Communicative and Cultural Memory

Jan Assmann

The past exists, if it can be said to exist at all, in a double form: as a sedimentation of relics, traces, and personal memories and as a social construction. This dual nature characterizes the personal past that is with us human beings not only as internal memory traces and external memory symbols of every sort but also as an image or narrative that we construe and carry with us as our autobiographical or episodic memory. As the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs has shown, even our autobiographical memory is a social construction that we build up in communication with others. Arguably, it is strictly personal only in its first aspect, as a sedimentation or unstructured archive (Halbwachs, 1925/1985). As a social construction, the past conveys a kind of connective structure or diachronic identity to societies, groups, and individuals, both socially and temporally. Memory is what allows us to construe an image or narrative of the past and, by the same process, to develop an image and narrative of ourselves. This form of memory seems to be a specifically human faculty. Clearly, animals also possess a memory, but the link between memory and identity—the "autonoetic" function of memory, which provides the connective structure that characterizes both a person and a society—seems to be a specifically human characteristic based on the exclusively human faculties of symbolization and communication. A human self is a diachronic identity "built of the stuff of time" (Luckmann, 1983, p. 69). At both the collective and the personal levels, human memory brings about a synthesis of time and identity, which may be called a *diachronic identity*. It is this identity that allows human beings to orient themselves personally and collectively in terms of the future, the past, or both. Because of our memory, we are able to think in temporal horizons far beyond our birth and our death.

This connection between time, identity, and memory operates at three levels: the inner (or individual); the social, and the cultural (see Table 1). At the inner level, memory is about the human neuropsychical system, the individual's personal

J. Assmann (✉)
Department of Egyptology, Heidelberg University, 69117 Heidelberg, Germany
e-mail: Jan.Assmann@urz.uni-heidelberg.de

P. Meusburger et al. (eds.), *Cultural Memories*, Knowledge and Space 4,
DOI 10.1007/978-90-481-8945-8_2,

Table 1 The connection between time, identity, and memory

Level	Time	Identity	Memory
Inner	Inner, subjective time	Inner self	Individual
Social	Social time	Social self, person as carrier of social roles	Communicative
Cultural	Historical, mythical, cultural time	Cultural identity	Cultural

memory, which until the 1920s was the only form of memory to have been recognized as such. At the social level, memory is about communication and social interaction. It was Halbwachs's great discovery that human memory depends, like consciousness in general, on socialization and communication and that memory can be analyzed as a function of social life. Memory enables us humans to live in groups and communities, and living in groups and communities enables us to build a memory (Halbwachs, 1925/1985). During those same years, psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud (1953–1974) and Carl Gustav Jung (1970–1971) were developing theories of collective memory but still adhering to the first (the inner, personal) level, looking for collective memory in the unconscious depths of the human psyche rather than in the dynamics of social life. At the cultural level, the art historian Aby Warburg (1925/2003) seems to have been the first scholar to treat images, that is, cultural objectivations, as carriers of memory (Ginzburg, 1983). His main project was what he called the "afterlife" (*Nachleben*) of classical antiquity in Western culture, and he termed this project *Mnemosyne*, the ancient Greek term for memory and the mother of the nine Muses.

As an art historian, he specialized in what he called *Bildgedächtnis* (iconic memory), but the general approach to the reception of history as a form of cultural memory could be applied to every other domain of symbolic forms as well (Gombrich, 1981). The literary historian Ernst Robert Curtius, for example, applied it to language, inaugurating a new field of research that he termed *Toposforschung* (topos research; e.g., Curtius, 1948). Among these early theorists of cultural memory, Thomas Mann should be mentioned for his four Joseph novels (1933–1943), which are the most advanced attempt at reconstructing the cultural memory of persons living in Palestine and Egypt in the Late Bronze Age. By the same token, the novels conjure up European cultural memory and its Jewish foundations in times of antisemitism (J. Assmann, 2006b). Neither Warburg nor Mann, however, used the term cultural memory, for it did not emerge until the late 1980s. It is, therefore, only within the last 20 years that the connection between time, identity, and memory in their three dimensions of the personal, the social, and the cultural has become more and more evident.

The term *communicative memory* has been introduced in order to delineate the difference between Halbwachs's concept of collective memory and the understanding of cultural memory presented in A. Assmann and J. Assmann (1989) and J. Assmann (1988, 1992). Cultural memory is a form of collective memory in that a

number of people share cultural memory and in that it conveys to them a collective (i.e., cultural) identity. Halbwachs, however, was careful to keep his concept of collective memory apart from the realm of traditions, transmissions, and transferences that I propose to subsume under cultural memory. I preserve Halbwachs's distinction by breaking his concept of collective memory down into "communicative" and "cultural" memory but insist on treating the cultural sphere, which he excluded, as another form of memory. I am, therefore, not expanding or diluting Halbwachs's concept in a direction that for him would have been unacceptable. Nor do I argue for replacing his idea of collective memory with the notion of cultural memory. Rather, I distinguish between the two forms as two different modi memorandi, or ways of remembering.

Culture as Memory

Cultural memory is an institution. It is exteriorized, objectified, and stored away in symbolic forms that, unlike the sounds of words or the appearance of gestures, are stable and situation-transcendent. They may be transferred from one situation to another and transmitted from one generation to another. Unlike communicative memory, cultural memory is disembodied. In order to function as memory, however, its symbolic forms must not only be preserved but also circulated and re-embodied in a society. The disembodied status of cultural memory is another reason why it was not recognized as a form of memory until recently. Memory, the argument runs, requires a mind. Things like the madeleine immortalized by Marcel Proust (1931/1982, pp. 46–47) or monuments, archives, libraries, anniversaries, feasts, icons, symbols, and landscapes cannot have or carry memory, for they lack a mind.

This objection, however, rests on a complete misunderstanding. Neither Proust nor Halbwachs nor anyone else who speaks or writes of collective memory has ever asserted that collective or cultural memory "exists in something that has no mind." Dishes, feasts, rites, images, texts, landscapes and other things do not "have" a memory of their own, but they may remind their beholder, may trigger that person's memory because they carry the memories that he or she has invested them with. Groups do not have a memory in the way an individual does, but they may make themselves a memory by erecting monuments and by developing a variety of cultural techniques (mnemotechniques) that support memory or promote forgetting (A. Assmann, 2006).

Memory, which people possess as beings equipped with a human mind, exists solely in constant interaction not only with other human memories but also with outward symbols. Human memory is embodied, and it requires a brain as the material carrier of its embodiment. In addition it is embedded, and it requires social and cultural frames for its embedment. *Memory* is not a metaphor for embedment but rather a metonym for physical contact between a remembering mind and a reminding object. Halbwachs acknowledged social frames only, but it seems obvious that human memory is also embedded in cultural frames, such as the landscape or townscape in which people grew up, the texts they learned, the feasts they celebrated, the

churches or synagogues they frequented, the music they listened to, and especially the stories they were told and by and in which they live. This interaction between a remembering mind and a reminding object is why the realm of these things and especially the things meant as reminders (mnemonic institutions) must be included in the concept of memory.

This institutional character does not apply to what Halbwachs called collective memory and what I propose to rename *communicative memory*. Communicative memory is noninstitutional. It is not supported by any institutions of learning, transmission, or interpretation, nor is it cultivated by specialists or summoned or celebrated on special occasions. It is not formalized and stabilized by any forms of material symbolization. It lives in everyday interaction and communication. For this very reason communicative memory is of fairly limited duration.

Change in constellations and frames brings about forgetting; the durability of memories depends on the durability of social bonds and "frames." Halbwachs, in his work before 1941, does not seem to be concerned with the social interests and power structures that are active in shaping and framing individual memories. In his last work on collective memory, however, he shows a keen awareness of institution and power (Halbwachs, 1941). That book, written and published during the German occupation of Paris, deals with the transformation of Palestine into a site of Christian memory by the erection of all sorts of memorials after the adoption of Christianity as the state religion by the Roman empire. In this work Halbwachs crosses the line that he himself drew between *mémoire* and tradition and shows to what degree this kind of official memory depends on theological dogma and how much it is formed by the power structure of the church.

Time Frames

Jan Vansina, an anthropologist who worked with oral societies in Africa, devoted an important study to the form in which they represent the past (Vansina, 1985). He observed a tripartite structure. The recent past, which looms large in interactive communication, gradually recedes into the background. Information becomes increasingly scarce and vague the further one moves into the past. According to Vansina, this knowledge of affairs that are told and discussed in everyday communication has a limited depth in time, not reaching beyond three generations. A more remote past is marked by either a total gap of information or one or two names remembered only with great hesitation. For the most remote past, however, there is again a profusion of information dealing with traditions surrounding the origin of the world and the early history of the tribe. This information is not committed to everyday communication; it is highly formalized and institutionalized. It exists as narratives, songs, dances, rituals, masks, and symbols. Specialists such as narrators, bards, and mask carvers are organized in guilds and must undergo long periods of initiation, instruction, and examination. Moreover, actualization of the most remote past requires certain occasions, such the gathering of the community for some celebration or other. This actualization is what I propose to call "cultural memory."

In oral societies, as Vansina shows, the informal generational memory referring to the recent past is separated from the formal cultural memory that refers to the remote past. Because this gap shifts with the succession of generations, Vansina calls it the "floating gap" (pp. 23–24). Vansina sums up by stating that historical consciousness operates at only two levels: time of origins and recent past.

Vansina's (1985) floating gap illustrates the difference between social (communicative) and cultural frames of memory. The communicative memory contains memories of what Vansina refers to as the recent past. They are the ones that an individual shares with his or her contemporaries. They are what Halbwachs understood by collective memory and are the object of oral history, that branch of historical research drawing not on the usual written sources of historiography but exclusively on memories elicited in oral interviews. All studies in oral history confirm that, even in literate societies, living memory goes back no further than 80 years, after which point—separated by the floating gap—come the dates from schoolbooks and monuments (rather than myths of origin) (Niethammer, 1985).

Cultural memory rests on fixed points in the past. Even in cultural memory, the past is not preserved as such but rather is galvanized in symbols, for they are represented in oral myths, conveyed in writings, and performed in feasts as they continually illuminate a changing present. In the context of cultural memory, the distinction between myth and history vanishes. What counts is not the past as it is investigated and reconstructed by archaeologists and historians but only the past as it is remembered. It is the temporal horizon of cultural memory that is important. The cultural memory of the people who share it extends into the past only as far as the past can be reclaimed as "theirs." For that reason I refer to this form of historical consciousness as "memory," not just as knowledge about the past. Whereas knowledge has no form and is endlessly cumulative, memory involves forgetting. It is only by forgetting what lies outside the horizon of the relevant that it supports identity. Nietzsche (1874/1960) circumscribed this function by notions such as "plastic power" and "horizon" (p. 213), obviously intending to convey what the term *identity* is generally accepted to mean now.

Institutions, Carriers

The difference between communicative and cultural memory expresses itself also in the social dimension, in the structure of participation. The participation of a group in communicative memory is diffuse. Some people know more, some less, and the memories of the old go farther back than those of the young. However, there are no specialists in informal, communicative memory. The knowledge communicated in everyday interaction has been acquired by the participants along with language and social competence. By contrast, the participation of a group in cultural memory is always highly differentiated, especially in oral and egalitarian societies. The preservation of the group's cultural memory was originally the task of the poets. Even today, the African griots (storytellers) fulfill this function of guardians of cultural memory.

Cultural memory always has its specialists. These carriers of memory are known under a rich assortment of names, such as shamans, bards, griots, priests, teachers, artists, clerks, scholars, mandarins, rabbis, and mullahs. In oral societies, the degree of their specialization depends on the magnitude of the demands on their memory. The highest rank is accorded verbatim transmission. This task requires use of the human memory as a "data base" in a sense approaching the use of writing. A fixed text is verbally "written" into the highly specialized and trained memory of these specialists. The approach typically applies when ritual knowledge is at stake and when a ritual must strictly follow a "script," even if that script is not laid down in writing. The Rgveda is the foremost example of a codification of ritual memory rooted solely in oral tradition. The social rank of the specialists in ritual corresponds to the magnitude of this task. They are known as the Brahmins, who constitute their society's highest caste. It is even higher than the aristocratic class of warriors (*kshatriya*), to which the rulers belong. In traditional Rwanda, the full text of all 18 royal rituals had to be memorized by specialists who ranked as the highest notables of the kingdom. Error was punishable by death. Those three notables partook even in the divinity of the ruler (Borgeaud, 1988, p. 13).

Rituals are therefore the context in which the oldest systems of memorization or mnemotechniques arose, with or without the help of notation systems like knotted chords, churingas, and other forms of prewriting. It is interesting to see how differently various religions have behaved toward writing after the development of full-fledged systems for that new cultural technique. In the Indo-European traditions, from the Indian Brahmins to the Celtic Druids, writing is generally distrusted and shunned. Memory is held to be the far more trustworthy medium for handing down the religious (i.e., ritual) knowledge to later generations. The reason normally given for this preference is that too many mistakes may creep into a text by copying. The true reason, however, seems to be that writing always implies the danger of dissemination, the divulgence of a secret tradition to the profane and uninitiated. This distrust of writing was still very prominent in Plato's works (Plato, trans. 1901a, 1901b). In the semitic traditions such as those of Mesopotamia, Israel, and Egypt, on the other hand, writing is eagerly grasped as an ideal medium for codifying and transmitting the sacred traditions, especially ritual scripts and recitations.

Even where the sacred tradition *is* committed to writing, memorization plays the central role. In ancient Egypt, a typical temple library contained no more books than may be known by heart by the specialists. Clement of Alexandria gives a vivid description of such a library, including the books that formed the stock of an Egyptian temple library—all written by Thot-Hermes himself. The hierarchical structure of the priesthood, with its five different ranks, reflected the size and importance of the literature to be memorized. The priests were not expected to read and learn all of the books but to specialize in certain genres corresponding to their rank and office.

In describing a solemn procession of these priests, Clement showed both the hierarchy of the priesthood and the structure of their library (Clemens Alex., Strom. VI. Cap. IV, §§35.1–37; see G. Fowden, 1993, pp. 58–59).[1] It was the books of the *stolistes* that served as a codification of ritual memory proper, complemented by

what Clement calls "education." The books of the high priest, on the other hand, are said to have contained literature on the laws, the gods, and priestly education. The library was thus divided into normative knowledge, which ranks highest; ritual knowledge, which comes as a close second; and general knowledge about astronomy, geography, poetry, biography, and medicine, all of which occupies the lowest rung in this canon of indispensable literature.

> [Forty-two], Clement summarizes, is the number of the "absolutely necessary" [*pany anankaiai*] books of Hermes. Of those, 36 are learned by heart by the priests; these books contain the entire philosophy of the Egyptians. The remaining six books are learned by the pastophoroi. They deal with medicine, that is, with anatomy, with diseases, with the bodily members and organs, with drogues [drugs], with ophthalmology and with gynaecology. (J. Assmann, 2001, pp. 88–89)

There is, however, yet another sense in which the participation in cultural memory may be structured in a society: that of restricted knowledge, of secrecy and esotericism. Every traditional society has areas of restricted knowledge whose boundaries are not defined merely by the different capacities of human memory and understanding but also by issues of access and initiation. In Judaism, for example, general participation is required in the Torah, which every male member of the group is supposed to know by heart. Specialized participation characterizes the world of Talmudic and medieval commentaries, codices, and Midrash, a vast body of literature that only specialists can master. Secrecy, however, shrouds the esoteric world of kabbala, to which only select adepts are admitted (and even then only after they have reached 40 years of age).

The participation structure of cultural memory has an inherent tendency to elitism; it is never strictly egalitarian. Some individuals have to prove their degree of admittance by formal exams, as in traditional China; or by the mastery of linguistic registers, as in England; or of the treasury of German quotations (*Citatenschatz des deutschen Volkes*), as in nineteenth-century Germany. Others remain systematically excluded from this "distinguished" knowledge, such as the women in ancient Greece, traditional China, and Orthodox Judaism or the lower classes in the heyday of the German educated middle class (*Bildungsbürgertum*).

As for the media of cultural memory, there is a more or less pronounced tendency toward a form of intracultural diglossia, corresponding to the distinction between one "great tradition" and several "little traditions" as proposed by Redfield (1956, passim). Until the creation of Iwrith (modern Hebrew), the Jews always lived in a situation of diglossia, for their "Great Tradition" was written in Hebrew and their everyday communication took place in vernacular languages such as Yiddish, Ladino, or the various languages of their host countries. To a similar or lesser degree, this phenomenon is typical of virtually all traditional societies, be it in the form of two different (though related) languages such as Hindu and Sanscrit or Italian and Latin or of two different linguistic varieties such as Qur'anic and vernacular Arabic or classical and modern Chinese. In modern societies this binary structure tends to diversify into additional linguistic varieties as cultural media such as film, broadcasting, and television multiply. The clear-cut binary structure of Table 2 therefore does not do full justice to the modern situation.

Table 2 Communicative and cultural memory: areas of difference

Forms, dimensions	Communicative memory	Cultural memory
Content	History in the frame of autobiographical memory, recent past	Mythical history, events in the mythical (*in illo tempore*) or historical past
Forms	Informal traditions and genres of everyday communication	High degree of formation, ceremonial communication; Rituals, feasts
Media	Living, embodied memory, communication in vernacular language	Mediated in texts, icons, dances, rituals, and performances of various kinds; "classical" or otherwise formalized language(s)
Time structure	80–100 years, a moving horizon of 3–4 interacting generations	Absolute past, mythical primordial time, "3,000 years"
Participation structure	Diffuse	Specialized carriers of memory, hierarchically structured

Transitions and transformations account for the dynamics of cultural memory. Two typical directions have a structural significance and should at least briefly be mentioned in this context. One is the transition from autobiographical and communicative memory to cultural memory. The other direction concerns, within cultural memory, the move from the rear stage to the forefront, from the periphery to the center, from latency or potentiality to manifestation or actualization and vice-versa. These shifts presuppose structural boundaries to be crossed: the boundary between embodied and mediated forms of memory, and the boundary between what I propose to call "working" and "storage memories" or "canon" and "archive" (A. Assmann, 1999, pp. 130–145). Western society is living through a period of transition from communicative to cultural memory. The main problem is how to preserve the personal memories of holocaust survivors and other eye witnesses of the catastrophes that occurred in the context of World War II and how to transform them into durable forms of cultural memory that may be transmitted to later generations. The Biblical book of Deuteronomy offers a striking parallel. The problem with which Deuteronomy is concerned is how to preserve the memory of the generation who had witnessed the Exodus from Egypt and the revelation of the Law and turn it into cultural memory that can be handed down to an infinite number of future generations of Israelites. The aim of Deuteronomy is to teach what to remember and how to remember, that is, both the lesson that must never be forgotten and the mnemotechnique that ensures its continuous transmission. Moses outlines a full-fledged mnemotechnique of individual and collective remembering (J. Assmann, 1992, pp. 215–228).

The book of Deuteronomy is the foundation text of a religion based on a covenant between one single god and a chosen people. In this new religion, memory is to play the central role. It deals with a revolutionary change of cultural memory. Normally, cultural memory is not instituted this way; it accumulates and changes in the course

of centuries instead. The mnemotechnique of Deuteronomy follows and elaborates a model that belongs more to political than to cultural memory (for this distinction see A. Assmann, 2006). Political memory is highly normative, prescribing what, in the interest of forming and belonging to a political identity, must never be forgotten. Deuteronomy closely corresponds to this concept. The model it describes is based on a ritual that Esarhaddon of Assyria had introduced to ensure that the vassals of his empire remembered their allegiance. First, they had to travel to Nineveh in order to swear an oath of loyalty to Esarhaddon and his designated successor Ashurbanipal. Then, so as not to forget this oath once they had returned to their home cities, they had to perform an annual ritual to refresh their memory. This ritual was dedicated to the goddess Ishtar of Arbela.

> Water from a sarsaru-jar, she [Ishtar of Arbela] let them drink,
> a goblet of 1 Seah [about 6 l, or 1½ U.S. gallons] she filled with water from the sarsaru-jar and presented it to them[,] saying:
> In your hearts you will speak thus: Ishtar, a narrow one is she! [i.e., Ishtar is only a local deity, ignorant of what is going on far off]
> Thus: You will return to your cities and will eat bread in your districts, and will forget these contractual stipulations.
> Thus: You will drink from this water and again remember and observe these contractual stipulations which I set up concerning Esarhaddon. (J. Assmann, 2006a, p. 10)

From this ritual of memory and certainly many similar ones that were to be repeated periodically, Deuteronomy develops an entire culture of remembrance and a life form that came to be understood as "religion" and then became the model for later world religions such as Christianity and Islam. This new type of religion comprises much more than just cult. It extends to every aspect of life and focuses especially on justice and morals. It does not develop from pagan cults but rather from the political system it means to supersede as a form of liberation, emancipation, and enlightenment. It therefore represents a totally new form of both religion and sociopolitical organization, which rests primarily on memory.

Again the connection between memory and society surfaces. Memory, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, enables us human beings to live in groups and communities, and living in groups and communities enables us to build a memory. This connection between memory and belonging is not only a matter of self-regulating or "autopoietic" evolution, as Halbwachs suggests. It is also a matter of political foundation or fabrication. Both remembering and belonging have normative aspects. If you want to belong, you *must* remember: *Zakhor*—remember—is the Jewish imperative (Yerushalmi, 1982).

The Assyrian mnemotechnique, too, was meant as the foundation of a political memory where memory is an obligation. If you wanted to belong to the Assyrian empire and be safe from its political violence, you had to remember the loyalty you had sworn. If you forgot, you would be punished and expelled. But in the ancient Assyrian context the memory was still purely ritual; whereas the Deuteronomic mnemotechnique relies primarily on written and oral language.

As a form of memory, ritual is based on repetition. Each performance must follow a fixed model as closely as possible in order to make the actual performance

resemble the previous ones in every respect. The flow of time is brought into a pattern that combines the irreversible and the reversible, the passing time and the returning time. Human life and social institutions are thereby rescued from just passing away, decaying, and vanishing; they are integrated into the natural cycles of regeneration. Repetition is a form of preservation, of memory.

The decisive difference between ritual memory and the Torah, for example, is the fact that the former is known only to specialists who have to learn it by heart, whereas the latter is taught to everybody, and every male member of the community is expected to know it by heart. If a civilization following the ritual model intends public circulation and general communication of the cultural memory stored in specialized memories, then it is during feasts that the broad public is admitted to the performance of rituals and the recitation of the sacred texts. This difference in participation is salient in a passage of Josephus's pamphlet *Contra Apionem*:

> Can any government be more holy than this? or any Religion better adapted to the nature of the Deity? Where, in any place but in this, are the whole People, by the special diligence of the Priests, to whom the care of public instruction is committed, accurately taught the principles of true piety? So that the body-politic seems, as it were, one great Assembly, constantly kept together, for the celebration of some sacred Mysteries. For those things which the Gentiles keep up for a few days only, that is, during those solemnities they call Mysteries and Initiations, we, with vast delight, and a plenitude of knowledge, which admits of no error, fully enjoy, and perpetually contemplate through the whole course of our lives. (Flavius Josephus, trans. 1738, Chapter 22; see also Flavius Josephus, trans. 1901/1993, pp. 177–178)

The "pagan" religions, despite their extensive use of memorization and even writing, still relied on ritual continuity. Rituals and texts were solutions to the problem of how to make the transient permanent and, hence, how to establish continuity. The same issue confronts memory, and in that sense rituals and texts may be seen as media of memory. Rituals secure the transient by iteration; texts, by duration.

Textual continuity is achieved only when there are institutions of learning and exegesis that keep the ancient texts alive and semantically transparent. Because the texts themselves must not be altered, exegesis and commentary are the only ways to preserve the meaning of the texts while also adapting it to a changing world. All new religions since antiquity develop canons of sacred scripture and commentaries that translate the canonical texts into changing realities and conditions of understanding. Most of these religions are monotheistic and most are in antagonistic opposition to older traditions and other religions, which they reject as paganism. The circle of these faiths include Judaism and the Tanakh, Christianity and the Christian Bible, Islam and the Qur'an, Buddhism and the Pali-Canon, Jainism and the Jaina-Canon, the Sikh religion and the Adi Granth, Daoism, and Confucianism, extending down to the Mormons and the Book of Mormon. The strong alliance between religions of this new type—the world religions—and the formation of canons and commentaries underscores the connection between memory and identity. The transition from ritual to textual continuity means a complete reorganization of cultural memory in the same way as the transition from the ethnically and culturally determined religions of the ancient world to the new type of transcultural and transnational world religions

meant a totally new construction of identity. The canon, in a way, functioned as a new transethnic homeland and as a new transcultural formation and education.

Western cultural memory, however, is informed not only by the Biblical canon but also by a parallel canon of Greek and Latin literature. It was the outstanding achievement of Irish monks and Byzantine scholars, people working on the periphery of the ancient world, to have copied and rescued alongside with religious literature a considerable part of the pagan literature of classical antiquity. Detailed discussion of this second canon is beyond the scope of this *chapter, but it should at least be mentioned because it represents a kind of parallel project. At about the same time as the final redaction of the Biblical canon, the Alexandrian philologists started to collect and select the literature of ancient Greece, compiling lists of those works and authors that deserved to be edited and annotated (*hoi prattomenoi*). These tracts and authors were the ones Aulus Gellius classified as "classici," alluding to the first class of Roman taxpayers as a metaphor for the most important material and writers. Canonization and classicism are typical phenomena in the organization of a cultural memory, not only in the West but wherever writing has a fundamental role. Not only does Western tradition have several eras and movements of a return to antiquity, of classicisms such as the Renaissance in Italy, the seventeenth century in France, the "Augustan Age" in England, and the decades around 1790 in Germany. It also has the formation of "Golden Ages" to which later epochs have recourse to, such as the Elizabethan Age in England and the time of Louis XIV in France; of Schiller and Goethe in Weimar; and of Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven in Vienna. The case of music is especially revealing of the necessity to create a Golden Age, for there is no possibility of returning to antiquity in that field (Vosskamp, 1993).

The distinction between the classical and the sacred canons lies in the fact that the sacred canon is closed and can be amplified or modified only by commentaries, whereas the classical canon is open because every age—including antiquity—may become an object of recourse, recycling, and reference for another and because the canon of "classics" changes and rearranges itself around a central stock of unquestionable works with every new work that is admitted to the canon. One cannot deny, however, that even the classical canon has a certain religious character. It seems evident that art, philosophy, and religion have common roots and that these roots lie in nothing other than cultural memory.

Note

1. Clement invites the reader to imagine a small group of people solemnly filing from a sacred building in ascending order of rank. The *singer* comes first. He carries a musical emblem as a sign. He is supposed to have learned by heart two books of Hermes, one containing hymns to the gods and the other a biography of the reigning king. Next comes the *horoscopos*, carrying a palm branch and an astrological emblem. He is to know by heart the four astrological books of Hermes, one dealing with the order of darkness, one with the planets, one with the encounters and appearances of the sun and moon, and the last one with the risings (of the decan stars). Then the *hierogrammateus* comes forth, carrying a feather on his head and a book and the equipment of a scribe in his hands. Unlike the horoscopes, whose astrological knowledge refers

to the order of time, the *hierogrammateus* is the specialist for the order of space. He has to know the so-called hieroglyphical books dealing with cosmography and geography, with the constellations of the sun, the moon and the five planets, the soil of Egypt and the nature of the Nile, the structure and equipment of the temples, the grounds allotted to the temples, the measurements, and the objects used in the temples. These three priests deal only with the context of ritual; the following two superior ranks address its content. The first of them to emerge is the *stolistes* whose sign is a stola and whose competence concerns ten books dealing with education, cult, and sacrifice. Clement's *stolistes* is the "lector priest." He appears in the earliest representations of Egyptian rituals, wearing a scarf across his breast and bearing in his hands a scroll from which he reads aloud the ritual recitations. His Egyptian title is hrj-h3b, literally "scroll bearer," and he is both the embodiment of ritual memory and the master in the art of writing. Last comes the *prophetes*, or high priest, carrying a situla with water and followed by attendants bearing a processional plate with breads. As the chief of the temple priesthood, he has learned the ten "hieratic" books concerning the laws, the gods, and all about priestly education. Holding the highest priestly rank, he acts as the representative of the king. His Egyptian title, "servant of the god" or "highest servant of the god," has nothing to do with prophecy.

References

Assmann, A. (1999). *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* [Commemorative spaces: Forms of and changes of cultural memory]. Munich: C. H. Beck.

Assmann, A. (2006). Memory, individual and collective. In R. E. Goodin & C. Tilly (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of contextual political analysis* (pp. 210–224). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Assmann, A., & Assmann, J. (1989). Schrift, Tradition, Kultur [Writing, tradition, culture]. In P. Goetsch, W. Raible, & H.-R. Roemer (Series Eds.) & W. Raible (Vol. Ed.), *Scriptoralia: Vol. 6. Zwischen Festtag und Alltag* (pp. 25–49). Tübingen: Narr.

Assmann, J. (1988). Kollektives Gedächtnis und kulturelle Identität [Collective memory and cultural identity]. In J. Assmann & T. Hölscher (Eds.), *Kultur und Gedächtnis* (pp. 9–19). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Assmann, J. (1992). *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* [Cultural memory: Writing, remembrance, and political identity in ancient civilizations]. Munich: C. H. Beck.

Assmann, J. (2001). Five steps of canonization: Tradition, scripture and the origin of the Hebrew Bible. In A. Neuwirth & A. Plitsch (Eds.), *Crisis and memory in Islamic societies* (pp. 75–93). Würzburg: Ergon.

Assmann, J. (2006a). *Religion and cultural memory: Ten studies*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Assmann, J. (2006b). *Thomas Mann und Ägypten. Mythos und Monotheismus in den Josephsromanen* [Thomas Mann and Egypt: Mythos and monotheism in the Joseph novels]. Munich: C. H. Beck.

Borgeaud, P. (1988). Pour une approche anthropologique de la mémoire religieuse [Toward an anthropological approach to religious memory]. In P. Borgeaud (Ed.), *La mémoire des religions* (pp. 7–20). Geneva: Labor et Fides.

Curtius, E. R. (1948). *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* [European literature and Latin middle ages]. Bern: Francke.

Flavius, J. (1738). *Contra Apionem* [Against Apion] (W. Warburton, Trans.). London: F. Gyles.

Flavius, J. (1993). *Kleinere Schriften* [Short writings] (H. Clementz, Trans. & Ed.). Wiesbaden: Fournier. (Original translation published 1901)

Fowden, G. (1993). *The Egyptian Hermes: A historical approach to the late pagan mind*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Freud, S. (1953–1974). In J. Strachey, A. Freud, A. Richards, & C. L. Rothgeb (Eds.), *The standard edition of the complete works of Sigmund Freud* (24 vols.). London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis.

Ginzburg, C. (1983). Kunst und soziales Gedächtnis. Die Warburg-Tradition [Art and social memory: The Warburg tradition]. In C. Ginzburg (Ed.), *Spurensicherungen. Über verborgene Geschichte, Kunst und soziales Gedächtnis* (pp. 115–172). Berlin: Wagenbach.

Gombrich, E. H. (1981). *Aby Warburg. Eine intellektuelle Biographie* [Aby Warburg: An intellectual biography]. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Halbwachs, M. (1941). *La topographie légendaire des évangiles en Terre Sainte* [The legendary topography of the gospels in the Holy Land]. Paris: PUF.

Halbwachs, M. (1985). *Das Gedächtnis und seine sozialen Rahmenbedingungen* [Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire] (L. Geldsetzer, Trans.). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. (Original work published 1925)

Jung, C. G. (1970–1971). *Collected Works* (G. Adler & R. F. C. Hull, Eds.). 20 vols. Bollingen series. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Luckmann, T. (1983). Remarks on personal identity—Inner, social and historical time. In A. Jacobson-Widding (Ed.), *Identity: Personal and sociocultural—A symposium* (pp. 67–91). Stockholm and Uppsala: Almqvist-Wiksell International.

Mann, T. (1933–1943). *Joseph und seine Brüder* [Joeseph and his brethren] (4 vols.). Frankfurt am Main (1933–1936) & Stockholm (1943): S. Fischer.

Niethammer, L. (1985). *Lebenserfahrung und kollektives Gedächtnis. Die Praxis der "Oral History"* [Life experience and collective memory: The practice of "oral history"]. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Nietzsche, F. (1960). Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben [Of the advantage and disadvantage of history for life]. In K. Schlechta (Ed.), *Werke* (pp. 209–285). Munich: C. Hanser. (Original work published 1874)

Plato (1901a). *Phaedrus. Platonis* (Opera Ed., I. Burnet, Trans.). (St. III, Vol. 2, pp. 227–278). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Plato (1901b). *Letter VII, Platonis* (Opera Ed., I. Burnet, Trans.). (St. III, Vol. 5, pp. 323d–351). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Proust, M. (1982). *Remembrance of things past: Vol 1. Swann's way: Within a budding grove* (T. Kilmartin & C. K. Scott-Moncrieff, Trans.). New York: Knopf. (Original work published 1913)

Redfield, R. (1956). *Peasant society and culture*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Vansina, J. (1985). *Oral tradition as history*. Madison, WI: Wisconsin University Press.

Vosskamp, W. (Ed.). (1993). *Klassik im Vergleich. Normativität und Historizität europäischer Klassiken* [Classics compared: Normativity and historicity of European classics]. Stuttgart: Metzler.

Warburg, A. (2003). In M. Warnke (Ed.), *Der Bilderatlas MNEMOSYNE* [Mnemosyne: An illustrated atlas] (2nd ed.). Berlin: Akademie-Verlag. (Original work published 1925)

Yerushalmi, Y. H. (1982). *Zakhor: Jewish history and Jewish memory*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.