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Roundtable: Moving Memory

This roundtable brings together a group of academics and artists working throughout Europe to discuss the question of memory in theoretical and artistic contexts at a historical moment highly preoccupied with acts of commemoration and moving memory.

As the convenors of this roundtable, we are working and writing within an Irish context. Hence, we ourselves are in the middle of the Irish State's 'Decade of Centenaries', which marks events from 1912–1922 and the founding of the Irish Free State. At the time of coordinating this roundtable, we have been engaged in the yearlong celebration of the Easter Rising centenary in particular, celebrations that have raised anew debates about scales of commemorative practice in relationship to the representation of militarisation as a primary commemorative mode at state level and the need to animate and centralise marginalised voices, particularly those of women and children. The artists participating in this roundtable from both the Republic and Northern Ireland have engaged centrally with questions of national narratives, minority histories, and scales of remembrance as communal (or performative) acts; the academic participants are, likewise, informed by their work in diverse areas of memory studies, and particularly by their membership of the COST Action Network *In Search of Transcultural Memory in Europe* (2012–16).

What does memory mean to you as a theoretical, artistic or philosophical concept in relationship to its experience (by self or community) and its use value within culture?

Paula McFetridge: Memory is a sensory recollection of a moment, event, feeling – it can remind you of a physical or emotional sensation. It is completely personal and as unique as DNA – each of us can share an experience but recall it with a range of subjective framing devices. It can recall a split second of time or a longer, less detailed period of engagement. Memory alters over time – it can both gain and lose clarity.

Even though memory is personal that does not necessarily mean you own it. There can be a ‘real’, fully formed memory of something that lives with and in you but do you have the right to share it? Is there a central protagonist that has increased hierarchy regarding ownership and, ultimately, say over what and when, and if ever, it is recalled? Is it even an accurate memory? Are the others who participated in the original ready for it to be shared – how will they feel about your version of events, who manages the fall-out?

As memory is not absolute, it is constantly reassessed and distilled. Therefore it is ideal territory for artistic intervention – through offering alternatives the artist can encourage the viewer to question and reimagine. Art blossoms in doubt. The artist can lead to a new memory being formed and/or stabilise the pre-existing and/or encourage others to add to the memory. Then when the memory is recalled again it is from a different context and with different detail: it’s fluid.

Dominic Thorpe: The relationship between memory and art feels fundamental and vast. I find creativity and memory are intrinsically linked and dependent on each other. My memory and creativity feed and respond to each other and can seem to move in tandem while working through artistic process, formulating and interpreting ideas, perhaps similar in some ways to how parts of the body move simultaneously in achieving a particular gesture. While important discourses and practices related to values around collecting and archiving artworks are prominent within the visual arts I find myself often thinking about the importance of artwork residing in each individual’s own personal memory. In many ways I can’t think of a more potent place.

I find experiences of memory, like the experiencing of artworks as an audience member, rely strongly on creativity and invention. For example I often recall aspects of a performance artwork I have seen, but in a jumbled sequence or format. I can vividly remember certain elements while not recalling others. Sometimes I have images and actions in my mind which feel like memories of a performance I experienced but which didn’t actually happen during that particular performance. At times I find I have constructed what seem like solid

memories of performances I didn't experience first hand but may have heard about or seen images of. What gets remembered seems most often to connect closely with the personal. While this raises questions about the reliability of memory from an historical accuracy perspective, as an arts practitioner it is a useful opening up of uncertainty, perhaps indicating that both personal memory and engagement with art can be relied upon to never fully remove individual identity.

Ann Rigney: Memory is for me a theoretical concept that helps me as an academic in describing how information is preserved and transformed across time by individuals and by societies. This makes for a potentially very broad field. In practice people approach 'memory studies' from different perspectives and disciplines. Where psychologists study the mental capacity of recall and how this plays out over a person's lifetime, my concern as a literary scholar and cultural historian is with 'cultural memory,' meaning the memory that is carried through media rather than brains, and that involves the transfer of stories across individuals, groups, and generations. How are shared narratives culturally produced and what is their impact on social relations? Scholars working in the social sciences tend to work instead with the term 'collective' memory', which harks back to Halbwachs' pioneering work in the 1920s and emphasizes the social rather than cultural constituents of the sharing of memory.¹ But it's not a matter of either-or. In my view, 'individual,' 'cultural,' and 'collective' memory should be seen as complementary rather than as competing terms; they are all useful in asking particular questions under the umbrella term of 'memory studies.'

Astrid Erll: As an academic field, memory studies bases its critical function on an analytical approach to memory. In fact, much of the fundamental research that emerged since the 1980s (e.g. the contributions by Jan and Aleida Assmann in cultural studies, Elizabeth Loftus in psychology, Jeffrey Olick in sociology)² was deeply critical of 'memory' and has systematically shown that memories, individual and collective, are volatile constructs. Using detailed case studies, research on collective memory has uncovered how memory is put to political uses, and how memory culture creates foundational stories that make a group's discourse about norms, values and identity plausible. In more recent work, scholars such as Michael Rothberg or Dirk Moses have been investigating how modern societies might conceive of memory in a different, more productive way, for example, how political discourse could break out of the vicious circle of schematized thinking about the 'Other',

or how coercive links between identity and memory could be relaxed, dynamised, and pluralised.³ For today's globalizing world I would envision a memory practice characterized by self-awareness and the will to transcend boundaries (of nationality, ethnicity, class, religion, language etc.), that is, a *reflexive transcultural memory*. Memory studies can contribute to this goal, by studying not only what there *is*, but also by imagining what *could be*: the potentialities of cultural memory.

Ann Rigney: One of the biggest challenges facing cultural memory studies is the fact that the term 'memory' is both a scholarly concept that does analytical work, and an 'everyday' concept that is invoked by actors in the field. In that regard, it is interesting to note the use of 'memory' *tout court* in public debates. 'Memory' is often invoked in an essentialist way to indicate a type of embodied truth that is supposed to be unmediated and 'authentic' as opposed to the 'false' and 'hegemonic' truths that are characteristic of history (Ricoeur has described this dialectic between history and memory very well).⁴ The idea that memory is a hotline to lived experience has been used as the basis for claims to recognition on the part of minority groups who have been left out of hegemonic views of history. It has also been appropriated by state institutions eager to mark their affinity with populist sentiment. To be sure, this idea of memory as more authentic than history resonates within cultural memory studies. It too emerged in opposition to the discipline of history and the dominant narratives about the past that the discipline of history was believed to sustain. It involved, and still involves, an intellectual and ethical commitment to understanding narratives produced across a range of communicative and commemorative practices, not just historiography, and linked to this, a commitment to exploring non-hegemonic narratives that had been marginalised in public debates. By now, however, it is time to take a step backwards and build a *critical* memory studies in which we consider more clearly the costs involved in popular evocations of memory as a locus of unquestioned authenticity as well as the cost in the very commitment to a memory conceived in terms of victimhood. Cultural memory studies should remain committed to understanding the power politics at play in the production of collective narratives; but in order to do so we need to develop a *critical* memory studies that is also willing to reflect on its own blind spots and its complicity in sustaining a public discourse about memory and identity that may ultimately be constraining rather than liberating.

Astrid Erll: Yes, it is time to think about how academics could bring their analytical and critical thinking into a dialogue with the broader

public. My first impulse as a university teacher is to *teach* about memory. I do think that insight into the processes of cultural remembering and forgetting enables students to see through and critically assess most currently pressing world affairs, from Brexit to ISIS, from Donald Trump to the 'refugee crisis', as well as our inability to halt climate change. Memory studies concepts (such as 'postimperial nostalgia', the 'invention of religious traditions', 'social forgetting' and 'cultural remembering' as well as questions of 'framing' and 'the economy of attention') can help us unlock some of the complexities of these present challenges. At my home university in Frankfurt, we have implemented memory studies modules into two Masters programmes, and my feeling is that students do value this perspective – even if they may have started, say, their Masters in English Literature not expecting this to be a component of their studies. However, the 'home match' of teaching memory studies at their university should not be the only agenda item for memory scholars. They should also seek a sustained dialogue with curators in historical museums, producers of television documentaries, politicians, memory activists, and artists. An important node in this process is postgraduate education. I would like to see more practice-led doctoral research, i.e. dissertations that closely engage with and (self-)critically analyse different kinds of memory practice. This would not only foster a new generation of memory scholars, who can negotiate academic and corporate, political or popular spheres with relative ease, but also (for those who decide against a career in the academic system) be a way of training young actors in memory culture who bring a firm grounding in the theories and methodologies of memory studies to their respective fields.

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, we are in the middle of what feels like endless commemorations, both in terms of centenaries or the recent quartercentury of Shakespeare's birthday. Some commentators have referred to 'commemoration fatigue' emerging from this. Do you agree? When, if ever, does engaging in acts of memory become counter-productive?

Ann Rigney: Commemorations linked to centenaries and anniversaries are fascinating in that they introduce an artificial, calendar-time periodicity into collective memory. Where individual memory is thought of as following biological time, public commemorations follow ten-year and hundred-year cycles that are entirely predictable and absolutely arbitrary. Their popularity since the early nineteenth century,⁵ serves as a reminder of the fact that

modern collective memory is 'synthetic' in the sense of non-natural: not just because it is shaped through media of all sorts but because it follows a calendar-dictated rhythm that generates intense moments of synchronised remembering against a background of everyday forgetting (anniversaries represent on the temporal axis the equivalent of Pierre Nora's 'sites of memory' on the spatial one). By and large history is *unpredictable* (who could have predicted five years ago the current influx of refugees to Europe? Or the Bastille Day terrorist attack in Nice?). But centenaries are 'historic' in the sense of being momentous events that can be planned years in advance. In that regard, they have the distinct characteristic of having already happened before their time has come, so often have they been pre-mediated in all the discussions about what should be done and by whom. By the time a centenary comes around and heads of state have visited memorials and cut ribbons, it may seem like a 'historic' non-event. In the second decade of the twenty-first century, centennial commemorations have indeed become ubiquitous, and it is easy to become cynical and dismiss them as occasions for rehearsing pieties, political grandstanding, feeding euro-hungry museums, and, last but not least, providing employment for academics and a market for academic books.

Paula McFetridge: We cannot under-estimate the role of the commissioner; they control what is commemorated and what might be possible to commemorate – this may explain why the Northern Irish narrative was absent in any truly engaged manner within the 1916 programme in the Republic of Ireland. The fear of the fall-out over-rode recognising the need for the interrogation.

Within a period of heightened commemoration increased resources allow for new possibilities and support an environment where new narratives come to the fore. Within 2016 Kabosh worked with Diversity Challenges to stage a new play by Laurence McKeown entitled *Green & Blue*.⁶ Based on stories gathered from serving Royal Ulster Constabulary and An Garda Síochána officers patrolling the border area during the height of the conflict, this exploration of the person behind the uniform gave voice to a silent community. These cross-border voices have not been heard before now. Undoubtedly the societal drive to explore the past laid the foundation for this unique project. A collective climate of questioning and finding a voice encourages the unearthing of others.

Ann Rigney: While their importance needs to be relativised, as I just suggested, commemorations do have a role to play in the slow transformation of dominant narratives – in two ways. Firstly, in being

high profile, official ceremonies lift what people know or half-know as individuals into *common* knowledge. A centenary can thus seal and make visible to all a revised narrative whose public recognition may have begun decades earlier in the arts and civil society. If in some contexts it is merely a way of reinforcing dominant narratives, in others it helps crystallize long-term trends into a public, attention-grabbing performance. Like a wedding, a centenary makes it official. It was interesting in this regard to note that the ongoing commemoration of World War One involved not only definitive recognition of Irish participation in the conflict, but also of the other four million colonial troops who served in the European theatres of war. That recognition is still piecemeal, but it nevertheless marks what Yaël Zerubavel calls a 'turning point' in the evolution of the transnational commemorative narrative.⁷ The arts played a key role in bringing those colonial voices into circulation, while the centenary's role is one of consolidation; but it is crucial nevertheless. However, and this is my second point, unofficial commemorations may also be linked to contestation. The periodicity of ten years, twenty-five years and the centenary *provides an occasion* for public demonstrations of adherence to a counter-memory and for recalling unfinished business. Thus anniversaries have seen regular commemorations of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre that are at the same time calls for more democracy in China. In short: commemorations may be much more than empty gestures and shouldn't be dismissed too easily. Crucially, however, their mobilizing power remains dependent on their relative infrequency; too much and too often indeed generates commemoration fatigue. Structural changes in collective memory cannot happen every day, meaning that the adage that one should choose one's battles applies also in the case of public acts of commemoration.

Paula McFetridge: We need to remember also that people have the right to forget. If we decide to commemorate, then what are we saying about the past within the current context to help us better deal with the future? I always ask myself three questions when deciding what to comment on as an artist:

1. Is it the right time to tell the story?
2. Am I the right person to tell it?
3. Who is it for?

This then determines the form of the event. I do believe commemorations are valuable as both artists and citizens as it can

focus the mind, encourage us not to be passive but rather formulate opinions. Even if that means we choose to actively disengage.

It becomes counter-productive if the commemoration says nothing new and doesn't put the past into a new framework, doesn't assist us in looking at the past through a new lens so when the next commemoration comes around that we can distil the past yet further. It is also key that we are acutely aware of when is the right time to commemorate – we have a responsibility when examining memory and asking questions to take care of the human spirit.

I have commemoration fatigue when we say nothing but rather simply state. It is imperative artists are employed to respond to the past and ask difficult questions that the media and politicians can't and/or won't.

Dominic Thorpe: Making artwork at any time which feels personal, honest, rigorous in its questioning and relevant in the here and now can be challenging. During large scale commemorations in particular, artworks can become stuck or swallowed up by the weight of dominant narratives, rendering them somewhat ineffective and even counterproductive in asking new and relevant questions. However, in a demonstration of the strength of the arts in Ireland today there have been many examples of powerful and effective work across all art forms throughout the 2016 commemoration period. Among the best examples I feel are works uncovering previously buried stories, such as those giving recognition to the pivotal role, lives and position of many women at the time of the 1916 rising. I find the most interesting works raise issues still relevant today, often illuminating and unraveling complexities between that which is put aside due to a sense of necessity and that which is grounded in denial.

A factor impacting significantly on engagement with memory during 2016 has been Ireland's ongoing and painful experiences of straining to acknowledge, come to terms with, and respond to, the scale of institutional abuses in Ireland's past.⁸ The tsunami of revelations in recent times of systematic perpetration, denial and cover up of abuses, at every level in Irish society, of huge numbers of children and adults in the care of the state over decades has forced us to become more mature and re-evaluate memory from an ethical perspective.

It is important to note national commemorations are not the only valid or relevant context for artworks dealing with memory. Artists are continually excavating the past, marking particular events, moments and people they think important for varied reasons, not only at times of heightened commemoration. Often this can be deemed unwelcome activity. Sometimes the most relevant moment and context to make such work is when it is unwelcome.

Certain modes through which we engage with memory can be counterproductive. For example, when artistic processes of recalling and commemorating serve only to reinforce our capacity for forgetting in ways that are destructive. Focus can become stuck on learned rigid historical images, thus proposing nothing new and preventing broad analysis of the past and the present. Just as remembering is continually acted out in personal and collective consciousness, forgetting is also acted out, behaved and performed. Certain kinds of commemorative processes, rather than opening up histories, risk solidifying a cultural persistence of failing to acknowledge the reality that history is ever shifting and always viewed from the present. Re-performances and re-enactments failing to adequately acknowledge their position in the present may not engage meaningfully with either the present or the past. Instead, possibly only providing repetitive narrow images of memory without questioning how they are arrived at and certified.

For some artists remaining unstuck from the weight of particular moments in time may involve working through methodologies which hold artworks in the present moment, pre-emptively trying to disrupt overly simplified learned and rehearsed narratives which might be imposed on work and drag it backwards. Engaging with memory at times of commemoration is at its most relevant when connections between how we remember the past and how we feel and behave in the present are openly explored. Questions of memory and history, vital in the here and now, need also to be forward looking.

What are the historic and current challenges for work on memory in academic contexts?

Stef Craps: A major challenge, I would say, is interdisciplinarity: how to arrive at an integrative understanding of memory drawing on various disciplines and areas of expertise? As Astrid Erll points out, over the last three decades, memory has emerged as ‘a genuinely transdisciplinary phenomenon whose functioning cannot really be understood through examination from one single perspective’.⁹ Memory studies is an area of inquiry that spans the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, involving such diverse disciplines as history, sociology, psychology, philosophy, literary studies, media studies, the arts, anthropology, architecture, museology, and neuroscience. Seeing signs of growing convergence, Astrid observes that ‘the disciplines of memory studies are steadily moving towards one another, and scholars are increasingly interested in the possibilities offered by interdisciplinary exchange’.¹⁰

However, some critics remain sceptical of the variegated nature of the field. According to Jeffrey Olick, for example, the 'interdisciplinary integration of memory studies'¹¹ envisaged by Astrid largely remains at the level of aspiration rather than reality:

interdisciplinarity is a concept that has never really fulfilled its promise, even in this most 'trans-disciplinary' field. We all write a lot about how we need to take the work of other disciplines seriously, but rarely does this go beyond reading and citation. ... Actual cross-disciplinary research, however, has been much rarer than affirmations about its necessity and desirability. ... We need to think more about genuine interdisciplinary cooperation, cooperation that is beyond the level of mutual referencing.¹²

A similar concern is expressed by Adam Brown and his colleagues, who question whether scholarly meetings promising interdisciplinary approaches to memory and other such attempts at collaboration across disciplinary lines do not 'more often result in multidisciplinary, rather than interdisciplinarity, in which scholars are exposed to other disciplines' perspectives, but little is transferred from one academic discipline to the next'.¹³ These points are well taken: it seems to me that redeeming the unfulfilled promise of genuine interdisciplinarity in memory research is a challenge that the field does indeed need to address, though this is easier said than done, of course.

Ann Rigney: Going by the number of publications, the frequency of conferences and the burgeoning number of handbooks and readers, the field of memory studies is booming. This has led to a certain degree of interdisciplinarity with scholars working in different traditions converging on common concepts and theoretical models in order to capture an object of study that cuts across and transcends traditional disciplines. The operative phrase here is 'a certain degree'. Although the journal *Memory Studies* has been very successful in providing a common forum for the different disciplines involved in the field, it is too soon to speak of an integrated interdiscipline of 'memory studies' that would combine the individual, the social, and the cultural dimensions of memory-making into a single field of study. There is certainly a degree of convergence among humanities scholars working on cultural memory and its mediations, on the one hand, and social scientists working on collective memory and its politics, on the other. But taking interdisciplinarity to the next step remains a real challenge. It's a bit like world peace: everyone is for it, but no-one quite knows how to achieve it. The problem is not so much in defining a common point of concern but in finding ways of creating a dialogue

that transcends methodological differences and that really seeks to integrate the actor-based perspective of the social sciences with the culture-based perspective of those working in cultural studies. Right now it's more a question of parallel lines that don't often meet. In the future, memory studies might in fact benefit from a narrowing rather than a broadening of the field.

So rather than expand in ever new directions, I would argue for concentrating on developing fruitful forms of collaboration with key partners operating in a more restricted subsection of the potentially bigger field of memory studies. A lot could be gained by bringing together researchers in cultural memory studies, critical heritage studies, the social sciences, and transitional justice around particular issues. Rather than pursue a rather vaguely defined Holy Grail of interdisciplinarity, the idea would be to develop a form of slow scholarship that works on combining forms of knowledge and not just on the pursuit of hot topics. If further extended to collaboration with curators and educationalists, this would also provide a more robust basis upon which to respond to the increasing demands from governmental authorities that academic research be societally relevant, not just in theory but also in practice.

Astrid Erll: There is large and still-untapped potential in 'wide interdisciplinarity'. To give just one example: the neurosciences have greatly refined their insights into the workings of the brain over the past fifteen years. It is now time for a sustained dialogue between the natural sciences and the humanities/social sciences on their respective approaches to memory. Interesting attempts at such a conversation have already been made, for example by Hans J. Markowitsch, Harald Welzer, Suzanne Nalbantian or Thomas J. Anastasio.¹⁴ This may be 'risky' research, but if we seriously understand 'memory' as a 'bio-psycho-socio-cultural' phenomenon, then memory studies by definition *is* a widely interdisciplinary field, and widely transdisciplinary scholarship must constitute its foundational research.

An additional challenge is the further development of memory studies' *international* orientation. Much has been achieved in the past decade. The field of memory studies has progressed from an agglomerate of isolated, nation-specific discourses to a platform of international dialogue and (increasingly) transnational research practice. Admittedly, much of this exchange takes place on English-speaking platforms. Memory studies travels in English translation. It therefore remains important to acknowledge the linguistic variety of speaking and researching about memory. An important task for scholars who want to shape the field of

memory studies is to curate translations. There is also the ‘uneven geography’ of our memory mappings. Only if we keep our eyes and ears open to memory dynamics in seemingly ‘remote’ places can we really assess and if necessary ‘provincialize’ our general assumptions about memory.

What are the challenges for memory work in artistic practice?

Paula McFetridge: A challenge that inspires me when looking at commemoration as an artist is the imagining and animation of the moment before an historic turning point: what leads to the outbreak of war or what leads an individual to suggest a ceasefire or what happens in the second before a leader makes a seminal decision? Also, how to give voice to the silent or lesser characters within social events – giving voice to them provides a different lens by which we view the past. Through finding something new to say the past is made relevant to a new audience. In addition, we need to never lose sight of whose commemoration it is – this determines focus, format and ultimately content. Witnessing voices encourages individuals to begin their sharing process. Also, audiences may not be ready to engage with all elements of the narrative in this moment, the artist is responsible for assessing what material it is the best time to animate so it is ‘heard’ by audiences.

The historic and current challenge continues to be the lack of true artist recruitment and investment when considering commemoration. By this I mean allowing for artistic risk, investment long-term, allowing for provocative commentary and celebrating these artistic interventions as part of central programming. This is only possible by engaging with artists in the early stages of commemoration programme development.

Dominic Thorpe: Regarding art practice and memory, questions of ethics continually raise significant challenges and position the arts at difficult junctions. For example on one hand it is important to question the value of recalling and recounting traumatic experience, not least because deciding to leave certain events and experiences in the past, in so far as may be possible, can be important and necessary for many people. On the other hand telling stories that challenge and illuminate social constructs and behaviours is fundamental to art, therefore it feels important to accept and act on art’s role in this regard.

Where human rights abuses have occurred there is often the feeling that it is impossible to have a truly neutral position. This, of course, is far more nuanced than simple images or declarations of guilt or

innocence, presence or absence, knowledge or ignorance. It has been my experience as an artist and as an audience member that artistic process can be effective and even vital in identifying positions (known or unknown) in relation to the lives of other people. Important questions arrived at include: What is my position in relation to a particular subject/event and through engagement with art can that position be understood more, changed for the better, to positive not negative effect and in solidarity? Choosing to listen or not has consequences as does the decision to act or not. Not engaging difficult subjects related to historical abuses, echoes of which still persist in everyday behaviour and in the ways current social systems continue to operate, can feel like contributing to the continuation of cultures of silence. If this is the case I wonder at what points could we consider current behaviour in the everyday complicit, however indirect, or otherwise in perpetuation of cultures of silence that lead to traumatic experience?

An important question is; how do those of us who do not have direct experiences of trauma engage such subjects? I have never experienced a crystal clear indication as to how a particular subject matter should be approached and explored, and broadly speaking there is never a consensus dictating whether you should or shouldn't engage with a particular area or subject as an artist. For example I have been both questioned and supported when working with the subject matter of historical child abuse, by people who as children were abused.

I have found engagement and interaction with research and researchers looking at the areas of memory studies, human rights and ethics are necessary to create a broader understanding and theoretical underpinning for questions raised through my practice. In this regard it is important to question how diverse areas and processes of research that cross trajectories at a point of memory studies can inform each other in useful ways.

'Ethical memory' has been defined as a 'form of justice that recognises the political nature of remembering and forgetting'. Is the ideal of ethical memory too utopian?

Dominic Thorpe: For me ethical memory is not about achieving a utopian ideal, it is a recognition that human rights abuses have, do and will happen. It is also a recognition that we must work relentlessly to prevent abuses now and into the future. By situating responsibility for action in the present and not only the past ethical memory has a central role in advocating for human rights. Otherwise what is the point?

Stef Craps: What I'm a little concerned about is a tendency to take 'ethical memory' for granted – to assume that remembering is somehow intrinsically beneficial, and, conversely and consequently, that forgetting is inevitably harmful. There is no valid reason to believe that either is the case; it all depends, I think, on the context you're looking at and the use to which remembering or forgetting is put in that context. It's not hard to think of cases where collective memory, rather than serving the cause of justice, led to or enabled further bloodshed. To give but one example, during the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s Serb leaders justified slaughtering Bosniaks and Kosovars by conjuring up collective memories of the 1453 Fall of Constantinople and the 1389 Battle of Kosovo that fomented and reignited ancient hatreds.

And just as remembering is clearly not always good, so forgetting is not always bad. While it tends to get a bad press, a number of memory scholars have recently tried to rehabilitate forgetting or, at least, called for a more nuanced approach to it, one that would acknowledge its ambivalence. I'm primarily thinking of Paul Connerton and Aleida Assmann,¹⁵ both of whom insist on the need to differentiate between different types or forms of forgetting – some destructive, others constructive. There is also a provocative new book by journalist David Rieff declaring that forgetting is a worthy pursuit.¹⁶ Assmann reminds us, for example, that forgetting was necessary to lay the foundations of a new Europe in the wake of the Second World War, citing a remarkable plea for oblivion made by William Churchill in a speech delivered in Zürich in 1946: 'We must all turn our backs upon the horrors of the past. We must look to the future. We cannot afford to drag forward across the years that are to come the hatreds and revenges, which have sprung from the injuries of the past. If Europe is to be saved from infinite misery, and indeed from final doom, there must be an act of faith in the European family and an act of oblivion against all the crimes and follies of the past.' A similar sentiment can be seen to underlie the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which, in a sense, remembered in order to forget, to impose closure on the apartheid past. As its interim report put it, 'We open wounds only in order to cleanse them, to deal with the past effectively and so to close the door on that dark and horrendous past forever.'¹⁷ The goal, ultimately, was to break the past's hold on the present so as to allow Europe and South Africa, respectively, to begin anew, to make a fresh start. In other words, the distinction between remembering and forgetting doesn't map neatly and unproblematically onto that between good and evil. In reality things are a lot messier and less straightforward; you can't make abstraction of the socio-historical context and commend or condemn either one no matter what.

Ann Rigney: As Luisa Passerini argued in an important article that tends to be overlooked in recent discussions of forgetting, the politics of amnesia have long been recognised.¹⁸ The ancient Greeks had a moratorium on remembering divisive events; the English Civil War was followed by an act of oblivion (which Churchill evoked in his Zürich speech); and the Spanish had their own *pacto de olvido* in the post-Franco years. So there is nothing surprising about forgetting having a political dimension. What is perhaps more noteworthy is the more recent belief that memory is necessarily a good thing; that it is indeed our task to ‘make the silences of history speak,’ to quote the Romantic historian Jules Michelet, and that anything that is not brought into the open is by definition hidden or repressed.¹⁹ However, as Passerini remarks with respect to the Roma reactions to the Nazi genocide, staying silent can in some circumstances also be read as a sign of strength and not of repression. One of the real achievements of memory studies has been in the development of a set of conceptual tools to describe the dynamics of remembering and forgetting in post-conflict situations or in cases of ongoing contestation and structural inequalities. We now know that neither remembrance nor forgetting works like an on-off switch and that both are complex operations involving degrees of visibility in the public sphere. Studying the dynamics of remembering and forgetting as an integral part of memory has generated insight into different modalities of remembrance, including what Graham Dawson has called ‘reparative remembrance.’²⁰ By this is meant acknowledging past injustice in such a way as to change its affect and, with it, its power to feed into renewed conflict. Reparative remembering, as Dawson argues, is the key to creating a balance between memory and forgetting that does justice to the historical injury caused. I like to think that academic memory studies can provide a vocabulary with which to identify and reflect on different modes of remembrance, thus expanding the range of options available to the public at large; much as artists help to provide images and stories to replace ingrained ones. In that sense both academics and artists are implicated in different ways in the production of collective memory. That being said, it would be foolish to think that academics or artists or any other single group has the power to engineer any particular outcome in what is an extremely complex and multi-sited field.

Paula McFetridge: There is a difference between passively forgetting and actively forgetting – laying to rest cannot be equated to forgiving. If we do not find creative ways of facilitating the sharing of personal and collective trauma if individuals so desire then the hatred, bitterness, anger festers and eventually rises to the surface again and

the cycle of violence continues. As an artist, I take my responsibility not to re-traumatise very seriously: to ensure this I am acutely aware of the importance of timing when commemorating and questioning the past, as well as putting in place mechanisms for supportive post-show interrogation and discussion, as well as providing support material for long-term subject engagement. Inevitably there is an impact on all participants when unveiling a new 'truth'.

When we speak about memory, particularly collective memory, do we end up focusing on trauma too much in terms of what *needs* to be remembered? What is the downside to making acts of memory synonymous with trauma retrieval?

Stef Craps: Michael Lambek and Paul Antze have noted that 'Increasingly, memory worth talking about – worth remembering – is memory of trauma'.²¹ Even though much of my own work has dealt with trauma, I'm wary of this tendency to confine our understanding of memory to trauma, as it comes at the expense of happy memories.

Ann Rigney: In his classic 1882 essay on 'What is a Nation' (whose interest was underscored by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities*),²² Ernest Renan argued that solidarity is usually based on the memory of shared achievements, but that suffering may connect people even more than joy. Renan was of course writing in the fallout of the Franco-Prussian war a decade earlier, and this may have made him particularly sensitive to the significance of defeats and of suffering at a time when triumphalism was the dominant mode in practices of public commemoration. This is no longer the case. Suffering has dominated public memory culture since at least World War One, as Jay Winter has shown, and has certainly been a dominant theme in memory studies as this emerged in the shadow of the Holocaust.²³ By extension, both collective identity and personal identity have become linked to victimhood and to having a grievance. One comes into an identity and into public memory by being recognised as a victim.

Reflecting the discourse of victimhood, but also feeding into it, memory studies has been largely invested in salvaging, highlighting, and analysing different forms of historical injustice. It has developed a vocabulary to talk about trauma, and investigated modes of reparative remembrance that ensure past suffering is not perpetuated for descendants, with the insult of amnesia added to the original injury. This is all very important, and much has been achieved. But there are also serious downsides that are beginning to come to light. Three in

particular come to mind, and they underlie my earlier comment about the need for critical self-reflection in memory studies.

Firstly, the overemphasis on victimhood has drawn attention away from perpetrators and forms of implication as bystanders; in this regard, Michael Rothberg's recent work on 'implicated subjects' promises to provide a badly needed vocabulary with which we can begin to investigate transgenerational and transnational 'implicatedness' in injustice and the particular forms of forgetting this has generated.²⁴

And secondly, the dominance of the emphasis on victimhood and the traumatic may in the long term deprive victim groups of imagined agency as 'willful subjects' (to use Sara Ahmed's term), with rights in the present.²⁵ The cost of having minority identities so firmly linked to historical victimhood may be that their grievances are compartmentalised as an issue in memory and not of the present. In an interesting article on Roma identity politics, Slawomir Kapralski shows how Roma activists began to highlight their role as Porajmos victims in order to gain recognition, but at the cost of depriving themselves of their image as independent-minded and sovereign.²⁶ Similar points have been made in the context of the historical apologies issued to the indigenous peoples of Australia and Canada: saying sorry, while it opened up expectations on the part of the victim group that things would become different, turned out to change nothing in the present and instead merely transformed structural injustice into a regrettable chapter in history.

Dominic Thorpe: I'd like to add here that making acts of memory synonymous with victim/survivor trauma retrieval does not give broad – or any – consideration to the position of perpetrator and our own proximity to that position. I am interested in how we can engage processes of remembering through art, which disable the kinds of static, narrow and overly sentimental images and narratives of trauma and victimhood which may hinder broader questions of perpetration.

Ann Rigney: Even more fundamentally, the dominance of trauma, suffering, and victimhood in memory studies and memorial practices means that there is an enormous investment in the things that go wrong. Andreas Huyssen warned us more than a decade ago that the huge attention being given in society to memory was a symptom of our failure to imagine a future and ourselves as wilful subjects chasing it.²⁷ One could add to this general remark that the concentration specifically on traumatic memory has certainly not fed into any confidence in the future, however justified it is by the enormity of the suffering in the modern world. By now we have an excellent set of

conceptual tools to describe trauma and analyse how its effects are transferred. Three decades of memory studies and a huge expansion of memorial practices in society have left us very poorly equipped, however, to describe the communication of such things as joy, hope, and aspirations for a better world across generations. This is a major blind spot in the discipline of memory studies which, in its very concentration on trauma, may be limiting the horizon of expectations of the public. This realisation underlay my earlier remarks to the effect that memory studies, in its very commitment to attending to the victims of history, may be helping to sustain a public discourse about memory and identity that is constraining rather than liberating.

Stef Craps: I agree that trauma's domination of the field of memory studies risks displacing memories of how people manage to overcome adversity and successfully fight injustice. However, I think it would be wrong to infer from this that an emphasis on trauma cannot but have politically debilitating effects. Memory-as-trauma studies is not destined to serve as the handmaiden of the status quo, as Wendy Brown and Lauren Berlant have suggested,²⁸ or as a mere academic alibi for the indulgence of voyeuristic inclinations, as Mark Seltzer would have it.²⁹ I would argue that it can also help identify and understand situations of exploitation and abuse, and act as an incentive for a sustained and systemic critique of societal conditions. In other words, yes, memory scholars would be well advised to broaden their scope beyond the traumatic, but it's not as if focusing on trauma is politically suspect per se.

Ann Rigney: The answer is not to abandon the study of memory altogether but rather to open up new pathways of research that would help us understand better how memory works to create positive forms of attachment and connectedness. This is not a proposal to return to the celebratory mode of monumental history practiced in the nineteenth century; but to take seriously the potential role of positive affects in the transmission of memory. My own current research is addressing this question by investigating how activism is remembered.

Stef Craps: This is important because, as Carrie Hamilton observes, the privileging of trauma leads to 'the marginalization of activist memories'.³⁰ Trauma displaces positive legacies of past activisms, memories of mass movements for change such as the student protests of 1968 or the revolutions of 1989. The close association of memory with trauma can be seen as symptomatic of a general 'reluctance to

consider the very notion of politics or collective political agency in the present'.³¹ Hamilton therefore argues for 'caution in the face of the popularity of trauma' and asks that 'trauma not be allowed to displace other theories and models of memory'.³² Instead of mourning for what is lost, she writes, memory scholars committed to progressive politics would do well to explore the richness of activist memories, which have been relatively ignored.

Paula McFetridge: Often a traumatic memory can also be a memory of survival / over-coming – it may have been traumatic originally but we lived to tell the tale and bear witness to the past. It can then be celebratory, provide hope. Often reliving a past reduces the trauma. With *Belfast by Moonlight* (staged in St George's Church to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the foundation of Belfast) Carlo Gébler gave voice to six women from different periods over the 100-year period.³³ Produced by Kabosh, their spirits return on the night of a full moon to bear witness to each other's private and public histories; each have died in tragic circumstances but it is essentially about survival. It's about living to tell the tale and acting as inspiration for others.

Can you say what 'moving memory' means to your work, or how you would situate your work in the context of 'moving memory'?

Stef Craps: As it happens, I have just edited a new book on this topic with Lucy Bond and Pieter Vermeulen.³⁴ The point of departure for the collection is our observation that what unites much of the most exciting research going on in the field of memory studies today is a tendency to regard memory not as fixed but as fluid, not as static but as dynamic, not as bound but as unbound. Memory is increasingly being studied as something that does not stay put but circulates, migrates, travels. The book explores what we consider to be the four most important dimensions of the mobility of memory: its transcultural, transgenerational, transmedial, and transdisciplinary drift.

Whereas early work in memory studies focused on the ways in which memories are located in certain sites or objects, and shared within particular communities, constituting or reinforcing group identity, in recent years the transcultural or transnational circulation of memories has moved to the centre of attention, as critics have highlighted the ways that phenomena such as migration and the rise of mass cultural technologies allowing for global dissemination challenge the idea that memories adhere to a static location in place or time.

At the same time, there has been a marked increase of interest in how memory travels between different media, and specifically in the role of evolving digital media in the production, preservation, and transfer of memories. As the Holocaust begins to pass out of living memory, the question of how memories of survivors of historical traumas are transmitted to, and inherited by, members of later generations has become another area of intense inquiry. Furthermore, memory studies appears to be moving towards greater interdisciplinarity, or, at least, enhanced awareness of the necessity or desirability of cross-fertilization between memory research in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.

Rather than treating the four dimensions of memory's 'unboundedness' in isolation, the book brings these different aspects together to allow readers to trace resonances between the diverse dynamics of memory, and to offer them insight into the ways certain forms of mobility inflect others. The volume explores, for instance, how the transgenerational transmission of cultural memories is shaped by different media; how, when memories of violence take the shape not only of punctual traumas but increasingly also of ecological devastation, ecocriticism and ecology emerge as privileged interlocutors in the study of memory across cultural and national contexts; how the tools developed in the field of digital humanities allow new forms of archive to be recognized as media of memory; and how the diasporic spread of communities has affected the travel and translation of transgenerational memories. In so doing, *Memory Unbound* shows how considering different dimensions of mobility across cultures, generations, media, and disciplines is indispensable for the study of the dynamics of memory.

My own work in memory studies, though, has been primarily concerned with transcultural memory. In my monograph *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds*³⁵ and in various journal articles and book chapters, I examine how, why, and to what effect the memory of the Holocaust is evoked in literary texts that connect the Nazi genocide of the European Jews with other exceptionally destructive, criminal, and catastrophic histories, such as slavery, colonialism, and other genocides. I tend to dwell on the risks involved in remembering across cultural and national boundaries, the reason being that many proponents of what Astrid Erll calls the 'transcultural turn'³⁶ in memory studies minimize them or ignore them altogether. Much work in transcultural memory studies articulates a very hopeful vision: it is characterized by a strong belief in the emancipatory potential, the cathartic or healing effects of remembering across cultural and national borders. Personally, I think a healthy dose of scepticism is called for. After all, very often Holocaust comparisons, for example,

are used in ways that do not lead to greater transcultural understanding and the establishment of a universal human rights culture. I do think the notion that transcultural or transnational remembrance can have beneficial effects—in principle if certainly not always in practice—is worth considering, but not uncritically.

Ann Rigney: ‘Moving memory’ as such is a not concept that I work with and in a sense I find it tautological. Of course memory moves; it does so by definition. As I’ve been arguing for quite a long time now, memory is continuously ‘on the move’ in the fundamental sense that it is dependent on reiteration and recursivity, and on renewed acts of recollection; it is a dynamic and not static phenomenon. I wrote once that memory is like a swimmer: it has to keep moving in order to stay afloat. Without new acts of recall a narrative becomes inert and hence ceases to exist as memory; without contestation too, memory reverts to inert indifference. So at this point in time, it seems to me important, not just to celebrate flows and movements, but to examine in more detail how narratives and models of remembrance travel and when they don’t; and to consider the direction in which they travel and the blockages and points of resistance they meet along the way. Too often claims to go beyond methodological nationalism have led to a celebration of a seemingly borderless or ‘unbounded’ world. We need to work with a more complicated topography in order to understand better the asymmetries in the ‘free movement’ of practices and narratives. Anna Tsing has aptly referred to the ‘frictions’ that characterise our world where information flows unevenly – not just because not everyone has access to first world media, but also because local communities continue to creatively resist such hegemony.³⁷ Differences and dissensus are as vital to the future of memory, conceived in dynamic terms, as is agreement.

In an attempt to capture some of this complexity, I recently edited a collection of essays with Chiara De Cesari called *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales*.³⁸ The section on circulation deals with the flow of narratives and models across national and cultural borders. With the idea of ‘articulation,’ however, we wanted to emphasize the continuing importance of borders: the points of articulation, of connection, where differences meet, hybridize, or refuse to engage; or where there are points of resistance to hegemonic practices being imposed from outside. Finally, with the idea of ‘scales,’ we underline the importance of multiscalar analysis in memory studies. Moving beyond methodological nationalism is not just a matter of jumping to the larger scale of the macro-regional, the global or the planetary, but involves rethinking the traditional hierarchy of scales that privileges the big over the small, the global over the local and the intimate, and

examines the interrelations between these. Multiscalar analysis allows among other things for a rethinking of the role of the arts as carriers of memory that circulate across the world (arguably more freely than disciplined forms of knowledge) and yet at the point of arrival affect people in the intimate realm of pleasure and emotions. In this way, as I have argued with relation to Europe, the arts may become a conduit for creating new imagined communities that operate over large distances while mobilising individual subjects. We need more multiscalar analysis to come up with models of community, memory, and identity that are better fitted to the lived realities of today's entangled world.

Astrid Erll: The term 'moving memories' is an operative metaphor. First, as Stef and Ann have explained, it can describe 'memory unbound' or 'memory on the move', or what I call 'travelling memory'.³⁹ Second, it hints at the affective and emotional side of memory. It asks about how representations of 'our' past and that of 'other people' affect us, thus referring to memory that is capable of moving audiences. Both aspects of the metaphor are connected. Moving memories make memories move. Affect and emotions carry images and narratives about the past from person to person and across different kinds of socio-cultural boundaries. As much as I like this fertile metaphor, I would not overemphasize the role of emotions to the exclusion of other dynamics of travelling memory. Images and narratives about the past can also move because of sheer curiosity, economic interests, or military-strategic reasons. The concept of 'moving memory' (in its double sense) is not a key to all doors of the memory process, but is clearly a product of our field's current emphasis on ethics, empathy, and solidarity in memory culture.

Paula McFettridge: Memory is fluid and changes continually, it is context specific: informed by location, distance from the original event, distance from the central protagonist, what sparks the remembering, who is with you when you remember. Theatre and performance work seems to me to be particularly suitable for discussions of moving memory, given the emotional provocation possible in an artistic commemoration through its 'live-ness'. Also the calibre of engagement and animation of informed discussion varies performance-location to performance-location, audience to audience, and this flexibility means the memories within theatre (both onstage and in the audience) are constantly 'moving'. Kabosh's *Those you Pass on the Street* has been performed to over forty-eight different communities in three years locally, nationally and internationally; the performances range from single-identity closed performances to cross-community performances

hosted by local organisations to presentations in theatres.⁴⁰ Each performance is followed by a facilitated discussion where issues about dealing with the past can be aired. There are individuals who have experienced the play in recent months who were not ready to engage with the play when it premiered in 2014; they are now ready to participate in conflict resolution narratives as their distance from the conflict has increased and their personal contexts have shifted in the past three years. Consequently their memory of conflict has shifted sufficiently for them to begin to have conversations about painful memories.

Dominic Thorpe: Moving memory brings to mind a feeling that memory may evolve or be placed, but never truly settles. Moving memory for me relates to a need for constantly probing and renewing our living connections. Deep down we forget nothing. Every sense, movement, gesture, sound, touch, vision, smell, feeling and thought. This well of experiences is the raw material of art. Artworks are not simply consumed by us as audiences. They don't just confirm what we think we know or only give us information about what we are not yet aware of. The most effective artworks help us find and address what we do know but have not yet admitted to ourselves, what we have buried, what we have failed to acknowledge openly or what we have trouble articulating. They align with and trigger our memories and imaginations, helping us find and negotiate new questions and positions which are not oversimplified or polarised, but are complex and potentially very difficult.

For me, experiencing particularly affecting or moving artworks can result in the internalising of other people's stories on such a deep level, lasting connections are created with my own life experiences. In this way artworks can put us in the picture even as audience. They can illuminate our close proximity to each other and position us in relation to our society and our histories in ways that can be deeply personal, undeniable and potentially transformative in a manner that everyday life can very often resist.

Feminist and queer theory, as well as critical race studies, postcolonial studies and subfields including subaltern studies, have focused centrally on the relationship between memory and privilege, arguing that minoritarian subjects are regularly violently denied the right to individual and collective memory, and therefore have to form counter-memories, counter-archives and counter modes of expression through the creation of subcultures. Do you think that the insights of these fields and their recuperation/retrieval of

minority memories have made any impact on mainstream or hegemonic discourses of memory?

Stef Craps: It has taken quite a while for memory studies to wake up to the postcolonial critique and to start addressing issues of colonialism and its legacies. As Michael Rothberg has pointed out, the founding texts of the field, by eminent scholars such as Maurice Halbwachs, Pierre Nora, and Jan and Aleida Assmann, exhibit certain limitations restricting the ability or inclination of early memory studies to engage with colonial or postcolonial realities.⁴¹ For example, Halbwachs's organicism, his tendency to conceive of the various groups in which collective memory is located as homogeneous and closed entities, makes his work less obviously useful for understanding processes of colonization, globalization, and migration, which by their very nature dislocate such communities. Nora's influential *Lieux de mémoire* project, for its part, is marked by colonial amnesia: it minimizes France's imperial history to the point of making it a *non-lieu de mémoire*. And the Assmanns' seminal work on cultural memory has tended to stress the role of institutionalized canons in the formation and transmission of collective memories at the expense of alternative archives and non-canonical memory traditions. Early work in memory studies was thus shaped by an imperial mindset, which, I'm afraid, still persists today, though there is at least a growing awareness of this as a problem.

I myself have spent a good deal of my career so far critiquing the Eurocentric tendencies of the related field of trauma studies, which is something of a subfield of memory studies, even if it has a rather different history. Here too, though, experiences of non-Western or minority groups have tended to be marginalized or ignored, despite the omnipresence of violence and suffering in the world. As is apparent from the work of Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, Geoffrey Hartman, and Dominick LaCapra, trauma studies as a field of cultural scholarship developed out of an engagement with Holocaust testimony, literature, and history. Moreover, a flurry of trauma-theoretical publications also followed in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 9/11. If trauma studies is to stay relevant in the globalized world of the twenty-first century, though, it will have to go beyond its focus on key Western trauma sites and wean itself off its dependence on supposedly universal models of trauma and recovery that are rooted in the history of Western modernity. It seems to me that this process is well underway now: pluralization and diversification are among the most pronounced trends in recent trauma scholarship, though much work remains to be done.

Ann Rigney: As Stef's work testifies, more needs to be done, particularly in expanding knowledge of traditions of commemoration in non-Western settings. Moreover, as I indicated earlier, there is a certain tension between the notion of minoritarian memories and subjects, and the idea of social justice in the present. It would help if we could develop stronger models to conceptualise the dynamics of contestation so that 'minority' becomes not just a byword for 'ghetto' but a fundamental challenge to dominant narratives about both the past and the present. Again, dissensus and agonism rather than recognition should be key words.

Astrid Erll: The challenge for minoritarian memories in Europe today lies in the dynamics of recognition and participation. It is important that minority groups not only articulate their past experience, but that they also actively take their stories into the heart of society and its memory cultures. Put simply and using the metaphor of a museum: minoritarian memories should not remain in the special exhibition (as a showcase on difference), but become an integral part of the permanent exhibition (where difference is seen as a *constitutive* part of society). At the moment, European memory cultures seem particularly prone to the problem of providing apparent recognition without granting real participation. For Nancy Fraser, 'the notion of *parity of participation*' constitutes the 'normative core' of the discussion about recognition and redistribution.⁴² If all members of society are meant to participate 'on par with others in social life',⁴³ then memories must not only be shared, but be *shared on par*.

In the midst of an ongoing European and global migration crisis, what is the relationship between migration and memory, both in this political moment, and in the circumstances leading up to it?

Ann Rigney: Unfortunately, memory has been a cornerstone in the building of fortress Europe. It has been linked to migration in the form of a defensive bulwark: Europe has its own national and regional traditions; you don't share in those traditions, so keep out. A more constructive and humane approach is ethically demanded. There is an urgent need both to lay down an archive of migrant experiences for future remembrance as an integral part of European life and to scour the annals of European history for cases that resonate multidirectionally with present-day dilemmas: the turning away of ships carrying Jewish refugees from various ports across Europe for example. Indeed, if Europeans care as much about Holocaust remembrance as its official status within the European Union would

suggest, then isn't this our chance to 'make good' on the past by not repeating the same mistakes? Here again, we see the importance of refusing to 'pastify' memory. Let us consider memory instead as unfinished business from the past and the present as an opportunity to act differently.

Paula McFetridge: This is why arts activists aim to challenge the keeper of the memory (the source material) as well as impacting on those who were never a part of it. The artist frames the narrative to maximise engagement with today's new audiences. The objective is to offset collective amnesia about the past. In 2009 Kabosh premiered a play in the Belfast Jewish synagogue. Entitled *This is what we Sang*, and written by Gavin Kostick, the play was inspired by an oral archive conducted by Jo Egan over a 12-month period.⁴⁴ This involved interviewing forty-five members of the aging Jewish community – some still residing in Belfast and some who had left since the start of the conflict in 1969. The interviews were transcribed and returned to the participants so the voice of this diminishing community is now archived. Through staging the play Kabosh ensured audiences looked at both the Belfast Blitz and the conflict through a different lens, as well as encouraging audiences to consider the contribution made by the Jewish community to the evolution of Belfast. Through engaging with the story of a sizable migrant story we hoped attitudes to current migrants would be reassessed. In addition the Belfast Jewish community were empowered by other communities bearing witness to their narratives.

Stef Craps: I've been struck by the coincidence of the migration crisis with the centenary of the First World War and by the abundance of historical echoes, as well as by what I can only describe as our collective inability to hear them. Piet Chielens, the director of the In Flanders Fields museum in Ieper, has expressed his consternation over the fact that while commemorating a traumatic war that took place here in Flanders one hundred years ago, we are humiliating refugees fleeing war in the present.⁴⁵ In particular, he was shocked by statements made by leading politicians from his home province of West Flanders, which saw some of the worst fighting of the war, who are on record saying things like, 'Don't give food to refugees,' or, 'We should stop them from setting up camp here at all costs.' They speak lofty words about peace and honouring the victims at a ceremony to commemorate the First World War one day, only to fulminate against the victims of war and persecution who are knocking on our door the next.

Similarly, the *New York Times* published an article in the summer of 2015 about how Europeans, despite facing one of the continent's worst

humanitarian crises since the Second World War, seem blind to images that recall that blackest time in their history.⁴⁶ These images – of migrants locked into trains, police putting numbers on people’s arms, babies handed over barbed wire, soldiers herding crowds of bedraggled men, women, and children – evoke memories of the Holocaust, yet Europeans by and large seem oblivious to these historical parallels. Remarkably, the countries that are most resistant to immigration and diversity, such as Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic, are among those that suffered the most during the Second World War and produced the most refugees in its aftermath. As a Human Rights Watch official quoted in the article puts it, ‘It is hard to understand how people lose their sense of history so quickly. We all say we have learned the lessons of history, but to be turning away these desperate people who are fleeing a horrific situation suggests that we haven’t learned the lessons at all.’

We are astoundingly good, it seems, at ignoring the discrepancy between the words spoken at commemorative ceremonies about lessons learnt from history and our actions in the present, which are often completely at odds with those lessons. Historical commemorations become hollow rituals when there is such a glaring contrast between the ways in which as a society we remember the past and act in the present, when our actions obviously contradict the timeless values we profess to hold dear in those ceremonies. I’m not exactly sure what to make of this historical disconnect, this collective form of cognitive dissonance, which may not be an entirely new phenomenon but which has become very hard to ignore in the current climate. Do we need more memory, better memory, more accurate memory to combat moral complacency and self-congratulation, or do commemorative practices inevitably promote and foster such attitudes? And are we as memory scholars, who like to think of ourselves as progressive, complicit in the widespread reduction of historical remembrance to mere virtue signalling?

Paula McFetridge: To shake the public out of its complacency and its apparent inability to make the connection between historical migration and the current political situation it is imperative artists continue to explore new ways of humanising immigrants and emigrants; giving them a voice, sharing their journeys and present situation, making connections, challenging social systems that prevent integration and equality of rights. The key question for the artist is how to do this and not simply speak to those engaged with the migration narrative and how not to ensure the audience aren’t complacent voyeurs – what information do they require to be activists and champions for change. Also within this area of theatre for social change we need to

consider how the experiences are sourced and collated. And if the archiving of stories is for animation now or in the future – we must be sensitive to the importance of timing. Kabosh is currently working with Belfast playwright Rosemary Jenkinson on a new commission *Lives in Translation* resulting from a series of interviews conducted with female Somalian refugees (scheduled to premiere September 2017).

Dominic Thorpe: Selective solidarity can seem to draw on particular inherited concepts and senses of national identity to facilitate a placing of the shared experience of migration in this moment as secondary, unconnected or even irrelevant. Each year in Ireland around the time of St Patrick's Day (March 17th) Irish politicians make calls to US politicians for recognition and positive action in relation to the plight of Irish illegal emigrants in America, the so called 'undocumented Irish'. This call for compassion contrasts with the treatment of 'undocumented' in Ireland or the treatment of those who come to seek asylum in Ireland and are forced to live in the widely criticised Direct Provision asylum system, a system branded 'a form of institutionalised poverty' by the special rapporteur on children Geoffrey Shannon.⁴⁷ Lentin refers to Ireland as having become a 'diaspora state', leading to a 2004 referendum where Irish citizens voted to deny the right of citizenship to children born in Ireland to non-national parents.⁴⁸ The referendum did not include children born outside Ireland who are entitled to Irish citizenship if they have at least one Irish grandparent. Such a prioritising of bloodline over geography indicates the complexity of relationship between migration and memory in Ireland, a place with a history of poverty, discrimination, and mass emigration.

I remember hearing an interview on an Irish talk radio programme around nine years ago where the host was speaking on the phone with an Irish man who had emigrated to America to seek employment a number years previously and was now living and working there illegally. The man was lamenting the cruel reality that he could not return temporarily to Ireland for his father's funeral. Because of his illegal status he would not be allowed re-entry to America, despite having built a life there. At the time the conversation was happening there was an economic boom in Ireland and the number of people coming to Ireland looking for work and seeking asylum had increased. The radio host mentioned this in passing to which the man suggested too many foreigners were being allowed into Ireland. At this point instead of trying in any way to explore the complexity of the often simultaneous contrasting positions taken when discussing lived realities of migration, the radio presenter momentarily stumbled

over the conversation before quickly bringing the focus back to the man's plight.

My response at that time was to hire approximately eighty advertising spaces on three national radio stations over one week, during which were played audio recordings of a number of segments of interviews with two people, both from war torn countries, who had recently come to live in Ireland overlaid with recordings of traditional Irish emigration songs.⁴⁹ I have never experienced questions of migration and memory sitting well together. That they most often need to be forced and the spaces in which they are articulated and drawn out need to be created, recreated, and forced when necessary, is telling.

Astrid Erll: I would like, finally, to consider some of the positive aspects in the handling of the current refugee crisis and discuss how these may be connected with memory. In 2015, when almost one million refugees, mainly from Syria and Afghanistan, came to Germany, the 'welcome culture' emerged not only as a political slogan, but indeed found a broad social basis. At the same time, other parts of society voiced xenophobic, specifically anti-Muslim, sentiments, and Germany saw the rise of political populism. Despite this, the welcoming attitude of a large part of German society is a social fact and, it seems to me, was at least partly the result of an effective memory culture. It was shaped – premediated – by cultural memories about the millions who became exiles and refugees during the Nazi era. At the same time, prospective memory appears to be at work here. Since the 1990s, Germany has (as has Europe at large) developed a highly reflexive memory culture. People have become attuned to thinking in terms of remembering and being remembered. Many Germans are clearly aware that the current refugee crisis is a 'historical moment' that will shape the nation and Europe, and they are sensitive to the question of how this moment may be remembered in the future. There is an acute awareness of what Axel Honneth calls the 'recognitional structure of collective memory',⁵⁰ which connects past, present and future generations – albeit no longer in homogeneous ethnic or national frameworks, but in structures that interlink members of today's society with future generations in thoroughly transnational and transcultural formations. If 'a group must be able to expect from its prospectively recognized descendants that they will reciprocally recognitionally approve the currently valid self-understanding',⁵¹ then actions today must be conceived of as potential objects of memory of tomorrow's 'new Germans',⁵² (Münkler and Münkler) – or, by extension, tomorrow's 'new Europeans'.

NOTES

1. Maurice Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1994 [1925]). See also Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy, eds., *The Collective Memory Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
2. Elisabeth F. Loftus and Katherine Ketcham, *The Myth of Repressed Memory: False Memories and Allegations of Sexual Abuse* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich: Beck, 1992); Jeffrey K. Olick, *The Politics of Regret: On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility* (London: Routledge, 2007).
3. Dirk A. Moses, 'Genocide and the Terror of History', *Parallax* 17.4 (2011), 90–108; Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).
4. Paul Ricoeur, 'Memory – History – Forgetting', in *Meaning and Representation in History*, ed. by Jörn Rüsen (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006), 9–19.
5. See Joep Leerssen and Ann Rigney, eds., *Commemorating Writers in Nineteenth-Century Europe: Nation-Building and Centenary Fever* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
6. Written by Laurence McKeown, directed by Paula McFetridge, produced by Kabosh, performed by James Doran and Vincent Higgins; premiered 21 October 2016 Girdwood Cultural Hub.
7. Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995).
8. See, for example, the 2009 Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (www.childabusecommission.ie).
9. Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture*, trans. by Sara B. Young (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.38.
10. Erll, *Memory in Culture*, p.38.
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