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# 1 *Class 11.01.2021*

## 1.1 Introduction to the Course

- class is difficult
- the readings are not long, but difficult even for native speakers
- he discovered this subject by accident
- Clyde Forsberg is our professor
- if there is one thing you should learn at university, what is it?—we learn how to learn
- Forsberg did not graduate from high school
- he studied a bunch of different things, first two degrees were in Religious studies, can read and write Hebrew, Arabic, Aramaic
- got a graduate degree in education and realized he hadn't missed anything in high school
- PhD in European, American, and Canadian history
- at 40 he figured out what he is learning for, it took him until after he finished his PhD
- he remembers Reagan not because he was in DC and saw it go down, but because he saw how Reaganomics destroyed people's lives and homes in Canada
- we will talk about digital memory and the problems that come with it
- the course will be artsy-fartsy, but it will also have a practical side to it
- 3-4 decent essays over the course of the semester
- the first thing we will have to do is watch a movie—they tend to be dark and he loves that (Danish and Canadian are apparently the best)
- he hates the lovy-dovy Hollywood movies
- **watch the movie *Remember***
  - it is about a German senior citizen living in Canada, in an elder home
  - he has Alzheimer's disease as he is in his 70s
  - he was in Germany during WWII
  - story is fictitious, but the war hero attempts to track down a Nazi commander that he believes killed his entire family
  - this is our first assignment, we will talk about it in class
- the Holocaust is one of the main items of memory studies
- trauma fucks with your head, so it is hard to say if you actually remember or not
- this means that one often gets it wrong—when something happened, how it happened, etc
- memory studies focuses on why you remember things the way you did, and why you cannot really trust your memory
- how can one do history if one's own memory is not even trustworthy
- a couple hundred years ago Canadians did what Trump supporters did a couple days ago
- Canadian health care is better than US health care—you don't have to pay a dime for your treatment
- free writing is a good thing, even though writing is different than shooting shit over some beers
- basically we are just at university to learn how to put things into your own words
- this course has a bunch of difficult conceptual things and boiling them down into

simple, straight-forward words

- we aren't really here to learn about memory studies, we will use memory studies to learn how to write
- Forsberg had a 57% in his high school history class, meaning it is not bad to not get it at first
- his parents were super hardcore religious, and he only found out how fucked it was until he left and saw what else there was
- he is the oldest one of 14 siblings
- if one is studying—writing is a good way to do it
- free writing, 10 minutes
- why do men tend to forget anniversaries, and why do women seem to remember them better? Nobody knows how
- if you don't delete files (forget things), maybe your system gets gummed up and slower if one does not de-clutter
- two kinds of forgetting—forget what a person did (my father was so nice and kind when he certainly wasn't) or the kind of forgetting where you can let things go without erasing the things that happened
- is the idea of psychotherapy to remember? you need to remember and work through it so that you can finally forget
- remembering what you need to remember is an important part of learning and remembrance

## 1.2 Free writing

Which is better: To remember or to forget? Take a position.

It is better to forget than to remember. Forgetting can enable one to experience the same thing anew more than once. It can also mean that unpleasant things can be forgotten. If that happens, it can almost seem like they never happened. In some cases this might benefit the person who forgets. Forgetting can help to de-clutter our brain and get rid of information we do not need. If I remembered everything that I heard and did even in just one day my brain would be too full to be useful. I do not need to remember what exactly I had for breakfast, or which pants I wore last week. Forgetting can make room for the important things that should be remembered. Today I feel like this is even more true than 50 years ago because so much information is at our disposal whenever we want. We do not need to remember facts that a computer can tell us. We all carry one on us most of the time and can retrieve information in seconds. In some way this makes remembering, especially remembering of facts, useless. Maybe we even waste energy and brain capacity when we try to remember things that we do not need to remember. If we focused on forgetting everything we do not need or can simply look up again, we'd have more space and capacity to remember the things we cannot simply look up—personal experiences, emotions, etc.

## 2 Notes Remember (2015)

- Zev (Hebrew for Wolf) Gutman is 90, demented, and lives in a senior home
- Zev is an old German Jew who speaks with some German words in his English
- his wife Ruth died about a week before the movie begins, she died of cancer
- her death sent his dementia into overdrive
- now each time he sleeps he forgets her death and everything that comes after
- Zev has a friend called Max who is wheelchair-bound
- both of them are Jewish
- Max sends Zev on a mission to kill the Nazi SS Totenkopfverbände Blockführer from Auschwitz concentration camp that killed both of their families
- the Nazi escaped Germany by taking on the name of the recently executed, like some other SS officers prisoner—Max found 4 people that fit their target
- Max writes Zev a letter so that he can remember what he has to do, and also gives him hundreds of USD
- one night Zev leaves the senior home and goes to Cleveland—his son Charles starts looking for him unsuccessfully
- Max has made arrangements for most of the things on his voyage so Zev does
- there he buys a Glock 17 9mm handgun
- he has to find a man named Rudi Kurlander and kill him, one of the 4 is it—his real name is Otto Wallisch
- the first Rudi he finds was in the Wehrmacht, but at 18 he was in North Africa with General Rommel, and he has proof of that
- he is still proud of his military service, and even agreed with Hitler on the work camp stuff, but not on extermination camps
- but because he is not the one, Zev goes to Canada in search of another Rudi
- this one turns out to be a Jew as well, he even was at Auschwitz
- in that nursing home he plays piano for the first time since his wife's death and he remembers how to do it
- then he travels to Idaho to the house of the 3rd Rudi
- this one died and his son, a State Trooper, takes Zev in
- he shows him his dad's memorabilia collection:
  - Nazi flag that flew over Berlin during Kristallnacht (09.11.1938)
  - original Star of David patch
  - first edition Mein Kampf
  - framed picture of Heinrich Himmler
  - full SS uniform
- dad was a proud Nazi, would hang out with friends and tell stories
- they start drinking and it turns out that his dad only was a cook in the army
- John finds out Zev is Jewish and freaks out, shouting Heil Hitler in his face
- then he sets their German shepherd Eva on Zev, who shoots and kills both the dog and John
- en-route to his next stop he has a fit of dementia and walks into a road, trips and goes to the hospital
- there, he has a young girl read his letter to him
- Max used to be a Nazi hunter with the Simon Wiesenthal Center and caught many Nazi war criminals—now he is incapable so he sends Zev
- Zev had promised Max and his late wife Ruth he'd kill Otto Wallisch

- he leaves the hospital and goes to the 4th Rudi
- his daughter welcomes him
- when Rudi joins them, he and Zev recognize and remember each other
- they go outside to talk in private
- Rudi said he'd go outside from time to time to speak his name and remind himself of who he was/is
- Zev wants him to admit who he really is, at gun point, then threatening the granddaughter
- Rudi's family finds them outside and Charles joins them as he finally finds Zev
- despite Rudi's pleading, Zev makes him admit what he did, being a Blockführer and killing many people
- then he reveals that he was Kunibert Sturm, and that Zev was Otto Wallisch, both Blockführer at Auschwitz
- they both took fake names and escaped, tattooing themselves numbers on their left arms
- in rage, Otto shoots and kills Kunibert, says "I remember", and commits suicide
- finally we find out that Max knew all along and set Otto up, he is satisfied with finally having killed his families murderers
- his justification for murder was that he, Otto, and Kunibert were too old to be properly extradited to Germany and then convicted, that would take too long and they would die in the meantime

### **3    *Class 13.01.2021***

#### **3.1    Presentation next week**

- I have to be first for my presentation: Jan 18-24, Mar 1-7, Mar 29-Apr 4
- he changed the grading schedule to make up for
- my presentation will be next Wednesday, I can watch his on Monday to see what he wants me to do
- I need to submit an outline the morning of Wednesday, it should be styled in the same way as the one he will use on Monday

#### **3.2    Notes**

- we will write a comparative essay based on the two movies that we watched
- look at his outline from ecourse and take that as an example
- lots of talking about stuff that we will have to do, but that's not super important
- just some more talk

## 4 Notes A Hidden Life (2019)

- about a conscientious objector from Austria in WWII
- main character is called Franz Jägerstätter
- he is simply a farmer that sticks to his guns (or far away from them)
- he is Catholic, didn't serve in the German army, didn't swear fealty to Hitler, or respond to "Heil Hitler!" salutes
- as a result he was attacked in different ways in an attempt to break him
- in the end he is executed for his refusal and disobedience
- lives in St. Radegund with wife Franziska (Fani), living on farm work
- he is drafted in '39 but does not see combat
- next time in '43, Germany has conquered many countries, killed millions, started the Holocaust, and Franz simply cannot serve in that war
- it is complex in the interplay with his marriage: he became political and principled after marrying Fani, but now she wants him to give in because otherwise she will be without husband
- Can one stick to his guns if it makes one's family suffer? Is it a sin to act in self-preservation? Where does one draw the line?
- some people feel guilty because Franz is willing to suffer for his beliefs
- he finds supporters in many places, but none willing to stick up for him or to stand up to the Nazis
- some Nazis even get introspection, like the judge that questions Franz and then seems to put himself into Franz's shoes
- integrates these struggles into normal life
- Waldlan is a soldier who becomes a conscientious objector because of Franz
- regular citizens identify with government bullies of course
- soldiers (many really young) abuse Franz, tie him up, scream at him, all like bullies who know that their victims cannot fight back
- one covered phenomenon is that regular people invest their self-worth, pride, fantasy of machismo into a single authoritarian figure—this might be a parallel to the US in 2019 in a way

### Summary

- Franz and his wife are important members of the community
- he is sent to basic training, never sees any fighting
- when France surrenders, he is sent back for training
- he is called up again and has to swear an oath of allegiance to Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich
- Jägerstätter refuses to take the oath, despite pressure from those around him
- he finds strength in his faith in God and in his wife, even though he knows he will be arrested and maybe killed
- he is arrested and waits months for his trial, he exchanges letters with his wife
- he is brutally treated while in prison
- he is finally tried, found guilty, and sentenced to death

## 5 Notes Cultural Memory Studies: Sites of Memory in U.S.-American Histories and Cultures (Udo J. Hebel)

p. 47

### 5.1 Conceptual Frameworks and American Memory Studies

- US cultures of memory are shaped by developments since the colonial period
- because the US promised redemption (as a country and idea) and because the multiple ethnicities that conflict, purposeful construction and ongoing revision of a multivocal network of sites of memory happened
- for nation building/community preservation we study the political, social, and cultural power of imagined communities and invented traditions
- thus the significance of cultural memories and collective commemorations for the formation of the US nation can be studied
- the US was created rhetorically and in historical acts of political and cultural opposition
- we should remember the pre-Columbian achievements and travellers, be less Anglocentric, there are memories preceding 1492
- American studies is versatile and thus good at accommodating the heterogeneity of American cultures of memory and at studying the political and economic competition for commemorative participation and authority
- American and memory studies (constructivist and sociocultural approaches) mesh well together because of American studies foci on a usable past, American civil religion, New Historicist understanding of US culture as a rhetorical battlefield

### 5.2 The Cultural Work of Literary Sites of U.S.-American Memories

- three main types of literary commemoration:
  1. historiographical writings
  2. fictional writings
  3. autobiographical writings
- with European colonization came literary construction of cultural memories specific to America
- first contacts and conflicts with natives were preserved
- the Puritans (New England) were the most commemorative English-language writers
- there is a US-American commemoration of the Anglocentric origin myth of the Pilgrim Fathers' arrival at Plymouth Rock in 1620—Thanksgiving
- in the 17th century this myth was perpetuated to set America apart, best said in *“But whether New England may Live any where else or no [sic], it must Live in our History!”*
- they used historiographic scripts to exercise commemorative authority, especially in times of crises and intercultural conflicts (see officially sanctioned re-writes of New England history by prominent people)
- after the founding of the U.S.A. construction of historiographical sites continued—for

ideological control and cultural containment (e.g. G. Bancroft's *History of the United States of America*, from 1837 until the 1880s)

- after the British-American war and the Civil War a ton of historical novels were published—literary sites of memory—to maintain a national US culture and identity
- the intentional creation of a US national literature was demanded
- many historical novels dealing with earlier times are written
- regional differences come into play, the South has slavery literature (plantation literature; apologetic, racist, lost-cause of the Confederacy)
- continues with *Birth of a Nation*, *Gone with the Wind*, *North and South*
- history is still a popular genre, which shows its unbroken cultural power
- autobiographical writings are purposeful acts of individual remembrance
- they also serve the construction of identity in specific cultural and intercultural situations
- John Smith—self dramatizing impulse of early promoters of colonization
- self-scrutinizing urge of Puritan writings
- self-perceptions are a big section of the early religious or secular writings in British North America
- autobiographies of women, ethnic writers, politically or religiously dissenting writers are useful tools for oppositional, subversive expression (useful acts of individual remembering)
- American slave narratives stand out in this, they expose the plight of chattel slavery and the transatlantic slave trade—later resound in writings of MLK, Malcolm X... .
- also includes pluralization of ethnicities, away from Anglocentrism and English-only

### 5.3 Visual Sites of Memory in an Increasingly Mediated U.S.-American History and Culture

- visual rock art is the oldest form of visual sites of memory in the US
- made by different indigenous groups both pre- and post-Columbian
- these visual sites could have been either abstract, ceremonial, or representational
- they preserve sacred rites, mythic figures, ancient symbols, specific events like Spanish massacres
- the visual sites of memory remain part of ceremonial rites, the tourist business and commemorative industry with national parks in the Southwest
- paintings of *landing scenes* of Columbus and settlers have a special place as commemorative constructions of pivotal moments of origin, foundation, and identity formation
- landing scenes are a big part of active recollection of foundational moments
- John Trumbull's painting *The Signing of the Declaration of Independence, 4 July 1776* (1820) is another such commemoration—creates usable past by commissioning icons of memory
- these visual sites were widely reprinted and sold, making a connection from visual sites of memory to commercial interests
- pictorial US histories were also a hit, coming in the times of territorial expansion
- three iconic site of memory (pre 20th century) are: engraving of the Boston Massacre, distributed since right after the event; *Washington Crossing the Delaware* as the representation of G. Washington as hero; *Westward the Empire Takes its Way* as full representation of *Manifest Destiny*

- even *Freedom from Want* (1943) as recent example that paintings still hold a lot of power
- photography make visual site of memory a part of US media culture
- Civil War photos were the first photos of important US historical events
- photos replaced all other forms of memorization that were popular before
- ~1900s photos of Native Americans have created the iconic figure of the vanishing Indian in US (also non-US) memories
- photos became the commemorative instruments for all moments of US history
- TV news and even the internet have contributed to this development
- this has inscribed certain images into collective US memory, like great sports moments, WWII events, JFK, Vietnam War, Moon Landing, Nixon, 9/11, Katrina...
- movies have a similar influence, some being very culturally ingrained: *Birth of a Nation, Gone with the Wind, JFK, Amistad, Pearl Harbor*
- TV documentaries are also a big part of this remembrance

## 5.4 Commemorative Performances and Material Displays of U.S.-American Memories

- after creating the US its history and identity needed to be celebrated
- at first many local mashed old traditions with new ones focusing on the country
- at first it was birthdays of leaders, specific other occurrences, or the ratification of the constitution
- these festivities laid the foundation for a US civil religion—cultural and cohesive function relies on national sites of memory
- in the 19th century the 4th of July developed into a national holiday, beating out Forefathers' Day, when the Pilgrims arrived at Plymouth
- around the expansion and Civil War, local festivities gained more traction
- performative memory also became more pluralistic
- Civil War reenactments were a big thing, together with the erection of Civil War monuments; Gettysburg becoming the icon of it, basically a commercialized shrine
- African American influence pluralized some of the sites of memory
- history was also further pluralized and localized
- there were some attempts to go back to the monolithic, Anglocentric history of the Pilgrims
- this monolith still remained powerful if not dominant—there were debates over the merit of Columbus Day or Forefathers' Day as repressive celebrations of a Eurocentric vision of the US
- instead a more pluralistic model is proposed that has space for different ethnic groups
- museums and similar institutions are basically as old as the US itself
- the Library of Congress is the biggest collection of *American Memories*
- local and state historical societies, heritage societies, archives, and libraries form a nation, intricate network
- these institutions strongly influence all levels of memory of things
- the Smithsonian Institutions is the epitome of US museum culture (on the National Mall in DC)
- museum exhibits (Enola Gay) or museum concepts are still controversial and debated—particularly public and influential sites of memory in the multi-ethnic US

- the National Mall is a very particular example:
  - it houses the Smithsonian, National Archives, monuments to Jefferson, Lincoln, FDR, connects the Capitol, White House, Supreme Court, memorials for the Vietnam, Korean, and Second World Wars
  - the national archives have important documents, the capitol rotunda paintings of important historical moments on display
  - the National Park Service holds the Mall, together with 400 other important historical sites—Independence Hall, Battlefields, Yellowstone, Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty
- in addition to that, commercial sites such as living-history plantations or forts mix historical education with commerce
- whether or not his democratizes history is debated
- coins and stamps are further sites of memory—agents of historical and cultural memory

## 5.5 Transnationalization and Virtualization of Sites of U.S.-American Memories

- the fact that the US is multi-ethnic and transnational makes sites of memory pluralistic—despite of repression, erasure, exclusion, forgetting...
- the monolithic surface is more and more being disturbed—renaming Custer Battlefield National Monument to Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument and addition of an Indian memorial
- the creation of a Crazy Horse Monument in the style of Mount Rushmore is another example of that
- more multivocal histories at Ellis Island and in California's Angel Island
- memorials to the Japanese Americans
- US Holocaust Memorial Museum is an American manifestation of the international memory
- fights over how to best memorialize Ground Zero in NYC show the struggle over commemorative authority
- most of these sites are completely available online—making them super accessible
- how that will influence pluralization, democratization, commercialization remains to be seen

## 5.6 Questions from Handout

### 5.6.1 Is Donald Trump and the Republican Party intent upon making America great again by remembering the past or forgetting?

I think they plan on doing both. What the goal of MAGA seems to be is to make people yearn for a past that never existed, but which Trump promises to bring back. Selective remembering and forgetting can be very helpful here. Of course many of his followers want to live better lives. That is not surprising or strange. To improve their lives though, they seek to move backwards instead of forwards. This can be appealing because the future is always uncertain, whereas the past can be known. If one has a distorted, rosy view of the past this idea becomes even more attractive. Instead of moving towards the uncertain future and making the best of it, it seems simpler to move back to the past

where everything seemed better. In reality of course, this is nor possible, simply because external circumstances changed and make past situations impossible. Furthermore, trying to MAGA implies that America used to be great (again a rosy view of the past). If America used to be so great, what happened? Why is it so much worse now? In trying to determine how America became worse, scapegoats need to be found. If one has a certain political agenda, scapegoats can be easily found and blamed for the current situation (regardless of how true that might be). Thus people wishing for a better life that they see in the past can be turned against scapegoats for obvious political gain. In short, a combination of remembering the good and desirable things of the past and forgetting both its unpleasant elements and how the transition between then and now can make people follow a political campaign that might not be in their own best interest.

### **5.6.2 Does the argument apply in any ways to Central Asia's new and evolving self-understanding**

following the collapse of the USSR and Independence, to your own country's employment of various sites of memory to build a national consciousness and what might be termed a single ethnic national belief? Can you come up with any examples? Is this good or bad? As for Central Asia I cannot say much, but for Kyrgyzstan the focus on Manas as a national hero and possibly Kurmanjan Datka as another important figure shows an attempt at building a national identity through cultural commemoration. This includes studying the Manas epic in schools and universities alike, the various Manas statues occupying prestigious squares, celebrating the 1000 years of Manas, a monument at Manas' tomb in Talas... As far as change goes, the focus on Manas is a relatively recent one that came about after the fall of the Soviet Union when ideological control became relaxed and Kyrgyz independence demanded a national identity.

For Germany's building of a national consciousness there are a couple different factors. Sites of memory include many of the great poets, writers, and philosophers of Germany (or German-speaking regions) before it really was a single country. These figures are known to most people and they are studied in school. The poets include Goethe, Schiller, Rilke, and Storm. The philosophers include Kant, Marx, Engels, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Leibniz. Leibniz was also a great scientist, as well as Copernicus, Kepler, Einstein, Planck, von Humboldt, and von Braun. More recent sites of memory are WWII memorials and most of all the ruins-turned-museums of concentration and extermination camps. Those are an ever-present reminder of our history. More recently, the fall of the Berlin Wall is an event that many Germans currently alive lived through and remember. The division of Germany still influences life in Germany. The poets, writers and scientists are from different eras of German history—some before “Germany” was a thing—but through their continued presence in school and people's general awareness of them they create a feeling of connection between people. WWII and the Holocaust are an even starker element in the building of a common consciousness. While some people reject the thought (for different reasons), Germany is the country succeeding the Third Reich and inherited the responsibility for all those atrocities committed during WWII—Germany's population after the 8th of May 1945 was still the same that applauded Hitler in 1933. WWII and the lead up to it occupy a significant amount of time during school and a visit to a concentration camp is a mandatory part of every pupil's education. This creates a sense of common history, as ugly as it might be. The German reunification creates a sense of unity because now Germany was whole again after being divided by the Allies in 1945.

Also it was a significant historical event that many Germans experienced first-hand. Often portrayed as the result of a popular movement it represents the German peoples wish for unity and their rejection of GDR rule.

It is difficult to say whether the creation of a national identity is a good or a bad thing. For national cohesion and rallying people behind a common cause it seems to be a proven measure. The downside I see in it is that in choosing a few big memories, others that might be equally important will be ignored. Furthermore, selecting some over others will inevitably color the resulting national memory in some way, even if it is unintentional. This would then distort the self-perception of the country and its people as well as simply being incorrect.

### **5.6.3 Are the Americans in trouble, culturally?**

I would not say so. Yes, American culture is based on certain facts and assumptions that may not be true. It might also be too monolithic and bury smaller subcultures that have equal right to exist. But as the text lays out, this culture and the way it is commemorated is continually changing and adapting. It is a slow process, but it is happening. This means that over time the American culture has a chance to adapt to the times and to “improve” (whatever exactly that means). Because it seems possible that this will happen and because there is still movement and change going on (e.g. BLM protests, civil rights movements) I think that America will be ok. Also, I don’t see a better way to deal with this. Culture generally changes slowly and dependent on events and developments. - Are there other countries who have attempted to follow their example, their lead?

Who is they?

### **5.6.4 Should collective sites of memory be torn down if their history is problematic?**

I do not think so. Tearing down any physical thing will not destroy the idea associated with it—it may even strengthen the resolve of its followers. In some cases it might work, for example renaming sports teams whose names are racist to something less racist, but this does not always work. Furthermore, attempting to remove anything from history is dangerous because who gets to decide what is problematic. Take concentration camps as an example. They are undoubtedly problematic. But tearing them down is not the solution. On one hand that would in some way erase the history and the suffering they caused, lending credit to those who deny their existence (also the Nazis attempted to destroy them before they had to give them up and one does not want to finish a Nazi’s job). On the other hand, an argument for tearing them down would be that they keep the memory of those atrocities alive unnecessarily, it might be better to forget. I disagree here because just because the concentration camps disappear what happened there is not undone. The current approach is reasonable in my opinion. Keep the concentration camps in such a state as they are now and turn them into a place of remembrance where their history and issues are explained. Then it is up to the visitor to decide what to think of it. In the end each person has to individually decide how to interpret things anyways, and tearing down problematic sites of memory will not guide that process into a better direction (also who decides what that even is?). I think if a collective site of memory turns out to be problematic but significant, it should be displayed as such—showing the problematic aspect and supplying enough information that the visitor/viewer/whatever can form their own opinion.

## 6 *Class 18.01.2021*

- we're starting with free writing
- we have Trump's America and the other America
- he wants to hear our ideas on what America is
- Americans tend to be narcissistic?
- when an immigrant comes to the US, they are turned into Americans (Christians, good capitalists)
- peoples' impressions from childhood seemed to be way more rosy than reality turned out to be
- he is asking why people know George Washington but not Frederick Douglas
- "If I dress you up like Pocahontas you will look like Pocahontas."—jeez
- "they believe they were able to gather the best white people from all over the world and create a white super-race"—lol
- historically, the US offered more chances than Europe had left to offer—but someone always had to pay for it, first the Native Americans, slaves, Irish, etc
- American studies: developed in Germany to know the enemy
- it's about most things but America
- the people who stormed the Capitol were not particularly diverse
- just go through the handout and read it, add a little bit of explanation to them
- performative memory is something that is performed, like parades, or even just drinking at home, it's still performative memory
- he hates the Kyrgyz history course, he hated helping to write it and had to stop
- nationhood is an invention, there is nothing really behind it
- Anglocentrism is slowly dying as a concept
- **for the presentation**
  - go through the summary paragraph, reading it, and maybe expanding on it a little bit
  - write a paragraph that gets to the bottom of the text
  - make a list of terms from the reading
  - pick one or two of the terms and talk about them
  - maybe pick a quote and discuss something related to it
  - questions that are related, but can go beyond the text as well
    - relate it to personal experiences and to what you know and have experienced
- Kyrgyzstan is a pretty multi-cultural country, a weird mix of religions, cultures, etc—his wife is a Muslim, atheist, and believes in witches
- the US is not that multi-cultural because they tried really hard to form one American culture—melting pot analogy
- relates the cycle of Roman history to how America is working right now, maybe his grandchildren will not know the US
- he'll be there to jump in in case it stalls, haha

### 6.1 Free Writing

What does it mean to be American?

This question in itself says something. Technically America is made up of two continents and hundreds of millions of people. But in common usage America means the United States of America. This fact indicates that being American means being from the US, at

least the way it is commonly used. Maybe this fact also indicates that being American means being from an important country. Regardless of one's opinion of America, it is an important country. And why else would the continent's name be synonymous with this country? America is one of the top 2 most powerful countries in the world (whether China is more powerful or less I cannot say). With this comes a certain feeling of being important as a country and, stereotypically, Americans are proud of their country. More recently it seems being American either means being a gun-toting, conservative, Republican redneck or a super-liberal Democrat. The political system of the US seems to reflect this split along two opposing political camps. With a two-party system there seems to be no room for middle ground, you must either be for my party and my beliefs or for the *others*, the opponents, the enemies. Maybe being American means being divided. On one hand many Americans seem to share some common beliefs like freedom, building ones own destiny, etc but they vehemently disagree about how this should work. Should freedom include the freedom for corporations to destroy the environment and exploit their workers? Or should for example peoples' freedom to carry guns be curtailed in some way to reduce the exorbitant number of gun deaths the US has? Honestly, I don't know what it means to be American and looking at what's happening in the US right now shows that neither do Americans.

## 7 Notes Cultural Memory Studies: Sites of Memory and the Shadow of War (Jay Winter)

- p. 61

### 7.1 Quotes

- “Sites of memory are places where groups of people engage in public activity through which they express “a collective shared knowledge [...] of the past, on which a group’s sense of unity and individuality is based” (Assmann 15).” (p. 61)
- “Commemoration at sites of memory is an act arising out of a conviction, shared by a broad community, that the moment recalled is both significant and informed by a moral message. Sites of memory materialize that message.” (p. 62)
- “The critical point about sites of memory is that they are there as points of reference not only for those who survived traumatic events, but also for those born long after them. The word “memory” becomes a metaphor for the fashioning of narratives about the past when those with direct experience of events die off. Sites of memory inevitably become sites of second-order memory, that is, they are places where people remember the memories of others, those who survived the events marked there.” (p. 62)

### 7.2 Introduction

- *sites of memory*: places where groups of people publicly express and share knowledge of the past
- this past is the basis of the group’s unity and individuality—it is defining for the group
- through these actions the group inherits earlier meanings attached to the event but also new meanings
- this activity is the defining element of presentation and preservation of commemorative sites
- without these groups, the sites of memory lose their initial force and purpose and my fade away entirely
- here *site of memory* means a physical site where people go to commemorate something
- in the 20th century most of these places commemorated war and death
- phases:
  1. creative phase: construction or adaptation for a specific purpose
  2. institutionalization and routinization of their use
  3. in many cases a phase of forgetting, where the site fades away together with the social group that started it
- these sites of memory have become more common in modern times—they did exists before that, but not in these numbers
- here focus is on the time of the nation state, i.e. 19th and 20th century
- in modern times events of remembrance were distinct from religious events
  - Armistice Day (11.11. for WWI) is decently close to All Saints Day (01.11. Catholic) and in some places they were interchangeable
  - the end of WWII in Europe (08.05.1945) is the Saint’s Day of Joan of Arc

- moments of national humiliation are rarely commemorated, except:
  - “Never Again” for Israeli Day of Remembrance for Nazi victims
  - shells of buildings in Hiroshima are also that
- Where moral doubts persist about a war or public policy, commemorative sites are either hard to fix or places of contestation. (p. 62)
  - you cannot commemorate the Algerian War in France, Vietnam War in the US
  - there is no moral consensus about the conflict and thus no consensus on how and when and what should be remembered
- sites of remembrance are often multifaceted—contested, embittered
  - shrines to war dead in Japan—both normal soldiers and war criminals lay there
  - same for German war cemeteries

### 7.3 Commemoration and Political Power

- a good part of the debate over sites of memory concerns their use as instruments of dominant political elements
- public events can be used to establish the legitimacy of political rule
  - some events are held regardless of who is in power, see Bastille Day in Paris or Independence Day in the US
  - others are tied to the ruling elite, November 7 as date of the Bolshevik Revolution, the parade was a demonstration of power and pride
  - top-down approach
  - sites of memory: materialization of national, imperial, or political identity
  - for Australia it is the day when AUS and NZ troops landed in Turkey in WWI (Gallipoli landings)
- not all sites of memory are associated with warfare
- birthdays are welcome: Queen Victoria’s birthday (04.05.) was Empire Day, not Commonwealth Day
- these days were part of a movement of “the invention of tradition.”
- ceremonies that are rooted in a distant past and connected to it can cover political innovation, instability, or insecurity
- these types of traditions are not really bound to specific places
- this is a functionalist interpretation
- a different approach focuses on how sites of memory can allow dominated groups to contest their subordination publicly
- the “official script” can be “reinterpreted” and subverted
- Armistice Day for example was being used as a commemoration of military service, but pacifists used it to say “Never again” and to denigrate military values
- this approach emphasizes the multi-vocal nature of remembrance and the opportunity to change what sites of memory stand for and are used for
- there is always a chorus of voices in commemoration
- in some cases dissonant voices come together for common remembrance, but then there is no single place where it takes place
  - two-minute silence on 11.11. 11 am from 1919 and 1938 in GB
  - in those two minutes most people thought not about victories of armies, but about the people they lost, the men who weren’t there
  - it was a meditation about absence
  - thus it was less political and more family history

- “the richest texture of remembrance was always within family life. This intersection of the public and the private, the macro-historical and the micro-historical, is what has given commemoration in the twentieth century its power and its rich repertoire of forms. But the very complexity of these processes means that sites of memory are not always the foci of acts of remembrance.” (p. 65)
- sites of memory can also be unofficial, not designated by design, but because of what happened there, by those who lived important moments there
- official certification is not necessary when groups of people act on their own
- unofficial sites are preserved through the time and money of groups of people

## 7.4 The Business of Remembering

- sites of memory cost money and time to construct and preserve
- they require specialists' services and continued funding
- two types of expenditure: capital expenditure, recurrent expenditure
- land must be purchased, symbolic form must be designed, constructed
- this requires large sums of public money
- the fine details are mentioned in the text
- if the project is national, all these steps are scrutinized by the public and by committees
- even on a local level this happens, but there tends to be less publicity
- difference of memorials in Protestant vs Catholic countries: Protestant memorials tend to have some utilitarian part, Catholic ones never do
- in many cases public funding has to be supported by private funding to pay for memorials, especially in protestant countries, e.g.
  - memorial wards in hospitals, memorial scholarships in schools and universities, alongside memorial cricket pitches and memorial water troughs for horses. In the United States and in Australia there are memorial highways
- recurrent expenses are always born by taxpayers, in Germany christian groups take care of war cemeteries
- this is also caused by the fact that many memorials become public property once they are finished, thus the public needs to maintain them
- a bunch of the effort with sites of memory comes from getting the public to remember in public—one has to get them to sites of memory
- many towns in Europe have WWI and WWII memorials where ceremonies are held
- every church has a plaque with the names of the fallen
- all of these forms of remembrance require the public to travel a little from their homes
- because both world wars were so spread out, travel is an integral part of remembrance and the industry
- these voyages start as a pilgrimage and turn into tourism
- one needs to travel there, find food and lodging, get guides, buy flowers, trinkets, mementos, visit museums
- this whole thing is hardly new, it's simply a different form of the old, religious pilgrimage in the middle ages (San Juan de Compostela in the middle ages)
- pilgrimage to war cemeteries is public commemoration of long distances
- where pilgrimage turns into tourism is hard to say, but business is always there

## 7.5 Aesthetic Redemption

- sites of memory are more than just political gestures and material tasks
- sites are also forms of art: creating, arranging, interpreting signifying practices
- this can be analyzed on an aesthetic level and on a semiotic level, both are related
- national commemorations can either be unique or shared between nations
- France has Marianne as a symbol, Germany the iron cross and Teutonic influences
- after WWI many commemorations were medieval in character, in many countries
- these had heroic and divine fighters (individual combat), not artillery and human flesh
- it was represented with romance and chivalry; all sides of the war did that
- some of these were even in churches, giving it a sacred character
- most of these memorials were not really focused on victory, they emphasized the “lost generation” and the suffering and loss
- Christian motifs were common, e.g. the grieving mother which brought women into the national grief and remembrance
- in Protestant countries war memorials were often obelisks because crosses were seen as too “Catholic”
- in France memorials were supposed to be on public and secular ground, but people found ways around those restrictions
- 20th century warfare made grieving a common thing, where before mercenaries, volunteers and professionals fought common, drafted men took their place
- thus everyone was affected by loss in war
- in GB, Germany, France almost every household lost someone, many of whom did not even have a grave
- as a result memorials highlighted names more than anything else, it was all that remained of them—these were the sites of local and national commemoration
- in few cases (Australia), war memorials listed the names of all those who fought
- with memorials alphabetical order of names replaced social and military rank
- the reason was that people only had the names of the dead to remember them by, and those should be easily accessible
- this way of naming stayed around for far longer
- sometimes WWII dead were simply added to WWI memorials, both because they are connected, and because it was simpler and cheaper
- towards the end of the 20th century abstraction became the main tool for commemorative expression—fewer national symbols and human figure
- Soviet commemorative art is an exception, it stuck to its guns—heroic romanticism—WWII called the Great Patriotic War
- forms suggesting emptiness and absence were popular
- Holocaust remembrance is a good example of this
  - sites of memory: concentration and extermination camps, places of residence before the Shoah
  - has to be different from world war commemoration
    1. cannot have Christian symbols
    2. orthodox Jews resist representational art
    3. there is no uplifting meaning, purpose, or meaning at all
  - “The third was the absence of any sense of uplift, of meaning, of purpose in the deaths of the victims. Those who died in the Holocaust may have affirmed their

faith thereby, but what is the meaning in the murder of one million children? To a degree, their deaths meant nothing, and therefore the Holocaust meant nothing.” (p. 69)

- representing nothing is a challenge
- post-modern forms suggesting disorientation, void, emptiness
- Libeskind: Star of David taken apart or Lightning bolt in stone and glass
- since the ’70s Holocaust and WWII remembrance go hand-in-hand
- WWI memorials sought for some kind of meaning in all the killing, also a “Never again”, even though that lasted like 20 years
- after WWII the search for meaning became way more complex
- “Finally, the extreme character of the Second World War challenged the capacity of art—any art—to express a sense of loss when it is linked to genocidal murder or thermonuclear destruction.” (p. 70)
- Auschwitz defies conventional meaning, Hiroshima and Nagasaki do so as well
- “Sites of memory are places where people affirm their faith that history has a meaning. What kind of site is appropriate where the majority of people see no meaning at all in the events being marked in time and in space?” (p. 70)
- Auschwitz and Nagasaki cannot be ignored but they also don’t fit into normal frameworks

## 7.6 Ritual

- “Public commemoration is an activity defined by the gestures and words of those who come together at sites of memory to recall particular aspects of the past, their past.” (p. 70)
- commemorative rituals are more complex than just reading a text
- “Inevitably, commemoration overlaps with political conflicts, but it can never be reduced to a direct function of power relationships.” (p. 70)
- ritual has three stages
  1. construction of the commemorative form
  2. grounding of ritual action in the calendar, then routinization
  3. transformation or disappearance as active sites of memory
- July 1, 1916 (beginning of the Battle of the Somme) is still observed by some people—they don’t have national legislation, the rituals are locally defined
- in France November 11 is a national holiday, in GB it is not
- “Public commemoration flourishes within the orbit of civil society. This is not true in countries where dictatorships rule; Stalinist Russia smashed civil society to a point that it could not sustain commemorative activity independent of the party and the state (Merridale). But elsewhere, local associations matter. And so do families. Commemorative ritual survives when it is inscribed within the rhythms of community and, in particular, family life.” (p. 71)
- commemoration only lasts when national and family history overlap
- people at these events bring with them the memory of family members that live through these events
- this personal connection makes people commemorate wars and revolutions long gone—their grandparents might have told them about it
- in some cases a household itself can become a site of memory—remembering a dead loved one or something like that

- “When the link between family life and public commemoration is broken, a powerful prop of remembrance is removed. Then, in a short time, remembrance atrophies and fades away.” (p.72)
- family transmission of narratives is an essential part of public commemoration
- public reinforcement can stave off this process, but the event will become hollow
- when they face away, the sites can be revived and re-appropriated
- the purpose of the site can change, but most just fade away
- “they arise out of the needs of groups of people to link their lives with salient events in the past. When that need vanishes, so does the glue that holds together the social practice of commemoration.” (p. 72)
- collective memory fades away and sites of memory decompose
- some sites of memory can reappear after being forgotten
- people can always choose to revive the memory of the commemorated moment
- vanishing is not always meant literally, they can simply fade from memory and become effectively invisible
- “Public commemoration is both irresistible and unsustainable. Constructing sites of memory is a universal social act, and yet these very sites are as transitory as are the groups of people who create and sustain them.” (p. 73)
- sites of memory are always changing, appearing, reappearing, vanishing

## 8 *Class 20.01.2021*

- Trump is basically done, Biden is trying to look as different as possible
- normally the leaving President welcomes the new one
- they apparently planted thousands of flags on the green where people would normally watch the inauguration
- they are a memorial to the 400,000 dead from Covid
- in a speech there he said something—free writing is on that

### 8.1 Free writing

We have to remember in order to heal. Remembering as healing.

Biden may be trying to take a course opposite to Trump's. Throughout the pandemic Trump has always tried to ignore, downplay, or forget about it. By extension he also ignored all the people suffering from it. For those who lost someone to Covid this situation may be hurtful because the people who are supposed to be fighting the crisis that took your loved one don't even recognize its existence. In a situation like that healing seems difficult.

Biden saying we have to remember to heal means we need to accept what happened. By remembering what happened we recognize the people that died and the hurt of those who lost someone. Accepting events can be the first step towards working through them. If one is in denial about what happened it is impossible to work through it. How can you work through something that you pretend has never happened?

Forgetting any of this ever happened might also work as a solution, but it seems impossible in practice. If one could truly forget about the whole disaster one might be ok. But with the incredible influence Covid and the deaths have had on many peoples' lives it seems impossible to forget all of it. Something would always remind of the things that were never addressed and almost forgotten.

If this remembering to heal works, people might be able to forget in time, but they would forget after having properly dealt with the situation.

## 9 *Notes Cultural Memory Studies: Memory in Post-Authoritarian Societies (Andreas Langenohl)*

p. 163

### 9.1 Transitions from Authoritarianism: Democratization and the Role of Memory

- coping with authoritarian legacy is tricky, but necessary to build a democracy in its wake
  - how can the transition be secured, how can the institutions be rooted in culture (“democratic consolidation”)
  - three waves
1. 19th century–post WWI:
    - monarchies being overthrown
    - no one gave any thought to their remembrance
  2. after WWII
    - German and Italy, Japan stripped of colonies and democratized from the outside
    - then a bunch of European colonies became independent and wanted democracy
    - here were questions about how to remember fascism, national socialism, imperial colonialism
    - Germany focused on individual and elite guilt first (Nuremberg, Auschwitz trials)
    - postcolonial had cultural dimension: official languages, arts...
  3. overthrow of authoritarian regimes in Portugal, Spain, Greece and Latin America in the '70's
    - all three were problematic (conflict between politically pragmatic and judicially/morally just)
    - all 3 had impunity for the fighters against democracy
    - this did further democratic transition but also was criticized by victims of authoritarianism—keeping authoritarianism on the agenda.
  4. maybe 4th wave of state-socialist societies in '80's and South Africa in 1994
    - here we had political and social integration of former victims and perpetrators
    - there are a couple different ways authoritarian systems can fall, most actual cases are a mix of these types
1. defeat from outside
    - Germany as example of overthrowing through international intervention
    - rapid development of democratic institutions: import of them, denazification, international control
    - few people resisted the Nazis, thus overcoming them was hard, e.g. debates over whether May 8, 1945 was a liberation or defeat
  2. revolution and resistance from within
    - often 3rd and 4th waves
    - political groups or broad strata rise against authoritarianism
    - end of authoritarianism can become founding narrative of new democracy
    - consolidation challenge: different interests of victims and perps

- if perps still have power, a power struggle happens
  - sometimes perps will achieve impunity, angering the victims
  - thus the new gov lacks support of powerful groups or the public
3. negotiated change
- often 4th, state-socialist countries
  - transitions negotiated between old regime and protesters, e.g. round tables in Poland and Hungary
  - extreme example is SU to RF, protesters played less of a role than struggles among the elite
  - advantages in solving/postponing a bunch of possible issues, smooth transition, generally high support for transition
  - compromises are always reached on the backs of the ones most hit by the regime, that's dysfunctional for democratic consolidation, these groups tend to be excluded
  - international context matters, outside influence can be decisive, cultural frame of reference
  - international impact felled European and Japanese authoritarian regimes
  - international pressure from the UN, EU, EC influence South Africa and ex-Yugoslavian countries, and also failed transitions in Afghanistan and Iraq
  - some strategies become globally diffused as best-practices for dealing with mass atrocities
  - international context also matters for memory practices
  - since 1990s internationalization of memory
  - Holocaust has become a global things that no one should permit to happen; 2002 Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust where 40 countries' representatives apologized for their countries involvement
  - WWII is being framed as European and not just national history; 60th anniversary of D-Day with many European state leaders; also createslays bare schisms, e.g. Baltic leaders boycotting 2005 Victory Day celebrations because they reject RF/SU narratives about them being the liberator of Europe

## 9.2 Transitional Justice: Reckoning with a Macro-Criminal Past

- transition to democracy = return of the legal state
- how to deal with macro-crimes from a legal perspective
- Nuremberg trials: "human rights violations", "crimes against humanity", "war crimes", got around retroactively applying national laws, but they need to be recognized
- transitional justice gains clear id of victims and perps through legal sanctions (punishment, compensation)
- can stand for unbiased coping if formality and political independence are met
- courts can contribute to making reckoning more transparent
- the limit is that these crimes are not individual crimes on a large scale, but collective crimes—dependent on bystanders' implicit support, co-responsibility, or profiting from it; e.g. Nazi Germany or South Africa
- Nazi Germany is the main example of macro-crimes with passivity and profiting
- macro-crimes can be hard to pin on individual people, e.g. SU party reps
- the difficulty of pinning guilt on individual people makes judicial reckoning more

difficult

- because law dictates the legal system, it can put an end to reckoning/persecution of both sides—amnesties and compensation often depend on laws—and influence the legitimacy of judicial reckoning
- there is a lot of variance in how to deal with the legacy, i.e. Czech Republic vs. Poland
- judicial reckoning is in no way enough to establish a democratic order
- thus there were Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs), came from South Africa, then implemented in Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Peru...
- these are supposed to deal with challenges the legal system cannot address—contradictions between integration and the need to do justice
- South Africa's TRC established and acknowledge the victims' suffering, have the perps apologize
- by publicly listening and acknowledging their guilt perps could escape punishment, in the name of promoting national unity
- on the other hand they were criticized for pardoning people and not changing the political and social situations in any way
- “Thus, although TRCs are set up as a response to the juridical system’s incapacity to resolve the social and moral tensions inherited from the authoritarian political order, they may threaten to annul the merits of a juridical ascription of individual responsibilities for macro-crimes.” (p. 168)

### 9.3 Collective Memory and Post-Authoritarian Democratic Consolidation

- representation of macro-crimes impacts transition but also democratic culture
- Karl Jaspers (1946) had 4 categories of guilt (on Nazi crimes) that are still relevant today
  1. if it's individual and judicially dealt with → “criminal guilt”
  2. committed in the name of pol. collectivity → “political guilt”, responsibility is expected of all members of the collectivity
  3. in reaction to macro-crimes → “moral guilt” (kinda shame)
  4. relationship towards instances transcending worldly orders (e.g. God) → “meta-physical guilt”
- political guilt means responsibility for crimes done on behalf of the imagined community one ascribes to—being a part equals agreeing to be held accountable for the actions done on behalf of the group
- moral guilt could be motivation to work against macro-crimes
- in the years after the atrocities negotiations between the old and the new can bring stability, e.g. not facing the Nazi past in 50s and 60s Germany gave stability in a way, then, with stability, they could face the past (young people accusing their parents of being silent etc)
- democratic consolidation is hindered by a memory of a glorious past if it cannot be kept in check by the memory of a scornful past, e.g. Russia and the SU—proud of Great War but ignoring Stalinist atrocities or being reproached for remembering the Gulag

## 9.4 The Memory of Macro-Crimes in Late-Modern Democratic Societies

- how to remember macro-crimes questions some assumptions about how symbols work in democratic societies
- this includes state leaders apologizing for past crimes (Germany, Nazi collaborators, US president on slavery)
- there were discussions on how to remember such atrocities; museums, school and education, historiography, public space—apologizing seems to have established itself as a proven method
- we observe
  1. most democratic societies are built on some type of massive atrocity, e.g. Germany whose constitution is a direct response to Nazi crimes; also true for similar histories, like Nazi collaborators or other macro-crimes
  2. there is no unchallenged representation of the national past anymore; each representation can be seen as excluding certain groups; being silent on certain atrocities can be seen as a problem; apologies are a reaction to the pluralization of memories
  3. macro-criminal past may be functional for the creation of a national narrative, while glorious past narratives would be publicly challenged—it's easier to say what you don't want to do than to say what you are
  4. cultural trauma: group who was the victim of macro-crimes or group whose members committed those crimes; the former because the passing on of traditions got massively interrupted, the latter because their past is either distanced from or denied

# 10 Notes Cultural Memory Studies: Memory and Politics (Erik Meyer)

p. 173

- political science deals with regime change mostly
- thus it is relevant to confront the old regime, it is necessary to come to terms with the past
- *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* is still controversial, in Germany is used to only mean ethical dealing with the Nazi past, now it turned to mean any abolition of dictatorship and begin of democracy
- it means the measures used to grapple with the dictatorial past
- guilt is not only dealt with politically and judicially, but also morally and metaphysically

## 10.1 Transitional Justice and Political Culture

- transitional justice is often explored as historically comparative
- shortly after the fall you have measures like indictment or compensation—these only matter if they happen during the lifetime of perps and victims
- these matters can become involved in foreign policy and diplomacy, thus *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* is a precondition to functioning political systems and international relations
- *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* includes everything that is and can be done about the past
- sanctioning the past gives the option to judge the past
- coming to terms with past history includes all things that touch on the past
- the extent of reckoning with the past is a reflection of the countries political culture
- conflicts can be conflicts on the interpretation of events
- the narratives and discussions about them reveal structure of power, interests, norms, values
- this approach is conflict oriented

## 10.2 Policy for the Past and Politics of History

- in German historiography one has the application of *Vergangenheitspolitik* and *Geschichtspolitik*
- *Vergangenheitspolitik* is the political process of about 5 years
  - on one hand reintegration of the indicted and convicted Nazis
  - on the other hand creating distance from the remainders of National Socialism
- *Vergangenheitspolitik* defines 3 things (practical political measures)
  1. amnesty
  2. integration
  3. demarcation
- it is dependent on the presence of the involved individuals
- *Geschichtspolitik* is a broader term
  - deals with the history of a community, which is disputed
  - this is not that interested in the facts of history, but more in the connection

between past, present, and future

– it is not about how true the past is, but how it can become politically relevant

- *Geschichtspolitik* is a political thing, it is an instrument of politicians
- it is about how history is used for a political narrative
- it is used to legitimize current political projects, but also influences normative orientations
- *Geschichtspolitik* is a mostly discursive practice
- this term was used to describe the politicized use of history in the 1980s by politicians and historians
- general instrumentalization of history in politics is assumed
- remembrance of the past is impossible without current motifs (after Halbwachs)
- sites of memory are important in memory and remembrance
- *Geschichtspolitik* then refers to the political construction of reality
- legitimacy plays a role in *Geschichtspolitik*: legitimacy of identity, political order, political actors
- legitimacy can be achieved through negative distancing or positive reference to historical events
- *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*: *Vergangenheitspolitik* zu *Geschichtspolitik*—from decision to communication

### 10.3 A Policy Studies Perspective on Cultures of Memory

- memory studies distinguishes communicative and cultural memory
- communicative memory is shaped by the biographical horizon of the experiencing generation—it can only last if it is institutionalized
- constructing tradition needs decision making, it is not conflict free
- *Erinnerungspolitik* is a communicative act, but we have to consider political decisions and resources
- cultures of memory have to be understood as normal political domains

# 11 Class 27.01.2021

- Trump is the first president in American history to be tried after leaving office
- they will try him for inciting an insurrection, which is treason
- nothing might happen
- the Senate will try Trump
- he is also the only President to be impeached twice
- to convict him they will need 17 Republican votes
- now doing free writing
- how do you deal with a criminal past
- how should one deal with Trump
- if a former President is impeached, will this happen every time now?
- now Galina's presentation

## 11.1 Free writing

Why should the Democrats try Trump, even if they will fail?

One reason for trying Trump is that it could be a good political move. The Democrats have been wanting to impeach him for a long time. Finally doing this could give them a popularity boost with their followers who want to see that. Additionally, if they really want to put a mark on Trump's legacy, impeaching him would do that. They could finally say that their accusations amounted to something. Up until now they have never actually made anything of all their accusations, but if he were to be impeached they could finally say they did something.

Furthermore, they would be holding Trump accountable. This is simply a matter of believing that if injustice was done, it must be rectified or at least sanctioned in some way. Relating to our reading, this "criminal past" needs to reckoned with so that they can move on. If this trial were successful, it would also establish the accusations as fact (at least a bit). This would again give credibility to the people that have accused Trump for years.

Assuming that they will fail does not change the fact that they are trying to make history reflect what they think is right. In a way, this trial is negotiating Trump's legacy. Not trying him and just accepting defeat would look a lot weaker than trying and failing. Accepting defeat would signal that they do not believe in their own cause. If they try Trump and fail, they can still say that they tried and only failed because of partisan politics. This might even further their cause in a way, cementing their base through a shared defeat. Trying to impeach Trump in the knowledge that they will fail sends a signal saying "We tried, and we do not agree with what he did". Also, putting the second impeachment on Trump's record marks him regardless of the outcome of the trial. Also, if he is impeached he is stripped of certain privileges that ex-Presidents have, so it would even hurt him a little bit personally.

## 11.2 Galina Memory in Post-Authoritarian Societies (Andreas Langenohl)

- how Trump's situation is
- parallel to Putin's Russia in how the authoritarianism works

- people respecting Putin: people fear Russia, he is smart...
- what does Putin know that Biden does not?
  - he knows how to hold on to power, that is certain
  - Putin is shown as savior in other countries
- there is still discussion about WWII and how to remember it. How did you react to the events of 2020 leading up to the 75th anniversary? USA misrepresented the facts of what happened/the Soviet role being downplayed.
  - in Canada he didn't learn anything about what the SU contributed to WWII
  - the only WW related holiday is Remembrance Day/Armistice Day in Canada
- why are our memories structured a certain way around certain events
- most big Soviet statues are still here in Bishkek. That is not something that you see in other former SU countries. Should they (not) be torn down?

## 12 Notes Cultural Memory Studies: Social Forgetting: A Systems-Theory Approach (Elena Esposito)

p. 181

### 12.1

- forgetting accompanies memory and shows its darker sides
- to remember we need to forget all the irrelevant things to free up space
- Themistocles was more interested in lethotechnics (forgetting) than mnemotechnics (remembering)
- Nietzsche wrote on forgetting and how it can free you in a way
- forgetting is a thorny matter: a technique to forget is a paradox—something that denies itself
- many strategies over time have been of that nature, some amassing memories to neutralize others
- *ars memoriae* generally implied some *ars oblivious*
- writing was sometimes seen as fostering forgetting and not remembering—freeing the mind of irrelevant and troublesome memories
- forgetting is always reflexive—who intends to forget needs to confront his own memory construction, who just remembers can fool themselves into thinking they only record data
- “In remembering, one faces the world; in forgetting one faces oneself—a circumstance that will always create problems for all approaches that believe the two references to be independent.”

### 12.2

- systems theory does not include the view point *from the outside*, the observation includes itself
- this approach lends itself to studying forgetting
- the main function of memory lies in forgetting, not to clog up memory and become unusable—it keeps itself open for new stimuli
- most stuff is forgotten, and only stuff relevant to build identity is retained
- remembering and forgetting always proceed together—if one could not remember there is nothing to forget, and without forgetting remembering would be quickly overloaded
- most things are forgotten and only some things are remembered
- both abilities need to increase or decrease at the same time
- an equilibrium is needed to keep the system operational and not arbitrary
- forgetting has priority because it is unnoticed: you have to forget the remembering/forgetting

### 12.3

- systems theory has a different approach to memory than other sociological disciplines

- it does not focus on shared memory as we have talked about
- instead, the seat of collective memory is the consciousness of the individuals—this differs from social memory
- the more complex society is, the more limited collective memory becomes
- social memory emerges based on social operations
- I think this means at first there was a personal connection in a way, which became weaker with weakening collective ties, then societal memory took over, shaped by societal processes (more complex)

## 12.4

- *ars memoriae* has been a great tool over time and worth studying, but the printing press made it clear that they are not necessary
- memory does not accumulate memory like a store house in this system view,
- “Memory, in this view, does not serve to accumulate fixed memories as a sort of storehouse that would be more efficient the more materials it can include, but serves rather to eliminate the punctual aspects of the events in an ever more refined process of abstraction” (p. 184)
- memory is not supposed to preserve the events, but allow addition to already known categories of memory and forget all else
- memory serves to create independence from time
- it is not a storage system, but a computing device that has procedures to re-generate data and not the original data
- “Memory does not record the past, which would be of no use and would only be an overload, but reconstructs it every time for a future projected in ever new ways.”
- remembrance never creates the same answer twice

## 12.5

- task of memory lies in organizing information access
- “Thanks to its memory, the system has a past from which to depart in turning to what is to come—in a more or less open way” (p. 185)
- this the observers world depends their capability to understand and capability (its memory)
- memory performs a constant test of consistency
- memory influences the world of a system
- it reflects most of all the relationship of the system with itself
- “And that is why forgetting becomes the primary function: It is the ability to select which produces each time the identity of the system as distinct from its environment.” (p. 186)

## 12.6

- how does this work when considering societies
- this memory cannot be in the minds of the people or in society as a whole
- thoughts are preceded by linguistic forms
- words correspond to concepts and categories, they allow objects to be recalled for long periods of time

- the social ability to remember and forget must be passed to the media
- written communication must be less specific because its contents must be understood by all involved in the communication
- “Whoever writes for the printing press does not address specific partners, and gives up the control of the situation. One does not know who will read the text, in what context or with what interests, and the text thus exposes itself to the production of meaning guided by entirely unpredictable references (the famous plurality of interpretations, where every reader can make of a text what he or she wants, producing a sense different from that of other readers and possibly also from the sense the author intended).” (p. 187)
- communication now works on the grounds that the information needed for understanding is available *somewhere*, vs being known to the reader when its written
- we have fewer things memorized but have access to a wider array of information
- we can thus forget and lose contexts because they are available if we need
- printing strengthens and also overloads memory—it helps us both remember and forget

## 12.7

- mass media are now supposed to construct an image of reality for the whole system
- social systems are constituted by communication, objects of memory are topics one can talk about and expect other people to know
- these are mostly offered by mass media, just personal experience is not enough
- societal memory is thus ruled by mass media and the search for novelty
- this type of memory is also truly independent from personal experiences
- mass media only offers the themes and not the opinions about them
- “But we can communicate with almost everyone, without any need to know them or to be in the same place, sharing very little in common, but remembering more or less the same things and forgetting immediately almost everything.”

## 13 Class 01.02.2021

- free writing straight away
- the past is what makes us people—we are built on our memories I guess
- is forgetting something that you do or something that you don't do?
- remembering and forgetting are two sides of the same coin
- Islambek's presentation

### 13.1 Free writing

Remembering to forget—how can one do that?

Remembering to forget sounds like some type of oxymoron. How can one remember not to remember? This does pose some interesting questions. Because it seems impossible to remember not to remember, can forgetting to forget get us anywhere? I think in many cases that's how forgetting works—we simply forget—about remembering and forgetting. Does that mean that forgetting to forget makes one forget?

One way to understand this phrase could be that remembering is necessary for forgetting. This seems obviously true because if one does not remember anything there is nothing to forget. On the other hand, if one wants to remember new things one has to forget some things because human memory is limited and we cannot remember everything. In the text we read the author said that forgetting might be more important than remembering because it keeps our memory able to store new information. If we didn't forget the irrelevant things we would have no space to remember the important ones.

### 13.2 *Islambek Social Forgetting: A Systems-Theory Approach* (Elena Esposito)

- remembering to remember is paradoxical
- remembering can be easier than forgetting—remembering is selective and one can fashion their own picture
- when it comes to forgetting, we need to confront ourselves and the ways we remember
- Heisenberg's Uncertainty Problem: we cannot *see* atoms per se, we just have the Unschärferelation beating our asses
- in classic mechanics we either know or don't know—in quantum mechanics we only have probabilities that we can rely on
- to observe is to change from quantum physics was also being applied to social sciences
- our brain is a system, the internet is as well
- now talking about Facebook and their targeted ads
- romanticizing history here instead of forgetting about it

# 14 Notes Cultural Memory Studies: Memory and Forgetting in Paul Ricoeur's Theory of the Capable Self (Maureen Junker-Kenny)

p. 203

- philosophers: exact formulation of specific problems
- analysis and critique of concepts used by other disciplines
- reflection of the things (human beings) other branches presuppose
- what can philosophy offer on memory; personal, collective, cultural manifestations
- *epistemology*: theory of knowledge
- Ricoeur's analysis has epistemology of history, tracing elements to their reconstruction
- how can memory influence morality?
- how to remembering and forgetting interplay?
- two types of forgetting: one destroys traces, the other one leaves them
- active forgetting and ethics of memory depend on a eschatological (theology concerned with death, judgement, final destiny of the soul) horizon

## 14.1 Philosophy of the Self as Critical Reflection on Memory and History

- Ricoeur is in dialogue with the philosophical traditions since Plato
- *hermeneutics*: theory of methodology of interpretations, generally of biblical or philosophical texts
- how can one distinguish memory from imagination, part of philosophies search for truth
- locating memory in classical philosophical tradition: Plato and Aristotle use *eikon* (image)
- Plato: present image of previous imprint
- Aristotle: image/memory as part of time—temporalising vs merely absent
- Plato: *mneme* and *anamnesis*, involuntary reappearance vs searched-for recollection
- *phenomenology*: clarify, describe, make sense of structures and dynamics of pre-reflective human experience
- how can we achieve a faithful representation of past events
- how is reproduction achieved?
- philosophers noted the difference between memory that just resurfaces and memory that is actively recalled
- we need to establish criteria to categorize memory as true and false
- memory referring to the past raises the question of how to access the past
- how trustworthy are memories?
- *exegesis*: critical explanation and interpretation of texts, generally scripture
- to overcome impasses in the study of memory we must trust individual testimony
- Adolphi criticized the reclaiming of facts instead of facing the interpretive nature of history
- the question of “why” in history writing owes its answer to the relevant facts
- the studied objects are connected with human agents
- history writing has to do justice to history: documenting, being accurate

- Ricoeur keeps between 3 things: a reduction to just facts, ignoring their potential; supposing we can just reconstruct the past; not judging the past
- he simply states: “we have nothing better than memory”
- Ricoeur insists that there is fact in an event that’s not just interpretation; even if we cannot get past previous interpretations
- this is relevant for trying to refute Holocaust denial because here mere interpretation of facts would not lead anywhere

## 14.2 The Ethics of Memory

- memory and levels of ideology are related: integration of a shared world, legitimization of power, distortion of reality
- national heritage has an ambiguous role in identity construction
- political exploitation of memory and attempts to add credibility to political systems
- forgiveness is on one level with memory and history
- Ricoeur does not want to turn memory into an imperative: political instrumentalization, his ethics, short-circuiting the relationship between memory and history
- he wants “work of memory” and “work of mourning” after Freud
- ethics of memory would fall under the third section of applied ethics or “practical wisdom”
- each case of memory has to be decided individually
- he criticizes amnesty as commanded forgetting for the sake of the stability of the state
- goal is a pacified, happy memory
- can happen as result of a reconciliation, a forgetting that preserves
- forgiveness is not a natural part of human capability
- love stronger than death endures, similarly we have to trust that forgiveness will be there
- can forgiveness only be realized with respect to the future?
- forgiveness recognizes the crimes and the rift between perps and victims
- a person is more than the sum of their acts
- she really loves Ricoeur, calls him a true master

## 15 Class 03.02.2021

- start off with free writing
- can you really forgive people, is everyone doing it?
- first forgive, let something go, then you can forget it
- forgetting things to move on, but it does not mean that the perps are welcome in your life again
- damn, Forsberg is a savage; didn't talk to his parents for 35 years, being somewhat happy that some of them died
- if something is cancer, just cut it out
- now Meerim is presenting

### 15.1 Free writing

Forgetting and forgiving—should you always forgive?

As far as I understood his goal was a pacified, happy memory. To achieve this, forgetting and forgiving can be a decent tool. If one can forgive misgiving or injuries or crimes one experienced, it might be easier to live with them; one is no longer holding a grudge or worse. Once something is forgiven, it can be seen as being a process or event that has been completed or concluded. There are no unresolved parts left. Once this happens I could imagine forgetting it is easier. Trying to forget a thing that has not been completed seems almost impossible.

I am not sure if forgiving is always the best method to achieve this state of closure though. In some cases crimes or injuries might be of such a nature that forgiving seems almost impossible, see Holocaust. In these cases other methods might work. For example a trial and conviction could give closure. Revenge could also bring some closure. Compartmentalisation or denial can possibly help, too. In the end though, finding closure for whatever happened is a purely individual task. No trial and not even revenge could give it if the person is not willing to put an end to things and accept them for reality. I understand why Ricoeur puts this task on forgiveness because if you can forgive someone for what they did it means that you can accept that it happened, you have learned to live with it, and you no longer hold a grudge. All in all this seems incredibly difficult and maybe impossible, but as an ultimate goal it may have a purpose.

### 15.2 Meerim Memory and Forgetting in Paul Ricoeur's Theory of the Capable Self (Maureen Junker-Kenny)

- develops position in discourse with philosophical tradition
- philosophy has to distinguish true from false memories
- Aristotle started the tradition of seeing memory in time
- biggest question: how can we access the past
- we recall memories as images; how can we tell if it is from the past or totally made up
- Aristotle assumed (incorrectly) that we can know because actually we cannot
- to know we need to know past, present, future all at the same time
- Aristotle was inductive in reasoning, Plato was deductive
- Ricoeur deals with the fact that we cannot remember facts → we misremember

- remembering is weird, forgetting might be the best thing
- false memories can still have consequence(s)
- there are always false stories that everyone knows and most believe
  - George Washington cutting down a cherry tree
  - the Manas epic being 1000 years old, Kyrgyzstan being 2000 years old
- sometimes lies for nation building can be good, but there is some danger to building something on lies
- telling the truth is impossible (generally speaking), so one might as well make up something positive
- “remembering in the future tense”: having ambitions, plans, dreams

# 16 Notes Cultural Memory Studies: Psychology, Narrative, and Cultural Memory: Past and Present (Jürgen Straub)

p. 215

## 16.1 Establishing Memory Discourses in the Nineteenth Century: A Cultural-Psychological Footnote on European “Retrospective Culture” and the Development of Narrative Psychology

- memory sciences developed as scientific approach to human soul
- memory as essential element of human life
- working out life history to solve problems
- *art* of memory became eclipsed by *science* of memory
- focus on narratives in memory studies
- sometimes story telling is the only way to make sense of a certain event or psychological situation
- recollection often happens in the shape of a story (or part of one)
- to manage life one must recollect and reconstruct
- who narrates his own history is authentic
- person is equivalent to their memories
- we can also anticipate future memories (future perfect tense)
- processing of one's own past is central to psychological treatment
- recalled memories (recollections) are creative constructions
- memories change over time
- obsession with the past is not good
- retrospective culture reigns supreme
- present can only be seen accurately with a (deciphered) picture of the past

## 16.2 Narrative Psychology and an Active, Constructive Memory

- history is too complex for simple facts, we need narratives
- memory and recollection are cultural tools
- memory is not simple facts, it is significant, meaningful, thus communicable experience
- *scheme* is an organized unit of memory
- “Memory operates both actively and creatively. Recollections are meaningfully structured compositions or constructions. The one who is recollecting creates or affirms a world permeated with sense and meaning. Memory and recollection are prominently involved in people's attempts to endow their experiences with sense and meaning that conforms to socio-cultural standards (values, rules in the form of norms or conventions, habits, goals, etc.) An important part of this process consists in a narrative arrangement and integration of events into generally intelligible stories. If it is required by one's own cultural, social, and psychological “logic,” one leaves out one detail or another and adds something else here or there, changing things until they assume a more or less comprehensible guise.” (p. 222)

- remembering is dependent on cultural devices and practices

### **16.3 Dissociated Stories, Multiple Personalities: Cultural Schemata of a Split or a Multiple Self**

- we can study the past better if we use methodical analysis
- the root of personal problems was seen in the past of a person
- multiple personality disorder is said to be caused by severe unresolved and buried trauma, generally of sexual nature
- therapists can generate false memories, even if they do not mean to
- patients simply accept those false memories as their own
- working with memory is the first step to “soothing the pain”
- this work with memory is autobiographical and narrative, working on memory modifies the stories we have of ourselves, updates them and the narrative self
- memories and their personal reconstruction are culturally encoded
- without for example the notion of psychological trauma the concept of multiple personalities would be unthinkable
- narratives about oneself encode already familiar stories
- memory is narrated as a member of a certain culture

## 17 *Class 15.02.2021*

- he is fucked medically
- he will not be able to finish the course
- we will be taught by a Turkish PhD scholar who is a memory studies scholar
- she cannot come today, but she will reach out to us to get to know us
- he needs to eat apples, watch his blood sugar, get blood transfusions, ...
- COVID-19 may have damaged his kidneys, heart, lungs; he really needs to relax

# 18 Class 17.02.2021

## 18.1 Introduction

- Hatice (Hati-je) is the name we should remember
- she writes on literary representations of the memory of the Spanish civil war and Irish Troubles in literature
- she generally teaches on literature, has also taught Spanish for some time
- she's amazed that students here speak so many languages because this can be useful for discussion on how remembering works (like different words used for the same thing in different languages)
- she will continue the course in the way Forsberg did
- Forsberg will be kept up to date and be involved in grading our stuff

## 18.2 Text discussion

- we create memories by creating narratives
- write something quick about the narrative created by the website and ted talk
- TED is like a failure conference, most people there are not afraid to fail
- you have to dare to do anything, and if you fail doing it, you still tried
- some people misunderstand common English expressions
- we are now doing the presentation on our text

## 18.3 Free writing

What can you say about the self-remembering on <https://brenebrown.com/about/>?

A funny element that struck me is that she identifies herself not as American, but as Texan and that she wears cowboy boots in the photo next to her short bio. The bio also gives the official rundown of who she is, it's the usual thing you would expect.

Her pictures show the most important milestones in her life, it seems to be pretty similar to what most people would do. Nothing about the things she highlights strikes me as particularly unusual (besides that she is probably more successful than most people).

In connection to her focus on vulnerability and courage I would say that showing her life story for all to see takes a certain amount of courage and makes her a little vulnerable. But connected to her stated motto of "I believe that you have to walk through vulnerability to get to courage, therefore ... embrace the suck" is not really reflected in her life story. I don't really see any "suck"; the memories she presents are memories of happiness and success. The life she presents seems perfect and ideal. There is a possibility that she has not had any "suck" in her life, but I doubt that.

I could imagine that she is doing this deliberately, as her page title says "Owning our story and loving ourselves through that process is the bravest thing that we will ever do". She might be "owning her story" and loving herself through it; this would explain why the life she presents is so perfect.

I feel like that this narrative she presents is disingenuous when combined with her message of having to overcome vulnerability because to me her photos do not reflect any real

amount of vulnerability. Her photos do not reflect any real shame or vulnerability, she creates a success story.

#### 18.4 **Zarena Psychology, Narrative, and Cultural Memory: Past and Present (Jürgen Straub)**

- things that happen to a person shape their personality and might keep them from making the same mistakes more than once
- engagement with the past and history
- the personality of a person is the representation of their past
- *memory is a narrative that is constructed retroactively*, can we trust any memories
- also talking about creating false memories which seem real and cannot be distinguished from
- **main point of the text is that memories are constructed narratives that are not reliable; we create a narrative full of meaning and sense; they are influenced by one's culture, society, psychology**
- in connection with the website we looked at we see this very clearly
- we create memories according to social and psychological expectations as well
- we understand our experiences in-line with common narratives
- should be appreciate all that happened because it shaped us?

## 19 Notes Cultural Memory Studies: Against the Concept of Cultural Trauma (Wulf Kansteiner and Harald Weilnböck)

p. 229

- academic handbooks impart important knowledge and concepts from one generation to the next—this is not that
- they see the approaches to developing an interdisciplinary concept of cultural trauma as spectacular failures
- they blame their colleagues for wrongly applied post-structuralist theory and developing a narrow and aestheticized concept of trauma
- they hope this will not come across as another boring theory-bash
- they are committed to analyzing master narratives, being reflexive, finding prejudices, etc
- they object to trauma in current discourse precisely because it is not reflexive, and because it has an obvious master narrative
- in literature departments trauma studies has contributed to a roll-back of new procedures
- this trauma stuff has worked against interdisciplinary collaboration in literary and cultural studies
- *trauma*: “an experience consisting of two components that the trauma victim never manages to reconcile with each other. A severe mental and maybe also physical injury which the victim seems to overcome remarkably well is followed by a belated onset of symptoms that sometimes appear to bear no causal relationship to the original injury” (p. 230)
- this is a very compatible definition (with psychology), but she celebrates it because it gives great insight into the human condition (Caruth)
- this is good because we only get a glimpse at what is truly human when societal stuff collapses for a bit
- this cannot be transmitted though; it can only be grasped in its inaccessibility
- trauma is basically impossible to represent
- Caruth celebrates the disconnection between the victim and cultural institutions, something that their survival might depend on
- she is also not interested in the therapeutic process and misrepresents psychological literature
- the study of the self-destructive effects of Western culture date back to end of 19th century, especially strong after WWII
- now though, it has become a convenient and self-important pursuit, see trendy celebrations of trauma
- Weinberg also believes that trauma is inaccessible; philosophy has the purpose to make us forget about the bad sides of memory
- he also does not care about the actual trauma victims and not about their treatment
- he wants to prove trauma’s incurability
- they argue that trauma must be inaccessible, and they don’t care about trauma outside of their theoretical studies
- often these discussions take on religious fervor because people care so much about it
- they all also hold that trauma cannot be represented

- dude from Canada wants all narratives removed because they are often used to justify excessive violence
- he wants to question “the frames of certitude that ground our understandings of existence” (186)
- this is also rather doctrinaire because it ignores the good sides of narrative
- he taps into Holocaust memory to advance his program
- they all ignore the clinical advantages of narrative; not using narratives might re-traumatize people
- people don’t differentiate between trauma as a concept and the trauma that people actually experienced
- can we ask 9/11 survivors to risk their mental health because some scholar disagrees with the metaphorical meaning of trauma?
- people bash trauma in media while it might actually be a good thing to raise awareness
- some scholars conflate the challenges we all face with severe trauma
- most people never experience PTS, and thus there needs to be a difference between the different experiences
- they have 5 main criticism:
  - a very vague concept of what trauma is; connecting physical trauma and metaphorical concepts; ignoring the different types of trauma and how it affects people
  - no interest in having interdisciplinary research, i.e. ignoring psychology
  - they ignore the research on media influence on people
  - unfounded fear of the narrative, contradicting psychotherapy
  - putting stuff on too-high a pedestal
- apparently these scholars are bystanders who want to philosophize about trauma that they have no personal experience with
- they want to remove the actual experience by speculation
- p. 238

## 20 Class 20.02.2021

- different languages can give us tools to deal with the past
- different words that can be used can give us insight, Vergangenheitsbewältigung
- we can also see *amnesia* and *amnesty*
- care should be taken with narratives, who presents it, what are their goals/perspectives, can the audience understand it, what is the audience we are targeting?
- making connections between readings is important
- free writing
- is there a duty to remember those who experienced (suffered in) certain events?
- Rakhilya's text presentation
- cosmopolitan memory—everything that happened to everyone in the world is important—then how do you judge any of it
- **look into grand narratives or master narratives**
- how should the trauma of perpetrators be treated?
- trauma is inaccessible because some elements of human nature are inaccessible
- interdisciplinary work can be difficult because methods might not be adapted to a different field—it can lead to wrongful application, selective data usage, etc

### 20.1 Free writing

First 4 minutes of <https://thoughtmaybe.com/white-light-black-rain/>

- WWII footage of the Imperial Japanese, then WWII Europe
- Pearl Harbor—a day that will live in infamy, then see battles, kamikazi
- bombing runs on Japan, then nuclear bombs
- this is the story of some people who survived this nuclear attack
- asking people on the street what happened on Aug 6 in 1945
- 75% of the Japanese population was born after 1945

From her quote

- forgetting as a way to make peace
- speaking inciting shit was forbidden, even had a new term in ‘to remember what is bad’

Forgetting as a way to reconcile different peoples or groups can certainly work, but I don't think it is the right way to go. Forgetting about the atomic bombs is not going to undo the events and bring the tens of thousands of people back to life.

I cannot come up with anything good.

To be fair to the Japanese people they talked to, they would have probably known something about the events, but possibly not the dates.

### 20.2 *Rakhilya Against the Concept of Cultural Trauma (Wulf Kansteiner and Harald Weilnböck)*

- a lot of the time in her life people told her not to worry about little things—can you measure different “levels” of trauma against each other?

- can you compare traumata–central question in memory studies
  1. what is the best medium to convey trauma?
  2. do you believe trauma is inaccessible to memory?
  3. can you measure different traumata against each other?
  4. if yes, how can you compare and why?

### 20.3 Metanarrative

- A metanarrative (also meta-narrative and grand narrative; French: métarécit) in critical theory and particularly in postmodernism is a narrative about narratives of historical meaning, experience, or knowledge, which offers a society legitimization through the anticipated completion of a (as yet unrealized) master idea (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metanarrative>)
- Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives. The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal. It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language . . . Where, after the metanarratives, can legitimacy reside?
- metanarratives should give way to petits récits, or more modest and “localized” narratives, which can “throw off” the grand narrative by bringing into focus the singular event
- Postmodernists attempt to replace metanarratives by focusing on specific local contexts as well as on the diversity of human experience. They argue for the existence of a “multiplicity of theoretical standpoints”[12] rather than for grand, all-encompassing theories

## 21 Notes Cultural Memory Studies: Cultural Memory and the Literary Canon (Herbert Gräbes)

p. 311

- remembering is selective, group remembrance even more so
- this process is called a canon
- canon = objectification of values, have prestige in the cultural framework
- collective values influence the validity of the canon
- groups promote different canons in a single culture
- canons still last a long time
- cultural memory: “the characteristic store of repeatedly used texts, images and rituals in the cultivation of which each society and epoch stabilizes and imports its self-image; a collectively shared knowledge of preferably (yet not exclusively) the past, on which a group bases its awareness of unity and character” (p. 311)
- canons keep stuff in memory for the purpose of unity
- they are social and political tools and that are constantly negotiated
- the canon serves the rich and powerful; it can be abolished to make room for pick-and-mix
- literary canons are super important because that's what's taught in college and school
- this canon has different facets (national, international, “high”, “popular”)
- marginalized groups of course disagree with these monolithic canons
- canons are linked to the different cultures of memory
- who makes the curriculum has cultural power
- a lot of factors shape the literary canon (313-314)
- canons are not only created by critics or authorities alone, so abolishing them is rather difficult
- canons are vehicles of national politics, narratives
- they kind of create the concept of “literature”
- they also create a literary “usable past”
- evaluating canons is dependent on experiences and also cultural factors
- the number of works in a canon is also an important aspect
- generally there is a very stable core, then an eminent group surrounding those that change more over time as literary criticism changes, and then less and less attention is paid to more and more rapidly changing authors
- any canon, especially the British one, is “a vehicle for national, racial and gender superiority”
- more recently women authors have been included more often (through work of feminists and historians)
- literary historians are fond of tradition → nothing changes quickly
- to abandon the canon would be to jettison cultural memory

## 22 Class 22.02.2021

- start with free writing
- background for free writing
  - ecological disasters made earth unlivable
  - people fought over resources
  - a lucky few managed to escape to a new planet
  - planet was chosen because it is an ecological dictatorship (ecological utilitarianism)
  - we believe in equality for all species, promote understanding that allows life in harmony
  - because of the dictatorship we have the ministry that is the object of the free write
  - dictatorships like people who are not qualified to choose for themselves
- Islambek
  - Republic (Plato), “Invisible Hand” (Smith), Nineteen Eighty-Four (Orwell)
- Begimai
  - “it was hard to only choose 10 authors”
  - Jamila, Manas, Aaly Tokombaev’s poems, War and Peace, Anna Karenina, some encyclopedia
- Ibragim
  - classic books that give us information about our world
  - science books, War and Peace
- censorship is less oppressive than a canon, but also decides what is acceptable
- we can plot against her in her ministry role and then manipulate the selection process to get our will through
- we focused on preserving literature or information, less on aesthetic values
- now Symbat’s presentation

### 22.1 Free writing

*A series of drastic changes took place and we had to leave Earth for good. We need to start a new life on a new planet, where we will represent humankind. Together, you and I form The Lucky Thirteen. On this new planet, I am in charge of the Ministry of the Preservation and the Promotion of Indispensable Works of Literature, and my mission is to choose which literary works from planet Earth will be allowed in our new society. You are chosen to be a member of the Most Venerable Council of Canon Formation that will guide the ministry throughout this process. You will nominate at least ten literary works that deserve being part of the new canon. Please state reasons for your choice and defend them by referring to “Cultural Memory and the Literary Canon”. You don’t need to agree with Herbert Grabs but you need to explain why you disagree with him and clarify your criteria for choosing your works. I have the right to veto the works you nominate and I will explain my reasons to do so.*

As a general comment I don’t see why the ministry would want to exclude certain works from this new planet. With current technology we could transport all literary works and not lose any of them. Thus I don’t see why we would need to choose such a limited number of them and basically doom all the other works.

Assuming there is some limitation to the number of literary works, I would try to select works based on their influence and also by how much information would be lost if they were not included. To do this well I'd need to know what exactly "literature" refers to here (i.e. does it include works of science or are those somehow already there, are computer programs included here or not?).

I would also need to know what my goal is (what are these works supposed to accomplish?). Would these works be used for nation and identity building, or would they be used for moral education? What culture are these works from or what culture are we residing in or trying to build?

Ignoring these questions, the best list I can come up with includes (in no particular order):

1. Nineteen Eighty-Four (George Orwell): it's dystopian and philosophical, it warns of a path in society we should maybe not follow, and for a new society this might be important
2. The Lord of the Rings (J. R. R. Tolkien): one of the main works of fantasy literature (a personal favorite of mine, admittedly), it shaped most fantasy novels since

After she told us her information, these are irrelevant

1. encyclopedias that preserve knowledge
2. environmental philosophy books
3. environmental accounts of what went wrong on earth

## 22.2 *Symbat Cultural Memory and the Literary Canon (Herbert Grabes)*

- canon's are representations of cultural values
- books selected in school are representations of cultural values
- canon's are expressions of opinions of social strata
- contain classics of their time, this is debated because this thing always changes
- feminism is a good example of a canon being updated a little bit
- she is just reading shit to us; once she is asked questions, her English gets so much worse
- parents (soviet) imposed their canon on children—is this canon relevant in our current education?
- because the whole canon is kinda sexist, should we widen it to include more women?
- “our generation is making equality between the genders, we don't really care anymore if a book is written by a man or a woman”
- one generation influencing another with their literary canon: what should be done
  - the canon should not change because it played a big role in our education
  - the new canon should be up to the standard of the old books
- the canon is always political, values of society are generally values of a particular group of people (bourgeoisie)

## 23 Notes Cultural Memory Studies: Life-Writing, Cultural Memory, and Literary Studies (Max Saunders)

p. 321

- life-writing is contentious because it is such a broad term
- sometimes used when different life-story writings (memoir, autobiography, biography, diary, letters, autobiographical fiction) are discussed together
- sometimes it is also used because the line between biography and autobiography is being blurred
- in 18th century the view that all writings is (in some way) autobiographical emerged and is still around
- this blurs the line between autobiographical writings and all other forms
- even the most factual thing carries some autobiographical mark
- autobiography not as a genre, but a mode of reading
- biographies tend to quote a ton of material; even autobiographies to that for some reason, even if they could be pure acts of memory
- some people write about themselves like about someone else to make it easier
- these questions are important for memory studies, as well as cultural memory
- *contract* between author and reader that author is also subject of the autobiographical book
- but then how valid is this contract, and what about cases where there is no contract (like 3rd-person autobiographies)
- this mess makes connecting life-writing to actual experiences hard
- on the other hand, if everything is life-writing, everything can be connected to cultural memory
- we then must approach all of these texts like literary critics and not naively
- these texts reveal memory cultures—how memory is produced, constructed, written, circulated
- everything to do with memory is always already mediated, by narratives, textualization, short-term memory; they are “after the event” by definition
- “truth of memory” is debatable, some might match up more with other types of evidence, but all are falsified as transformed as event or experience
- studying life-writing can make us better cultural historians
- this might also create better literary critics
- certain autobiographical episodes can give insight into formative memory, from autobiographical point of view
- from a memory studies point of view we can see what happened, and if you have multiple sources you can build a picture of that cultural memory; if something is published it is worse because those sources contributed to the formation of cultural memory too
- biography is central in cultural memory production; anthropologically we are looking at ancestor worship; defining, celebrating its values
- one type of history writing focuses on great men; they shape history, even though history is a collection of biographies—contrasts with Marxian view that economic movements shape history
- other biographies focus on the circumstances that made pretty ordinary people great

- challenges to life-writing
  - *psychoanalysis*: the self is fragmented and not entirely accessible, writers cannot fully access it;
  - *Marxism*: biography is conservative: it is individualistic and liberal; function is to present something that is not true, keep up the illusion; but it also delivers important information on class struggle
  - *feminism*: writing the biographies of women that were ignored; they could also express all their stuff now; 3 types
    1. write biographies of women
    2. create reference or companion works
    3. contribute to reference works other forms of identity politics do the same
  - *fiction*: tries to fictionalize certain elements in cultural memory and sometimes gets some flack for it; Anne Frank has become a symbol for this, her personal memories give voice to thousands of fates
- making meaning free from the author can be liberating too
- crossing biography and fiction is a 20th century thing
- life-writing was late in receiving a lot of attention from literary critics
- life-writings was in its hay-day in the 19th century
- stupid fucking mumbo-jumbo

## 24 Class 24.02.2021

- looking at the works suggested for the new canon
- most suggestions are very culture-specific, this is a general problem canons have
- oral literature is generally not included
- the included works should appreciate and embrace our values, of course
- we should maybe include some texts to read critically and see how problematic they are
- reading critically should be included in our canon (what kind of dictatorship is this?)
- Ibragim puts his own work at the end of the list, this work is based on his own experiences
- now for free writing
- if it's fiction it is not worth reading; it does not have the same connection to real events; it still has some value because some people will still believe it
- an agreement; keeping diary important for those who will read it at some point; reading a fictional diary is not worth it because it is made up and does not have the same impact?
- they don't lose their value even if they are in doubt because we can analyze it regardless; who really benefits from it being authentic or fiction? we can never be 100% sure in any case
- now Ibragim's presentation
- she will send us an email about our assignment

### 24.1 Free writing

What is the value of life-writing if the authenticity of the document is doubted? Think of the controversy around Anne Frank's diary, and explain whether it is worth reading if it is a work of fiction, not a real diary written by a 13-years-old girl who died in a concentration camp.

Having an inauthentic piece of life-writing is a problem because now we cannot attribute the things we read to the supposed author. But I think when it comes to life-writing authenticity is not the main focus. Although there are different types of life-writing, they all share an element of personal influence (coming from the author or the subject, in case they are different) that distorts what is written. This distortion is unavoidable for this medium because everything that is written is modified by memory and how memory is produced and conveyed. This means that any life-writing is tainted, if not inauthentic, because of the way memory works.

If the authenticity of a document is in doubt, it cannot serve as evidence of what the (supposed) author experienced. Nonetheless, even inauthentic life-writing can convey the same memories and emotions as if it were authentic. And even if the author is actually the author, they would present themselves in a certain light, even if unintentionally. This can, in a way, be seen as inauthentic in the same way as someone pretending to someone else.

## 24.2 *Ibragim* Life-Writing, Cultural Memory, and Literary Studies (Max Saunders)

- introduces life-writing as a wide-reaching term
- autobiography is supposed to present personal memories
- if we read it from a cultural memory perspective we can put ourselves into the context of the writing (e.g. being a kid in the 1800s)
- misunderstands the old way of writing history—there only great men influenced history through their own exceptionalism
- life-writing helps social historians because it gives a window into bygone times
- survivors of catastrophes form memory through their stories
- feminist attitude towards life-writing: they are using it to bring into focus forgotten and excluded women in history
- texts do not reveal cold, hard facts, but they reveal memory cultures and how people wrote stuff down
- memories are constructed—they are not simple transcriptions of events, they reflect morals, values, incorporate metanarratives
- we also add meaning to events in trying to make sense of them
- all of these things contain a grain of truth
- going against the grain: reading a text critically and not how it was meant to be read
- Question: “Life-writing” covers various texts and forms. If you were to write a “life-writing”, meaning tell a life story, which form of writing would you choose and why? In addition, what would you include in your story?
  - if I were to do life-writing I would probably choose a diary, I feel like that would give a more authentic experience
  - this diary would include what happened to me and how I reacted to it,
- he wants to include life advice for people and only the most important pieces of information
- when people read novels, they pay a lot of attention to the truth value of the statements; people cite a lot of shit in their autobiographies
- in the 20th century, we find more fictional and constructed narratives
- “the person who experiences is different from the person who writes”
- why did we see this radical change in approaches? relates to mentality and paradigm shift

## **25 Class 03.03.2021**

### **25.1 Organization**

- most of Forsberg's books have a biographical aspect to them, reading them could tell us something about him
- one of our assignments relating to some of Forsberg's writing and its relation to memory studies
- first assignment due before spring break—compare the two movies
- we talked about cultural trauma, comparing traumas, approaches to trauma, cosmopolitan memory models (perspective of the victim); hidden life—against that kind of memory
- choose any angle or topic to compare 2 or more of the movies with each other
- follow academic rules, follow word count expectations etc from the syllabus
- she is focused on academic honesty—she will send the prompt to us?

### **25.2 Discussion**

- journalism and memory
- free writing now
- first-hand contributors
- focus on different things that the mainstream media misses
- can increase trust in the media if people themselves participate
- presentation now

### **25.3 Free writing**

Advantages and disadvantages of open-source / citizen journalism:

Obvious advantages that I can see are that this type of journalism would be more open to participation by normal people. You do not need a degree or exceptional writing ability to create works of journalism. The hold of big media corporations on journalism and media could also be weakened because they no longer control all the news.

From the perspective of memory, a many-voiced journalism can give a more accurate representation of cultural memory than journalism created by a kind of elite. If more people from different backgrounds engage in journalism, this journalism can reflect more diverse cultures of memory. For example this could contrast the general journalistic representation of 9/11 from a white American perspective with the perspective of an American of Middle-Eastern origin who would have a different story to tell.

The disadvantages for general journalism could be that there is less control of what is being published. I know I also put this as a positive point, but if there is no regulation, people can easily publish falsehoods, lies, inciting material, etc. Considering the enormous influence the media has on our thinking and our actions, there would need to be robust, transparent moderation of this open-source journalism to keep journalism distinct from pure opinion writing.

For memory I am sure that there are at least some drawbacks, but I cannot think of any.

## 25.4 *Begimai* Journalism's Memory Work (Barbie Zelizer)

- journalism is generally very focused on the most immediate present
- but analysis shows that to make sense of the present journalists use connections to the past
- they either use the past to explain the present, use it for analogies
- “Journalism’s institutional memory is nurtured by the tensions surrounding the critical incidents of the public sphere, and so the presence of contestation and debate is often a reliable predictor that memory work will at some point begin”
- journalistic conventions are kind of important
- can journalists write objectively?
  - not quite, they are human after all
- influencing media:
  - hard power of a state
  - funding influence on organizations
- censorship online on social media (Facebook) as well as the internet in general (AWS and Parler)

## 26 Notes Collective Memory Reader: Reflections on the Revolution in France (Edmund Burke)

- texts of 18th to 20th century writings in memory
- edits highlight the most important parts

The text

- Edmund Burke (1729–1797)
- Anglo-Irish political commentator and philosopher
- founded political conservatism
- opposed the French revolution
- text from 1790
- social order is sustained by tradition and memory
- influential thinker, influenced Durkheim and Shils

From *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

- purpose of revolution: preserve ancient laws and liberties; ancient constitution of government is only guarantee for law and liberty
- to find the roots of this, look at history and acts of parliament
- don't look at religion or revolutionary ideas
- fabricating new government fills him with horror and disgust
- he wishes to get all things they have as inheritance from their forefathers
- they preserved the inheritance by not adding something against its nature (scion from horticulture: new part grafted onto the roots stock)
- any reforms should have reverence to antiquity
- he hopes that all later reformations will also have this spirit
- considering inheritance is good
- freedom leads to misrule and excess, but if a canon of the forefathers is there, this can be tempered
- descent inspires with a native dignity; prevents upstarts from being insolent
- liberty -> noble freedom; pedigree of noble ancestors
- we can look back at the symbols and products of earlier times
- we treat it like we treat reverence in nature: by age and by whom it is descended
- sophister - philosopher?
- choosing nature and hearts rather than speculation and invention for rights etc
- directly addressing the people in France:
  - they should have followed the example of britian?
  - give some dignity to the freedom that they regained
  - they had not lost their original dignity during oppressive rule
  - some of it was destroyed but all the foundations and some of the walls were still there—they could have been built on
  - their constitution was not finished, but it could have been revised and perfected
  - the old constitution had all the action and counteraction that ultimately lead to harmony
  - these oppositions were considered to great for the new constitution, but they bring a check to all proceedings
  - they make deliberation necessary and not just a choice
  - they necessitate compromise which means moderation; thus they prevent harsh,

crude, unqualified reformations

- arbitrary power can thus not be exerted by anyone
- everything was ordered and in its place
- proper monarchy could have weighed them all down and made sure they stayed where they belonged
- they had all these advantages, but chose to pretend that they did not and to start over from scratch
- they began by despising all that they had, and thus they made a mistake
- if the last generations were not good, why not leave them and start before it went bad
- in them you could have seen a standard of virtue and wisdom that's worth using
- this would have elevated you
- respecting ones forefathers would teach to respect oneself
- they chose to represent the French as people of yesterday, low-born wretches until the *emancipation of 1789*
- analogous to a group of *maroon slaves* that was suddenly freed from bondage, and thus not to be held accountable for the abuse of liberty because they were not used to it
- instead of this he advocates for: seeing themselves as he sees them: a generous and gallant nation that was long misled by its high values of fidelity, honour, loyalty
- unfavorable events made them slaves, but not a servile disposition, but a public spirit, worshiping their country through the person of their king
- he would have liked them acknowledge their error compared to their ancestors and go back to their principles and preserve recent honor and loyalty
- if they didn't want their own shit, they could have gone back to what countries around them kept alive of their old European traditions and adapted them to the current day
- that would have been wise
- this would have been worthy of veneration
- they would have shamed despotism
- well disciplined freedom is auxiliary to law
- you would have had:
  - \* productive revenue
  - \* flourishing commerce
  - \* free constitution
  - \* potent monarchy
  - \* disciplined army
  - \* reformed and venerated clergy
  - \* mitigated but spirited nobility
  - \* liberal order of commons to emulate and select the nobles
    - \* protected, satisfied, laborious, obedient people
- virtue leads to happiness in all conditions
- this is the true moral equality of mankind
- monstrous fiction (the three ideals) inspires false ideas and vain expectations into men
- civil classes are established as much for the benefit of the humble as for the

- more splendid (but not more happy)
- you had a chance for true luck and glory unlike any in the history of the world,  
but you threw it away

## 27 Class 10.03.2021

- we are having a “flashback” of sorts
- going back to the roots of memory studies
- precursors and classics in the second text
- today after the session we will get feedback on our first presentations
- no free writing, but keep in mind: “what do today’s reading have to do with memory studies”?
- my presentation on Burke’s text
- text by Toqueville by Zhazgul

### 27.1 *Zhazgul Democracy in America (Toqueville)*

- aristocratic history focuses more on individuals and forgets what the masses do
- democratic history focuses on the masses and forgets the influence of individuals
- in aristocratic times people were more connected to their ancestors and their future relatives, while in democratic societies their ties are severed
- democracy leads to an increase in state power
- democracy can lead to despotism if people have less of a connection to their ancestors and depend more on the state
- is a majority decision always democratic?
  -
- does religion help or hinder democracy?
  -
- what are the main problems facing today’s democracy?
  -
- if people rule in a democracy, are there any genuine democracies in the world?
  -
- democracy severs all the connections people had to their ancestors and descendants, it also separates him from other people
- his ideas were based on the American Revolution and influenced the French Revolution
- the French revolution was also caused in part by the support they gave to the American colonies
- the revolutionary period was also a shift in the culture of memory in the affected countries
- modernity shaped memory studies, and the ideas of modernity were broadcast by and after the French revolution
- Kantsteiner’s chapter can be related to this discussion
- a scientific approach to the human soul lead to a development in memory studies
- changing social systems influence the way memory is created and how knowledge is handled
- our social systems and the way we understand them are related
- the core of the issue is how we remember

## 28 *Class 15.03.2021*

- revolution shapes memory
- Rakhiliya's presentation

### 28.1 *Rakhiliya Claude Levi-Strauss*

- French anthropologist
- created structural anthropology
- idea: every society started from the same fundamentals and later separated
- every culture has the same fundamental roots
- rooted in linguistics
- "Savage Mind" meant untrained by society, not in the usual sense
- he talks about recurring historical sequences (seasons, exchange of goods and services)
- some people accept it, some deny it
- strict rules needed to prevent conflicts
- he talks about Australian tribes
- mourning rites turn the present into the past
- the past survives in books and archives; how do events survive in the present
- what is the meaning and where does it come from?
- spirituality and materialism are strongly related to this
- post-colonialism meant looking at the terms people used and what assumptions they had that turned out not to hold true
- hierarchical relationships might be problematic
- problematic assumptions need to be checked; using the word savage is a problem that he needed to address
- reversible time?
- ancestors become spirits and whatever
- diachronic and anachronism (not timely, e.g. a medieval town in current times)
- something remains the same or changes, but it is preserved within time
- this somehow means that the memories narrate a story about the past
- commemorations bring the past to the present

### 28.2 *Karl Marx text*

## **29 Notes**

### **29.1 Collective Memory Reader: Democracy in America (Alexis de Tocqueville)**

p. 82

### **29.2 Collective Memory Reader: On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life (Friedrich Nietzsche)**

p. 87

### **29.3 Collective Memory Reader: What Is a Nation? (Ernest Renan)**

p. 94

### **29.4 Collective Memory Reader: Totem and Taboo: Resemblances between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics (Sigmund Freud)**

p. 98

### **29.5 Collective Memory Reader: The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (Karl Marx)**

p. 103

- historical reading of coup of Louis Napoleon (nephew of THE Napoleon)
- evidence against his historical determinism
- collective memory is not a central theme, even though later theorists saw some shit in that
- men make history based on circumstances derived from the past
- especially during revolution previous generations are conjured to borrow names, slogans etc in time-honored disguise
- one can only really live in the now when all this past shit is forgotten
- French Revolution used Roman slogans and imagery
- bourgeois revolution tends to cover itself in other, older and better traditions; when the revolution is complete, the old ideals are cast aside
- the old and dead are used for glorification, finding spirit
- a people who thought that power of revolution was with them, now find themselves in the past and powerless
- what is important for the future and 19th century revolutions is to let the dead be dead
- this means that these new revolutions must be satisfied with themselves and not try to emulate earlier revolutions

## **29.6 Collective Memory Reader: The Sociological Problem of Generations (Karl Mannheim)**

p. 106

## **29.7 Collective Memory Reader: Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory (Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi)**

p. 215

- American Jewish historian
- old biblical and rabbinical concepts of time and current Jewish ones
- human civilization is not inherently concerned with history, even though Western tradition suggests as much
- mythical time is more important in many “primitive” societies—they attach meaning to things like the dream-time, but the current moment does not have any of that; only when rituals shatter the distinction does the present have some weight
- Herodotus (father of history) and his society saw no real value in history—Herodotus wrote to preserve the deeds of the Greeks and barbarians—protection against erosion through time
- they also sought moral or political insights from the past
- Jews were the fathers of meaning in history
- ancient Israel assigned meaning to history, a view that Christianity and Islam would later appropriate
- God’s will was manifest in human history
- suddenly the interaction with god was not here and now, but in history (divine challenge and human response)
- struggle of gods against chaos replaced by struggle of god against his creation, man–tense dialectic of obedience and rebellion
- primeval dream-time world is Paradise in Genesis, irrevocably abandoned
- history and historical time begins with Adam and Eve leaving paradise
- man discovers that even in suffering, god reveals himself in the course of history
- now celebrations are no longer trying to re-gain dream-time, but they celebrate actual history
- only in Israel is the injunction to remember as a religious imperative to an entire people
- there may be a desperate pathos about biblical history: human memory is fleeting
- history can never repeat itself, but mythic time repeats itself
- in light of all that, the covenant is supposed to last forever
- to remember it the bible states to remember the Jordan being split when the covenant passed
- as Sinai cannot be repeated, what happened there must be carried along with history and thus transmitted from the forefathers to the present
- biblical appeal to memory has little to do with curiosity, it is about remembering the important parts
- two channels: ritual and recital
- preserving links to seasonal cycles, passover and tabernacles turned into Exodus from Egypt and sojourn in the wilderness
- religious need to remember overflowed into actual historical narrative too

- biblical history spanning a millennium is very impressive, even though it is supposed to show the acts of god it is mostly concerned with the acts of men and nations
- this was ultimately to be interpreted in religious terms, but it lead to a giant piece of history
- three elements: meaning of history, memory of the past, writing of history
- in bible they were somewhat connected, afterwards they diverge
- prophets are more likely to transmit collective memory than actual history writing
- collective memory mostly transmitted through ritual and not chronicle
- the historical books of the bible (Joshua, Kings, Samuel,...) had to be more than just history to survive
- they had to turn into sacred, authoritative writings
- when the biblical canon was sealed at Yabneh, these books received an immortality that subsequent (and even current) books can never achieve (this theory is actually discredited today)
- for the first time the history of a people became part of its scripture
- this historical stuff was (is) read in synagogues—keeping history alive
- with democratization of Judaism, more people were learning and reciting history
- why did rabbis not take up where biblical history left off?
- historiography came to a halt even though belief in history remained
- this also lead to a- or anti-historical thought patterns
- a sharp change in Jewish life lead to a change in group memory
- history became the faith of fallen Jews
- history, not a sacred text, was now the arbiter of Judaism
- later ideologies appeal to history for validation
- Jewish historiography must thus be opposed to Jewish history: it must oppose the divine as the casual and ultimate factor in Jewish history, and the uniqueness of it
- the secular view of history took way longer to make it's way to Judaism than any other area
- Jewish history as national history was the only one that was considered sacred; it could be interpreted purely religiously
- Judaism is inseparable from its evolution through time
- only in 19th century do we find historiography that is separate from Jewish collective memory
- “The historian,” he wrote, “is the physician of memory. It is his honor to heal wounds, genuine wounds. As a physician must act, regardless of medical theories, because his patient is ill, so the historian must act under a moral pressure to restore a nation’s memory, or that of mankind” (p. 220)
- historiography cannot replace eroded group memory if it never depended on it in the first place
- The decline of Jewish collective memory in modern times is only a symptom of the unraveling of that common network of belief and praxis through whose mechanisms. . . . the past was once made present. Therein lies the root of the malady. Ultimately Jewish memory cannot be “healed” unless the group itself finds healing, unless its wholeness is restored or rejuvenated. But for the wounds inflicted upon Jewish life by the disintegrative blows of the last two hundred years the historian seems at best pathologist, hardly a physician. (p. 220)
- just read 220 onwards
- every sentence is good

## 30 Class 17.03.2021

- assignment 2 might be on whether or not we need Holocaust memorials
- assignment 3 may be a paper on memory studies itself; alternatively we could read some of Forsberg's writing and then see what we can say about his memory or life writing—coming to terms with the past; can we find a topic that combines my major and memory studies?
- talking about what Nooruz is, also how names and patronymics work here
- now Begimai

### 30.1 *Begimai Jewish History and Jewish Memory (Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi)*

- mythical is more real in “primitive societies” than actual history
- Jews were the first to attach real importance to history
- she is simply reading sections of the text to us
- what is the point of this
- Jews, more than any other group, can read their history completely religiously
- is it possible to reconstruct historical events with 100% accuracy?
  - not really, because any kind of transmission involves a certain loss of information
  - experiencing an event we have a certain connection of the event with the past
  - views of the Turkish coup attempt is mostly shaped by people’s political convictions
  - postmodernists would say true objectivity is impossible and thus true reconstruction cannot happen
- use of history:
  - learning from the past: information and strategy and tips
  - try to understand the present by looking to the past §§ Begimai Jewish History and Jewish Memory (Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi)
  - why do we write history?
- the invention of tradition (B. Anderson):
  - writing as an invention of tradition, especially for nations
- is learning history from a national perspective a good idea?
- history: identity, not repeating the mistakes of the past
- perceptions of god and history change over time—spirit of the age; dominant thought of the times
- right now the end of the world is coming but people don’t really care, while in some countries people made sense of stuff with reference to a nearing end times

### **31 Notes Collective Memory Reader: Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method (Alon Confino)**

p. 212

- relationship of power in society shaped by process of remembrance
- memory sustains a relationship of power; “who wants whom to remember what and why”
- reduction of memory to only politics is weird and doesn’t paint the whole picture
- ignoring the social aspect of memory is not good
- effects of memory on organization, hierarchization, arrangements of social and cultural relationships
- reduction to political makes us intellectually poorer
- mostly people just look at the obvious places where memory is manipulated, while the places where it is not obvious are the more interesting ones
- we’d miss anything that is not political: association, workplace
- memory studies echoes the classic social theory that cultural differences only reflect social differences -> culture can only be analyzed in connection with the underlying social preconditions
- this has been abandoned there, and it should also be abandoned in memory studies
- people describe representation of the past and neglect: transmission, diffusion, meaning
- reception is important not just for knowledge, but for correct interpretation of evidence
- reception is measure against evolution of memory, levels of analysis are separate narratives
- must be more theoretical in the relationship between social, political, cultural; more anarchical in linking representation and experience
- memory itself is meaningless
- writing the history of memory can be especially useful
- care is needed to do it correctly
- memory of WWII in a country cannot be separated from the evolution of memory in that country since then
- “To write a history of memory, we need to draw the mental horizon of an age- When and why did memory become a habit of mind shared by people to give meaning to the past? One can imagine that it is the kind of historical problem Warburg and Bloch would have been delighted to pose, and perhaps to begin to answer. And so, perhaps the first task of the history of memory is to historicize memory.” (p. 214)

## **32    *Class 29.03.2021***

- class got cancelled

### 33 *Notes Cultural Memory Studies: Truth and Method* (Hans-Georg Gadamer)

- this text is incredibly dense
- hermeneutics (studying texts) lives between people having a traditional connection to a text and it being a separate historical object
- it must clarify the conditions in which understanding takes place
- the real meaning of a text does not depend on what the author wanted, but on the context in which it is read
- we should not see distance in time as a problem and try to think ourselves into the past, but we should take this distance as a strength
- sometimes it is better to interpret something old because all the concurrent things that might have messed up the true meaning of the thing
- true meaning can only be discovered with some temporal distance
- the process of understanding and finding the true meaning is infinite because we always discover new shit
- one needs to be aware of one's prejudice to be able to see past it
- understanding begins when something addresses us
- suspension of our own prejudices is required
- we cannot just cast aside prejudice, it needs to be considered fully in connection to the other prejudice
- historical thinking must be aware of itself

## 34 *Class 31.03.2021*

### 34.1 *Ibragim Confino* Text

- argues against reduction of memory to politics
- memory is not just an instrument of politics
- which part of the memory is the most important
- when it comes to politics, we are talking about a ruling class that rules top to bottom, ruling class shapes memory top to bottom
- 3rd assignment on what memory studies is
- memory is an attempt to resist the power of history—lower social classes wanting to be remembered and us remembering what happened to them
- personal is political: there is an inter-relation between personal and political; personal <=> political
- resistance from the bottom is also political
- is bride kidnapping a memory practice? Certainly not lol, it is kind of a made up tradition
- some people claim it is from Manas, but it actually is not and they just made it up
- keeping the patriarchy running by the way the bride kidnapping works; it's not just about rights of the individuals, it keeps the economic and cultural systems running
- how should we remember COVID-19, how would you tell them about your experience (someone born after it happened)
- relating current anti-Asian violence to Black Death anti-Semitic tendencies
- political aspect of this is the assigning of blame to other places
- one problem is that humans have a right to rule the world
- many policies are informed by political or social concerns
- how political events are being remembered will generally have a political dimension

## 35 *Class 05.04.2021*

- who is Marx talking about when he says “They are therefore incapable of asserting their class interest in their own name, whether through a parliament or a convention. They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented. Their representative must at the same time appear as their master, as an authority over them, an unlimited governmental power which protects them from the other classes and sends them rain and sunshine from above.”?
- the proletarians need to have representatives such that they are their masters but also
- 

### 35.1 *Meerim Karl Marx*

- for revolutions people always borrow stuff from previous revolutions to give their current revolution credibility
- she is reading off and it's horrible
- opinion on “In like manner the beginner who has learnt a new language always translates it back into his mother tongue, but he has assimilated the spirit of the new language and can produce freely in it only when he moves in it without remembering

the old and forgets in it his ancestral tongue.” (p. 89)

- she is not making sense, just repeating Marx and doing so badly
- opinion: “The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.” (p. 89)
- Awakening the past to create something new is the goal of a new struggle or a parody of the old one?
- reviving monarchy by creating a certain cultural atmosphere?? holding onto power as a president creates more of a climate for monarchy??
- you have what needs to be done vs. what people want to do
- after Marx’s statement that men can built history but not freely
- if there are “forces” driving history, how much independence do we really have?
- using aphorisms to make strong points
- what does Marx contribute to memory studies: “the past influences the present?”, “people conjure up the past to support actions in the present”
- idea of awakening the dead is one of the main ideas of memory studies
- remembering is a retroactive creation of the past
- his idea of old revolutions being used to support current movements is in line with this idea
- understanding language can help us understand stuff
- reflexivity, influence of a person on thinking and remembering
- in Spanish, to exile can be an active verb, in most languages you can say something like that
- languages can tell us stuff about perceptions in particular cultures
- how is Marx perceived in the culture that you are from
- aristocratic order -> bourgeois order -> hopefully proletarian order
- working class people were super vulnerable, in Marx’s context is was more of a nation-based economy, while today we have a more international economy
- something can move us from Marx to Gadamer
- what do we think when we say representation

## 35.2 *Symbat Gadamer*

- what does one need to know about memory to understand hermeneutics
- tradition is an ongoing process of interpretation
- they are
- can there be a way of experiencing the world that is not scientific
- “For so long as our mind is influenced by a prejudice, we do not know and consider it as a judgment.” (p. 182)
- we are located in a certain hermeneutic circle and we need to understand it in order to see past the accompanying prejudice

## 36 Notes Collective Memory Reader: Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism (Jan Assmann)

p. 223

- mnemo-history: don't ascertain truth of traditions, but study them as traditions of collective memory
- communicative memory: past handed down between generations in everyday conversation, limited time, malleable, changing; lacks cultural characteristics
- cultural memory: accumulated residue of distant pasts, source of awareness of unity and peculiarity
- mnemo-history: not past, but with how it is remembered
- mh concerned with recourse of the past, only appears in later readings
- truth of memory does not lie in factuality, but actuality
- living on is caused by continued relevance; comes not from the past, but from the present where they are remembered as important
- mh analyzes importance the present gives the past; analyzing the mythical elements in tradition and uncovering their hidden agenda
- history -> myth as soon as it is remembered, narrated, used
- study of history != study of its commemoration, tradition, transformation in collective memory
- memory is reconstructive imagination; not stored but processed
- truth of memory lies in the identity that is shapes
- we are the stories that we are able to tell about ourselves
- each of us lives a narrative, we all collectively do too
- myths: stories that a society or group lives by; important for ethnogenesis
- history is imbued with narratives of its own
- greeks saw culture as a form of memory
- discourse: series of texts on the same subject and on each other; textual debate
- discourse has a life of its own and is kind of self-reproducing

## 37 Notes Collective Memory Reader: Collective Memory and Cultural Identity (Jan Assmann)

p. 226

- person's belonging to a group is not phylogenetic, but a result of socialization and customs
- survival of the type is a function of cultural memory
- self-images and memories are specific to social groups
- communicative memory is temporally close, cultural memory is temporally distant
- cm does not have a temporal horizon
- memory cannot preserve the past, it only holds that which it can reconstruct in its contemporary frames of reference
- memory needs to be crystallized to be institutionalized
- there is a system of values and structure to memories and symbols

- reflexivity:
  1. practice-reflexive: interpreting common practice through proverbs and ritual
  2. self-reflexive: uses itself to modify itself
  3. reflexive of its own image; reflects the self-image of the group
- cultural memory: body of work cultivated to stabilize and convey a self-image

### 38 Notes Cultural Memory Reader: Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition (Yael Zerubavel)

p. 251

- deployment of memory in construction of Israeli nationhood; national mythologies in general
- “master commemorative narratives”: underwrite generation of particular settings; master narratives in defining turning points
- commemoration reproduces a commemorative narrative; provides a moral message
- cm draws on historical sources, but selectively and creatively
- undergoes narrativization
- creativity of commemorative narrative within historical narrative is interesting
- comm is fragmentary in nature
- in combination, they contribute to master commemorative narrative which structures collective memory
- provides group members with a notion of a shared past
- study of an event involves study of its commemoration and of the commemoration of related events
- mcn focuses on group’s distinct social identity; highlights historical development; also to formation of a nation
- generally group moving through history; mostly linear time, sometimes suspended for certain reasons
- holidays etc disrupt the normal flow of time to give attention to important events
- historical patterns recur within a group
- mcn marks events that set a group apart
- beginnings, divides, and others are used to demarcate “us” from “them”
- use of birth vs origin as separation from another group and also coming into own life
- mcn imposes order on the past
- reconstructs past from a current ideological stance
- past is divided into major stages, basic plot of structures
- power lies in establishing basic images of particular ideological stances
- drastic definitions make advancements and setbacks clear; give development structure
- commemorative density: importance attached to different areas of the past
- collective amnesia: not commemorating entire periods
- historical time -> commemorative time
- collective memory takes specific events and makes them into decisive moments; turning points
- which points to select highlights the ideological underpinnings
- events can turn into political myths through which people perceive current events
- analyzing different commemorations of the same event can give insight into the tension and mediation involved
- if the myth can no longer mediate the tension surrounding an event, it becomes openly contested
- **countermemory as something that opposes the mcn**
- mcn is political elites construction of the past, cm is of the marginalized groups of society and opposed to mcn

- even cm targeting only one event is highly subversive to mcn, as it questions its validity
- collective memory is thus contested and changeable
- with enough force, cm can become mcn

## 39 Class 07.04.2021

- second assignment: today after class we will get the topics by email
- we can use Forsberg's assignments if we want to: James Young's work on texture of memory (are Holocaust memorials necessary?)
- our deadline will be the 25th of April
- 3rd paper will be submitted by May 15
- roughly 3 weeks per paper
- research-based or response-based
- digital memorials: more international approach to remembrance for accessibility etc
- digital Holocaust memorials; how will we remember the pandemic
- 3rd: what the hell is memory studies? based on 2 chapters from A. Erll
- discussion of the Assmann texts by Galina

### 39.1 *Galina Jan Assmann's texts from our readings*

- developed theory by Halbwachs, collective memory analyzed from historical perspective
- talking about mnemo-history: analyze the mythical elements in tradition and discover the hidden goals
- 6 main characteristics of cultural memory
- just nothing of her own work, she is simply reading shit aloud
- truth and facts don't really have intrinsic meaning, we have to form a narrative about it to make sense
- example of the storming of the Capitol in the US
- likening OCD to origin myths? obsessive compulsive thinking has "magic thinking" behind it, if you repeat it enough times, it becomes more sure; you convince yourself that doing certain things will avert disaster
- taking charge of a part of something means taking control of the whole
- you can influence the rest of the universe by influencing a small part of it
- how can magic thinking be applied to cultural terms? Superstitions are a good example
- magic thinking is an important part in myth making (in the anthropological and psychological sense)
- we tell this story about ourselves, they help us understand the creation of narratives too
- myths should be incorporated into narrative analysis because to normal people, they are as real as actual facts
- pay attention to the predecessors: Warburg, Halbwachs
- Assmann is the founding father of memory studies
- loss during transmission from communicative memory to cultural memory

## 40 *Class 12.04.2021*

- my last presentation today
- second period of memory studies
- revival after a bit, cosmopolitan memory
- recently there has been a movement to find an alternative to cosmopolitan memory models
- talking about national identities
- racism and prejudice in certain countries
- thinking globally: can we think of the world
- being a world-citizen in a way; thinking in transnational terms we have to discuss issues of contact between cultures
- politics is also a really important
- cannot tell the story of the British without telling the story of the Empire and the colonized countries
- Michael Rothberg: multidirectional memory
- when you try to understand an issue in historical terms, it can contribute to the understanding of another issue
- Hitler might have started the hatred-filled extermination, but how did he mobilize most people to do this and participate in this?
- talking only about the Holocaust is taking attention away from what happened to Native Americans
- can we think of national identities not based on heroic narratives
- cosmopolitan memory is based on victimhood
- thinking of people only as victims takes away their agency and makes them powerless
- we can use the “victimhood” to deprive people of their agency and it can bring about populist responses
- what can be the alternative? using the term “survivor”
- when controversial issues come up, we need to look at what makes us identify with a certain thing
- being reflexively self-critical can help us be aware of our own prejudices

## 41 Notes Collective Memory Reader: Mass Atrocity, Collective Memory, and the Law (Mark Osiel)

p. 482

- American legal scholar
- wrote about influence and obligation of law with respect to collective memory
- should law play a big role in collective memory?
- large scale trials capture attention
- can get public attention and stimulate reflection
- thus influence collective memory, maybe even concepts of memory
- “the process of how people are made to vanish has become a distinctive feature of postwar conceptions of what memory is.”
- highlight official brutality + complicity -> reassessment of beliefs, more so than most other political events
- “moments of truth”
- moments of transformative opportunity, maybe a goal of the trial
- prosecutors and judges try to shape collective memory as public spectacle but also as liberal legality
- collective conscience to draw on may not exist at such times
- can still contribute to an underappreciated social solidarity based on procedures that uphold some kind of due process
- the “poetics” of legal storytelling are important here (how to frame the Holocaust)
- comparative historical sociology: assess and analyze the tropes employed in certain trials and their effectiveness; their influence on memory
- defense suggests tragedy, prosecutors a morality play
- judicial task is to have law of evidence, procedure, responsibility, “theater of ideas”
- trials designed as monumental spectacles to get most impact
- “liberal show trials” conducted by “moral entrepreneurs” and “activists of memory”
- this goes beyond a normal task of a court (historical interpretation, moral pedagogy) and assumes that they can actually influence society meaningfully
- nations have founding myths, either from time immemorial, or from a time of revolution
- most of these are centered on some type of legal document -> legally induced
- to create such a piece, a bit of smoke and mirrors is necessary; self-conscious dramaturgy by prosecutors and judges
- e.g. Allies (Nuremberg etc.) tried to make a point about the fair process of the trial as totalitarianism vs civilized humanity
- dangers: sacrifice rights of defendants to social solidarity; distort historical understanding; foster delusions of purity through faulty analogies
- they may also fail because they need more extensive admissions of guilt than most nations are willing to give
- using law to instill shared memories would require large segments of the population to accept responsibility and break with old beliefs
- also, collective memory arises incidentally, so constructing it internationally is difficult
- can it only be done dishonestly (not disclosing its deliberate creation)?
- assertion of rights or stigmatization of the violation can be focal point for a nation’s

memory -> rites of commemoration

- shared memories are consolidated; typical problem with “real” and “false” memories
- to prevent mass atrocities, a shared and enduring memory of them needs to exits; the law can be employed to get there

## 42 *Class 14.04.2021*

- stuff about how memory is being created and used
- now we get to the discussion of Mark Osiel's text

### 42.1 Mass Atrocity, Collective Memory, and the Law (Mark Osiel)

- what is the purpose of the major war crime trials
- “how people are made to vanish” -> forced disappearances, abductions, extrajudicial killings
- narratives are considered to be cathartic
- does catharsis do any justice to anyone? catharsis -> purification and purgation of emotions
- Eichmann’s trial is a big example of show trials: summoned over 100 witnesses even though archival information would have easily sufficed for a conviction; the defense refused to have their witnesses (that would have attested immoral behavior of Jews) speak
- remembrance narratives never leave space for remembering deserters either
- court’s influence should be dependent on how much stock people put in courts and the legal system

## 43 Notes Cultural Memory Studies: The invention of tradition revisited: The case of colonial Africa (Terence Ranger)

p. 289

Vansina

- invention of tradition in non-Western settings
- because tradition is invented it is difficult to track identity
- historians don't like tradition because it is the lack of change while they look for change
- can also be used to legitimize stuff held on other grounds
- tradition invoked to describe the historical consciousness of a group
- cultural and traditional roots of equatorial Africa go back 4-5k years, but people have shied away from it; it was rejuvenated from time to time
- invention by tradition, not of tradition
- western scholars assuming that African traditions were unchanging and thus never innovated or changed for the better
- tradition is a set of values that can be built upon and elaborated in various different ways and with different outcomes
- colonial conquest only needed 40 years to destroy the traditions
- instead of having traditions be the source of invention, colonial governments became the source
- the Europeans built something that made sense in their mind but not in tradition and then imposed it on the people
- traditions are processes, they must change to stay alive, they need autonomy
- recovering self-determination after independence was no solution
- now they had no tradition to go back on and thus "Today the people of Equatorial Africa are" still bereft: of a common mind or purpose."
- pluralism of 20th century Africa implies end of great tradition and impotence of modern African thought

Feierman

- long-term duration and active creation are compatible; can lead to mystification, but choosing a particular discourse is an active act
- pluralism is the essence of creativity
- invention is too one-sided, it presupposed an inventor, they always were Europeans
- it is also a too once-for-all event, it leaves no space for change or development
- this idea can hold analysis back, even though it gives a good contrast to earlier fluidity and colonial rigidity
- this topic has to be approached correctly
- change in power structures and use of invented traditions even after Europe stopped using it
- he prefers imagined to invented (except for cases where administrators did just that) because customary law, ethnicity, religion, language were all imagined by many people over a long time
- they were in constant tension and contestation with each other -> imagining

something further

- traditions were re-imagined by different groups of people
- imagine stresses the importance of symbols, ideas, images
- traditions are about identity, and that is about imagination

## 44 Notes Cultural Memory Studies: Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study (Orlando Patterson)

p. 293

- slavery is form of social death, “natal alienation” (severing of a right to ancestry), alienation from patrimony is central to establishing nonpersonhood essential for slavery
- slavery was usually seen as a substitute to violent death
- it was not a pardon, but a conditional commutation as long as the slave remained powerless
- master was a ransomer who held the claim to the slaves life
- slaves had no existence outside their master and thus became nonpersons and socially dead
- natal alienation: no right or claim of birth -> no membership in any social order; secular excommunication
- no claims to any ancestors, genealogical isolate
- had a past, but not a heritage
- slaves were not free to ingrate the experience of the ancestors into their life, not able to use conscious community of memory
- trying to reach out meant struggle with the master, his community and laws, policemen and patrollers
- they always had strong social ties between themselves, but no relationships were ever officially recognized or binding
- the master had the power to remove sexual partners from one another, children from their parents, people from their communities, or to have sex with the slaves
- in the 17th century there was almost no difference between black and white servitude (slave == servant)
- then a distinction emerged between white and black: they did not belong to the group of civilized white Europeans (first religious, then racial)
- a big “we-they” thing; difference was needed between them
- slaves were total outsiders
- alienation from both ancestors and descendants
- acceptance was in the power of the master over symbolic instruments, also he had the only connection between the social world and the socially dead slaves
- masters used special rituals when acquiring one: naming, clothing, hairstyle, language, body markings, symbols of religion
- natal alienation is perpetual and inheritable; not the loss of political or social liberty, but perpetuity of that loss
- slaves had no claim to their children so that master could take them and also because their upbringing incurred a debt to him; no one had any interest in the child so the master took it, child had no claim

## 45 Class 19.04.2021

- great emphasis on post-colonial literature in many countries
- post-colonialism in memory studies is also a thing
- application of “imagined communities” to post-colonial Africa
- significant part of identity construction is based on tradition, they are invented (not like customs, pre-modern ways of doing things)
- invention of tradition: using old elements to create a new tradition
- Ottomans never used the caliphate term against other muslims, but after they lost power, they tried to use it to reassert their power
- ancient materials are always there, but they are not used until someone has need for them to create something new
- in the last 10 years this caliphate idea has become popular in Turkey again
- customs: ancient materials not utilized with purpose in mind, different from traditions
- you cannot assume that any society has been stable for 1000s of years, it is just bogus
- assuming static cultures before colonization makes the impact of colonization even more clear, but it is also a racist perception of no progress in those countries
- for this tradition we have 1000s of years in Africa and only centuries in America and Europe -> idea of home and belonging changes
- idea of immigrants from different cultures in the far right: you don't belong here, and you should go back to where you come from
- sometimes people go too post-colonial or anti-colonial and ignore “bad” things about local cultures
- Islambek's presentation
- slavery as total erasure of identity: can we explain the African American culture (music, cuisine, etc) through this
- using Django as an example to talk about slavery lol
- mulatos: to black to be white, to white to be black
- SA slave owners were different, they have policies to assimilate slaves to their culture
- many different slave uprisings, but the slave owners were smart about keeping slaves separated and in the dark so that they could not organize effectively
- Malcolm X as a big figure in the civil rights movement, the X as a symbol of lost heritage and also as rejection of slave owner given last names
- he was also muslim and saw it as going to back to the roots
- this might be an example of invented tradition on his part
- nonetheless, forced conversion to Christianity was a central part of slave owning
- addressing the experiences of slaves without talking about the slave owners is questionable, as they were directly involved in the suffering
- you should not erase the slave owner from the equation

### 45.1 Islambek Slavery and Social Death (Orlando Patterson)

- Harvard professor and social scientist, concerned with racial issues
- natal alienation and social death are conditions for slavery
- slaves did not have any useful or social ties because the master could sever all of them at will

- slaves were not able to have ancestors or descendants as they could not claim either
- they were inter-slave communities, but those were never binding and could be ended any time
- no obligations between parents and their children; masters had the right to the slave women
- slaves are outcast, constrained by law, police, master, slave patrols
- a bunch of weird, slightly off-topic questions
- some serfs could not be sold, which is a marked difference from slavery
- were slaves totally alienated, or were they just putting up a facade to protect themselves

## 46 Notes Collective Memory Reader: Disturbing Memories (Richard Sennett)

p. 297

- working class conscious analysis
- memory contains the endless struggles that have made us what/who we are (Darwinian)
- traces of conflict, failure, disaster are not erasable in time; no solace in truths of memory
- nostalgia is memories lie (Marx)
- truthful memory requires courage, nostalgia does not; pain becomes thicker if we remember well
- what we remember gives no solace, but maybe how
- remembered pain can be objectified
- sharing memory draws us closer together; solidarity through common remembrance
- cm is source of social strength even if memories are not objective at all
- mythic properties are essential here
- more voices of memory tell a more accurate story; don't privatize memory
- how do people make sense of capitalism?
- people's record of his change is weird, they deny injuries; cm creating myth and not fact
- wounds of memory need objective memory; needs pluralistic voices (group); modern economy works against that
- needs a group where people can remember across differences
- verbal conflict forms social bonds between parties (arguing implies caring what other people think)
- why is this not happening for unemployment, why is memory not confrontation with capitalism's pains
- economic system is individualizing; strips away collective supports against economic dislocation, behavior as isolated entrepreneurs
- individualized insecurity makes life highly unstable and uncertain; sense of self is hard to find; memory comes in here
- shared memory can yield a subjective solidarity; can yield stable inner life
- possess ourselves through memory
- memory becomes private property, something that needs to be protected
- capitalism encourages this; companies want to move fast and not be stuck in the past, thus they don't care about loyalty but moving and changing
- work of recalling is negative; corps have to interest in their own history
- people will express their memories in a way that empowers and solidifies remembering; sharing this creates bonds of loyalty and trust
- shared memories do not protect workers from the world, they focus on what they should have done when there still was time
- they do not remember well because the modern economy does not encourage that
- private empowerment is the answer, collectively collude on that
- sense of time is victimized by economy that does not care about stability, memory, etc and the way people construct their own memories
- how can we make the time that we lived matter in the conduct of our lives?

- shortness of economic time seems to make our experienced time insignificant

## 47 Notes Collective Memory Reader: Toward a Cultural Theory of Trauma (Jeffrey Alexander)

p. 321

- trauma not as inherent, but as ascription of meaning to events
- cultural trauma as horrendous event that happened to a group of people; leaves marks on group consciousness, marking memory forever
- constructing cultural trauma -> identify the existence of human suffering and take on responsibility for it
- taking on moral responsibility allows sharing of suffering of other groups
- other's suffering might also be our own
- social groups can also ignore other's trauma; cannot achieve moral stance
- not only refuse responsibility, but make the victims responsible in a way
- trauma is everywhere; basically an unforeseen, unwelcome, and sudden shift
- trauma does not naturally exist, it is constructed; it's also not an attribute of an event, it is attributed to it
- some events may only become traumatizing in retrospect, but that is as traumatizing as anything else
- the actual effect is not really important, but the belief in their abrupt, harmful change of collective identity
- collective's identity gives individuals a frame of reference (cultural frame of reference)
- only if patterned meanings are abruptly dislodged does trauma happen
- meanings cause shock, not event itself
- process affected by power structures
- for social crises to become trauma they must become cultural crises
- event must become part of identity to become traumatic
- carrier groups as collective agents of the trauma process, they can "make meaning" and can be any social group
- representing trauma means new framework for cultural classification / telling a new story
- storytelling is complex, multivalent, contested, polarizing
- to convince a larger group that they too experienced trauma the carrier groups must make meaning
- experiencing trauma: collective painful injury, established victim, attributes responsibility, distributes consequences
- traumas revise collective identity
- also leads to reexamination of collective past
- there is a "calming down" period; stuff calms down, "lessons" are learned from trauma, memorials are constructed, new identity rooted in sacred places, ritual routines
- the fervor around the trauma will fade away (maybe with resistance)
- they still have a profound impact on social life
- failure to recognize traumas is not a feature of the trauma, but a failure in the *trauma process* (carrier groups too weak, weak narratives, small audiences, ...)
- no new moral responsibility definitions

## 48 Notes Cultural Memory Studies: Living in a Post-Traditional Society (Anthony Giddens)

p. 430

- british sociologist, main dude in reflexive modernization
- place of tradition and detraditionalization in this framework
- warns against repressiveness of traditionalism
- traditions are there, even in modernized societies; sometimes they even thrive
- there are two frameworks for traditions in modern societies
- traditions can defended in a variety of ways, but it needs to be open to dialogue and not just threaten violence
- if this is not true, traditions turns into fundamentalism
- fundamentalism can only assume forms against radical doubt
- fundamentalism: assertion of truth without regard for any consequences
- destruction of the local community reached its apogee in developed countries
- little traditions have mostly disappeared; distinction between great and little traditions has basically disappeared
- high and low culture are still a thing, but they play less of a role
- the things local culture references becomes increasingly more remote; the meaning of local customs changes as they become relics or habits
- habits are personal forms of routinization; people attach significance to them and they give them structure
- customs are more general and created by some common influence, but if they stem from traditional practices, they are maybe neurotic remnants—you just do it because you have to and not because there is any sense in it
- artefacts simply become relics, but are still full of meaning of a transcended past
- relics belong to a past that has no development, they are not really connected to anything around them
- relics are only significant because of the past that they belong to
- modernity does not mean disappearance of collective ritual, generally it is a recent invention
- formulaic truth – mystical notions
- ritualism is displaced by ritualization
- tradition continues to exist wherever mystical notions can help interpret the past
- creation of monuments can foster the creation of a new nationalism
- tradition is not just about celebrating the past, it is also about changing the future by taking it as a resource

## 49 Notes Cultural Memory Studies: Lost Time: On Remembering and Forgetting in Late Modern Culture (David Gross)

p. 434

- things can be out of historical sync with the present
- noncontemporaneity: absolute, relative, enduring
- reference to the past is not always regressive
- forgetting a collective past can free one from burden
- forgetting can be a good thing; fresh perspective, better engagement with the world
- can also make the future more clear, opportunities more apparent, future is in the long run more important than the past
- that's why forgetting is very popular right now
- what can be gained from collective remembering?
- collective memory gives greater breadth of awareness, can enrich and stimulate
- it can also provide a better standpoint to judge our current situation
- we can do these by looking at what is not in ruling memory schema
- noncontemporaneous, kind of the “forgotten” of current memory
- discordant with the present because it is from another time
- memory of the noncontemporaneous carries potential for creativity and critique
- modernity created the distinctions between contemporary and noncontemporary elements a lot sharper than they had ever existed before; what is “modern” or “unmodern”
- the more modern stuff replaces older stuff, the more noncontemporaneous stuff gets produced; not all noncontemp things are the same
- absolute nctmp: past is obliterated except for a few things in museums; can only be abstractly reconstructed (history, archeology)
- relative nctmp: left some noticeable traces behind, even though it has passed
- e.g. cosmology, stuff from before industrialization, old honor codes
- they are broken pieces of a whole that has disappeared
- should not be used as traditions because they are disconnected from surroundings
- these are useful because they can lead back to the whole that existed in the past
- enduring nctmp: survived intact into the present age; continuing/ living presence of the past; “unzeitgemäßig”
- to survive they must retreat from the main stream
- they preserve living nodes of nctmp, carry it on
- remembering these nctmp things will give us a richer idea of the past than if we forgot stuff
- this also gives information about what people are forgetting at the moment
- true value of vanishing can only be appreciated if one is aware of fleetingness

## 50 *Class 28.04.2021*

- Meerim presentation, text about the IBM programmers
- presentation didn't bring anything interesting
- skewing of "survival of the fittest" to serve the purposes of capitalism
- what do individualism and memory have to do with each other
  - memory here turns into something private that people have to protect from others
  - where communities share their memories, they draw closer together, get a sense of solidarity, even if the memory itself is traumatic
  - collective memory is a source of social strength
  - solidarity is a significant idea in memory and stuff
  - "Truthful memory opens wounds which forgetting cannot heal; the traces of conflict, failure and disaster are never erasable in time."
    - \* e.g. crimes against entire peoples, etc
- Zarena's presentation on Jeffrey Alexander's text
  - cultural trauma: terrifying event that leaves marks on collective consciousness
  - trauma can be a source of solidarity, also for perpetrators or bystanders
  - groups can also ignore other peoples' trauma, thus excluding groups from solidarity
  - trauma does not need to be violent, just a quick change that leaves its marks
  - trauma shatters our horizon of expectations
  - personal trauma tends to be sudden; trauma for groups is a process, it develops over time
  - trauma is a construction and events cannot be inherently traumatic
  - why do these people have to just stupidly read the text back to us?
  - it's so fucking dumb and boring
  - media also plays an important role in creating these traumas
  - issue of media, even if it is not modern media, and its influence on what is going on
- having privatized issues will prevent common memory and trauma
- Abrahamic religions built on the trauma of the exodus, maybe Mosaic religions
- in Sennett, "[B]y sharing rather than privatizing memories, communities might find a way to tell the truth about themselves. The question is, how?"
- sharing memory globally (in cosmopolitan model)
- pluralism of voices is better, has a better chance to weed out the bullshit
- accuracy of memory should be increased by more voices? It adds information, but that does not necessarily mean the truth is known by the majority

## 51 Notes Cultural Memory Studies: Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia (Andreas Huyssen)

p. 444

- preoccupation with past instead of the future
- but “past cannot give us what the future has failed to deliver”
- recently the past has been privileged over the future in Western societies
- began in 1960s with decolonization and social movement that needed their own histories
- securing the future -> taking responsibility for the past
- is a boom in memory accompanied by a boom of forgetting?
- too much memory makes system unstable, triggering a fear of forgetting?
- old models of memory cannot reflect current dynamics; can we even have these models today?
- why fear of forgetting now? memory as anchor in an uncertain world?
- new media is an important part in modern memory concepts
- huge commodification of events such as the Holocaust, we cannot think of these events outside that, also it is not necessarily bad
- gap between reality and its representations
- “musealization” not just in museums, but obsession with the past in all areas, also more obsolescence
- memory and musealization as bulwarks against forgetting

## 52 *Notes Collective Memory Reader: Reasons for the Current Upsurge in Memory* (Pierre Nora)

p. 451

- recent awakening of a new memory focus
- creation of new traditions, readings, interpretations of history
- memorialist trend setting score with the past
- shattered unity of historical time
- we cannot anticipate the future, so we stockpile
- end of history whose end is known
- acceleration of history—it abruptly distances us from the past
- memory has become so broad that is basically a replacement for history
- two effects on memory: leads to stockpiling; autonomising of the present, it's already overlaid with awareness of its own
- democratization of history is also a thing: emergence of memory bound to specific smaller groups
- this is generally due to different types of decolonialization