

Introduction: Travel, locatedness, and new horizons in Memory Studies

ABSTRACT

This introduction outlines new developments in the field of cultural and media memory studies in the wake of the transcultural turn. It pays specific attention to the twofold dynamics of memory's travel and locatedness. While in recent memory studies discourse there has been a tendency to see travel as the inspiration for innovative research, locatedness has become associated with old-fashioned, bounded approaches. Rather than reproduce the positive charging of travel and negative charging of locatedness, this special issue aims to emphasise the complexity of memory dynamics resulting from the interaction of the two poles and to make visible that the production, (re)mediation, and reception of the past in the present is constituted by both travel and locatedness.

KEYWORDS

cultural memory studies;
media memory studies;
travelling memory;
locatedness of memory

Travel and locatedness

Over the past decade, the interdisciplinary field of memory studies has seen a decisive turn towards questions of the transcultural, transnational, and the global. This reorientation was prepared by a more general preoccupation with globalisation, cosmopolitanism, transnational culture, migration, and diaspora in the humanities and social sciences (e.g. Appadurai 1996; Cohen and Vertovec 2003). Put simply, while memory studies in the 1980s and 1990s was focussed on bounded mnemonic communities and *sites of memory* (in the sense of Pierre Nora's [1984, 1986, 1992] guiding concept of *lieux de mémoire*), since the early 2000s it has turned its attention to the *movements of memory* between and across social groups—a research perspective for which Astrid Erll (2011) has coined the term “travelling memory”.¹

According to this approach, “memory” never stands still. Just as people—the carriers of memory—do not necessarily stay put, but can move, travel, and migrate as well as share their stories of the past with other people, so will remembered contents rarely remain in just one place and with one group, but instead travel across mnemonic communities (Holocaust memory is a well-researched case in point; see Levy and Sznajder 2006). Memory media (books, films, the Internet etc.) carry images and narratives of the past across the globe. Memory forms and practices (for example, the genre of the historical novel or the ritual of two minutes' silence) also move along certain paths across time and space.² As Erll and Rigney (2009) have argued, travel is such

a constitutive force in acts of remembering that mediated travels of memory—remediations—constitute the very condition for memories to “stay alive”.

Whoever studies the movements of memory today can draw on a rich body of research. Among the foundational and most productive contributions are Daniel Levy and Natan Sznajder's concept of “cosmopolitan memory” (2006), Andreas Huyssen's discussion of “global memory” (2003, 26), Alison Landsberg's “prosthetic memory” (2004), Michael Rothberg's “multidirectional memory” (2009), Joanne Garde-Hansen, Andrew Hoskins, and Anna Reading's writings on digital and “globital” memories (2009) as well as Marianne Hirsch's (2012) discussion of “connective postmemories”. These contributions fundamentally challenged and changed the field of memory studies.

Soon after, memory scholars identified new sub-fields and developed new approaches to memory, such as “transnational memory studies” (De Cesari and Rigney 2014). Some argued for significant “turns” in memory studies, such as a “transcultural turn” (Bond and Rapson 2014), and, more recently, a “planetary turn” (Bond, De Bruyn, and Rapson 2017, 854). Others staged discussions of memory around concepts such as “memory in a global age” (Assmann and Conrad 2010), “memory and migration” (Creet and Kitzmann 2011), “scales of memory” (Kennedy and Nugent 2016), and “moving memory” (Pine 2017). All these recent theorisations offer insight into memory's travels beyond cultural, religious, ethnic, linguistic, gendered, and national boundaries.

This special issue is the outcome of an ongoing and in-depth collaboration between the Frankfurt Memory Studies Platform (FMSP) at Goethe University Frankfurt and the International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC) at Justus Liebig University Giessen. The contributions to this special issue were first presented at a symposium organised by Jelena Đureinović, Paul Vickers, and Jarula M.I. Wegner in Giessen in June 2016, which sought to identify “new directions and challenges in cultural memory studies” (see Wegner 2016). Many of the concerns of this special issue also emerged from the DFG-funded project “Migration and Transcultural Memory: Literature, Film, and the ‘Social Life’ of Memory Media”, which Astrid Erll, Erin Högerle, and Jarula M.I. Wegner conducted together at Goethe University from 2015 to 2018. Finally, we gratefully acknowledge the generous funding of this publication by the Open Access Publication Fund of Goethe University.

Yet despite this new fascination with movement in memory studies, any researcher working with travelling memory will soon realise that they are in fact following a moving target, faced with the impossible task of “catching fleeting memories” (Jones 2013). Memory cannot be caught while moving, but only once it finds expression in particular contexts. No matter what methods we use—from the analysis of remediations to multi-sited ethnography—what we are actually faced with is a twofold dynamics of *travel and locatedness*.³ But how should we conceptualise their relation? How can we account for travelling memory’s simultaneous locatedness of production, (re)mediation, and reception?

Memory, we argue, exists in a dynamic tension between travel and locatedness. Both situatedness and movement impact memories on small scales, in intimate or familial contexts, as well as on larger scales, spanning communities and nations, supranational organisations and continents, and even the planet.⁴ Moreover, memory never moves seamlessly. The dynamics of travel and locatedness are marked by barriers and frictions as well as by encounters and exchanges.

In recent discourse of memory studies, there has been a tendency to see travel as the inspiration for innovative research, while locatedness has become associated with old-fashioned, bounded approaches. Rather than reproduce the positive charge of travel and negative charge of locatedness, this special issue emphasises the complexity of memory dynamics resulting from the interaction of the two poles and makes visible that the production, (re)mediation and reception of the past in the present is constituted by both travel and locatedness. We thus recognise that while “the production of cultural memory, people, media, mnemonic forms, contents, and practices are in constant unceasing motion” (Erl 2011, 12), it is also the case that memory “is only ever *instantiated* locally, in a specific place and at a particular time” (Radstone 2011, 117).

This special issue argues that the recent preoccupation with memory as *travelling* entails the need to account for the concomitant aspect of memory’s *locatedness*. The contributions to this special issue range across a great variety of mnemonic media and sites, taking up the empirical, theoretical and methodological challenges emerging from a critical engagement with the entanglement of travel and locatedness.

Situating our work in the area of *cultural and media memory studies* and building on Erl and Rigney, we consider the dynamics of travel and locatedness as a product of the fundamental “mediatedness of memory” (Erl and Rigney 2009, 5).⁵ The mediation of memories takes place in the interconnected processes of creation, transmission, and reception. Guiding the contributions of this special issue is an understanding that travels and locatedness of memories through mediation function on at least three levels: content, form, and context. Memory media (from orality to digital media) enable content to

travel. Yet this content itself emerges from, travels through, and arrives at specific locations and particular times. The forms which encode content in media (speech genres, print formats, plot structures) travel, too—through the respective medium’s physical movement, through duplication, or derivation—and such processes, again, take place in particular times and places. Finally, then, the contexts of memory production and reception change in different institutional settings and with “the intellectual and cultural traditions that frame all our representations of the past” (Kansteiner 2002, 180). The interactions between content, form, and context create new encounters, relations, and exchanges in particular locations between the producers and recipients of memories while providing the impetus for new travels.

New horizons

This special issue showcases new research in memory studies emerging from the fields of cultural history, cultural analysis, literary studies, sociology, film and media studies. Its aim is to open up new horizons of further inquiry into cultural and mediated memory. All the articles collected here address the fundamental dynamic of memory’s travel and locatedness, but they do so from different disciplinary and conceptual vantage points, breaking innovative new ground for the future of memory studies. These “new horizons” that we envision for cultural and media memory studies range from dialogues with film festival studies and narratology all the way to social media research, thus drawing attention to understudied memory media and mnemonic forms, producing new concepts and testing new methods.

Reflecting the dynamics of travel and locatedness, each essay in this special issue presents a case study focused on a travelling memory and its instantiations in a specific medium or form, in particular locations or contexts, both spatial and temporal. The contributions trace the entanglements of travelling and locatedness with respect to a statue of a World War I hero in Čačak, Serbia (Baković); a memoir about two post-World War II exiles in India, Germany, England and beyond (Butt); two novels on twentieth-century civil wars in Sudan and Nigeria read from afar (Dorr); the creation of European memories in museums in Poland, Germany, and France (Czerney); the networks of actors, choices of locations, and acts of framing that shape memories of the Asian American film festival CAAMFest in San Francisco (Högerle); a family tribute to Queen Elizabeth II on her diamond jubilee broadcast on television and DVD (Jordan); and, finally, responses to Facebook’s “Look Back” feature in Brazil and around the world (Migowski and Fernandes).

The special issue’s first contribution is Nikola Baković’s diachronic study of attempts to memorialise a World War I military hero through a statue in the small town of Čačak, Serbia. Using historical

sources ranging from the interwar period to the time of 1990s Yugoslav conflicts, the dynamics of locatedness and travel become evident in this particular location or place that is explored as a “micro-cosmos of memory” (Baković). It reflects attempts to negotiate the shifting public, national and international contexts of memory which marked Yugoslavia. Baković’s study reveals the competing agencies at play in seeking to commemorate an individual’s life or cast it into oblivion. These cannot be divided simply into official and vernacular, state and private, national and local, or cosmopolitan and provincial. Instead, all these modes of memory intersect, forming different dynamics, depending on the current contexts and positions of the actors involved in creating or effacing versions of the past.

Nadia Butt’s essay offers a close reading of Vikram Seth’s memoir *Two Lives* (2005), which presents the author’s family as another micro-cosmos of memory, in particular his Indian uncle and German-Jewish aunt. Family history thus becomes a locus of transnational and transcultural memory networks, shaped by experiences of migration and diaspora. In Butt’s analysis, transcultural memory operates on the three levels of the narrated, narration, and reception process, while it simultaneously functions epistemologically (as a means of comprehending) and therapeutically (as a means of coping). The encounters of postcolonial history and Holocaust memory in the microcosm of the family history and archive reflect the challenges of facing memory studies as a field with global scope that seeks to analyse, recollect and re-imagine “the puzzling fragments of memory” (Butt).

Highlighting the narrative and spatial dimensions of memory, Maria Elisabeth Dorr’s contribution, “Collapsible Spaces and Distant Storyworlds in (Trans-)Cultural Memory Studies”, brings narratological theorising into close dialogue with memory studies, arguing that both fields share an urgent concern with understanding the dynamics of reception in general, and of the reception of “nomadic texts” (Marie-Laure Ryan) across wide spaces in particular. Using the notions of “distance” and “proximity” as an innovative lens for a close reading of Dave Eggers’ *What Is the What* (2007) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2007), the essay examines the possibilities of readerly involvement in novels that are written to be “on the move” (Dorr) towards audiences who are unlikely to have experienced first-hand or even second-hand encounters with the memory objects that the texts are concerned with.

Studying the Europeanization of national museums, Sarah Czerney reflects upon situatedness in the memory process. Situatedness is inherent not only to the production of representations of the past,

in this case, in museums, but also to the researcher’s reception of them and subsequent production of knowledge. Drawing on feminist standpoint theory, Czerney underscores the necessity for scholars to make explicit their own positions that shape their readings, thus challenging both future memory studies research and producers of public memory to address their own privileges, particularly when it comes to gender and ethnicity. Her reading of three museums in Gdańsk, Marseille, and Berlin seeks to put this into practice, highlighting how the use of “Europoeic media”—her innovative concept for travelling media that shape collective notions of Europe—reinforces male-centric and nation-centric conceptions of Europeanization, even in recent and transnationally-informed museum exhibitions.

Erin Högerle’s essay on the Asian American film festival CAAMFest explores similar tensions of situatedness and travel, focusing on the different parameters that guide our experiences and receptions of films at festivals. Next to the complex network of actors whose different agendas influence the narratives constructed around the films as well as shape their identity and travels as memory objects, the festival locations themselves or, rather, the multiple layers of locations (cities, neighborhoods, venues) are crucial to the festival’s memory-making impact. What is more, festivals create “frames” for their films, produced and disseminated by the various festival media and live performances at the festival events. Bringing memory studies into an innovative conversation with film festival studies, Högerle thus examines how the films screened “move on”, their meaning changing with the locations in which they are presented and the frames chosen by the festival actors, and highlights the interactions of film contents, festival frames, and locations in shaping cultural memories.

Christina Jordan examines an institution that has sought to perfect the art of using media and rituals to remain in the public eye and build bonds across global communities, namely the British monarchy. Jordan makes innovative use of the concept of “prospective memory” in her reading of the television documentary *A Jubilee Tribute to The Queen by The Prince of Wales* (2012), exploring how versions of memory are produced for the future, and for future crossings of the divide between private and public spheres in particular. Her study draws on methods from narratology, film and television studies to raise questions of agency and authority over and through memory, examining how the mass medium of television could be used nationally and globally to create empathy and thus legitimacy for rulers.

The question of the boundaries of public and private memory, access to one’s own archive and its future uses, is crucial to Ana Lúcia Migowski and Willian Fernandes Araújo’s contribution. They

examine the Look Back feature on Facebook, one of the platform's first explicit "mnemonic products", launched in 2014. Migowski and Fernandes combine a new media ecology framework with Actor Network Theory and in-depth qualitative and quantitative social science methods in order to investigate how users and digital technologies co-constitute and engage with digital memories. Another form of prospective or future-oriented memory emerges here, one that highlights how algorithmic memory means that agency travels to humans as well as non-humans and relocates the dynamics of memory initiation, form, and content to a virtual realm that intersects with lived experience.

The contributions brought together here offer empirical depth enabled by disciplinary methods, from source-based historiographical analysis (Baković) to close readings of literary works (Butt; Dorr) and museum exhibitions (Czerney), to the study of film festivals based on expert interviews and participant observation (Högerle), and to film and digital media studies-inspired reflections on the relation of media and identities, both subjective and collective (Jordan; Migowski and Fernandes). What is more, each individual contribution suggests ways forward for cultural and media memory studies, opening up new horizons with conceptual innovations that we hope will travel beyond specific disciplines and the media, forms, and contexts explored.

Notes

1. Erll (2011) speaks of the "third phase of memory studies" (since ca 2010) in order to distinguish the current orientation towards the transnational and the transcultural from the first phase of memory studies, when research on collective memory emerged in the 1920s and 1930s (e.g. by Maurice Halbwachs, Aby Warburg, and Frederick Bartlett), as well as from the field's second phase, when the interest in collective memory reemerged across various disciplines in the 1980s and 1990s (with leading figures such as Pierre Nora, Jan and Aleida Assmann, and Jeffrey Olick). This second phase was characterised by what Ulrich Beck (2006) calls "methodological nationalism", as memory researchers tended to work with bounded concepts of mnemonic communities (national, but also ethnic, linguistic, and religious). In the third phase of memory studies, the field became interested in phenomena of "memory unbound" (Bond, Craps, and Vermeulen 2017). Nevertheless, such a discussion of three phases of memory studies is admittedly focussed on developments in Western Europe and the USA. It would also be possible to trace different genealogies of memory studies, for instance, from an Eastern European perspective; see Vickers (2018) as well as Pakier and Wawrzyniak (2013).
2. For these five dimensions in which memory travels, see Erll (2011) and (2015).
3. See also Radstone (2011), who has pointed out the seeming paradox that "it is from the perspective of

the 'transnational' and the 'transcultural' that we are reminded of the significance of memory's locatedness". The recent "spatial turn" (Bachmann-Medick 2016, 211–244) in the humanities and social sciences can help address different forms of such locatedness. For existent theorisations of locatedness within memory studies, see, for example, Kuhn and McAllister (2006).

4. On scales of memory, with a focus on (trans-)national frameworks, see De Cesari and Rigney (2014).
5. Memory studies may well be one of the most wide-ranging academic fields, spanning as it does the humanities, the social sciences, and (with the biology and neuroscience of memory) also the natural sciences. Within this broader field, we identify a cluster of research interested in "cultural memories" and "mediated memories", whose scholars tend to come from the disciplines of cultural history, cultural studies, literary studies, and media studies. Our shorthand for this disciplinary cluster within the larger field of memory studies is *cultural and media memory studies*. Important recent contributions to travelling memory from this cluster include Dagmar Brunow's (2016) study on "remediating transcultural memory" and Tea Sindbæk Andersen and Barbara Törnquist-Plewa's (2017) collection on questions of "transcultural mediation and reception" across Europe.

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