MIDLANDS HISTORICAL REVIEW

Pierre Nora, Memory, and the Myth of Elizabeth I

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The Memory Industry

Since the 1980s there has been a boom in historical discourse on the subject of memory and its relationship with history. Whilst the concept of memory was incredibly under-studied before the 1980s, the term and its various derivatives are now a dominant theme in cultural history, and are especially associated with mentality and identity.[1] Indeed, Confino has argued that memory has become 'deprecated by surplus use, whilst memory studies lack a clear focus and have become somewhat predictable.[2] There are various reasons for this revolution in critical thinking: twentieth-century violence and the Holocaust; a rise in consciousness about anniversaries; the ending of the Cold War; the explosion of New Histories; and a growing distance between professional history and public memory.[3]

The relationship between history and memory has become the battleground for theoretical discussion within this 'memory industry', and the central thinker in this is the French historian, Pierre Nora.[4] Nora fundamentally believes in the 'conquest and eradication of memory by history'.[5] The processes of modernity have meant 'we have seen the end of societies that had long assured the transmission and conservation of collectively remembered values, whether through churches or schools, the family or the state'.[6] Consequently, memory and history are now in fundamental opposition, exemplified by 'the awakening, quite recently in France, of a historiographical consciousness'; whilst memory is natural and evolving, 'open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting', history reconstructs and is 'a critical discourse that is antithetical to spontaneous memory'.[7] Spiegel similarly argues that modern history and memory, whilst not antithetical, are at least very different, with memory using the past in the present whilst history keeps it in the past.[8] Nora

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[1] A. Confino, 'Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method', *American Historical Review*, 102 (1997), p. 1386.
[2] Confino, 'Problems of Method', p. 1387.
[3] D.W. Blight, 'The Memory Boom: Why and Why Now?', in P. Boyer and J.V. Wertsch (Eds.), *Memory in Mind and Culture* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 238-251.
[4] K.L. Klein, 'On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse', *Representations*, 69 (2000), p. 127.
[5] P. Nora, 'Between Memory and History': Les Lieux de Memoire', *Representations*, 26 (1989), p. 8.
[6] Nora, 'Between Memory and History', p. 7.
[7] Nora, 'Between Memory and History', pp. 8-9.
[8] G.M. Spiegel, 'Memory and History: Liturgical Time and Historical Time', *History and Theory*, 41 (2002), p. 162.

consequently believes sites of memory, *lieux de memoire*, are an artificial, historical reconstruction where remembrance 'comes to us from the outside' compared to *milieux de memoire* – natural 'real environments of memory' of collective historical consciousness.[9]

Memory studies have not yet reached an end-point. Many complaints exist regarding its fragmented nature and the lack of clarity over key concepts.[10] These theoretical discussions of the relationship between history and memory have largely occurred outside of British history; a profession that is 'less given to philosophy, theory, or abstraction', whilst generally sceptical of post-structuralist theory.[11] This is especially true of early-modern studies, as when it has been applied by British historians it is mostly within post-Enlightenment contexts or less regularly in ancient and medieval European history.[12] Yet Pivetti exemplifies how early-modern studies can benefit from Nora's theory, using the idea that history destroys memory to analyse Restoration writers like John Dryden: 'Dryden [is] an advocate of Nora's modern society' by '[crafting] a natural history against the dissenting memories of the Puritan Revolution, and against them memories that would break down both logical and political unity'.[13] Sherlock meanwhile highlights how Nora's idea of *lieux de memoire* and their categorisation as inherently politicized, subduing the act of natural collective memory, is incredibly useful for early-modernists as they '[force] attention to the significance of the 'will to remember' sites of memory embody … [and] their material, symbolic, and functional aspects'.[14]

The concept of memory is a vital component of early-modern studies, especially its relationship with identities, ideologies and mentalities. Nowhere is this truer than in the historiography on posthumous perceptions of Elizabeth. This has been termed the myth of Elizabeth; however historians are in effect dealing with how Elizabeth has been remembered from her death in 1603 until the modern day, a form of 'reputation studies' that differs significantly from traditional biographies that give a historical judgement.[15] This has been the subject of much historical study. As Dobson and Watson argued in the topic's seminal study,

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[9] Nora, 'Between Memory and History', p. 7, p. 14.
[10] Confino, 'Problems of Method', p.1387; J.K. Olick and J. Robbins, 'Social Memory Studies: From 'Collective Memory' to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24 (1998), p. 105.
[11] K. Hodgkin and S. Radstone, 'Introduction: Contested Pasts', in K. Hodgkin and S. Radstone (Eds.), *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory* (London, 2003), p.2; D.P. Jordan, 'Introduction', in P. Nora (Ed.), *Rethinking France: Les Lieux de Memoire. Volume 1: The State* (London, 2001), p. xxxi.
[12] P. Sherlock, *Monuments and Memory in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, 2008), p. 6.
[13] K. Pivetti, *Of Memory and Literary Form: Making the Early Modern English Nation* (Lanham, MD., 2015), pp. 145-146.
[14] Sherlock, *Monuments and Memory*, pp. 4-5.
[15] Olick and Robbins, 'Social Memory Studies', p. 130.

Elizabeth I is 'the most glamorous of English monarchs', 'the nearest thing England has ever had to a defining national heroine'.[16] The myth has also constantly evolved, as 'different anecdotes and texts [achieve] currency and prominence in different eras, some to be forgotten, some utterly to change their meanings, and some to be discredited, as … different views of past and present alike have become dominant'.[17] Freeman and Doran similarly argued:

> This myth has flourished because it explained, and justified, such disparate and incompatible concepts as English nationalism, the British Empire, the Church of England, anti-Catholicism, religious toleration, the subjection of women and, in a different era, their equality with men.[18]

Clearly the myth of Elizabeth is imbued with various values and beliefs, and the ideas of memory studies could potentially help to delineate and categorise the many aspects of the myth.

However, studies of the myth of Elizabeth follow a trend in British early-modern studies in being significantly under-theorized. Beyond Sherlock, no one explicitly interacts with Nora.[19] Hutton's studies of the ritual year in early-modern England exemplify this insularity.[20] Despite dealing with the issue of collective memory, Hutton is typically neo-Rankean and non-interdisciplinary, articulating solely what the archive reveals. Still, key terms of memory studies consistently appear throughout studies of the myth of Elizabeth – notably 'collective memory', 'remembering', 'forgetting', 'identity' and 'site of memory'. Therefore Nora and other ideas can be applied to its historiography, even if it is under-theorized. This article will thus analyse what historians argue about the myth of Elizabeth through the prism of memory studies and Nora's theory. The first section will deal with what Nora calls 'pre-modern' memory – the pre-nineteenth-century myth. The final two sections will then apply the historiography to Nora's contention that history has destroyed memory. It will show that whilst Nora's theory has its merits, notably about the 'national' memory of Elizabeth, in reality history's relationship with memory is far more nuanced than simply destroying it – demonstrated markedly by feminist critiques of the myth. Instead post-modern

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[16] M. Dobson and N.J. Watson, *England's Elizabeth: An Afterlife in Fame and Fantasy* (Oxford, 2002), p. 1.
[17] Dobson and Watson, *England's Elizabeth*, pp. 4-5.
[18] T.S. Freeman and S. Doran, 'Introduction', in S. Doran and T.S. Freeman (Eds.), *The Myth of Elizabeth* (Basingstoke, 2003), p. 3.
[19] P. Sherlock, 'The monuments of Elizabeth Tudor and Mary Stuart: King James and the Manipulation of Memory', *Journal of British Studies*, 46 (2007), pp. 263-289.
[20] R. Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1994) & *The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain* (Oxford, 1996).

historiography, especially that which interacts with social identities, is constantly evolving 'in light of particular cultural biases and assumptions'.[21]

The Pre-Modern Elizabethan Myth

Pre-modern memory was simply defined by Nora as the natural collective memory that served a purpose in the present ('throughout the past we venerated ourselves') and which occurred until the rupture of the French revolution.[22] Nora believes memory evolves through three stages – pre-modern, modern, and post-modern.[23] Significantly, these categorisations serve an analysis of primarily modern and post-modern (post-1789) memory of historical events. Yet historical research vis-à-vis Elizabeth has concentrated mainly on her pre-modern remembrance and it shows the myth was central in the creation of a Protestant national identity. Memorialised in a variety of media from almanacs to paintings, Protestantism's centrality in national identity continued into the nineteenth-century.[24] This study of the myth of Elizabeth can theoretically be defined as 'mnemohistory', a term coined by Assmann in studying the memory of Moses throughout European history:

Mnemohistory does not deal with the past as such, but only with the past as it is remembered. It is not the opposite of history but one of the branches of history. It concentrates exclusively on those aspects of significance and relevance that are the product of memory – that is, recourse to a past – and which only appear in later readings.[25]

There is a great deal of historiographical consensus over the pre-modern mnemohistory of Elizabeth. Only Hutton doubts the myth's importance in early-modern England, arguing that it was part of a political culture of mainly metropolitan elites, and only gained notoriety when used as a politicised tool to attack the government when they felt the crown was too pro-Catholic; instead the memorialisation of the Gunpowder plot was much more important in popular early-modern religionised memory.[26] The historiography has instead followed Cressy's belief that numerous dates – notably 1558, 1588, and 1605 – were 'among a pattern of providences and mercies that underlay the Protestant calendar'.[27] 'Queen

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[21] Freeman and Doran, 'Introduction', p. 19.
[22] Nora, 'Between Memory and History', p. 16.
[23] W. Kansteiner, 'Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies', *History and Theory*, 41 (2002), p. 183.
[24] L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London, 1992), pp. 18-22.
[25] J. Assmann, cited in R.J. Bernstein, 'The Culture of Memory', *History and Theory*, 43 (2004), p. 167.
[26] See the chapter 'Blood Month and the Virgin Queen', in Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, pp. 386-392.
[27] D. Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (Stroud, 1994), p. 110.

Elizabeth of famous memory' was the outstanding Protestant heroine who symbolised England's elect status, and the myth that surrounded her in the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries underwent a process of selective remembering and forgetting to create this idealized memory.[28] Published in 1989, *Bonfires and Bells* is significantly under-theorized, with no attempt made to define key concepts. Yet perhaps unwittingly, Cressy echoes memory theorists in the title of two chapters: 'History and Providence in the English Revolution' and 'The Politics of Memory in Later Stuart England'. Here history and memory are synonyms, showing that in pre-modern England they are effectively the same, both memorialising past events.

In analysing the seventeenth-century myth of Elizabeth, early-modernists have overall drawn similar conclusions to theorists that have built on Nora's perception of pre-modern memory, despite either not reading or referencing these works. In analysing medieval and post-Holocaust Jewish memory, Spiegel describes memory here being religionised: 'in liturgical commemoration … the fundamental goal is, precisely, to revivify the past and make it live in the present, to fuse past and present'. This overturns Nora's relationship between modern and post-modern history and memory, as 'history … is absorbed into cyclical, liturgical memory'.[29] Similarly, Birth talks about 'the immanent past', where collective memory gives significance to the present, whilst Olick and Robbins term this phenomena 'presentism'.[30] These important concepts are analogous to ideas about the pre-nineteenth-century myth of Elizabeth. In his introduction, Cressy formulates a liturgical, cyclical idea of memory in early-modern England by arguing that 'momentous episodes … were memorialized and commemorated as signs of God's interest in his Protestant nation'.[31] Walsham's comprehensive analysis of the posthumous Biblical imagery of Elizabeth, where she was compared to Deborah, Judith and Hester, arrives at similar conclusions that this myth gave seventeenth and eighteenth-century Englishmen a confidence that England was a New Israel and God's elect nation.[32] Whilst not Protestant propaganda in their original Latin, Collinson has also shown that through various translations of William Camden's popular history, the *Annales*, a myth of Elizabeth being a Protestant heroine was increasingly perpetuated.[33] In early-modern England, history was religionised,

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[28] Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, p. 130.
[29] Spiegel, 'Liturgical Time', p. 152.
[30] K. Birth, 'The Immanent Past: Culture and Psyche at the Juncture of Memory and History', *Ethos*, 34 (2006), p.169, pp.180-181; Olick & Robbins, 'Social Memory Studies', p. 128.
[31] Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, p. xiii.
[32] A. Walsham, ''A Very Deborah?' The Myth of Elizabeth I as a Providential Monarch', in J.M. Walker (Ed.), *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana* (Durham, NC., 1998), pp. 143-168.
[33] P. Collinson, 'William Camden and the Anti-Myth of Elizabeth: Setting the Mould', in J.M. Walker (Ed.), *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana* (Durham, NC., 1998), pp. 79-98.

serving the same function as memory as a malleable force for present needs. The early-modern historical perceptions of Elizabeth were hence not historically accurate; whilst in the early seventeenth-century Elizabeth was celebrated as a Biblical figure and a quasi-replacement for the medieval cult of the Virgin Mary, during her reign Elizabethans frequently commented on her not doing enough for the Protestant cause.[34]

Although these analyses by early-modernists do not explicitly interact with memory theory, they do serve a valuable function for memory theorists. Confino has argued that memory is often studied in 'symbolic isolation'; instead memory should be conceived as a two-way process that includes both how it represents the past and its context.[35] Too often the latter is ignored. Similarly, in outlining the future direction memory studies needs to go in, Olick and Robbins emphasise how memory needs to be historicised.[36] Due to the nature of their studies, historians naturally do this and analyses of the myth of Elizabeth are exemplary. For example, Rodger's analysis of the myth of Elizabethan sea-power in English history first outlines this myth then historicises it as a potent historical agent throughout seventeenth and eighteenth-century politics.[37] Furthermore, a related problem in collective memory studies is the issue of reception; Confino argues that through concentrating predominantly on the 'politics of memory' and 'the sacrificing of the cultural to the political … we tend to ignore the issue of reception'.[38] Perhaps an older historiography that exists on the myth of Elizabeth has been guilty of that. The works of Neale, Yates and Strong concentrated primarily on the politicized creation of the myth – notably the propaganda and the symbolism inherent in the literature and visual arts of Elizabeth. However recent studies have moved beyond this.[39] More popular medias of the myth have now been studied which see reception as fundamental: Cressy's bonfires and bells as 'vocabularies of celebration';[40] Collinson's study of Camden's popular history and its politicised translations;[41] and Grant and Richardson's analysis of the dramatic representations of Elizabeth.[42]

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[34] L. Richardson, 'Elizabeth in Arcadia: Fulke Greville and John Hayward's Construction of Elizabeth', in J.M. Walker (Ed.), *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana* (Durham, NC., 1998), pp. 99-119.
[35] Confino, 'Problems of Method', p. 1391.
[36] Olick & Robbins, 'Social Memory Studies', p. 134.
[37] N.A.M. Rodger, 'Queen Elizabeth and the Myth of Sea-Power in English History', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 14 (2004), p. 153.
[38] Confino, 'Problems of Method', pp. 1393-1395.
[39] Freeman & Doran, 'Introduction', p .4.
[40] Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, p. 67.
[41] Collinson, 'Camden and the Anti-Myth', p. 85
[42] T. Grant, 'Drama Queen: Staging Elizabeth in *If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody*', in J.M. Walker (Ed.), *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana* (Durham, NC., 1998), p.137; Richardson, 'Elizabeth in Arcadia', p. 99.

The vitality of the theme of reception in studying the early-modern myth of Elizabeth has led to a significant issue being contestation, primarily between elite and popular memory. Hodgkin and Radstone have emphasised the 'struggle involved in producing smooth and non-contestatory narratives', whilst arguing 'official and popular wishes for a memory site do not always coincide'.[43] This is especially apparent in the Jacobean period, when James I aimed to use the memory of Elizabeth (and the Tudors in general) to legitimate his claims to the throne, whilst the popular memory of Elizabeth as a Protestant heroine was used as a yardstick which contemporaries had to live up to – notably during the Spanish Match in the 1620s. This theme is discussed in Walker's analysis of posthumous images of Elizabeth. Whilst the popular Cecil engraving of Elizabeth in armour evokes a memory of a militant Protestant England that fought off the Armada, a comparative royally-commissioned Gheeraerts portrait aimed to revise the memory of Elizabeth as an aged woman of a bygone age, whose politics were outdated in the 1620s.[44] Moreover, Sherlock's analysis of the monuments of Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots at Westminster Abbey and James' attempts to manipulate memory explicitly discusses this contestation, whilst directly engaging with Nora. Sherlock argues that 'James hoped to rewrite the past in his own image', giving relative equality to Elizabeth and Mary's monuments by '[adopting] virtually identical forms'; they are thus a *lieux de memoire* that aim to give an aura of continuity at a time of discontinuity in English history.[45]

Nora contrasts *lieux de memoire* with *milieux de memoire*: the former being artificial, 'material, symbolic, and functional' whilst the latter were 'real environments of memory', 'collectively remembered values' of a profoundly religious society.[46] These categorisations are extremely useful both in studying the myth of Elizabeth and early-modern studies in general. For example, Sherlock contrasts James' *lieux de memoire* to Elizabeth with the more organic monuments to Elizabeth in London parish churches that 'contained quite different versions of the queen's life than that found at the abbey'.[47] Cressy also indirectly uses these categories through explaining the Spanish Armada was a national *milieux de memoire*: 'The deliverance of 1588 was forcefully imprinted on English national memory. It was not institutionalized, there being no 'Armada day', but the horror of the invasion attempt and the miracle of God's judgment were too remarkable to be forgotten'.[48] Similarly bonfires

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[43] Hodgkin & Radstone, 'Contested Pasts', p. 16.
[44] J.M. Walker, 'Bones of Contention: Posthumous Images of Elizabeth and Stuart Politics', in J.M. Walker (Ed.), *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana* (Durham, NC., 1998), p. 252.
[45] Sherlock, 'Monuments', pp. 263-266, p. 273.
[46] Nora, 'Between Memory and History', p. 7, p. 19.
[47] Sherlock, 'Monuments', p. 289.
[48] Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, p. 122.

and bells as the vocabularies of commemorative celebration were naturally infused into early-modern Englishmen's memory.[49] In early-modern England, one can therefore see a contestation over Elizabeth at sites of memory to her – monuments, paintings and literature. Some were a natural, cultural product of the dominant Protestant ideology whilst others were artificial aiming to rewrite history, with limited political and functional effect. Without either realising it or referencing it, early-modernists directly engage with Nora and other memory theorists, showing just how useful Nora's perceptions were.

Engaging with Nora – The National Myth of Elizabeth

Nora's idea of pre-modern memory and its further conceptualisation as cyclical and liturgical therefore stands up to the historical scrutiny placed on the pre-nineteenth-century myth of Elizabeth. However, much more important to Nora's mainly post-1789 analysis is the idea that 'history is perpetually suspicious of [traditional, collective] memory, and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it'.[50] This is a modern phenomenon, a by-product of both the nineteenth-century secularization of the state and the 1930s academic development of the *Annales* school – where perceptions of the nation-state were replaced by the state-society. History consequently emerged as a social science.[51] Significantly Nora is very specific in arguing that this phenomenon was unique to France; for example, in the USA traditions have continued because they were not pre-modern but created in the modern world.[52]

Nora does not express his beliefs about Britain, however parallels can be deduced. It was only in the 1980s when historians stopped reinforcing the national myth of Elizabeth in their academic work, however implicitly. Freeman and Doran have shown how the old Oxford DNB article on Elizabeth was very celebratory and patriotic, ending with 'her name was held in something more than honour from Persia to Peru, from Russia to Algiers'; meanwhile Black's 1959 volume for the *Oxford History of England* believed that when Elizabeth died 'she left behind her a kingdom that had won a commanding position among the great powers of Europe'.[53] A similar picture of British academia is presented by Frye through analysing the myth of Elizabeth at Tilbury. She argues 'as a myth of nationalist sentiment, the Queen was as appealing to anti-royalists of the seventeenth-century as she was to those historians who

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[49] Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, p. 67.
[50] Nora, 'Between Memory and History', p. 9.
[51] Nora, 'Between Memory and History', pp. 9-11.
[52] Nora, 'Between Memory and History', p. 10.
[53] Oxford DNB and J.B. Black, cited in Freeman and Doran, 'Introduction', p. 17.

experienced World War II'. Historians like Rowse and MacCaffrey are quoted as still 'remembering' in their historical arguments; here memory was still repressing true history.[54] In his appraisal of A.L. Rowse, Haigh arrives at similar conclusions that 'presentism' was evident: ''The England of Elizabeth' [Rowse] projected was a myth. He created the England of his dreams. It was an England that had all the qualities he thought his own had lacked – leadership, bravery, energy, achievement'.[55]

These twentieth-century historians continued the Victorian and Edwardian popular myth of Elizabeth evident in children's books, of her being the progenitor of the British Empire and a model for modern-day empire-builders.[56] They also correspond with the popular national memory that perpetuated a belief that Elizabeth's resolve was also a model for Britain in times of hardship, evident in late 1930s films like *Fire Over England* that paralleled Elizabeth's experiences against Spain with the contemporary threat of Nazism.[57] Therefore, if history does become antithetical to memory in British academia, it was a post-World War II phenomenon, perhaps even post-decolonisation when the myth of Elizabeth that was so imbued with nationalist sentiment and ideas of empire became archaic. Indeed, Nora has recognised parallel events occurring in France, with the 1970s being an important decade when 'national identity was replaced by social identities'.[58]

Published in anticipation of the four-hundredth anniversary of Elizabeth's death, Dobson and Watson argue:

> We are able to write [*England's Elizabeth*] because we live at a historical moment in which the partial unravelling of certain notions of Englishness and Britishness alike … has made the processes by which they once coalesced available for interrogation as perhaps never before.[59]

It appears Dobson and Watson believe Britain is at the post-modernist stage of Nora's history of memory, no longer tied to notions of national identity or the nation-state. Haigh has similarly argued that there has recently been a widening gap between academic history and the public, with academics no longer feeling they have to create a certain type of history in the public interest whilst the public are concurrently less interested in history because of the

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[54] S. Frye, 'The Myth of Elizabeth at Tilbury', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 23 (1992), pp. 113-114.
[55] C. Haigh, 'Rowse, Elizabeth and England', *History Today*, 53 (2003), p. 26.

[56] V.B. Richmond, 'Elizabeth I in Imperial Britain: A Myth for Children', in C. Jansohn (Ed.), *Queen Elizabeth I: Past and Present* (Munster, 2004), p. 231.
[57] T. Betteridge, 'A Queen for all Seasons: Elizabeth I on Film', in J.M. Walker (Ed.), *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana* (Durham, NC., 1998), pp. 242-259.
[58] P. Nora, 'General Introduction', in P. Nora (Ed.), *Rethinking France: Les Lieux de Memoire. Volume 1: The State* (London, 2001), p. xv.
[59] Dobson and Watson, *England's Elizabeth*, p. 3.

declining importance of the monarchy, religion, and traditional communities and values.[60]
Since the 1980s we have seen two anniversaries – the four-hundredth anniversaries of the
Armada in 1988 and Elizabeth's death in 2003 – that would appear ripe to celebrate and
commemorate this myth. Instead, there has been scepticism.

The Armada's anniversary saw a wide range of 'commemorative' scholarship produced that,
in reality, was not celebratory. Padfield, in a monograph entitled 'Armada: A Celebration',
argued it was indecisive: 'The winner, Elizabeth, gained extraordinary fame, but nothing
else'; instead, Padfield outlines the importance of Dutch rebels and economic forces that
saw the rise of north European capitalism and Spain's decline.[61] Previous English historians
imbued with this memory of Elizabeth had thus misinterpreted events to serve a nationalist
purpose. It was only in this post-modern stage that history could truly escape memory, and
historiographies, like Marxism in this case, could reinterpret dominant interpretations.
Williams has also been derogatory about this past nationalist historiography imbued with the
myth: 'The Armada deserved a better history than this, and in recent years it has had it as
scholars … have addressed themselves to the real issues in the tumultuous campaign'.[62]

Even some monographs more celebratory of the Armada can be viewed through the prism of
history destroying memory. Nora has argued that 'what we call memory today is … not
memory but already history'; that there has been a 'materialization of memory' and that
'modern memory is, above all, archival'.[63] Whilst pre-modern memory was naturally imbued
in the collective memory of Protestant English people, this modern-day memorialisation was
materially and visually reconstructed as if trying to recover this forgotten collective memory.
For example, Rodger published a monograph entitled 'Armada in the Public Records' that
aimed to give non-academics access to the archives, whilst the National Maritime Museum's
commemoration was dominated by the visual and material culture of the Armada.[64] The
memory of the Armada here is thus 'surviving only as a reconstituted object beneath the
gaze of critical history'; Nora continues this statement by saying that '*Lieux de Memoire* are
fundamentally remains, the ultimate embodiment of a memorial consciousness that has
barely survived in a historical age that calls out for memory because it has abandoned

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[60] Haigh, 'Rowse', p. 28.
[61] P. Padfield, *Armada: A Celebration of the Four Hundredth Anniversary of the Defeat of the Spanish Armada 1588-1988* (London, 1988), pp. 194-201.
[62] P. Williams, *Armada* (Stroud, 2000), pp. 163-164.
[63] Nora, 'Between Memory and History', p. 13.
[64] N.A.M. Rodger, *Armada in the Public Records* (London, 1988); M.J. Rodriguez-Salgado, *Armada, 1588-1988: An International Exhibition to Commemorate the Spanish Armada* (Harmondsworth, 1988).

it'.[65] These celebrations of the Armada and of Elizabeth's role within it are artificial, historicised sites of memory that relied on visual and material aids to recover and present a lost past in England's collective memory.

Whilst the Armada commemorations of 1988 celebrated the event, albeit with some scepticism, the 2003 academic commemorations of Elizabeth's death were very different. The anniversary 'inspired a number of conferences, the majority seemingly devoted to the new Stuart Britain'.[66] In academic circles, 1603 was thus considered more important for the accession of James I and a new royal family than for the end of the Tudors. Even in the *TRHS* conference where the above statement comes from, entitled 'Elizabeth I and the Expansion of England' at the National Maritime Museum', articles by Armitage and Mason which re-evaluate Elizabeth's role in creating an empire and Britain respectively diminish her importance compared to the imperial myth of her.[67] In doing so, they are part of a more positivist recent historiography about the early Stuarts that aims to re-accommodate James and Charles' importance in 'British' issues such as empire and union in direct comparison to Elizabeth's unimportance. Yet in the English national memory, Elizabeth had a greater importance than the early Stuarts which, in the dominant Whiggish conceptualisation of English history, were seen mostly as the deposed family during the English revolutions. Here academic history is diametrically opposed to past popular memory.

Adam's introduction to the *TRHS* conference reveals professional history's new suspicions of this memory of Elizabeth being central to England's expansion: 'To avoid yet another explosion of the myth of Elizabeth I, the conference was given a deliberately neutral stance with contributors encouraged to take whatever position they chose'.[68] Significantly, the contributors aimed to deconstruct the myth of Elizabeth in what Nora would perceive as the 'terrorism of historicized memory'.[69] Notably interrogated was the naval myth. Whilst Rodger and Knighton's articles acknowledged its importance as a historical agent in seventeenth and eighteenth-century England, other articles by Barber and Rose reach a conclusion that overall 'there are strong reasons for denying Elizabeth any personal role in an expansion of England in her reign'.[70] Alongside Armitage and Mason's questioning of the imperial myth,

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[65] Nora, 'Between Memory and History', p. 12.
[66] S. Adams, 'Introduction', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 14 (2004), p. 199.
[67] D. Armitage, 'The Elizabethan Idea of Empire', pp.269-277; R.A. Mason, 'Scotland, Elizabethan England and the Idea of Britain', pp.279-293.
[68] Adams, 'Introduction', p. 119.
[69] Nora, 'Between Memory and History', p. 14
[70] Adams, 'Introduction', p.121. Articles cited include Rodger, 'Myth of Sea-Power', pp.153-174; C.S. Knighton, 'A Century on: Pepys and the Elizabethan Navy', pp.141-151; S. Rose, 'Mathematics and the Art of Navigation: The Advance of Scientific Seamanship in Elizabethan England', pp.175-184;

Howard and Hearn similarly interrogated and historicized Elizabeth's visual image and both suggested the myth surrounding her in visualized form was less potent as itself but rather subject to other forces that led to its significance in future centuries.[71] The conference's overall aim to normalize the Elizabethan age shows an explicit suspicion of the myth of Elizabeth, and perhaps can only now occur because academic history in Britain has entered a post-modern age that no longer serves the nation-state – an age where 'we no longer unquestionably identify with [the nation's] heritage'.[72]

Beyond Nora? The Feminine Myth of Elizabeth

In one of the only early-modern studies critiquing Nora's theory that the end of pre-modern society saw the end of real memory, Garnsa and Pivetti argue that 'Nora's distinctions between pre-modern and modern visions of the past ignore the "living" site of memory common to both eras: the eroticized body'.[73] Whilst national identity for much of modernity was hegemonic,[74] social identities have become more significant with the post-modern decline of the nation-state. Nora did argue that 'the passage from memory to history has required every social group to redefine its identity through the revitalization of its own history',[75] however his theory is still dominated by the issue of national identity and gender identity is notably absent. Maybe it is because French history, as Nora admits, is inherently masculinised, with Jeanne d'Arc an anomaly in a history dominated by men – and even Jeanne was defeminized, viewed as a 'providential man' to save France.[76] This is compared to a British past which has had numerous strong heroines that the national memory has had to accommodate. Furthermore, it is doubtful whether Nora's belief in a redefinition of social identities, like gender, is solely a modern phenomenon. In Richmond's study of Victorian and Edwardian children's books which evoke both feminine and national myths about Elizabeth, she argues this type of memory text is on a continuum from the plays and histories of early-

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and P. Barber, 'Was Elizabeth I Interested in Maps – And Did it Matter?', pp. 185-198; *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 14 (2004).

[71] K. Hearn, 'Elizabeth I and the Spanish Armada: A Painting and its Afterlife', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 14 (2004), pp.261-268 and M. Howard, 'Elizabeth I: A Sense of Place in Stone, Print and Paint', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 14 (2004), pp. 123-140.

[72] K. Hearn, 'Elizabeth I and the Spanish Armada: A Painting and its Afterlife', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 14 (2004), pp.261-268 and M. Howard, 'Elizabeth I: A Sense of Place in Stone, Print and Paint', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 14 (2004), pp. 123-140.

[73] J.S. Garrison and K. Pivetti, 'Introduction: The Erotics of Recollection', in J.S. Garrison and K. Pivetti (eds.), *Sexuality and Memory in Early Modern England: Erotics of Recollection* (London, 2015), pp. 7-8.

[74] Olick and Robbins, 'Social Memory Studies', p. 126.

[75] Nora, 'Between Memory and History', p. 14.

[76] Nora, 'General Introduction', p.xiv; M. Winock, 'Joan of Arc', in P. Nora L.D. and Kritzman (eds.), *The Construction of the French Past: Realms of Memory* (New York, NY, 1992), p. 478.

modern England to the films of the twentieth-century.[77] This suggests a far more nuanced differentiation between simply pre-modern and modern memory and sites of memory than what Nora perceives.

Dobson and Watson clearly show the myth of Elizabeth is more than just a national myth. The feminine myth was, and is, an equally strong strand of it, and this has either celebrated, or more likely vilified Elizabeth since her death. Whilst the seventeenth-century saw Biblical female comparisons, the eighteen-century saw her femininity come to the fore emphasised in her sacrifice for the political, public good. Then in the nineteenth-century, a negative myth of her subversive femininity manifested and finally the twentieth-century saw Elizabeth sexualised.[78] Levin and Carney argue that, even in this post-modern age, we still struggle to deal with gender issues and femininity in similar ways as early seventeenth-century dramatists – something highlighted by the lack of any cinematic depictions of Elizabeth accommodating both her private femininity and her public political role.[79] Therefore, cinematic depictions as memory texts are in many ways not artificial *lieux de memoire*, but natural and evolving *milieux de memoire*, 'open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting'.[80] Rather than creating a myth of Elizabeth to fit a contemporary cultural functionality – as perhaps physical, 'national' memory places, like monuments, do – these memory texts instead perpetuate a myth that had pre-modern origins.

Dobson and Watson's *England's Elizabeth* is a cultural feminist critique, archetypal of this increasingly dominant strand of historiography on the myth in the twenty-first-century.[81] Whilst recognising the differences between the historical and mythical Elizabeth, these analyses do not place memory and history as antithetical. For example, Levin and Carney's analysis of seventeenth and twentieth-century dramatic depictions of young Elizabeth opens with the historical account and follows with how drama reinterpreted them. They then conclude by arguing that 'the limitations of the representations of young Elizabeth not only fail to give us a more complex and fully realized historical woman, but perpetuate the myths about what young women can do with their lives today'.[82] Similarly, Freeman and Doran argue for a nuanced relationship between history and memory where 'the mythical

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[77] Richmond, 'Elizabeth I in Imperial Britain', p. 231.
[78] Dobson and Watson, *England's Elizabeth*, pp. 43, 79-83, 103-106, 116, 179-180, 216-221.
[79] C. Levin and J.E. Carney, 'Young Elizabeth in Peril: From Seventeenth-Century Drama to Modern Movies', in C. Levin, J.E. Carney and D. Barrett-Graves (eds.), *Elizabeth I: Always Her Own Free Woman* (Aldershot, 2003), p. 235.
[80] Nora, 'Between Memory and History', p. 8.
[81] See also Betteridge, 'A Queen for all Seasons', pp.242-259; Levin and Carney, 'Young Elizabeth in Peril', pp.215-237; D.G. Moss, 'A Queen for Whose Time? Elizabeth I as Icon for the Twentieth Century', *Journal of Popular Culture*, 39 (2006), pp. 796-816.
[82] Levin and Carney, 'Young Elizabeth in Peril', p. 235.

Elizabeth is a simplified version of the historical Elizabeth, who was at once more and less than the myth'.[83] Betteridge's analysis of twentieth-century cinematic representations of Elizabeth also reveals a symbiotic relationship between academic history and memory. This still occurs, as shown by Kapur's 1998 film depicting a post-modern Elizabeth who becomes and performs the role of the Virgin Queen – a cinematic depiction of Judith Butler's contention that females perform gender roles, and pre-occupied with the post-structuralist issue of image.[84] Finally, feminine historians like Fraser use history in the present even in this post-modern age, as she compares Elizabeth to Thatcher.[85] Clearly history, or more precisely historiography, has not reached an end-point but is still constantly changing 'in light of particular cultural biases and assumptions'.[86]

The pre-modern idea of 'presentism' is therefore still evident in academic work by feminist historians, and thus raises the question about whether it exists in other forms of historiography concerned with social identities. This form of memory studies should consequently be seen as a vibrant historiographical branch that is interacting with memory, not destroying it. Certainly memory and history are different; however the reality is far more nuanced than them being antithetical, perhaps because there has still been no rupture with the past in gender history, thereby giving it a need in the present. Still, despite writing in a firmly post-structuralist setting, and often being academics from non-historical backgrounds like film studies, these feminist critiques again fail to explicitly interact with memory theory beyond simply recognising the post-modern context they are writing in. Whilst Olick and Robbins recognise the need to historicize memory, the historiography on the myth of Elizabeth needs to do the opposite and interact more with memory theory, thereby giving a significant historical example in the interrogation of Nora's notion that history has destroyed memory.

Although needing to increase its theoretical engagement with memory theorists, the study of the myth of Elizabeth and its historicization is still a model for the future direction of memory studies identified by Olick and Robbins in 1998.[87] Moreover, they show that Nora's ideas about the relationship of memory and history are beneficial to studying the myth of Elizabeth. This notably includes classifications of pre-modern memory, as its conceptualisation as being liturgical and cyclical has stood up to the historical scrutiny that early-modernists have placed on the pre-nineteenth-century myth. Nora's notions of *lieux* and *milieux de*

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[83] Freeman and Doran, 'Introduction', p. 19.
[84] Betteridge, 'A Queen for all Seasons', p. 254.
[85] A. Fraser, cited in Moss, 'A Queen for Whose Time?', p. 809
[86] Freeman and Doran, 'Introduction', p. 19.
[87] Olick and Robbins, 'Social Memory Studies', p. 134

memoire are meanwhile similarly valuable to early-modernists wishing to discuss issues of contestation and the dichotomy of popular and elite memory, as Sherlock has shown. Furthermore, Nora's belief that history destroyed memory is an interesting prism through which to analyse nineteenth and twentieth-century historiography on the myth of Elizabeth and its relationship with national identity, whilst the academic commemorations in 1988 and 2003 show it has conceptual uses beyond the paradigm of French history. Still, Nora's analysis is inherently limited by concentrating on the issue of national identity and memory: as feminist critiques of the myth of Elizabeth reveal memory is still alive and flourishing. This post-modern historiographical field is not trying to destroy memory through historicization, but is instead interacting with memory and accommodating it as a form of mnemohistory because here, unlike with issues of national identity, there has not yet been a rupture in the past. Feminist history – and perhaps social histories in general – are still rooted very much in the present.

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