative language cannot begin to convey it.

[381] James Berger, *After the End* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 19.

however, these connections to life before the end only frustrate his attempts to survive, for, within post-apocalyptic space, memory serves as a dangerous link to a destructive past. Without the social frameworks to help him work through these memories, he cannot make sense of them to the same extent. Whereas new memories might not be entirely problematic, those pertaining to the world before the apocalyptic event threaten to physically and mentally harm him and whomever he shares his memories with.

Positioned as a spectator or witness of *the end*, the man risks passing on what violence he saw and experienced to his son, who represents the future; therefore, the man chooses not to consciously engage with his memories concerning the apocalyptic event. Even though his son has questions about the past, the distinction between then and now is immense for the man: "Sometimes the child would ask him questions about the world that for him was not even a memory. He thought hard how to answer. There is no past."[382] The novel and, to a lesser extent, the film produced some three years later, reject memory as a means to recuperate and work through past trauma(s). Characters must instead concentrate on surviving, an act requiring myriad acts of forgetting, oftentimes a physical *and* mental process within the bounds of post-apocalyptic space. The novel and film do not suggest that forgetting is a simple task for survivors, since so much memory arises implicitly, but characters continue to choose forgetting over remembering, recognizing the dangers inherent to the latter. As not only a traumatic event, but as a disaster in the fashion of Blanchot, the apocalypse signifies an impossible memory, one not worth recuperating—*or perhaps not capable of being recuperated*—in the space of the text. By considering traumatic memory as a dangerous connection to a damaged and damaging past that must be discarded, *The Road* portrays a controversial outlook concerning traumatic memory because trauma

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[382] McCarthy, *The Road*, 54.

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survivors typically exhibit little control over what they remember, occurring as it does as an implicit traumatic repetition. Yet, while this outlook differs quite sharply with traditional viewpoints regarding recovery from trauma, it has been increasingly echoed in contemporary post-apocalyptic works.

The narrative and physical space of the novel emphasizes the changes that have taken place to the United States, and how people's absence affects the man's ability to construct memories that are meaningful, as opposed to hurtful. *The Road* presents a country that has been "looted, ransacked, ravaged."[383] Nature and culture alike have been devastated, and this double-devastation has an immediate impact on memory. Early in the novel, the reader comes face-to-face with the disfigured landscape:

> On the far side of the river valley the road passed through a stark black burn. Charred and limbless trunks of trees stretching away on every side. Ash moving over the road and the sagging hands of blind wire strung from the blackened lightpoles whining thinly in the wind. A burned house in a clearing and beyond that a reach of meadowlands stark and gray and a raw red mudbank where a roadworks lay abandoned. Farther along were billboards advertising motels. Everything as it once had been save faded and weathered.[384]

The landscape itself – the space of post-apocalypse – exhibits a physical trauma that comes to emphasize people's absence, wherein the "charred and limbless" trees here represent a kind of rootlessness since social frameworks no longer exist as a mnemonic foundation. Their absence, and the razed landscape that once represented the United States affect his mind, which differs drastically from what it once was. Now more in keeping with a razed space no longer rooted to any social framework, he experiences memories but does not wish to do so, reminiscent as they are of a long gone time. In the midst of this slowly decaying world the man and boy move south from their northern hideout, for the winters have grown increasingly harsh and he worries they

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[383] Ibid., 129.

[384] Ibid., 8.

will not endure another one.[385] They travel by way of a sparsely populated state road or, "[w]hat used to be called the states," using the old infrastructure to navigate their way.[386] The main task required by the post-apocalyptic world in *The Road* is survival. Within both the novel and the film, *The Road* depicts a world cut loose from any measurable time or spatial context, such as country, state, or city. Writing on the nature of naming and meaning in the novel, Ashley Kunsa argues, "By divesting the post-apocalyptic landscape of those names that signify the now ruined world, *The Road* frees both character and reader from the chains of the old language."[387] The "chain of old language" affixes survivors to a past where language acts as a meaning-making structure, but that meaning has been disrupted, so now language imparts the destruction ingrained to a historically-oriented use. Yet, the post-apocalyptic world in *The Road* exists beyond history; it has been disconnected from the temporal structure and signification that would endow it with historical meaning. As such, language as explanation and/or narrative has no place in the space of *The Road*, because meaning-making structures are no longer privileged forms of working through trauma, since they are cut off from the social frameworks that construct meaning. In discarding language, survivors also discard their memories, bound as the two are to one another.[388] By moving beyond language as it was utilized in the past and keeping the apocalypse out-

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[385] The man's wife and the boy's mother committed suicide some time (the novel never reveals specifics like *when*) before the pair set out on the road, because she was unable to deal with the annihilation of any normative way of life.

[386] Ibid., 43. While the mysterious apocalyptic event that exists on the novel's horizon does not initially eradicate humanity, the population quickly diminishes over time between the growing food scarcity and the appearance of cannibals who hunt the road for "provisions."

[387] "'Maps of the World in Its Becoming': Post-Apocalyptic Naming in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*," *Journal of Modern Literature*. 33. (2009): 64.

[388] Once verbalized…the individual's memories are fused with the inter-subjective symbolic system of language and are, strictly speaking, no longer a purely exclusive and unalienable property…they can be exchanged, shared, corroborated, confirmed, corrected, disputed – and, last but not least, written down." See Aleida Assmann's "Re-framing Memory: Between Individual and Collective Forms of Constructing

side the space of the text, *The Road* creates a new relationship with meaning-making, one bound up in forgetting.

The Road's sparsely narrated form reflects the razed post-apocalyptic world, which the film starring Viggo Mortensen also demonstrates. McCarthy's other novels, such as *Blood Meridian* and *Suttree*, are verbose and expansive, with no end to the lengthy sentences that describe, in enormous detail, every aspect of the world he wishes to paint. *The Road* differs quite sharply from this style, however, and its divergence speaks to the trauma situated at the novel's core. McCarthy's language is stripped bare from description to dialogue, indicating in its starkness the difficulty with language often seen after a traumatic experience because it doesn't connote meaning the way it once did, representative as it remains of another, lost world. Often the boy and his father communicate in short questions and even shorter answers, because language appears to have shifted in the post-apocalyptic world without social frameworks to sustain signification. In one particularly telling scene, a snowstorm forces them to stop moving for the night and find shelter and the two exchange a dialogue:

> We have to stop, he said.
> It's really cold.
> I know.
> Where are we?
> Where are we?
> Yes.
> I dont know.
> If we were going to die would you tell me?
> I dont know. We're not going to die.[389]

Their exchange has been paired down to the extreme, because language, as a primary social tool, falls short without a cultural context in which to place it. Even though the man and his son com-

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the Past" in *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, edited by Karin Tilmans, et al. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 36.

[389] McCarthy, *The Road*, 94.

prise a social framework of two, their interaction has changed as a result of the space they occupy and traverse. Without any kind of geographical context and given the significant loss the land reflects with every step, their attempts at meaning making change as a result. Facts, such as, "It's really cold," and questions regarding their survival take precedence over unrestrained descriptions and insight into the characters' emotional state. In this way, the style reflects a traumatized sensibility, one that continues to work against memory and recuperation, since post-apocalyptic space affords no such place for recovery. The traumatic events that have occurred – both the end of the world and his wife's suicide – have left the man in a such a state that neither mourning nor melancholia remain viable response options; his loss is too immense to fully grasp and try to retain, as one would in melancholia, and does not he have the time or space to fully grieve his loss and move on, as in mourning. Post-apocalyptic space produces a liminal space wherein memory becomes a physical threat and must be discarded in order to survive.

The novel provides little in the way of explanation regarding what actually caused "the end," leaving both the event itself and what occurred in its wake a mystery. Explanation remains unnecessary in a way that extends beyond characters and affects readers, who become entangled by the absence of meaning making in *The Road*. Both the novel and the film explain that "[t]he clocks stopped at 1:17. A long shear of light and then a series of low concussions," but actual specifics concerning the apocalypse remain outside the text.[390] Whereas other trauma narratives attempt to make sense of the traumatic experience by way of explaining and narrating what

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[390] Ibid., 52.

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fragments remain and return, *The Road* does not explain.[391] Even while it reveals slivers of life

immediately following the apocalypse, it goes no further in providing a *why* or *how*:

> In those first years the roads were peopled with refugees shrouded up in their clothing.
> Wearing masks and goggles, sitting in their rags by the side of the road like ruined avia-
> tors. Their barrows heaped with shoddy. Towing wagons or carts. Their eyes bright in
> their skulls. Creedless shells of men tottering down the causeways like migrants in a fe-
> verland. The frailty of everything revealed at last. Old and troubling issues resolved into
> nothingness and night. The last instance of a thing takes the class with it. Turns out the
> light is gone.[392]

Again, McCarthy's style reflects the paltry post-apocalyptic landscape. The staccato-like sen-

tences provide no more than what is needed to ascertain the events occurring shortly after the end

of the world. Profuse descriptions would distract from the effort of survival, because such lan-

guage connects survivors to a world that no longer exists, and risks transmitting the destruction

inherent to that world. Memory, bound up as it is to language, would also risk the same destruc-

tive transmission, and so must be avoided. Instead, knowledge becomes restricted in order to aid

in the act of surviving.

The temporal boundaries that once defined life before the apocalyptic event, such as sea-

sons, no longer exist, thereby confusing the individual's place within time. It is not that time elic-

its the threat it does in apocalypse works; instead, it signifies nothing because those meanings

remain tied to another life. Spring, summer, fall, and winter do not exhibit definitive beginnings

and endings, and, in fact, life seems to hang between fall and winter since the "dull sun" can

barely be seen "beyond the murk."[393] This continually experienced liminal space signifies post-

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[391] See Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), Tim O'Brien, *In the Lake of the Woods* (New York: Penguin, 1995), and Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1996),

[392] McCarthy, *The Road*, 28.

[393] Ibid., 14.

apocalyptic space in *The Road*, which is never quite *after*, a point I will return to momentarily.[394]

A landscape once bright with color now exudes varying shades of gray, growing darker with each passing day, so that midnight becomes indistinguishable from noon. The man has no idea of time, because he has not "kept a calendar for years," and throughout the novel he continues to wonder what month it might be.[395] Shelly Rambo, who briefly explores McCarthy's novel and trauma in her article "Beyond Redemption?: Reading Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* After the End of the World," contends, "The quest McCarthy sends us on in *The Road* is one in which temporal markers of past, present and future no longer hold."[396] As such, the odd time/space of the post-apocalyptic world does not permit the same relationship with memory; remembering the past fails to offer the same redeeming qualities for apocalypse survivors that it potentially contains for other trauma survivors because the requisite social frameworks needed to construct and transmit memory no longer exist. While the man and his son do serve as a framework, their efforts are better served journeying south rather than recounting and analyzing the past.

The traumatized, post-apocalyptic space in *The Road* exhibits temporality in terms of duration, as opposed to a linear structure, suggesting Henri Bergson's theory of time. For Bergson, linear time requires thought i.e. pause, because it is nearly impossible to think analytically in the midst of duration. Speaking of numerical sequencing, an analogy Bergson often turns to throughout his first work, *Time and Freewill*, he explains, "It is certainly possible to perceive in time, and in time only, a succession which is nothing but a succession, but not an addition, i.e. a

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[394] Shelly Rambo, "Beyond Redemption?: Reading Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* After the End," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 41 (2008), 109. Rambo explains how "The experience of *living on* in the aftermath of trauma as in *The Road*, is often described as a tenuous middle, in which both what is behind and what is ahead are unsettled and threatening and unknown."

[395] McCarthy, *The Road*, 4.

[396] Rambo, "Beyond Redemption?", 108.

succession which culminates in a sum."[397] Linear time—or measured time—allows individuals

to consider a series of perceptions, so that they add up to a sum or conclusion, an analytical pro-

cess for Bergson requiring evaluative thought. However, duration does not permit such thought.

Bergson explains, "real duration is what we have always called time, but time perceived as indi-

visible."[398] In other words, duration exists as time without a consciousness beyond the immediate

moment, without a bigger picture. Gilles Deleuze further expounds upon Bergson's definition,

writing, "It is a case of…a becoming, but it is a becoming that endures, a change that is sub-

stance itself."[399] With regard to trauma, duration suggests the transitory period that occurs be-

tween first experiencing the event and eventually processing it into a narrative structure. The

"change" Deleuze suggests manifests as a change in consciousness that "endures" long past the

traumatic experience (the apocalyptic event in this instance) has ended.

Time, as understood through duration, cannot be completely grasped by the human mind;

once individuals attempt to transform pure experience into thought or language in order to com-

prehend a larger picture, they no longer interact with time at the level of duration. Suzanne Guer-

lac, who has written extensively on Bergson's concept of time, explains how critical thought

"presents an immobile world for us to master, projecting our thought through a grid of space,

thrown out…like a net to collect and organize the heterogeneous and dynamic real, so that we

can better act upon it and take control of it."[400] While Bergson in no way condemns the act of

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[397] Henri Bergson, *Time and Freewill,* trans. F.L. Pogson (Mineola; Dover Publications, Inc., 2001), 78-79.

[398] Ibid., 80.

[399] Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Brooklyn: Zone, 1990), 37.

[400] Susan Guerlac, *Thinking in Time: An Introduction to Henri Bergson* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 2.

analyzing, he admits its unnaturalness in the face of pure duration, which connects the mind/body to consciousness in a way thinking and processing cannot. By pausing in time, an act which spatializes temporality, Bergson argues, the individual moves away from pure duration, explaining, "it is in spatialized time that we ordinarily place ourselves. We have no interest in listening to the uninterrupted humming of life's depths. And yet, that is where real duration is."[401] Thought—the intent to explain, analyze, and master that which cannot be made sense of—removes the individual from real duration into measured time. Post-apocalyptic space denies such thought, though, because the apocalyptic event has left the survivor in a space that does not guarantee them an *after*, so that characters must continually fight for survival. Duration, therefore, becomes the privileged mode of grasping consciousness in the post-apocalyptic world, because it is concerned with experience as it occurs, as opposed to measurement and analysis.

The *post* of *The Road*'s post-apocalyptic space through which the man and his son travel, is never a space of *after* or at least not a full *after*, unlike other post-apocalyptic works. Instead, it is a traumatic space where the disaster persists, and survival has not yet been assured thanks to the presence of cannibals, the lack of sustenance, and the inhospitable natural conditions. As a result, the man never gains the distance necessary to begin processing both the larger traumatic event of the apocalypse, as well as the more personal traumatic events, such as his wife's suicide. His memories serve as distractions that shift his focus from protecting the boy, further frustrating the man's struggle. The man and boy remain continually on the defensive while they work their way south; they have no time to pause and process their memories of the apocalyptic event and the traumas it produced. Although the son was only a baby when the apocalypse occurred and contains no knowledge of a world different from the ash-covered, barren landscape through which he and his father slowly journey, the father remembers life before *the end*, but quickly re-

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[401] Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), 149.

alizes how memories only serve to distract him from his primary task: protecting his son. In terms of duration, the man cannot pause to attend to his thoughts about the events that have taken place, but must continue moving forward, existing in space bound up in movement *and* time required by existence on the road.

Instead of working through these memories and "repetitions," the man discards them – both physically and mentally – in order to concentrate on the business of surviving. Meaning making, be it through dreams or memory, cannot offer redemption from a past that has not yet passed and a present lacking social frameworks. What the man remembers of his own life cannot help him, and he refuses to consciously engage with it because he recognizes the barrier it creates for the present. When his son asks him if he ever had any friends, he refuses to elaborate and provide details regarding his life before the apocalypse:

> Yes. I did.
> Lots of them?
> Yes.
> Do you remember them?
> Yes. I remember them.
> What happened to them?
> They died.
> All of them?
> Yes. All of them.
> Do you miss them?
> Yes. I do.
> Where are we going?
> We're going south.[402]

Just as it is not important for the reader or the boy to know what brought about the end of the world, so, too, do details surrounding the man's life before the end not matter because thinking requires a pause that the post-apocalyptic space cannot offer:

> Sometimes the child would ask him questions about the world that for him was not even a memory. He thought hard how to answer. There is no past. What would you like? But he

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[402] McCarthy, *The Road*, 59-60.

stopped making things up because those things were not true either and the telling made him feel bad.[403]

Recognizing that "there is no past," because temporal markers no longer exist to quantify and qualify – to measure and assign meaning – to time's passage, the man resists the boy's line of questioning. Even though he's tempted to offer his son some kind of meaning through myth, the man refrains from that temptation, bound as it is to the former world. The past does not exist as a narrative memory in his mind, because the magnitude of the event he experienced has erased it from explicit memory. Therefore, rather than spend time and energy recalling his past, the man instead chooses to keep moving—to literally advance south away from his past.

What memories do surface for the man come about through an implicit form. The film opens with a dream-memory, and brings to light the nightmares, flashbacks and vivid recollections often experienced by trauma survivors. While the novel initially locates the man in the post-apocalypse, the film wishes to situate the viewer in the *before*, and does so by presenting brief snippets of the world before the apocalypse. The audiences sees vibrant colors in the green tree leaves, hanging yellow flowers, and bright pink blooms, which juxtapose the gloomy gray and dismal landscape the man wakes up to moments later. In the film's opening scenes, the man lies beside a waterfall, dreaming of the apocalyptic event. In his dream, he is in bed with his wife when he is awakened by loud bangs and screaming. Even though the man peers outside and seems to quickly understand the severity of what is taking place, the audience never sees anything more than the couple's bedroom and their reactions to the events outside. The apocalypse is shrouded in mystery; all the viewer can see are glowing lights—presumably from fires—in the curtained windows. Once he discovers that they no longer have electricity, the man rushes to the bathroom, stoppers the tub, and begins running water, his instincts for survival already starting.

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[403] Ibid., 54.

Presumably the waterfall by which he sleeps has triggered the sound of running water, and so the man returns to the night of the apocalypse in his mind. In this way, pausing in the post-apocalyptic space, as he and the boy must do each night to sleep, affects his mind and risks overwhelming it with past visions. The land surfaces in the man's mind and reconnects him to the past, albeit implicitly and through dream-forms.

When it comes to the traumatized, dreams and implicit memory reveal the ways in "[t]he experience cannot be organized on a linguistic level," in turn leading to an "organiz[ation] on a somatosensory or iconic level: as somatic sensations, behavior reenactments, nightmares and flashbacks."[404] The man's brain takes over the work of what he daily ignores and will not face. Still, as with memory, dreams only serve to draw the man's focus away from his present situation. In the novel, the man awakens from a particularly disturbing dream where his son has died, and he finds "[w]hat he could bear in the waking world he could not by night and he saw awake for fear the dream would return."[405] At times, his dreams involve nicer moments from his past, but he comes to realize how he prefers nightmares to nice dreams about his past:

> He mistrusted all of that. He said the right dreams for a man in peril were dreams of peril and all else was the call of languor and of death. He slept little and he slept poorly. He dreams of walking in a flowering wood where birds flew before them and he and the child and the sky was arching blue but he was learning how to wake himself from just such siren worlds. Lying there in the dark with the uncanny taste of a peach from some phantom orchard fading in his mouth. He thought if he lived long enough the world at last would all be lost. Like the dying world the newly blind inhabit, all of it slowly fading from memory.[406]

The post-apocalyptic space is one in which memories and dreams about the past return, although they eventually slip away, "slowly fading from memory," because the future cannot sustain a

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[404] van der Kolk, "The Intrusive Past," 172.

[405] McCarthy, *The Road*, 130.

[406] Ibid., 18.

link to the past without also assuming the past's destructive nature. As such, forgetting comes to take precedence over working through past traumas.

The past resurfaces for the man in ways besides dreams. As a result of his movement through the post-apocalyptic space the man comes face-to-face with his past trauma, which includes both a sense of loss concerning the known world, as well as a more personal loss pertaining to his dead wife and friends. Even though, as the novel opens, his losses are not new to him, it is only when he proceeds through the post-apocalyptic landscape that the man encounters nightmares and memories, momentarily returning him to the trauma surrounding the apocalypse. McCarthy describes the landscape as a "cauterized terrain," bespeaking the nature of a physical wound. As the man moves throughout the countryside, the land's "cauterized" nature affects him, often returning him to moments before the apocalypse. Awaking one morning, the man discovers a forest fire whose color freezes him in his tracks:

> He woke toward the morning with the fire down to coals and walked out to the road. Everything was alight. As if the lost sun were returning at last. The snow orange and quivering. A forest fire was making its way along the tinderbox ridges above them, flaring and shimmering against the overcast like the northern lights. Cold as it was he stood there a long time. The color of it moved something in him long forgotten. Make a list. Recite a litany. Remember.[407]

In the pause he allows himself, his memory flares up and brings to light a moment from the past; the color, so vivid against the gray and black terrain he has become accustomed to since the apocalypse, arouses old emotions. The wounded land draws him away from his task and distracts him with memories that awaken a desire to "remember" and repeat, but such repetition only transmits the trauma and desecration ingrained in the past.

Interestingly, the man also exhibits an awareness concerning the ways in which remembering enacts violence against the original experience: "He thought each memory recalled must

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[407] Ibid., 31.

do some violence to its origins. As in a party game. Say the word and pass it on. So be sparing. What you alter in the remembering has yet a reality, known or not."[408] Memory attempts meaning making by structuring the past where no structure originally existed, and imparts meaning in a way significant to the present *not* the original experience. Memory changes with each 230recollection, is reconstructed with each remembering, and the man understands how sieving through events and memories fails to offer salvation from what has already transpired; no final meaning will ever be achieved from such an endeavor, and even were it possible it would contribute nothing to his present-day focus on survival. Rather than actively remember in order to forget, he finds it better to forget entirely, to sever himself, at times physically, from his history so that he can concentrate on surviving the present. Both he and the boy must slowly unlatch their memories from the things they carry in order to survive. These moments of shedding can be seen both metaphorically as well as literally throughout the novel. In one particular moment, the man examines the contents of his wallets, finding identification from before the end; he acknowledges its insignificance in the present moment by refusing to engage it for any kind of meaning:

> He'd carried his billfold about till it wore a cornershaped hole in his trousers. Then one day he sat by the roadside and took it out and went through the contents. Some money, credit cards. His driver's license. A picture of his wife. He spread everything out on the blacktop…He pitched the sweatblackened piece of leather into the woods and sat holding the photograph. Then he laid it down in the road also and then he stood and they went on".[409]

The objects that people most often associate with identity on a daily basis – wallet, driver's license, etc. – here no longer become the markers they once were. The man's immense action of leaving his wallet by the side of the road indicates not only how much has changed since the apocalyptic event but also how those objects once bound to identity no longer bolster it. In dis-

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[408] Ibid., 131.

[409] Ibid., 51.

carding his wallet, he leaves behind his identity as it was in the former world. Within *The Road,* the man's memories predominantly stem from life before the apocalypse, and so must be discarded in order to concentrate on survival. This movement appears to be easy for the man, because the space of post-apocalypse requires focus on the present, but the reality of such a move poses great difficulty in actuality. The man recognizes that living in the past—parsing through memories in order to gain some sense of understanding or comfort—becomes a futile gesture in duration. Since past traumas return through memory, it cannot offer a redeeming connection to the past.

As *The Road* indicates, in a post-apocalyptic world absent of geographical signification and social frameworks, memory doesn't function the way it once did, especially in a narrative sense. Rather than providing characters with temporal distinctions and narrative meaning, memories become far more implicit, fractured, and disruptive – reflecting their true nature as originally experienced by an individual – as a result of the apocalyptic trauma. Taking on characteristics in keeping with trauma, therefore, memory distracts survivors from the important task of surviving and implies a far more physical component than is typically seen in narrative memory. The novel proposes that, in such instances, forgetting comes to be not only a preferable but a required task because it discards violent memories representative of a violent past. More than being roadblocks that affect the present, memories become a dangerous connection to the past that can physically hurt and impede any attempt to live in the present.

Although characters in *Fiskadoro* do not need to focus on surviving to the extent that the man in *The Road* does, the novel does not privilege memory as a stable or healthy connection to the past. Existing in a contrasting role from Grandmother Wright, her grandson Mr. Cheung

finds the past to be an elusive, tantalizing puzzle that must be solved and ordered to decipher the events that devastated life on earth. He

> believe[s] in the importance of remembering," and so desperately wishes to stand in his grandmother's place, to appropriate her memories as his own so that the past makes sense to him.[410] He admits, "I would like to be where you are…to see what you're seeing. I wish I could remember your memories.[411]

In a way that reflects Hirsch's concept of postmemory, Cheung wishes to identify so closely with his grandmother that he actually takes on her memories, but his desire is appropriative and lacks the empathic understanding necessary between first and second- or third-generation family members. He finds it frustrating that he cannot remember what "sixty years ago…any little child could have told [him]," but he wishes to remember in order to understand the past, a gesture the novel rejects both because of the absence of any original social framework, as well as the vio-lence bound up in the past.[412] Cheung cannot make sense of the apocalyptic event and the world that existed before it, because such an event exists beyond the logic of meaning making and structure. The novel criticizes his "habit of trying to keep the world in his mind, the whole world, to keep it turning in the space of his brain, from the start of time to the last day."[413] His brain does not have room for "the whole world," nor does it tolerate memories from such a destructive time; he suffers from seizures, usually brought on after a particular attempt to remember what he was not present to experience. In this way his body physically rejects any attempt he makes to recall the past, instead warning what could happen if his grandmother's memories of the past were transmitted to his mind. Rather than recuperate the past in order to understand how the pre-

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[410] Johnson, *Fiskadoro*, 10.

[411] Ibid.

[412] Ibid., 155.

[413] Ibid., 126.

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sent came to be, *Fiskadoro* champions separating oneself from a memory that connects people to what has already passed instead of what is currently taking place.

Rather than privileging Cheung's and the Society's efforts at piecing together the past, the novel presents an unnerving alternative in the form of the title character, Fiskadoro. The thirteen year old comes to represent how the future people will regard the past, when he undergoes a subincision ritual that erases his entire memory. What initially seems to be a destructive move actually prepares him for the future, for as the people recounting his and Mr. Cheung's tale, Fiskadoro was "the only one who was ready when we came."[414] Although Mr. Cheung works with Fiskadoro hoping to help him regain his memory, Fiskadoro protests saying, "I don't wanna remember who I am. Es me already, right now today. If I remember, then I gone be somebody else."[415] Fiskadoro's past – his memories of who he once was – represent a person much different than his present, and he chooses not to engage with his memories in order to fully exist in the present moment. For both *Fiskadoro* and *The Road*, post-apocalyptic space gives way to duration in which a person exists in the present without pausing to analyze, since such an action would require some knowledge of what has come before. Despite the fact that Cheung attempts to unearth such knowledge in order to piece together his role in the temporal scheme (past, present, future), the novel contends that his efforts would be better served focusing on the present. To Cheung, Fiskadoro signifies a frightening possibility, for if humans were to have no memory to connect one day to another, "surely it would break a person. Surely it would main the soul."[416] His own attempts at understanding the past having been frustrated, though, he comes to admit

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[414] Ibid.

[415] Ibid., 95.

[416] Ibid., 190.

that there is "something to be envied in [forgetting]."[417] *Fiskadoro* proposes the idea of existing

from day to day, because of the past's dramatic and negative influence on an individual's ability

to function properly in the present when memories of the past continually impede the present. In

other words, memory becomes a problem when people focus too intently on the past that they

forget to operate in their own present.

As problematic – and perhaps even unfeasible – as a life without memory would be in ac-

tuality, both *Fiskadoro* and *The Road* propose to varying degrees the necessity of forgetting in

the wake of destruction. Within each novel, the apocalyptic event represents a traumatic event,

and cannot be properly pieced together within narrative memory because it exists beyond such a

narrative frame but also, more importantly, because memories of such destruction would endan-

ger the present. For the trauma survivor, forgetting is not an easy or at times plausible task given

that memory arises implicitly, but each novel questions the benefits of working through such

memory when it represents destruction so potent it takes on an affective quality. With regard to

such affective memory, the risk of transferring trauma to future generations becomes increasing-

ly possible, so that the past threatens the present in ever-greater and more menacing ways. Re-

membering comes to reflect a destructive act, especially if the memories continually position the

viewer as a spectator wherein they witness the past rather than engage with the present. As much

as memory is imperative in developing and maintaining identity, these post-apocalyptic novels

continue the memory work of their genre, but work both within and against the unease people

feel regarding the act of forgetting. *Fiskadoro* and *The Road* suggest that forgetting can be a

healthy, necessary act in terms of everyday acts of forgetting, as well as with regard to more

emotional, traumatic memory. Richard Thompson, who has studied memory, argues, "The prob-

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[417] Ibid., 190-192.

lem is not so much being able to remember…traumas but instead being able to forget them."[418]

Moving against the recent trend to remember everything, then, these novels argue that concentrating too greatly on the past becomes a hindrance to living in the present.

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[418] Richard Thompson and Stephen A. Madigan, *Memory: The Key to Consciousness (*Washington: Joseph Henry Press, 2005), 24.

CONCLUSION
Memory Work in Post-Apocalyptic Literature and Film

> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.
> - Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

> Because memory with its unending and uncompassable associations is the modality of culture itself.
> - Richard Terdiman

    This project has sought to show the important contribution the post-apocalypse genre makes to the ongoing conversation about the nature of memory in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The post-apocalypse genre shares many similarities with the apocalypse genre, since the concept of the apocalypse once contained the *after* so central to the post-apocalypse. As such, the *post-apocalypse* designation draws criticism from theologians and other scholars who understand the apocalypse myth. Yet, the distinction between the apocalypse and the post-apocalypse is worth making given the growing presence of post-apocalyptic literature and film in recent years. These cultural works concentrate almost exclusively on the world that emerges after an immense catastrophe, as opposed to the time period leading up to or occurring during the catastrophe. As a result, post-apocalypse works reintroduce space, which was once a central component of the apocalypse myth, since it involved a transition from old to new world. Contemporary notions of the apocalypse, as well as cultural manifestations of the apocalypse, concentrate less on space and more on temporality, both in terms of the threat posed to time, as well as the threat time poses. By re-spatializing the *after* that follows an apocalyptic event, and by concentrating more exclusively on setting, post-apocalypse works reassert the important role space plays in the apocalypse myth, and use that devastated space to explore the nature of memory in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

As this project contends, literature and other creative forms become an ideal space to work through questions about memory, because of the socially embedded nature of narratives. What Proust discovered in *Swann's Way*, and what Vonnegut found with *Slaughterhouse-Five* is that narrative forms, such as the novel or short story, permit the kind of narrative play necessary when it comes to depicting memory. Vonnegut famously struggled with reporting his experience as a soldier and prisoner of war during WWII. Having lived through the experience, he approached the subject matter as a report, but found – much to his frustration and dismay – that he could not remember his experiences clearly, and moreover that he could not find the language with which to depict those experiences. In a speech delivered in 1969, Vonnegut attested to the difficulty he still experienced remembering Dresden:

> I would head myself into my memory of it, the circuit breaks would kick out; I'd head in again, I'd back off. […] It's like Heinrich Boll's book, *Absent Without Leave* – stories about German soldiers with the war part missing. You see them leave and return, but there's this terrible hole in the middle. That is like my memory of Dresden; actually there's nothing there.[419]

Vonnegut's difficulties writing about his time in Dresden during the firebombing that razed the city attest to the traumatic nature of those memories, which make any act of narrativization much more difficult than more normatively formed memories. Yet, as Vonnegut details in the opening narrative frame of *Slaughterhouse-Five*, he could not "report" about the incident the way he thought he could; instead, he must rely on a more fictional narrative frame through which to construct the past.[420] Literature, in this instance, helps Vonnegut remember the past and narrativize it to the extent that he can share it with readers, but it transmits an individual experience into a socially embedded structure, thereby aiding in the help of transmission. I include Vonnegut in this

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[419] Bellamy, Joe David, ed. *The New Fiction: Interviews with Innovative American Writers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 202-203.

[420] *Slaughterhouse-Five* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1991), 2.

concluding section because he comprises a part of an important series of authors, artists, musicians, and other creative minds who perform "memory work" through a range of cultural forms, and in doing so illuminate the nuances of memory in unique and interesting ways.

Moreover, Vonnegut relies upon science fiction, as opposed to other more realistic genres or literary forms, because the oscillation between familiar and defamiliar at the center of the genre provides him with a greater entryway into the nuances of memory. Memory does not passively record the past, nor do people recollect the same event exactly the same way each time. Memory changes with each recollection, and so cultural forms that rely upon and utilize narrative characteristics that borrow from imagination, reality, history, and myth, do well to explore memory, as opposed to a strictly realist portrayal. So, too, do post-apocalypse works continue this memory work, drawing upon the genre's characteristics in order to address the mounting fears in the twentieth century that the nature of memory has changed to such an extent that people can no longer remember to the extent they once did. Set in imagined futures that provoke recognition on the part of the reader because of the familiar settings, post-apocalypse works also incorporate a sense of the unfamiliar, so that readers better grasp the underlying criticism involved. In other words, while readers may recognize the geographical designation associated with the setting, i.e. the United States, England, Key West, etc., these works also evoke a sense of strange, because the seemingly familiar places are familiar in name only. Numerous and varied changes have taken place to upset the geographical signification that specific locations once elicited. Consequently, characters cannot turn to places for any mnemonic meaning. Whether the places have been razed, or whether their association with specific frameworks have been upset, the loss of these places makes it clear how individuals cannot depend upon them exclusively for memory. Post-apocalyptic narratives criticize the rise in and dependence upon external memory by presenting

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razed settings that no longer "contain" the past. In doing so, these works underscore memory's social nature, suggesting that people play a far more important role when it comes to remembering than has heretofore been explored. Although research in cognitive studies continuously explores the nature of collective memory, it is in cultural forms generally and post-apocalypse works specifically that memory's social characteristics emerge most clearly.

On the one hand, memory pertains to subjective experiences or a subjective understanding of the past, and in this way exhibits properties that suggest its individual nature. Early work in psychoanalysis examined this line of thinking, and more recently neuroscience has conducted myriad experiments that locate memory in the brain and therefore posit memory as an exclusively individual phenomenon. Equally important, however, is memory's social nature, for it is in this arena of exchange between and among people that memory's affective qualities manifest. If, as Jay Winter contends, "Memory is history seen through affect," then the past returns in physical ways that arise when a person is alone, but arises more often through their interactions with other people in their lives.[421] Their social frameworks, those collective groups that form their relationships, become the site where people engage with the past by way of engaging with one another. Individuals are certainly capable of narrating (and narrativizing) the past, but they do so by drawing upon socially structured narrative forms to help them contextualize memory. When a person speaks to other members of a shared social framework about the past, they do so through the socially embedded form of communication that is language, thereby transforming memory from an experience into a communicable and therefore social narrative about the past. But in addition to constructing their own narratives, people's important memory work comes about

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[421] "The performance of the past: memory, history, identity," in *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 12.

through their social relations. Winter explains the way that a person contributes to their social

frameworks and how those relationships in turn contribute to a person's memory, stating,

> When individuals and groups express or embody or interpret or repeat a script about the past, they galvanize the ties that bind groups together and deposit additional memory traces about the past in their own minds. These renewed and revamped memories frequently vary from and overlay earlier memories, creating a complex palimpsest about the past each of us carries with us.[422]

The act of narrativizing the past incorporates elements of revision, so that memory never stays

the same, instead acting as a mutable force that constitutes (and reflects) a group's interests in

the present by establishing their existence over time, or explaining their development over time.

Memory-narratives, the form that memory takes once it has entered language, construct the past

in understandable and interpretable ways, since memory, as an individual phenomenon, exists as

a fractured, disorganized perspective of the past. It takes social frameworks to help organize and

structure the past, and so it is often in the presence of other group members that acts of remem-

brance occur most frequently.

Ultimately, memory operates as an interaction that functions between social frameworks,

places, and objects, the latter two serving as materializations of memory that help to bolster it.

As much as memory changes with each act of narration, social frameworks actually do stabilize

memory by investing places and objects with mnemonic signification. Even if places and objects

survive the ravages of time, though, if the social framework associated with either disappears

then the meaning that existed within those physical properties disappears, too. Each novel, film,

or other type of cultural work that falls within the bounds of the post-apocalypse genre ap-

proaches memory somewhat differently; however, the overall bent of the genre involves eluci-

dating the social nature of memory at a time when the acts of remembering and forgetting the

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[422] Ibid., 11.

past continues to be labeled as an individual phenomenon. The post-apocalypse works I have explored in this project produce a number of questions when it comes to memory in the twentieth century, including: How does memory function socially? How does memory pertain to other temporalities than the past? What happens to external memory if those sites containing memory disappear or drastically change? Is all forgetting necessarily a negative act? These questions serve as important entryways into considering how memory functions in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and how a range of changes to mnemonic practices threatens to end memory. By looking past the world's "end," post-apocalypse works draw parallels to the end of memory by warning readers about the problems that arise when people no longer act as sites for memory, and when the places and objects used to bolster memory become the main source for the past, facilitating how people engage with it. They serve, therefore, as memory-narratives themselves in that they are both narratives about memory, as well as works that will serve as cultural memory. In other words, in addition to acting as an ideal form for memory, these works also function as an ideal form of memory, acting themselves as cultural memory that become important parts of the cultural fabric both of the period in which they emerge, as well as for future periods.

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Hey Amanda,

Nice to hear from you. I shared your note with Caelyn Cobb, editorial assistant at NYU…will let you know when I hear back. My sense was you did not need permissions for dissertation, but I wanted her confirmation on that.

Best,
Monica

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Monica J. Casper, Ph.D.
Professor and Head, Gender and Women's Studies
University of Arizona
110 GWS, 925 N. Tyndall Avenue
PO Box 210438
Tucson, AZ 85721-0438
(520) 626-9158

Amanda, here is Caelyn's response:

Yes, that's correct. She can just cite the book in the way you'd cite a chapter with material from a previously published article.

Caelyn Cobb
Assistant Editor
NYU Press
838 Broadway, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10003
212-992-9013 caelyn.cobb@nyu.edu

VITA

Amanda Wicks received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from the University of Florida in 2005, and a Master of Arts degree in English from Florida State University in 2007. Primarily, her research focuses on contemporary literature and film, and cognitive scholarship in order to understand how cultural narratives function as a form of and for memory. Her scholarship on memory in contemporary literature can be found in *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, as well as the edited collection *Within Trauma* (NYU Press, 2014). In addition to her graduate work, Amanda writes for the *Washington Independent Review of Books*, as well as for *225 Magazine*, a local Baton Rouge publication.