Introduction

Memory Practices and History Education

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This special issue of the *Journal of Educational Media, Memory and Society* explores memory practices and history education. The first point of departure for the texts collated here is that *memory* (whichever concept we use from the current range including collective memory, cultural memory, social memory, connected memory, prosthetic memory, multi-directional memory, travelling memory and entangled memory) is a site of political contestation, subject formation, power struggle, knowledge production, and community-building. Our second point of departure is that history education is a site where teachers and pupils as members of distinct generations engage with textbooks and other materials as specific forms of memory texts that guide what should be passed on to the younger generation. As editors, we solicited papers that investigate how what counts as “worth remembering” in a given context is reproduced, negotiated and/or interrupted in classrooms and other educational practices. This introduction aims to sketch the overarching understanding of memory practices which guide the contributions, to point to the purchase of attending explicitly to the “doing” of memory, to highlight the difference between our approach to history education and approaches focusing on historical thinking, and to introduce the six articles.

Our first point of departure thus orients to memory studies: the term “memory practices” has an undeniable currency in the field today. While most authors emphasize memory’s social constitution, they differ quite significantly in what they make the term do. For William Hirst and David Manier “memory practices” are “shaped by social forces.”¹ Astrid Erll defines “mnemonic practices” as one of five dynamics of travelling memory.² Jeffrey Olick and Joyce Robbins refer to “distinct sets of mnemonic practices in various social sites” to disturb the notion of “collective memory as a thing.”³ Alison Landsberg’s work on prosthetic memory explores historical moments in which “memorial practices assumed broad significance.”⁴ For Geoffrey Bowker, “acts of committing to record (such as writing a scientific paper)” are embedded in a range of technical, formal, and social practices that he defines as memory practices.⁵ Marita Sturken is concerned that the political dimension of early memory research has been lost as memory studies has become formalised as a recognizable academic field. She suggests that the “concept of memory practices allows

for an emphasis on the politics of memory, precisely because of the ways in which the production and construction of memory through cultural practices has as its foundation the notion that memories are part of a larger process of cultural negotiation.”⁶

At the same time, recent work has stressed the importance of materiality and media in remembrance practices.⁷ Andrew Hoskins, for instance, in his work on mediated memory in times of “post-scarcity culture,” argues that today’s digital networked connectivity has shifted the workings of memory.⁸ José van Dijck identifies algorithms and protocols which are entangled in shaping contemporary online visual cultural memory.⁹ Laura Basu engages with ways in which the complex relations of temporality, mediality and power constitute memories and group identities in social media.¹⁰ Scholars such as Michalis Kontopodis and Lila Rosén Rasmussen have pointed to the material-semiotic or material-sensuous dimensions of enacting memory in educational practice.¹¹ These studies remind us of how performativity is closely intertwined with power relations, with guarding particular memories, contesting some accounts, and forgetting others. Performativity highlights the multiplicity of decidedly political memories, of genocide, slavery, colonialism, race, and trauma, which as Michael Rothberg has argued, may not be in conflict with one another, but which are certainly interacting with one another in unpredictable and productive ways.¹²

Thus, an orientation to the doing of memory on the one hand, and to the materiality and mediality of memory on the other, is clearly emerging in memory studies, traceable in a number of recent studies engaging with the (material) doing of memory in a more sustained way.¹³ Although memory scholarship has retained a strong interest in “institutional collective memory objects”¹⁴ such as memorials, films, digital media content or textbooks, in-depth studies attending to how people actually *use* the past, “live” and in-situ, in naturalistic, everyday settings are slowly becoming more visible, that is, studies that attend to what we understand as memory practices.

This work in memory studies, then, marks one salient touchstone for the authors in this special issue. Each contribution adopts a slightly different approach to memory practices: Meenakshi Chhabra and Alexandra Binnenkade begin the issue with broad epistemological and methodological reflections. The empirical accounts by Lisa Krieg and Johanna Ahlrichs and colleagues draw on sociological practice theory. Susan Hogervost adopts a process-oriented understanding of historical culture and memory culture. Teresa Oteíza, Rodrigo Henríquez, and Claudio Pinuer present a socio-semiotic approach to the language practices in history teaching. Binding these contributions together is an interest in exploring *the doing of memory* as a complex phenomenon which involves many (human, discursive, material, entangled) agencies; which emerges

through small, everyday interactions; yet which also develops, shifts, reproduces, sticks or unsettles major political configurations. By orienting to doings, the contributions point to the complexities, ambivalences and/or productively non-coherent memory practices in their specific cases.

Our second point of departure lies in research on history education. There is an impressive body of literature that describes practices in the history classroom. Most studies are primarily interested in history teaching as such. Typically, they ask what pupils and teachers do, when they engage in historical thinking¹⁵ or in historical reasoning.¹⁶ Hence, they investigate pupils' understanding of what are perceived to be central concepts, such as, for example time, change, perspective, significance or evidence,¹⁷ they explore the ways pupils deal with sources;¹⁸ they try to disentangle the complex act of historical thinking into single components;¹⁹ or they look into the types of historical consciousness displayed by pupils.²⁰ As a rule, researchers contributing to this strand of literature pay special attention to the impact teaching and certain methods of teaching have on the way pupils' understandings of historical concepts and their strategies in dealing with historical sources or narrations change over time. Ultimately, this kind of research aims to answer the very important question of which type of teaching and which type of teacher contributes most efficiently to the development of historical thinking or related skills and competences.²¹ As this brief overview illustrates, although the final goal remains to gauge the potential impact of teaching on learning, these studies demonstrate a contemporary shift away from measurable outcomes, competencies and effects. Instead, researchers are increasingly orienting to empirical observations of the processes and practices of historical learning.²²

Despite sharing this orientation to practices in the history classroom, the papers collated in this volume pursue a slightly different agenda. Whereas the literature discussed above investigates practices *of* history education we explore *memory* practices *in* history education. The main focus is on memory practices; history education comes into play (only) as a field or a setting in which these memory practices can be observed. The contributors' interest in this field or setting stems not from a primary interest in teaching and education but from our observation of its social relevance for the dynamics of memory and the advantages it offers to the observation of memory practices.

First, it is in formal and informal education that educators and pupils as members of different generations interact with one another. A good deal of research on the dynamics of remembering emphasizes the significance of generational change.²³ Since different generations generally grow up with different types of media, the increased attention paid to the role of media in processes of remembering also entails an interest in generations. Second, teachers and pupils interact with one another over

a protracted period of time. As a result, educational sites are well placed to generate thick, longitudinal observational data. Third, educational settings are connected to their social environment in several important ways. Three sets of actors meet who are equally socially embedded, who are entangled in structural ambivalences, and whose actions are thus almost unavoidably unpredictable. History textbooks are mass media for the dissemination of officially approved images of history *and*, at the same time, mirrors of societal controversies surrounding sensitive issues;²⁴ history teachers are members of a state elite specialised in conveying official interpretations, *while*, at the same time, each teacher carries a unique autobiographical memory;²⁵ pupils are future citizens who are supposed to adopt officially sanctioned knowledge *and* also offspring of families and social milieus with their own potentially diverging memories.²⁶

In the light of these observations on its social relevance and structural ambivalence, the interactive space of the classroom constitutes an exciting research subject for all those who are interested in memory as a set of contingent and unpredictable practices. In addition, by approaching history education in general, and the history classroom in particular, from a perspective informed by memory theory, the contributions to this special issue present a novel perspective on history teaching and learning.

To engage with complex memory practices in educational practice today, this special issue has brought together a theoretically, methodologically, thematically, and geographically diverse set of authors. We hope that bringing this range of approaches together sets in motion a rich conversation among scholars who adopt a sensibility to the doing of memory in educational settings in order to both shed new light on the central issues facing memory studies (for example, violent pasts, traumatic pasts, emotions), and also to bring new issues to more prominence in the field (for example, the micropolitics of everyday practices).

The first two articles offer epistemological and methodological reflections:

Meenakshi Chhabra reflects on the conditions that have to be met in order to allow for a change of hegemonic memories on communal violence. Taking the example of partition between India and Pakistan in 1947, she looks into the intimate and, at the same time, ambivalent link between narratives of remembering and identities. Reflecting on memory practices enacted in the private setting of her own family, in the third space of Indians and Pakistanis meeting during dialogue workshops in the USA and in the Indian classroom in the aftermath of a curriculum change, she shows how narratives on significant historical events and images of self and other interact with one another. According to her personal experience and the observations she made, awareness of cultural similarities facilitated by interaction in a third space can generate first, the readiness to listen to the stories of the other; second, the need to

rethink a rigid division between us and them; and third, a destabilization of hegemonic narratives. At the same time, her findings demonstrate that the exposure to new narratives alone will not result in sustainable change unless the underlying issues of identity constructions are also tackled.

Second, Alexandra Binnenkade picks up epistemological reflections and turns to the methodological implications of empirical work on memory practices. She presents the “discursive node” as an agile concept which enables a particular approach to empirical field work. It conceptualizes memory practices such as teaching as nodes of entangled discursive strands. Some of these strands lead into the classroom as different ways of knowing about the past; the node metaphor increases the visibility of the multiple, external memory practices a teacher and a class merge into new meaning. At the same time, some strands can also be traced out of the classroom into broader social contexts, and thus the metaphor sheds light on the fact that micro classroom practices interact with and, occasionally, alter hegemonic narratives. Discursive nodes invite not only talk and human exchange into the mix, but also add material and non-human agency. They work on different analytical levels, yet have the potential to capture overflows from one level to another, and, most of all, they foreground connections as the main structure of memory practices.

The final four articles take a more grounded empirical approach, focusing on four different aspects of memory practices. Drawing on the insight from sociosemiotics that language use creates meanings and, to a certain extent, codifies socio-political experience, Teresa Oteíza, Rodrigo Henriquez, and Claudio Pinuer analyse class interactions in history lessons in Chile. They ask how historical memories of the human rights violations committed during Pinochet’s dictatorship are dealt with in Chilean public schools. Using the concepts of semantic density and semantic gravity, Oteíza and colleagues are able to show how specific instances of teacher talk work up or down the conceptual complexity of this difficult past, and how the level of linguistic complexity and the intensity of an ethical orientation is intimately interwoven with officially legitimated discourses and/or opens space for counter memories.

Susan Hogervorst attends to a broad range of media in her diachronic analysis on how the practices of remembering the Rotterdam bombardment have shifted in local cultural memory and education since the 1980s. Taking a close look at three local educational projects about the Nazi bombing of Rotterdam in May 1940, she argues that the changes over the years demonstrate a process of pedagogization of memory: as eyewitnesses are no longer available, objects and technological tools (such as candles, smartphones, ceramic dolls, tablet computers, and the built environment) take on a more salient role in remembering. Intriguingly, Hogervorst notes that even though recent projects use technological tools

which are widely thought to enhance personalized and individualized engagement with the past, no particular personal or emotional engagement is foregrounded in the projects' approaches.

Johanna Ahlrichs et al. investigate memory practices in the classroom from two different angles. On the one hand, they explore these practices as material semiotic ones paying special attention to the question of how ways of remembering relate to the use of things like paper, whiteboard, textbook, and digital media as well as to the doing of things like reading texts, visualizing text in a diagram or talking in the classroom. On the other hand, they focus on the political aspect of making the past present in the classroom by discussing instances in which hegemonic discourses together with the categorizations and common sense assumptions associated with them are either reproduced or destabilized or interrupted. Memory practices, the article argues, are two things at the same time: since they are entangled with the not always intentional choice of media and material as well as by the logics of doing things they are never fully controlled by human actors. Since they contribute to the reproduction or disruption of hegemonies, they are always political.

Looking at Holocaust education in two different settings, in a memorial site as well as in the history classroom, Lisa Krieg has not only chosen a core topic in memory studies, but in exploring the emotional ideologies articulated by museum guides, students, and their teacher, she provides empirical answers to the debate on emotions in the age of post-memory. To date, this debate is still held mainly on a normative level and is, moreover, caught in binary oppositions between those who equate emotional approaches to the Holocaust with the imposition of ready-made and therefore empty moral reasoning and those who stress the importance of emotional identification in learning processes. Through ethnographic fieldwork, Krieg, however, shows that the memory practices we can empirically observe are much more ambivalent and complex than the normative preferences expressed by experts with opposing viewpoints. In their memory practices, students as well as museum guides and teachers constantly muddy the alleged distinction between emotion and rationality.

As editors, we are delighted to bring these articles which take a practice-oriented approach to the doing of memory into conversation with one another through this special issue. Each article, adopting its own conceptual approach, points to specific continuities, specific changes, and specific non-coherences relevant to its own case. This mix of indeterminate, situated (micro-)practices, which, in each case, have very significant political and ethical resonances with broader issues, is what makes up the doing of memory, not only in educational settings but also, we suggest, in many other settings and sites across our contemporary world.

Notes

1. William Hirst and David Manier, "Towards a Psychology of Collective Memory," *Memory* 16, no. 3 (2008): 186.
2. Astrid Erll, "Travelling Memory," *Parallax. Special Issue Transcultural Memory* 17, no. 4 (2011): 13.
3. Jeffrey Olick and Joyce Robbins, "Social Memory Studies: From 'Collective Memory' to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices," *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 112.
4. Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 3.
5. Geoffrey Bowker, *Memory Practices in the Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 7.
6. Marita Sturken, "Memory, Consumerism and Media: Reflections on the Emergence of the Field," *Memory Studies* 1, no. 1 (2008): 74.
7. For instance, Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, eds., *Medien des kollektiven Gedächtnisses: Konstruktivität, Historizität, Kulturspezifität* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004); Ann Rigney and Astrid Erll, eds., *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009); Motti Neiger, Oren Meyers and Eyal Zandberg, eds., *On Media Memory: Collective Memory in a New Media Age* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Katrina Schlunke, "Memory and Materiality," *Memory Studies* 6, no. 3 (2013), 253–261.
8. Andrew Hoskins, "Media, Memory, Metaphor: Remembering and the Connective Turn," *Parallax* 17, no. 4 (2011), 19–31.
9. José van Dijck, *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age: Cultural Memory in the Present* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007); "Flickr and the Culture of Connectivity: Sharing Views, Experiences, Memories," *Memory Studies* 4, no. 4 (2011), 401–415. See also Katarina Sluis, "Algorithmic Memory? Machinic Vision and Database Culture," in *New Media and the Politics of Online Communities*, ed. Aris Mousoutzanis and Daniel Riha (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2010), 227–235; Ori Schwarz, "The Past Next Door: Neighbourly Relations with Digital Memory-Artefacts," *Memory Studies* 7, no. 1 (2014), 7–21.
10. Laura Basu, "Memory Dispositifs and National Identities: The Case of Ned Kelly," *Memory Studies* 4, no. 1 (2011), 33–41.
11. Lisa Rosén Rasmussen, "Touching Materiality: Presenting the Past of Everyday School Life," *Memory Studies* 5, no. 2 (2012), 114–130; Michalis Kontopodis, "Documents' Memories: Enacting Pasts and Futures at the School for Individual Learning-in-Practice," *Memory Studies* 2, no. 1 (2009), 11–26.
12. Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009). See also Larry J. Griffin and Kenneth A. Bollen, "What Do These Memories Do? Civil Rights Remembrance and Racial Attitudes," *American Sociological Review* 74, no. 4 (2009), 594–614; Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz, eds., *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010).

13. Javier Auyero, "The Judge, the Cop, and the Queen of Carnival: Ethnography, Storytelling, and the (Contested) Meanings of Protest," *Theory and Society* 31 (2002), 151–187; Marketa Spiritova, "Performing Memories. Erinnerungspraktiken Zwischen Geschichtspolitik Und Populärkultur Am Beispiel Tschechiens," *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 110, no. 1 (2014), 91–111; Heidi Grunebaum, *Memorialising the Past* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2011); Laura Aguiar, "Back to Those Walls: The Women's Memory of the Maze and Long Kesh Prison in Northern Ireland," *Memory Studies* 8, no. 2 (2015), 227–241.
14. Aaron Beim, "The Cognitive Aspects of Collective Memory," *Symbolic Interaction* 30, no. 1 (2007), 8.
15. Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).
16. Janet Van Drie, Jannet and Carla Van Boxtel, "Historical Reasoning: Towards a Framework for Analyzing Students' Reasoning about the Past," *Educational Psychological Review* 20, no. 2 (2008), 87–110.
17. Peter Seixas, "Historical consciousness: The progress of knowledge in a post-progressive age," in *Narration, identity and historical consciousness*, ed. Jürgen Straub (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006), 141–162; James Voss, Jennifer Wiley and Joel Kennet, "Student Perceptions of History and Historical Concepts," in *International Review of History Education*, vol. 2, Learning and Reasoning in History, ed. James Voss and Mario Carretero (Portland: Woburn Press, 1998), 307–330.
18. Samuel Wineburg, "Historical Problem Solving: A Study of Cognitive Processes Used in the Evaluation of Documentary and Pictorial Evidence," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 83, no. 1 (1991), 73–87.
19. Barton and Levstik, *Teaching History*; Carlos Kölbl, „Zum Nutzen der Dokumentarischen Methode für die Hypothesen und Theoriebildung in der Geschichtsbewusstseinsforschung," in *Geschichtsdidaktik empirisch. Untersuchungen zum historischen Denken und Lernen*, ed. Hilke Günther-Arndt and Michael Sauer (Münster: Lit-Verlag, 2006), 29–48.
20. Seixas „Historical consciousness"; Kölbl, „Zum Nutzen Der Dokumentarischen Methode."
21. Van Drie and Boxtel, "Historical Reasoning."
22. For an overview, see Keith Barton and Linda Levstik, *Teaching History for the Common Good* (London: Routledge, 2009); Peter Gautschi, *Guter Geschichtsunterricht. Grundlagen, Erkenntnisse, Hinweise* (Schwalbach: Wochenschau Verlag, 2009); Hilke Günther-Arndt and Michael Sauer, "Empirische Forschung In Der Geschichtsdidaktik. Fragestellungen, Methoden, Erträge," in *Geschichtsdidaktik Empirisch. Untersuchungen zum historischen Denken und Lernen*, ed. Hilke Günther-Arndt and Michael Sauer (Münster: Lit-Verlag, 2006), 7–28.
23. Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
24. Eleftherios Klerides, "Imagining the Textbook: Textbooks as Discourse and Genre," *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society* 2, no. 1 (2010), 31–54; Felicitas Macgilchrist, "Geschichte und Dissens: Diskursives Ringen um Demokratie in der Schulbuchproduktion," in *Erziehungswissenschaftliche Diskursforschung: Empirische Analysen zu Bildungs- und Erziehungsverhältnissen*,

- ed. Susann Fegter et al. (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2015), 193–209.
25. Barbara Christophe, “Verhandlungen über den Sozialismus. Geschichtslehrer als Schnittstelle zwischen Individuellem und kollektivem Gedächtnis,” *Eckert. Beiträge*, no. 1 (2012), <http://www.edumeres.net/urn/urn:nbn:de:0220-2012-00214>; Damira Umetbaeva, “Paradoxes of Hegemonic Discourse in Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan: History Textbooks’ and History Teachers Attitudes Towards the Soviet Past,” *Central Asian Affairs* 2, no. 3 (2015), 287–306.
26. Harald Welzer, Sabine Moller and Karoline Tschuggnall, “Opa War Kein Nazi.” *Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 2002).