

**MEDIATION OF MEMORY: TOWARDS TRANSDISCIPLINARY  
PERSPECTIVES IN CURRENT MEMORY STUDIES**

**Preface to the special issue of Trames**

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**1. Introduction**

Memory has become one of the buzzwords in today's humanities and social sciences. Concepts like 'collective memory' (Halbwachs 1950), '*lieux de mémoire*' (Nora 1989, 1996, 1998), 'cultural memory' (Bal et al. 1999), 'social memory' (Fentress and Wickham 1992, Misztal 2003), and many others catch our attention in the titles of recently published books and articles, in tables of contents and lists of keywords. We are witnessing an increasing 'memory boom' (Winter 2000) in humanities and social sciences and a new field of research – *memory studies* – has emerged and develops rapidly. Under these circumstances we should, more than ever, pose ourselves the question – what do we mean by 'memory'? Is memory an object of study, a unit of research, or is it a theoretical perspective through which we investigate other phenomena? What are the differences between the concepts of memory and history or memory and tradition? In which aspects do processes of individual memory and collective memory correlate, and in which they diverge? How far can we extend the sub-concepts related to memory like remembering, forgetting, or trauma? And how can individuals' remembering be juxtaposed to the construction of social memory? What is the agency of language or artefacts in producing memory, in reflecting the experience of temporality? What kind of potential, individual and collective, cultural or political, does the inversion of temporal order extend in narratives of memory?

The current special issue aims to raise some of these questions while implementing an interdisciplinary perspective on particular phenomena that arise from these explorations, in order to consider different aspects of memory with particular focus on cultural memory.

## 2. From the memory boom to critical contemplations

Taking into account the abovementioned developments, ‘memory’ has become an excessively used and ‘abused’ concept, in humanities and social sciences, to the extent that ‘memory’s’ meaning and heuristic value become almost unclear (see Berliner 2005, Klein 2000, Fabian 1999). Misuses of memory seem to stem from the feeling that it may be easier to avoid providing an adequate account of memory rather than to risk providing an insufficient definition. In the field of anthropology Johannes Fabian warns against the ‘dangers of overextension’ of the concept of memory in the ‘current boom of memory, whereby memory becomes indistinguishable from either identity or culture’ (Fabian 1999:51). It appears that the concept of memory is undergoing developments similar to those that the concept of culture recently underwent (cf. Fox and King 2002). We, as the authors of this introduction, recognize that whereas it is probably impossible to provide an exhaustive definition of memory, it is nevertheless necessary, in the ongoing academic boom of memory research, to continue the discussion on the possibilities and limitations of memory as an object and as a method.

One of the first significant critiques of ‘the memory boom’ by historian Kerwin Lee Klein (2000:128) pointed out that memory has become a ‘metahistorical category’, something like a Foucauldian field of discourse, referring to both individual and collective practices of remembering. However, it does not mean that memory is becoming a more abstract object, quite the opposite – we witness “the new materialization of memory to the status of a historical agent, and we enter a new age in which archives remember and statues forget” (Klein 2002:136). Wulf Kansteiner has argued that the cumulative research on collective memory has not yet established a clear conceptual or methodological basis for the cultural study of collective memory processes. The characteristics of individual memory are too eagerly attributed to collective memory, ignoring that memory in group processes does not function the same way as it does in individual mind, and collective memory as an object of study needs therefore appropriate methods for its analysis. “Collectives are said to remember, to forget, and to repress the past, but this is done without any awareness that such language is at best metaphorical and at worst misleading about the phenomenon under study” (Kansteiner 2002: 185). A similar argument has been made by cultural psychologist James Wertsch who contends that collective memory is not a thing in itself but refers to many different acts of remembering, shaped by overarching social forces and cognitive frameworks such as narrative (cf. Wertsch 2002). We should also look at how narratives and the implemented poetic devices mediate remembrance, and how these narratives of memory implement temporal collapse to contest the representation of history. Thus we move between the conceptualisation of memory and the production of its objects, from individuals’ remembering to the construction of social memory. The tensions between the abstractions embedded in individual or collective memory are tacitly traceable in the three part division of the contributions in the current volume.

Social historian Jay Winter asserted that we need “a more rigorous and tightly argued set of propositions about what exactly memory is, and what it has been in the past” (Winter 2000:13). By the same token, the complex relations between the concepts of memory and culture, memory and history, memory and tradition, or memory and heritage should be re-considered. What happens if we replace the concept of history or tradition with that of memory?

These arguments reflect an essential conceptual predicament related to the discourse of memory. It implies the inherent link of past cultural practices, presumably transferrable in time and with inscribed value, to the present investigation or politics of representation – an intricate relation of ‘the past in the present’ often argued by theorists of memory studies. Anthropologist David Berliner points to the intriguing resemblances between the concepts of *tradition* and *cultural memory*, and accordingly between *memory* and *culture*, so prominent in some approaches (Berliner 2005:202).

The replacement of the previously established terms like history or tradition with that of memory in various contexts can be considered to be part of the fashionable trend in academia, which occasionally serves merely stylistic purposes, but we may claim that it reflects at the same time certain substantial epistemological shifts in various disciplines.<sup>1</sup> ‘Lived experience’ and ‘subjectivity’ (Misztal 2003:100) in relation to “fantasy, ... invention, the present, representation and fabrication” (Radstone 2000:6) are the novel central questions that distinguish current memory studies from the previous research on memory.

The more recent critique on the uses and abuses of memory has shifted its focus from methodological and conceptual concerns to the importance and necessity of memory work, particularly in the context of ethics (testimony and archive, forgetting and forgiving, ideology – who decides which events will be remembered and how) (Ricoeur 2004, Margalit 2002, cited in Rossington and Whitehead 2007:11–12).

The memory boom is not a homogeneous process, though. There are different cultural contexts which have fed it, and different phenomena/events have inspired scholars to choose memory its object of study. Radstone notes that “the contemporary explosion of scholarly research emerged within the context of a more general cultural fascination with memory” (Radstone 2000:9). Several trends can be brought out and researchers from different countries stress that it is not always possible to adequately compare the reasons why the interest and urge to study the different forms of memory have increased in these particular countries during the last decade or so, these reasons are occasionally too complex to compare (Kammen 1995:247–251, Erll 2005:2–3).

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<sup>1</sup> A characteristic example of this epistemological shift in the humanities and social sciences is the emergence of the new keyword – *memory* – in handbooks, disciplinary encyclopaedias and dictionaries. For example, Raymond Williams’s (1976) classic *Keywords* enlisted concepts like ‘history’, ‘myth’, and ‘ideology’, but not ‘memory’. A more recent edition *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society* presents ‘memory’ next to ‘history’ and ‘heritage’ (Bennett et al 2005:214–215).

By no means is the memory boom itself free from ideology, from legitimising and favouring certain issues and ignoring others. Kansteiner draws attention to the interrelation between memory studies and identity politics, while pointing out that historically the crises of memory have tended to coincide with crises of identity: “memory is valorized where identity is problematized” (Kansteiner 2002:184).

Although the concept of the boom refers to a synchronic dimension, we cannot but concur with the position that memory means different things at different times (Radstone 2000), therefore our understanding of this phenomenon also needs to be diachronic and dynamic. Here we find our rationale in presenting to the reader yet another collection of studies on memory by pointing to the necessity of a nuanced investigation into the comparably versatile instigators of those booms (plural intended). These booms have undertaken manifold courses while being triggered by different experiences which depend on particular socio-cultural and historical contexts. These in turn depart from geographical differences and distinct memory experiences – we are aware of dissimilarities governing the memory booms in the US or in Europe, for one, but we may also point out the colonial constraints and contingencies in Australia, which deviate from the memory boom experienced in Estonia. Thus the elaboration on the manifold process renders versatile insights into experience and temporality, apparent also in the contributions below.

Nevertheless, the memory boom has turned from its former cumulative phase to a more critical one, and even though it seems to be hard to find unified concepts, theories and methodologies for talking about memory in cultural disciplines, critical awareness of the present predicament can certainly lead us further.

### 3. Memory studies: inter and transdisciplinary challenges

*Memory studies* has currently become an umbrella term embracing all research (both in the humanities and social sciences) that defines its object as ‘memory’. Memory studies like several other new analogous in-between-disciplines (performance studies, urban studies, gender studies etc.) have recently emerged after the interdisciplinary shifts in academia. Memory studies is not limited to any existing discipline traditionally holding the right to study memory (psychology, history, philosophy etc.). Instead, memory studies has risen from and around the ‘travels of the concept’ (Bal 2002), uniting multiple disciplines and creating a ‘field study’ (Young 2000:126) concentrated around one concept – memory. The complexity of the situation rises from the bi-directional nature of memory – it can be both an *object* of and a *tool* for research.

Numerous interdisciplinary conferences<sup>2</sup> dedicated to the issue of memory have been organised lately. The current publication presents contributions that

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<sup>2</sup> Cultural Memory and Cultures in Transition, Vilnius, 2006; The State of Social Memory Studies, Virginia, USA, 2005; Cultures of Memory, Memories of Culture, Cyprus, 2004; Cultural Memory Conference, University of Warwick, UK, 2003, Memory from Transdisciplinary Perspectives: Agency, Practices, and Mediations, Tartu, 2007.

were initiated by the international conference *Memory from Transdisciplinary Perspectives: Agency, Practices, and Mediations*<sup>3</sup> that was held in Tartu, Estonia, in January 2007.<sup>4</sup> This conference provided a meeting ground for scholars from the humanities and social sciences, who convened to map the present situation in memory studies, and to undertake a critical re-examination of the employed theoretical or methodological premises. The potentials for transdisciplinary research on the topic of memory were approached in the final discussions of the conference, and these deliberations have also inspired to a certain extent the arguments presented in the current issue.<sup>5</sup>

In February 2008 a similar event was organised by The New School for Social Research in New York, USA. The conference was titled *Is an Interdisciplinary Field of Memory Studies Possible?* The convenors argued that different scholars doing memory research share during such meetings the need for new paradigms and analyses that would bridge and support the diverse disciplines of memory studies<sup>6</sup>.

In January 2008 a brand new journal, *Memory Studies*, was launched (Sage Publications) with a statement that the field of memory studies is driven 'by problem or topic, rather than by singular method or tradition' that facilitates the critical forum for negotiations between different disciplinary assumptions (Hoskins et al. 2008:5).

Memory studies can still be considered rather a set of multidisciplinary territories than a newly integrated web of inter or transdisciplinary collaboration<sup>7</sup> (Roediger and Wertsch 2008:9, Misztal 2003:7). Memory studies is a developing field involving various disciplinary traditions and it has been argued that it therefore needs more systematic theoretical foundation (i.e., the development of novel

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<sup>3</sup> The conference was organized by the Research Centre of Culture and Communication, University of Tartu, Estonia. See conference website <http://www.ut.ee/memory2007>. (Visited May 13, 2008.)

<sup>4</sup> Keynote speakers of the conference included James V. Wertsch, Susannah Radstone, David Berliner, Paul Bouissac, Seppo Knuuttila, and Tiina Kirss.

<sup>5</sup> Several speakers argued that one feasible option for a transdisciplinary research project could be a case-centred study. As a possible perspective for transdisciplinary memory research, they raised the question of how World War II is remembered. This draws attention to one nexus of current memory research in the humanities and social sciences. Furthermore, participants of the final discussion observed that different approaches in memory studies should co-operate to study a specific aspect or event or act of remembering; e.g. to combine the practice of cultural research with neuropsychology. Such concrete transdisciplinary co-operation would unite scholars from different fields, to create collaborative relations while drawing on previous achievements, and to establish a fresh environment for discovering the potential embedded in varied disciplinary expertise.

<sup>6</sup> See conference website <http://www.nssrmemoryconference.com>. (Visited April 29, 2008.)

<sup>7</sup> Strathern (2005:127) defines *multi-disciplinarity* as the alignment of skills from different disciplines; *interdisciplinarity* may involve a common framework shared across disciplines to which each contributes its bit; *transdisciplinarity* brings disciplines together in contexts where new approaches arise out of the interaction between them, but to a heightened degree.

concepts), as well as more disciplinarity in view of more elaborated empirical research in the future (Roediger and Wertsch 2008:19).

Whether this tendency towards greater disciplinary unity in memory studies, and greater terminological coherency related to memory between different researchers justifies itself remains to be seen. It is nevertheless clear that we cannot draw on traditional methodological frameworks when studying memory from a broader perspective. Yet, on the other hand, the previous disciplinary knowledge cannot be totally ignored. The transdisciplinarity of memory studies is not wholeheartedly welcomed by all scholars in the field. Susannah Radstone (2008:32) finds the move towards transdisciplinarity to be disturbing, because “the travelling concepts related with memory (e.g. trauma) may become applied too rapidly to diverse phenomena including texts, practices and cultures” and consequently these concepts “may appear to explain more than they actually do”. In Radstone’s opinion, memory research would be “most productively practiced *within* the disciplines from which media and cultural studies borrow, rather than within the transdisciplinary space of ‘memory studies’” (Radstone 2008:35).

These discussions by Wertsch and Radstone indicate that the perception of the course to where memory studies should head can be as diverse and varied as the field of memory studies itself proposes to be. On the one hand, it is argued that the solution lies in developing a disciplinary framework that could be used to develop a conceptual apparatus, simultaneously differentiated and yet shared, being unequivocally understandable. On the other hand, the heterogeneous nature of memory studies and the importance of the contributions of different disciplinary traditions are acknowledged, as this allows the representatives of different disciplines to reciprocate in their shedding of light to the prospects of memory as an object and a method.

For the authors of the present introduction to the following case studies, the transdisciplinary perspective in memory studies lies not in pursuing universal concepts or developing a universal methodology, but in studying concrete phenomena, which may give rise to shared problems for further research on common grounds. We have articulated the emergent research problems by trying to avoid disciplinary binders, however, this does not mean that disciplinary methodologies could not provide an important contribution to a more comprehensive understanding of a particular phenomenon in further research. In other words, transdisciplinary memory studies should seek for research questions amongst complex elusive problems (either new or old), from the subject matters that are determined by the overlap of multiple disciplines (Young 2000:126). For such a transdisciplinary research project, we argue that scholars should employ careful critical reflexivity towards the disciplinary frameworks applied (including concepts, definitions of memory, etc.). Such collaboration may lead to transdisciplinary concepts and a more complex understanding of the researched phenomenon as a whole.

In the current issue, the transdisciplinary approach to memory, suggested to our readers by the editors who have collated these particular contributions, draws upon the investigation of *how memory is mediated*. Although none of the articles

include explicitly transdisciplinary studies, the mediation-perspective allows us, as editors, to observe connections and points of contact for the different treatments that follow.

The problem of mediation of memory is ambiguous in research on memory, however. Memory has a double position here – memory can be dealt with as a medium (between the past, the present and the future) and it can be observed as something that is mediated in culture by means of different mediums (both material and immaterial, both technological and ‘traditional’). Memory as a medium has two roles, which have been pointed out both by Yuri Lotman (2000) and Aleida Assmann (1999). Approaching memory as an object, they differentiate on the operational level of memory between the ‘informative’ and ‘storage memory’, and the ‘creative’ and ‘functional memory’, respectively. These distinct types of memory are characterised by different temporal and spatial relations. If we focus on memory as something that is mediated in culture by different mediums, we are talking about what is included in functional memory, i.e. what is relevant and needs mediation in culture. Here the relationships between memories and the representational level of memory are involved. On the one hand, these memories are intricate productions of different narratives and genres (Chamberlain and Thompson 1998, Radstone 2000:11), on the other, memories are embedded in specific historical experience, i.e. they are memories belonging to an individual who, having had the experiences, at a later date simultaneously remembers and applies the memory. Kansteiner (2002) has argued that too much attention has been paid to the mediation of memory via discursive and visual objects, to the production of the objects of memory, and too little to the ‘consumers of memory’ as a heterogeneous community. From the perspective of this issue the mediation of memory involves multiple agents, individual and collective, human and inhuman, in their interrelations in the ‘memory work’. The questions which the authors of the following articles strive to answer are: How do different mediums influence memory and remembering? How is the medium for remembering, in its turn, influenced by what is being remembered or who does the remembering? What are the relations between the levels of representations and operations of memory, or in other words, what are the connections between the mediation of memories and the dynamics of remembering? What are the entanglements of memory and temporal inversion in representing the interaction between past and present?

#### **4. Narratives and memory: time and (articulated) mediations of contested truth**

An eternal question permeating the discussion of memory is its relation to reality, the degree of mediation in the process of remembering and the eventual ‘products’ of memory. This angle calls for a deeper look at the emergent agency of memory, and to investigate its mediating capacity as well as the act of mediation in the context of representation. The functional context of mediation is particularly

relevant in discussing (or conceptualising) the problems of access to external reality. Therefore, contributions in the first set of this volume do not so much investigate how memory operates, but rather conceptualise the moments entangled in mediation from three distinct disciplinary perspectives: that of folkloristics, cinema in cultural studies, and history studies. Their approaches are not homogeneous, taking into account different 'technologies' of memory involved, but appear nevertheless linked by the related conceptual basis in their deliberation.

The unifying principle for these studies revolves around the narrative and temporal texture of memory, perceived as an articulation or representation of the past. The authors have taken a look at the discursive figurations of memory as representation, not so much of what is remembered but rather the conceptual or political contingencies of recalling. It has been stated by many of those who have provided substantially to the analysis of memory in cultural context that it means different things at different times (cf. Radstone 2000). The current contributors address experience, reality, time, narrative, and language as inherent notions involved in the act of remembering, but also in the process of recalling.

The foundational premise for all three articles rests on the mediation of memory by narratives in intricate involvement with temporality. Memories are presented to us in narrative structure, while narrative is the central means whereby humans come to understand temporality – we learn to organise time through the experience of narratives, both fiction and historical (Ricoeur 1980). Narrative as a mediation of memory is embedded in the dialogic moment of telling, which in turn implies the mediation of language. Language is a medium for remembrance, which nevertheless cannot be taken for granted as a lucid medium but opaque and arbitrary in its application of linguistic or poetic device.

These texts explore time and memory, time and narrative, anachronism and allegory, memory and fantasy, intentional selection and political entanglements, the collapse of time in representations. The subject relations extend from individual mental processes to collective perceptions. The proposed analyses imply the perspective of both individual and social memory, but do not particularly articulate the tensions between the individual and collective perspectives. The problems raised concern the articulation of 'truth' about the past, or the moment for reversing the established 'truths' and re-investigating 'realities' experienced. These inquiries address another aspect in the mediating agency of memory, by questioning its transparency and foregrounding memory's complex relation to 'actuality' (cf. Radstone and Hodgkin 2003:7). The basic understanding of time in these settings contends with the postmodern claim that time is a historical construct, and there exists no linear, progressive temporality. All three authors find inspiration in the explicit collapse of time in their narratives discussed as representations of memory.

In his article, **Seppo Knuuttila** elaborates on the issue of narrative and the expression of the experience of time, by investigating the conceptual potential of tropes – the figures of speech where the mode of thought or usage diverges from norm. While focusing on anachrony to describe the discrepancy between the order



of events in a story or in their presentation, he explores how the articulation of memory and imagination makes it possible to 'travel' in time, and also reverse the position of truth. By contending that in folkloristics memory is always articulated through a text, he discusses anachronism as a temporal figure of speech, a trope similar in use to metaphor, metonymy and irony, when posing the question: how the articulations of imagination and memory work. "Anachronism ... always manipulates the course and structures of time." Knuuttila examines inversion in temporality, the manipulation with its logic as a trope: "a consciously chosen means of expression through which relations between the past, present and future are organized". Intentional discord between temporal or spatial order in narrative expression reflect the uniqueness of individual experiences and the relative truth in remembering past events. Anachronisms as temporal tropes have a potential in collapsing the past and present, while this reversible projection in time renders a potential for critical, humorous, or didactic expression. According to Knuuttila, the most important research subject in contemporary folklore studies is the relative conceptualisation of the experienced past, which is 'always anachronistic' in the simultaneous articulation of memory and imagination, which "produce or affirm the actual meanings about the past." Potentially, the focus of interpretation would be on the textual articulation of time, memory, imagination and context.

**Felicity Collins** has found her productive figure of speech in allegory, analysing the representational capacity of narrative via film, a national cinema's allegorical reworking of colonial documents and popular frontier iconography into scenes of violence. Her relation of narrative and memory investigates the complicated representation of truth in the reflection of past traumatic experience that addresses the political concerns of today. She focuses on memory and selection in the context of the emotional burden of remembering (Todorov 2001), the choices made in the interaction of disappearance or preservation of memories (cf. Rohdewald in this volume), and the complex representation of truth about the colonial past in the elements of historical past retained in public memory. To this she juxtaposes intentional (fictional) 'surfacing' of repressed (erased) memories. By looking at the historical memory, allegorical truth and colonial violence in Australia, she asks how historical fiction can tell the truth about the past. The point of departure likewise dovetails to the perception of the time/space compression in postmodern context and in the implementation of modern technologies which collapse temporal order, as proposed already in the critical insights by Walter Benjamin. Cinema and television are the twentieth century's most powerful arbiters of historical memory. Collins is likewise inspired by Benjamin's defence of allegorical expression as an antidote to myth in her proposal to implement 'film allegory as a perceptual mode' in remembering or repudiating established myths of colonial history. She argues that "allegorical modes of historical fiction have the capacity to produce new forms of public memory and subjectivity that conventional historiography fails to recognise."

Collins asks if the self-reflexive history film could teach historians a different mode of remembering modernist, traumatic or holocaustal events, when the post-

war shift from ‘storytelling’ to ‘re-telling, re-membering’ as the site of ‘authentic’ engagement between subjectivity and the past becomes combined with the cinematographic temporal inversion. Media temporality suffuses historical reality because of its ‘misremembering’, ‘misinterpreting’, the continual collapsing of narratives. She aligns it with a new ‘traumatic’ formation of the postmodern, incomplete subject, whose lacunary relation to history and memory provides the apprehensive and empathetic link with the fragmented, dialectical structure of allegory. Here the author sees the potential for understanding historical fiction “as an antidote to rather than instance of myth-making.” Allegorical intention in fiction (film) provides a revisionist moment in order to supplement an existing media iconography of colonial times, and would repudiate the tendency to dismiss historical fictions as myth.

Thus the allegory of violence can be used against national myth as its re-interpretation, in order to supplement historical ‘traces’, rather than represent ‘holocaustal’ events. “In the recent constellation of films that re-figure the on-going catastrophe of colonial violence in Australia, historical allegory is performing the paradoxical feat of aligning history’s victors with the point-of-view of the defeated, producing a new, ethical form of subjectivity with a bi-cultural sense of nationhood as one among several horizons of identity.” The cinematographic texts or narratives “work as dis-placements and re-memberings, in media temporality, of traumatic, unrepresentable, unmourned historical events.”

The third contribution in this set by **Stephan Rohdewald** concurs with the discussion of mediated representation of past as a narrative of national memory. He departs from another potential of temporal collapse in the presented narrative where the intentional inversion of time and place is implemented with a political purpose of creating a celebrative, coherent ‘narrative’ as a foundational premise for teleological national memory. The author interprets Pierre Nora’s seminal concept of *lieux de mémoire* with a semantic extension: places of memory are to be understood metaphorically – they are not confined to physical places, but include personalities, events, buildings and memorials, institutions and terms. Rohdewald proposes to discuss the production and reproduction of social groups with shared remembrance via the iconographic transformations of “culturally formed, societally binding figures of memory” when drawing inspiration from both Halbwachs’ and Assmann’s conceptions alluding to narrative and figures of speech. He contends that past ‘levitates and fixates’ into ‘symbolic figures’ while they become in the framework of national movements important points of crystallisation of national identities. Rohdewald finds particular significance in the process that he calls ‘sacralisation of nationalism’ and focuses on expressively Christian elements, on national religious figures of memory in nominally orthodox societies to investigate religious and cultural history as central aspects of political history. He extends to a transnational setting in a comparative exploration of the instrumentalisation and mediation of these figures of memories through the angle of *histoire croisée*: concentrating on interdependency, linkage and interconnectedness. Pointing to the secularisation of the saints in the 19th century when

(re)negotiating (or reinventing) competitive memories of those ‘national’ figures, the author traces the changes concerning the temporal horizon, the conceptualisations initiated by and formulated around these figures, and the forms of collective identity. For this functional change of remembrance of religious figures of memory, or the ideologies they represent, their role and significance can be recast, especially in the context of societal crises, and thus negotiating new narratives of national memory where time and experience collapse in the process of reinterpreted mediation.

### 5. Mediation of memory on stage: displays in theatre and museum

Theatre due to its spatial organisation and museum due to its purpose have both been productive sites of memory, while film and laboratory present somewhat more recent examples. Together these *loci* can be defined as *stages* on which memory is set for display (either by particular directors or by a collective imagination), for performances and further reflexion and observation. A stage may be both an imaginary cultural framework and a particular materialised site that has a capacity to transform everything in its frame (either real or imaginary) into signs possessing double meaning (see Eco 1977). From the articles by Liina Unt, Anneli Saro, and Stuart MacLean we can learn that these stages for memory (landscapes, theatre and film productions, museum exhibits and laboratories) as well as objects set for display (actors, stereotypes, landmarks, exhibits) become signs that stimulate both our cultural and personal memory, that mediate between collective and individual pasts.

Theatre and film, although by different means of expression, are collective forms of art and thereby function as a stage for mediating and (re)creating cultural/collective memory via adapting popular narratives, either real or fictional events and characters from the past. An interesting example of the cinematographic representations of colonial violence in Australian cinema as allegorical modes of historical fiction has been presented by Felicity Collins in this volume, who argues that film allegory has the capacity to produce new forms of public memory and subjectivity. In Estonia, the construction of cultural selfhood has always been extensively based fictional texts – literature, theatre productions, and films later on. The analysis proposed by **Anneli Saro** on the stereotypes depicted in the cinema and theatre productions of the popular Estonian school novel *Kevade* (*Spring*, penned by the national classic Oskar Luts in 1913–1914) provides an example of the dynamics of cultural memory related to certain artistic textual space that is capable of both storing information from the past and at the same time re-creating it (cf. Lotman 2000:18). Today *Spring* has become rather a *locus* for collective cultural memory, an association of various texts that collocate the original novel, its multiple re-interpretations both on stage and on screen, as well as its numerous meta and intertextual commentaries. The rural lifestyle depicted in *Spring* prevailed until the 1950s, therefore even today elderly Estonians may

reminisce of their schooldays by referring to *Spring*. Furthermore, the protagonists from the novel have become common denominators for regular school mischief or for boys and girls in one's class – each class is said to have their Toots (the most mischievous boy in class) or Teele (the class beauty). Thus, fictional characters and events play an important role in shaping peoples' 'personal cultural memory' (van Dijck 2004a) as the real ones. Commonly shared stereotype images created by the arts (theatre, film) can become as significant as those based on real events, and therefore the visual arts, especially theatre and film, appear to be powerful designers of cultural memory.

In a similar vein, the familiar Estonian landscapes that **Liina Unt** discusses in her article, become material 'condensers' (cf Lotman 2000:18, 111) and a medium of cultural memory that have been appropriated and absorbed into different pasts and different socio-cultural periods. Cultural landscapes often carry strong symbolic meanings for a community and sometimes function as national emblems in quite similar way as national religious figures (cf. Rohdewald in this issue) or national stereotypic characters and their embodiments (cf. Saro in this issue). Yet, engagement with the past of the landscape does not simply emerge from an encounter with material references, as it requires certain acts performed by people in this place (Lowenthal 2007:636, Tilley 2006:14). Landscape as a stage for (inter)action (in contrast to landscape as a scenery, a pictorial image) becomes the processual place of collective recall and remembrance. For that reason open air performances that use certain landscapes as a stage for theatre performances can likewise serve as mediators between the past of the landscape and the present of the actors and audience alike, providing the experience of embodied interaction with the landscape-related memories. Open-air performances have a capacity to both reinforce and transform our perceptions and memories related to familiar landscapes. Unt asserts that quite different fictional strategies can be used for actualising or reinventing the landscape-related memory – sometimes it entails a symbolic return to the site of either fictional or historical events, sometimes it denotes the construction of fictional memory about a particular location. Landscapes have served as heterogeneous 'sites of memory' (Nora 1989) for various periods in the Estonian past, but statistics of the last five years provided by Liina Unt show that certain landscapes (mainly the historical 'countryside' and 'wild nature') and sites (manors, castles and ruins, farmhouses) are preferred over the others (Soviet landscapes and landmarks are almost neglected as well as landscapes created during the 1990s). This is in line with the post-Soviet discourse of remembering, which sought its roots both in the flourishing pre-World War II farms (cf Kõresaar 2002, Palang et al 2004) and in the 'pristine' Estonian nature, and likewise in an attempt to restore its membership in the European cultural space through the veneration of Balto-Germanic manor culture. In consequence, current open-air productions provide excellent material for studying the relationship of Estonians to their landscape heritage, in order to analyse what persists and what changes in how people perceive or estimate these landscapes.

Unt's discussion of a recent open-air production *Vargamäe kuningriik* (*Kingdom of Vargamäe*, 2006) indicates the complexity of a particular landscape – Vargamäe – that is loaded with cultural memories, where fictional and real pasts have become inextricable. *Vargamäe kuningriik* was performed in the farmlands (including both fields and forests) of a seminal Estonian national classic Anton Hansen Tammsaare, whose five-volume novel *Tõde ja õigus* (*Truth and Justice*, written in 1926–33), has been an identity creating text for several generations of Estonians. Although the reception canon of the novel has been concentrated first and foremost on its main characters, the images of Vargamäe (prototypic setting of events in the novel) and its landscapes symbolise the successful cultivation of the hard Estonian soil. *Vargamäe kuningriik* provided a significant example of the strong integration of the fictional meanings related to Tammsaare's novel with the actual past of the novelist's home-farm, which has in turn become a stage for semi-fictional memory as a museum. Together these associations in cultural memory create a common receptional basis for the Estonian audience. For a director of a play, as well as for those arriving as audience, the concurrent encounters with Vargamäe can be considered as acts of 'commemoration ceremonies' (Connerton 1989) where cultural memory, created by fictional characters and events together with symbolic landscapes, is constantly performed by various generations of actors and spectators.<sup>8</sup> Thereby the processual quality of both landscape and cultural memory becomes evident.

A different aspect of landscape dynamics is actualised in the study by **Stuart McLean**, who asserts that landscapes change in accordance with the change in our knowledge of them. His example is the peat bog landscape close to the village of Grauballe in Jutland, Denmark, that has been transformed from the 'wild nature' to a sacral landscape where ritual executions and immolations are believed to be performed. In McLean's case it was the bog body of the Grauballe Man, 'archived' by the bog for centuries and (re)discovered by scientists in the past century, which has actualised different aspects of cultural memory related with the bog.

Thus, in order to be mediated, memory should be materialised either in material objects or in particular embodiments or images. Every nation has in its culture certain typical or stereotypical fictional figures coming from the arts or other cultural spheres like religion or folklore, that have achieved great symbolic significance for various generations. In collective memory both orthodox martyrs (see Rohdewald in this issue) and embodiments of stereotype fictional characters in theatre and film (see Saro in this issue) function as a medium of cultural continuity which transmits cultural memory between generations. From a different perspective, the remains of a body – the Grauballe Man – 'recall' different information related to the Iron Age (see McLean in this issue). Anneli Saro's example of *Spring* demonstrates how one fictional text (including its adaptations) mediates particular stereotype images related to cultural memory and thereby to

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<sup>8</sup> In the summer of 2008, stage productions based on four of the books in Tammsaare's series will be performed there, to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Estonian republic.

collective identity. Theatre and film as audiovisual media present particular embodiments of certain characters that sometimes become stereotype images in collective memory. The strong visual canon and ‘common cultural consensus’ (Tudor 1973:131) of how the main characters of *Spring* should be depicted was created by the movie *Spring* (1969). Successful casting together with regular reruns on Estonian television has created a ‘nostalgia film’ that supports ‘selective re-remembering’ of a particular historical period (Jameson 1991:279–296 – ref. in Grainge 2003:190–191). Although *Spring* has not been adapted for the screen after the successful 1969 production, it has been staged several times in Estonian theatres where actors’ bodies have both recycled and re(created) stereotypes in cultural/collective memory associated with certain characters and their previous enactments. Saro shows how stereotypes in theatre may achieve the status of an agent linking individual corporeal and collective memory. Although it is not easy for an actor to brake a widely-accepted/legitimate stereotype and establish a new one, on the other hand, the embodiments and interpretations by certain popular and beloved actors become ‘haunting’ (Carlson 2003) in the audience’s memory for years until the new generation of theatregoers will discover their own favourites amongst younger actors. Theatre is a live medium that provides the audience with unique opportunities to encounter fictional worlds that consist both of real bodies and imagined characters and events, where stereotypes from the past are constantly recalled, recycled and reformed. In conclusion, observing stereotypes in theatre and film, one can see both the dynamics and continuity of stereotypic characters for a nation and their varied embodiments.

Museums that were once meant to structure the ‘storage memory’ (Assmann 1999), and to archive cultures in their integrity, have currently become a ‘collective memory medium’ (Erl 2004). Thereby modern museums, in collaboration with laboratories, have turned from previously closed ‘archives’ to more public open spaces where memory is explored, produced and performed with the help of new media technologies. Stuart McLean’s case study of the Grauballe Man demonstrates how the remains of a body, with the help of new technologies and chemicals, gain new ‘memories’ time after time. If the earlier laboratory tests could indicate the exact burial time, then now they can provide us with information on his last meal (“porridge gruel made from corn, along with the seeds of more than 60 herbs and grasses and traces of the poisonous fungus ergot”). Furthermore, the fragile remains have been transformed for examination purposes into a virtual body with the help of CT scanning and 3-D computer generated reconstructions that make it possible to investigate various body parts of the Grauballe Man, including his skin, muscles and tendons. These discoveries are displayed in a museum to encourage an interactive relation with the exhibit by the museum visitors, and to stimulate their sensory imagination and shared corporeality with the displayed body. The Grauballe Man becomes a sign of the Iron Age, not just a simple body, but the body that has both mediated us something from the ancient past while being simultaneously a product of the present.

## 6. Material objects and technologies: non-human agencies in memory mediation

An act of memory is in fact a series of activities – inscribing or recording, interpreting, narrating, recalling etc – that may involve a number of memory products. One of the most interesting sites of memory production has been and continues to be the sphere of material culture. Several articles in this issue deal with the material memory in connection with particular practices, identities and agency in everyday life. Objects are seen as agents in the construction of memory rather than external instruments that mould our past: objects are mediated memories, material inscriptions of (historical) experiences that are always filtered through discursive conventions, social and cultural practices, and technological tools (van Dijck 2004a:261–262, cf also Erl 2005:102f). **Marketta Luutonen**, **Berk Vaher** and **Anna Reading** demonstrate this dynamic aspect of cultural memory in interaction with the creation of individual identities in the everyday cultural practices of handicraft, vinyl records collecting, and camera-phone photos. To these humanly devised objects and technologies MacLean adds – with his example of the bog body – non-humans by traversing the customary distinction between the natural and the social realms and showing that, under the ‘right circumstances’, they can assume an agentive role.

At the very core of these contributions there is material memory as an act of mediation. The articles analyse how material inscriptions mediate between individuality and collectivity, between the past and the present. The authors’ theoretical relation to objects can, in most cases, be characterised by the concept of personal cultural memory introduced by José van Dijck (2004a:262f) – a concept that places material objects and activities related to them in the intersection of individual and culture by emphasising the individual’s creative relationship to technological tools, socio-cultural practices and cultural/collective memory in the formation of identity. McLean maintains that the nature of memory is inevitably relational: his treatment of the Grauballe Man suggests that we need to understand memory not only as a faculty exercised by human subjects but as a continuously unfolding heterogeneous process that involves ‘human beings, technologies, philosophies of history, architecture, chemical reactions, animals, plants, micro-organisms, landscape, geology, climate’ etc. He claims that in theorizing collective memory we should pay more attention to its collective aspect by considering both the role of non-human agencies in the shaping of (human) histories, as well as to the relationship between preservation and transformation in the constitution of collective memory.

Some theorists state that memory materialises primarily through the technologies, which are used for producing mediated objects (cf. van Dijck 2004b: 358f). In Luutonen’s approach, a traditional woollen knitted garment involves memories of the process of its making, the history of tradition, with certain ideas but also connotative emotional and physical reactions to the material nature of the garment. Vaher in his turn refers to the (sonic) past of the exotic distance arising

from the materiality of vinyl records. Reading's analysis on the use of mobile phones addresses the transformation of memory in the digital age by conceptualising the usage of a 'wearable' mobile phone as a (private) bodily practice (even an extension of the body) that is simultaneously part of a (public) space of multimedia network. The 'new materiality' of mobile technology is connected to the transformation of individual and cultural mnemonic practices. Thus, in addition to their material aspect, the technologies can also be appropriated as social and cultural tools for inscribing memory and identity. On the other hand, according to McLean, the technologies (in his case the research laboratory and the museum display) are not the only agents of memory at work here: for instance, also chemical processes unfolding invisibly below the surface of an object preserve and transform it and consequently play a role in the construction of memory.

The cases studied by these authors express another aspect of the politics of identity in their relation to material memories, if compared to the previously discussed contributions by Collins, Rohdewald or Saro in this issue. For example, Vaher shows that in a cultural practice like vinyl hunting, the initial 'motive is all-important' (Pearce 1994:158–159): record collecting is essentially a culture of dissent, "a way of reasserting one's agency in the consumerist society through expanded consciousness of the complexities of the forgotten cultural past". Vaher combines two important aspects in the practice of collecting vinyl records: the music that has a mnemonic function in itself and vinyl records as collectibles that enable a special access to the past connected to the technological awareness (cf. van Dijck 2006:364).

In Reading's study, however, the predominant question is how the gendered usage of mobile technology in everyday life transcends the established boundaries between public and private memories. She shows among other things that, in terms of memory, the camera-phone is being used to traverse the gendered contradictions of space and time in the post-industrial society, where children are often cared for by women other than the mother. Mobile images are used as a form of public testimony in relation to the more private world of parenting and childcare.

In Luutonen's treatment the identity-politics aspect is more veiled, but traceable in the choices and motives of the consumers and producers of handicraft items. Her approach rests on the background conception that craft contains inherently contesting aesthetics, the images of which emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a reaction to the products of the industrial revolution and an attempt "to restore a dignity and respectability of labour, to oppose the separation of art and politics, morality and religion" by becoming 'art in society' (Shanks 1994:107–108). We may add here the criticism of the modern consumer society, the 'green' world view and other ideologies pointing to the predicament of the modern world. In Luutonen's interpretation, the handmade sweaters in the wardrobe of modern Finnish people carry a message of traditional closeness to nature combined with the contemporary ecological world view, 'old-fashioned' masculinity and, in a certain way, of timeless Finnishness (cf. Saro about the stereotypes of Estonian-



ness in cultural memory), which is represented by handicraft belonging to the so-called folk art.

Individual choices made on the basis of cultural knowledge that extends much further than the individual's experience support Luutonen's interpretation of how craft conveys memories. We can take a step further by referring to how the material memory relies on and also acts as a generic resource of cultural remembrance. This relates to the concept of genre memory, which is based on the understanding of the path-dependency of memory, meaning that images of the past not only reflect on what is remembered and in which circumstances, but are 'path-dependent products' (Olick 1999) of earlier memory work. In the interpretation provided by Berk Vaher, exotic vinyl hunting can be seen as an extension of earlier exotic practices, namely of 'ethnographic surrealism'. In Luutonen's analysis the meaning attached to a hand-knitted pullover – be it an 'anonymous' ethnographic item or one created by a designer – is embedded in the perception of the place these objects have in (popular) tradition and in the (ethnic) realm of memory. The similar seems to emerge from McLean's analysis of how contemporary mythical and supernatural associations around a bog body from the Iron Age celebrate the recent achievements of archaeologists in deciphering its secrets.

The complexity of materiality, technologies, socio-cultural practices, as well as personal and collective identities in the problem of memory can be summed up by using the concept of the realm of memory – a place where '[cultural] memory crystallises and secretes itself' (Nora 1989:7). In this issue, more than one article aligns with Nora's concept of the realm of memory, in a rather monumental sense, without directly conceptualising it: historical experience (Collins), historical figures (Rohdewald), national tradition – either in the form of ethnic stereotypes, 'nationalised' landscape or revived folk art (Saro, Unt and Luutonen). Nora's approach has aroused abundant criticism both because of his dichotomy between memory and history, cultural pessimism and his longing for the lost 'real' collective memory (politics and cultural despair), but also for his French-centeredness. Yet it has been highly appreciated as a novel perspective for writing cultural history as the history of memory, which makes his work indispensable (cf. among others Tai 2001, Leith 1999, Winter 1997). Anna Reading suggests in her analysis of the implementation of camera-phones that we need to re-conceptualise personal and cultural memory by taking into account the mobile digital technologies of the 21st century. To counterbalance the argument resulting from Nora's train of thought that social milieus of memory will fade away and the only site of memory will be the body, she claims that the mobile phone's potential to link the body with a digital network refers to the generation of a new 'techno-social milieu'. However, Reading refers to the culture-specificity and ambivalence of memory mediation practices in the digital era, shows that the inability of an individual to adapt to technology (or the relative expensiveness of technology) may at the same time interfere with the development of such milieu.

This in turn takes us back to practices and technologies and their role in the history of memory: on the one hand the development of digital media does not affect the fact that in the digital era memory is embodied in and mediated by artefacts just like before. On the other, we may concur with van Dijck that “the very notion of embodiment and materiality need upgrading in order to account for memory’s morphing nature as well as its hybrid conceptualisation” (van Dijck 2004b:351).

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