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*And the Mirror Cracked: Feminist Cinema and Film Theory* (1998)

# Technologies of Memory in the Arts

Edited by

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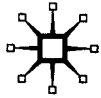
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# Technologies of Memory in the Arts: An Introduction

*Liedeke Plate and Anneke Smelik*

The tyranny of memory will have endured for only a moment – but it was our moment.

(Nora, 1996, p. 637)

'Remember me,' the ghost famously says to Hamlet in Shakespeare's tragedy, and like so many contemporary Hamlets, we obey the spectral past's call to remembrance. The seemingly simple imperative to remember, however, obscures the fact that remembering can be a tricky business. Sometimes we remember in order to honour the past, even as we remember selectively and distort the past. At other times, we disremember, failing to remember what seems of little importance, or forgetting altogether. We may remember because we refuse to forget. Or we may forget what we wish to remember. By remembering, we form an idea of our self and shape a sense of our identity; thus, we end up embodying the memory that inhabits us. Yet, memory is a dynamic phenomenon for any individual, but also for a culture as a whole. Memory is affected by politics, ideology, technology, or art and popular culture. By changing over time, memory may unsettle received ideas of the past, and consequently also of the present and even the future.

In *Technologies of Memory in the Arts*, we focus on *cultural* memory, that is, on the cultural dimension of memory, taken as both the *what* and the *how* that a culture remembers. Cultural memory can thus be defined as the things and the ways in which a culture remembers. Located at the intersection between individual and collective memory and connecting, as it were, self and society, it includes the institutionalised discourses about memory and practices of remembrance. Cultural memory has a material as well as an immaterial dimension. It is not cast and settled forever in a certain form but, on the contrary, continually subject to

negotiation and renegotiation, at the crossing point between the personal and the collective, and between the past and the future. Because our concept of cultural memory points to a memory that is emergent and perpetually as if 'in the making', art, media and popular culture evidently play a pivotal role in it. As the essays in this book demonstrate, forms of artistic or popular recollection work to inscribe as well as to give meaning to and thus to affect the past.

In fact, how we remember the past affects not only the present but also the future it helps to bring into being. Whether we recall it deliberately or involuntarily, the past conjured up serves the interests of the present. Remembering happens at the level of the individual recalling the personal past or at the level of the nation recollecting its collective history. This recalling and recollecting is always memory for something – a remembering in the interests of a particular group of people, a particular ideology, or a particular notion of the individual or collective self. Memories are not only shaped by the social context in which they are produced, but also by the material and technological means available to produce and reproduce, store, archive and retrieve them.

The book *Technologies of Memory in the Arts* focuses on art and artistic practices as technologies of cultural memory: paintings, souvenirs, photographs, science fiction films, memorials, novels, documentaries, comic strips and toys. Exploring the varied ways in which art and popular culture process and construct the past in the present, this volume examines how those artistic and popular practices have a particular stake in the complex procedures of remembering and forgetting, of recollecting and disremembering, of amnesia and anamnesis that make up cultural memory.

As such, *Technologies of Memory in the Arts* engages with issues that are crucial for our times. Exploring technologies of memory from a wide range of perspectives by authors from the Americas and Europe, including Eastern Europe, the book at once addresses the globalising tendencies of cultural memory today and provides a powerful corrective to it. We do so by contextualising historically and situating geographically the various media, technologies, and artistic and performative practices that we explore in this volume. In addition, students of cultural memory on both sides of the Atlantic and scholars engaged in cultural memory studies worldwide will find the book's focus on the materiality of the medium of memory illuminating. Indeed, the combination of an analysis of art and technology offers particular insight into the workings of cultural memory in the western hemisphere. We thus hope to provide a unique perspective on cultural memory as a shared yet contested

practice that stands at the heart of current cultural identity debates, national (re)formations, and the construction of Europe as a cultural as well as a political and economic project.

### Technologies of memory

In *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (1925), French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs explores the social construction of memory, arguing that individual memory functions within a social context and is, therefore, framed by it. There is, in other words, no other memory but social memory; all individual and personal memories take place within society and are shaped by their social context. Following Halbwachs, Jan Assmann (1992) postulates two uses of the past: first, the *collective* memory of the recent past that finds objectification in all kinds of sign systems, such as ritual, dance, myth, clothing, tattoos, roads, painting and landscapes. Second, the *cultural* memory of fixed points in history that is focused on myth rather than on facts or, more precisely, that changes historical fact into myth. In Assmann's definition, cultural memory may contain an aspect of the sacred, as for example in ceremonies or festive events. Also, collective memory and cultural memory have normative and formative powers, since they serve to actively construct the identity of a social group or of an individual. Aleida Assmann (2004) further refines the terminology. Identifying 'four formats of memory', she distinguishes individual, social, political and cultural memory. In her analysis, political memory differs from the other formats of memory in being more homogeneous and monolithic, less volatile and transient, and 'emplotted in a narrative that is emotionally charged and conveys a clear and invigorating message' (p. 26). In this book, we take the position that personal and social memory are already political, traversed and informed by ideology and politics, and that 'cultural memory is always about the distribution of and contested claims to power' (Hirsch and Smith, 2002, p. 6).

In fact, just as memories are formed and informed by their social, generational and cultural context, so are they formed by their medial and technological frameworks (Rigney, 2005). Here we want to refer to the notion of technology that Foucault introduces in his first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, in which he analyses 'the presence of a veritable "technology" of sex' in bourgeois society (1998 [1976], p. 90). By 'technology of sex', Foucault means that modern sexuality is not regulated by law, but by discourses of power. Thus, he understands sexuality

as the effect or product of a 'complex political technology' (p. 127), for example through institutionalised discourses and cultural practices.

In the same way, we can understand memory as an effect of a variety of institutionalized discourses and cultural practices. That is what Marita Sturken suggests in *Tangled Memories* (1997), when she launches the term 'technologies of memory': objects, images, and representations 'are technologies of memory ... through which memories are shared, produced, and given meaning' (p. 9). Sturken explains that we should not obliterate the process that is involved in creating memories. Rather than repeat and confirm the self-evident nature of memory, she argues that the illusory transparency of individual memory is in fact the outcome of complex technologies that produce cultural memory, through objects such as monuments, texts, icons and images. Her focus of analysis is therefore on the material objects that convey cultural memory or memorial practices. Following Foucault, she argues that those technologies of memory are implicated in power dynamics, involving people in an active process in relation to institutionalized discourses and cultural practices (1997, p. 10).

The aim of our book is to analyse memory as a technology, in order to grasp the historical production of cultural memory in its many forms and expressions. *Technologies of Memory in the Arts* therefore focuses on the varied technologies of memory as they find expression in art and popular culture, addressing a wide array of artistic and cultural practices. The technologies for remembering, the social and cultural institutions, and the media to which we have recourse for storing, recording and otherwise keeping our memories all equally affect how we remember no less than what is remembered. Thus, the rise of national museums in the nineteenth century served to construct and preserve the nation's cultural memory through rituals of canonization (Duncan, 1995), while more recently, the advent of home videos has transformed the way in which people shape their personal memories (van Dijck, 2007). In that sense, we take the position that memory is always already mediated, following debates by Terdiman (1993), Huyssen (1995) and Radstone and Hodgkin (2006).

The authors in this book address the cultural dimension of memory. At the cultural level, art and artistic practices most explicitly engage memory as representation. Memory is always re-representation, making experiences, as it were, present again in the form of images, sensations or affects. At the level of cultural memory, therefore, we are inevitably dealing with representations, performances and re-enactments of memory. Foregrounding the work of memory, such as the processes of

remembering and of forgetting and of selective amnesia, artworks and artistic performances form a particularly interesting site for the study of cultural memory as a social practice of self-representation and self-understanding.

As a technology of memory that links the present to the past and to the future, art has strong ethical and political aspects. This is particularly evident in the case of memory of traumatic experiences – architectural design memorializing 9/11 and the Oklahoma City bombing come to mind as recent American examples, as Marita Sturken and Wouter Weijers discuss in Chapters 1 and 2 respectively. Documentaries of post-socialist Slovenia (see Maruša Pušnik, Chapter 11) or reproductions of photographs of Hitler (in Frances Guerin, Chapter 9) equally and forcefully demonstrate the political and ideological implications of art as a technology of memory. *Technologies of Memory in the Arts* therefore addresses the mediation of memory not only as a technological issue, but also as a political one. For instance, Julia Noordegraaf (Chapter 10) looks at the recycling of found colonial footage in contemporary art as a political gesture in the context of a revision of colonial history, and Marta Cabrera (Chapter 12) explores some of the rare artworks that commemorate the violence of the civil war in Colombia. Ultimately, the book is about cultural memory as continuous movement, unsettling and unsettled, producing new memories, cultural representations and social effects.

Art and popular culture are governed by specific rules and conventions of shared social practices. As such, they are engaged in non-linear processes of remembering and forgetting, characterized by repetition, rearrangement, revision and rejection. This can be seen in the literary practice of rewriting canonical novels, for example *Jane Eyre*, as is explored by Nagihan Haliloglu (Chapter 5), or the retelling of Robinson Crusoe as a fallacious myth of progress, as discussed by Liedeke Plate (Chapter 6). It can also be found in the artistic practice of recycling graphic styles in comic strips, as Ann Miller shows in her essay (Chapter 4) on the resurrection of the comic strip with the heroes Blake and Mortimer. Wouter Weijers argues that the complex practice of cultural memory-in-the-making is reflected in the recycling of Minimalism to commemorate the dead in Germany or at Ground Zero, while Marta Zarzycka (Chapter 8) explores how female artists such as Frida Kahlo and Alina Szapocznikow use art to process physical pain and trauma. Throughout these cases, new memories are constantly constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed by narrative strategies, visual and aural styles, intertextual references and intermedial relations, re-enactments

and ritual performances. Artistic representations re-present the past, that is, make it present again. As Mieke Bal puts it, 'cultural memorization [is] an activity occurring in the present, in which the past is continuously modified and redescribed even as it continues to shape the future' (1999, p. vii). In doing so, art inevitably selects to include certain aspects while excluding others. Cultural codes and conventions, no less than material support and technological means and tools, equally determine what can be re-collected and re-presented. As new technologies make new memories possible, they also demand that older representations be re-visited and re-presented again, thus engaging art and popular culture in a dynamic process of re-vision and re-production.

Not surprisingly, the contemporary fascination of art with history and memory is accompanied by developments in media technology that have simultaneously a petrifying and a virtualizing effect, as Sobchack (1996) and Radstone (2000) have observed. The fossilizing effect of the media lies in the fact that both individual and cultural memory are more and more mediated by technology. This means that memories are not only collected and saved by media, but are also reproduced and represented by them (Huysen, 2000; Hirsch and Smith, 2002). As Julia Noordegraaf discusses in this volume, artists such as Fiona Tan recycle found colonial footage in video art. The virtualizing effect lies in what Baudrillard (1983) has termed a society of simulacra and Žižek (2002) has called the derealization effect of the media: anything that is filmed with a camera becomes more show and less reality. This effect of visual technologies reinforces 'memory's mediatedness' (Radstone and Hodgkin, 2006, p. 11). In her essay on recent science fiction films, Anneke Smelik (Chapter 3) illustrates how the fascination with the virtualization of digitalised memory seems to reflect a crisis in narrative cinema as well as ontological uncertainty.

Thus, modern technologies increasingly mediate both individual and cultural memory as media not only record and recollect memories, but actually shape and produce them (van Dijck, 2007). Digital media in particular allow for new ways of storing, retrieving and archiving personal and collective memories and cultural artefacts that have far-reaching consequences for the ways we remember the past.

### Cultural memory

Cultural memory is far from homogeneous and coherent. Although shared, it is also contested, formed and re-formed time after time, in an incessant interaction of artistic and social processes. In our book,

we follow scholars of such varied plumage as German Egyptologist Jan Assmann and literary scholar Aleida Assmann, American media theorist Marita Sturken, as well as Dutch cultural analyst Mieke Bal and French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, among many others.

A number of factors are important to consider here. To begin with, the notion that cultural memory is a shared knowledge of the past that is not part of official history. As Sturken has put it, such memory 'is shared outside of formal historical discourse, yet is imbued with cultural meaning' (1999, p. 178). It is the French historian Pierre Nora who first formulated cultural memory as distinct from history. Arguing that modern, 'cultural' memory emerges from the split of history and memory resulting from the historical shift from a predominantly rural to a predominantly urban culture on the one hand, and historiographical self-reflexivity on the other hand, Nora proposes the *lieu de mémoire* (site of memory) as the object of study for 'another history' (Nora, 1989).

Nora's analysis of the factors that contributed to the emergence of memory and its crystallization around these *lieux* means that cultural memory has its own – often unwritten – history. Richard Terdiman observes that 'memory has a history' (1993, p. 3). In fact, the tendency to view history and memory as opposites itself belongs to our historical moment. It is in the wake of feminism, postcolonialism and postmodernism that history came to be viewed as one of the grand narratives denounced as totalizing and negatively associated with public and presumed objectivity, while 'memory has become positively associated with the embedded, with the local, the personal and the subjective' (Radstone and Hodgkin, 2006, p. 10).

Following Fredric Jameson's famous imperative to 'always historicize!' (1981, p. 9), then, this book insists on the importance of historicizing cultural memory. The preoccupation with memory that feeds contemporary interest in and research on cultural memory is the product of a particular historical configuration. In his seminal book on cultural memory, Jan Assmann locates the 'virulence of the theme of memory' (1992, p. 11) in a historical period that not only sees the global growth of electronic media, but also witnesses the end of 'old Europe' as we knew it, while people who lived through the horrors of the Second World War are dying out. Identifying, like Andreas Huysen (2003), the crucial roles of media, politics and the Holocaust in making memory a central contemporary concern, Assmann argues these factors together produce a need for reflection and reminiscence.

Nora's research into this new form of memory resulted in the monumental seven volumes of *Les lieux de mémoire* (1984–92), investigating a

vast array of sites that range from monuments (such as the Panthéon), to traditions, customs and practices (including *le café*, meaning both coffee and the coffeehouse). In the wake of Nora's project of national memory-making and historiographical recovery, other European countries have followed suit and engaged in similar projects. For instance, a four-volume *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte (German Sites of Memory)* was published in Germany in 2001, another four-volume *Plaatsen van herinnering (Sites of Memory)* appeared in The Netherlands between 2005 and 2007, while a volume collecting Belgian sites of memory appeared in 2008 under the title *België, een parcours van herinnering (Belgium, a circuit of memory)*.

To understand the different rhythms of these research projects as technologies of cultural memory, we would need to explore each country's specific investment in the various versions of their national past, in relation to recent wars, political regimes, former colonies, and the formation of Europe as a political, economic and cultural project. By mapping some of those trajectories, this book reflects on those trends from a more cosmopolitan perspective. This means that whereas we believe technologies of cultural memory need to be analysed in their local and national contexts, we are convinced they should also be thought about and reinterpreted within the imaginary connection for which Kwame Anthony Appiah retrieved the term 'cosmopolitanism' (2006).

'Cosmopolitan', however, does not mean 'global' by some other word, substituting one totalizing grand narrative by another. Indeed, as we map the material, social, cultural, political, ideological and artistic/aesthetic dimensions of cultural memory, it soon appears we should not only 'always historicize', as Jameson had it, but that we should equally 'always spatialize', as Susan Stanford Friedman puts it (1998, p. 130). Memory has not only a history; it also has a geography.

Everywhere in Europe we find a fascination with places that one can visit, from walking tours 'in the footsteps of' famous historical or fictional figures such as the Don Quixote trails in Spain, Hemingway's Paris or Virginia Woolf's London (see Plate, 2006) to guided tours of their homes, such as, for instance, the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam. Included in the brochures of travel agencies and increasingly part of the cities' marketing strategies, these sites then become tourist destinations in the current economy of cultural consumerism. In *Destination Culture* (1998), Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has shown how museums compete with tourism in the production of 'heritage', marketing themselves as tourist attractions and turning locations into destinations. This 'tourism of history', as Marita Sturken has labelled the phenomenon in her study of consumer practices at sites of national trauma in the United

States (2007), certainly has globalizing tendencies, affecting tourist practices in places as distant and different as Auschwitz, Oklahoma City, Hanoi and Budapest. As Antze and Lambek so poignantly put it, 'we all become the alienated tourists of our pasts' (1996, p. xiii). On the one hand, then, we see that places are put on tourist trails. On the other hand, we also see that this fascination and the commercial exploitation of this fascination assume different forms across the globe. Take, for instance, the Shoah, whose sites of memory are inscribed very differently within the cultural geographies of different countries. Packaged tours to Prague and Krakow often include, or offer the possibility of including, a day's visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau. In contrast, there are no tours to Babi Yar near Kiev, where an estimated 100,000 people were killed during the massacres of 1941 and the following years. In fact, the site is surprisingly difficult to reach for visitors of the capital city of Ukraine. These examples of geographically specific inscriptions of cultural memory, moreover, should not make us forget that many histories have no sites for memory at all. In this volume, this forgetting is illustrated by Marta Cabrera's analysis of the painful absence of memorials and commemorations of violence in Colombia.

The inscription of cultural memory in space requires attention to be paid to the materiality of cultural memory and to the medium of this materiality. As Aleida Assmann argues in her book *Erinnerungsräume (Spaces of Memory)* (1999), individuals and cultures build their cultural memory interactively through communication in language, images, objects and rituals. In other words, they need external media and cultural practices to organize and express their memories (p. 19). These media and practices are the subject of Marita Sturken's discussion in this book of kitsch souvenirs and Elizabeth Wood's exploration of childhood objects (Chapters 1 and 7 respectively). It is one of the reasons why we focus on *technologies* of cultural memory.

Yet the spatial dimension of cultural memory does not only translate as a key issue for media studies and cultural geographies of memory, it also points to a fundamental feature of cultural memory today. As the essays in this book illustrate, the contemporary interest in the past and in cultural memory, desirous of making the past present, takes on a distinct spatial dimension. Obviously, the materiality of memory has a spatial dimension: it literally takes place. Objects, but also performances, thus emphasize the spatialization of memory that is such a crucial feature of contemporary memory culture. Indeed, it is in this spatial dimension that 'the presentification of the past' manifests itself, as Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht has termed it (2004, p. 123 and *passim*).



Practices of cultural memory involve a conjuring up of the past that makes it present again; times of yore become tangible, material and capable of 'touching' us.

### A new historical culture

The recent boom in memory that has come to pervade Western culture since the 1970s has been accompanied by the conviction that this is only a moment in history. Reflecting on the destiny of the *lieux de mémoire*, Nora concludes that soon, 'the need to exhume these landmarks and explore these *lieux* will have disappeared. The era of commemoration will be over for good. The tyranny of memory will have endured for only a moment – but it was our moment' (1996, p. 637). For years now, scholars have searched for signs of 'memory fatigue' (Huysen, 2003, p. 3), convinced that the current fascination with memory would soon reach a point of saturation. In the context of our contemporary culture of instant obsolescence, of the ever-increasing acceleration of history and faster cycles of innovation and novelty, it is indeed to be expected that the newness of the old and the novelty of the past as fashionable interests would soon wear out. Surprisingly, however, this is not the case, as new pasts keep being retrieved, unearthed and manufactured. One reason for this may be that, contrary to appearances, the point of saturation is nowhere near to being reached. Another may be found in an intrinsic relation between the production of memory and consumer culture.

Looking back on the fate of the *lieux de mémoire*, Nora wonders 'why this co-optation has taken place' (1996, p. 609). Indeed, 'The work was intended ... to be a counter-commemorative type of history', but it was overtaken by commemoration – an irresistible and all-consuming 'commemorative bulimia' (p. 609). The idea that the academic, historical project was co-opted suggests it preceded its cultural and commercial co-optation; that it existed prior to and outside the sphere of consumer culture and was overtaken by it. This is akin to the notion that there once was an autonomous culture of art and intellect that has now been enlisted by the all-engulfing capitalist machine which knows how to make ready money out of anything faster than any academic can think, which 'is utterly promiscuous, and will happily tag along with the highest bidder' (Eagleton, 2003, p. 17). But what if, rather than imagining a pure and uncontaminated culture of memory beyond the sphere of commercialism, we were to think of memory and the memory boom as inextricably linked with it? We would then need to rethink its cultural

construction in art and artistic practices as inevitably informed by its economic no less than its political, social and aesthetic interests.

In this volume, we propose precisely such an unsettling of the past, reconceiving it as manufactured, that is, as produced by a culture in the interest of particular people in that culture and therefore solidly ideological and economic. As Pierre Nora phrases it: 'Today, the historian is far from alone in manufacturing the past; it is a role he shares with the judge, the witness, the media and the legislator' (2002). As discussed in this volume, there are evident commercial interests involved in the memorialization of the victims of the Oklahoma City bombing of 1995 or of the 9/11 attacks. Yet, as Liedeke Plate suggests in her essay on what she terms (after Bauman) 'liquid memories' (Chapter 6), the same is true for those modes of cultural production we generally think of as belonging to the more rarefied domain of art. In fact, the production of literary and artistic memories is not only a political and ideological affair but is framed by vested interests. This is corroborated by Maruša Pušnik in Chapter 11 on the struggle over meanings of the imagined past in documentaries from post-socialist Slovenia.

In *Technologies of Memory in the Arts*, we thus conceive of the memory boom and contemporary memory cultures as a constituent part of economic globalization, one of the ways in which art and culture were reconceived as cultural products to be packaged and sold on the increasingly significant market of the culture industry. This is why we gather essays dealing with popular culture and commodified objects, together with essays dealing within artworks marked by the halo of an authentic signature by the artist, viewing them as a continuum relating to the same consumer culture. This is not to say they are the same. But it is to stress that the past sells better than the future, from the paintings of Frida Kahlo to the remembering and forgetting of colonial history.

From our introduction, it follows that *Technologies of Memory in the Arts* specifically addresses the material construction of cultural memory. Some essays explore procedures of memory in both traditional and new media. Other essays investigate the role of digitalization of art and culture in relation to memory. Generally, the focus of the book is on the materiality of representation and on the relation between the medium and the construction of cultural memory.

*Technologies of Memory in the Arts* is divided into four thematic parts. Each of these parts consists of a short introduction to the theme and new essays specifically written for this volume, which are then more fully introduced in the thematic introductions. Part I, *Mediating Memories*, looks at the ways in which memories are mediated, exploring the

materiality of cultural memory in such diverse artefacts as tourist souvenirs, memorials and the representation of memory in recent science fiction films.

Part II, *Memory/Counter-memory*, focuses on intertextuality and rewriting as literary technologies of cultural memory. It explores how rewriting works counter-memorially, in the revival of the so-called *ligne claire* (clear line) in comic strips, Jean Rhys's rewriting of Charlotte Brontë's nineteenth-century classic, *Jane Eyre*, and Jeanette Winterson's retelling of myth in *The Stone Gods*.

In Part III, *Recalling the Past*, the focus shifts to the many ways in which the past is invoked in contemporary cultural practices, such as the role that toys play in childhood memories, contemporary recyclings of Hitler's so-called *Rednerposen* (oratory poses) photographs, and the possibilities of painting the traces of pain and trauma in the art of Frida Kahlo and Alina Szapocznikow.

The final section, Part IV, *Unsettling History*, engages with representations of cultural memory that disturb and upset the known and official historical accounts. The essays here show the wilful construction or the fundamental instability of cultural memory in visual representations that change the authorized views of history, focusing on colonial footage in documentary film and installation art, the redefinition of Slovenian history in recent right-wing documentaries, and Colombian art that helps to shape a cultural commemoration of a violent past in a culture of disavowal and denial.

*Technologies of Memory in the Arts* unravels the complexity of practices and discourses of cultural memory from many different perspectives. By its focus on artistic and popular practices as technologies of memory, this volume seeks to provide a pertinent analysis of how art and popular culture work to settle and unsettle the past in the present. Its international scope serves to underscore how the many and varied practices have particular stakes in the complex processes of remembering and forgetting, of recollecting and disremembering, that make up cultural memory.

## Part I

# Mediating Memories

## Introduction: Mediating Memories

*Liedeke Plate and Anneke Smelik*

When Pierre Nora (1989) situated the break between history and memory in modernism, as we mentioned in the Introduction, he also characterized memory as the realm of immediacy and presence. Memory is thus understood as being 'independent of the materiality of the sign' and 'unstructured by social technologies of learning or recall', as John Frow explains (1997, p. 223). In Nora's view, the *lieux de mémoire* that come into existence in modernity indicate a lost world of a historical time of traditions without rupture or conflict. Museums, archives, monuments and the like have transformed memory by a long passage through history. These memory sites have in a way 'degraded' immediate, unmediated, memory.

The notion of memory as unmediated experience has haunted cultural studies of memory. According to Susannah Radstone (2000), the memory crisis in the nineteenth century was the 'felt break with tradition' (p. 7), while the crisis in the late twentieth century is rather informed by the development of new media and electronic technologies that seek an experience of 'immediacy, instantaneity and simultaneity' (p. 7). It is as if the media have taken over the promise of immediacy and authenticity from memory. Ever since McLuhan (2002) argued in 1964 that media are an extension of the human senses, and also an extension of consciousness, it is impossible within contemporary multimedia culture to maintain a view of memory as unmediated. The focus of media and cultural studies on media and information technologies guarantees a foregrounding of the materiality of representation.

As Vivian Sobchack explains, audiovisual technologies of the twentieth century collapse the temporal distance between present, past and future. There is no longer a history that happened 'before' and a re-presentation that came 'after' the event, but we are moving towards

simultaneity (1996, p. 5). Sobchack refers to the O. J. Simpson case, but '9/11' is of course another example of history happening right here and now; it 'is transmitted, reflected upon, shown play-by-play, taken up as the stuff of multiple stories and significance, given all sorts of "coverage" in the temporal dimension of the present as we live it' (p. 5). For Huyssen (1995), this collapse of the boundaries between past and present in contemporary fast-speed media pertains to the very crisis of memory. Radstone claims that in the contemporary remembrance boom, memory is aligned with issues of subjectivity and representation, privileging invention and fabrication over authenticity and lived experience (2000, p. 9). Scholarly research in the last decade testifies to an understanding of memory as mediated by technology. For example, John Frow (1997) calls for an exploration of memory as '*tekhne*, as mediation, as writing' (p. 224), as structured by technological and institutional conditions (p. 230).

While it is an advancement to understand memory as 'always already' mediated, we can push the argument even further. Memory is not only shaped by media, but media are also shaped by memory. Thus José van Dijck argues that 'media and memory transform each other' (2007, p. 21). Media technologies structure our process of remembering, just as remembrance affects the way in which we make use of media devices. Mediated memory thus results in concrete objects, products or performances, which people employ for negotiating the relationship between self and society, between personal and cultural memory (p. 21).

If we understand the medium as a process, and not as a thing, we can also argue that it not only re-mediate, but that the medium itself also remembers. That is why media usually mediate each other, as McLuhan already indicated in his seminal *Understanding Media*: 'the "content" of any medium is always another medium', he famously stated (2002, p. 8). Or, to put it differently, if the past is always already mediated, then media have by necessity to re-mediate. Mediated memory products can so be understood as having a double mnemonic layer – that is, as being both the cultural and the medial remembrance of something. This may also hint at an explanation of why cultural memory seems to be shrouded in clichés and stereotypes. The essays that follow carefully examine the materiality of mediation, by paying attention to the layeredness of concrete objects and acts of mediated memories.

In the opening chapter, Marita Sturken observes how cultural artefacts such as tourist souvenirs and kitsch objects operate as technologies of memory in American culture. Her primary focus is on the intersection of cultural memory, tourism, architecture and consumerism in the

United States in relation to the Oklahoma City National Memorial and the debate over the memorialization of 9/11 at Ground Zero in New York City. She is particularly concerned with the way that American culture encourages a 'tourist' relationship to history, one that reveals the deep investment in the concept of innocence in American culture.

In Chapter 2, Wouter Weijers reflects on the minimalist aesthetic that seems to have become the dominant style for public monuments, probably because its 'timeless' and 'apolitical' forms allow for the private contemplation of loss. He situates the contradictory responses to the design *Reflecting Absence* by architect Michael Arad for the official 9/11 memorial in New York City within the context of Modernist abstraction. While minimalist designs can on the one hand be understood as the creation of transcendent meanings, Weijers explains how minimalist memorials can on the other hand be read as part and parcel of today's culture of the spectacle.

In Chapter 3, Anneke Smelik explores digital technologies in recent cinema on memory, such as *Minority Report*, *Final Cut*, *2046* and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. Either in spectacular images or in multiple and fragmented narratives, the films raise questions of subjective memory. Drawing on Deleuze's thought, Smelik argues that the affect of memories provokes a non-linear, dynamic vision of time, undoing the authority of the past that so often ties subjects obsessively to their recollections. The affective level also allows the spectator to establish an experiential relation to the film, embracing memory as a loop that connects present, past and future.

# Introduction: Memory/Counter-memory

*Liedeke Plate and Anneke Smelik*

Memories do not simply add up to constitute cultural memory. Instead, they compete and clash, vying for a place in collective remembrance. The many and competing, contested and contradictory memories have the effect of making modern memory markedly counter-memorial. As we explain in the Introduction, the democratization of History into histories has splintered the grand narratives of empire and progress into the many and divergent (counter)-memories of the men and women that felt left out. The positive valuation of memory, Radstone and Hodgkin write, is the result of its being 'utilised in order to retrieve that which runs against, disrupts or disturbs dominant ways of understanding the past' (2006, p. 10). By this account, memory is counter-memory. Unsanctioned, subversive, from below or from the margins, it attempts to overthrow or deconstruct the memory-as-history and to dislodge it from its position of authority. Memory resists amnesia. It refuses the political and ideological 'forgetting' of people and events and counter-acting the 'selective traditions' (Williams, 1961) that overlook or silence the experience of those who are not included in it. It is thus a movement against repressive memorialization emerging from all the nooks and cracks of the present culture of memory.

The view of memory as 'always already' a counter-memory can be traced back to Foucault. In his essay 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', he identifies the historical sense as giving rise to 'a view of history that severs its connection to memory, its metaphysical and anthropological model, and constructs a counter-memory – a transformation of history into a totally different form of time' (1977, p. 160). Opposing the idea of 'history as knowledge', as 'reminiscence or recognition', and as 'continuity or representative of a tradition' (p. 160), Foucault's conception of history as counter-memory implies it is actually a use of the past that

is no more organically related to identity and truth than any other narrative use of the past. In fact, it can be understood as 'just one more technology of memory', as Carolyn Steedman says (2001, p. 66). Neither memory nor counter-memory nor history constitutes the destiny of a person or a people. Instead, they are uses of the past that try to mask their own constructiveness as well as the non-neutrality of the subject of knowledge – of the historian, but also of s/he who re-memembers.

The movement towards seeing history as always already counter-memorial is evidently crucial to artistic projects that remember by way of rewriting. Thus, feminist 're-vision' (Adrienne Rich's term) attempts to intervene in the production of cultural memory by telling 'the other side of the story'. Similarly, postcolonial intertextuality conceived as a 'writing back to the centre,' as Salman Rushdie memorably phrased it, contributed to the characterization of postcolonial literatures as counter-narratives. The essays in this section focus on rewriting as a technology of cultural memory whose meanings, rather than being stable, are seen to change as culture itself, in its relationship to the past and in its understanding of that past, also changes.

Intertextuality, which basically means that texts are made of texts, reinscribes those texts and thus remembers them. 'Intertextual mnemonics' certainly is one of the 'strategies employed to implant and keep literature in cultural and collective memory' (Grabes, 2005, p. xi). (The other strategies are genre, the canon and literary history.) As the citation of texts that are 'anonymous, irrecoverable, and yet *already read*' (Barthes, 1986, p. 60), intertextuality itself is also a mnemonics and can thus be understood as a technology of memory. As Bakhtin explains in 'Discourse in the Novel', words remember the contexts in which they have been; they carry the 'taste' of these contexts, are shot through with the intentions and accents of others. Novelists employ the words' heteroglossia to achieve their purpose, carefully orchestrating the echoes of the words' previous contexts to resonate through the novel, using intertextuality as a technology of memory to invoke these other worlds.

Nagihan Haliloglu's reading of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* in Chapter 5 evokes this understanding of intertextuality as reinscription and polyphony in her notion of 'writing back together', while Ann Miller, in Chapter 4, shows how the recent Blake and Mortimer comic-strip albums retrospectively re-contour Jacobs's 1950s moral and political universe, stripping it of colonial overtones unpalatable to a twenty-first century readership. In Miller's analysis the *ligne claire* (clear line) serves as a technology of memory that can summon up 'the lost world of certitudes mapped out in the original albums' only after adjustments

to Jacobs's referential system. Similarly, Plate argues that as re-visions proliferate, 'telling the other side of the story' becomes a kind of shopping for alternative versions. In this (commercial) context, mythical retelling can continue to work as a technology of memory that brings women's stories into cultural memory and thus 'alters or expands the options for the future' (Belsey, 2005, p. 16). Together, the essays in this section demonstrate how rewriting as a technology of memory works to resist the supposed homogeneity and hegemony of 'official' or dominant memory yet is itself subject to change as the meaning of the past itself changes. Rewriting, indeed, enacts 'one of the crucial features of cultural memory', Catherine Belsey writes: 'We remember the past not simply as it was, but ... as it will turn out to have been, in consequence of our remembering it' (p. 4).

In Chapter 4, Ann Miller turns to a bestselling series of comic-strip albums, which have resurrected Blake and Mortimer, heroes created by the Belgian artist E. P. Jacobs in 1946. She addresses the question of technologies of memory by considering the *ligne claire*, the characteristic drawing style used by Jacobs as well as by Hergé, which was subverted by other artists for satirical purposes or postmodern irony. However, when Blake and Mortimer were resurrected in 1996, irony and pastiche were eschewed in favour of a convincing evocation of Jacobs's vision of the 1950s. This was achieved by means of 'a detour and mythological reworking,' Miller argues.

In Chapter 5, Nagihan Haliloglu offers an intertextual reading of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which relates memories that have been hidden in the discursive space of *Jane Eyre*. She proposes 'writing back' as a technology of memory, an orchestration on the part of the writer that gives expression to memories of certain subjects. She argues that remembering in the form of self-narration and in the narrative space of a single novel reveals the similarities between the experiences of the two different colonial subjects of Antoinette (Bertha in *Jane Eyre*) and Rochester.

In Chapter 6, Liedeke Plate discusses women's rewriting as a powerful political and ideological tool in the shaping of cultural memory. She highlights the success of feminist re-vision as a technology of memory aimed at affecting how we remember culturally central texts, yet submits that the role of rewriting has altered in the context of the present 'liquid' culture of memory. Taking her cue from Jeanette Winterson's retelling of myth in *The Stone Gods*, she proposes mythical retelling as a mode of rewriting that is particularly suited to the contemporary condition.

# Introduction: Recalling the Past

*Liedeke Plate and Anneke Smelik*

Contemporary cultural practices invoke the past in a more or less conscious attempt to make the past present. The essays in this part of the book look at objects and performances of cultural recall. As we mentioned in the main Introduction, artistic representations re-present the past, making it present again. In this part, then, we focus on 'the presentification of the past' (Gumbrecht, 2004, p. 123) as it manifests itself in, for example, childhood toys, photography or art. The point here is that objects and performances of cultural memory recall and adopt the past as part of the present, or as Antze and Lambek put it: 'Memory acts in the present to represent the past' (1996, p. xxiv). According to Mieke Bal, these acts of memory raise the question of agency, 'of the active involvement of subjects ... who "do" the remembering' (1999, p. xv). The essays in this part trace the dynamic involvement of subjects in the process of making the past present again in the cultural domain.

Acts of memory have a function in the construction of identity, whether it is a personal or a more public form of identity. As Frances Guerin argues in Chapter 9, photographs of a dictator such as Hitler can function as propaganda in the making, by representing a conscious construction of the public image as a weapon in the struggle for political dominance. On the other end of the spectrum, childhood toys may help to retrieve forgotten, often happy, personal memories of individuals and thus assist in the refashioning of their personal autobiographies, as Elizabeth Wood describes in Chapter 7. The old toy evokes a past time and makes it tangible; it is as if we could touch, feel, and smell it once again. Likewise, in Chapter 8 Marta Zarzycka demonstrates that the memories of artists such as Frida Kahlo and Alina Szapocznikow become public acts 'of commemoration, of testimony, of confession, of accusation'

(Antze and Lambek, 1996, p. xxv). In creating a dialectical relationship between painful experiences and the representation of those experiences in paintings or sculptures, the artists are capable of producing continuity over discontinuity. The cultural shaping of memory into narrative, visual or theatrical forms thus takes on a performative meaning, which both underlines and displaces the fragility of memory.

Whether the acts of memory are personally or collectively motivated, the tangible objects or performances make the past present. The weathered toy, the painted scar in a painting, or the photograph of Adolf Hitler all create an image of time that carries a certain experience. Memory is thus shown to be made of lived time. Perhaps the acts, objects, and performances of cultural memory can be understood as a defence against the cruel progress of time. Recalling the past is then a conscious act to ward off the fragility of recollections. In tracing the technologies of memory in different forms of cultural practices, the following essays testify to the power of memorial agency. The articles in this section show how memory constructs different aspects of identity, moving from the more personal to the more public level.

In Chapter 7, Elizabeth Wood explores the notion that objects and material culture serve as a medium to access a shared understanding and cultural memory of childhood. The analysis examines the implication that toys have in creating the collective memory of childhood in twentieth-century American culture and the effects of cultural norms in constructing and reconstructing narrative experiences of childhood by children and adults. The cultural memory of childhood is linked to the presence of objects from childhood, whether in personal collections, or in those in the general public.

In Chapter 8, Marta Zarzycka explores art as 'memory work' by delving into the question of how visual art can recall and narrate pain. Pain, seen as the intersection of lived experience and the memory of it, is the tool for retrieving the memory of flesh. She analyses how artworks can effectively account for traces of remembering pain or trauma, and at the same time mediate the appropriation of pain for the viewer. Zarzycka shows how art functions as a technology of memory of pain and trauma in the work of the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo and the Polish artist Alina Szapocznikow.

In the final chapter in this section, Frances Guerin focuses on the contemporary recycling of photographs of Hitler in his 'oratory poses', the so-called *Rednerposen*. She claims that recontextualizations of these rare photographs reveal little about the photographs in their original

context and everything about our own anxiety over how to remember the traumas of the past. The recycling of the photos in magazines, exhibitions and films creates new memories for the historical present, but forgets or erases the past through decontextualization. Guerin argues for the importance of retaining at least the traces of the original images through complicating the relationship between past and present, the photographs and their representation, in a new time for a new audience.



# Introduction: Unsettling History

*Liedeke Plate and Anneke Smelik*

In the main Introduction, we write that 'cultural memory is a shared knowledge of the past that is not part of official history'. Shared yet contested, outside formal historical discourse but productive of the material and immaterial culture that can form its 'sources' and produced by some of the same technologies, cultural memory clearly has a complex relationship to history. In *Tangled Memories*, Marita Sturken first writes that '[c]ultural memory can be distinct from history yet ... is essential to its construction' but soon afterwards acknowledges there is so much border traffic between them that the distinction is hard to maintain (1997, pp. 4–5). More recently, Andreas Huyssen observes 'a fundamental disturbance ... between history as objective and scientific, and memory as subjective and personal' (2003, p. 2). The recent debates about memory versus history underscore that the relationship of history to memory is not only complex, but is also changing, from the unification of memory and history demanded by the rise of the nations throughout the nineteenth century, to their irremediable severance in modern times.

Today, indeed, history and memory are generally seen as fundamentally at odds, with memory serving sometimes to bolster and other times to unsettle history. In the wake of historiographical self-reflection and under the pressures of various memory-groups, history had to relinquish its status as the record of the people's past, becoming instead the self-conscious study and narrative account of the past. Traditionally focused on political, social and economic events, history inevitably excludes the experiences and memories of many individuals. Therefore, it is by laying claim to memory and by foregrounding the memories of individuals and of social groups, that history came to be unsettled. The essays in this part, then, focus on this movement of unsettling history – that is, of shaking it up, showing its foundations to be unstable and constructed

in the interests of particular, usually dominant, groups – colonial settlers, dictatorships and other repressive political regimes. Showing those versions of history to effectively silence, erase or forget memories of the past that do not fit their version of history, these essays also address their continued haunting presence in cultural memory as well as the anxieties over remembering and forgetting to which their presence attests.

In this part of the book, cultural memory is viewed as instrumental in the process of unsettling history. 'Cultural memory,' Sturken writes, 'is a field of cultural negotiation through which different stories vie for a place in history' (1997, p. 1). Technologies of memory, in this context, are the means by which this negotiation takes place: the object, image and representations, but also the artistic practices and narrative and audiovisual techniques used to produce and give meaning to cultural memory. To be sure, there is a sense in which individual memories and the collective, social memory laid down in history are always in tension. As Carolyn Steedman puts it in *Landscape for a Good Woman*, '[p]ersonal interpretations of past times – the stories that people tell themselves in order to explain how they got to the places they currently inhabit – are often in deep and ambiguous conflict with the official interpretative devices of a culture' (Steedman, 1986, p. 6). As the place where individual and collective memory meet and intersect, cultural memory is one of the central sites for reworking past events, for rethinking, re-viewing and reimagining the past; indeed, for not letting the past settle into history. The essays in this part therefore explore cultural memory as the locus for the transformation of history – its re-production in the present but also its deconstruction by various means. Focusing on specific technologies of memory that work to disturb or upset the known and official historical accounts, these chapters show the wilful construction or the fundamental instability of cultural memory in visual representation that change the authorized views of history.

In Chapter 10, Julia Noordegraaf looks at the re-use of colonial footage from the Dutch East Indies in the compilation film *Mother Dao: The Turtlelike* (1995) by documentary filmmaker Vincent Monnikendam and in the works *Smoke Screen* (1997) and *Facing Forward* (1999) by visual artist Fiona Tan. The representation of audiovisual material is a way of bringing documents of the past into the present. Noordegraaf illuminates how the confrontation with these works encourages contemporary viewers to reflect upon their relationship to (Dutch) colonial history. The way in which the archival material is presented and deconstructed allows for a more critical perspective on this historical period.

In Chapter 11, Maruša Pušnik offers a critical analysis of the creation of documentaries of collective memory in post-socialist Slovenia. She shows how narrative and visual strategies redefine specific historical events and periods of the nation. Such popular representations of the past set a new agenda for public debates on history. Functioning as technologies of memory, the documentaries produce different meanings of the past that are concordant with a new regime of right-wing politics. These films reproduce and sustain a collective memory that is based on the elimination of the Yugoslav period and communism, and on the glorification and glorification of Slovenia's ancient and recent past.

In the last chapter, Marta Cabrera draws attention to the state of collective memory concerning the violent past of Colombia. While the mass media and the absence of adequate monuments and commemorations seem to contribute to the perpetuation of this amnesiac state, the visual arts have addressed issues of memory, identity and violence. Cabrera critically assesses visual artworks from the last decade by sculptor Doris Salcedo, video artist José Alejandro Restrepo, and photographer and visual artist Juan Manuel Echavarría. She argues that their work contributes to the construction of cultural memory amidst what has been perceived as a 'low-intensity conflict'.