INTRODUCTION. ON THE EARLY MODERNITY OF MODERN MEMORY*

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Most scholars who study memory believe that people in different cultures have different ways of remembering. This assumption implies that it should be possible to write a history of memory. Outlines of such a history can be found in various modern theories of memory, which often contain a macro-historical component. Jacques Le Goff distinguished five phases in the history of memory in the West, in which 'free, creative and vital' memory over time became 'exteriorised'.¹ Pierre Nora famously argued that 'milieux de mémoire' had given way to 'lieux de mémoire'.² Aleida and Jan Assmann have connected media revolutions to the emergence of new forms of cultural memory, while students of nationalism like Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm saw the combined forces of literacy, political change, mass media, secularization and capitalism as the motor behind the emergence of new approaches to the past.³ Increasingly, memory theories also have a 'futurist' component—it is alleged that postmodernity, globalization and/or the information revolution are creating changes that might lead to a new transformation of memory as we know it.⁴

However varied such macro-historical narratives may be, they also have a great deal in common. First, they are relentlessly linear in their approach

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¹ Jacques Le Goff, *Histoire et mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988).

² Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History. Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations* 26 (1989), 7–24.

³ Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1999); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities. Reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780. Programme, myth, reality* (1990; 2nd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁴ See e.g. Elena Esposito, *Soziales Vergessen. Formen und Medien des Gedächtnisses der Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002); Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, 'Social memory studies. From "collective memory" to the historical sociology of mnemonic practices', *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998), 105–140.

and work from the assumption that when new ways of approaching the past make their appearance, old ways of doing so will be discarded—almost as if there exists a finite capacity for engagement with the past in any one culture. Secondly, they usually posit an evolution of memory and memory practices away from the organic, local, traditional and communal, first towards the hegemonic nationalist memory cultures of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and subsequently towards the hybridity and chaotic individuality of postmodern memory practices. The onset of this process is believed to have been enabled by the emergence of a new historical consciousness, a sense of difference between past and present, which is sometimes defined as a split between memory and history.⁵

Nevertheless, there is little agreement about the timeframe in which this development from pre-modern to modern memory takes place. For Esposito and Le Goff the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are more important than they are for Hobsbawm and Anderson, who see most change happening from around 1800. For Walter Benjamin it was the First World War that produced a great shift, while Nora seems to set the disappearance of the ‘milieux de mémoire’ in the very recent past.⁶ Despite this lack of consensus about the chronology, the sociologist Jeffrey Olick, surely one of the most astute of today’s memory theorists, believes that one can glean from existing studies ‘a fairly clear account of the rise of linear historicity out of the cyclicity of rural living and church eschatology’. He is persuaded by scholars who believe that the state had an important role to play in this process but also sees a role for the interest of ‘publics’ in the post-Renaissance. Moreover, he thinks that ‘a rising sense of individuality’ in the early modern period simultaneously created an awareness that the personal past was something ‘that required preservation and recovery’.⁷ As far as Olick is concerned, a satisfactory paradigm about the history of memory is thus well within reach.

⁵ Matt K. Matsuda, *The memory of the modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 11; Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 39–49; Mattei Calinescu, *Five faces of modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987).

⁶ See for a useful overview of these timeframes Olick and Robbins, ‘Social memory studies’ and Jeffrey K. Olick, *The politics of regret. On collective memory and historical responsibility* (New York: Routledge, 2007), chpt 9; Pierre Nora et al., *Les lieux de mémoire*, Bibliothèque illustrée des histoires (Paris: Gallimard, 1984–1992); on the indistinctiveness of the terms modern and premodern see Penelope Corfield, *Time and the shape of history* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

⁷ Olick, *The politics of regret*, 185–187.

Even so, it is a striking feature of existing histories of memory that they are much better at describing what they consider to be new features of engagement with the past than in specifying what cultures of memory these replaced. In so far as current macro-historical theories consider pre-modern memory in any detail, they usually follow one of two strategies. The first, popular among scholars who work in cultural and literary studies, is to conflate pre-modern mnemonic theory, especially that of the *ars memoriae* first studied by Frances Yates in 1966, with actual memory practices in early modern European societies.⁸ Thus Elena Esposito, for instance, deftly combines the outcome of older research into Ramism and rhetoric, *ars memoriae* and the self, to arrive at a new grand narrative in which theories of intellectual change are soldered together to furnish an explanation of the modernization of memory.⁹

The second strategy is more common among social scientists and modernist historians, and relies for its evidence on grand narratives about other aspects of the coming of modernity, such as the discovery of the self, the rise of the print media and the public sphere, the impact of capitalism, and the emergence of the nation state, which are believed to have been accompanied by a new form of historical consciousness—it is the latter approach that Olick finds so persuasive. Since these narratives are interdependent, they create a plausible impression of coherence. From an early modernist perspective such an approach is, however, intrinsically problematic; early modernists have expressed doubts about the ‘modernity’ of each and every one of these phenomena and are therefore unlikely to accept the existence of the one as evidence for, or cause of, the emergence of the other.¹⁰

Both strategies actually have early modernist roots; they owe a great deal to the seminal work of Reinhardt Koselleck on early modern historical consciousness. Koselleck’s classic essay *Vergangene Zukunft* was first published in German in 1964 and translated into English in 1985 as

⁸ On this strand, see Astrid Erll, *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen* (Stuttgart and Weimar: J.B. Metzler, 2005).

⁹ Esposito, *Soziales Vergessen*.

¹⁰ Excellent summaries of the debates on modern vs. early modern nationalism in Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism* (2001; 2nd ed., Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010); and Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and modernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998); see on the public sphere Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the public sphere* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1992); and on the self Roy Porter (ed.), *Rewriting the self. Histories from the Renaissance to the Present* (London: Routledge, 1997). See also Phil Withington, *Society in early modern England. The vernacular origins of some powerful ideas* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010).

The Future Past.¹¹ As Koselleck saw it, pre-modern historical consciousness could best be understood by considering how it related to the future. In his view pre-modern historical consciousness had two strands. First, there was the eschatological tradition, which approached time mainly as a period of waiting for the second coming of Christ and the end of time. In the course of the seventeenth century such eschatological notions of time lost much of their intellectual appeal. Secondly, there was the classical notion of history as *magistra vitae*, according to which topical knowledge about the past could be reapplied to new historical conditions. Modern historical consciousness, on the other hand, hinges on the perceived difference and distance between past and present, that is, on a sense of anachronism. This also has implications for expectations for the future; modern cultures expect novelty as a matter of course. Koselleck thought this form of consciousness was fundamentally new and had mostly emerged in what he called a *Sattelzeit*, a period of transition, lasting from 1750 to 1850.

Koselleck's essay has been tremendously influential among students of modernity. Yet while his essay was originally a contribution to the history of ideas and philosophy of history, his readers in the social sciences and cultural studies have tended to assume that his findings can be extrapolated to describe all of what we now think of as early modern memory culture. Hence Olick's assumptions about a 'rise of historicity' from the 'cyclicity' of rural living and church eschatology'. And hence also ideas like those of John Gillis who, when outlining a history of national memory in 1994, argued that in the pre-modern period only the elites had need of institutionalised memories; what there was by way of national consciousness in a place like late Tudor England, he believed, 'scarcely penetrated the consciousness of more than a small part of the population. Institutionalised forms of memory were too precious to be wasted on ordinary people',¹² who, in any case, 'felt the past to be so much a part of the present that they perceived no urgent need to record, objectify and preserve it'.¹³

¹¹ R. Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (1964; Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979).

¹² John E. Gillis, 'Memory and identity. The history of a relationship', in John R. Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations. The politics of national identity* (Princeton NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1994) 3–24, there 7.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 6.

To early modernists, such a dismissal is clearly unsatisfactory; an ever-growing number of scholarly studies demonstrates how much richer and more complex were forms of engagement with the past before 1800. At the same time, early modernists have so far not offered anything like an alternative view on what, if anything, might constitute the similarities and differences between early modern and modern memory. This introduction will, first, highlight and summarise what the insights presented in the individual chapters of this volume can contribute to such an alternative view. Yet we also aim to show what the study of early modern memory practices has to offer to the field of memory studies and the history of memory as a whole. We have, therefore, organised the essays consciously around three themes that play a central role in the field of memory studies: the politics of memory, mediality and personal memory. We believe that in each of these areas, early modernists have much to learn from modern memory studies. Yet conversely, we will also argue that early modern practices shed an unexpected light on many scholarly assumptions about the modernity of modern memory.

I. *Memory Politics and Memory Wars*

Most studies of memory politics have concerned themselves with the period after around 1800, when nationalism was in its heyday and traditions were being invented thick and fast. Undeniably this was the era of huge history paintings, of monuments and museums, of national days of commemoration and of state-sponsored history curricula. Using the new mass media ranging from schoolbooks, stamps and street names to film and radio, many states since 1800 have manipulated and controlled versions of the past to suit their own political agendas.¹⁴ In the European states in which this form of memory politics originated, it now seems to be past its prime, although in former Soviet Republics, for instance, states still have a high stake in controlling the past. But governments are not the only agents who deploy memory for political purposes. In most democracies today, many non-state actors are involved in the politics of memory,

¹⁴ Following the influential agendas set by Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; E.J. Hobsbawm and T.O. Ranger (eds.), *The invention of tradition* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983). Ernest Gellner, *Nations and nationalism* (Ithaca N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983); Anderson, *Imagined communities*; Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism*.

to fashion and strengthen identities, to demand a place for memories of particular groups or events in the public domain, and to right past wrongs. These actors, too, of course avail themselves of new mass media.

Yet neither the nation state, nor democracy or mass media are required for memory to become a political issue. In late medieval cities, it was customary, for instance, to commemorate instances of deliverance from danger, or urban victories, with annual processions, which were often accompanied by sermons. Thus the city of Amsterdam instituted an annual procession to commemorate its suppression of an uprising of Anabaptist radicals in 1534.¹⁵ But secular forms of public memory also existed. From 1528, when it was defeated by neighbouring Holland, the city of Utrecht was obliged annually to send a pig to The Hague as a sign of submission; to keep the memory of Utrecht's humiliation alive, the pig was first exposed to the mockery of the crowds in The Hague before being slaughtered.¹⁶ Long before nineteenth century and before the advent of nationalism, memory was already a deeply political matter on all levels of early modern European society.

On the most basic level, this was so because almost all early modern claims to rights or authority were also claims about the past. On the whole, early modern people believed things to be true or legitimate only if they could also be proven to be old. Even when no longer claiming ancient Roman or Trojan ancestry, as had been common in the Middle Ages, princes presented themselves visually, ritually and in texts as the scions of ancient houses and the descendants of valiant and saintly ancestors. In terms of asserting social status, as well as establishing degrees of kinship, a knowledge of lineage was highly desirable. At the top end of society, heralds came to act as arbiters of descent, lineage and nobility, and by the early sixteenth century noble families were likely to use a whole range of media to commemorate their achievements, by having themselves depicted as 'founders' of altars and hospitals or by commissioning chapels, fountains and funerary monuments as well as genealogies, paintings of their ancestors and family chronicles.¹⁷ A craze for medals spread both portraits and memories of memorable political events across Europe along with

¹⁵ Femke Deen, *Moorddam. Publiek debat en propaganda in Amsterdam tijdens de Nederlandse Opstand*, doctoral thesis University of Amsterdam (2012), 41, 81.

¹⁶ J.J. Dodt van Flensburg, *Archief voor kerkelijke en wereldsche geschiedenissen, inzonderheid van Utrecht*, 7 vols. (Utrecht, 1838–1848), vol. 6, 79.

¹⁷ Bernard Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique dans l'Occident médiéval* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1980) chpt. 8; Daniel Woolf, *The social circulation of the past. English historical culture, 1500–1730* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 73–137.

printed accounts of royal weddings and funerals. If early modern rulers often preferred to dress up change as continuity, they could also be innovative in doing so. In late Tudor and early Stuart England, for instance, the authorities used the inclusion of new commemorative events on the calendar, like Accession Day and Guy Fawkes Day, to develop a strong new memory culture around the advent and blessings of Protestant rule.¹⁸ In the wake of the Reformation the Catholic Church buttressed its own historical claims with the latest findings and techniques of philologists and antiquarians.¹⁹

Yet memory politics was never just a matter for princes and churches. Even in small village communities knowledge about the past was of vital political importance. This was true, for instance, when it came to proving local grazing rights on common land, parish boundaries, the level of tithes or the limits to seigneurial power. If they were to stand any chance in courts of law, communities needed to mobilise collective knowledge about the past, and they did so quite effectively.²⁰ In cities corporate groups would back up legal and political claims with references to documents and charters as well as witness statements. How important this documentary evidence could be can be seen in Alexandr Osipian's chapter about the Armenian minority of the city of Lemberg, whose political conflict with the ruling Catholic majority was fought out mainly through medieval charters. In the new political context that emerged with the Polish-Lithuanian Union of 1569, the Armenians quickly seized on the possibility of appealing to charters of medieval Ruthenian princes, which could now legitimately be presented as relevant to the status quo. Yet in retribution, the Catholics seized on the Ruthenian connection to prove that the Armenians had once upon a time collaborated with the Tatar enemies of Poland and were thus old enemies of Lemberg. Several decades passed

¹⁸ David Cressy, *Bonfires and bells. National memory and the Protestant calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989).

¹⁹ Katherine van Liere, Simon Ditchfield and Howard Louthan (eds.), *Sacred history. Uses of the Christian past in the Renaissance World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

²⁰ Andy Wood, 'The place of custom in plebeian political culture: England, 1550–1800', *Social History* 22 (1997) 46–60; Andy Wood, *The politics of social conflict. The peak country, 1520–1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Adam Fox, 'Remembering the past in early modern England. Oral and written tradition', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6th series 9 (1999), 233–256; Ralf-Peter Fuchs, 'Erinnerungsschichten: zur Bedeutung der Vergangenheit für den "gemeinen Mann" der Frühen Neuzeit' in R.P. Fuchs and W. Schulze (eds.), *Wahrheit, Wissen, Erinnerung. Zeugenverhörprotokolle als Quellen für soziale Wissensbestände in der frühen Neuzeit* (Münster: Lit, 2002).

before the Armenians found a suitably documented alternative to salvage their rights. The Lemberg case teaches us that pre-modern views of the past were rarely static; in fact, precisely when the past is politically authoritative, it falls subject to constant reinvention.

In early modern Europe not only legal and political but moral claims as well had to be upheld with references to the past. Protestant and Catholic theologians battled out their differences over issues like the customs of the early Christians, to which Protestants claimed to be 'returning'.²¹ But the more recent past could also become highly contentious. Jasper van der Steen's chapter shows that very soon after the Reformed church of the Dutch Republic began to divide over the theological issue of predestination in the early seventeenth century, the contestants in this quarrel started to support their truth claims with reference to events of the Dutch Revolt of the 1570s and '80s, appealing as a precedent for correct religious thought to the views of its leader, William of Orange, who had been murdered in 1584. By the time the orthodox wing of the Reformed church could declare victory, in 1618–19, the conflict had generated a new tradition in Dutch politics in which references to the Revolt were used as a benchmark, not only when talking about the Spanish enemy but also in internal political polemics. A century later, as Ulrich Niggemann shows, it was no different in England, when the newly emerging Whig and Tory parties quarrelled about the true nature of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, not only with a view to appropriating its legacy but also to defining the nature of legitimate politics. In the process, the fact that both sides used the Revolution as their frame of reference promoted the acceptance of the Revolution settlement itself. Like Van der Steen, Niggemann thus shows the importance of conflicts and memory wars for establishing the status of an event in a 'canon' of the collective past.

Implicitly, Niggemann and Van der Steen's chapters also bear out an interesting point made by Sean Dunwoody, who argues in his chapter about the 'Calendar War' in sixteenth-century Augsburg that while memories of a local 1584 uprising became immensely contested, the coexistence of different versions of the past also helped to keep the peace. Even though Augsburg's authorities had felt very much threatened by the rebels' religious reading of what the magistrates insisted had been a simple political measure, the social structure of sixteenth-century Augsburg also

²¹ Van Liere, Ditchfield and Louthan (eds), *Sacred History*; Bruce Gordon (ed.), *Protestant history and identity in sixteenth-century Europe*, 2 vols. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998).

accommodated the existence of counter-memories among a minority within the city. Early modern authorities might go a long way in trying to propagandise and assert their version of past events, yet even in the densely governed early modern city there were very clear limits to the ability of rulers to control memories.²² In practice early modern power was never absolute. Even when ruling elites used gruesome levels of violence to eradicate rebellion, as in the 1514 peasant rebellion in Hungary analysed in Gabriella Erdélyi's chapter, rebel memories resurfaced in the public domain to coexist with the graphic memories of noble violence against the peasant rebels.

It is precisely because memory was politically so important and potentially explosive that many pre-modern societies also experimented with acts of oblivion. Formal agreements to forget the past were a frequently used political instrument until well into the nineteenth century, especially after civil wars. As late as 1946, Winston Churchill invoked Gladstone's proposal to have an 'act of oblivion' for Ireland and suggested that something of its kind was necessary if postwar Europe was not to descend into war again. As Ross Poole has pointed out in a 2009 article, such acts of oblivion seem a rather problematic political instrument. First there is the practical problem of how one can police such injunctions to forget. Secondly, their legal application contains a paradox. After all, to assess whether something can or cannot fall within the meaning of the act, a legal system has to have knowledge of the things that it is supposed to forget. So what did such acts actually try to achieve? Poole's analysis offers a persuasive answer. The point was less to prevent people from knowing about the past than to demand that they not act upon that knowledge. Memory, as Poole sees it, is knowledge with implications for the present that offers an agenda, even an imperative, to act. Acts of oblivion deny past events as legitimate reasons for action in the present and isolate them as being *of the past*.²³

It is in this vein, certainly, that oblivion seems to have been implemented after the French Wars of Religion. The policy of *oubli* that was legally imposed in the 1598 Edict of Nantes seems to have worked well

²² See for a nice example also Jelle Haemers, 'Geletterd verzet, diplomatiek, politiek en herinneringscultuur van opstandelingen in de laatmiddeleeuwse en vroegmoderne stad (casus: Brugge en Gent)', *Bulletin de la Commission Royale d'Histoire* 176 (2001) 5–54.

²³ Paul Connerton, 'Seven types of forgetting', *Memory Studies* 1 (2008) 59–71; Ross Poole 'Enacting oblivion', *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 22 (2009) 149–157, there 149–153.

in the sense that conflicts about the past could not become a trigger for new rounds of violence. But as Philip Benedict shows in his chapter, the two parties to the conflict who had not been decisively defeated could nevertheless develop and sustain a polarised historical view of events throughout the seventeenth century; only the defeated supporters of the Holy League did not succeed in commemorating their version of events. Instead the winners ended up representing the religious motives of the defeated League as a disguise for self-serving noble ambitions, a view with which all in seventeenth-century France could painlessly agree.

The politics of memory in early modern Europe were 'early modern' in the sense that the past as a ground for moral and political legitimacy was more or less uncontested; challenges to authority had to be made through a reinvention of the past. Yet in other respects the memory politics of early modern Europe were much more modern than is often acknowledged. They were the elaborate, ubiquitous, and highly flexible product of many agents and enjoyed importance on all levels of society. The political importance of particular memories might be limited to the local or regional levels, to a corporation or a minority, but there are also many examples of powerful 'national' memory cultures emerging, with or without central state intervention. And as we will see below, memory cultures could also come to include the politics of victimhood.

II. *Mediality*

The spread of mass media has in many ways transformed the nature of memory. It is undeniable that over the last two centuries it has become possible to reach many more people at once, through print, radio and film, through schoolbooks and television programmes, and not least through the internet. Yet what qualitative implications does this media profusion have for the practice of memory?

One of the most striking aspects of early modern local memory is that it was, or could be, a truly multimedia affair. The studies in this volume draw our attention to the vast range of media, objects and spaces that could be used as carriers of memory, ranging from a half-burnt rudder and a piece of peat in Marianne Eekhout's study of the commemoration of the capture of Breda in 1590 to the eighteenth-century Irish mummery plays evoking Oliver Cromwell which are described by Sarah Covington. Local authorities were often prime initiators or at least sponsors of the annual commemorations of great victories and instances of deliverance and of

the appearance of inscriptions and monuments in public places. Yet there were many other stakeholders in the perpetuation of memories.

Marianne Eekhout's chapter shows that soldiers and officers did much to spread memories of Breda's relief in 1590 across the Dutch Republic; the medals and other commemorative objects that were awarded to combatants were passed down through generations and remediated, for instance in portraits. The Gaelic population of Ireland, often illiterate, did not lack the means or the media to commemorate the evil days of Oliver Cromwell. Covington draws attention to their use of the Irish landscape as a site of memories, evoking not only displacement and dispossession but also resistance; rocks had rescued people and ravines had sent enemies to their death. And it was not just warfare that was commemorated. Jasmine Kilburn-Toppin shows how the medieval *memoria* tradition of London crafts guilds continued to thrive even after the Reformation had put an end to the guild's intercessory role for the souls of its deceased members. London craftsmen continued to ensure that they would be remembered for their skills and craftsmanship by presenting guild halls with specimens of their crafts or tools of their trade, while many others also preserved the memory of their membership by gifting objects for use in guild rituals. The guild halls thus became repositories of memories of individual members as well as the collective skills and history of the guild.

When we add up the evidence of ballads and medals, plays and gable stones, stained glass and sermons, rocks and ruins, street names and processions, not to mention family tales and rituals, it seems clear that on a local level early modern memories could be as ubiquitous and pervasive as they are at any time in the twenty-first century. This phenomenon was never just the result of one-way traffic; many agents were involved in the shaping and transmission of early modern communal memories. When we look carefully, we can see that many such memories resemble each other; many early modern memories seem to fit familiar narrative schemes. They have quite similar heroes and villains and may follow Biblical patterns or folkloric motifs. In her chapter, Erika Kuijpers highlights that whereas early printed histories of the Dutch Revolt privileged narratives of victimhood and self-sacrifice, in the stories which were passed on orally there was far more space for the picaresque, acts of violence, laughter and cunning. Covington notes that tales about Cromwell and his men were premediated by tales of earlier episodes of sacrilege and destruction. The same was true for the martyrologies discussed by Dagmar Freist in her article. The narratives of early modern martyrs could be authentic while at the same time being each other's spitting image.

When we started work on memory, we were inclined to think of this pre- and remediation of memory as an early modern phenomenon, which fitted the anachronistic mind-set of pre-modern people. Yet among students of modern memory there has also been much interest recently in the pre- and remediation of memories. When modern people remember, too, their memories are often shaped by existing images and narratives. Thus, it seems that when British soldiers described their experiences in the First World War, they frequently did so in imagery that they borrowed from John Bunyan's Valley of the Shadow of Death. People in the French Cevennes modelled memories of World War II on older tales about the Calvinist resistance to the French State in the late seventeenth century, which, in turn, echoed the Biblical plight of the Jews in Egypt. Film and television have an enormous power to shape memories, but in doing so, they tend to invoke existing imagery, some of it surprisingly old. Astrid Erll gives the example of the iconic image by Richard Drew of the man falling from the Twin Towers on 9/11 and argues that this image attained iconic status because of the abundant pre-existing notions about falling angels and the fall of man.²⁴ Modernity has thus not put an end to the pre-modern cultural habitus of describing new things with reference to past examples.

In an influential 2009 book Michael Rothberg coined the term 'multidirectional memory' to describe the way in which memories of slavery and the Holocaust have affected one another. He shows how many times philosophers, filmmakers, novelists, and others have presented memories of slavery as a pre- or remediation of the Holocaust, and vice versa. Rothberg thinks of this as a new phenomenon that has been enabled by the development of modernity and the mass media.²⁵ Yet once more there seem to be parallels with early modern examples. In her chapter, Dagmar Freist draws attention to the way in which the Spanish treatment of the 'Indians' in the New World became part of the European imaginary as a model of cruelty. In the 1560s and 1570s Dutch rebel pamphlets warned that the advisers of their overlord, the King of Spain, were clearly

²⁴ Astrid Erll, *Memory in culture*, transl. Sarah B. Young (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) 139–143; David J. Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation. Understanding new media* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1999); Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney (eds.), *Mediation, remediation and the dynamics of cultural memory* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2009); see for the Cevennes example Philippe Joutard, *La légende des Camisards. Une sensibilité au passé* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977).

²⁵ Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional memory. Remembering the Holocaust in the age of decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

intending to treat them 'as they had the people of the New World', and presented themselves as the Indians of Europe, the innocent victims of power-hungry tyrants. Once having established this parallel, the Dutch could present their colonial ventures in the Americas as a form of rescue mission for American Indians, who would be liberated by the West India Company in the same way in which the Dutch had liberated themselves from their overlords.²⁶

Phenomena such as the Black Legend about Spain are reminiscent of what Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider have called cosmopolitan memory.

cosmopolitanism refers to a process of 'internal globalisation' through which global concerns become part of local experiences of an increasing number of people. Global media representations, among others, create new cosmopolitan memories, providing new epistemological vantage points and emerging moral-political interdependencies.²⁷

Levy and Sznaider see the advent of the cosmopolitan memory of the Holocaust as the result of a 'decoupling of collective memory and the nation state' and as a new phenomenon that belongs to a more 'global' era of human development. Yet, as Freist points out, when we broaden the chronological perspective we can see that 'cosmopolitan memories' of the type discussed by Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider with reference to the Holocaust actually emerged well before the advent of the nation state. Levy and Sznaider do in fact note that religious solidarities had, of course, always created their own form of cosmopolitanism, but they have not considered historical parallels before 1800 in any detail. Freist draws attention to the confessional diasporas, including the transnational interest in martyrdom and mission cultures. For earlier periods we might think of the crusades.²⁸

It may seem perverse to compare such deeply partisan and polemical uses of memory with the cosmopolitan memories of the Holocaust and the new standards for good and evil that these seem to have set across the

²⁶ See on this issue also Benjamin Schmidt, *Innocence abroad. The Dutch imagination and the New World, 1570–1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

²⁷ Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, 'Memory unbound. The Holocaust and the formation of cosmopolitan memory', *European Journal of Social Theory* 5 (2002), 87–106.

²⁸ Nicolas Paul and Suzanne Yeager (eds.), *Remembering the crusades. Myth, image and identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012); Nicholas Paul, *To follow in their footsteps. The crusades and family memory in the high middle ages* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2012).

globe. Still, the parallel is not really so far fetched because as time went on, after all, it was some of these Protestant memories which morphed into *lieux de mémoire* for the Enlightenment. In the eighteenth century, memories of the Inquisitions, for instance, outgrew the context of confessional solidarities to become the exemplars of obscurantism and the bugbear of all those striving for freedom of thought and speech, and they have remained so until today.

That cosmopolitan memories might undergo considerable change and loss of meaning is borne out by the essay of Benjamin Schmidt, who charts the ways in which geography created global memories of 'memorable matters' in far-flung places. Deriving their authority from alleged eye-witness accounts of individual travellers, such memories were trans-mediated and reshaped to serve a variety of purposes, not least commercial ones. Moving from print to pottery, from wallpaper to cabinet, the iconographical motifs ultimately derived from the 'memories' of travellers could become constituent for European convictions about the Asian world—for instance about the total control which 'oriental' rulers exercised over the bodies of their subjects—while simultaneously also changing meaning as they moved from medium to medium and from paper to bedroom decorations.

All in all, we can conclude that the difference which mass media have made to memory is really one of scale, rather than of the mechanisms by which memories are shaped and mediated. Now, scale certainly matters; it has, indeed, enabled modern states to go much further than before in trying to engage subjects in a vision of the past that suits their current political objectives; it also enables the spread of a greater variety of views of the past. Yet in a qualitative sense, it seems fair to say that early modern societies had both the means and the motives to shape and celebrate collective memories and did so with enthusiasm. Moreover, it is also clear that memories moved and were transmediated across space with considerable ease.

III. *Personal Memory*

Recent developments in modern neurosciences have led to new insights into the process of memory formation. Modern psychology describes 'personal episodic memory formation' as a process of continuous selection and adding meaning, a process that starts during the experience and is again

at work every time the memory is narrated in the course of a lifetime.²⁹ The recall of an event or experience always comes with new meanings added to it. Today's psychologists therefore define remembering no longer as retrieval of stored data but as a cognitive construction of a new reality which involves the activation of existing neuronal structures. Memories are flexible at the moment they come to our mind. During the process of remembering our brains also take care of the contextualizing, the solving of inconsistencies and so forth. New ingredients may be added: associations with people, other experiences, emotions, explanations, reasons and motives, the importance of what happened. The main goal of this processing of memories is to give memories reliability to oneself and one's audience, to enrich them with extra meaning and to strengthen them.³⁰

Yet whereas the need to organise, interpret and narrate memories seems universal, the way people do this—the when, where, what and how—is socially, culturally and thus historically determined. To what extent did early modern memories differ from our own? In some respects, personal memory seems to have operated in ways quite similar to our own. Thus, people in early modern Europe were well aware that the elderly could recall events from their youth much more vividly than the things they had experienced at a later age. Like today, people in early modern Europe found it important to know something about their families. To be without knowledge of one's kin had practical disadvantages in a society in which kinship determined not only whom one might marry but also one's status. Emotionally, as well, there are indications that people felt that something was amiss if one had no knowledge of the family past. Frederik van der Moelen, who had left home at age eleven and had returned to find all his kin deceased, was clearly troubled by his lack of family history; in 1545 he made his son Pieter record the bits of information Frederik heard from people who had known his kin.³¹ As is the case today, women were often

²⁹ Episodic memory refers to 'the individual's conscious memory of events and experiences in which he or she has been personally involved'. Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 68; see also U. Neisser and Lisa K. Libby, 'Remembering life experiences', in Endel Tulving and Fergus I.M. Craik (eds.), *The Oxford handbook of memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 315–332, esp. 316.

³⁰ Siegfried J. Schmidt, 'Memory and remembrance. A constructivist approach', in Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning, Sarah B. Young, (eds.) *Cultural memory studies. An international and interdisciplinary handbook* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2008), 192.

³¹ O. Schutte, 'De familiechroniek van der Moelen', in: E.C. Dijkhof and M.J. van Gent (eds.) *Uit diverse bronnen gelicht. Opstellen aangeboden aan Hans Smit ter gelegenheid van*

the best sources of family knowledge.³² The chapter by Katharine Hodgkin shows how elite women in seventeenth-century England took it upon themselves to record the family histories for their children. The fact that families rise and fall, and continuity is always threatened by misfortune, illness and death perhaps explains why these women were so concerned with preservation and commemoration, and also why their records are marked by recurrence of events and a sense of time that seems indeed rather cyclical. Yet while these women figured as custodians of the family past, they were not concerned only with importance of lineage and their family's connection to place and continuity. Their family histories were also connected with national history and God's plan for England. It was not family links alone that were constitutive of personal identity. Jasmine Kilburn-Toppin shows how important it was for London guildsmen to commemorate their skills and membership of the artisan community. For sixteenth-century Ghent chronicler Jan de Rouck being a guildsman also involved commemorating his family's tradition of rebellion against their overlord.³³

While some early modern memory practices thus seem quite familiar to us, others reveal significant differences with modern behaviour. That is partly because recording personal memories was not self-evident. Writing history, including writing down one's personal memories, is a social act that is highly determined by social and cultural conventions. Literacy was limited in early modern Europe and the writing of memoirs not a widespread activity. The social biases in early modern source material are thus certainly more pronounced than in contemporary evidence. Yet, the five studies in the last part of this volume make use of early modern texts by a large and socially fairly heterogeneous group of non-literary authors: women, priests, nobles, antiquarians, chroniclers, diarists, genealogists and self-styled historians, all of which may contain personal memories and eye-witness accounts. Although most of these texts have remained in manuscript until the nineteenth or twentieth centuries, or even until today, they were usually not meant to be private nor personal; the reflective introspection that characterises so many modern so-called ego-documents is rare in the early modern diaries of non-literary authors. Many indeed do not seem to be very personal at first sight, just a list of facts and data,

zijn vijfenzestigste verjaardag (Den Haag: Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis, 2007) 293–307.

³² Woolf, *The social circulation of the past*, 116.

³³ Haemers, 'Geletterd verzet'.

and only now and then coming out with standard phrases about God's punishments and the wickedness of mankind. As Yuval Harari has put it: sixteenth-century memoirs and chronicles are 'made of facts rather than of experiences'.³⁴ We believe, nevertheless, that personal memory essentially functioned as it does today: creating identities by connecting oneself to a meaningful and shared past. These texts, as terse as they may seem to us, must have been meaningful to their authors and their audiences and although the interpretation of this type of source material is far from straightforward, records like these are our best evidence for finding out how individuals related to the past.

When interpreting such texts, we see three interrelated variables at work that determine the content of personal memories: first, the author's frame of reference such as his or her knowledge, presuppositions, concepts etc.; second, the cultural practices or the way people 'do memory' (i.e. rules of genre, narrative templates, *topoi*, rituals, language, expression etc.); and third, their functionality, that is, the psychological, social, political aims and needs for which memory is instrumental.

Obviously the frame of reference of sixteenth- or seventeenth-century writers is different from our own. They will deploy other concepts of good and evil, truth and relevance; they also differ in their knowledge and beliefs about nature and the cosmos and have other ideas about the meaning of life, the divine and the hereafter, about society and social order, about justice and authority. These notions and normative frameworks lead to memories that do not correspond with what we would have observed had we been present at the described event. Until the mid-seventeenth century many authors incidentally report on supernatural phenomena and interpret these as divine signs. More generally, divine providence was omnipresent in early modern experiences. And whereas in our perception, fear is a psychological reaction to stress or danger, the fear experienced by the authors discussed in the chapter by Andreas Bähr derives from an exterior source; divine intervention determines whether they are struck by fear or experience fearlessness.

Such conceptual differences are the most pronounced in the way authors write about what were presumably distressing and disorienting events. Modern Western middle-class society has a strong tendency to psychologise the effects of individual emotional experiences. In early modern

³⁴ Yuval Noah Harari, *Renaissance military memoirs. War, history, and identity, 1450–1600* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004), 67.

Europe people saw their memories very much as an archive of factual data about the past, and it was rare for an individual to explicitly connect these memories to his or her own identity. For us, memories tell us who we have become through past experiences. We structure our autobiographies in terms of a personal development that is marked by what we have lived through. In early modern autobiographical sources, however, the self is more connected to the body and bodily experiences and defined in terms of membership of family or community. In early modern histories and chronicles the individual's life is a function of the religious or civil community to which he or she belongs, and part of a greater design that is beyond the author's own control. Every person will go through the given stages of childhood, adolescence and adulthood; he or she will encounter fortune or misfortune but will not change fundamentally.

It is therefore quite possible that we do not always recognise memories of loss for what they are, because they are expressed in ways that seem unfamiliar to us. Whether or not people write in emotional language is a question of genre and conventions as well as the identity of the author. Susan Broomhall shows in her chapter that violent and distressing experiences can be recorded in many ways and in a wide range of documents, yet the expression of emotions is bound to the rules or conventions of genres as well as to the identity of the author. Thus, lamentations and ostentatious grief could be expressed by Catholics in connection with the devastations to the Church caused by Protestants and fellow Catholics. Such lamentations could be seen as an act of devotion and fitted in narratives of suffering and martyrdom for the true faith. Yet the emotions that individuals are likely to have experienced in situations that threatened their own lives were more problematic to talk about. Various authors describe their own feelings through the eyes of others, in some cases a fictive narrator, or they restrict their descriptions of distress to the expressions of anonymous others. Charlotte Arbaleste, who for her son recorded the life of her husband, a prominent Parisian Protestant, did not explicitly write about her own feelings, except on the one occasion when she feared that her daughter would be slaughtered before her eyes. At that point she momentarily felt despair. Yet this passage serves a pedagogical purpose in her account; the moral lesson to be learned was that despair is a sin as it implies a loss of faith. One should always trust in God's plan.

More common in many chronicles and records of the time of the religious wars is a tendency to create order through classifications and detailed descriptions of things lost. In many chronicles we find the enumeration of material losses including the assessment of their financial

value. Convent communities, especially, produced many such texts in the hope that restitution could be claimed somewhere. But as terse as these inventories may be, they are emotionally charged and may have served the task of spiritual recovery from traumatic loss. From modern psychological literature on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) it becomes clear that adding meaning and order to traumatic memories helps prevent mental disorders by connecting cognitive data to physical and emotional memories, creating distance in time and place between the event and the moment of retrieval. The very act of writing is thus an effective way of coping, whether or not emotions are expressed in a way familiar to us.³⁵ Moreover, the articles by Broomhall, Bähr and Hodgkin show that early modern authors were culturally very well equipped to give meaning to their experiences of suffering, probably better so than many people in the West nowadays. Early modern Christianity, which put so much emphasis on the benefits of suffering and sacrifice and on a providential God, offered a framework in which many people apparently managed to make sense of experiences and thus to cope with them in ways that helped them to move on. Modern psychologists say there are people who are capable of turning traumatic memories into what they term 'personal growth'.³⁶ Although no early modern person would have described the process in that way, the notion that spiritual growth was to be had from a terrible experience was widely available as a cultural model.

A good example is given by Andreas Bähr in his account of Jesuit Athanasius Kircher, who was saved from being hanged by attackers when he overcame his fear and was spiritually prepared for martyrdom. Bähr

³⁵ In modern medical practice, autobiographical writing is used as therapy: Charles M. Anderson and Marian M. MacCurdy, *Writing and healing. Toward an informed practice* (Urbana Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 2000); Louise A. DeSalvo, *Writing as a way of healing. How telling our stories transforms our lives* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000); Judith Harris, *Signifying pain. Constructing and healing the self through writing* (Albany N.Y.: SUNY Press, 2003); Matthew D. Lieberman and others, 'Putting feelings into words. Affect labelling disrupts amygdala activity in response to affective stimuli', *Psychological Science. A Journal of the American Psychological Society / APS*, 18 (2007), 421–428; Crystal L. Park and Carol Joyce Blumberg, 'Disclosing trauma through writing. Testing the meaning-making hypothesis', *Cognitive Therapy & Research* 26 (2002), 597; Mary Beth Williams, and Soili Poijula, *The PTSD workbook. Simple, effective techniques for overcoming traumatic stress symptoms* (s.l.: New Harbinger Publications, 2002).

³⁶ Nigel C. Hunt, *Memory, war and trauma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), esp. chpt. 6; Barbara Lieberei and Michael Linden, 'Overcoming hurting memories by wisdom and wisdom psychotherapy', in Michael Linden and Krzysztof Rutkowski (eds.) *Hurting memories and beneficial forgetting. Posttraumatic stress disorders, biographical developments, and social conflicts* (Oxford: Elsevier, 2013), 165–179.

underlines how often both Catholics and Protestants describe their fear as something of the past. A truly faithful person will trust God and so overcome fear. Similarly, converts might evoke the sinfulness, pain and misery they had experienced in their unconverted state, or in the process of conversion itself, but only because this state could be contrasted with their newly converted persona. Martyrdom, a death suffered for steadfast belief in the right cause, was considered deeply edifying. One's personal fate on earth is of secondary importance to those who believe that suffering is a test and that redemption will follow hereafter. Many chroniclers report the triumph of good over evil and the restoration of the true church, law and order or social structures.

Of course, very few victims of the atrocities of early modern warfare would write their memoirs.³⁷ Susan Broomhall suggests that victims tended to evoke memories mainly if there was some secondary gain to be achieved by doing so and/or if their experiences could be given some sort of transcendent significance. A possibility of compensation might trigger emotive descriptions of war experiences, for instance. The benefits might also come from the status which some memories conferred. Apart from religious merits these benefits could also derive from a reputation for heroism or cleverness as we can see in the many seventeenth-century family stories which recounted how ancestors outwitted the enemy, made a miraculous escape, or were delivered from great danger. A community or a family as a whole could benefit from the pious or heroic deeds and martyrdom of ancestors or from the blessings that were bestowed on their leaders or ancestors. Thus the descendants of the exiles described by Johannes Müller could claim to be particularly pious because their ancestors had fled their homes for the godly cause. Yet their exile identities did not necessarily distance them from the host society to which they had fled. On the contrary, their exile past legitimised their presence in the host society and could easily be combined with the new local identities they embraced. Identification with the local society and even with the local past could perfectly be coupled with the cultivation and reinvention of the exile narrative and identity. Müller's study of exiles shows that early modern people had multiple identities, just as they do today.

³⁷ Erika Kuijpers and Judith Pollmann, 'Why remember terror? Memories of violence in the Dutch Revolt', Micheál O'Siochru and Jane Ohlmeyer (eds.), *Ireland 1641. Contexts and reactions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013) 176–196.

Other ways of matching memories and identity are discussed by Brecht Deseure and Judith Pollmann. They argue that even if it was common for early modern people to see the past repeat itself, this did not mean that they did not have a 'sense of change'. Examining two chronicles for what they can tell us about the impact of rupture on historical consciousness, Deseure and Pollmann show that major crises did have a clear impact on the way in which people experienced the relationship between past and present. Yet they also argue that such an impact did not have to last. Rather than to admit to having changed themselves, early modern people might also reinvent the past to suit their needs in the present.

Conclusion

There are important differences between the ways in which early modern and modern European people remembered the past. In a political, legal and moral sense, the past was more important in early modern Europe because as a source of authority it had few competitors; notions of universal or natural law existed but were normally paired with, and expected to give way to, precedent. With the exception of technological changes, which were widely praised, there was little sense of progress as an end in itself. Perhaps the most common alternative to using precedent was to point to divine intervention—the providential, sacred or miraculous could sometimes match or override the authority of the past. Once we realise this, it is no wonder to discover that even without the nationalist agendas of nineteenth-century Europe, memory was of extreme political importance on all levels of society and that the reinvention of the past, with or without scholarly support, was a well-established practice. In this sense, when reinventing memory politics for national agendas, modern nation states could build on a tradition that was already very well established. Moreover, important elements in this tradition have in fact survived the nationalist phase in the history of memory. In modern secular societies the status of the past is obviously different from what it was in early modern Europe; references to universal rights are the order of the day, 'development' and innovation are considered positive values, and the sacred has lost most of its public explanatory power. At the same time, the new forms of legitimation coexist with the much older use of the past as a source of authority. Historians have learned to frown on anachronism, but the rest of society constantly invokes the past for lessons and parallels.

When practicing memory early modern Europeans availed themselves of an enormous range of objects and artefacts and features in the landscape, which could attain long-term significance as mnemonic markers as long as there were people to tell tales associated with them. Written, visual, ritual and performative media interacted and reinforced one another, creating ubiquitous memory cultures on a local level and sometimes even beyond. Both before and after 1800, memories were pre- and remediated. Moreover, even before mass literacy, cheap print, radio and television, memory was already a multimedia affair. In terms of mediality, the differences between modern and pre-modern memory are mainly ones of scale. Scale matters immensely when it comes to the use of memories as a tool to mobilise people and resources for the national or large-scale ideological and military undertakings that marked the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But an awareness of early modern memory practices helps us recognise that side by side with such large-scale memory projects, other ways of doing collective memory persisted. There is an uncanny resemblance between early modern memory practices and those of many post-national memory cultures. Phenomena that have been seen as the product of very recent developments, like the emergence of global memory or the writing of instant history, have many precedents and cannot automatically be explained with reference to very recent events.

The biggest difference between pre-modern and modern memory lies perhaps not in the area of public memory but in the practice of personal memory. Even then there are some interesting similarities. To have some recall of family and kin was, and has remained, of enormous importance. The role of women as keepers of family memory also seems to have been in place for a very long time. Yet early modern people were not inclined to think of their 'selves' as subject to change beyond the expected stages of growing and aging; their bodies changed, and people had different characteristics which matched the regulation of humours in the human body. They might change their minds through the acquisition of knowledge or spiritually through the experience of conversion. But they did not conceive of themselves as subject to individual change or use personal memories to build a narrative about their psychological development. This mindset also had consequences for the way early modern Europeans dealt with experiences of pain and suffering. Yet even there, the differences are far starker when comparing them with their modern European descendants than when we compare them with most non-Western people today. Moreover, even the most individually experienced modern personal memories are in fact heavily premediated by narrative schemes and cultural expectations.

Early modern findings strengthen the case for modern psychologists and memory theorists to think about the variations as well as about the universals in the way humans today cope with memories of distress.

In general, it seems to us that there are two important gains to be had from a long-term perspective on the history of memory. First, a better knowledge of pre-modern memory practices can help modernists rethink some of their explanations for modern and postmodern memory practices and help further to 'provincialise (modern) Europe'.³⁸ Even if hegemonic national memory was ever as hegemonic as some have claimed, its existence was never universal and has really been no more than a blip in the history of memory. Hybridity and diversity have always characterised memory and cannot be considered exclusive hallmarks of postmodernism. Secondly, we believe the essays in this volume suggest an alternative way to think about the history of memory, not as unchanging or linear, but as a cumulative and fluid process, in which new ways of engaging with the past constantly emerge and often end up in coexistence with older practices. Where these practices clash, conflict can result, but not necessarily so. The same individuals who invoke examples from the past one day will, after all, sing the praise of innovation the next, without experiencing this behaviour as inconsistent. It is important for us to acknowledge this reality if we are better to understand both modern and pre-modern memory, in Europe and beyond.

³⁸ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial thought and historical difference* (Princeton NJ.: Princeton University Press, 2000).