Introduction: Politics and Cultures of Liberation

L'homme enfin n'est pas entièrement coupable, il n'a pas commencé l'histoire; ni tout à fait innocent puisqu'il la continue.¹

ALBERT CAMUS, *L'Homme Révolté*, 1951/1966 (355)

At the opening of the exhibition *Routes of Liberation: European Legacies of the Second World War*, in Brussels on 13 February 2013, Martin Schulz, then President of the European Parliament, identified the development of multiple-perspectives on war, liberation, and remembrance as a desirable or even necessary European aspiration. Referring to Albert Camus' conviction that human beings may not be "entirely guilty" when looking at past developments in history, he agreed with the French philosopher and author that they are not "wholly innocent" either, since it is they who shape future developments of history. Schulz went on to remind his audience that "man would be wholly guilty, if he started to forget."² The issue raised by Schulz, the importance of remembering, is an urgent and complicated one: how can we counterbalance one-dimensional processes and acts of repression, exclusion, erasure, forgetting, and misinformation that often characterize(d) remembrances of the processes of war and liberation in favor of understanding the multidirectional, competing, and often conflicting dimensions of remembering war and liberation?

Looking back on the course of the 20th century, including the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union, the themes of war and liberation play a central role in the collective memory of many Europeans, shaping both national and supranational perspectives on how the ideal of democracy should be anchored, preserved, and projected. At the same time, the term liberation is loaded with connotations vastly different across the various nations involved, depending on political and cultural contexts.³ Since liberation embodies not

1 English translation: "In the end, man is not entirely guilty, he did not start history; nor is he wholly innocent, he continues it." See http://www.europarl.europa.eu/former_ep_presidents/president-schulz-2012-2014/en/press/press_release_speeches/speeches/sp-2014/sp-2014-february/speech-by-the-president [accessed 15 Jan. 2016].

2 Ibid. [accessed 15 Jan. 2016].

3 Closely tied to the experience of liberation from political oppression is the value of personal freedom from "restrictive or discriminatory social conventions and attitudes." *The Oxford*

a single idea but rather refers to a complex set of values, any effort at defining the term needs to take into account equally varied and often contested notions, whether approached from an intellectual, social, economic, political, or ethical perspective. For example, from a moral angle the term liberation has been used to claim legitimacy for a variety of grievances associated with victimizations, fears about current developments, as well as hopes and visions of the future.⁴ While traumatic memories of war, destruction, and particularly the Holocaust are at the center of many debates about a common framework of European memory (Sierp 2014, Sollors 2014, Watten 2015), this volume contributes to the ongoing discourse of mapping, analyzing, and evaluating memories, rituals, and artistic responses to the theme of “liberation” (Erll 2010, Hebel 2009, Rothberg 2009). While the liberation ending World War II was a multi-national event, the postwar memories of it are often defined by national characteristics and interests, and hence intrinsically selective. Also, views on other participating national entities are often one-dimensional: in the context of World War II and the Cold War, for instance, liberation is often closely associated with the United States as a liberating force, conceptualized as a beacon of freedom and stark proponent of democracy (Ellwood 2012, Fluck 2009, Kroes and Rydell 2005, Paul and Schock 2013, Mehring 2014, Pells 1997, Stephan 2006, Wagnleitner 1991).

Existing memory cultures, we argue, need to be confronted with international contextualizations, and be placed in transnational frameworks. The essays brought together here conjointly explore the memory of liberation by bringing into play both national and transnational trajectories that inform audio-visual and literary representations, commemorative practices, and sites of memory. The contributions explore how the national is framed within a dynamic system of intercultural contact zones highlighting often competing agendas of remembrance. Conjointly, the essays in this volume illuminate how the production, (re)mediation, and framing of narratives within different social, territorial, and political environments determine the cultural memory of liberation. Rather than dealing with one-dimensional and uncomplicated categories of liberation and oppression, this volume opens up new venues to better understand the

English Dictionary distinguishes between active and passive agents. On the one hand, “liberation” refers to the “action of liberating (esp. from confinement or servitude)”; on the other hand, “liberation” describes “the condition of being liberated.”

- 4 If no idea is more fundamental to the identity of Americans as individuals and as a nation than “freedom,” as Eric Foner argues (xiii), then “liberation” can be described as a key term for the experience many Europeans share. Both terms are linked in the sense that liberation paves the way for a new experience of freedom which, in some way or another, had been taken away before.

struggles, disagreements, and debates that necessarily come to the fore when they are approached from multiple (national) perspectives.

An important theoretical assumption that underlies this volume is that the politics and cultures of liberation inform educational, public, cultural and political institutions. The same holds for commemorative practices, which combine public affect (as defined by Erika Doss 2010), modern media, and performative acts (in the sense of what Jay Anderson describes as “living history” and Wolfgang Hochbruck as “Geschichtstheater”). For example, memorials celebrating the experience of liberation from oppression have the capacity to provide spaces and subjects that permit cultural and political creativity and prompt acts of responsible democratic citizenship. The study of culture in a political climate or context, from fine arts to photography, graphic design, and film, can reveal both national and transnational agendas that utilize the memory of liberation for overcoming chauvinism, ethnic prejudice, and foster mutual understanding. In addition to visual culture, as Jacques Attali and scholars in the field of sound studies (Sterne 2003, Schafer 1986, Paul and Schock 2013) have suggested, the politics and cultures of liberation can also be understood through music: new sources and archives can be activated to combine “transnational optics” (De Cesari and Rigney 2014) with transnational sonics so that memories of liberation can be experienced both visually and aurally across the traditional boundaries of the nation-state. Such recent approaches testify to the need for novel interdisciplinary theories and methodologies which can move beyond traditional approaches governed by a focus on national cultures. We argue that transnational studies can provide such a critical frame of reference.

The essays compiled in this volume seek to provide new interdisciplinary and intercultural perspectives on the politics and cultures of liberation by examining commemorative practices, artistic responses, and audio-visual media that lend themselves for transnational exploration. Rather than adhering to a single theoretical approach, the seventeen essays gathered here offer a wide range of diverse intercultural perspectives on media, memory, liberation, (self) Americanization, and conceptualizations of democracy from the war years, through the Cold War era to the 21st century. All contributions in one form or another seek to explore the possibilities of interdisciplinary and transnational approaches. Hence, the individual essays are informed by a wide array of theoretical and methodological concepts based on media studies, memory studies, history, literary studies and art history. The contributions evolved from symposia and workshops held between 2013 and 2015, which celebrated 25 years of American Studies at Radboud University under the theme “The Politics and Cultures of Liberation.” They also reflect the ongoing research agenda of the European Network of the same title, which the American Studies

program at Radboud University launched at the 20th EAAS conference in The Hague (2014).⁵

This anthology is divided into four sections, each of which has a separate focus: 1) The Politics and Cultures of Liberation: Marketing, Memory and Mediation, 2) The Soundtrack of Liberation, 3) Transnational Re-locations, and 4) Transnational Perspectives from the Archives. The fourth section is part of our efforts to ground transnational American Studies locally by highlighting the potential of specific archives and institutions to contribute new sources and perspectives related to the theme of our book.⁶

The opening section on *The Politics and Cultures of Liberation: Marketing, Memory and Mediation* presents Dutch, American, Japanese-American, and Canadian perspectives on the experience and framing of liberation in the context of World War II. **Marja Roholl's** essay focuses on "The Projection of America," a U.S. Office of War Information Overseas Branch program, explored here through its operations in a particular national setting: the Netherlands, 1944–45. The goal of the Overseas Branch was not only to smooth the transition from occupation and war to liberation, but also to help shape a new world order under the aegis of the United States. The campaign's most important tools were films and illustrated magazines. But the Overseas Branch saw these media as more than mere implements. It also helped the American film and publishing industries to protect and expand their markets, even if that was at odds with the official message of the propaganda campaign. Local circumstances mattered crucially to the deployment of "The Projection of America" program, as the Dutch case study shows. The liberation of the Netherlands took much longer than anticipated, with the Dutch government fully re-installed only in June 1945. This essay explores how the program's goals and products were tailored to meet local circumstances. The Dutch case underlines the importance of the local in understanding how propaganda was deployed and received. "The Projection of America" campaign was part of the invasion and

5 The European Network "Politics & Cultures of Liberation" wants to provide an innovative platform for European scholars of North American and Cultural Studies to present their research projects, coordinate future projects, workshops, organize conferences, and establish joint seminars and summer school initiatives. The network welcomes researchers who convene under the umbrella of the European Association of American Studies. The network aims to contribute to what we envision as a crucial goal of American Studies: to reunite our academic discipline with responsible citizenship thereby building new bridges towards a truly democratic society. More information under www.ru.nl/col

6 For more information on "grounding transnational American Studies" see our international spring academy mission statement under <http://www.ru.nl/nas/information/rudesa/>

the liberation; it also provided the prototype for America's postwar cultural diplomacy efforts.

Mathilde Roza focuses on the Dutch illustrator and pen artist Jo Spier. Spier made crucial contributions to two successful Marshall Plan booklets that were distributed in the Netherlands: *Het Marshall-Plan en U*, about the benefits of the Marshall Plan, and *Als We Niet Hélemaal van de Kaart Willen Raken*, a promotional booklet about the Technical Assistance Program in the Netherlands. Roza zooms in on the ways in which national identity and traditional conceptions of "Dutchness" were deployed as marketing strategies to "sell" the Marshall Plan to the newly liberated Dutch, not just in the official narratives in favor of the Marshall Plan that Spier contributed to, but also in other media, including two "Marshall films" by the famous Dutch filmmaker Herman van der Horst.

Joost Rosendaal puts the complicated memory and commemoration practices of the Nijmegen bombing at the center of his analysis on destruction, liberation and reconstruction. Taking his cue from a television documentary that explores the difficulties of comparing the destruction of Rotterdam by the National Socialists with the one in Nijmegen, caused allegedly by mistake by Allied American fighters on 22 February, 1944, Rosendaal examines how potentially traumatic events are repressed from memory and commemorated in different ways. As a case study, he turns to the bombardment and asks about the reasons for the delay of commemorations by several decades. His essay critically examines the specific narrative that American bombers allegedly had the intention to destroy a German city beyond the border. Would such an explanation make it easier for the population to cope with the tremendous loss of lives and the material damage caused by those who would later be remembered as liberators? Nijmegen in the Netherlands and the Belgian town of Mortsels are remarkable case studies to illuminate comparatively the more general problem regarding the function of self-censorship and political correctness in processing a traumatic historical event.

Laszló Munteán sheds new light on the mediated memory of Operation Market Garden, a combined air and ground offensive launched by the Allies in September 1944, aimed at securing bridges across rivers in the Netherlands in order to facilitate the northward advance of the army and, ultimately, to end the war by Christmas. The campaign was unsuccessful and the First British Airborne Division had to surrender after days of arduous battle. One year later the veterans of this division returned to Arnhem to reenact the battle in the form of the film *Theirs Is the Glory*, directed by Brian Desmond Hurst. Released in 1946, the film was shot on the former battlegrounds in and around Arnhem, exclusively featuring soldiers who participated in or witnessed the battle. Munteán argues

that the lack of professional acting and special effects are part and parcel of the way in which the film memorializes what was then the very recent past. Through the analysis of acting and *mise-en-scène*, the author demonstrates that the film derives its power less from its realistic depiction of the battle and more from the veterans as authentic witnesses and the ruins of Arnhem as the authentic location of the battle. In addition, the essay explores how the film employs this aura of authenticity as a rhetorical platform to reimagine the ill-fated campaign along the larger trajectory of the liberation of the Netherlands.

Wolfgang Hochbruck analyzes appropriations of history in reenactments of Operation Market Garden. He argues that the popularity and proliferation of reenactments over the last 50 years have resulted in the amalgamation of older forms of commemoration with living history presentations that both enliven, and potentially subvert, the traditional militaristic gravity of such events. In his article, he discusses the modes and methods of this transformation with reference to the change in participants, and the use of musical scores.

Hans Bak turns to the media of poetry and art as a source to trace the cultural imaginary associated with the liberation of the Netherlands. Against the background of the Canadian military presence in Nijmegen between November 1944 and May 1945, Bak examines the representation of war-torn Nijmegen in the war art of two Canadians who—each in his own way—marched “the road to Nijmegen.”; poet Earle Birney (1904–1995) and painter Alex Colville (1920–2013). In particular, Bak seeks to understand why the city of Nijmegen became a central symbolic motif in their artistic rendering of their war experience. What was it about the location, strategic importance, or “spectacle” of Nijmegen that made it a challenging and significant topic for artistic rendering by these two Canadian artists? How did their experience of Nijmegen as frontline city reverberate with larger philosophical or metaphysical concerns? What explains the special appeal of Nijmegen to their artistic imaginations?

The second section on the *Soundtrack of Liberation* turns to the medium of music as a central, often neglected source of remembering and commemorating the experience of liberation. This chapter follows Jacques Attali’s suggestion to understand socio-economic and cultural developments through music, arguing that music can “make people *forget* the general violence,” “make people *believe* in the harmony of the world” and “*silence* [...] by censoring all other human noises” (19). At the same time, this section goes beyond the analysis of the function of music in national environments in order to map the power of music to cross cultural, ethnic, racial, and national boundaries.

Frank Mehring excavates the unique visual, textual and musical archive of Dutch liberation songs to address questions regarding the transformative and healing power of music in light of the experience of destruction, despair and

suffering at the end of World War II. Mehring shows that the sheet music collection of liberation songs can shed new light on the function of the United State as a reference culture at a crucial moment in Dutch history: the summer of 1945. The months after the end of World War II are often remembered as a time marked by intense intercultural encounters, in which the *lingua franca* of American jazz conflated the Dutch Dream with the American Dream. Mehring reveals a dual function of music based on the liberation songs: first, music provided an emotional glue to interlink the cultural imaginary of a glorious past with a yet to be fulfilled prosperous future. Second, liberation songs created a kind of sounding memorial of gratitude to the Allied forces.

Walter van de Leur investigates the reception and development of jazz in the Netherlands from the period of liberation until the late 1970s. He argues that jazz music in the Netherlands offers a fascinating case study to investigate ever-changing cultural and social landscapes by placing particular emphasis on cultural mediators and mass media such as radio and film. Van de Leur observes that there is a remarkable consistency in the reception of jazz before, during and shortly after the German occupation. However, defenders of what sometimes is called “real” or “pure jazz” often differentiate between American entertainment music as “authentic” and “hot” music. Looking at the Dutch jazz magazine *Jazzwereld*, van de Leur shows that jazz remained a marginal phenomenon in the Netherlands in the postwar decades since only a small number of performers and composers could make a living of jazz music. Van de Leur ends on a critical evaluation of the government-funded jazz avant-garde, in particular the Willem Breuker Kollektief, and how it emancipated itself musically from American jazz models.

Wilfried Raussert’s article addresses transnational flows of music within a political context. Using a distinction between sonic cosmopolitics from above and from below Raussert investigates the similarities and differences in agency, music, and politicization between U.S. government-sponsored programs such as *The Jazz Ambassadors* and *The Rhythm Road* and recent grassroots musical movements such as *Fandango Sin Fronteras* and *The Pleasant Revolution Tour*. Raussert points out that, for example, Louis Armstrong’s Jazz Ambassador tour was part of the state-sponsored politics of liberation with a distinct political, economical and cultural motivation. Nevertheless, the iconic jazz performer was able to add critical voices from below to a top-down diplomacy program. Asking about new developments such as the *Rhythm Road* concept, Raussert critically analyzes how music can “align itself with grassroots egalitarian approaches to mobilize music form the people for the people” despite its involvement with State Department agendas.

The third section, on *Transnational Re-locations*, addresses the politics and cultures of liberation by exploring Dutch-American, German-American, Latin-American and Caribbean-American encounters. **Birgit Bauridl** investigates the arrival of the advance contingents of U.S. troops in Southern Germany in the spring of 1945 and the liberation of that part of Germany from the Nazi reign of terror. This process marked the beginning of a highly complex, mutually enriching, and at times intricately conflicted history of German-American encounters in the fields of politics, social interaction, and cultural exchange. Cultural encounters and contact zones, she argues, inevitably produce transnational processes of transfer, negotiation, and contestation. These processes ensuing from German-American encounters after the liberation are also reflected in the memory landscape of the German State of Bavaria, which, immediately after World War II, would become the larger part of the American military occupation zone in Germany. Tracing both archived and embodied manifestations of German-American transnational memories in Bavaria—and the blurry fields in between—the purpose of this article is twofold. First, it pursues a conceptual endeavor in regard to the dimension, location, and shape of cultural memory: Bauridl pinpoints the transnational dynamics and entanglements of cultural memory arguing that “American” or “transnational American” sites of memory may well be situated outside of the United States. Furthermore, it proposes that cultural memory may appear both in and especially beyond textual or material shapes. Drawing on Diana Taylor’s notion of the “archive” and the “repertoire,” the article suggests an approach to transnational memory that acknowledges embodied practice (i.e. performance) as enactments of cultural memory. Second, to illustrate its conceptual claim, the article introduces the complex network of trans/national memories in a contact zone located outside the United States asking how German-American memories in Bavaria emerged as a contact zone during and after the times of WWII liberation and post-WWII occupation.

Jorrit van den Berk investigates how the United States sought to influence Latin-American perceptions of its war effort through the information programs of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs during World War II. Several historians have suggested that these programs bolstered indigenous opposition to existing dictatorships in Central America, including the regime of Maximiliano Hernández Martínez in El Salvador. Based on the archives of the U.S. legation (embassy from 1943 onward) in El Salvador, this essay seeks to enhance our understanding of the role that the idealistic language of the U.S. war effort came to play in U.S.-Salvadoran relations. Van den Berk shows that Salvadoran oppositionists actively adopted and adapted the language of, for example, the Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter,

to translate the objectives of their struggle against the local dictatorship to U.S. diplomats. While the United States would ultimately denounce the “dictatorships and disreputable governments” of Latin America, its failure to respond to the overtures of oppositionists prevented it from playing a positive role in El Salvador’s brief experiment with democracy.

Josef Raab turns to the experience of oppression and liberation by putting his academic searchlight on Caribbean-American history. Edwidge Danticat’s story cycle *The Dew Breaker* (2004) concentrates on the ways in which atrocities committed during the Duvalier dictatorships in Haiti (1957–1986) overshadow the lives of Haitian Americans twenty to forty years later. Unlike other immigrant writers like Mary Antin, who calls her new life in the United States a “make-over,” Danticat presents life stories that are ambivalent and complex, since the traumata of both victims and torturers will not vanish in the act of relocating but will instead continue to impact the circumstances of the migrants as well as those of the next generation. The book’s narrative technique, which asks readers to piece together fragments and clues, expresses the difficulty of finding words and coherent narratives for traumatizing experiences of violence and torture. Raab traces moments of resistance to remembering because to remember is to knit together experiences that deep pain has torn apart. Hope for healing emerges in the assistance of family and/or community, although the healing process is painful and never complete. Danticat uses the well-established topos of the United States as a space of liberation, while cautioning that the physical and emotional injuries suffered in the unfree past will continue to haunt the lives of Haitian Americans.

Eric Sandeen’s essay briefly rehearses the history of Japanese-American confinement in World War II, treating it as a racist act that deprived more than 110,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans living on the west coast of their full constitutional rights. Sandeen investigates how the former Heart Mountain Relocation Center in northwest Wyoming functions as a memory site, despite the fact that the landscape has been transformed and almost all of the signs of this settlement had been removed. Geographer Kenneth Foote introduced the term “shadowed ground” to describe what members of the Japanese-American community have sanctified through annual pilgrimages over the last 20 years. An interpretive center opened in 2011 on the site of the center, a restorative product of many years of hard work on the part of Japanese Americans and local community members. This facility offers an interpretive focus for the World War II experience. Many of the more than 400 barracks were relocated from the camp to serve as the building blocks for post-war settlement by Euro-American farmers. Using his own field research, Sandeen details the fates

of some of these barracks, which have, in effect, seen two forms of pioneering: one from the west, enforced by the War Relocation Administration, and the other from the east, promoted by the Bureau of Reclamation, both of these federal agencies. The barracks bear witness to a complicated history of hope, despair, and settlement, redolent of American myth and imbued with wartime injustices.

The fourth, final section offers *Transnational Perspectives from the Archives* from the United States and the Netherlands. Five international scholars and researchers, who have been working in archives of the Radboud University library, the Cornelius Ryan Collection at Ohio University, the National Archives in Washington DC, and the National Liberation Museum 1944–45 in the Netherlands, address the challenges of translating sources into multi-media environments and share new research perspectives regarding the politics and cultures of liberation.

Léon Stapper maps an American aid program to a European institution during the post-war years. The city of Nijmegen, its Catholic University, and more specifically its university library, had suffered badly during the war: the library lost several thousand volumes and part of its building. Stapper zooms in on the activities of a specific aid organization, officially called the “American Committee to Aid the University of Nijmegen” (ACA), which was meant to support the rebuilding and strengthening of the university as a whole, of which effort the aid to the library is the more visible, if not altogether very effective aspect. The activities of the ACA were coordinated by the Dutch priest P.J.M.H. Mommersteeg, the executive secretary of the ACA, Dr. Ch.M.J.H.J. Smits, the librarian of Nijmegen University, the jurist F.M.E. Haan, secretary to the Board of Governors, and Prof. Dr. Willibald M. Ploechl, an Austrian professor of Canon Law in Washington and assistant to Mommersteeg. Between 1946 and 1949 they were actively engaged in acquiring funds and books for the university library, which resulted in some 30,000 volumes being donated to the library. However prodigious that may seem, in the end only a small number were actually shelved, long after the decision was made in 1949 to end the ACA’s activities due to a lack of funding and proper results.

Doug McCabe emphasizes the potential use of the Cornelius Ryan Collection, which is one of the remarkable archival collections related to World War II in the United States. What kind of novel perspectives on world history events can be connected to the theme of liberation based on what McCabe describes as “memories of ordinary people caught up in unordinary times?” Many of the audio-visual sources and interviews Ryan conducted have not been used to investigate, for example, the destruction, liberation and reconstruction of war-torn cities such as Nijmegen.

Linda and Eric Christenson have been at the helm of the first feature length documentary on the Marshall Plan, for which they did intensive research in Europe interviewing people who worked in some capacity for the Marshall Plan. For the purpose of this volume, they selected three interviews from this unique archive of oral history particularly relevant to the theme of the politics and cultures of liberation: First, with economist Ernst van der Beugel, a representative of the Netherlands to the first meeting of the newly formed Committee of European Economic Cooperation (CEECE) in Paris in July 1947. Second, the Honorable J.R.M. van den Brink, Minister of Economic Affairs of the Netherlands, 1948–1952. Third: Gerrit Staarman, who came to the U.S. in 1950 as a young farmer for a nine-month stay under the auspices of the ECA, and continued to be a spokesman for the Marshall Plan at his farm in one of the new polders. Taken together, these three interviews highlight Dutch-American connections, moments of cultural change, confrontation, and the function of the Marshall Plan.

Jory Brentjens and Wiel Lenders from the National Liberation Museum 1944–45 in Groesbeek, the Netherlands, shed light on the challenges of creating, mapping, exhibiting the theme of liberation from a multi-perspectival angle. In 2014, the Liberation Route Europe Foundation opened its traveling exhibition *Routes of Liberation: Legacies of the Second World War*. For the first time, the organizers and curators of the exhibition employed a multi-perspectival approach on a broader European scale with input from Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, Germany, and Poland. Bringing together the national narratives of five countries led to several heated discussions but also brought valuable new insights and a broader context in which to view one's own history.

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