

Epilogue

BODIES CROSSING BORDERS



Rosemarie Buikema

The Mobility of Memory deals with key issues in both Migration Studies and Critical Memory Studies. As one of the outcomes of the *Bodies Across Borders in Europe: Oral and Visual Memory in Europe* (BABE) Project, this rich compilation of essays emerges from the tensions between roots and routes, history and memory, minds and bodies, macrostructures and micro stories, control and resistance, the discursive and the visual. In productively shifting the boundaries between these concepts *The Mobility of Memory* implements the configuration of intersubjectivity as a means by which to investigate the dynamics of identity formation as an ongoing and dialogical process of adaptation and change. Taken as a unified whole, by deploying this configuration of intersubjectivity as a technology of the self—as Foucault would say—the chapters become an innovative and epistemologically important gesture. Intersubjectivity epitomizes the way in which bodies crossing borders necessarily entail the mobilization of signs; a process in which language and affect intra-act to such an extent that we start to realize how borders also cross bodies.

Bodies crossing borders and borders crossing bodies make imperative the need to open up historically and geopolitically delineated boundaries of time and place and thus of cultural canons, vocabularies, iconographies, and even disciplines. In a time when bodies are frequently forced to cross borders, the very idea of beginning and ending is constantly disrupted. As Awam Ampka (2017) aptly suggests, instead of assuming a linear or circular form, time might best be described as a spiral, perceived differently by different people. It is impossible to survive the escape of violence, poverty, exclusion, and/

or repression if one sticks to the unity of time and place. Rather, one must assume the plurality of times and places, not to say a plurality of modernities, between which bodies and borders commute in order to evoke multiple existences. Only if we agree to accept intersubjectivity as a process of simultaneously belonging to different times and places might we be able to conceptualize displacement not as alienating, but as part of what it means to be a citizen in the world of today—notwithstanding the concomitant and inevitable experiences of loss and suffering. This is exactly where Migration Studies and Critical Memory Studies meet in their efforts to constitute an archive of the concepts of movement, memory, time, and place based on a dialogical response to oral histories and artworks in times of migration and mass displacement.

Critical Memory Studies consider politically engaged or trauma-related artifacts as history seen through affect. In this context, affect is understood as a residue of an event reactivated through the reiteration of that event by something equivalent to it—for example, by means of art. The historical event is thus studied in connection to the medium that gives access to the experience of the event. Affect, in this sense, is therefore related to cathexis: the power to relate. As historian Jay Winter suggests: “History is memory seen through and criticized with the aid of documents of many kinds—written, aural, visual. Memory is history seen through affect. Therefore, it is difficult to examine the claims of memory in the same way as we examine the claims of history” (2010: 12). History is thus a discipline of which we learn and teach the rules and methods. Memory is a faculty: the faculty to be affected. It is a claim of Critical Memory Studies that contemporary artifacts dealing with traumatic events should not be studied only for their representation of history or reality, but also for the part they play in the production of affects and deep thought. As such, in order to open up new worlds, and to connect the personal and the political, Critical Memory Studies scholars consider artifacts as a form of thinking. Critical memory discourses link micro stories to macrostructures and thus, Critical Memory Studies scholars are interested in the ways in which artifacts, as critical memory discourses, counteract the threat of socially produced amnesia and/or the engineering of hegemonic concepts of citizenship, subjectivity, time, and place. They concentrate on the analysis of both oral histories and artifacts as inventions of techniques for transmitting and storing information, deemed vital for the constitution or continuation of a specific group or a specific constellation of groups (Assmann 2010; Huyssen 2003; Rothberg 2009).

As elegantly demonstrated again and again in the essays of *The Mobility of Memory*, bodies that have crossed borders need to insert their potentially disruptive presence by producing something new, something that is not yet there. Bodies crossing borders inevitably have to intervene in existing

iconographies and vocabularies. In the appreciation of both oral histories and artifacts as vehicles of new beginnings, as well as instruments to evoke the articulation and visualization of multiple existences, this publication contributes to new conceptualizations of citizenship, subjectivity, time, and place. As such, *The Mobility of Memory* is an invaluable contribution to the work of Critical Memory Studies and Migration Studies. Together these fields will continue to produce knowledge through the study of the visual arts, literature, dance, and performance, and to theorize about different conceptions of the disunity of time and place as a process of endless renewal and beginning.

Rosemarie Buikema is professor of Art, Culture and Diversity at Utrecht University. She chairs UU's Graduate Gender Studies Programme, is the scientific director of the Netherlands Research School of Gender Studies (NOG), and is the project leader of the Museum of Equality and Difference (<https://MOED.online>). Her most recent publications include the monograph *Revolts in Cultural Critique* (Rowman&Littlefield International, 2020) and the coedited volume *Cultures, Citizenship an Human Rights* (Routledge 2019).

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