



Articulations of Memory: Mediation and the Making of Mnemo-Regions

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POSTNATIONAL MEMORY STUDIES

There is evidence of a growing desire among memory scholars to go beyond “methodological nationalism” (Amelina et al. 2012), reflected in the appearance of a flock of related terms: “cosmopolitan memory” (Levy and Sznajder 2002), “memory in the global age” (Assmann and Conrad 2010), “travelling memory” (Erl 2011), “transcultural memory” (Crownshaw 2014; Bond and Rapson 2014), “transnational memory” (De Cesari and Rigney 2014), and “memory in the global age” (Reading 2016). These concepts overlap and sometimes compete, each facilitating a different type of analytic work. But they all share a common concern with thinking about new frameworks and new sites for studying the production of memory in an increasingly entangled world of globalized communication, mass migration, and planetary climate change. Together, they represent a concerted attempt to conceptualize memory in what can be called

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postnational terms, with “postnational” being understood here by analogy with the term postcolonial, as referencing a world that recognizes the enduring legacy of nationalism, while also relativizing the current importance of the nation state in organizing social, cultural, and political life. The concept of region, central to the present volume, belongs in this postnational movement in memory studies.

By and large critiques of methodological nationalism have involved broadening the framework in which memory production is considered. In a milestone essay called “Travelling Memory,” Astrid Erll argued that memory is “not bound” by any national container and, instead, is “continually moving across and beyond [such] territorial and social borders” (Erll 2011). Her use of the term “not bound” echoed Levy and Sznajder’s article “Memory Unbound” (2002) and was subsequently echoed in the (sub-)titles of later essay collections, including: *Memory Unbound* (Bond et al. 2017), and *Anne Frank Unbound* (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Shandler 2012).

The concept of the unbound represents an important first step away from the nation state as a self-evident framework for memory and identity. In particular, it has helped yield a growing body of insights into how global entanglements are explored in the arts. However, as I shall argue here in line with De Cesari and Rigney (2014), the “unbounded” character of memory should not be overemphasized, lest a critique directed at relativizing the national as a framework for memory should end up creating the illusion of a brave new world with no borders at all; with no outside and no outsiders. The contemporary world is not a seamless space where everything flows smoothly across borders; nor is it a level playing field where all experiences have equal weight or voices equal power. Arjun Appadurai has referred in this regard to the “bumps and potholes” (2003) that interrupt the flow and uptake of information and affect across the world. With this in mind, the present article approaches memory production as a multi-scalar and multi-sited process operating across uneven topographies. Material and imagined borders between “insiders” and “outsiders” still exist even if they no longer coincide with the traditional borders of nation states. Indeed, the number of borders or interfaces has arguably grown rather than diminished as a result of our entanglements. If Europe, for example, has been about “integration” and the disappearance of border controls, it has also generated a proliferation of new borders operating at different scales and marking the outer reaches of what is considered “European” (see Rigney 2012b). In order to study this

complexity, memory studies should not dismiss the national as outdated. Not only because nationalism is proving to be a hugely resilient force in society, but more importantly here, because contemporary memory studies may also learn from the history of nationalism as an earlier phase in the “upscaling” of society.

Critiques of the nation state as the “natural” framework for collective identity and memory actually predate the publications mentioned above. Arguably, reflexivity regarding the phenomenon of the nation state has been at the heart of memory studies since its emergence as an interdisciplinary in the 1980s. Pierre Nora’s influential *Lieux de mémoire* project (1984–1992) was in essence a nationalist project in that it buttresses a canon of French identity. But the very fact that it thematized the nation state as a framework for memory indicates that the latter had lost its self-evident primacy. Nora’s work is often cited as a key point of reference in genealogies of memory studies. What has less often been noted is that it appeared around the same time as Hobsbawm and Ranger’s *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), David Lowenthal’s *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985) and, last but by no means least, Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (1991 [1983]). What these works have in common is that they reflect on the nation as a “natural” mnemonic frame by exploring the history of its construction.

In his influential study of “imagined communities”, Anderson invoked Ernest Renan’s famous “Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?” ([1882] 1947–1961)) in order to argue that remembrance and forgetting are key aspects of nation-building. Nationalism, Anderson argued, was “a new way of linking fraternity, power and time meaningfully together” (1991, 36). It involved a voluntary identification—or what Edward Said around the same time was calling “affiliation” (Said 1983)—with people with whom one had no “natural” or traditional connections. This voluntary affiliation yielded a fictive kinship (what Anderson called “imaginings of fraternity”; Anderson 1991, 203) based on the sense of a shared history; this involved overlooking genealogical differences and forgetting divisive memories. Learning to “live with strangers”, to echo Kwame Anthony Appiah’s definition of cosmopolitanism (2006), was arguably already part of nation-building and its production of fraternal solidarity across greater distances.

In the case of nation-building, however, “linking fraternity, power, and time” did not entail a permanent openness to strangers. In contrast to cosmopolitanism, nationalism involved both mechanisms of bonding and, once the common history had been established, mechanisms of exclusion:

it depended on the idea that some strangers were brothers because they shared a common history and culture, while others were constitutionally outsiders. Nations thus came into being by generating a demarcation line between “us” and “other”, between home and abroad, the domestic and the foreign. As Anderson noted, nations are by definition “limited” or, indeed, bounded:

The nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind. (Anderson 1991, 7)

In what follows, I propose to take a leaf out of the book of nationalism studies in recognizing people’s capacity to voluntarily affiliate with strangers, but also the inevitable “boundaries” of all imagined communities; indeed of identity itself, defined as the subjective sense of belonging to “a bounded, distinctive, solidary group” (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 34). Although the boundaries of imagined fraternities may be elastically extended, they never become coterminous with mankind, not necessarily because of deliberate mechanisms of exclusion (as in nationalism), but because of the limits of communication and of our ability to imagine the lives of others.

Having arrived at this point in my argument, the concept of region presents a welcome alternative to the nation as a conceptual tool for thinking about the role of borders in memory production. Like a nation, but without its exclusionary logic, a region designates a structure *in between* the global and the local. It is bounded, by definition, but its borders do not coincide with the nation and, crucially, they are also subject to being redefined. In the terms of the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, a region is “an indefinite area of the world or universe”; in the terms of the Oxford dictionary, a region is “an area, especially part of a country or the world having definable characteristics but not always fixed boundaries”.

In what follows, I shall adapt this notion of region to study the circulation but also the boundaries of memory in a postnational world. More specifically, I explore the role of the media in defining but also shifting those boundaries by creating the imaginative conditions for new affiliations with strangers and hence virtual mnemo-regions that transcend traditional solidarities.

MEDIATION AND CULTURAL BORDERS

A key assumption in cultural memory studies is that mediated acts of remembrance are performative in the strong sense of speech act theory (Austin 1962): they not only reflect the world but also effect change in it, by giving meaning and affective force to the memory of events. In this sense, mediated acts of remembrance are agents of “worlding” (Anderson and Harrison 2010).¹ The very fact of sharing narratives through communicative acts specifically helps to shape social relations by providing common points of reference and a common language. These points bear emphasizing since the argument that follows rests on the assumption that media do not just reflect social relations but, in certain circumstances, also have the power to change them by changing lines of communication and patterns of affiliation.

In highlighting the role of media in producing collective identities, cultural memory studies shares a common focus with nationalism studies. The invention of nations in the nineteenth century (Leerssen 2018) offers a prime example of the performative power of cultural practices, including mnemonic practices, in forging an imagined fraternity between increasingly nationalized subjects and in promoting the desire for congruence between cultural identity, state formation, and national territory. Anderson (1991) notably attributed the making of nations to the role of modern media in creating imagined communities at a scale transcending that of local, face-to-face contacts. With a predigital, indeed pre-audiovisual view of the world, Anderson restricted himself to print media (newspapers and the novel), focusing on how they operated within specifically national frameworks especially in the period before World War One. People now live in more complex media ecologies, but the basic point is still relevant: namely, that the media, as carriers of memory, have the power to create new alliances and new imagined communities. In today’s digital world, this power clearly operates at scales both below and beyond the national frame.

Contemporary media do not stop at a country’s border no more than the weather does. Nor did they do so, *pace* Anderson, in the age of print. Like the flight paths that are displayed in in-flight magazines, communication networks traverse and transcend national territories and produce

¹Anderson and Harrison (2010, 8): “the term ‘world’ does not refer to an extant thing but rather the context or background against which particular things show up and take on significance: a mobile but more or less stable ensemble of practices, involvements, relations, capacities, tendencies and affordances”.

distinct constellations. The circulation of information brings a world of connections into being and, through the exposure to common narratives, imagined communities shaped along other than national lines and not necessarily tied to a particular territory. Communication networks transcend physical space and create new, de-territorialized relations of distance and proximity (Anderson and Harrison's concept of "non-representational" geography is useful here; 2010). In keeping with the key concept of the present collection, we can speak here of "mnemo-regions" in the sense of virtual, de-territorialized mnemonic formations that are coterminous neither with national frameworks nor with the planet as a whole. As the idea of "region" indicates, these formations are bounded, although the location of that boundary is not defined a priori but is continuously emerging as one of the outcomes of communication and connectivity itself.

Knowing more about communication networks is a precondition for understanding how memory is produced transnationally today. Who is talking to whom and which narratives reach which destinations? Addressing these questions entails studying the way narratives "travel" but also how their movement may be contained within echo chambers of the likeminded or blocked by cultural borders. Unlike the borders of nation states which are linked to clearly-defined jurisdictions, cultural borders are never clear cut, open or shut. Instead, as the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss once argued, they take the form of a series of thresholds each marking a gradual decrease in mutual comprehension because of differences in language, values, and habitus (Lévi-Strauss 1974). This suggests that, in certain circumstances, mediation can help to shift cultural borders by *creating new grounds* for mutual comprehension between hitherto disconnected parties who then form, if only temporarily, a new public (Warner 2002).

The following analysis builds on this hypothesis by considering the various ways in which mediated memories create new interfaces between hitherto disconnected groups. This research question resonates with Astrid Erll's recent analysis of "relationality" (Erll 2017, 2018); specifically, of the various ways in which the creative arts reveal underlying entanglements between the memories of distinctive groups. My emphasis will be less on the uncovering of hitherto overlooked connections, however, and more on the forging of new interfaces between as yet unconnected groups through acts of mediation. A key concept in this analysis is that of articulation, building on De Cesari and Rigney (2014).

As Stuart Hall already pointed out (in Grossberg 1986), the word "articulation" means, on the one hand, "speaking clearly and coherently"

and, on the other hand, “connecting” (as in joints and trucks). Its value as an analytic term is that can help us bring together within the same frame both the composition and the circulation of cultural artefacts. Applied to memory production, articulation entails mediated acts of remembrance that “perform” connections between people. When memory is given expression in a cultural carrier (novel, film, testimony, documentary...) that goes into circulation, new connections between individuals, between groups, and between “us” and “strangers” are made possible. Acts of articulation thus enable “unscripted linkages” (Rothberg 2014, 133), affiliations that are not based on tradition, but are newly constituted (as national identities once were). Alison Landsberg (2004) has influentially argued that experiential modes of narration in particular can produce “prosthetic memory” whereby people engage imaginatively and affectively with a history into which they have not been socialized, but that now becomes part of their memory and identity thanks to their exposure to the narrative. Landsberg is arguably over-optimistic regarding the empathy-inducing powers she ascribes to experiential narrative. But her basic point is nevertheless well taken; namely, that cultural carriers, fictional narratives in particular, can form a bridge between mnemonic communities; in our terms, articulate them.

FOUR TYPES OF ARTICULATION

What follows is an initial typology of the different ways in which historically distinct memory communities can be “articulated”, that is, brought into conversation through mediated narrative practices. Four types of articulation, touching on both the composition of narratives and the manner of their circulation, will be briefly discussed. The examples offered to illustrate these types are wide-ranging, designed to show the complexity of the phenomenon but also to serve as a reminder that the work of articulation is not just a by-product of the postnational, but has long been a part of mediatized community-building. In the last section of this article, I will go on to consider the work of articulation within specifically digital contexts.

Integrative narration involves using a plot structure to reconcile two opposed groups as part of a single “birth of the nation” story with a happy end. This was the classic narrative model for nation-building and linked to the genre of the historical novel as this emerged at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It is exemplified in the novel *Ivanhoe* (1819), the

international bestseller by Walter Scott about the struggle between the native Anglo-Saxon population and the Norman colonists in the century after the Norman Conquest of Britain (c.f. Rigney 2012a). Like Scott's other novels, it offered a way of imagining the birth of the nation as the overcoming of ethnic differences or, to use our terms here, the articulation of two groups. Renan's claim that all the nations of Europe originally originated in two "races" (Renan 1947–1961) was arguably inspired by this integrative narrative model whose emergence can be seen as a response to one of the major challenges of nation-building; namely, how to imagine a single nation on the basis of differences? More recent examples of this narrative model can still be identified (for example, in the American television series *North and South* (1985–1994), based on the novelistic trilogy by John Jakes (1982)). In the context of contemporary migration, other variations have come on the scene. These work less on the principle of two-becoming-one in a single plot than on showing the legitimate co-existence within the same narrative frame of different groups with their own histories. More could be said on the rich array of narrative models that are still being invented in response to changing conditions in the life world and changing ideas about citizenship. Suffice it here to mention, as one example among many possible ones, the comic novel the *Clash of Civilizations over an Elevator in Piazza Vittorio* (2008) by Italian-Algerian writer Amara Lakhous, which thematizes cultural and linguistic differences, and divergent life narratives among people in contemporary Rome. In this case, the convivial sharing of city space is the unifying principle rather than the unfolding of events over time, but here too, narration is being used in an integrative way.

Multidirectional narration involves bringing into conversation within the framework of the same cultural text historical experiences hitherto unconnected in public perception. The experiences are not so much connected at the level of the plot as through cross-referencing and analogies. The term "multidirectionality" is drawn here from Michael Rothberg's seminal work (2009) which shows how the memory of the Holocaust provided a model for articulating the memory of colonization in the 1950s, and vice versa, how colonial memory has helped in giving expression to the memory of the Holocaust. To take one of Rothberg's examples: Caryl Phillips' novel *The Nature of Blood* interweaves two story lines—one is about a Holocaust survivor in the twentieth century; the other about Othello in Renaissance Venice—into mutually illuminating juxtaposition or "multidirectional montage" (Erl 2017). Phillips jumps

imaginatively through time and space and, in the process, invites his reader to make connections between two forms of racism without integrating the different subplots into a single story.

Hetero-remembrance involves narrating the historical experiences of an outgroup or the “lives of others”. It is not a feature of narrative composition but of positionality. Most theorizing in memory studies has been focused on what might be called “auto-remembrance”: the ways in which individuals and groups negotiate and give expression to their own memory, be this as a private person or as members of a community. As a result, the ubiquity of cross-cultural remembrance—what I call here “hetero-remembrance”—has been overlooked. More than has been recognized hitherto, historians, writers, directors, curators, and other memory workers express an interest in the experience of groups with whom they are not traditionally affiliated by language, history, or the sharing of a particular territory. The work of Lydia Koidula, penname for the German-educated Estonian writer Lydia Jannsen, offers a case in point. As Piret Peiker (2015) explains, Koidula’s historical fiction *Juudit, or the Last Maroons of Jamaica* (1870) narrates in Estonian the story of runaway slaves fighting the British in the Caribbean and thus very far from the Baltic and the Russian Empire. Koidula’s story was read in Estonia as being about “the life of others” to be sure, but also as a story that resonated (Armstrong and Crage 2006) with that subaltern nation’s struggle for independence vis-à-vis both the German elite and the Russian empire. An experiential narrative about a group located elsewhere was thus made imaginatively available to a domestic audience for whom it also became a multidirectional projection screen for anti-colonialist concerns closer to home. A similar point might be made about the ways in which the French revolutionary leader Danton has been depicted outside of France from Georg Büchner’s *Dantons Tod* (1835) to the movie *Danton* (1983), by Polish director Andrzej Wajda; or the Paris Commune, as depicted for example in Bertolt Brecht’s *Tage der Commune* (1949), a German play about the Paris Commune which was recently reproduced again, as performance and as video installation, in New York within the context of the Occupy Wall Street movement.² Hetero-remembrance transcends—effectively suspends—linguistic, cultural, and mnemonic borders. In doing so, it makes

² *Days of the Commune* was directed as street theatre by Zoe Beloff, recordings of which were later made available on vimeo (www.vimeo.com/55209376); the project also became the subject of an installation at the Slought Foundation, Philadelphia in May 2011; see <http://daysofthecommune.com/>.

possible different types of interaction between self and other, and promotes some degree of identification with actors at a different location. In doing so, our examples suggest, it may be a way of holding up a critical mirror to the home country. In other instances, a selective interest in the “lives of others” may be a way of keeping them “in their place” within a traditional hierarchy (hetero-remembrance in the recent British/US mini-series *Chernobyl* (dir. J. Renck 2019), for example, shades over into an exoticization of the former USSR). Whatever the particular effect intended or achieved, hetero-remembrance suspends the boundaries between “home” and “abroad”, and if only in a partial or temporary way, relocates the imagined boundaries between “us” and the “other”.

Translation, as the name indicates, involves transposing existing narratives across linguistic borders and “translation zones” (Apter 2006). Translating novels and subtitling movies is the converse of hetero-remembrance in that it involves making accessible narratives that originated elsewhere. Translation from one language to another has largely been overlooked in studies of transnational memory work, though in many cases it is a necessary condition for the “travelling” of memory (Erll 2011). Non-fictional historical works are regularly translated, but it would seem that imaginative works circulate more easily and more frequently across linguistic borders. As I have argued elsewhere, the arts do not require a prior interest in a particular topic, but are instead capable of generating that interest through the way in which particular narratives are composed and offer aesthetic rewards (see Rigney 2009, 2021). Javier Cercas’s novel on the Spanish civil war *Soldiers of Salamis* (2001), for example, has been translated to date into 15 languages, including Japanese. Orhan Pamuk’s novel *Snow* (2002) about the unrest relating to the history of Kurds and Armenians in Eastern Anatolia has been translated into 19 languages, including Japanese and Chinese. A similar point can be made about the subtitling (and foreign distribution) of films dealing with historical events. Among many possible examples, mention can be made here of Andrzej Wajda’s *Katyn* (2007), distributed with subtitles in 30 European countries; Paul Greengrass’s *Bloody Sunday* (2002) distributed in 33 countries; and Emanuele Crialesi’s *Terraferma* (2011) distributed with subtitles in 28 countries.³

³ Data collected in November 2019. Information on the distribution of European films has been found at: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/funding/distribution-selective-scheme-support-for-transnational-distribution-european-films_en. A more detailed study

While the very existence of translations and subtitled versions indicates that “foreign” narratives are of some domestic interest, the variation in the number of translations shows that memories move across uneven ground. Translations are facilitated or impeded according to priorities in the target culture or, conversely, the extent of the efforts made in the source culture to promote particular works abroad. For it is clear that not all novels and films travel to the same extent: because of a lack of institutional support, a lack of aesthetic appeal, a lack of local resonance in the subject-matter, or a combination of all of these factors. To date, Dubravka Ugrešić’s *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender* (1998), originally written in Serbo-Croatian, on the legacy of the former-Yugoslavia has only been translated 4 times, while Assia Djebar’s novel on the Algerian civil war *Children of the New World* (1962), originally written in French, has only been translated into English. Finally, the film *Terraferma* about illegal immigrants trying to survive in Sicily has been widely distributed in Western Europe (as well as Brazil, Israel, Korea, and Taiwan), but it has not yet travelled widely in Eastern Europe, with the exception of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Ukraine.

Mapping and explaining the unequal distribution of such movies and translations is a desideratum in memory studies.⁴ In this regard, scholars would do well to take a leaf out of the book of transnational poetics, translation studies, and world literature studies where the question is asked how receiving cultures “negotiate, accept, indigenize, resist, and transform foreign influences” (Ramazani 2009, xiii).⁵ That “foreign influences” may be appropriated for local purposes is borne out by the reception of Paul Greengrass’s movie *Bloody Sunday* (2002), which was given a public screening in Bozen in South Tyrol in 2009 on the occasion of the bicentenary of the death of local resistance hero Andreas Hofer. The story of

would need to extend the scope of the analysis to include distribution patterns elsewhere in the world. Information on translations has been gained from UNESCO’s Index Translationum (<http://www.unesco.org/xtrans/>) supplemented by online searches for particular writers.

⁴Happily, after this article was originally written, a project called *Translating Memories*, directed by Eneken Laanes at Tallinn University, was started thanks to funding from the European Research Council: www.translatingmemories.tlu.ee.

⁵The study of world literature and translation studies have focused largely on the tensions between global culture (largely English-language) and linguistic diversity, and on the desirability or not of maintaining “untranslatability” as a form of resistance to cultural homogenization; see for example, Damrosch (2003) and Apter (2006). Translation studies too has focused on the tension between domestication and “othering”; see for example Venuti (2013).

the Irish Bloody Sunday apparently resonated with the local narrative of struggle against foreign oppressors (also presumably with the South-Tyrolean version of “Bloody Sunday” in 1921 when Italian-led fascist gangs attacked locals).⁶ In order to understand the ways stories originating in one culture are appropriated and interpreted in others, more attention should be paid in the future both to public practices of reception and to the (semi-)private practices of reception evidenced, for example, on online forums such as Goodreads. The idea that new stories need to resonate with existing ones in order to take root, as Armstrong and Cragge have argued (2006), also implies the need for future research into the multifarious ways in which “foreign” stories map onto domestic ones.

But hopefully enough has already been shown here to support the point that narratives, both in their composition and their transposition to other places, have the potential to change traditional patterns of affiliation and to *create* new relations between hitherto unconnected mnemonic communities. The composition, circulation and local uptake of narratives create “flight paths” that transcend linguistic, cultural, and national borders and extend the boundaries of imagined communities into new memo-regions.

My examples so far have been from traditional broadcast media and have specifically referred to experiential narratives produced by creative writers and filmmakers. In my final section, I reflect on how these basic insights apply to today’s digital “culture of connectivity” (Van Dijck 2012).

WIKI-MEMORY

If there was a natural affinity between newspapers, novels, and nations, as Anderson argued, what sort of social formations are sustained by the new media ecologies? And do they too carry out acts of articulation? Not surprisingly, there is a fast-growing literature on the impact of digitalization on cultures of memory and the collaborative production of memory narratives, which it is beyond the scope of this article to discuss in detail. Suffice it here to flag two general issues. Firstly, as several important studies have shown, digitalization has generated multiple new possibilities for storing and sharing information independent of experts and state institutions (Garde-Hansen et al. 2009; Reading 2016), for building more

⁶On the Tyrolean Bloody Sunday, Steininger (2003) and Thaler and Mumelter (2011). I am grateful to Susanne Knittel for drawing my attention to this case; for details see Rigney (2016).

personalized archives (Van Dijck 2007), and for the online remediation of textual and audiovisual materials (Jenkins 2006), which makes them accessible to new generations and new publics irrespective of their location. Secondly, and more challenging, theorists of digitally-born communication have argued that the traditional narrative forms of memory-making exemplified in the previous section of this paper have become subject in the new media ecologies to a “connective turn” (Hoskins 2011). There has been a paradigm shift, Hoskins argues, whereby the recollection of the past as experiential story has become less important to collective identity than the sense of being connected or networked in the present; this connectivity is not dependent on empathic engagement with the lives of others, but rather on the algorithms that link the users of social media and hence the technologies that “engineer” their sociality (Van Dijck 2007, 169).

Since digital culture is evolving as we write and encompasses many different practices and technologies, it is impossible to generalize. For this reason, I have decided to focus specifically on Wikipedia, since this online encyclopedia, unlike other social media platforms like Facebook, is more obviously linked to collective memory and the shaping of imagined communities, and thus offers a good observation point for the ongoing transformation of memory culture. Wikipedia has been identified as a distinctive “technology of memory” (Plate and Smelik 2009), and also as a “global memory place” (Pentzold 2009), its scope and its multilingualism exemplifying postnational memory production. Its design means that it is also an important site of “convergence culture” (Jenkins 2006) where different cultural practices are brought together on one platform. Most importantly here, it is a generator *par excellence* of articulations which uses, but also goes beyond, the forms outlined above. As we will see, Wikipedia uses the possibilities offered by digital media to continue the work of articulation across a topography that, albeit free of national frames and unprecedentedly global in its scale, nevertheless remains uneven and differentiated.

In the course of just a decade, Wikipedia has become a key site of transnational memory production (Pentzold 2009; Pentzold et al. 2017; Ferron and Massa 2014; Rosenzweig 2006). There are some signs that activity has leveled off since around 2014 and that a certain editorial fatigue has set in, but it still remains a hugely important medium of memory with a unique set of affordances: an interactive media technology, a template for ordering information, and a system of governance that allows both for user generated content and regulation on the part of editors (Van Dijck 2012). The governance model is aimed at achieving accuracy,

neutrality, global reach, and consensus-building in an international arena (accessing the “edit history” reveals the level and intensity of controversy on particular topics).⁷

Wikipedia’s linguistic range is impressive, with no fewer than 301 languages represented as of July 2019. The English-language Wikipedia is by far the largest and seems to serve constituencies both inside and outside the English-speaking world, hence giving it both a global and a regional-specific dimension. A comparative study of the different articles on the Srebrenica massacre in Serbian, Croatian, Dutch, and English, led by Richard Rogers at the University of Amsterdam (2013), concluded that the same editors act differently on the English-language site (targeting an international public and subject to greater control) than on the site in their local language (where articles were more colored by interpretation). Since machine translation is only permitted in a limited way,⁸ the appearance of new articles (be this in the form of a translation or a new text) can be taken as symptoms of interest in a certain topic and a desire to make the memory available to a new linguistic community. Since Wikipedia is a non-aesthetic medium without the attractions of experiential narrative, the uptake of these articles will depend either on the prior interest of reading subjects or on serendipity, that is, users happening upon an article by following other links, which the hyper-linked interface encourages them to do.

Despite its potential to accommodate all interests, attention in Wikipedia is not spread evenly over languages and topics. National minority languages like Breton and transnational languages like Tatar are “over”-represented through multiple articles, with Wikipedia apparently offering a new international platform for non-state languages and the cultural identities they sustain. In contrast, African languages and coverage of Africa-related topics are under-represented leaving that continent largely outside of the over-lapping mnemo-regions being produced by this internationally used technology.⁹

⁷ Additional digital tools can give more information about patterns in editing and moderation: <http://contropedia.net/>.

⁸ Most editions of Wikipedia ban the use of full automatic translation. However, recent application of Lsjbot for automatic translation has led to a huge increase in articles in Swedish along with Cebuano and Waray, languages of the Philippines; if automatization on this scale were to continue, it will have major implications for our understanding of Wikipedia as a site of human interactions.

⁹ The basic information about Wikipedia and its current organization and biases has been gleaned from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia>; supplemented by Van Dijck (2012) and Rogers (2013). For additional information on editorial practices, see <http://contropedia.net/>.

Differential memorability (Rigney 2016) is thus at play in what has been celebrated as a global medium. Filtering affects not only the uptake of topics in the different languages, but also the dissemination of particular topics across language areas. To date,¹⁰ there are articles in 34 languages on Alan Kurdi, for example, the Syrian boy whose drowned body became the subject of an iconic photograph in the last months of 2015 (the fact that these articles were produced very soon after the boy's death indicates that Wikipedia is both a "hot" medium of "communicative memory" as well as a medium of long-term "cultural memory"; Assmann 1999). It is interesting to note, moreover, that a majority of these articles (21) were produced in non-European languages (including not just Arabic and Kurdish, but also Malay, Bahasa Indonesia, and two variants of Punjabi), delineating a mnemo-region centered outside of Europe. In contrast: of the 60 articles generated by the massacre of Katyn more than 20 are in Eastern European languages, presumably reflecting an historical interest within the former Soviet bloc in this particular event. Less predictably, however, there are also articles on Katyn in multiple Asian languages from Bengali and Persian to Korean, Chinese, and Vietnamese. It would be extremely interesting to map in more detail such patterns of hetero-remembrance, showing who is interested in whom and for how long (the latter indicated in the number of ongoing edits and page visits¹¹). Initial findings suggest there are regional clusters based on geographical proximity and already "scripted linkages" as a result of long-standing historical ties. But they also indicate the occurrence of multiple "unscripted linkages" to geographically distant parts of the world that are not yet part of a familiar narrative, but which may nevertheless resonate by way of analogy with local memories to form de-territorialized mnemo-regions. In the ongoing production of new articles, articulation is thus facilitated, on the one hand, by the affordances of the medium and, on the other hand, by the commitment of local editors to pay attention to particular topics, often using existing articles in another language which they translate and, where relevant, adapt. Conversely, local events can be brought to the attention of an international public by producing articles in English, hence creating

¹⁰The data relating to Wikipedia presented here was first collected in 2014 and updated in 2019.

¹¹Average page visits can be calculated through Wikipedia's own tool: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Pageview_statistics.

the conditions for them to be linked by way of analogy to resonant events elsewhere.

The distribution of articles dealing with the 1972 Bloody Sunday killing of demonstrators in Northern Ireland can be used to illustrate these patterns of convergence and divergence (Ackermans and Rigney 2015).¹² By 2019, this atrocity had generated acts of hetero-remembrance in 45 languages. These included the languages of the Celtic fringe (Welsh, Galego, Basque, Breton, Irish), an interest that is not surprising in view of “scripted linkages” between these minority groups. But it also included a significant number of articles in Middle Eastern and Asian languages, some of which were direct translations from English, others original articles or hybrids combining translation with new text. A detailed analysis of 20 of these 45 articles, which I conducted with Hannah Ackermans, showed a considerable overlap between the content to which people in different linguistic communities were exposed. The most obvious point of convergence, besides the basic information about the transformation of a demonstration into a site of killing in Derry in 1972, is the tendency for articles to present a list of the victims, including their age (and, depending on the length of the article, some biographical information). While the number and nature of the images varies quite a bit across the articles (6 articles have none), there is also a notable convergence on three images in particular, all of which have to do with the dead demonstrators: a memorial naming the victims (20 articles), a mural showing their faces (15 articles), an installation of fourteen crosses representing each of the victims (14 articles). Alongside these points of convergence, there is also evidence of indigenization, to recall Ramazani, where receiving cultures appropriate and transform content in particular ways.¹³

¹²I am happy to acknowledge here the invaluable contribution of Hannah Ackermans to this section on Bloody Sunday on Wikipedia; in 2014 she collected and compared the different Wikipedia entries then available, providing me with the basic data used here (which I then updated in 2019); see Ackermans and Rigney (2015). At a later stage, Thomas Smits also helped regarding the images used in Wikipedia and how to track them.

¹³Pentzold et al. (2017) illustrate how Wikipedia’s neutrality is continuously under pressure from divergent interests and value systems. They point out with reference to bull-fighting that variation between articles can also be linked to ideological positions, with the Spanish article downplaying controversy, the English one drawing more attention to debates about cruelty, and the French one pointing out that bull-fighting is not an exclusively Spanish phenomenon.

To begin with, there is considerable variation in the length of the different articles, ranging from 6000 words in English, to 2879 in French, 2775 in Spanish, 1647 in German, 841 in Turkish, 500 in Malay, and fewer than 200 in Norwegian. This variation indicates that the salience of the topic for particular groups is not necessarily a function of geographical distance or proximity. Apparently, other historical factors make certain groups more receptive than others to particular topics. In addition, a variation in the emotive distance to the events depicted can be noted. One might expect that the geographically closer one gets to the controversy the greater would be the degree of controversy. While it is true that the English-language site indicates a high level of activity around certain issues, the end result, in keeping with Wikipedia's governance model, is that the English-language article is neutral in tone and technical in its register, with evaluative and emotive terms avoided. In contrast (and in keeping with Rogers' findings on Srebrenica), the Dutch and Swedish articles are more emotive in their use of words like "bloodbath" (bloedbad [Dutch]), and "massacre" (massaker [Swedish]), and more insistent in their emphasis on the peaceful character of the demonstration, hence amplifying the unlawfulness of the shooting. This more judgmental engagement with the past indicates the existence of an affective geography that does not neatly coincide with physical distance.

One of the regular features of Wikipedia articles on historical events is the inclusion of links to related art works or works of popular culture. Exemplifying Jenkins' claim about the internet being at the heart of trans-medial convergence, the platform works as a relay station between different media and practices of cultural memory (the remediation on Wikipedia of images of the Bloody Sunday memorial and other forms of memorialization already illustrates this basic principle). Comparison between the various articles on Bloody Sunday shows a strong continuity in the links made to the arts, with reference to Greengrass' movie and to the internationally known U2 song *Sunday, Bloody Sunday* occurring in almost all the articles. Their presence reinforces the point made earlier about the role of the arts as mediators between different mnemonic communities since they are presumed to provide a self-evident point of reference and a point of interest for Wikipedia users. Interestingly, several articles also include links to the works of local artists and their acts of hetero-remembrance, with the French and Swedish articles, for example, including invocations of Bloody Sunday on the part of local rap artists. Reflecting a similar "domestication" of the topic, the German article ends with a reference to the fact that

the Joseph Beuys prize was awarded in 2010 to a group of artists from Derry. This combination of transnational and local links is replicated in the list of sources where the BBC is regularly found side by side with journalism in the local language of the article.

Another key affordance of the Wikipedia format is the section “categories” which allows the article to articulate its topic to analogous events in the memory culture of the target language. The use of this feature differs quite widely across the articles which each use different categories to link Bloody Sunday to wider historical developments and to frame it as one sort of event rather than another. The Italian article, for example, categorizes the event under the label “state terrorism” and when one clicks through to this category, one finds the Irish Bloody Sunday aligned with the Italian “Anni di piombo” and terrorism in Italy. In the French case, in contrast, we find the category “massacres in the United Kingdom” which then brings us by two degrees of separation to the massacre of Algerian demonstrators in Paris in 1961. Similarly, the German article brings us through the category of “massacre” to Srebrenica and Amritsar. In a comparable way, but now using the “disambiguation” feature of the Wikipedia template, the Turkish article leads us back to other Bloody Sundays, including the 1969 one in Beyazit Square in Istanbul. Finally, in the English article, the disambiguation feature of the basic search term “Bloody Sunday” (1972) shows that this memory site, so central to Irish memory culture, was just one of a series of Bloody Sundays that took place across the world in the last century (see also Rigney 2016).

In these multiple ways, Wikipedia’s technological affordances and textual template have intensified the work of articulation that, as I showed earlier, has long been a part of modern memory culture. It generates new and sometimes unexpected links between hitherto dispersed events and lays the basis for new acts of affiliation based on analogy and the comparison between histories. Clearly there is huge potential here for the postnational expansion of memory.

This of course begs the question if and how users realize this potential for articulation. Do people pursue links because they are open to engaging with new stories? Does the Wikipedia interface in itself generate new forms of engagement? Or does it, conversely, merely constitute a huge archive whose activation as “working memory” (Assmann 1999) will depend on the contingencies of reception and of resonance with the narratives already familiar to users? In contrast to the examples given earlier in this essay, Wikipedia does not itself take the form of an experiential narrative capable

of generating interest in its own right. This means that understanding its impact in connecting up different mnemonic communities will entail studying the interplay between offline and online memory practices, and between encyclopedic and imaginative forms of engagement with the past as these continue to shape our subjectivities.

CONCLUSION

I have highlighted the role played by the media, both traditional and digital ones, in “articulating” memories. My examples have shown how mediation establishes virtual connections between “strangers” in such a way as to create virtual mnemo-regions outside traditional frameworks tied to particular territories. They indicate the existence of an emergent mnemotopography which is much more complex than “flat world” models of memory; more complex, not in the least because it demonstrates that memory does not travel evenly across the globe. Even in the case of a multilingual and globally extended platform like Wikipedia, with an extraordinary range and reach, information is channeled selectively, adapted, and indigenized. This is not necessarily a bad thing, however, as long as people continue to actively seek out their blind spots, as citizens and as memory scholars. It is true that mediation often serves to reinforce inherited identities and, in the age of social media, to create echo chambers of the like-minded. However, it is equally true that telling stories, be this in encyclopedic or in experiential form, and inviting subjects to engage actively with them, also helps bring new social relations into being. The ongoing work of articulation, as I’ve described it here, creates new possibilities for people to relate to those whom they have hitherto considered “strangers”, or not considered at all.

In the third decade of the twenty-first century, we need to take this particular role of mediation fully into account in our studies of memory; not just because of its inherent interest, but also because it opens up new perspectives on the capacity of memory cultures to regenerate and to “reinvent” themselves. Changing stories is vitally important in a world where we are increasingly being called upon to learn to live with strangers, migrate into “other pasts” (Huyssen 2003), and take responsibility for the implications of our actions at the other ends of the world. More detailed research is needed into both what enables and what hinders mnemonic articulation as a critical counterpart to the assumption that social frameworks and memories have been fixed once and for all.

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