

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THE THEORY OF CULTURAL MEMORY

Our understanding of how societies create, maintain, and pass on their collective identities across generations has been profoundly altered by the emergence of cultural memory as one of the most important and dynamic areas of interdisciplinary inquiry in modern scholarship. Fundamentally, cultural memory is a type of collective memory that goes beyond personal experience and includes collective knowledge, values, customs, and stories that societies comprehend and transmit over time (Assmann, 2011). In contrast to communicative memory, which is usually limited to 80–100 years, cultural memory runs on external systems of notation and symbolic representation, such as monuments, rituals, texts, and media, and can last for generations or even centuries. This creates what Jan Assmann called long-term societal memory, which can last up to 3,000 years (Assmann, 2011).

Theoretical underpinnings of cultural memory studies are largely derived from Maurice Halbwachs' groundbreaking theory of collective memory, which posits that human memory is essentially social rather than individual and that memory can only function in collective settings where social groups provide the structures for remembering (Halbwachs, 1992). Building on this basis, Pierre Nora's seminal idea of *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory) recognised the symbolic places, activities, and artefacts that help to preserve cultural memory in the absence of lived tradition (Nora, 1989). In our modern, globalised world, where cultural memories increasingly operate in transnational contexts and transcend national boundaries, these conceptual frameworks have proven especially pertinent.

In recent decades, the importance of researching cultural memory in settings characterised by trauma, migration, translation, and identity formation has grown as researchers have realised how important it is to comprehend how communities deal with historical rupture, cultural contact, and displacement. According to Brownlie (2016), translation serves as a metaphor and a mechanism for the transmission of cultural memories, allowing memories to flow across linguistic and cultural boundaries while also changing them. Cultural memory plays a crucial role in diasporic contexts by allowing the creation of hybrid identities that balance host expectations and ancestral traditions while also reuniting scattered communities with their homelands (Baser, 2024).

Multiculturalism and modern globalisation have produced previously unheard-of circumstances for the circulation of cultural memory, where digital technologies enable the transformation and preservation of collective memory (Erll, 2008).

Traditional nation-state paradigms are being challenged by these developments, which also give marginalised communities a chance to reclaim suppressed histories and express counter-narratives. By analysing how dominant groups construct historical narratives and acknowledging media and translation as sites of resistance, the field has grown more aware of the power dynamics present in memory-making processes.

This resurgence reflects the realisation that understanding how societies remember and forget is crucial to understanding conflict, political legitimisation, and identity formation in the modern era (2011). Writing, remembering, and political imagination in the context of cultural memory and early civilisation. Cambridge University Press.

RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE BOOK

This volume aims to address the major conceptual and methodological issues that the field of cultural memory studies faces, despite its impressive growth over the last three decades. The methodological shortcomings of contemporary memory studies have been criticised, especially its emphasis on representation at the expense of audience and reception (Kansteiner, 2002). There is a disconnect between textual analysis and lived mnemonic experience because most studies focus on individual events within specific chronological and geographic contexts without considering how their audiences actually receive and transform memories.

Additionally, the field has been described by what academics refer to as "Euro/Anglo centrism," with a preponderance of Global North-designed approaches, concepts, and methods (Charumbira et al., 2022). The idea that memory frameworks created in European contexts are universally applicable has been questioned by calls for decolonising memory studies as a result of this Western-centric bias (Pauls, 2024). Intersectional approaches that would show how various axes of difference – such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and citizenship – operate as intersecting sites of lived experience and marginalisation have proven difficult for traditional memory studies to incorporate (Chidgey, 2023).

Although the importance of the intersection between translation studies and memory studies is becoming more widely acknowledged, it is still theoretically undeveloped (Hou, 2023). According to recent research, translation serves as both a linguistic transfer and a transmission of cultural memory, involving processes of foreignization and domestication that can either strengthen stereotypes or promote understanding (Brownlie, 2016). Nevertheless, there are still few thorough frameworks available for examining these intricate cultural translations.

By providing a variety of interpretive perspectives that emphasise translation as a methodology and a subject of study, *Cultural Memory in Translation* fills these gaps. The three main goals of our volume are to: (1) examine memory across linguistic, cultural, and geographic boundaries in order to challenge methodological nationalism; (2) enhance marginalised voices and counter-narratives that are not included in dominant memory discourses; and (3) create interpretative frameworks that take complex dynamics into account.

Recent developments in transcultural memory studies, which highlight the fluidity and movement of memories across cultural boundaries, are incorporated into the volume's interpretive approach (Erll, 2024). We investigate how memories move, change, and take on new meanings as a result of translation and cross-cultural interaction, as opposed to viewing cultural memory as enclosed by national or ethnic boundaries. This method makes it possible to study what Michael Rothberg refers to as "multidirectional memory"—the dynamic process by which various cultural memories interact and impact one another (Rothberg, 2009).

This collection illustrates how interpretative approaches uncover the power dynamics, ethical considerations, and transformative potential inherent in cultural memory practices by assembling a variety of case studies from literature, film, oral storytelling, and digital media.

ORGANISATION BY THEME

In order to highlight translation as both an analytical tool and a cultural practice, *Cultural Memory in Translation* carefully divides its wide range of contributions into five thematic sections. This organisational framework explores how memories cross linguistic, cultural, and temporal boundaries through intricate mediation and transformation processes, going beyond conventional disciplinary boundaries.

One of the most pressing issues in modern memory studies is how governments and powerful groups plan systematic forgetting to hide historical injustices. This is covered in Part I: Trauma, Memory, and Political Erasure (Mihai, 2022). Drawing from Kansteiner's (2002) criticism of trauma studies' methodological shortcomings, these chapters explore what Mihai refers to as the "double erasure" that occurs in hegemonic narratives that both absolve complicity and produce idealised resistance figures. The section examines state-sanctioned amnesia as a political tactic, showing how "imposed amnesia" functions as "the modus operandi of the current moment," where historical consciousness is sacrificed to cultural apparatuses and consumerism spectacles that engage in social amnesia (Giroux, 2010). Contributors examine how traumatic memories withstand erasure through

translation into alternative narratives and counter-archives through case studies covering political violence, genocide, and memorial reconstruction.

Part II: *Diaspora, Multiculturalism and Transnational Memory* investigates how memories spread across national and cultural borders by conducting transcultural memory studies (Erll, 2024). Building on Landsberg's idea of prosthetic memory, this section examines how diasporic communities create hybrid identities that balance host expectations and ancestral traditions while preserving ties to their homeland (Baser, 2024). The chapters examine how digital platforms support "diasporic memory practice," which uses shared narratives to unite scattered communities and translation processes to change cultural meanings (Clarke et al., 2023).

Intersectional perspectives that emerge as interrelated sites of marginalisation and lived experience are highlighted in Part III: *Caste, Identity, and Cultural Memory* (Chidgey, 2023). These chapters analyse how Dalits use collective memory in anti-caste struggles to produce counter-memories that challenge Hindutva meta-narratives, drawing on Choudhary's (2024) analysis of "mnemonic injustice" within caste-based memory structures. By elevating under-represented voices and examining how caste serves as a structuring principle of historiography, the section helps decolonise memory studies (Jose, 2023). Contributors show how counter-storytelling develops into "a concept and method for critical medical anthropology from the Global South" (Krishnan, 2024), articulating anti-caste counter-framings and exposing underlying Brahmanical assumptions.

Part IV: *Translation, Media and Cultural Memory* examines how digital technologies can alter memory structures and their mediality (Mandolessi, 2024). In addition to examining how translation serves as a means of transmitting cultural memory through domestication and foreignization processes, these contributions also look at cinema as a storehouse of cultural memory (Brownlie, 2016). The section discusses the "translation-memory interface" in the context of migration, examining the ways in which translation mediates the connection between cultural displacement and autobiographical memory (Hou, 2023).

Intimate scales of memory transmission are the subject of Part V: *Family, Pedagogy, and Local Memories*, which explores how families are essential settings for intergenerational memory sharing (Baudet et al., 2025). These chapters examine "family memory" as a unique autobiographical memory formed through shared activities and conversations (Shore, 2009), drawing on research showing that family knowledge predicts successful functioning in children through enhanced recall and narrative abilities (Fivush et al., 2006). In addition to looking at local memory websites as venues for community development and collective

empowerment, contributors assess the effects of teachers' "memory-relevant language" on kids' strategic knowledge development (de Kreek, 2016).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Cultural Memory in Translation is theoretically grounded in foundational memory studies scholarship while advancing innovative interpretative frameworks that challenge traditional disciplinary boundaries. The volume draws primarily from three seminal theoretical traditions that have shaped the field: Maurice Halbwachs' pioneering concept of collective memory, which argued that human memory can only function within collective contexts where social groups provide frameworks for remembrance (Halbwachs, 1992); Jan Assmann's distinction between cultural memory – long-term societal memory spanning up to 3,000 years transmitted through external systems of notation – and communicative memory, typically restricted to 80-100 years (Assmann, 2011); and Pierre Nora's influential concept of *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory), which identified symbolic spaces, practices, and objects that preserve cultural memory when lived tradition has disappeared (Nora, 1989).

However, our interpretative framework moves beyond these foundational approaches by integrating insights from transcultural memory studies, which emphasize "the fluidity and fuzziness of memory in culture" while challenging "methodological culturalism" that assumes memory is contained within bounded national cultures (Erll, 2024, p. 18). This transcultural turn, emerging around 2010, represents memory studies' "third phase," moving away from national container approaches toward examining how "mnemonic contents, forms, and practices travel across and beyond cultural boundaries" (Erll, 2024, p. 23 on Michael Rothberg's concept of multidirectional memory, which challenges competitive memory models by demonstrating how "memory works productively through negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing" (Rothberg, 2009, p. 3), our framework emphasizes translation as both analytical lens and cultural practice. This approach draws from emerging scholarship on the translation-memory interface, which recognizes that "translating and remembering are fundamental human endeavours that exist in a coterminous relationship" through their shared interpretative operations (Deane-Cox & Spiessens, 2022, p. 1). Our interpretative methodology synthesizes these theoretical insights with attention to power dynamics, ethical dimensions, and transformative potential embedded within cultural memory practices, enabling analysis of how memories migrate, transform, and acquire new meanings through processes of translation and cultural contact.

SCHOLARSHIP CONTRIBUTION

Cultural Memory in Translation advances the quickly developing field of memory studies by offering a number of unique theoretical and methodological interventions. First and foremost, the book addresses criticisms of "Euro/Anglo centrism," which has long influenced the field's prevailing ideas, methods, and approaches (Charumbira et al., 2022). The collection supports calls to decolonise memory studies while addressing methodological constraints that still plague the field by emphasising translation as both an analytical lens and cultural practice (Kansteiner, 2002).

The creation of a thorough framework for the translation-memory interface is the book's main theoretical contribution. Despite recent research emphasising that remembering and translating are "coterminous" interpretative activities (Deane-Cox & Spiessens, 2022), systematic models for examining how cultural translation affects the transmission of memory have not yet been developed (Hou, 2023). Therefore, contributors consider translation as a multifaceted practice that can both promote cross-cultural understanding and perpetuate othering stereotypes, rather than just as a means of transferring language (Brownlie, 2016). The volume expands on Michael Rothberg's concept of multidirectional memory and places it in transnational contexts by showing how translation influences the transmission, reception, and alteration of collective memories.

From a methodological standpoint, the collection promotes intersectional analyses that highlight how race, gender, class, sexuality, and citizenship are all intertwined in memory practices. This approach fills a significant gap: despite its influence in the social sciences and humanities, intersectionality is still "suspiciously underdeveloped" in memory studies (Chidgey, 2023). The volume shows how digital platforms and community-engaged memory work can rebalance prevailing historical accounts through case studies that elevate marginalised voices and counter-narratives (Cochran & O'Brien, 2024). In reconstructing collective narratives about the past, these empirical chapters demonstrate the significant agency that activists, translators, and other cultural mediators possess (van de Warrenburg & Declercq, 2022).

When combined, *Cultural Memory in Translation's* theoretical synthesis and empirical scope makes translation a crucial framework for comprehending the circulation of transcultural memory. As a result, the book questions widely held beliefs about how memories move, change, and take on new meanings across cultural boundaries, providing academics and professionals with a wealth of resources for further study.

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