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Editorial

Since the 1980s, a growing number of studies across a whole range of disciplines have examined how communities and cultures remember, re-construct and/or forget the past within as well as across nation states. David W. Blight refers in this regard to the "memory-boom" in the humanities and social sciences (Blight 2009). Research from a variety of disciplines, including the Study of Religions, examines when, how, why and by whom particular memories are remembered (or forgotten) by particular communities. Communities are, of course, not homogeneous (Wertsch 2009) but rather complex entities distinguished by various religious, economic, historio-political and gender dynamics that influence how and why particular historical events are remembered or not remembered. These practices of remembering and forgetting of historical events are, as Halbwachs argues, "[…] reconstructed on the basis of the present" (Halbwachs 1992, 40) and are related to people's own life stories, experiences and personal development (see also Boyer 2009; Pennebaker & Gonzales 2009). Individual engagement with particular historical events draw on representations of the past that are negotiated, reinterpreted and reconstructed according to one's own religious, political and gendered context. The process of remembering provides communities with a "normative source of identification" (Sakarahano 2011, 151) – a constructed shared collective identity (Shanneik 2015).

Collective memories are transmitted through particular 'cultural tool kit[s]' (Bruner 1990; Wertsch 2008a). Rituals are one of the useful instrumental tools for remembering the past as "[…] events are most likely to be consolidated in memory if they are verbally rehearsed" (Pennebaker & Gonzales 2009, 174) and bodily performed (Connerton 1989). Narrative and language as well as material objects such as paintings, sculptures, photographs or public spaces are also important tools for remembering the past as they play a major role in evoking and producing emotions that shape the narrative of the past (See also Wertsch and Roediger 2008b, 322).

The reciprocal relationship and influences between the individual and the collective are important. What to remember and how to remember is crucial for a community's self-understanding of their identities. As Assmann argues: "The past is not simply 'received' by the present. The

present is 'haunted' by the past and the past is modelled, invented, reinvented, and reconstructed by the present" (Assmann 1997, 9). Power relations within the community influence the process of remembering and depend on the various socio-political, religious and cultural contexts in which they are embedded. As Wertsch argues: "[…] the past is tied interpretatively to the present, and if necessary part of an account of the past may be deleted or distorted in the service of present needs" (Wertsch 2008, 320. See also Assmann 1997, 9).

The articles published in this second edition of JISASR engage with these debates around memory, remembering and identity in relation to religion in different contexts, in Ireland and globally. They were selected from papers presented at the third annual interdisciplinary conference of the *Irish Society for the Academic Study of Religions* (ISASR) held in collaboration with Queen's University in Belfast (23-24 May 2014) on the theme: "Religion and Remembering".

The first article in this issue is based on the keynote lecture by James Cox of the University of Edinburgh who compares the ritual practices among the Shona of Zimbabwe with a cleansing ritual performed by a Celtic shaman in New Hampshire, USA. Cox analyses these two rituals within Danièle Hervieu-Léger's understanding of religion as a chain of memory and argues that ritual performances gain their legitimisation through an authoritative tradition that binds the community together and is used to explain events that affect the community's collective well-being.

Colette Colfer's article problematizes the question of when a particular space can be termed as "religious". She discusses the efforts made by Hindu groups in the Dublin city area to transform particular places in Dublin to religious spaces of worship. In a different context, she analyses the perceptions of some visitors to the Indian Sculpture Park in County Wicklow as a public space of worship and argues that people attribute certain meanings to spaces that affect their perception of a space as religious or non-religious.

Deirdre Nuttall provides an ethnographic study based on an extensive collection of narratives on the 'ethnic' dimension of Protestant identities in the Republic of Ireland. In contrast to the dominant post-independence narrative of the poor Irish Catholic exploited by the wealthy Protestant minority during British rule, Nuttall explores voices of ordinary Protestants, including those living in poverty in both rural and urban areas, to narrate their perspectives on their marginalised position in independent Ireland.

Similar to Nuttall, Tony Walsh's study is based on the narratives of the Protestant minority in Ireland, although through an auto-ethnographical lens. Taking Michel Foucault's work on power and knowledge as his theoretical lead, he explores identity and power

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dynamics between the Protestant minority in Ireland and the religious and political hegemony of the Irish Catholic state.

Jenny Butler discusses understandings of identity and cultural belonging amongst Irish Pagans through examining narratives around ancestors, lineages and ethnicity and connections to sacred space. In particular she examines the remembering and honouring of the dead through Pagan ritual practices particularly during the celebration of the festival Samhain, the feast of the dead on October 31, and the significance that contemporary Pagans ascribe to the sacred landscape as a means of connecting with the ancestors.

Contemporary cultural representations of Beothuk Indians, an extinct indigenous group from Newfoundland, Canada, are the focus of Suzanne Owen's article. She approaches representations of the Beothuk in art, literature and museum displays, revealing the practices and politics of remembering and forgetting the circumstances that led to Beothuk's demise. She raises the important point with regards to the native peoples of Newfoundland, that it seems "safer to remember the past that can never be redressed", rather than focusing on the continued suspicion and marginalization of surviving indigenous communities.

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