AP® Seminar Performance Task 2: Individual Research-Based Essay and Presentation

Directions and Stimulus Materials

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Introduction

This performance task, highlighted in bold below, is one of three parts of the overall assessment for AP Seminar, and one of two performance tasks. The assessment for this course comprises the following:

Performance Task 1: Team Project and Presentation

- Component 1: Individual Research Report
- Component 2: Team Multimedia Presentation and Oral Defense

Performance Task 2: Individual Research-Based Essay and Presentation

- **Component 1: Individual Written Argument**
- **Component 2: Individual Multimedia Presentation**
- **Component 3: Oral Defense**

End-of-Course Exam

- Part A: Three Short-Answer Questions (based on one source)
- Part B: One Essay Question (based on four sources)

The attached pages include the directions for Performance Task 2, information about the weighting of the task within the overall assessment, and detailed information as to the expected quantity and quality of work that you should submit.

Also included are the stimulus materials for the task. These materials are theme-based and broadly span the academic curriculum. After analyzing the materials, develop a research question that suits your individual interest based on a thematic connection between at least two of the stimulus materials. Your research question must be rich enough to allow you to engage in meaningful exploration and to write and present a substantive, defensible argument.

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AP Seminar Performance Task 2: Individual Research-Based Essay and Presentation

Student Version

Weight: 35% of the AP Seminar score

Task Overview

This packet includes a set of stimulus materials for the AP Seminar Performance Task 2: Individual Research-Based Essay and Presentation.

You must identify a research question prompted by analysis of the provided stimulus materials, gather information from a range of additional sources, develop and refine an argument, write and revise your argument, and create a presentation that you will be expected to defend orally immediately following your presentation. Your teacher will give you a deadline for when you need to submit your written argument and presentation media. Your teacher will also give you a date on which you will give your presentation.

Task Components	Length	Due Date (fill in)
Individual Written Argument (IWA)	2,000 words	
Individual Multimedia Presentation (IMP)	6–8 minutes	
Oral Defense (OD)	Respond to 2 questions	

In all written work, you must:

- Acknowledge, attribute, and/or cite sources using in-text citations, endnotes or footnotes, and/or through bibliographic entry. You must avoid plagiarizing (see the attached AP Capstone Policy on Plagiarism and Fabrication and Falsification of Information).
- Adhere to established conventions of grammar, usage, style, and mechanics.

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Task Directions

1. **Individual Written Argument** (2,000 words)

- Read and analyze the provided stimulus materials to identify thematic connections among the sources and possible areas for inquiry.
- Compose a research question of your own prompted by analysis of the stimulus materials. Your question must relate to a theme that connects at least two of the stimulus materials.
- Gather information from a range of additional sources representing a variety of perspectives, including scholarly work.
- Analyze, evaluate, and select evidence. Interpret the evidence to develop a well-reasoned argument that answers the research question and conveys your perspective.
- Throughout your research, continually revisit and refine your original research question to ensure that the evidence you gather addresses your purpose and focus.
- Identify and evaluate opposing or alternate views and consider their implications and/or limitations as you develop resolutions, conclusions, or solutions to your research question.

Required Checkpoints

While you are working on your research for the IWA:

- you will be required to submit evidence of the original sources that you have found and read to your teacher.
- your teacher will arrange a time for you to discuss your research and sources with them. For that discussion you should be prepared to talk about your sources, and the perspectives and ideas you have found in your research.

When you begin planning your argument you will also be required to present and discuss your argument outline with your teacher. For that presentation you should explain your decisions about the structure of your paper and what information you decided to include.

- Compose a coherent, convincing and well-written argument in which you:
  - Explain the significance or importance of your research question by situating it within a larger context.
  - Establish a well-organized argument that links claims and evidence and leads to a specific and plausible conclusion, resolution or solution that addresses your research question.
  - Integrate at least one of the stimulus materials as part of your argument. (For example, as providing relevant context for the research question or as evidence to support relevant claims.)
  - Evaluate different perspectives by considering objections to them, and their limitations and/or implications.
  - Include relevant evidence from credible sources to support your claims. You should include evidence from scholarly work.
  - Cite all sources that you have used, including the stimulus materials, and include a list of works cited or a bibliography.
  - Use correct grammar and a style appropriate for an academic audience.
- Abide by the 2,000-word limit (excluding footnoted citations, bibliography, and text in figures or tables). Word count does include titles, sub-headings, and in-text citations.
- Remove references to your name, school and teacher.
- Upload your document to the AP Digital Portfolio as directed by your teacher.

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2. **Individual Multimedia Presentation** (6–8 minutes)
   - Develop and prepare a multimedia presentation that will convey the argument from your final paper to an educated, non-expert audience.
   - Be selective about the information you choose for your presentation by focusing on key points you want your audience to understand.
   - Design your oral presentation with supporting visual media (e.g., presentation slides, a poster, a website), and consider audience, context, and purpose.
   - Prepare to engage your audience using appropriate strategies (e.g., eye contact, vocal variety, expressive gestures, movement).
   - Prepare notecards or an outline that you can quickly reference as you are speaking so that you can interact with supporting visuals and the audience.
   - Rehearse your presentation in order to refine your design and practice your delivery.
   - Check that you can do the presentation within the 6- to 8-minute time limit.

   - Deliver a 6- to 8-minute multimedia presentation in which you:
     - Contextualize and identify the importance of your research question.
     - Explain the connection between your research and your analysis of the stimulus materials.
     - Deliver a well-organized argument that connects claims and evidence.
     - Incorporate and synthesize relevant evidence from various perspectives to support your argument. Make sure you cite or attribute the evidence you use to support your claims (either orally or visually).
     - Offer a plausible resolution(s), conclusion(s), and/or solution(s) based on evidence and consider the implications of any suggested solutions.
     - Engage the audience with an effective and clearly organized presentation design that guides them through your argument.
     - Engage the audience with effective techniques of delivery and performance.

3. **Individual Oral Defense**

   Defend your research process, use of evidence, and conclusion(s), solution(s), or recommendation(s) through oral responses to two questions asked by your teacher. Be prepared to describe and reflect on your process as well as defend and extend your written work and oral presentation. Make sure you include relevant and specific details about your work in your answers.

Sample Oral Defense Questions

Here are some examples of the types of questions your teacher might ask you during your oral defense. These are *examples only*; your teacher may ask you different questions, but there will still be one question that relates to each of the following two categories.

1. **Reflection on the Research Process**
   - How did some preliminary information you gathered inform your research?
   - What evidence did you gather that you didn't include? Why did you choose not to include it?
   - How did your research question evolve as you moved through the research process?
   - Did your research go in a different direction than you originally expected?

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- What information did you need that you weren't able to find or locate?
- How did you approach and synthesize the differing perspectives in order to reach a conclusion?

2. **Extending Argumentation through effective questioning and inquiry**
   - What additional questions emerged from your research? Why are these questions important?
   - What are the implications of your findings to your community?
   - How is your conclusion in conversation with the body of literature or other research sources you examined?
   - How did you use the conclusions or questions of others to advance your own research?

AP Capstone™ Policy on Plagiarism and Falsification or Fabrication of Information

A student who fails to acknowledge the source or author of any and all information or evidence taken from the work of someone else through citation, attribution or reference in the body of the work, or through a bibliographic entry, will receive a score of 0 on that particular component of the AP Seminar and/or AP Research Performance Task. In AP Seminar, a team of students that fails to properly acknowledge sources or authors on the Team Multimedia Presentation will receive a group score of 0 for that component of the Team Project and Presentation.

A student who incorporates falsified or fabricated information (e.g. evidence, data, sources, and/or authors) will receive a score of 0 on that particular component of the AP Seminar and/or AP Research Performance Task. In AP Seminar, a team of students that incorporates falsified or fabricated information in the Team Multimedia Presentation will receive a group score of 0 for that component of the Team Project and Presentation.

AP Capstone Policy on Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

DEFINITION OF GENERATIVE AI IN AP CAPSTONE COURSES

Generative AI tools use predictive technology to produce new text, charts, images, audio, video, etc. This includes not only ChatGPT and similar Large Language Models (LLMs), but also many writing assistants or plug-ins that are built on this or similar AI technologies.

POLICY ON ACCEPTABLE GENERATIVE AI USE IN AP CAPSTONE COURSES

Generative AI tools must be used ethically, responsibly, and intentionally to support student learning, not to bypass it. Accordingly, all performance tasks submitted in AP Seminar and AP Research must be the student's own work. While students are permitted to use generative AI tools consistent with this policy, their use is optional and not mandatory.

Students can use generative AI tools as optional aids for exploration of potential topics of inquiry, initial searches for sources of information, confirming their understanding of a complex text, or checking their writing — but not rewriting — for grammar and tone. However, students must read primary and secondary sources directly, perform their own analysis and synthesis of evidence, and make their own choices on how to communicate effectively both in their writing and presentations. Students may not use generative AI tools to write or create their assignments for them. It remains the student's responsibility to engage deeply with credible, valid sources and integrate diverse perspectives when working on the performance tasks. Students must complete interim "checkpoints" with their teacher to demonstrate genuine engagement with the tasks.

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The following table describes what constitutes acceptable use of generative AI at different phases of the work to complete the performance tasks.

Phase of Work	Acceptable Use	Not Acceptable Use
Exploring ideas to develop and refine an area of inquiry	Using generative AI tools to get a sense of existing debates on an issue, potential sub-topics, or what is generally already widely known about a topic.	Taking the output of generative AI tools uncritically, such as using AI to generate a research question or thesis, without engaging with the actual research or relying solely on generative AI as a source of information about a topic
Finding sources	› Using generative AI to find authors, organizations, publications, or sources that may be pertinent to the area of inquiry, so that the student can then locate and read those perspectives directly. › Asking for recommendations on related sources to further explore the topic or address gaps in research. **NOTE:** Not all AI tools are the same in terms of the likelihood they will provide output with credible sources. For example, AI-powered search engines for research databases draw from vetted sources, whereas ChatGPT does not necessarily differentiate. Students must review output with a skeptical, critical eye to be sure any suggested sources are real, credible, and relevant to their inquiry.	Using a list of sources generated by AI without going to the original sources and reviewing the content.
Summarizing and/or interpreting sources	Using generative AI to help develop understanding of complex texts by: › Requesting help with understanding complex vocabulary or sentence structures in a source. › Asking for clarification on a confusing concept or passage in a source. **NOTE:** Students should <u>always</u> read the original text of the sources they intend to use to ensure they are accurately understanding and utilizing the evidence from those sources in their work	› Generating a summary or paraphrasing of the source instead of reading it. › Requesting direct quotes or citations from a source to use as evidence without independently identifying them. › Copying and pasting AI generated source summaries into the final draft.

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Phase of Work	Acceptable Use	Not Acceptable Use
Synthesizing ideas and information from sources into a literature review, report, or argument	No acceptable use. **NOTE:** Students will be asked questions in either their PREP-based in-progress meetings (AP Research) or in the checkpoints (AP Seminar) to ensure they have done this work themselves.	Asking generative AI to: › Compare or contrast sources and/or generate a review of literature. › Synthesize common or contrasting elements from within a source or across multiple sources. › Develop statements or paragraphs that put sources in conversation.
Developing an aligned method for their Research **(AP Research only)**	Summarizing commonly used methods in discipline-specific fields or reviewing benefits and drawbacks of different generic methods or methodologies. **NOTE:** Students will be asked questions in their PREP-based in-progress meetings (AP Research) to ensure that they have done this work themselves.	Using generative AI to determine the appropriate method for an individual student's research and/or providing rationales for a specific method.
Producing, summarizing and/or interpreting data **(AP Research only)**	No acceptable use. **NOTE:** Students will be asked questions in their PREP-based in-progress meetings (AP Research) to ensure that they have done this work themselves.	› Using generative AI to generate data (this would count as falsified and/or fabricated data). *The only exception would be if use of generative AI tools is the subject of the inquiry. In this case, using generative AI to generate data would be part of the method.* › Using AI to summarize or discuss their results or data.
Developing displays of data **(AP Research only)**	Using generative AI to create charts/graphs or other representations of data collected and assembled by the student.	Using generative AI to produce or generate the data itself. *See exception noted above.*
Drafting or outlining a paper	Seeking guidance on general best practices in how to structure a research paper, essay, or report. **NOTE:** Students will be asked questions (on the reasoning underpinning their choices for structure and content) in either their PREP-based in-progress meetings (AP Research) or the checkpoints (AP Seminar) to ensure that they have done this work themselves.	› Asking generative AI to produce an outline or draft of a specific paper. › Requesting generative AI to write all or part of the paper. › Using writing generated by AI in the final draft.

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Phase of Work	Acceptable Use	Not Acceptable Use
Revising a paper	› Using spell or grammar checkers. › Asking for feedback on style and tone (students must make deliberate choices on what feedback to incorporate).	› Accepting AI-generated suggestions for revisions of written work without critically evaluating such contributions. › Incorporating into student submissions new sections of text suggested by generative AI.
Creating Citations / Bibliography	› Seeking guidance on how to cite or check citations. › Generating a draft of the bibliographic listing of citations or checking the format of a student-generated draft of the bibliographic listing of citations.	› Using AI to generate citations without having directly studied the original sources. › Relying on generative AI to create the bibliographic listing of citations without then checking the accuracy of the format.
Developing Presentations	› Seeking general guidance on effective presentations. › Generating initial ideas for key points, sequence, or visuals for presentations.	› Uncritically using AI to produce the key points, visuals, or structure for presentations. › Using AI to generate a script that is memorized or read for the presentation.
Preparing for Oral Defense	No acceptable use.	Using AI to generate possible answers to potential oral defense questions (and memorizing or reading them).

REQUIRED CHECKPOINTS AND AFFIRMATIONS

To ensure students are not using generative AI to bypass work, students must complete interim "checkpoints" with their teacher to demonstrate genuine engagement with the tasks. **AP Seminar and AP Research students will need to complete the relevant checkpoints successfully to receive a score for their performance tasks. Teachers must affirm, to the best of their knowledge, that students completed the checkpoints authentically in the AP Digital Portfolio. Failure to complete the checkpoints will result in a score of zero on the associated task**.

- In AP Seminar, teachers assess the authenticity of student work based on checkpoints that take the form of short conversations with students during which students make their thinking and decision-making visible (similar to an oral defense). These checkpoints should occur during the sources and research phase (IRR and IWA), and argument outline phase (IWA only).
- In AP Research, students must complete "checkpoints" in the form of in-progress meetings and work in the Process and Reflection Portfolio (PREP).

AP Seminar and AP Research teachers are also required to affirm, to the best of their knowledge, that the student's final submission is authentic student work.

College Board reserves the right to investigate submissions where there is evidence of the inappropriate use of generative AI as an academic integrity violation and request from students copies of their interim work for review.

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False Nostalgia

The "good old days" weren't all that good—but they're still messing with politics.

JOHAN NORBERG | FROM REASON MAGAZINE, THE JANUARY 2022 ISSUE

aeroengland.co.uk

If you visit Hagley Park in the West Midlands of England and make it to the big 18th century house of the Lyttelton family, walk another half-mile to the east and you'll come upon an exotic and impressive sight once you clear the trees.

In front of you is what seems like the ruins of a Gothic castle. There are four corner towers, but only one is still standing, complete with battlements and an intersecting stair turret. The others are reduced to one or two stories and the wall connecting them has collapsed. Just two remaining windows impress the spectator with their tall Gothic arches. Below them is a pointed doorway and above it three shield reliefs.

You stand there in awe, lost in thought. It is a place of history and memory. You start thinking about the ancient experiences of which this place could speak, and you wonder what spectacular building once stood here.

The answer is none. The ruin was constructed just like this in the mid–18th century. The purpose was to give the impression that this was a place of wonder where a magnificent castle had once been until time, nature, and a few heroic (or barbaric) acts reduced it to a state of decay. It is a selective, artificial version of history—very much like the politics of nostalgia that are in vogue today. They tap into a powerful sentiment, a widespread yearning for the good old days. When asked if life in their country is better or worse today than 50 years ago, 31 percent of the British, 41 percent of Americans, and 46 percent of the French say that it is worse.

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Nostalgia is not new. The mock castle of Hagley Park was not extraordinary back in its day. Building ruins from scratch—"ruin follies"—was at the height of fashion for the European aristocracy in the 18th century. They built shattered castles and crumbling abbeys to commemorate their real or imagined past. In 1836, Edward Hussey III of Scotney Castle in Kent improved his old house by smashing it and turning it into a ruin that made for a nice view from his new house. In the late 18th century, another aristocrat built an extravagant six-story tower in Désert de Retz in France, made to look like the remaining column of a colossal temple. Right beside it he built a ruined Gothic chapel.

The ruin craze was part of a broader reaction against the Enlightenment and its ideals of reason and progress. The reaction came to be called Romanticism. It glorified nature, nation, and history and turned the nostalgic desire for childhood and home country from pathology to movement. Sometimes it was not a rejection of modernity but a way to create a continuity that made it easier to live with change, as industrialization and urbanization quickly changed living conditions. "This acute awareness of tradition is a modern phenomenon that reflects a desire for custom and routine in a world characterized by constant change and innovation," wrote the architect and writer Witold Rybczynski in 1986.

Nostalgia and Nationalism

The term nostalgia was coined by the Swiss doctor Johannes Hofer in 1688. It was his word for the sad, obsessive desire of students, servants, and soldiers in foreign lands to return to their home. In *The Future of Nostalgia*, comparative literature scholar Svetlana Boym points to the curious fact that, by the end of the 18th century, intellectuals from different national traditions began to claim they had a special term for bittersweet homesickness that did not exist in any other language. Germans had *heimweh*, French people had *maladie du pays*, Russians had *toska*, and Polish people had *tesknota*. Other emerging nations also claimed that only they, because of their unique national identity, knew the true meaning of the sad, beautiful welling-up of longing. Boym "is struck by the fact that all these untranslatable words are in fact synonyms; and all share the desire for untranslatability, the longing for uniqueness."

This was the era when governments and intellectuals began to construct national identities, especially to resist occupation during the Napoleonic Wars and to rebuild afterward. The folk songs they praised as a pure expression of the people's traditional sentiments were rewritten with new lyrics because the old ones were just a little bit too authentic—far too vulgar and not sufficiently patriotic. Authorities also created national languages, often by systematizing a local dialect and enforcing it on everybody through the education system. Linguistic boundaries became rigid, and many oral traditions perished. In the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, which lasted until 1806, only one-quarter of the population spoke German. Even in Prussia, which did the most to encourage poets and writers to create a common German identity to resist Napoleon, German was just one of six major languages. At the 1815 Congress of Vienna, Prussia was registered as a "Slav kingdom," and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel talked of Brandenburg and Mecklenburg as "Germanized Slavs." In his book *The Myth of Nations*, the historian Patrick J. Geary claimed that even in a country like France, with centuries-old national boundaries and long linguistic traditions, not many more than half spoke French as their native language in 1900. Others spoke different Romance languages and dialects, and in some areas Celtic and Germanic languages.

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Just as the aristocrats built fake ruins, kings and poets were now erecting artificial ethnicities and nations. Some did it out of love for the homeland, but some also saw its potential as a cement for ideological collectivism. Yet although such ruins and ethnicities are artificial, our feelings for them are real. Evolutionary psychology has revealed that it only takes trivial similarities between people to create strong bonds with strangers. So it's not strange that an idea of a common history and destiny unites people easily. And while the history of ethnic nationalism is, as former U.S. diplomat Dan Fried has pointed out, like cheap alcohol—first it makes you drunk, then it makes you blind, then it kills you—civic forms of nationalism have inspired fights for freedom and inclusion of immigrants and minority groups too.

Nostalgia is a natural, even important, state of mind, according to psychologists. Anchoring our identity in something enduring helps us when all that is solid seems to be melting into air. Everything changes, but we need a sense of stability and predictability. When things change too fast, we lose our sense of control. This is probably why a yearning for the past is especially likely when we experience rapid transitions, like maturing into adulthood, aging into retirement, dislocation, migration, or rapid technological advancement.

People going through rough times can be helped by remembering better days in the past. For dementia sufferers, nostalgia can help establish some sense of personal continuity. The best way to deal with it is not leeches or opium (or execution, which a Russian general threatened nostalgic soldiers with during the War of the Polish Succession in 1733). It is a glass of wine, the favorite music from your teens, and the family photo album.

As James Madison University religion professor Alan Jay Levinovitz explains, it is important to make a distinction between three sorts of nostalgia: personal, historical, and collective. Personal nostalgia is made up of first-person memories and contributes to your own sense of identity and history. If personal nostalgia is about what life was like for you in the past, historical nostalgia is a generalization about what the past was like, often in the form of a longing for an enchanted, simple world—the good old days. Collective nostalgia is the emotional attachment to collective cultural identities: "This is what my group was like" or "this is what my group endured in the past." Just like personal nostalgia, this emotion can be a source of strength that helps someone through difficult periods. The insight (or illusion) that your people or your nation endured something together can help and inspire. But it is also easily abused by [those] who claim they can restore…that [which] has been lost.

That is a false promise, because we can't go back—and even if we could, we wouldn't find what we were looking for. It was never there and, in any case, would not be able to give us the solution to our current problems. One way of revealing that is to look at what the good old days were really like.

The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same

In a wonderful podcast episode, *Build for Tomorrow* host Jason Feifer explored nostalgia throughout history...[He asked the question, when was America at its best?] The most popular answer seemed to be the 1950s. So then he asked scholars of the '50s whether people in the '50s thought they were the good old days. Definitely not. People were worried about race and class, the impact of television, and the very real threat of instant nuclear annihilation. There was anxiety about rapidly changing family life and especially the new youth cultures and mindless, consumer-oriented students on campus. American sociologists warned that rampant individualism was tearing the family apart.

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But there must have been exceptions. For example, being an autoworker in Detroit must have been amazing, considering how often this group is featured in current labor market nostalgia. Or was it?

When historian Daniel Clark launched an oral history project to find out how the autoworkers themselves experienced it, he fully expected to hear stories about a lost Eden. However, as Clark wrote, "hardly anyone, male or female, white or African American, recalled the 1950s as a time of secure employment, rising wages, and improved benefits."

Instead, Clark was told about economic volatility, precarious employment, and recurring unemployment. In 1952, one-tenth of all U.S. unemployment was concentrated in the city of Detroit. Impressive hourly wages don't say much about annual incomes if you are only called in temporarily and quickly let go. Most of the workers Clark spoke with recounted how they had to take secondary gigs (cab driver, trash hauler, janitor, cotton picker, moving company worker, golf caddy) to pay the bills.

"Autoworkers fell behind on installment plans, resulting in repossessions of their purchases, and they found it impossible to keep up with mortgages and rents," Clark wrote. "Most autoworkers, and especially those with families, were priced out of the market for the new cars that they built."

Our collective rosy memory of Detroit in the '50s is based on the fact that those who managed to hold on to a long-term full-time job in these industries had significantly better wages than most Americans, because the country was still so poor back then. This was especially true of the group employed during the mini-boom of 1953. In other words, the narrative of our lost era of manufacturing is based on a single American city in a single year during the very peculiar time after World War II, during which Europe's industrial infrastructure was destroyed.

And how much did these lucky few get paid? Well, the autoworkers union managed to push up the hourly wage to about $1.30, which is equivalent to around $17 today. That happens to be the same average starting wage Amazon began to pay warehouse workers in May 2021.

In fact, many people in the '50s pointed to the '20s as the good old days. But back in the 1920s, people worried about how rapid technological change was threatening our sanity—radio and recorded music gave us too much speed and choice. So did the automobile, which would probably ruin the morals of the young. In *The New York Times*, you could read on the front page that scientists had concluded that "American life is too fast." The famous child psychologist John Watson warned that increasing divorce rates meant the American family would soon cease to exist. Many romanticized the calmer lifestyle of the late 1800s. Seeing how family life was changing, some began to idealize the Victorian family, when they thought that fathers were really fathers, mothers were really mothers, and children respected their elders.

But at the turn of the century, the railroads, the telegraph, and rapid urbanization were undermining traditional communities and ways of life. Many people worried about a fast-spreading disease caused by the unnatural pace of life: neurasthenia, which could express itself via anxiety, headaches, insomnia, back pain, constipation, impotence, and chronic diarrhea.

The Victorian middle classes handled the transitions of the era by becoming the first generation to value the old as such; they started to care about antiques and covered their walls with portraits of ancestors. The historian John Gillis has shown that their fear

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of urbanization and of work outside the household led them to invent the notion of a traditional family life that has been lost—a time that was simpler, less problematic, more rooted in place and tradition. They felt life before the Industrial Revolution was better. In the U.S., many people longed for the quieter, happier life they had before the Civil War.

Before the Industrial Revolution, family life was indeed different. Around half the members of a birth cohort died before they were 15 years old, and 27 percent of those who survived were fatherless by the time they reached that age. The share of marriages broken up prematurely by death was similar to the share broken up by divorces today. Most families sent children away to live in other households as servants or apprentices. After the French Revolution, Edmund Burke thought, "the age of chivalry is gone; that of sophisters, economists and calculators has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished forever." In America, many worried the republic had somehow lost its way since the Founders created it.

Feifer and the scholars he talked to in his podcast episode continued to look for the good old days, wandering further back into the past until they reached ancient Mesopotamia, some 5,000 years ago. After inventing civilization and writing, it didn't take more than two centuries before humans started writing about how difficult life now was and how it must have been so much easier in the past. It seems the first society was also the first nostalgic society.

The scholar Samuel Noah Kramer found examples of the Sumerians in cuneiform script complaining about how their leaders abused them and the merchants cheated and family life was not what it used to be. One clay tablet frets about "the son who spoke hatefully to his mother, the younger brother who defied his older brother, who talked back to the father." On an almost 4,000-year-old clay tablet, Kramer found the story of Enmerkar and the land of Aratta, an expression of the idea that there was once a golden age of peace and security, and that we had since fallen from this blessed state:

Once upon a time, there was no snake, there was no scorpion,
There was no hyena, there was no lion,
There was no wild dog, no wolf,
There was no fear, no terror,
Man had no rival. ...
The whole world, the people in unison,
To Enlil in one tongue gave praise.

In other words, if you happen to think we have uniquely difficult problems today, with a more rapid pace of life, corrupt rulers, and unruly youngsters, don't trust your feelings. Every generation has thought the same. Every generation has interpreted its struggle with the human predicament and the difficulty of relationships as a sign that things have become worse since a supposedly more harmonious time.

Why We Get Nostalgic

One important explanation for this historical nostalgia is that we know we survived these problems, so in retrospect they seem smaller. Otherwise we wouldn't be here. But we can never be certain we will be able to solve the problems we are facing today. That, however, has been the predicament of every generation, and that is why we always look back at a simpler time.

We know the radio didn't ruin the young, but we don't know if the smartphone will. We know we survived smallpox and polio, but we don't know about Ebola or the coronavirus.

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We know the planet didn't blow up during the Cold War, but who can say for sure that it won't happen this time around? And this also leads us to forget the terrible anguish our ancestors suffered when dealing with what were then the worst difficulties that they could imagine.

Another reason is that we often confuse personal nostalgia with the historical sort. When were the good old days? Was it by chance the one incredibly short period in mankind's history when you were alive and, more importantly, young? I can't say anything certain about you, of course, but when I ask people this question, that is the most common answer. And polls bear this out. A British study found that people in their 30s think life was better in the '90s than today. Brits in their 50s prefer the '80s, and those over 60 think life in the '60s was the best. A U.S. poll found that those born in the '30s and '40s thought the '50s was America's best decade, while those born in the '60s and '70s preferred the '80s. (It is interesting that the great nostalgic '70s and '80s television show *Happy Days* was set in a glamorous version of the '50s. A few decades later, we got another influential nostalgic television series, *Stranger Things*, now looking back fondly on the fashion and music of the 1980s, when we were all watching *Happy Days*.)

Isn't that why we have this great wave of nostalgia in the Western world right now? The big and influential baby boomer generation is retiring, and a suspiciously large share of them think the good old days were during their youth. Because when we are young, life for most people is exciting: Something new awaits around every corner. We scheme and dream, but we can also feel pretty safe, because our parents are there to take care of us and pick up our bills. Eventually, we all grow older and learn about the horrors of the world. We take on more responsibility, and we have kids ourselves. Suddenly we have to pay attention to every kind of risk and problem in society. With time, some of our dreams are frustrated, a certain decay in physical capacity sets in, and what once seemed new and exciting is replaced by things the now-young think are new and exciting but seem strange and unsettling to us.

It's easy to assume we have a clearer memory of things that happened to us recently. That is not the case. Researchers have found that we encode more memories during adolescence and early adulthood than during any other period of our lives, and when we think back on our lives, this is the period we most often return to. We might have this "reminiscence bump" because that was a period when we started forming our identity and experienced many firsts—first love, first job, first time we went to a Depeche Mode concert. It is a period of rapid change followed by stability, and so it figures prominently in our recollection of our lives.

Although strong, those memories are notoriously unreliable. When schoolchildren returning from summer holiday are asked to name good and bad things from the break, their lists are almost equally long. When the exercise is repeated a couple of months later, the list of good things grows longer and the bad list gets shorter. By the end of the year, the good things have pushed out the bad from their memories completely. They don't remember their summer anymore; just their idealized image of it. It is difficult for any version of the present to compete with that.

We should beware of politicians, populists, and parents who claim that things were better in the past and that we should try to recreate that former world. Certainly some things were better and we should investigate and learn from that, but trusting our gut feeling is letting ourselves be deceived by our reminiscence bump.

Nostalgia is a necessary human psychological trait, but it's not a governing philosophy.

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Maori Oral Narratives, Pakeha Written Texts

TWO FORMS OF TELLING HISTORY

THIS ESSAY is about two different forms of transmitting history, oral and written.[1] My beginning is Albert Wendt's theme, 'We are what we remember; society is what we remember'.[2] There have been two remembered histories of New Zealand since 1840: that of the colonizers, and that of the colonized. Their visions and goals were often different, creating memories which have been patterned by varying hopes and experiences. The Maori oral histories of these events have been largely suppressed histories, although they live in their own world. In the twentieth century it is the European written histories which have dominated. Mohe Tawhai accurately predicted, while considering whether or not to sign the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, that the sayings of the Maori would 'sink to the bottom like a stone', while the sayings of the Pakeha would 'float light, like the wood of the wau-tree, and always remain to be seen'.[3]

Maori forms of recording history were, and in some regions still are, primarily oral. Oral history is transmitted by narrative, by song (waiata), by proverb (whakatauki), and by genealogy (whakapapa). We who write down our histories in books transmit our chosen perceptions to readers rather than to listeners, but both forms are structured, interpretative, and combative. History is the shaping of the past by those living in the present. All histories derive from a particular time, a particular place, and a particular cultural heritage. The life of any good written history in Western European culture may itself be only ten to 15 years before its subject matter is liable to be reinterpreted by another generation of writers. The life of an oral narrative may be much longer — generations — but all its verifying details, its participants, and even its central mythic cell (its symbolic intent, sometimes expressed through parable) may have been altered. It will continue changing, and be changed, as surely as textual history. In these shifts, as in historical rewriting, oral accounts convey an inevitable subjectivity, as well as a new objectivity, which enables people to see the past, and the present, afresh.

People living in an oral tradition often come from the past into the present when they explain the present. The pivotal place where this is done in Maori society is the marae and its meeting-house. In the korero spoken on the marae and within the walls of the house, history is shaped. There is, then, a continuous dialectic between the past and the present, as the past is reordered and the present reinterpreted. The cycle of traditions about the people, land and events is dynamic, not static. For the Maori, the past is seen as that which lies before one, 'nga ra o mua', the days in front. It is the wisdom and the experience of the ancestors which they are confronting and seeking to interpret. The words of the

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ancestors exist still in memory, wrought into oral tradition, and they themselves can be encountered as they appear to the living in dreams. 'Nga kupu a nga tipuna' or 'nga kupu tuku iho', the words and phrases of the ancestors, take on new meanings in new contexts.

In listening to the voices of the colonized, rather than the observations and reports of those who were the colonizers, a gap in perceptions soon becomes apparent. As Gillian Chaplin and I talked about Rua Kenana and, subsequently, Te Kooti Arikirangi we came to understand this with ever greater awareness.[4] The focus of attention is different; the sympathetic identifications are different; the encrustation of meaning around events is different. What for the Prime Minister in 1908, Sir Joseph Ward, was a minor, tricky political negotiation with a troublesome leader of Tuhoe, was for Rua a 'Ceremony of Union' between himself and the Crown, a ritual which had been formally enacted and had, therefore, fundamental obligations for both parties. The final assessment, or what it all meant, was inevitably different.

It is only relatively recently that Western-trained historians have come to realize that they have been perpetuating colonialist attitudes in their so-called objective histories. At the same time, these histories have served, to a considerable extent, to erase Maori memories and perceptions. As the great-granddaughter of the nineteenth-century prophet Te Kooti said about her ancestor:

> I didn't know anything about him. I used to hear how he was a rebel and all that, and I didn't think I was connected to him. Because we weren't encouraged to talk about Te Kooti and whatever he did, if he was a good man or bad man. We weren't. This was at home. I was in Standard VI [in 1928], and we were asked to write about Te Kooti and, well, I didn't *know. I* didn't know anything about him. I went home and talked about it, and was told to forget it. 'Don't worry about it! It is over! Finished.' I went back and told them [my parents] that my headmaster was threatening to strap me. Because I didn't know anything about Te Kooti. And I asked them — *then.* My mother said, 'Oh well, it is too late now'. And she started telling me who we were, who he was. My grandfather was there and she said, 'That is his son sitting over there.' I must have been about fifteen then.[5]

Her family history was suppressed because of shame. The overriding interpretation taught in Poverty Bay about her great-grandfather was, as she said, that he was an 'arch-rebel'.[6]

But quite other traditions had survived in the oral narratives and the waiata of Te Kooti. They convey quite different perspectives; other ways of seeing. They are, among the Ringatu, who are the followers of Te Kooti, the main means of conveying their history. These oral traditions coexisted alongside the written accounts of the victors. It is they which carry the Ringatu understandings.

In the oral narrative forms what have survived are not so much directly political stories (although these do exist, particularly among men) but family myth-narratives. These are the histories which establish the particular relationship between Te Kooti and the family's own ancestors. Maori history is structured around kin. Whanau (the extended family) and hapu (the functioning tribal unit) are the basic concerns of Maori history. It is the whanau which

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gives identity to the individual, and the tipuna, the ancestors, are the source, in turn, of its mana. History is told in these terms. It is defined by family and by whakapapa. It is concerned with the holding and the transference of mana by successive generations.

To attempt to cross the frontiers of European history and to gather oral narrative histories requires, therefore, an understanding that the narratives will be structured for their own purposes. The people with whom I have talked in recent years are those who have grown up within the Ringatu tradition. This means that they have most commonly been brought up by their grandparents (or other close kin), who had lived with Te Kooti. 'These old people' had perhaps been prisoners with him on Wharekauri, one of the Chatham Islands, between 1866 and 1868, or had ridden to him to learn about the new faith when he was sheltering with Ngati Maniapoto in the King Country between 1872 and 1883. It is these tipuna who link the living individual into the myth-histories which surround Te Kooti.

I can tell my own story about my great-grandmother, because she was a follower of Te Kooti. Well, I come from the Bay of Plenty. That's how I know — my great-grandmother — she was a staunch follower of Te Kooti. When she was a young woman, they transported her with all the other Maoris around Gisborne to Chatham Islands. Whakarau they call them. My great-grandmother was one of the whakaraus [the captives]. I remember her saying to me when I was a girl, oh, they were driven from Opotiki on the buggies to Poverty Bay, all the Ringatus in those days. Oh, it was sad. They were taken to the wharf, and Captain Porter[7] was with the soldiers in those days, the red coats she calls them, 'nga hoia koti wherowhero — koti toto' — eh?[8] And she calls, 'Captain, captain!' 'Hurry up, hurry up! Go on the boat. Go on the boat!' And Te Kooti called out to that fellow, Porter, 'When I come back (in Maori), when I come back I will slay you!' Which he did, when he did come back . . . . They were there for about two years. Then she came back. … She was with him too, for a little while, at Te Kuiti [living in exile]. Then when her first husband died she went back to Torere. She brought us all up; four generations she brought up.

She was a makutu old lady, and I didn't realize it until I grew up and they told me that my great-grandmother had some mana. Some power. She could destroy, you know. You did something wrong against her, she just prayed. Some kind of prayer that she uses, and it reacts on to that person . . . . That mana was given to her by Te Kooti. Te Kooti bestowed it upon her.[9]

This woman's focus here is that her own knowledge, and her right to speak, derives from her great-grandmother. Her account conveys an alternative history, the perspectives of the whakarau. It opens up other worlds of causation.

In a similar manner, her husband recounted the narrative of his grandfather, Te Hira Uetuku, and Te Kooti.

My grandfather, he went there [Te Kuiti], in 1878. There was a lot of confusion with this land, Mangatu. So they said over here, 'Go and see Te Kooti'. So he went to see Te Kooti, and when he got there — Te Kooti had a habit of misleading people to test you at all times to see how good your faith is. Well, he was going there and tell Te Kooti, 'Oh, what's going to happen to this land that belongs — that my great-grandfather has fought for? What's going to happen to it?' In other words, he's going there for his family in preserving and maintaining his rights to the land. So Te Kooti said to him, 'Well,

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now that you're here, I see you people are very tired — here's a bottle of whisky.' And my grandfather — well, his friends all got that bottle of whisky, all had a drink, but my grandfather refused. My grandfather said, 'No. I came for a purpose and my mission is about the land. Mangatu.' Then, I think he put a curse on the ones that already had a drink of that bottle —

Heni: That's my family! My people! They're all dead now!

Ned: Te Kooti said, 'Oh well, I'll give you something — he mauri. He mauri mo te whenua.' Pertaining to some powers unknown to us. That he will preserve your rights to the land. So my grandfather never talk about this thing. But I hear a lot of others — outsiders — talking about it. 'Cos it is believed that it was part of the diamond that Te Kooti used — to go through the dense bush at Te Wera. And those that followed him saw it. It was in the form of a lamb: the diamond. Some say that it is a portion, or part of it, broken off from that, and given to my grandfather to bring back and plant it on Mt Maungahaumi[a]. That is the mauri, to hold and preserve the family in the years to come. It was told to Te Hira's father, old Pera Uetuku Tamanui. Te Kooti said to him, 'You can sell the rest of Mangatu, but don't ever sell the mountain. Hold the mountain. Because that mountain in days to come, well, your great-great-grandchildren will have a footing. It's better that than having no land.' So, Te Hira said to Te Kooti, 'Well, you can see my horse is used up. It's been a long ride from Mangatu to here, to Te Kuiti.' — Te Kuiti, by the way, is named to decipher things — for 'hei kuiti nga tikanga o te iwi Maori' — if any problems between the Maori people, well, Te Kuiti was the place for it. Hei kuiti nga tikanga o te iwi Maori. We have parliament members to decide things for the people, for the running of the country. Te Kuiti was named on that principle for the Maori people — so my grandfather said to him, 'Oh, you can see my horse is used up. He'll never do this trip.' So Te Kooti said to him, 'Well, you've got a mission and it's got to be fulfilled. Take my horse.' I believe my grandfather was the only one, apart from Te Kooti, rode that horse. The white horse. It took him only a day to come from Te Kuiti to Maungahaumia and back again, to fulfil his mission.[10]

This narrative establishes this family's relationship both to the prophet and to their land. It shows the Maori practice whereby history was, and still is among the Ringatu, conceived as an extension of mythology. Many of the narratives about Te Kooti endow him with super-human powers, which are believed to have been given to him by God. In this story Te Kooti tested Te Hira and, when he had proved himself, gave him the mauri, the diamond, to protect the tribal mountain. Te Kooti thus bestowed upon this family's tipuna his protection, and a portion of the diamond which is, in this narrative, identified with the sacrificial Lamb of God. The diamond therefore carries a multitude of meanings. It is not only an image of hidden wealth, or power to be recovered in 'the days to come'. It recreates the quintessential image for the Maori world, Te Ao Marama, the world of light and knowledge, and it specifically asserts through its biblical reference the salvation of the people in the 'days to come'.

The ancestors share in these divinely bestowed powers. The narratives tell of their mana, and also convey a predictive view of history which assures that the people's autonomy will be restored, as the wheel turns, and the past is renewed in the present.

The actual form of the narratives is like a fan. At the apex is the core narrative, which estabishes the whanau's link to the prophet-leader, his teachings, and his particular Words for them. From this apex flows the history of the family, through two or three generations to the living. Some of the family histories are

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similar and, indeed, they may share a 'core' narrative. But the ancestors about whom the history is told are always their own.

Genealogy is the backbone of all Maori history. Critical narratives may therefore be rearranged, in both time and place, around the appropriate ancestors. Maori oral narrative history is obviously concerned with its own leaders. They may not necessarily be those who have been particularly noticed in the European world. There will also be conflicts between narratives, as whakapapa and kin order their priorities and their truths. Maori history is agonistic, and old conflicts will be refought in words, as anyone who listens to whaikorero on the marae will know. It is, therefore, extremely difficult simply to insert an oral tradition into a written text which purports to deal with the same events.

For example, one of the favourite devices in all oral narrative traditions is the riddle. The riddle is a form of structuring, like the parable, which enables new meanings to be found in old stories. A riddle is a test for the listeners as well as for those in the story. In the story the task is usually set by those with access to knowledge which is ultra-human in its source. The answer will only be discovered by those with faith. Here is a riddle told concerning the successful escape of the whakarau from the Chatham Islands in 1868. In this story, the Archangel Michael sets a task for the prisoners:

> And before, Te Kooti referred to this Angel, Michael, coming to rescue them. He said to them, 'Look, here's a stone! I want you people to eat it. If your faith is good, you can do it.' So I believe old Penehau put it in his throat — almost choke — couldn't get it down — too big! So, they had a session with one another. 'How we going to eat that stone?' Just saw old Pene trying to perform, how to swallow it — it won't work! So, all right: 'Let's all put it to God. Tell God to help us.' And when they went to sleep it was given to one of them in a dream. He woke up startled, and he said, 'I've got it! I've got it! I've got it!' And they all woke up and said, 'What? Oh, how to eat that stone.' And he got that stone and pounded it into dust. Got it all into dust and he gave you a bit. That's how we were told.
>
> *Heni:* That's the sharing. That's right. 'Cos my great-grandmother ate that stone.
>
> *Ned:* 'Cause Te Kooti said, 'You people got to swallow that stone.' But they couldn't find an answer. But in a dream, after their prayers, the Lord blessed them. This particular person was given the understanding. Everyone of them had a bit. So they were rescued [from Wharekauri].[11]

In this manner, the understanding of the mystery, the solving of the riddle, gave the prisoners their deliverance.

The systems of explanation which are embedded in the narrative traditions create the mental world which the people inhabit. Their decisions and actions — their 'history' — are all influenced by their systems of belief. Rua Kenana's first wife, Pinepine Te Rika, became a tapu woman. She became tapu from about 1905, the time when she, according to the oral narrative traditions of the Iharaira, the followers of Rua, climbed the sacred mountain of the Tuhoe, Maungapohatu. She later told people of her experiences on the mountain, and this narrative has become a part of the oral tradition of the next generation:

> Ana, ka moe au i te tama a Pinepine ia Te Whatu, ana, ka korero mai te mama ki au ana, i te raua pikinga ki Maungapohatu, te maunga. Penei noa te whanaui o te rori ne, he kohu

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hoki. E toru pea ana okiokinga ka eke raua ki runa i te papatahi i runa. Ka korero mai a Pinepine; i te mea naku ka korero mai ki ahau, kare a korero ki etehi . . . . Ko te mea ke ra hoki, ko te taimana. Koia ke ra hoki te piki a Tai raua ko Mami ki reira. Na ra e korero mai ana a Mami ki au, ana, na Te Atua tonu a Tai i tono kia haere ki reira, kia piki, mana e arahi, ana, ka kite ia i Te Karaiti raua ko tana tuahine i reira, i te maunga ra.

Well, I married the son of Pinepine, Te Whatu, and his mother told me when they climbed Maungapohatu, the mountain. The road was only this wide, and foggy. She must have rested about three times before they reached the flat on the top. Pinepine said she would not relate this to any other person but me . … It was that thing, that diamond, that was the reason. That was the reason Tai [Rua] and Mami [Pinepine] climbed up there. Mami was telling me that it was God indeed who sent Tai to go there, to go to the top. He must take the lead. Then it was s/he saw Christ with his (Christ's) sister there, on that mountain.[12]

From this moment Pinepine was set apart. She could not cook food for herself, because cooked food violates the state of tapu, or the state of being under the influence of the gods. Te Puhi said Pinepine was, for a time, always carried outside the pa for her meals, and her hands were always washed before leaving. She had to be fed with feeding sticks, or from her own ratao (platter of leaves) by Marumaru, her female companion. Pinepine was tapu because she had seen what Rua had seen: the hidden diamond. The diamond is, again, the mauri whenua, the guardian of the land and the people, the Tuhoe, and it is the symbol of their hidden mana. In some narratives it is said to have been placed there by Te Kooti; in others it has always been there. But it was Te Kooti who covered it with his shawl ('horo'), or, alternatively, the tartan rug that is particularly associated with him. As a tapu woman, Pinepine also lived apart from her husband, unlike all Rua's other wives. Equally, she was seen as King Solomon's wife, Pharaoh's daughter, who lived apart in her own house.[13] Pinepine, then, lived in a world which was ordered by a framework of thought that was both Maori and scriptural in its origins, and which can be explained only by reference to the narrative of the vision on the mountain. Pinepine died in 1954.

Te Kooti created this body of thought, and the actions it has successively generated. He was not the only Maori leader to possess and transmit such a world view. All the major prophet leaders of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have created histories which are predictive in the telling, and hermeneutic in their systems of resolution. For the Ringatu, however, it is Te Kooti who is critical and, indeed, he created a faith which has endured. The old Ringatu matakite (seer) and tohunga (reader of signs) Eria Raukura, who came from inland Poverty Bay, explained that it was on Wharekauri, where both he and Te Kooti were imprisoned from 1866 to 1868, that the two traditions were joined in a revelation by the angel Michael to Te Kooti. The Maori lineage he stated as deriving from the spiritual encounter of the ancestors with Io, when they arrived at Aotearoa. These were 'the things of the past', 'nga mea a muri nei', which were joined with 'the first things', 'nga mea tuatahi', or the prophetic sayings from Abraham until Christ. 'Te hononga', Eria called

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it,[14] or the marriage of two predictive views of history, and of two perceptions of the present as a cyclic renewal of the past. All the Ringatu explanations of history derive from this conjunction of thought. They assert an overarching interpretation of events in a testimonial form of telling history: that is, where the predictive words of the prophet-leader, or 'nga kupu whakaari', are fulfilled in other, apparently discrete events. The events give testimony to the words. This predictive form of telling history is found particularly in oral societies, and it infused the Bible. As Walter Ong has commented, the orality of the 'mindset' in the biblical texts is overwhelming.[15]

The oral narratives which surround Te Kooti are concerned with the future, restored, autonomy of the people in their land. They assert that Te Kooti's powers were derived from God, and they demonstrate how he shared his powers, his mana atua, with those who followed him. He gave them taonga — precious objects and precious knowledge. These powers are temporary, and are held only in trust. They can be used for good, or for ill; that is their burden. So 'history' constantly tests the leaders, and the people: and that is what the narratives are about. They assert the separate nature of the authority of the Maori leaders from that of colonizers. The Maori mana preceded the colonizers, and the narratives state that it is upheld by God, through his prophets.

An account given by one of Rua's followers tells how the divinely bestowed power of Te Kooti was transferred to his successor. This mana was held for a while, in trust, with the chiefly leader and tohunga of Waimana, Te Whiu Maraki:

Te Kooti had this thing of God. And he said to this old man, Kuku — Te Whiu — 'I'll give you something to keep in your hand. Keep it for safe.' And Te Whiu says, 'What is that?' 'Oh, the life of the whole of the Waimana people. Something to look after them.' Te Whiu says, 'All right. I'll have it.' So he gave that thing to Te Whiu. And when Rua came, trying to be God, when he came from Maungapohatu out to Waimana, well, the day they left Maungapohatu, he told a man to go and run ahead of him and get Te Whiu to give this thing that Te Kooti gave him. So this man rode down to Waimana, and he went to Te Whiu and asked him for that thing. Te Whiu said, 'No, he won't have it. I'm going to keep it for myself.' So this man rode back and met Rua at Tawhana, that night, and Rua says to him, 'Well, how you got on?' 'Oh, he won't let you have it. That's his own keep.' 'Oh.' So — Rua says to this man, 'Tomorrow morning, you ride out ahead of us in to Waimana and tell him to give you this.' So, next morning he went. The rest of the people came after. When they got to Matahi, they met there. Rua asked him, 'Well, what is it?' 'He won't give it to you. You're not the Son of God.' So Rua says, 'Oh well, I'll go in myself tonight.' And then, that very night, this old man told his daughters and his son, Te Maipi, 'That thing has gone out of my hand. That's the man all right — coming. Rua.' So in the morning we all gather up to Tataiahape and wait for him. 'That's the man. This thing in my hand has gone. He's got it now.' In the morning, this man Rua used to send before him, he came up and was waiting for Rua to tell him what to do that morning. When Rua came, he said, 'It's all right. Let your horse go. I've been there last night. I got it in my hand.' So he had it . . . . That thing — he got it from Te Whiu. It's got a bit of a share for the people. That's my way of thinking.[16]

In the Maori oral histories the tribal or family heroes are unique, yet the stories may be similar. This similarity is evident in the discrete accounts of

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Te Hira Uetuku of Ngariki, the ancient hapu of Maungahaumia, and of Rua, whose mother (from whom he traced his descent) was from Tamakai-moana of Maungapohatu. At the heart of each narrative is the diamond; and at the heart of each is the protection Te Kooti bestows upon the people. But the tipuna are their own, and each narrative is a statement of *their* mana.

You might ask further about Eria Raukura, as I once did of a Tuhoe elder. He replied angrily, 'Eria! What do you want to bring him in for? He's from Waimaha [on the other side of the Urewera ranges]. He'll makutu you!'[17] Eria, and the narratives which placed him as a matakite were local, and I was on the wrong side of the mountains. At Tataiahape in the Waimana valley, where I was, Eria was a threatening force because he had broken from Rua. Eria had been baptized by Te Kooti in 1881 as the leading tohunga to teach the faith, and was, therefore, a major figure in Ringatu history. He had originally endorsed Rua as Te Kooti's successor, and he died only in 1938. But despite being part-Tuhoe, he 'belongs' to the Gisborne side: so do not ask about him in the Bay of Plenty.

Different histories, then different heroes. In the oral form of telling history, the narrative *belongs* to the narrator. This can be seen most clearly when the narrator tells the story as events in which he or she participated, but which occurred before the narrator was born. Paora Tuhaere, the nineteenth-century Ngati Whatua chief, told Percy Smith: 'My home was Muriwhenua, it was my permanent residence because my ancestor lived there. Later I left Muriwhenua because of this murder [which he had described]. Then I tried to revenge myself and Hokianga's people were defeated and I took possession of the old country [Hokianga]. Because of this battle the whole of Hokianga was finally taken by me … and I lived in the country because all the people had been killed.'[18] All these events occurred long before Tuhaere was born.

This form of narration was common in the accounts given orally in the Maori Land Court in the nineteenth century. While I have not encountered people describing and inhabiting a past before they were born, I have encountered the personal presence of the narrator in events in which they were not physically involved. The accidental shooting in 1925 of Henare, Rua's only son by his rangatira wife, Te Akakura Ru, when Henare was about 15 years old, shattered the whole community. It has been described to me by several people. Sometimes, they were the only person who witnessed the accident. The event has become a part of the life of the narrator. This is not merely dramatic emphasis, nor for the sake of telling a good story. It is what has been aridly called the 'kinship I',[19] and it reaches not only into the past but into the future as well: 'Thus it is that I am born in you'. To be a Maori, as the Ngati Rereahu elder Henare Tuwhangai observed in the 1985 documentary programme on 'Te Maori', is to share the world with the tipuna and the whanau. Consequently, history is told in these terms.

The oral histories will cluster around the immediate ancestors of the living whanau. Most of the ancestral stories recorded by Elsdon Best from Tuhoe at the beginning of this century have now passed out of local tradition.[20] The focus of the whanau ancestors has moved down the whakapapa. Thus the old stories drop out, or are reworked around the different ancestors. The whanau

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is effectively the two or three generations back from the present family: a time span that most people can recall. A few of the narratives will, however, pass into the wider 'oral tradition'. They will, in turn, evolve. Thus the story of Rua and Pinepine on Maungapohatu has passed into Tuhoe oral tradition and is known among all Iharaira families. But when Te Puhi narrated it, she still emphasized that she knew the history only because Pinepine, her mother-in-law, had told her. Her identification of her source, Pinepine, was her means of stating the veracity of the narrative. Other versions, also stated as deriving from Pinepine, have already developed significant differences. Whaitiri, the early Tuhoe ancestress and deity of lightning, is present in Heta Rua's version of this narrative,[21] as well as in Te Puhi's. But it is only in Te Puhi's account that Christ is also present with his 'sister' ('tuahine'), Whaitiri, on the mountain top.

That oral narrative histories are not the prerogative of the men and the formal oratorical domain is already evident. In Maori society, women are important purveyors of family history and its values. The inner strength of the whanau derives from the women. As Heni Sunderland of the Rongowhakaata people commented, 'Without a doubt, it is the women who have the strengths. Within the extended family and out onto the marae as a whanau as a whole, you will find it is we, the women, who are the ones who really motivate our men. They wouldn't like me saying that, but I do think that.'[22] The women are also usually the composers of the oriori, the lullabies written for children by which they are taught the history of the whanau and the hapu. It is the women, therefore, who are the first conveyors of history.

For them, the experience of childlessness, or wharengaro — the house destroyed — is to be most feared. A high post-neonatal infant mortality has occurred with a remorseless frequency among Maori families for much of this century. Its occurrence is often attributed to a fault, and it may also be seen as having been predicted for the family. Ancestral history will be searched for an explanation. The solution, it follows, must be sought in faith and ritual. As one woman explained:

> My first one was what you call a premature. Just lived a week. I was riding horses and that, not knowing how it goes. What to expect. The first one is hard . . . . had John, my second one, right on here, right on this corner [of the meeting-house] . . . . He was seven months old when he died — at Maungapohatu. Then the old people had to go around, saying something about it, eh, losing your kids. Quite a few of us, as they said. That's the wharengaro, losing your child. It goes in the family. A wharengaro is a family that doesn't conceive. What child they have, it dies.
>
> So my family all got together. And that's why I got my third one. Old Tuhua, he was the eldest on my mother's side, in that family. He's the eldest of the Pari family — the Te Rika's. There was another family that had lost about, how many? — four, five kids. That's why I said it comes in our Te Rika family. It was all done in the one time, same time. These two families got together at the same time. Got all to agree to one thing. You have got to be all of one mind, not one pulling one way, one pulling the other. Tuhua came down, and they asked him. It was 1944. Each one had to get an offering, a koha, for their own family. He looked through the line of the family. It's always there; it's like a curse. And once you understand, then you get kids.[23]

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In this very personal account (here abridged), the interpretation and the human actions are derived from a larger frame of understanding which is essentially Maori. It rests on the perceived conjunction between the past and the present, and between the ancestors and the living.

The oral, myth-narrative tradition, encrusting meaning around events, has clearly survived to the present day. It has survived most particularly among people who were brought up in the small rural communities, which retained their own cultural and religious identity for much of this century. But it has also survived in other environments. The Maramatanga tradition within the Roman Catholic church, developed in the 1920s and 1930s and revived again in the 1960s, also retains systems of historical explanation which stem from a cosmology where the spirits of the dead, the wairua, are considered to be the media of communication between God and man. These ancestral spirits explain and direct 'history' for the living.[24] The Maramatanga faith is centred in Levin, north-east of Wellington, and Ohakune. Its followers are active in Maori affairs at a national level. They 'are not marginal individuals, alienated from the mainstream of Maori society. Their ready access to all important currents, their central and pivotal positions cannot be ignored.'[25] They are considered important within the Kingitanga, and within the Ratana movement. Their iconography and their religious beliefs form a system whereby they manage to keep the Pakeha domination at bay.

This brings me back to the central problem for a Western historian. First, Maori oral history is not merely another source of information, nor even of perception. The purposes of the oral narrative tradition are to establish meaning for events, and to give a validation for the family's and the group's particular claims to mana and knowledge. Some pivotal family histories may develop as the hapu's structured histories. They will be told, for a purpose, on the marae. An awareness of the structuring of the oral narratives also makes one very aware of the responsibilities engendered in recording oral history.

The primary responsibility must be to those with whom you have talked. It is *their* history. In the areas in which I have worked, individuals and families have allowed me to record some of it, because they share my view that recording is important. Maori history can then be communicated to Maori who no longer have access to it. I write here with an awareness of the positive responses among the Tuhoe and other Maori to a written history, based to a considerable extent on oral accounts, of Rua.[26] Secondly, the transmitting of Maori perceptions allows the colonizers to see the perspectives of the colonized — a necessary step so that the dominant culture changes its attitudes about its possession of 'truth'.

The integrity of the various oral histories has to be retained when they are transmitted in a written form. These accounts are focused quite differently from the linear history, or diachronic order, of the European historical tradition. Anthropologists have mostly tried to maintain the integrity of such world views by a synchronic approach. For the historian this is an inadequate approach, as it is for the anthropologist wrestling with the problems of cultural transformation. The contradictions in what constitutes history — oral and written — cannot be resolved. We cannot translate other histories into our own. We can merely

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juxtapose them.[27] The structures and the events have been bonded, culturally, in time and place. We need to remember, too, that the European forms of writing history can be considered to be just as subjective in their criteria of what is important and what is relevant as the oral forms.

Maori oral narrative histories convey what is seen to be the essence of human experience to the people who are living. As the Samoan historian Malama Maleisea has commented, if there *were* a truth, there would be no histories.[28] Or equally, as the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe put it, in his evocative novel about the colonization of his country, *Things Fall Apart,* 'There is no story that is not true . . . . The world has no end, and what is good among one people is an abomination with others.'[29] He was writing of the coming of the whites to the Igbo of Nigeria.

To incorporate Maori oral traditions into written history, then, is not a task to be undertaken easily. Yet there is currently much demand for 'Maori' history from the community. If it is to be undertaken it must be with the awareness that its concerns are probably different. The primary structuring of the recent Maori oral history is family history. But if family and genealogy, whanau and whakapapa, order Maori history, so notions of causation and consequence — which transform chronicle into explanatory history — are equally cultural. In the Ringatu Maori world, they are derived from a very ancient cosmological framework, one where divine forces intervene in this world. Witi Ihimaera's novel *The Matriarch* evokes this powerful conjunction of myth with history.[30] Such a view is not unique to the Ringatu. The lineage of prophetic tradition and the acceptance of the power of matakite infuses all the major Maori movements, religious and political. The old cosmogonic traditions have been interwoven with the biblical hermeneutic traditions of telling history by a succession of Maori prophet-leaders in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, of whom Te Kooti was only one of the more important. Today, all Maori movements trace their descent from this lineage of the prophets. The ideology which these narratives convey offers solutions to the problems that Maori still face in their own land. The 'telling of history', whether it be oral or written, is not and never has been neutral. It is always the reflection of the priorities of the narrators and their perceptions of their world.

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NOTES

Originally published in the *New Zealand Journal of History*, 21, 1 (1987), pp.16–28.

1 A version of this paper was first given as a talk to the Friends of the Alexander Turnbull Library in October 1985.

2 Opening address, Pacific History Conference, Suva, July 1985.

3 *Great Britain Parliamentary Papers*, 1845, XXXIII (108), p.10.

4 See the introductions to Judith Binney, Gillian Chaplin, Craig Wallace, *Mihaia: The Prophet Rua Kenana and his Community at Maungapohatu*, Wellington and Auckland, 1979, and Judith Binney, Gillian Chaplin, Nga Morehu: *The Survivors, Auckland*, 1986.

5 Conversation with Hei Ariki Algie, Manutuke, 26 November 1983. It will be noticed that this quotation (and others which follow) differ slightly from the versions cited in either *Nga Morehu* or in *Mihaia*. In *Nga Morehu*, in particular, the narrative thrust was maintained in the transcription and editing of several interviews from different occasions; the quotation here is from the original transcript. One of the problems of transmitting oral accounts in written form are the decisions which have to be taken about removing repetitions, false starts, and diversions, which, if all were retained or indicated, would leave the accounts prolix, discursive and punctuated with multiple deletion marks.

6 See for example W. Hugh Ross, *Te Kooti Rikirangi: General and Prophet*, Auckland, 1966, p.1. To an extent this view of Te Kooti is revived in Maurice Shadbolt's novel *Season of the Jew*, London and Auckland, 1986. At the same time, Shadbolt portrays a deeply critical view of many of the colonists and the militia leadership at Poverty Bay, and of the corrupting influence of the pursuit of vengeance by both Pakeha and Maori.

7 There is a confusion in this narrative between Captain Thomas Porter and Captain Reginald Biggs, both of whom were instrumental in having Te Kooti sent into exile. Te Kooti subsequently killed Biggs in reprisal.

8 'the soldiers with the red coats — bloody coats'.

9 Conversation with Heni Brown, Whatatutu, 14 February 1982.

10 Conversation with Ned and Heni Brown, Whatatutu, 14 February 1982.

11 Conversation with Ned and Heni Brown, 14 February 1982.

12 Conversation in Maori with Te Puhi Tatu, Maungapohatu, 22 January 1978. Transcription and translation by Rangi Motu.

13 The scriptural text from which this identity was taken is I Kings 7:8.

14 Paora Delamere, Poutikanga of the Haahi Ringatu, Manuscript Notebook, n.d., private collection, pp.34–35.

15 *Orality and Literacy*, London and New York, 1982, p.75.

16 Conversation with Hillman Rua, Rotorua, 21 May 1978.

17 Conversation with Horopapera Tatu, Tataiahape, 27 January 1978.

18 cit. J. Prytz Johansen, *The Maori and his Religion in its Non-Ritualistic Aspects*, Copenhagen, 1954, p.36.

19 ibid.

20 Jeffrey Sissons, 'Te Mana o Te Waimana. Tuhoe History of the Tauranga Valley', PhD thesis, University of Auckland, 1984, p.165.

21 Told on two occasions, 18 May 1978 and 23 May 1982, and cited in Judith Binney, 'Myth and Explanation in the Ringatu Tradition', *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 93, 4 (1984), pp.359–60.

22 Gisborne, 11 May 1984.

23 Conversation with Miria Rua, Tuapo, 7 May 1984.

24 Karen Sinclair, 'Maramatanga: Ideology and Social Process among the Maori of New Zealand', PhD thesis, Brown University, 1976, p.215.

25 ibid., p.166.

26 *Mihaia*, 1979, 2nd ed., 1987, 1990.

27 Sissons comments intelligently on these dilemmas in his Tuhoe history, pp.169, 418.

28 Pacific Studies Conference, University of Auckland, August 1985.

29 London, 1984, p.99.

30 Auckland, 1986.

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Abandoned Theaters

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INTRODUCTION

Selenidad and Latinidad in the 1990s

To get to the Selena Museum, you must leave the tourist district along Corpus Christi's bay front, traveling west on IH-35, or you can take the side streets, driving through town on Leopard Street, past the pawnshops, past the sign for Braslau's furniture that, when lit, reads "R S AU'S," past A & A Bail Bonds and Vick's Hamburger stand, past the Buccaneer Stadium, where on Friday nights crowds gather for local high school football games, past the racetrack, past the Ranch Motel and La Siesta Motel and Sunset Motel and Cactus Motel, past a billboard advertising Bud Light in Spanish, past the Diamond Eyes and Party Place Cabaret gentlemen's clubs, and just past the Greyhound RV Park on the right side of the street. If you're coming in from out of town, once you've crossed into the city limits, passing the oil refineries dotting the landscape, lit up and glimmering like the Emerald City at night or billowing smoke in the daylight hours, you must exit long before you see the ocean, veering onto Highway 358 from IH-35, quickly exiting and then turning left on Leopard Street, arriving finally at Q Productions, the recording studio owned by Selena's father and former manager and where Selena once recorded her award-winning albums. You almost miss the building, a low, boxy, industrial structure; almost miss the sign to the left of the side door indicating that this is indeed the Selena Museum, launched by her family in response to

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thousands of fans who visited the recording studio following her death (figure 2).

Once inside the rectangular room, after you've paid your one-dollar donation, you are immediately surrounded by the soft sounds of Selena's music piped in on the intercom system and by an eclectic range of memorabilia from Selena's life and career: the second-place spelling bee award Selena won in fifth grade, gold albums, Coca-Cola ad campaign photos, promotional movie posters for *Selena*, glass cases brimming with music awards, a copy of the Texas State Senate Resolution No. 619 honoring Selena. There is a roped-off area in which her red Porsche is parked. There are magazine covers, album covers, photos of Selena with other celebrities, her famed Fabergé egg collection, and letters from fans in Jamaica, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Spain, Cuba, New Zealand, and nearly every country in Central and South America. Selena's famous self-designed costumes are lined up throughout the room, adorning mannequins enclosed in glass cases.[1]

In the center of the room something sparkles. You can't miss it: the geometric cut, the deep color, the flared material aching for a twirl. Here it is in its violet resplendence, the mythic purple sequined pantsuit Selena designed and wore for her final concert in the Houston Astrodome (figure 3). In the year after her death the pantsuit toured with the Smithsonian traveling exhibit America's Smithsonian before returning to Selena's hometown. A miniature replica of the outfit adorned the Selena Barbie doll, sold frequently on eBay and more officially at the touring musical based on her life. Selena's purple-spangled pantsuit has assumed a life not unlike Elvis's flashy white pantsuit, that of iconic signifier, into which impersonators and other admirers aspire to fit.

On the afternoon I visit the Selena Museum a young Latina meanders across the room, singing along to "Como la Flor," pausing in front of one of the glass cases, pointing to a black leather bustier, interrupting her singing with, "Me gusta este, este de cuero [I like this one, this leather one]." Two other Latina visitors gather around the mannequin in the purple pantsuit. One tells the other, "This is my second time [here]. I really like this one a lot." They size up the mannequin. "Selena was little. She was so . . . skinny." The other responds, "Well . . . it's fit for the mannequin. She had big legs, but, you know, they don't make mannequins [like that] . . . . Look, they are kind of *huango* [loose] in the butt." They ask a young Latino who works in the museum, "What size was Selena? A size *five*?

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2. Sign posted outside the Selena Museum. Photo by Deborah Paredez.

3. Selena's Astrodome concert costume being prepared for museum display, Houston. Photo by Jeff Tinsley. Courtesy of the Smithsonian Institute.

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No! I thought she was at least a size seven or nine." The women remain suspicious as they continue to assess the official record of Selena's size.

When I approach the purple pantsuit I too am surprised by how small it looks, convinced as well that the costume has been recut to fit the mannequin. In my memory of her in that purple-spangled outfit undulating across the Astrodome stage, she seemed larger, at least larger than life, her generous rear end filling out the costume in inspiring ways. But as with many memories of Selena, my recollected image is surely a palimpsest. Is it Selena crooning her disco medley that I remember, or is it Jennifer Lopez as Selena discoing across the concert stage in the Warner Bros. biopic that pervades my memory?[2] My accretive memory suggests that the act of remembering Selena is inevitably imprinted by images taken from the phenomenon of Selena commemoration. To evoke Selena is to evoke her absence, to attend to the *huango* fit, the hollowed and hallowed spaces of her remains.

The observations about the huango fit of Selena's purple pantsuit reveal that despite its attempted alterations, Selena's proverbial measurements don't quite conform to the narrow curves of the standard-issue mannequin. . . . The outfit's misfit also signals the frequent misfit of official Selena commemorations that often fail to fill out the contours of Selena as she is remembered by legions of her Latina/o fans. And yet, in spite of the labored efforts to redraw the contours of her figure, the purple pantsuit with its huango inseam persists in casting the shadow of a different outline for Selena. As the Latina museum visitors observe, these huango folds serve as a visible reminder of the critical space created by Selena's absence. The gaping material in many ways acts as a metaphor for the creative processes of memory itself, whose imprecise fit invariably provides a capacious space for the production of new subjects or countermemories.

This book follows the lead of these observant Latina fans, focusing on that symbolic space between the mannequin's silhouette and the sagging or huango folds of the glittering purple material, on that space where memory, performance, and Latina/o identity gather. It is precisely these spaces opened up by the shell or sign of Selena, what I call Selenidad, that interest me. This book explores how a range of Latina/o communities, like the observant museum visitors, critically inhabited and interrogated the memorial terrain of Selenidad in efforts to measure and create new patterns for their own lives at the close of the twentieth century.

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Latin Boom, Latina Tomb

In May 1991 Louise Rosenfield Noun, an art collector and feminist historian from Des Moines, Iowa, decided to auction one of her most treasured paintings from her international collection of women's art. The painting, Frida Kahlo's *Self-Portrait with Loose Hair*, sold at Christie's in New York for $1.65 million, the most ever paid for a Latin American work. Following the record-breaking sale, economic forecasters announced that Latin American art had emerged as a solid investment.[3] Noun donated the proceeds to endow the Iowa Women's Archives at the University of Iowa, the same university that had trained Ana Mendieta, another Latina artist who, like Kahlo, had suffered a tragic and untimely death and was experiencing posthumous fame in art circles across the country. In the months before the auction another of Kahlo's self-portraits graced the sides of New York City buses, advertising the monumental exhibition Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In the decade to follow, Fridamania, as the cultural and commercial iconization of Kahlo was often referred to in popular accounts, exploded across the United States with biographies, exhibitions, operas, plays, documentaries, a Volvo ad, a U.S. postage stamp, countless Frida-emblazoned tchotchkes, and a battle over the coveted role of the anguished artist in the Hollywood biopic.

As Salma Hayek wrestled the role of Frida from Jennifer Lopez and Madonna, other battles ensued in Hollywood over the casting of yet another dead Latina icon, Eva Duarte Perón, in Disney Studio's film adaptation of Andrew Lloyd Weber's 1979 musical, *Evita*. When, after much protest, Madonna secured the role and began promoting the film, fashion industries ranging from vintage boutiques to runway shows capitalized on Evita's famously glamorous Dior-clad and Ferragamo-heeled image. Just a few weeks before the $60 million film's Christmas Day premiere in 1996, Bloomingdale's launched Evita boutiques in their stores, stocked with well-tailored designer suits, shoes, faux furs, and other Evita-inspired accessories. Estée Lauder soon followed with "The Face of Evita," a new line of makeup and perfumes that offered the patrician hues and scents styled after the late Argentine icon.[4]

Evita was not the only dead Latina fashion icon summoned to generate revenue for the garment and cosmetics industries in the mid-1990s. For those consumers and style mavens on a limited budget, JCPenney and Sears began carrying the "Selena" collection, inspired by the slain

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Tejana (Texas Mexican) musical superstar and budding fashion designer, Selena Quintanilla Pérez. Before her tragic death at age twenty-three in March 1995, Selena had achieved international success as a Grammy-winning recording artist and had become known as the designer of her rhinestone-studded stage costumes. The line of "Selena" apparel, which was unveiled in 1997, targeted a junior market that composed a substantial portion of Selena's fan base and included sassy yet affordable items such as skirts with side slits, sheer tops, and flared pants modeled after Selena's image of working-class Latina glamour.[5]

Selena's funeral occurred in the same year that Frida Kahlo's 1942 *Self-Portrait with Monkey and Parrot* fetched $3.2 million at Sotheby's and the U.S.-based publisher Knopf purchased the rights to Argentina's best-selling novel, *Santa Evita*, a fictionalized account of the abduction of Evita's corpse.[6] During Selena's closed-casket wake on 2 April 1995 rumors began spreading that the whole affair was a publicity stunt, that she was not really dead. To dispel the rumors and to appease the nearly fifty thousand mourners who had descended upon Corpus Christi, Texas, to honor the slain superstar, Selena's family agreed to open her coffin, momentarily revealing her corpse during the final hour of the twelve-hour public visitation held at the Bayfront Convention Center. Those who reverently filed past the opened casket caught a glimpse of Selena's embalmed body dressed in the self-designed outfit she had worn to accept her six Tejano Music Awards earlier that month. One popular account of the scene described her "lips and long nails done in blood red" and her "slinky purple gown" (she wore a pantsuit and jacket that revealed little skin); another emphasized the "single long-stem red rose . . . placed in her crossed hands."[7] The event was so noteworthy that the multinational Spanish-language television network Univisión interrupted regular programming with live footage from this unveiling that Sunday afternoon. This episode of exposure eerily foreshadowed countless other episodes in which Selena's body would be made public after her death, as corporate forces, political figures, and Latina/o communities mourned her passing, prompting one journalist to proclaim, "The veneration of Selena is taking on a life of its own."[8]

This generative "(after)life of its own," or what I call Selenidad, proliferated across the United States at the close of the twentieth century. Not unlike Fridamania and Evita worship, Selenidad assumed numerous and wide-ranging forms that included documentaries, magazine tributes,

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monuments, murals, a Selena Barbie doll, websites, biographies, Selena look-alike contests, musicals, drag shows, a ballet, a display of one of her costumes at the Smithsonian, and, as with Frida and Evita, a well-publicized controversy over the casting of a Hollywood biopic in her honor. Jennifer Lopez was ultimately cast in the Warner Bros. film *Selena*, but not before the studio staged well-publicized auditions in Los Angeles, San Antonio, Miami, and Chicago that drew over ten thousand young women and girls from across the country.[9]

It appeared that many Americans were invested—emotionally, politically, and financially—in the posthumous lives of Selena, Evita, and Frida. Why did dead Latina icons figure so prominently in the 1990s? What ideas and struggles did these dead Latina figures embody, enable, or efface? What do we make of this . . . fascination with the tragically fallen Latina body?

Dead Latina bodies were frequently celebrated and sometimes reviled by a range of communities throughout the 1990s to facilitate emerging and often competing articulations of latinidad, or Latina/o identity. That is, the Latina tomb was regularly raided to promote, to contain, and often to capitalize on the cultural, economic, and political Latin Boom in the United States. The decade witnessed what is commonly referred to as a "Latin Explosion" in culture and commerce, when corporate marketing forces understood Latinos as categories of potential capital at the same time that a resurgence of nativist discourse and sweeping immigration reforms saw Latinos as a potential threat to national unity. Latinos themselves engaged in acts of self-fashioning often not accounted for by the state or by corporate tastemakers. Despite their differing investments in latinidad, all of these constituencies frequently evoked the same symbol to further their cause: Selena's death. In short, it was over Selena's dead body that the Latin Boom exploded. As Selena's public viewing evocatively foretells, her dead body was frequently publicized to delimit or to expand prevailing notions of citizenship, cultural identity formation, and collective memory at the close of the twentieth century. More than any other dead Latina icon, Selena's dead body repeatedly galvanized Latina/o efforts to mourn collective tragedies and to envision a brighter future, corporate attempts to corner the Latino market, and political jockeying for and public concerns about the Latino vote. As such, Selenidad provocatively illustrates the simultaneous recognition of and anxieties about Latinos as a growing political, economic, and cultural force in the nation during the 1990s.

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This book examines some of the ways that Selenidad provided blueprints for and often remapped the terrain of latinidad. My understanding of Selenidad as a contested, creative, and critical set of endeavors is indebted to scholarship in recent years that has revealed how acts of cultural memory and collective mourning can generate and transform concepts of national, racial, and gendered identities. This focus on the imaginative nature of memory often foregrounds the role of performance and popular culture in the transmission of national or cultural histories.[10] Understood as an act of creation as well as citation, memory functions much like performance, as Joseph Roach observes, "as both quotation and invention, an improvisation on borrowed themes, with claims on the future as well as the past."[11] That is, both memory and performance defy traditional notions of temporality by simultaneously repeating *and* revising cultural scripts or scenarios. Given their improvisatory and capacious nature, sites of cultural memory such as public commemorations commonly act as contested arenas wherein what Marita Sturken calls "narrative tangle[s]" form among competing claims to a shared past, present, and future.[12] This book takes part in these efforts to explore the inventive powers and political contours of memory and mourning by examining the entangled narratives about latinidad, citizenship, and gendered and sexual identities that cross over Selenidad.

Some critics see only obsessive, often racialized hagiography in Selenidad, while others bemoan it as the prime example of the commodification of Latino culture.[13] To be sure, tracking Selenidad invariably involves following the trails of fan cultures and commodifying structures, but these forces alone cannot account for Selena's robust afterlife. To borrow a phrase from Gilbert Rodman in his work on Elvis's afterlife, I am interested in explaining Selenidad, rather than in explaining it *away* as simply the result of inevitable commodification or pathological Latino melancholia.[14] Selenidad operates in ways akin to what Raymond Williams refers to as a "structure of feeling," or a critical and affective social practice in process, that supports multiple and variant constructions of latinidad.[15] In fact, as the following chapters illustrate, Selenidad reveals important insights about the ways that assumptions about Latino consumption and mourning practices are positioned against normative standards for civic and national citizenship.

It is not uncommon for a singular figure, event, or image to emerge as a flashpoint for the constellation and transformation of cultural or

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national memory (think, for instance, of Stonewall, *Jet* magazine's photographs of Emmet Till, Elvis, or the planes careening into the Twin Towers). These memory circuits are charged by and in turn animate a range of collective memories.[16] Memory circuits provide complex pathways through which currents of past histories often run alongside or intersect with currents that pulse with claims to the present and hopes for the future. Selenidad acts as one such memory circuit. Dead bodies of famous figures often operate as such circuits, or what Roach calls surrogates for the transmission of collective memory or cultural continuity among communities of the living.[17] The tragically fallen, once beautiful, dead female body has its own particular cultural function, as Elisabeth Bronfen notes: "The death of a beautiful woman emerges as the requirement for a preservation of existing cultural norms and values . . . . Over her dead body, cultural norms are reconfigured or secured."[18] Throughout the 1990s dead Latinas, Selena in particular, were frequently pressed into service by a range of communities in efforts to claim or to contest the political, cultural, or economic force of latinidad. What made Selena more readily activated and frequently deployed than other dead Latinas?

Ironically the aspects of Selena that distinguish her from figures such as Frida and Evita are the very ones that seem to make her an unlikely candidate for such widespread iconization.[19] Unlike Frida and Evita, Selena was a U.S.-born Latina who grew up speaking English in a family that had lived in Texas for several generations. Although advertising executives and political parties rarely acknowledge this distinction in their homogenizing formulations of latinidad, U.S. entertainment industries—before Selena—historically ignored U.S.-born Latinas in favor of the exotic appeal of foreign-born Latin stars in the manufacturing of such cultural icons as Dolores del Rio and Carmen Miranda.[20] Selena was also affiliated with an explicitly Latina working-class style; she wasn't deployed to sell Volvos or Dior suits. She shared Evita's humble roots, but unlike the Argentine first lady she continued to promote a working-class aesthetic and allegiance after achieving fame through her fashion and her decision to continue living in the neighborhood where she was raised. This working-class aesthetic was undeniably linked to the contours and complexion of Selena's own body; she was brown, unquestionably curvy, and had black hair that hadn't been lightened—no securely held blond chignon or understated accessories were fastened to tone down her color. (Although Frida shared Selena's dark-haired

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and brown-skinned features, Frida's style was more frequently equated with an exotic, artistic sensibility and with the romanticized notions of revolutionary Mexico than with contemporary U.S. Latina/o culture.) Selena's age also set her apart from the others. All three women faced untimely deaths, but Selena was a particularly young woman who was clearly at the beginning of her career when she died at age twenty-three. Her status as a figure who had just begun to cross into the limelight thus resonated powerfully for Latina/o communities yearning to express a collective promise for their own future.

Selena lived, died, and was quickly canonized during the 1990s, unlike the others, who were unearthed and rediscovered years after their deaths. She was a product of and ultimately helped shape the decade. And while one could argue that all three women performed distinctive public personas, Selena was the only one who was a performer by profession. Moreover, Selena gained popularity in a musical performance form (Tejano music) that was often ignored or, at best, derided by mainstream and even many Latino communities. And yet despite the fact that all of these distinguishing traits—dark, working-class, Tejano music singer—are frequently devalued and even reviled in many communities across the nation, Selena emerged as a widely revered icon among diverse constituencies with a range of sometimes conflicting agendas. It is precisely this conundrum—how and why this unlikely young pop star became a seemingly ubiquitous cultural icon—that interests me. In the following pages I explore how Selenidad animated a range of charged, interconnected circuits, from political attempts to manage the emerging population categorized as Latinos to corporate manufacturing of Latinos as a marketing demographic, from the makings of U.S. Latina/o cultural memory to the inter- and intra-Latina/o conflicts and coalitions that arise along lines of gender, sexuality, race, and region.

The performative context from which Selena emerged and ultimately took part in reimagining is the dynamic tradition of Tejano music, which, unlike most of the Latino musical styles popularized in the recent Latin Music Boom, originated within the borders of the United States. As the ethnomusicologist Manuel Peña notes in his history of Tejano music, Texas Mexicans have distinguished themselves from other Mexican American communities of the Southwest by their "strongly innovative musical spirit."[21] Tejanos were the principal innovators in a range of musical styles, including the *corrido* (border ballads), *conjunto*

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(working-class dance hall music), and *orquesta* (orchestral ensembles patterned after American swing bands). Historically Tejano music has been derided by Mexicans as "too Americanized," by Anglo-Americans and other Latino communities as "too Mexican," and by nearly all as rural, working-class music. In truth Tejano music exemplifies the best of border cultural production by providing a historically resilient and innovative space wherein Tejanos have (re)fashioned an identity that transcends the bipolar categorizations of "Mexican" or "American." Within the themes and rhythms of Tejano music one can trace the legacy of occupations and negotiations over power that have marked south Texas; Mexican *rancheras* and Latin American *cumbias* collide with German polkas and mainstream U.S. country, pop, and hip-hop, often all within the same song. Tejano music thus reveals the deeply creative ways that Texas Mexicans have adapted to and often challenged the pressures that bore upon them as the result of a history of economic and political disenfranchisement in the state.

Selena mastered traditional Tejano musical conventions with a repertoire that included Spanish-language mariachi ballads, English-language pop love songs, and code-switching cumbias.[22] Like other young musicians throughout the 1980s, Selena, who grew up in the working-class neighborhood of Molina in Corpus Christi, transformed Tejano music largely as a result of her urban upbringing and her exposure to rock 'n' roll, African American funk, Caribbean reggae, Colombian cumbia, and Anglo-American pop music.[23] But unlike other young Tejano musicians of her generation, Selena reinvented the male-dominated genre. . . . During her early years of touring as a teenager Selena quickly gained a reputation for the combination of her deep resonant voice, adroit dance moves, charismatic stage presence, and sexually suggestive, self-designed costumes. Her stage persona was unusual for artists in the history of Tejano music. The dominance of male performers and record label owners and the common recurrence of misogynist themes found in the lyrics of Tejano music contributed to the dearth or, at best, devaluation of female participation.[24] Selena's profound economic success, bold costumes, deft choreography, and powerful vocal skills marked a significant intervention within the masculinist space of Tejano music. That is, she represented and ultimately redefined Texas-Mexico border culture, while simultaneously succeeding in crossing over a range of aesthetic, cultural, and national borders.

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Selena also displayed wide-ranging talents and actively participated in the creation of her image in her second career as a clothing designer.[25] It was well known among her fans that she performed in outfits of her own design, characterized by their sexual suggestiveness; she would often combine low-cut, sequin-studded bustiers with midriff-baring, tight-fitting, flared-cut pants. These costumes led many mainstream chroniclers to (mis)label her the "Tex-Mex Madonna," when in fact Selena's style was more reflective of a decidedly working-class Tejana self-fashioning than an uninspired attempt to copy Madonna's style.[26] After years of designing costumes for herself and her band, Selena launched her own clothing line in 1993 and opened a small chain of boutiques, Selena, Etc., in 1994. This act served to bolster her status as a working woman, and more particularly as a young Latina actively striving to assert symbolic and material independence from the patriarchal confines of her family and larger cultural forces as well. Her entrepreneurial efforts in the realm of self-fashioning also clearly set the prototype for the "star as brand" phenomenon that has emerged with artists such as Beyoncé and Jennifer Lopez.

In addition to her status as a sexy young woman, Selena was regarded as a barrio-girl-next-door, long before Jennifer Lopez's incarnation as "Jenny from the block." She was often referred to as *la reina del pueblo* (the queen of the people) or *la gran muchacha del barrio Molina* (the best girl of the barrio), due in large part to the fact that even after achieving fame and fortune she continued to live next door to her parents' home in Molina with her husband, the guitarist Chris Pérez, whom she married in 1992. Her working-class persona did not result simply from the fact that she continued to reside near her family in the barrio, but from her savvy self-fashioning. In interviews she often discussed her love of fast food or her shopping excursions to Payless Shoes, a discount franchise frequented by and often located within working-class communities. She thereby gained a reputation as a genuine, wholesome, barrio girl "who never lost touch with her roots."[27] Selena resonated with audiences not only in terms of a shared class and regional history, but in terms of color: her brown skin and unbleached black hair provided a rare and affirming representation of frequently devalued *morena* (dark) traits in a world where most Latin/a American celebrities conformed to Anglo-American standards of beauty in hair color and body shape. Selena's promotion and self-fashioning as the Tejana-in-touch-with-her-roots

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and the well-worn good girl/tempting siren dialectic that circumscribed her career invariably highlight the demands of authenticity placed on minoritarian communities. . . . Through her constant efforts at self-fashioning she navigated both the roots (the authenticity demands) and the routes (good daughter/dangerous woman) through which her story was regularly channeled.[28]

In some ways, as a working-class musical performer from somewhere down South who exuded a sexual charisma onstage and set up home close to her roots, Selena resembles that other dead American icon, Elvis Presley. Both performers continue to enjoy a vibrant afterlife, underscoring the ways that performers act as repositories of cultural fantasies and mediums through which collective histories, anxieties, and aspirations are expressed and refashioned.[29] Frequent comparisons to Elvis proliferated following Selena's death, with one critic summarily reducing her to "a new, darker-complected Elvis."[30] While this dismissive quip ignores the historical and gendered specificities of Selenidad, it does provoke questions about the racializing work that Selena does. What does it mean to be a "new, darker-complected Elvis"? What do Selena's performances and the memorial performances in her honor *reveal* about racial understandings in the United States that Elvis's performances and his ensuing iconization in particular sought to *conceal*? Because Selena died before she dyed her hair the dark roots of U.S. popular culture show through in Selena commemoration in ways that are often strategically effaced in most Elvis worship.[31] Selena and her subsequent phenomenon opened up a space for the representation of working-class, brown women and made visible traditionally ignored Latina/o histories and the ongoing Latina/o presence within U.S. cultural, political, and economic spheres. Selenidad thus illuminates, and at times actually inaugurated, the connections between cultural memory and the shifting categories of racial and gendered identifications at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

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Notes

Introduction

1 Field notes from visits conducted in January 2001 and December 2005.
2 For more on Jennifer Lopez as Selena, see Negrón-Muntaner, "Jennifer's Butt"; Aparicio, "Jennifer as Selena."
3 This fact is especially impressive given that more than a third of the works up for auction at Christie's failed to meet their minimums. Belejack and Plagens, "Frida on Our Minds"; "Iowa Gets $1.5-million from Sale of Painting," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 29 May 1991, A2.
4 S. Miller, "Selling Evita to the Masses," 92.
5 Ellen Bernstein, "The Selena Look," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, 20 November 1997; Mary Gottschalk, "Selena Lives On in Clothing Line," *Houston Chronicle*, 25 June 1998, Fashion sec., 1; Lisa Lenoir, "A Dash of Spice: Selena Legacy Hits High Note in Clothing Line," *Chicago Sun-Times*, 20 May 1998, 29.
6 Nathan, "Travels with Evita"; Judd Tully, "'Self-portrait' Sets Kahlo Record," *Washington Post*, 18 May 1995, C6.
7 Hewitt, Harmes, and Stewart, "Before Her Time," 49; Armando Villafranca, "Second Tragedy Stuns Corpus Christi; Selena Buried with Red Rose in Her Hands," *Houston Chronicle*, 4 April 1995, A1.
8 Patoski, "The Queen Is Dead," 110.
9 "Hoping for Stardom: 3,000 Selena Look-Alikes Turn Out for Casting Call," *Phoenix Gazette*, 18 March 1996, A2; "Wanted: Actress for Selena Role," *Houston Chronicle*, 8 March 1996, 1; Elena De la Cruz, "En busca de Selena," *La Opinión*, 15 March 1996, 1D; Lydia Martin, "2,000 Try Out to Play Slain Tejano Singer," *Miami Herald*, 18 March 1996, A1.
10 See Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, on the ways memory is "sedimented" in bodily practices; Lipsitz, *Time Passages*, on the role of popular culture in the making of collective memory; Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, on the links between

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performance and memory; Sturken, *Tangled Memories*, on cultural memory and national identity.

11 Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 33.

12 Sturken, *Tangled Memories*, 3, 44.

13 One of the first scholarly treatments of Selena to appear in print was "Santa Selena" written by the Latin/o American scholar Ilan Stavans. Stavans offers a cursory and cavalier analysis of the process of Selena's iconization wherein he reinscribes the border as a racialized site of pathologized fans who uncritically worship Selena as "a patron saint." For astute explorations of Selena and the commercialization of Latino culture, see Coronado, "Selena's Good Buy"; Jim Mendiola, "Selena and Me," *Frontera Magazine*, http://www.fronteramag.com/issue5/Selena/index.htm.

14 Rodman, *Elvis after Elvis*, 19.

15 Raymond Williams defines structure of feeling as "the specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought." Like performance and memory, a structure of feeling is ultimately, as Williams observes, "a social experience which is still *in process.*" *Marxism and Literature*, 132, emphasis in original.

16 Following Foucault, Marita Sturken refers to these charged circuits as "technologies of memory" (*Tangled Memories*, 9, 258). David L. Eng and David Kazanjian understand these symbols of loss as melancholic objects capable of expressing multiple losses at once and thus possessing "a certain palimpsestlike quality" ("Introduction: Mourning Remains," 5). Eng and Kazanjian seek to de-pathologize Freudian notions of melancholia, and instead understand it as "a continuous engagement with loss and its remains [that] generates sites for memory and history, for the rewriting of the past as well as the reimagining of the future" (4). For more on the role of melancholia as a generative identificatory and activist mechanism for queer communities of color, see Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, 57–74.

17 Roach writes, "Celebrity, performing in constitutional office even in death, holds open a space in collective memory while the process of surrogation nominates and eventually crowns successors" (*Cities of the Dead*, 76). Sharon Holland also writes about the "serviceability" of dead bodies in nationalist projects and among marginalized communities within the nation struggling to articulate emergent subjectivities (*Raising the Dead*, 9). Holland writes, "The ability of the emerging nation to speak hinges on its correct use of the 'dead' in the service of its creation. Here the dead are the most intimate 'enemy' of the changing and growing nation. Should they rise and speak for themselves, the state would lose all right to their borrowed and/or stolen language" (28). Her work also explores the ways that "embracing the subjectivity of death allows marginalized peoples to speak about the unspoken—to name the places *within* and *without* their cultural milieu" (4–5).

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18 Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body.*

19 For an analysis of Frida's emergence as an icon in the United States, see Molina Guzmán and Valdivia, "Brain, Brow, Booty." For analyses of Evita's afterlife, see Diaz, "Making the Myth of *Evita Perón*"; Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 133–60.

20 Several Latina/o scholars have addressed the cultural significances of female "Latin" stars such as Dolores del Rio, Lupe Velez, and Carmen Miranda. See Beltrán, "The First 'Latin Invasion'"; López, "Are All Latins from Manhattan?"; Baez, "From Hollywood and Back"; Rodriguez, *Latin Looks* and *Heroes*, *Lovers*, *and Others*; Sandoval-Sanchez, *José Can You See*?, 21–61.

21 Peña, Música *Tejana*, 14.

22 For more on Selena's biography, see Patoski, *Selena*; Vargas, "Bidi Bidi Bom Bom."

23 During the 1980s the term "Tejano" emerged as a distinct and recognized subgenre in the recording industry. Deborah Vargas notes that Tejano music was transformed and embraced by what she refers to as a "unique 'Tejano generation' located somewhere between the post-Chicano civil rights era and the emerging pan-Hispanic identity formation of the mid-1980s" ("*Cruzando Frontejas*," 226).

24 As Deborah Vargas documents, several remarkably talented and resilient female performers managed to achieve recognition and sustain careers within the male-dominated and machismo-saturated Tejano music industry. These Tejana artists included Lydia Mendoza, Ventura Alonzo, Rita Vidaurri, Eva Garza, Chelo Silva, Beatriz Llamas, Rosita Fernandez, Laura Canales, Patsy Torres, Eva Ybarra, Elsa García, and Shelly Lares. Vargas's dissertation, "*Las Tracaleras*," constructs a long-overdue genealogy of these female performers in the history of Tejano music.

25 My analysis of Selena's star text is informed by Richard Dyer's landmark studies of celebrity. See *Stars* (London: British Film Institute, 1979) and *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986).

26 See Willis and Gonzalez, "Reconceptualizing Gender," 9–16.

27 Johnny Canales, quoted in Rick Mitchell, "Selena," *Houston Chronicle*, 21 May 1995, Magazine sec., 6. It is important to note that the narratives that exalted Selena's wholesome family values often elided the fact that she was a Jehovah's Witness. This elision undoubtedly corresponds to the fact that one's status as a Jehovah's Witness does not fit easily within dominant constructions of Latina/o authenticity.

28 This double-edged sexuality discourse is nothing new in the historical representations of women of color. While Selena's biographer, Joe Nick Patoski, interprets Selena's complex persona within the confines of the virgin/whore or good-girl-from-the-barrio/hypersexy-international-superstar dialectic, several scholars have attempted more nuanced

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analyses. Notably, Emma Pérez posits that Selena represented "decolonial desire" by affirming a Chicana feminist sexuality (*The Decolonial Imaginary*, 102). José E. Limón argues that Selena's "good girl narrative" ultimately served to control the "dark possibilities" of her sexualized image (*American Encounters*, 183).

29 Joseph Roach argues, "Performers are routinely pressed into service as effigies, their bodies alternately adored and despised but always offered up on the altar of surrogacy . . . . [An effigy is] a cultural trend in which the body of an actor serves as a medium … in the secular rituals through which a modernized society communicates with its past" (*Cities of the Dead*, 39–40, 78). In a similar fashion, Gilbert Rodman, borrowing from Stuart Hall, describes Elvis as a "point of articulation," or a specific cultural site "that serves as the major conduit by which two or more *other* phenomena come to be articulated to one another" (*Elvis after Elvis*, 27).

30 Stavans, "Santa Selena," 181.

31 For a discussion of the ways that Elvis worship produces whiteness by effacing the African American sources of Elvis's music and style, see Roach, *Cities of the Dead*; Lott, "All the King's Men," 192–227.

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Of Memory and Our Democracy

BY COLIN POWELL, MAY 2, 2004

Every Memorial Day, my sister, Marilyn, and I would put on our Sunday best and accompany our parents to Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx to visit the graves of family members. Like all kids, my sister and I were happy to have the day off from school, and I can't say we were in a solemn frame of mind. But taking part in that annual rite of remembrance gave me my first sense of the importance of honoring those who have gone before.

I grew up and chose a soldier's life. I lost close friends in war. Later, I commanded young men and women who went willingly into harm's way for our country, some never to return. A day doesn't pass that I don't think of them. Paying homage to the fallen holds a deeply personal meaning for me and for anyone who ever wore a uniform.

In 1990, when I was chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I took my Soviet counterpart, Gen. Mikhail Moiseyev, around the United States. I wanted to give him a better understanding of what America is all about. We started in Washington, D.C. I especially wanted to take him to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

But I didn't take him there directly. First, I took him to the Jefferson Memorial. I pointed out a passage from the Declaration of Independence carved into its curved wall. All who have served in our armed forces share its sentiment. "And for the support of this Declaration," Jefferson wrote, "... we mutually pledge our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor." Then I asked the general to look up. Above the statue of Jefferson, in 2-foot-high letters on the base of the monument's dome, is this inscription: "I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man."

Here, I said, you see the foundation of America, a nation where "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights." I told the general that like Washington, Jefferson and all our Founding Fathers, Americans of every generation are ready to fight and die for those unalienable rights.

Then, to show Gen. Moiseyev the kind of sacrifices Americans are willing to make, I took him to the Lincoln Memorial, where Lincoln's words at Gettysburg are engraved. There, Lincoln said we had fought the bloodiest war in our history so our nation "shall have a new birth of freedom" and so "government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth." I wanted Gen. Moiseyev to see how sacred those words are to Americans.

I showed the general the final lines of Lincoln's second inaugural address: "With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the

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right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan..."

I then walked the general part of the way down the Lincoln Memorial's steps to the place from which Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech. I explained that the unfinished work of which Lincoln spoke was still unfinished a century later, so from the very spot on which we stood, King challenged his fellow Americans to make the promise of our Founding Fathers come true for all Americans.

Only now was I ready to take Gen. Moiseyev to the Vietnam memorial. We walked the short distance from the Lincoln Memorial to the Wall. I showed the general how to find someone's name on it. I looked up Maj. Tony Mavroudis. Tony and I had grown up together on the streets of New York. We went to college together. We became infantrymen together. And in 1967, on his second tour of duty in Vietnam, Tony was killed. The memorial book directed us to Panel 28 East, and there we found ANTONIO M MAVROUDIS carved into the black granite. It was an emotional moment for me, and not just for me. Gen. Moiseyev reached out gently and touched the Wall. The infantryman in him understood.

Thankfully, our forces no longer face the prospect of war with the Soviet Union. Today, we are cooperating with Russia's evolving democracy and with other former foes against 21st-century dangers common to us all.

Today's deadly threats come from rogue powers and stateless networks of extremists who have nothing but contempt for the sanctity of human life and for the principles civilized nations hold dear.

I do not know or care what terrorists and tyrants make of our monuments to democracy and the memorials we dedicate to our dead. What's important is what the monuments and memorials say to us. They can teach us much about the ideas that unite us in our diversity, the values that sustain us in times of trial, and the dream that inspires generation after generation of ordinary Americans to perform extraordinary acts of service. In short, our monuments and memorials tell us a great deal about America's commitment to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for all.

The haunting symbolism of the 168 empty chairs at the Oklahoma City National Memorial, the heartbreaking piles of shoes in the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the carefully tended headstones bearing crosses, crescents and Stars of David standing row-on-row in Arlington and our other national cemeteries - all speak to the value we place on human life.

The Vietnam Women's Memorial of the three servicewomen and the wounded GI; the Korean War Veterans Memorial's haggard, windblown patrol trudging up the rugged terrain; and the memorial of the flag-raising on Iwo Jima do not glorify war - they testify to the glory of the human spirit.

The Civil War battlefields and the monument in Boston to Robert Gould Shaw and his 54th Massachusetts Regiment of Negro soldiers who rode together into the jaws of death for the cause of justice tell us of the price past generations have paid so we might live in a more perfect union. They remind us also of the work our generation must do.

This Memorial Day weekend, we will join in celebrating the opening of the National World War II Memorial honoring the great generation of Americans who saved the world from fascist aggression and secured the blessings of liberty for hundreds of millions of people around the world.

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Today, their descendants are fighting the global war against terrorism, serving and sacrificing in Afghanistan and Iraq and at other outposts on the front lines of freedom. The life of each and every one of them is precious to their loved ones and to our nation. And each life given in the name of liberty is a life that has not been lost in vain.

In time, lasting memorials will stand where the Twin Towers once etched New York City's skyline, near the west side of the Pentagon, and in the Pennsylvania field where doomed heroes died on Sept. 11, 2001, using their last moments to save the lives of others and most probably the Capitol or the White House - symbols of our living democracy.

All of us lead busy lives. We have little time to pause and reflect.

But I ask of you: Do not hasten through Memorial Day. Take the time to remember the good souls whose memories are a blessing to you and your family. Take your children to our memorial parks and monuments. Teach them the values that lend meaning to our lives and to the life of our nation. Above all, take the time to honor our fellow Americans who have given their last full measure of devotion to our country and for the freedoms we cherish.

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My Mother's House

Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah

Easy is the descent to the underworld:
the doors of gloomy Dis stand open day and night.
But to retrace your steps and emerge into the open air,
this is work, this is the toil.

—The Aeneid

We Came to Alexandria to see the house at 205 Lowerline. The house where my great-grandmother, my grandmother, my mother and her two sisters all lived together—until one by one they left, called away by either death or work. When they moved, they left behind that old house, full of its furniture and the antiques my aunts still sigh about. The house, which had been in our family so long that the neighbors sometimes called the entire street by my family's last name, was not willed to anyone or rented, it was simply abandoned—given to raccoons and looters, and the local boys who wanted a place to drink warm Boone's Farm wine in peace on a sofa, not caring that its rusty springs sagged on down to the floor. When my grandmother left in 1984, she found a neighborhood man, someone she trusted, to be the caretaker. He was to cut the grass, daub any leaks, and just generally check up on things, but as the years passed his trustworthiness faded along with the distance between him and the slot machines at the Belle of Baton Rouge casino. By the time my grandmother got word of what was to happen to the house, it was too late. The long neglected structure was declared blighted and the City had already decided on a date to tear it down. I was a child when this all happened, but I remember that my grandmother did not leave her room in our house that day, and we did not hear any noise from the TV either.

"But what happened to our things?" I would ask my mother and aunts when they discussed 205 Lowerline, which is what they called it—never home or something more familiar. And depending on whom I directed the question to, I was answered differently: Auntie Rockie would give me a shrug and sigh and sadly shake her head; Auntie Conkie would flash angry eyes and purse her lips; and my mother would always give the most obvious answer of all: "They're gone."

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Mother on Easter, 1955.
Photograph. ©2012 Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah.

• • •

It should be said early on: I am descended from world-class secret keepers. When I first began writing about my family, I made the mistake of sending them some of my work. Hours later, I received a call from one of them:

Are you out of your mind?

Did you read it?

Yes, I read it. What is wrong with you? Black people don't go around telling stories about their family. Maybe it *is* true, maybe you really have spent too much time up there with those memoir writing white girls. I thought you knew better.

So, no black people have ever told stories about their families? Do you realize how crazy *you* sound?

No, the voice at the other end said. It's not about the telling, it's the writing it down.

Because of this secrecy, I cannot tell you certain things, like who my great-grandfather's mother was, or how she came into the many acres of

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land we once owned, acres that quickly sprawled into nothing but headaches until my mother and aunts gave it away to the city to be turned into low-income housing. I do not know why my great-grandmother fled Baker, Louisiana as a young woman and never looked back. My questions and guesses are deemed impolite by my family, they are perceived to be the result of my not knowing any better because I was not born in Louisiana like my mother, or her mother, or her mother before that… and the list goes on. But after a while, all the mothers and their names get mixed up with the names of cattle and crops. Because that is simply what happens in places like Louisiana.

Alexandria's most famous native poet is, by far, Arna Bontemps, who was a key figure in the Harlem Renaissance and also a prolific author, writing at least twenty-four books including a book he wrote in 1945 about black migrants called *They Seek the City*. Bontemps, who left Louisiana at age three, tells in that book a version of a story my mother used to tell us before bed. He wrote: "In the old days during slavery or later, on share farms where freedom of action was denied, the one who planned a getaway would shout, 'Bird in the Air!' When all faces turned heavenward to search for a pair of wings, the Negro would dash for freedom. Before the most deeply concerned realized what was happening, he would be on his way." On his way to where, a child wonders. But the adult knows the answer—to places even he can't imagine.

Like this man dashing to freedom, all of us travel without knowing the outcome of our journeys. I did not intend to fly thousands of miles south just to fall down in the mud of Holly Oak Cemetery and weep hard and long. But in that graveyard that had become a swamp because of weather and neglect, I realized that even though I had searched and sometimes lost a shoe in the thick of it, the mud might be all that is left. Perhaps neither I nor anybody in my family would be able to place flowers and rosaries where they rest and say, "Yes, see this here: this is my family here. These are my people. This is where we came from, and we know this because we can read their headstones, their records, and their logs." We cannot ever know for sure that we have found them. These are the consequences of a history I cannot change. This is what happens when the names of cattle and crops are recorded alongside those of your foremothers. Mud. That was it. Mud, that was us.

• • •

We arrived in Louisiana with high hopes during Lent, a time when the state seems to slumber. We made the plan a few months before. We would leave New York and head to New Orleans, flying over Lake Pontchartrain, a brackish body of water that from above looks like a terrible idea next to a beautiful city. New Orleans is a city whose geography was manifested by

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Old World Europeans, people who didn't care about the Chitimacha or Houma Indians who were there first, who didn't care about mosquitoes or the swampy unknown. Men named Pierre Le Moyne, Sieur d'Iberville and Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, who wore cocked hats, and held rusted guns, and believed that with godspeed and indignation alone, they could bend back water and its will to rise and make such a place their home. And they did. The Louisiana in my own mother cultivated our wills young. She took us fishing. She liked to tell us we could run with the wolves, and when we rode horses or took dance lessons, she would drop us off and tell us to move like the wind. We were girls without fathers—it was something that my mother told us blankly, but to me it sounded like an inheritance.

We would leave New York and head to New Orleans, flying over Lake Pontchartrain, a brackish body of water that from above looks like a terrible idea next to a beautiful city.

When I met my guy, years later, I became very concerned with this bit of history. On bad nights he would hold me and keep me still, so that in my worry I did not capsize us both.

"You don't get it, do you?" he would say, confidently, exhaling smoke from his cigarette. "You don't get that we can have anything we want."

And I would try to convince him that, as much I wanted him to be right, for my love to stay the tide, to push back water and make a home, what if he was wrong? What if this is where I had come from and where I was stuck?

"Then show me, he said, show me the thing that is so scary, and cannot ever be undone."

"Show you?"

"Yes, take me there and show me."

So I pushed pins into points of convergence. Places where our lives had intersected before we even knew the other existed. We never said much about it because we both knew that we were driving far away to see if we were closer than the world tells us is possible. Closer than some of my black relatives who told me, "Engagements are what white girls do." And closer than some of his Jewish relations and friends who are made awkward and uncomfortable by my blackness. These things rattle us.

We decided to go first to Alexandria, and then head a few miles west to Camp Claiborne, where his deceased grandfather had been based when he enlisted to fight in World War II. I keep his FBI files in my desk. He was a veteran of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish Civil War, openly Communist and Jewish—at Camp Claiborne, he was placed in an all-black brigade. He was not bothered to be there, only bothered that "in good old Army fashion we have separate messes and separate cars" and he is heartsick without his wife. He suggests that she come down to Alexandria and take an apartment in town before he is deployed. In his letters to his new

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wife, he writes, "It's a helluva thing to have to say, but we're going to be living in a part of the country where white chauvinism will blow in our faces like bad breath continuously." He was right, but here, they conceived a child, a boy who, one day, will have a boy himself, a boy who will grow up to be the man who accompanies me on this journey. The journey that we take to see if there isn't some way that his grandparents walked by my grandparents on one humid Friday night next to The Bentley Hotel in Alexandria, caught each other's eyes, and smiled—not knowing that in the future, in cities far to the north, in a world made better by their fight, they would become each other's family.

• • •

We landed at Louis Armstrong Airport in the morning, rented a car, and drove into the heat of New Orleans, where a musician friend in the Bywater was generous and let us borrow a cottage in Henderson, a town that squats in the center of the boot, a place he told us wasn't fancy. In fact, the house's previous owners were low-level pot dealers who, after being arrested, lost the house to a sheriff's auction. No, it was nothing glamorous, it was the country, but we would be able to eat well and sleep well, as Henderson was just a few miles from Breaux Bridge, "La Capitale mondiale de l'écrevisse" ("The Crawfish Capital of the World"), and at night the stars would be so bright, so close, God might be able to see us sitting in the front yard.

Our friend? He never told a lie. The house didn't have much in the way of furniture, but it was a musician's crib, so in every room there were records we liked, or good books about music we wanted to read. I knew we were home when, on the soap scummy bathroom sink, I found an autobiography of Sun-Ra. The kitchen held no food, no dishes, only straw baskets full of plastic fruit and a towering, dusty collection of half-filled bourbon bottles. We chose a room in the corner of the house with a small TV on a plastic desk, a plastic folding chair, and most importantly, a window that faced the field. There we would wake up late, watch reruns until noon, and only get up when we got hungry. Most mornings we would drive down the road to The Boudin Shop and order fried chicken and biscuits served by white ladies with gold-teeth, who scared us until they smiled, and got mad that I refused to take the thighs or drumsticks. "You gon' have to wait then. Least ten minutes," they'd say sucking their teeth as if the inconvenience was theirs. Twenty minutes later they would hand us bundles of small, grease-pocked paper bags. And while he—my man, my companion, my love—would fill the car up at the gas station next door, I would stock up on pralines and

Most mornings we would drive down the road to The Boudin Shop and order fried chicken and biscuits served by white ladies with gold teeth, who scared us until they smiled.

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Live Oak. Photograph. ©2012 Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah.

ice-cold Abita root beer and ask for a large plastic bag to carry it all. Prepared for the day, we would pull out into the dust of tractor-trailers and agree that even though when we first saw Henderson we were scared we would get lynched there, now we couldn't imagine a day spent away from it.

In those lazy afternoons in Breaux Bridge, we haunted pawnshops and thrift stores, and looked at wooden Victrolas we could not afford, or mourning wreaths and brooches made of dead women's hair. We forgot about getting to Alexandria and instead, we took long drives down roads framed by fields that looked empty except for houses that seemed to be built on the horizon and the occasional live oak whose huge limbs seemed to hold up the sky. We drove with my foot hanging out one window and his arm hanging out the other. At night if the weather was right we took comforters and beers to the field, and on our backs, lied to each other about which stars were Cepheus The King of Ethiopia, or Aquila The Eagle taking flight. He played the steel-string guitar he found in the living room, and I listened. This is where we promised for the first time to spend our lives together. Strange, the small signs and symbols we choose to mean that things have changed or will change. A white panther races fast across a plain of black above you. Someone tells you he likes the mole on your nose, the way you snore and struggle. He sees a future with you. We had been in Henderson for two days. Maybe I had been stalling on our plan to head to Alexandria, but I knew then that we could go—this was someone I could take home to a place I hadn't seen since I was young, since before my memories knew how to make themselves last.

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The next day we packed up our things and closed up the house.

"What if someone sees that we're gone and breaks into the house to wait for us?"

"Why would they do that when the house is empty half of the time anyway?" he replied coolly.

"But what about the music we heard last night, and those men?"

"They live there."

"I think I left the CDs on the counter."

He closed the trunk and went back in, and when he returned he stood in the door.

"Anything else?" he asked.

"You have the keys?"

He patted his pocket, took out the keys and jiggled them in the air. This time, he put them in his back pocket.

"Are you sure you want to keep them there?" I asked. "If we lose them, we'll be screwed. We don't know anybody out here, all of our stuff would be locked in there, and we would have to drive to back to New Orleans and find Mark."

Unconcerned, he got in the car, adjusted his seat and started the engine.

"Our stuff is in the trunk, and there are locksmiths in Henderson," he said, patting my leg in a way I don't like. "So, are you ready?"

"Yes," I answered.

Then I put on my sunglasses, and the world turned amber brown.

• • •

When my mother and her sisters left Louisiana, they settled in Philadelphia, D.C., and Atlanta; moves and destinations not at all particular to us. Historian Isabel Wilkerson has estimated that between 1910 and 1970, six million Black American migrants flocked to cities new to them. They were not merely desirous of finding their promised land, they trusted that physical distance would afford them a sense of rupture, a shift, a break from their past. It was a move away from memories of slavery and Jim Crow laws. *Jazz*, which I consider to be Toni Morrison's best work, tells, on the surface, the story of Violet and Joe Trace, a migrant couple living in the city whose marriage and lives are undone by a young, fickle girl named Dorcas. As much as *Jazz* is the story of a love affair gone wrong, it also bellows something much greater. There, in its song, is a symphonic ode to urbanity and the wave of bodies called The Great Migration.

The city is where they each learn, like the many others who left the South for the gleam of something brighter, that as big and bold as the city can be, it is also where millions of dreams have been hunted, chased, and just as often, deferred. And the trip that is the inverse of that story, the one I take, is a

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whisper rarely spoken about by people my age: The one back across the Mason-Dixon line, back to the South, back to place that was once home.

Perhaps, because I am now thirty, I've found that I want for my mother and her family in a way that even I don't understand. This hunger for them, a biological tug to return, scares me—a hunger that goes unrequited, since I cannot go back into their arms, their wombs, or their laps. When I was very young, I could sit on my aunts' beds and marvel at their Fashion Fair lipsticks, gold earrings, and eau de parfums. I could finger their lacy things, and with my false maturity, trick them into applying rouge on the apples of my cheeks or telling me things I was too young to hear. That is a nice time in anyone's life, when you are so young that people think you are merely a bit of your mama that has slipped out, a precocious bit of her that listens but doesn't hear or talks but doesn't think. When you are young like this, they are open with you: They change their bras and don't bother to turn their backs; they pass gas and don't excuse themselves; they talk bad about people and never stop to think that you live off this kind of slander. But one day, all of that stops. As you get older, adults begin to care about keeping things from you. They block fast women, trashy boys, and bad movies from your sight. They do this because what you don't know—your ignorance—is what makes you a child and makes them adults. In my family, despite the fact that I am old enough to have children, they prevent me from knowing what their childhoods were like. From each of them, I have heard a different story.

That is a nice time in anyone's life, when you are so young that people think you are merely a bit of your mama that has slipped out, a precocious bit of her that listens but doesn't hear or talks but doesn't think.

One of them—my mother—says it was filthy, so filthy that she has been forced to forget it. She remembers a house full of dogs, and curtains made of paper, and keeping her clothes in boxes instead of chests. But one day, she asks me and my soft-palmed self, "How do you think anybody lived? We weren't rich. Nobody was. If it was bad, I don't remember. If it was beautiful, I forget that, too. All I remember is wanting to leave, and I did."

One aunt recalls more: A fig tree that fruited in August, and in September, sitting in the sun after school, still wearing her school clothes but no shoes, eating syrup-preserved figs on stale Melba toast that exploded in her cheeks as she sat on the front step of the house. She remembers sharing a bed with her own grandmother. The warmth. She remembers seeing the headless ghost of her grandfather, the one she never met. With his sleeves pulled up to his elbows, he sat at a sewing machine, tape measure around his shoulders, sewing a beautiful dress she could not see. And something else—she remembers standing in the street screaming, "Mama, no!" while her mother drove fast into town, where she would drink beer and dance hard. She screamed because she knew, even then, that such behaviors were

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Second from the Right. Photograph. ©2012 Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah.

stones in the path to hell, something she had every reason to believe, because sitting inside watching the scene was her stern schoolteacher grandmother, who had told her so.

And another aunt, many years ago, in Virginia, pulled her car onto the side of road to tell me vagaries that explained much. "Listen," she said. "There were five women living in one house, Rache. Five women with no men for fifty years, and back when people didn't do that. So, sometimes it was very hard. Very, very hard. Grampy supported us all with her teaching. Money was tight, but she always provided. And I wouldn't change it for the world. I remember cutting up and laughing like nobody would believe. But it was five women under a single roof, and during that third week of each month, you knew for sure, it was a house full of women... with all the wild that brings."

I realized then, as I watched the cars zoom by, that in my family's eyes, I was stuck in a perpetual girlhood. There, I would be estranged from the intimacies of their younger years until they decided differently. And in their elliptical telling, there was a pointed message. It was as if they had all agreed that my sister and I, as girls in a family of women, were allowed to share their blood and love, but this part of their lives, their dawn, was for them alone, because for us they had determinedly made something better. The reason this all came to my mind was because, as we turned onto the highway from Henderson, on the way to Alexandria, I called my mother to tell her that we were on our way, and my mother who wants, most of all, to forget about the past, and dissuade me from searching it out, was blunt: "I

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can't believe you all are going all the way up there to 205 Lowerline to really just see a lot?"

• • •

Alexandria is a small town. The road that takes you there is straight. We passed the soybean crops and cattle farms. We listened to Led Zeppelin and Marvin Gaye's "Here, My Dear." And if we spoke, I cannot remember what we said. When we saw the exit for Alexandria, we turned off the highway onto a ramp and then onto Casson Street. And then I saw, for the first time, Alexandria, the city my family left. It looked not like a city, but an expansive bare lot. We made a left onto Third Street, and there we saw what happens to places deserted for brighter dreams. We rode past dusty, empty patches, buildings with blowout windows, and faded shipping containers rusted into the ground. In lieu of people, the rust had taken over. We drove around. We saw a small huddle of sweaty, middle-aged men in [tank tops] in front of a tire store, watching two guys slash at each other and the air with their pocketknives. A shirtless child roared by on a 4x4. He popped a wheelie and jabbed a victorious fist into the air. The engine screamed as he pulled off. In the distance, he went towards what looked like a cookout. Four men dressed in red head-to-toe leaned on a Fuchsia caddy on rims and stared at us as we passed.

"What the f*** happened here?" I said.

"I have no idea," my companion said, slowing the car down so we could take it all in.

When we leave people or places, we often imagine that those left behind stay frozen in the amber of our nostalgia and absence. Arna Bontemps would write of these people: "Old people too tired to move, young ones who enjoyed a favor or two in the South, and others who were just plain scared to leave, stay." In my mind, Alexandria would be the place where I would find those people by sitting at the Five and Dime's linoleum Automat counter and ordering a Shirley Temple. I would try to explain who my family was and where they lived to the ancient waitress in white shoes, until she was struck by a bolt of phosphorescent recognition and remembered them all and what they liked to order when they came in. I imagined I would find neighbors who would invite us in for a soda and awkwardly show us pictures of them all as children. None of this happened. When we found Lowerline, there were no fig trees, or polished Buicks, or girls in penny loafers. It was now a rundown street, crammed with doublewide trailers

"How do you think anybody lived? We weren't rich. Nobody was. If it was bad, I don't remember. If it was beautiful, I forget that, too. All I remember is wanting to leave, and I did."

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Their Car.
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resting on Astroturf mats next to old wooden cottages. 205 Lowerline itself was a grassy place where tough dudes parked cars they hoped to fix up but obviously never got around to. It was remarkable in no way except that it caused everyone in my family a lot of grief. "This is it?" I said to him, my fiancé, as he stood firm beside me, aware that people were eyeing us up and did not seem friendly. One of them, a dark woman in a white pair of Spandex biker shorts and a tight tank top, called out to us, "Who y'all?" I waved, adopting an easy voice I had heard my mother use with people, "How you? Do you know The Arsans?" I said, crossing the street. "Well, I'm Johnnie Marie Arsan's granddaughter, and we are here to see about the place."

• • •

Walter Benjamin once wrote of the Angel of History: "His face is turned towards the past. Where *we* see the appearance of a chain of events, *he* sees one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and

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hurls it before his feet. He would like to pause for a moment so, to awaken the dead and to piece together what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise, it has caught itself up in his wings and is so strong that the Angel can no longer close them. The storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the rubble-heap before him grows sky-high. That which we call progress, is *this* storm."

As I talk to the woman in Spandex, I think about Benjamin's storm and I think about those migrants who, like my own mother, were angels of history, so often viewing that which they left behind as the rubble heap, the catastrophe of the past. What of the people who remained, or could not or would not leave? The woman in Spandex, it turns out, has lived on the street her whole life. "In that house there," she points to a small, single story clapboard. It is old but well taken care of and has cheap, velveteen monarch flags hanging from the roof and life-sized plaster statues of cherubs in the front of the house. The cement is painted green and with the little bit of room left, she has crowded in a white table set. "My little castle," she says unhappily, looking at her front yard. She talks to us in a way that reminds us that conversation with us is a miserable obligation for her. Yeah, she remembers my family. She remembers my grandmother. "She was pretty, a good-looking woman with hair like a Breck's girl, no weaves back then, no suh. Is she still pretty? She is eighty years old now? Yeah well, age will do that do you. She in Virginia? Who is in Virginia? Oh, really? She married? And your mother? A professor? Well, she always did like books. Shoot, none of them played much, not with Mrs. Arsan's eyes on them. Yeah, she was something. Strict as all get out. Well, good to hear they doing well and nice meeting you two, you hear. You do that and tell 'em I asked after 'em. All right, all right. Will do. Same to you all. Drive safe now." We get back into the car, but we can still hear the woman laughing as we pull out. She has turned to talk to her friends.

We looked for two hours. I found the graves of people who were enslaved until their twenties but died free. I touched their names. I placed stones and bundles of buttercups and black-eyed Susan's on their graves. I prayed for them.

"Folks wanna come 'round here with their damn Starbucks coffee mug thinking they better than somebody. That cup don't mean a thing to me. For all I know, you could live in a shelter. Humph. Wanna see about those lots, see it, then. Don't nobody want those lovts, and seems like you didn't either. In twenty years, not a one of them has been back, what's the point of y'all coming now?"

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Waiting Boats. Photograph.
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Yes. What is the point of coming back now? It is a question I once considered as a child when I returned to Ghana, my father's homeland, for a summer-long visit. Once there, my cousins bent to my demands and, with great disinterest, took me to visit Elmina castle. As they laughed and played on the cannons and heckled the well-built fisherman, I took the tour alone, with a cheerful, intelligent guide, who, despite it being his lunch break, explained what had happened in each room, and concluded the tour with me peering out onto the blue water from an impossible, small slit. This, the tour guide informed me between bites of his sandwich, was the "door of no return." This, he told me, was the last time those Africans would see their continent, ever. As I listened to my cousins laughing outside, it wasn't lost on me that to them I was the product of those who walked through the door and they were the product of those who never saw it. They could empathize and intellectualize the passage and understand my belief that we were branches of the same tree, but as they often explained to me, there was much water between our ways. Perhaps it is because of those conversations that I see blackness in America as rooted to Africa but also to rupture. That same "break" gives way to the blues, to be-bop, to jazz, to hip-hop. It is the ability to create solely from the self, but it is also the vulnerability of not having that self preserved or recorded. Much of the history of black folks is intimate, disjointed, and full of questions: how did we get here? Where does this all come from? Mine is no exception.

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Earlier, my aunts made me promise that I would go across to Pineville and try to find my great-grandparents' graves. I told them I would do my best, but had no desire or plans to go through with it. Pineville is not far from where Jerry Lee Lewis was born. It is where my grandfather was born and raised on a farm in the woods, but after being attacked on a bridge by a white man, he left. And now, Pineville is where many of Alexandria's white residents have fled.

With some time to kill, we decided at the last minute to go. We drove out of Alexandria, past its rundown streets and the billboards that warned about the hazards of crystal meth. Pineville is just over a bridge, but it is a world apart. It is manicured and modern with big box stores and suburban tract housing. My aunts gave us very bad directions, and it was very hot out. We pulled into a strip mall and checked the map. The neighborhood was very residential, and very white—I decided that it didn't seem like a black cemetery would be nearby. So we got back on the highway until we

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Ruins.
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saw a flat, green expanse spotted with bright limestone headstones. We exited. In a small hut near the entrance, there was a caretaker. No, he had never heard of that cemetery but this one was not it, we needed to head back. "That street doesn't even exist out here, seems like you had it right the first time." We turned and reversed course until we found the street and drove to its dead end, where, to our left, a thin teenaged boy ran through the grass with a large trash bag. He smiled, we smiled back. We parked the car. The air, heavy and warm, felt like a smothering hand. The graveyard was small and tucked away. Weeds grew high and gnats cluttered the air. We walked through a metal fence with a gate that hung off of its hinges. Even from a distance, we could see that whole plots were sunken in. The older headstones were chipped, cracked, or sometimes half submerged under muddy water. Names were scratched roughly into bricks of cement, in block letters. Dogs, or some other creatures, had done their business with abandon. Once it was a graveyard, but what we saw was a ruin.

I wondered as we stood in the graveyard if my companion could understand this, with all of his books about his grandfather and his family's many pictures from the nineteenth century in Ukraine. If he could understand these toppled headstones, small monuments left to fall, and if he asked would I be able to explain, did I even have the answer? But he didn't ask. He asked if we know what area they are buried in. No, I told him. I was sharp because I was angry about the distance between our stories, and I was ashamed to have to show someone how much we suffered here. He squinted from the glare of the sun. "Then we will look," he said. "You take that side. I'll go here." The thin boy cut across the edge of the graveyard again—his bag was empty. A few feet behind him there was a small mound of trash next to overflowing trash dumpsters. He waved goodbye. Neither of us said anything about that either, because it was quite clear, that, yes, this is where they dump their trash.

We looked for two hours. I found the graves of people who were enslaved until their twenties but died free, living long enough to see the start of the twentieth century. I realized that my grandmother must have known people who had been enslaved, and that those people knew what it meant to be owned by another human being, and later found a way to believe in God, in music, in laughter. I felt the proximity of what I before called history. I touched their names. I placed stones and bundles of buttercups and black-eyed Susans on their graves. I prayed for them. Here was a baby placed beside her mother. A husband next to his wife. Sisters. A son who insisted on being buried in that mud only a few years ago, so he could be with his kin. Some of the headstones had pictures encased in glass on them. In one, a tall man in a black suit stands next to a piano, below him, a quote from the book of Samuel: "Therefore, will I play before the Lord." I said their names aloud. I wiped dirt from their engravings. I apologized for failing. I thanked them for surviving. I realized what was done was done, but here in the now, I had someone beside

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me to help me search the mud. I called my mother while standing in the high grass, alive with chirping, wild with flowers and damp with sweat, and asked her to tell me what was on the headstone of my great-grandmother. It took a second for her to remember but then she told me: *it says her name and then mother of daughter and granddaughters.*

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Alzheimer's Association 2024 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures

About this report

2024 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures is a statistical resource for U.S. data related to Alzheimer's disease, the most common cause of dementia.

Overview

Alzheimer's disease is a type of brain disease, just as coronary artery disease is a type of heart disease. It is caused by damage to nerve cells (neurons) in the brain. The brain's neurons are essential to all human activity, including thinking, talking and walking.

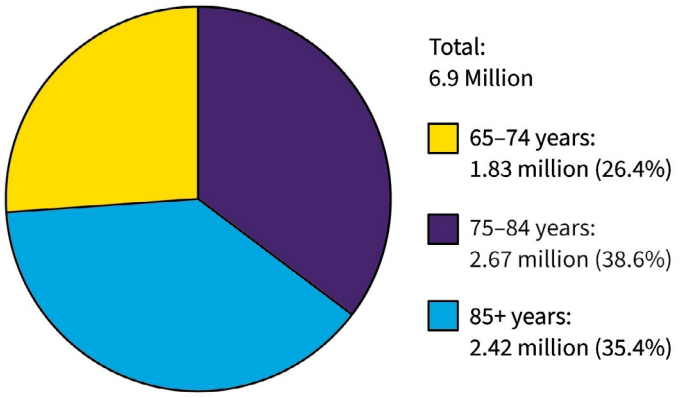
In Alzheimer's disease, the neurons damaged first are those in parts of the brain responsible for memory, language and thinking, which is why the first symptoms tend to be memory, language and thinking problems. Although these symptoms are new to the individual affected, the brain changes that cause them are thought to begin 20 years or more before symptoms start.[1-8] When symptoms become severe enough to interfere with a person's ability to perform everyday tasks, a person is said to have Alzheimer's dementia.

Prevalence

An estimated 6.9 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's dementia.

Millions of Americans are living with Alzheimer's or other dementias. As the size of the U.S. population age 65 and older continues to grow, so too will the number and proportion of Americans with Alzheimer's or other dementias.

Number and Ages of People 65 or Older with Alzheimer's Dementia, 2024*



*Percentages do not total 100 due to rounding.
Created from data from Rajan et el. [241]

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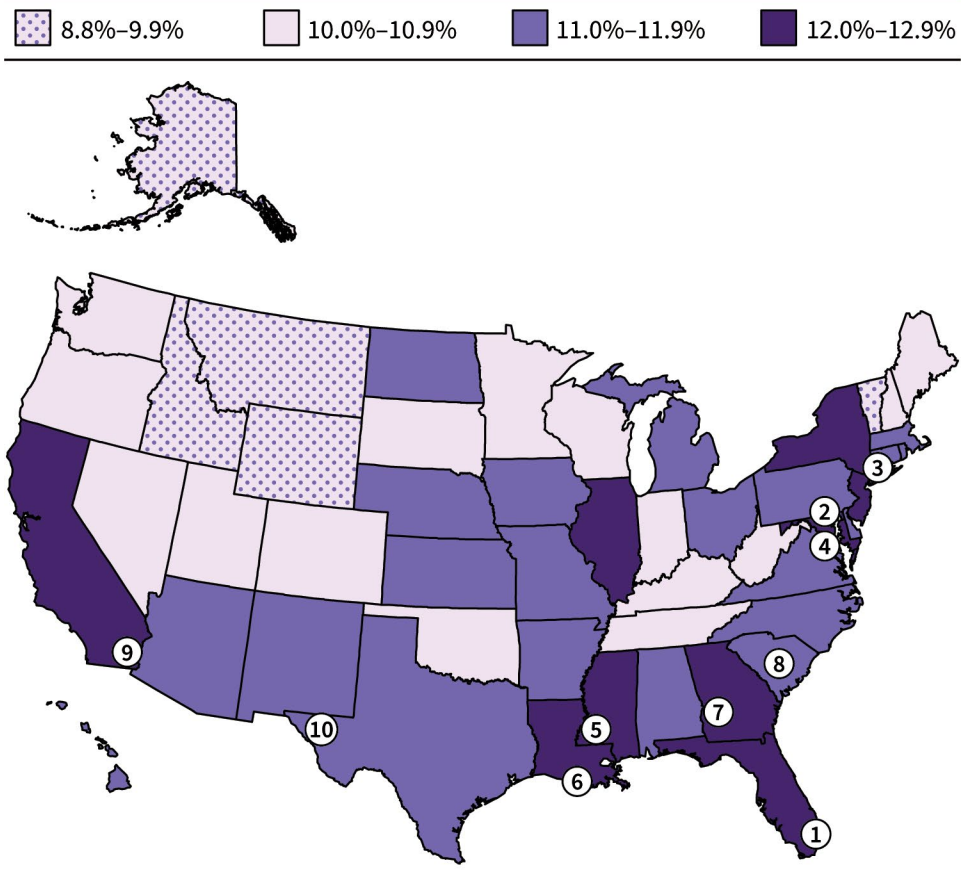
Prevalence of Alzheimer's Disease in the 50 U.S. States, and 10 Counties with the Highest Prevalence, 2020*



1. Miami-Dade County, FL
(16.6%)

2. Baltimore City, MD
(16.6%)

3. Bronx County, NY
(16.6%)

4. Prince George's County, MD
(16.1%)

5. Hinds County, MS
(15.5%)

6. Orleans Parish, LA
(15.4%)

7. Dougherty County, GA
(15.3%)

8. Orangeburg County, SC
(15.2%)

9. Imperial County, CA
(15.0%)

10. El Paso County, TX
(15.0%)

*Only counties with 10,000 or more residents age 65 or older were included in the ranking.

Created from data from Dhana et al. [283]

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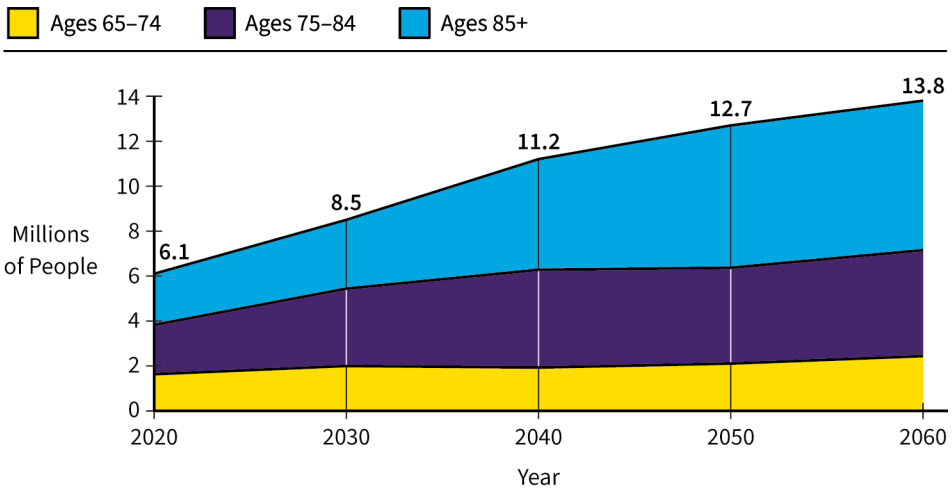
Projected Number of People Age 65 and Older (Total and by Age) in the U.S. Population with Alzheimer's Dementia, 2020 to 2060



Created from data from Rajan et al. [241]

Caregivers

More than 11 million Americans provide unpaid care for a family member or friend with dementia, a contribution to the nation valued at nearly $350 billion.

Caregiving refers to attending to another person's health needs and well-being.

Dementia Caregiving Tasks
Helping with instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs), such as household chores, shopping, preparing meals, providing transportation, arranging for doctor's appointments, managing finances and legal affairs, and answering the telephone.
Helping the person take medications correctly, either via reminders or direct administration of medications.
Helping the person adhere to treatment recommendations for dementia or other medical conditions.
Assisting with personal activities of daily living (ADLs), such as bathing, dressing, grooming and feeding and helping the person walk, transfer from bed to chair, use the toilet and manage incontinence.
Managing behavioral symptoms of the disease such as aggressive behavior, wandering, depressive mood, agitation, anxiety, repetitive activity and nighttime disturbances.
Finding and using support services such as support groups and adult day service programs.
Making arrangements for paid in-home, nursing home or assisted living care.
Hiring and supervising others who provide care.
Assuming additional responsibilities that are not necessarily specific tasks, such as: • Providing overall management of getting through the day. • Addressing family issues related to caring for a relative with Alzheimer's disease, including communication with other family members about care plans, decision-making and arrangements for respite for the main caregiver. • Managing other health conditions (i.e., "comorbidities"), such as arthritis, diabetes or cancer. • Providing emotional support and a sense of security.

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Who Are the Caregivers?

Sex/gender	• Approximately two-thirds of dementia caregivers are women.[A10, 440, 441]
Race/ethnicity	• Two-thirds of caregivers are White,[A10, 441, 442] 10% are Black, 8% are Hispanic, and 5% are Asian American.[A10] The remaining 10% represent a variety of other racial/ethnic groups.
Living status	• Most caregivers (66%) live with the person with dementia in the community.[434] • Over 60% of caregivers are married, living with a partner or in a long-term relationship.[A10, 441] • Approximately one-quarter of dementia caregivers are "sandwich generation" caregivers – meaning that they care not only for an aging parent but also for at least one child.[A10, 442, 443]
Caring for parents	• Over half of caregivers are providing assistance to a parent or in-law with dementia.[442] • Among primary caregivers (individuals who indicate having the most responsibility for helping their relatives) of people with dementia, over half take care of their parents.[444–446]
Income	• Forty-one percent of caregivers have a household income of $50,000 or less.[A10]
Education	• Approximately 40% of dementia caregivers have a college degree or more of education.[A10, 441, 442]
Age	• About 30% of caregivers are age 65 or older.[A10] • Twenty-three percent of caregivers ages 18 to 49 help someone with dementia, which is an increase of 7% between 2015 and 2021.[447]
Caring for spouse	• Approximately 10% of caregivers provide help to a spouse with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia.[442]

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Number of Caregivers of People with Alzheimer's or Other Dementias, Hours of Unpaid Care and Economic Value of Unpaid Care by State, 2023*

State	Number of Caregivers (in thousands)	Hours of Unpaid Care (in millions)	Value of Unpaid Care (in millions of dollars)	State	Number of Caregivers (in thousands)	Hours of Unpaid Care (in millions)	Value of Unpaid Care (in millions of dollars)
Alabama	217	387	$5,310	Montana	17	25	$478
Alaska	25	39	796	Nebraska	40	62	1,188
Arizona	292	483	10,228	Nevada	84	142	2,681
Arkansas	155	270	4,448	New Hampshire	48	77	1,529
California	1,373	1,864	44,272	New Jersey	272	494	10,882
Colorado	177	307	7,249	New Mexico	67	118	2,142
Connecticut	128	201	4,331	New York	543	879	18,996
Delaware	31	46	909	North Carolina	373	723	10,939
District of Columbia	14	15	343	North Dakota	19	25	465
Florida	840	1,321	24,437	Ohio	414	624	11,427
Georgia	374	755	11,417	Oklahoma	108	189	3,099
Hawaii	60	91	1,907	Oregon	170	229	5,285
Idaho	66	105	1,875	Pennsylvania	465	822	13,668
Illinois	311	480	9,840	Rhode Island	36	51	1,132
Indiana	216	322	5,186	South Carolina	219	361	5,550
Iowa	98	125	2,284	South Dakota	27	34	716
Kansas	89	125	1,989	Tennessee	369	499	7,804
Kentucky	157	302	4,869	Texas	1,016	1,532	23,937
Louisiana	168	256	3,428	Utah	112	132	2,465
Maine	51	87	1,911	Vermont	19	28	615
Maryland	247	405	8,144	Virginia	342	662	12,572
Massachusetts	213	246	5,668	Washington	247	378	9,499
Michigan	380	872	17,044	West Virginia	65	115	1,585
Minnesota	164	225	5,276	Wisconsin	205	297	5,528
Mississippi	93	175	2,380	Wyoming	16	21	385
Missouri	223	350	6,478	**U.S. Total**	**11,457**	**18,376**	**$346,585**

*State totals do not add to the U.S. totals due to rounding.

Created from data from the 2016, 2020, 2021, and 2022 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey, U.S. Census Bureau, National Alliance for Caregiving, AARP, U.S. Department of Labor and Genworth.[A7,A8,A9]

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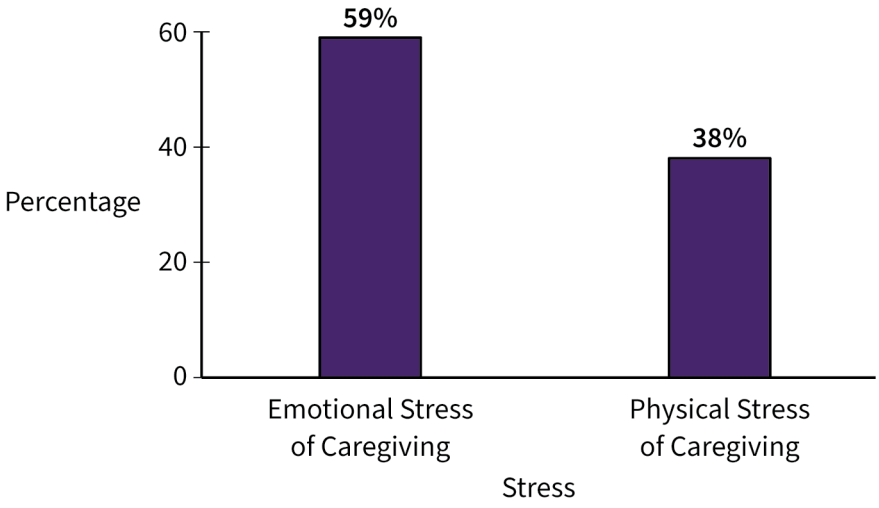
Percentage of Dementia Caregivers Who Report High to Very High Stress Due to Caregiving



Created from data from the Alzheimer's association. [A10]

Appendices

End Notes

A7. Number of family and other unpaid caregivers of people with Alzheimer's or other dementias: To calculate this number, the Alzheimer's Association started with data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey. Since 2016, all states and the District of Columbia utilized the BRFSS caregiver module. This module identified respondents age 18 and over who had provided any regular care or assistance during the past month to a family member or friend who had a health problem, long-term illness or disability. The module asks a series of follow-up questions, including asking the caregiver to identify what the main health problem, long-term illness, or disability that the person they care for has. One of the reported condition categories is "Alzheimer's disease, dementia, or other cognitive impairment." In the BRFSS surveys conducted in 2019 and after, an additional follow-up question was included, asking if the caregiving recipient also had dementia in addition to their main condition. Prior to 2019, the survey did not include caregivers of recipients for whom dementia was not their main condition, so these numbers were imputed using data collected in 2019 by the National Alliance for Caregiving (NAC)/AARP survey. The NAC/ AARP survey asked respondents age 18 and over whether they were providing unpaid care for a relative or friend age 18 or older or had provided such care during the past 12 months. Respondents who answered affirmatively were then asked about the health problems of the person for whom they provided care: 11% of respondents reported dementia as the main condition of their care recipient, while 26% of all respondents reported the presence of dementia. Using this ratio in combination with BRFSS data, the Alzheimer's Association was able to determine the percentage of adults in all states and the District of Columbia who are caregivers for individuals living with Alzheimer's or another dementia. These percentages were applied to the estimated number of people age 18 and older in each state in July 2023, using U.S. Census Bureau data available at: https://www.census. gov/programs-surveys/popest/data/tables.html. This resulted in a total of 11.457 million Alzheimer's and dementia caregivers across all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

A8. Number of hours of unpaid care: The BRFSS survey asks caregivers to identify, within five time frames, the number of hours they provide care in an average week. Using the method developed by Rabarison and colleagues,[441] the Alzheimer's Association assumed the midpoint of each time frame was the average number of hours for each caregiver within that time frame and then calculated the overall average number of hours of weekly care provided by dementia caregivers in each state. This number

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was then converted to a yearly average and multiplied by the number of caregivers in each state[A7] to determine the total number of hours of care provided. When added together, across all 50 states and the District of Columbia, the total number of hours provided by Alzheimer's and dementia caregivers is 18.376 billion hours.

A9. Value of unpaid caregiving: For each state, the hourly value of care was determined as the average of the state minimum hourly wage[1010] and the most recently available state median hourly cost of a home health aide. (For Nevada, the minimum wage used was the average of the minimum wage for those who are not provided health insurance and the minimum wage for those who are provided health insurance.)[908] The average for each state was then multiplied by the total number of hours of unpaid care in that state[A8] to derive the total value of unpaid care. Adding the totals from all states and the District of Columbia resulted in an economic value of $346.585 billion for dementia caregiving in the United States in 2023.

A10. The 2014 Alzheimer's Association Women and Alzheimer's Poll: This poll questioned a nationally representative sample of 3,102 American adults about their attitudes, knowledge and experiences related to Alzheimer's and dementia from Jan. 9, 2014, to Jan. 29, 2014. An additional 512 respondents who provided unpaid help to a relative or friend with Alzheimer's or a related dementia were asked questions about their care provision. Random selections of telephone numbers from landline and cell phone exchanges throughout the United States were conducted. One individual per household was selected from the landline sample, and cell phone respondents were selected if they were 18 years old or older. Interviews were administered in English and Spanish. The poll "oversampled" Hispanics/Latinos, selected from U.S. Census tracts with higher than an 8% concentration of this group. A list sample of Asian Americans was also utilized to oversample this group. A general population weight was used to adjust for number of adults in the household and telephone usage; the second stage of this weight balanced the sample to estimated U.S. population characteristics. A weight for the caregiver sample accounted for the increased likelihood of female and White respondents in the caregiver sample. Sampling weights were also created to account for the use of two supplemental list samples. The resulting interviews comprise a probability-based, nationally representative sample of U.S. adults. A caregiver was defined as an adult over age 18 who, in the past 12 months, provided unpaid care to a relative or friend age 50 or older with Alzheimer's or another dementia. Questionnaire design and interviewing were conducted by Abt SRBI of New York.

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