

# Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe

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# Between Paris and Warsaw: Multidirectional Memory, Ethics, and Historical Responsibility

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### From Paris to Warsaw and beyond

In his 2010 keynote lecture at the inaugural event of Cambridge University's "Memory at War" research project, historian Jay Winter provided a succinct motto for a new direction in Memory Studies. Referencing discussions at "European Union meetings on the question of creating a European history," Winter remarked that "it's been evident that the turn toward the east is the key move in scholarly work. *If you shift the centre of gravity of Europe from Paris to Warsaw, it looks different.* And it has to be done."<sup>1</sup> Shifting the center of gravity of Memory Studies from Paris to Warsaw, Winter continued, would "allo[w] for a reconfiguration of European space" and would 'deal with the notion of a common European past' in an original and valuable way. I am sympathetic to Winter's proposal to reconfigure European space and impressed by the Memory at War project's efforts to develop, in their words, a "memory paradigm" in order to understand "cultural and political transformations in Eastern Europe"—especially in Poland, Ukraine, and Russia—as "differential responses to legacies and traumas of the imperial, Soviet, and national pasts."<sup>2</sup> Although Warsaw as a site of memory plays a large role in my chapter, my contribution to rethinking memory and theory in Eastern Europe entails approaching Warsaw from diverse, non-Polish perspectives.

At the same time that Winter affirms the change of course undertaken by the Memory at War project, he recognizes the inherent

difficulties of mapping Europe or, in fact, any such overdetermined cultural geography. "Boundaries," he notes, "are in flux." A reconfiguration of European space will require more than just a shift of gravity, Winter implies when he references Turkey, another border region of historical and contemporary Europe: "Anyone who has spent any time in Istanbul will recognize that the question of where Europe starts and stops is a matter of urgent and incomplete debate." As the mention of Istanbul indicates, "turn[ing] toward the east" is indeed a complicated endeavor, since multiple "east" are at stake and different geopolitical maps coexist, maps that must account both for Cold War and post-Cold War configurations as well as multiple histories of imperial and postimperial conflict and exchange. Straddling two continents, Istanbul provides a symbol that troubles attempts to keep east and west apart and serves to suggest that not only a reversal of perspective is necessary—say, from Paris to Warsaw—but also an unsettling of location, a questioning of the self-sameness of any site.

When a reference to Istanbul supplements a shift from Paris to Warsaw—a move that Winter made again in a talk at Cambridge in July 2011<sup>3</sup>—a need also emerges for a shift from a model of remembrance constructed out of Pierre Nora's nationally framed *lieux de mémoire* to a model that can grapple with transnational "constellations" of cities and "knotted intersections" of memory (to borrow terms from Walter Benjamin and Paul Gilroy, respectively).<sup>4</sup> Developing this new model of what Debarati Sanyal, Max Silverman, and I have called *noeuds de mémoire* or knots of memory will entail not simply shifting to Warsaw from Paris, but remaining somewhere *in between*: thinking Warsaw *with* Paris as well as *with* a number of other cities, such as Atlanta, Gaza City, and, indeed, even Istanbul.<sup>5</sup> Such a relational approach owes much to postcolonial theory, which has challenged scholars in multiple ways: not only asking them to shift their gaze from the center to the periphery, but also—just as radically—to think the center and periphery together, as constituting each other in mutual, but unequal relations of exchange and influence. These challenges also entail rethinking the place of thinking itself (East for whom? West for whom?), and ultimately, of course, doing away with such geocultural hierarchies altogether.

What Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler call "the tensions of empire"—the reciprocal, power-laden relations connecting center and periphery, metropole and colony—are everywhere to be found in the circuits of the colonial and postcolonial worlds, but they are difficult

to accommodate in the received categories of cultural Memory Studies (as the shift from *lieux de mémoire* to *noeuds de mémoire* is meant to suggest).<sup>6</sup> I thus begin by reviewing why Memory Studies has been late to the encounter with Postcolonial Studies and then offer my theory of multidirectional memory as an alternative that can take into account the kinds of constellations and intersections that emerge from the histories and aftermaths of violence, domination, and transculturation. Mapping memory of the Warsaw Ghetto illustrates what I mean by a multidirectional knot of memory and allows us to sketch a set of distinctions necessary for developing a transcultural ethics of comparison. In the final part of the chapter I supplement memory and the ethics of comparison with a concern for postimperial and posttraumatic responsibility. Here I consider an artwork whose project of remembrance migrates in especially unexpected directions and takes us, finally, to other locations between Paris and Warsaw and between east and west, including the divided cities of Istanbul and Berlin. Connecting the varied sections of this chapter is the argument that only a nonorganic conception of the subjects of memory and historical responsibility can account for the multiple legacies that crisscross a Europe simultaneously postcolonial, postsocialist, post-National Socialist, and postmigrant.

### Excursus on cultural memory and Postcolonial Studies: A missed encounter

The field of Postcolonial Studies has had a paradoxical relation to cultural memory. On the one hand, the most influential monographs, anthologies, companions, and guidebooks to Postcolonial Studies have largely left the category of memory out of their theory and practice of the field. On the other hand, it can easily be argued that issues related to cultural memory make up the core concerns of Postcolonial Studies. Consider such matters as the erasure of the precolonial past by the invasion of colonialism, the reappropriation of that past by anticolonial struggles, and its subsequent reconfiguration by postcolonial regimes; the cultural legacies of colonization in language and education; the nostalgia for empire or precontact conditions in film, literature, and scholarship; the rereading of the archives of imperial dominance by contemporary historians and critics; and, at a metacritical level, the well-known debates about the disjunctive temporality of the "post" in postcolonial. These postcolonial concerns clearly

echo those of scholars of postsocialism as well: complex temporalities, historical erasure, nostalgia, the hangover of cultural hegemony, and the archives and counterarchives of domination play key roles in the postsocialist world.

The understanding of such phenomena ought to benefit from an analytic lens honed by Memory Studies, but Memory Studies, for its part, has largely avoided addressing colonialism and its legacies, both in its founding texts and in many of its more recent assessments. My argument is that the fault for this missed encounter lies largely with Memory Studies, which, in its classical mode, has been unable to think the conditions created by colonialism.<sup>7</sup> Before offering multidirectional memory as a possible model for thinking more adequately about the kinds of problems raised by the contested aftermaths of imperial projects such as those that mark Eastern Europe, let me suggest briefly why earlier iterations of Memory Studies have ultimately failed to offer adequate concepts, even as they have provided some necessary tools for postcolonial, postsocialist, and post-Holocaust Memory Studies.

The study of cultural memory has a variety of sources and draws on diverse theoretical predecessors, but its most obvious beginning in the modern period lies in the work of the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. Writing in the 1920s, Halbwachs considered what he called "collective memory" in relation to "social frameworks."<sup>8</sup> Emphasis on the shaping forces of social frameworks opens the study of memory to politics, for those forces wed the articulation of memory to the interests and conflicts of groups located in the present. Halbwachs, however, understood groups as relatively homogeneous and closed entities. Such a conceptualization ultimately limits Halbwachs's usefulness for a Memory Studies interested in questions of colonialism and globalization, since these are conditions that dislocate the organically defined groups that interested Halbwachs and that continue to interest many students of memory.

The most influential scholars who have led the rediscovery of Halbwachs have refined his theory, yet also repeated its limited understanding of who or what constitutes a subject of collective memory. When Pierre Nora reanimates the Halbwachsian heritage of collective memory by connecting it to the classical tradition of *loci memoriae*, he strongly reterritorializes Halbwachs's attention to social groups through a defining emphasis on the *nation* as the ultimate modern "social framework"—a nation purged of its imperial adventures and

minoritarian inflections.<sup>9</sup> Jan and Aleida Assmann's useful distinction between communicative and cultural memory inadvertently falls into an analogous trap by foregrounding hegemonic vantage points on the past. The Assmanns are forthright about the fact that cultural memory, as they use it, refers to *canonical* memory—those monuments (broadly understood) of a given civilization that have a shaping force over a long duration. However, despite their acknowledgment that official archives and repositories of memory "have their own structural mechanisms of exclusion," their theory has not generally sought to uncover alternative archives or noncanonical memory traditions.<sup>10</sup>

This brief survey suggests some of the reasons why Memory Studies has largely remained marginal to the concerns of Postcolonial Studies. Indeed, taken together, Halbwachs's organicism, Nora's purified national frame, and the Assmanns' preponderant focus on canonical archives suggest that throughout the twentieth century—the era of colonialism's apotheosis, collapse, and reconfiguration in neo- and postcolonial guises—cultural Memory Studies may have inadvertently done as much to reproduce imperial mentalities as to challenge them. In particular, the emphasis of so much Memory Studies on the construction of continuity and the coherence of cultural groups—whether defined as small-scale, national, or civilizational—appears in the postcolonial mirror as a kind of fetishism that disavows the structural dislocations produced by an imperial world system.<sup>11</sup> A Memory Studies available for the understanding of a Europe cross-cut by colonial and postcolonial as well as socialist and postsocialist experiences requires more than just attention to the shaping force of the present and the accretion of power-laden memory in national and civilizational canons of memory. It also requires a multidirectional theory of the constellations and knots of memory that result from imperial domination as well as peaceful exchange. This theory demands in turn an ethics of comparison that allows us to navigate the field of hybrid memories that emerges into view once we employ a multidirectional lens.

### Between Paris and Warsaw I: Multidirectional memory, the ethics of comparison, and the legacies of the Ghetto

The free and coerced flows of people, goods, and ideas that accompany colonial expansion create new constellations of histories and

temporalities. Such flows are among the sources of what I have called memory's "multidirectionality," a dynamism in which multiple pasts jostle against each other in a heterogeneous present, and where communities of remembrance disperse and reconvene in nonorganic forms not recognizable to earlier theorists of memory. Like empire, memory is simultaneously disjunctive and combinatorial: it both disassembles and reassembles. In my book *Multidirectional Memory*, I explored this process of dis- and reassembly via intersecting memories of the Holocaust, colonialism, and slavery in an era of decolonization. In renarrating the place of the Holocaust in contemporary memory cultures, I proposed three fundamental shifts in thinking about memory in transnational and transcultural contexts: first, a refusal of the zero-sum logic that characterizes competitive approaches to memory; second, a commitment to exploring memories dialogically across allegedly distinct histories; and, third, a deconstruction of the straight line that is assumed to connect collective memory and group identity. By making visible an intellectual and artistic countertradition that refuses the dominant zero-sum game, links memories of Nazi genocide, colonialism, and slavery, and reaches out beyond the organic communities of identity politics, I hoped in *Multidirectional Memory* to reveal how the public articulation of collective memory by marginalized and oppositional social groups provides resources for other groups to articulate their own claims for recognition and justice.<sup>12</sup>

If, however, public memory is structurally multidirectional—that is, always marked by transcultural borrowing, exchange, and adaptation—that does not mean that the politics of multidirectional memory come with any guarantees. Indeed, given the ubiquity of Nazi and Holocaust references and analogies in contemporary public spheres on a global scale, it is clear that the articulation of almost any political position may come in multidirectional form. Hence, it is important to develop clear criteria that allow us to distinguish between examples of multidirectional memory that are oriented toward justice and examples that perpetuate conflict. In response to the high stakes of proliferating memory discourses, it becomes imperative to develop an ethics of comparison that can distinguish politically productive forms of memory from those that lead to competition, appropriation, or trivialization.<sup>13</sup>

In my book, the primary criterion of comparison I used was a contrast between examples that collapse differences between historical

events and examples that bring histories into contact while preserving their distinctiveness. I now believe that this *axis of comparison*—a continuum that extends from equation to extreme differentiation—needs to be supplemented by an *axis of political affect*. The affective axis asks *to what ends* the comparison is being made; here a continuum runs from competition to solidarity. Mapping practices of memory across these two axes establishes four larger categories with distinct political valences and opens up the possibility of degrees, gradations, and tendencies within those categories.

Taking up Jay Winter's challenge to turn east in theorizing memory, I pursue this mapping by looking at several multidirectional acts of memory that cluster around the Warsaw Ghetto and bring together the Holocaust and issues concerning race, colonization, decolonization, and various experiences of the aftermath. I begin by reviewing two Warsaw examples taken from *Multidirectional Memory* before moving to more contemporary cases.

In my first example, Paris and Warsaw meet during the Algerian War of Independence. On November 9, 1961, the novelist Marguerite Duras published an article called "Les Deux Ghettos" (The Two Ghettos) in the newsweekly *France-Observateur*. Writing in the wake of the October 17 massacre—a massacre in which Maurice Papon's Paris police murdered dozens of peacefully demonstrating Algerians, dumped some of the bodies into the Seine, and arrested more than 11,000 others, who were then held in makeshift camps at the edges of the city—Duras brings together interviews with a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto and a pair of Algerian workers.<sup>14</sup> While the title of the piece seems to suggest an equation between the ghettos that held Jews during the Second World War and those that held Algerians at a late stage of colonialism—an impression reinforced by the side-by-side images of an Algerian worker and a Jew bearing a yellow star that accompany the article—the actual answers provided by Duras's interviewees suggest as many asymmetries as similarities. Positing history as relational—that is, as woven from similar, but not identical fabrics—Duras's text demonstrates a multidirectional sensibility.

A short essay by the African American intellectual W. E. B. Du Bois echoes Duras's view. In 1949 and on his way to Moscow, Du Bois visited Warsaw, where he saw the ruins of the ghetto. Three years later he wrote a short article recounting his trip called "The Negro and the Warsaw Ghetto," in which he reflected on the significance of the Jewish experience during the Second World War for the global

problem of race.<sup>15</sup> The result of his visit, he wrote, "and particularly of my view of the Warsaw ghetto" and of Nathan Rapoport's Warsaw Ghetto Uprising monument,

was not so much clearer understanding of the Jewish problem in the world as it was a real and more complete understanding of the Negro problem. In the first place, the problem of slavery, emancipation, and caste in the United States was no longer in my mind a *separate and unique* thing as I had so long conceived it. [...] The race problem in which I was interested cut across lines of color and physique and belief and status and was a matter of cultural patterns, perverted teaching and human hate and prejudice.<sup>16</sup>

What is notable in Du Bois's short piece is both the solidarity he expresses with Jewish history and his very prescient grasp of the relatedness of different histories of racial violence. Moving beyond a conception of his own experience as "a separate and unique thing," Du Bois comes to an understanding of race that is instead multidirectional. He draws on the material traces of the Nazi genocide in order to rethink his understanding of the African American past and present. Du Bois's interpretation of the larger significance of the Warsaw Ghetto derives in turn from the very experience and memory of racism that he is reconceptualizing in this article. As he continues, "I have seen something of human upheaval in this world: the scream and shots of a race riot in Atlanta; the marching of the Ku Klux Klan [...] the neglect and destruction of human habitation; but nothing in my wildest imagination was *equal* to what I saw in Warsaw in 1949."<sup>17</sup> It is important to emphasize that the asymmetrical understanding arrived at by Du Bois in juxtaposing Warsaw and Atlanta revises his own 1947 claim that "There was no Nazi atrocity [...] which the Christian civilization of Europe had not long been practicing against colored folk in all parts of the world."<sup>18</sup> In contrast, Du Bois's post-Warsaw vision brings black and Jewish histories into relation without erasing their differences or fetishizing their uniqueness. Proximate pasts are neither "separate and unique" nor "equal"; rather, a form of modified "double consciousness" arises capable of conjoining them in an open-ended assemblage.

The examples of Du Bois and Duras, which come from two moments when the meanings of Nazi Jewish policies had not yet solidified into the current, widely held understanding of the Holocaust as "a separate

and unique thing," help us begin mapping the field of multidirectional memory and formulating an ethics of comparison. While Duras's article looks at first like an expression of solidarity based on an equation of histories, it ultimately joins Du Bois in a vision of solidarity constructed through differentiated similitude.

Duras and Du Bois are far from typical; the Warsaw Ghetto is often deployed in comparative constellations of memory that do not attain such a simultaneously differentiated and solidaristic understanding of history. Jumping to the present, we can see, for example, very different commemorative articulations in the wake of the Israeli bombing of Gaza in winter 2009. The Gaza moment produced a proliferation of controversial Holocaust and, especially, Warsaw analogies that filtered the contemporary conflict through a genocidal matrix with varying degrees of nuance: from Caryl Churchill's *Seven Jewish Children: A Play for Gaza*—which in nine short minutes traces a harrowing genealogy from Nazi-occupied Europe to Israeli-occupied Palestine—to the case of the radical American sociology professor who sent an e-mail to his students in which he declared flatly that "Gaza is Israel's Warsaw."<sup>19</sup>

That same professorial e-mail also included a photo essay taken from the website of well-known Israel-critic, political scientist Norman Finkelstein, which, in the sociology professor's words, presented "parallel images of Nazis and Israelis."<sup>20</sup> This photo essay from the website of Finkelstein, who is the son of Holocaust survivors, circulated widely in the immediate aftermath of the Gaza crisis. It begins with the title "Deutschland Uber Alles" and the explanatory subheading "THE GRANDCHILDREN OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS FROM WORLD WAR II ARE DOING TO THE PALESTINIANS EXACTLY WHAT WAS DONE TO THEM BY NAZI GERMANY." A vertical strip of images follows, with black and white photographs of Nazis and Jews on the left side of the page—many depicting scenes in the Warsaw Ghetto—and color images of Israelis and Palestinians on the right. The images range from scenes of the construction of fences, walls, and camps, to depictions of prisoners behind barbed wire, confrontations of soldiers and civilians, and gruesome images of corpses. The images in each of the six sections of the photo essay abut each other without any gap. The lack of space between either the vertical or horizontal axes creates a continuous strip of images and suggests that the histories at stake blur into each other without remainder. While the histories of the Holocaust and Israel/Palestine are certainly *proximate*, both in terms of historical



sequencing and psychic consequences for Israelis and Palestinians, Finkelstein's montage of images translates proximity into *equation*: the histories are depicted as both identical and strictly identified with each other. There is a long history of such equations, which have been used by all sides in the conflict. But must the juxtaposition of these two histories always foster further conflict and competition, as the antagonistic framing of the photo essay does?

A work by a contemporary visual artist suggests that it is possible to confront both haunting legacies and ongoing violence without falling into this trap. Two of the images that appear in the Finkelstein photo essay reappear to different effect in the Israeli-British artist Alan Schechner's *The Legacy of Abused Children: From Poland to Palestine*, a 2003 digitally altered photograph and DVD projection. The Finkelstein photo essay concludes by juxtaposing the frequently reproduced, Nazi-taken photograph of a boy in the Warsaw Ghetto with his hands up—perhaps the most famous image from the Holocaust—with two photographs of Palestinian boys confronted by Israeli soldiers.<sup>21</sup> In Schechner's work, these photographs are no longer simply juxtaposed, but set into motion. In the DVD projection, the camera zooms in on the Warsaw photograph to reveal that the boy, whose hands are empty in the original image, is holding a photograph. As the camera gets closer, it becomes clear that this is a photograph of a Palestinian boy, who has apparently wet his pants in fear, being carried away by soldiers. As the camera zooms in on this image it becomes clear that the Palestinian boy is himself now holding a photograph as well: none other than the photo of the Warsaw boy.

In folding these two highly charged images into each other, Schechner could easily be described as using a strategy of equation similar to Finkelstein's, even as he inverts the affective charge from competition to solidarity. Yet, I would argue, the work also opens up the possibility of a differentiated solidarity. Crucial here is the act of constrained agency whereby each boy gestures at the other, as if to say, "don't just look at me, look at this other case." Although folded into the image of the self, the image of the other is not a mirror image, but an artistically produced supplement that ruptures the homogenous space and time of the original image: as viewers, we are neither in Poland nor Palestine but rather in a third space that allows us to perceive both our implication in the histories at stake and the differences at play. Through its self-consciously manipulated form,

*Legacy* also undermines deterministic genealogical explanations that present an endless cycle of reciprocal violence and reproduce notions of two victim peoples. In deconstructing the claims to origin that underlie much of the rhetoric of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it offers the possibility that analogy can become part of a depropriative and transformative work of memory in which the juxtaposition of different histories reorganizes understanding of each.

Taking into account Finkelstein and Schechner allows us to flesh out the mapping of multidirectional memory begun with Duras and Du Bois. Although schematic, such a map can provide orientation for a comparative exploration of political imaginaries in an age of trans-cultural memory. As all of these examples illustrate, Warsaw and the Warsaw Ghetto in particular have always been multivalenced knots of memory and resonant symbols in a transnational discourse on race, resistance, and colonization.

If we broaden our frame of reference and leave the Warsaw Ghetto behind momentarily, we can see that this map of memory also helps us account for current controversies unfolding in postsocialist Eastern Europe about the relation between Nazi and Soviet terror. These controversies as well can be illuminated by the intersecting axes of comparison and affect that I have charted. Thus, for instance, certain articulations of the double genocide thesis embodied in documents such as the Prague Declaration may represent more than a historical comparison: they can at times amount to a competitive assertion based on an equation of histories that seeks to seize the ground of recognition from people with other experiences of suffering. Such a competitive intervention also characterizes seemingly opposite sacralizing discourses of the Holocaust's uniqueness, discourses whose vision of extreme differentiation both prompts and responds to discourses of equation. The map of multidirectional memory allows us to chart these different positions and, equally important, to imagine alternative articulations of the sort practiced by Duras, Du Bois, and Schechner that would move along the axis of affect from competition toward solidarity.

### Between Warsaw and Istanbul: Rethinking historical responsibility

What are the conditions under which solidarity is possible? The examples of Warsaw Ghetto memory I've mentioned so far—as well

as the controversies about double genocide—are predominantly articulated from the perspective and out of the experience of *victims*, but that need not be the case. Indeed, the ability to shift *between* subject positions may ultimately be a prerequisite for differentiated expressions of solidarity. My final examples suggest that taking responsibility for the past is an act in excess of individual accounting and of the organic communities imagined by classical Memory Studies: the affect of solidarity involves a feeling of *implication in and accountability for* histories *not* considered “one’s own.”

I return one more time to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising monument, which has been the staging ground for diverse interventions—from Du Bois’s essay to Solidarity demonstrations under communism.<sup>22</sup> The history of the monument represents a classic case of mnemonic “hardware” lending itself to discursive and performative “software” innovations, in Alexander Etkind’s helpful terms.<sup>23</sup> One well-known public performance illustrates how a new genre of responses has emerged in relation to the ghetto. On December 7, 1970, West German chancellor Willy Brandt was in Warsaw to sign a treaty recognizing the German/Polish border on the Oder-Neisse Line. This important achievement of Brandt’s *Ostpolitik* has been overshadowed in popular memory by an apparently spontaneous gesture the German chancellor made just before signing the Treaty of Warsaw. During a visit to the site of the Ghetto, Brandt first lay a wreath at the foot of Rapoport’s monument and then, to the surprise of observers, fell to his knees in what was unmistakably a sign of repentance.

It would be difficult to overstate the significance of Brandt’s gesture. According to sociologist Valentin Rauer, “This performative event has changed the way [...] Germans attempt to come to terms with their Nazi past. [It] was the first symbolic public representation of German guilt that did not face general immediate defensive opposition in Germany. [It] opened up the way for new forms of collective remembrance of and responsibility for the German past.”<sup>24</sup> To our earlier examples, Brandt adds an association between Warsaw and the confrontation with historical responsibility for political violence from the perspective of a perpetrator society. That is, Warsaw becomes a site for what in German is called *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, “mastering” or coming to terms with the past. This concern with the historical responsibility of the perpetrator society—the concern of transitional justice—is a wide ethical and political field that bridges the post-Holocaust, postcolonial, and postsocialist epochs. Yet, significantly,

Brandt himself was not a perpetrator, but rather an exiled resistance figure; the power of his gesture lies in its expression of solidarity and implication beyond individual guilt.

As Rauer demonstrates, the success of Brandt’s act of memory also depends both on its adaptation of previous scripts *and* its subsequent repetition in other acts of memory: “the kneefall [*sic*] became an object of iteration and mythification in its own right. It had been applied to various contexts (Yugoslavia, China/Japan, Italy, Chile etc.) as a symbol which one should take as a model to be followed while performing public acts of reconciliation” (259).<sup>25</sup> An implication of Rauer’s analysis is that once a performative act of memory enters the circuits of media and thus becomes memorable, organic connection to the site of memory is lost. My reason for evoking Brandt’s gesture today lies in one of these nonorganic appropriations.

The famous image of Brandt on his knees shows up, remediated, in *Das Leben, das Universum und der ganze Rest*, a large-scale 2011 installation by the Frankfurt artists Anny and Sibel Öztürk. Apparently named after the popular 1982 Douglas Adams novel *Life, the Universe, and Everything*, the work assembles a large archive of public images from the period between 1968 and the fall of the Berlin Wall; portraits of politicians and pop stars abut photographs of world-historical events such as the Vietnam War.<sup>26</sup> On top of this wallpaper background, the artists, who are sisters, have hung a smaller number of faux-naïve paintings—some of which include narrative text—that relate the autobiographical story of their family. The wall-sized installation moves chronologically from left to right, from 1968 to 1989, as the family’s story of migration from Turkey to Germany as part of the “guest worker” program joins a narrative of public culture.<sup>27</sup> While some of these images reference Turkish or Turkish-German history—for example, adjacent images depict the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 and families of guest workers arriving at a German train station (an ironic commentary on the German discourse of “invasion” that accompanied Turkish migration to the Federal Republic in the early 1970s)—the images on the whole create a strong sense of a global public sphere, or perhaps, better, a collective memory of global events and ephemera. In layering family history with world history and filtering both through pop cultural icons, the Öztürks situate their work at the intersection of what Harald Welzer and his colleagues call the *Album* of communicative memory and the *Lexikon* of historical knowledge.<sup>28</sup>



The 1970 image of Willy Brandt appears near the beginning of the installation's visual timeline, where we find it surrounded by such icons as the moon landing, the Kent State massacre, the Red Army Faction, the black women's movement, and Charles Manson. The Brandt image is installed around eye level, which means that the photographers in the background of the picture are pointing their cameras directly at viewers, a self-reflexive framing that makes us aware of the crucial, mediated backdrop of the Chancellor's spontaneous act—without photography it's unlikely this could have become an "iconic" moment. Directly above Brandt's *Kniefall* hangs one of the autobiographical paintings: a middle-aged woman holds a small baby on her knees. The juxtaposed images link Warsaw with what must be Istanbul (given that the older sister, Anny, was born in the Turkish metropolis in 1970). As we move ahead in the timeline, this seemingly arbitrary and disproportionate juxtaposition catalyzes a question about historical responsibility: what does this Turkish infant on her relative's knees in Istanbul have to do with the kneeling German chancellor in Warsaw? The fact that that infant will go on to become the artist who creates the collage that raises this issue hints that the question cannot be unimportant.

A further image joins the Brandt photo to suggest that the plethora of transnational German histories evoked by *Das Leben, das Universum* can be usefully understood as *post-National Socialist* as well as *postmigrant*. One of the larger family images consists of an unframed painting of the sister we had seen as an infant in Istanbul now standing as an adolescent in front of a dour looking Adolf Hitler. The installation of the painting cuts off the corner of an image of the 1986 Challenger Explosion and abuts a photograph of Helmut Kohl and Erich Honecker, taken during the East German premier's 1987 visit to the Federal Republic. What is Hitler doing in this historical constellation and in the family's photo album? The image not only depicts the key responsible figure behind Brandt's apology and the divided state embodied by Kohl and Honecker. It also brings to mind the migration scholar Kien Nghi Ha's comment that "speaking about postwar migration to the Federal Republic of Germany also means keeping Auschwitz always in the back of the mind... Living against the backdrop of this historical singularity gives the existence of the migrants living here and their will to remain a particular connotation and explosiveness."<sup>29</sup> Ha's point is not that migration history in any way resembles Holocaust history or that migrants somehow resemble

the Nazis' Jewish victims, but that the legacies of the Holocaust and National Socialism constitute a significant part of the *social landscape* and thus the *framing conditions* in which migration to Germany has taken place over the past several decades. The Öztürks' self-portrait with Hitler, situated in a visual timeline that maps the conjunction of contemporary world history and German specificity alongside a collective and familial narrative of migration, strongly suggests such a framing.

Yet, the particular resonance of the artwork also pushes understanding of this framing in an unexpected direction and, indeed, reframes our reading of the image. Below the Hitler image hangs another autobiographical painting, this one depicting the same sister standing in front of two British policemen. Here a text clarifies how to read this segment of the work: it describes Anny Öztürk's 1987 trip to London on the occasion of her seventeenth birthday. During the trip, she visited Madame Tussaud's wax museum. The Hitler image comes from that trip. Now, instead of representing a surreal fantasy of historical haunting, the self-portrait with Hitler seems to be rather a version of that most banal artifact: the tourist snapshot.<sup>30</sup> The ghostliness of the image derives from the multiple mediations that stand between the viewer and the historical figure: a painting of a snapshot of a wax figure. The disturbing nature of the image does not disappear at this point—and many viewers may not even figure out the key to decoding it—but it takes on new resonance.

There is, to be sure, a tendency toward relativization or the equation of historical specificities in this work, as National Socialism takes its place between other political systems and technological catastrophes (the 1986 Chernobyl disaster is also referenced here). However, I would argue, the work *comments* on this relativization as a feature of the way popular and media cultures deal with historical events and, perhaps, as a mark of generational distance. Within a globalized cultural memory, *Das Leben, das Universum* suggests, events cannot remain the property of particular collectives defined by ethnic or national belonging. Memory is common property threaded through dispersed networks of association, even if corporations and nations attempt to commodify or copyright the past. At the same time, the Öztürks' artwork does not tell just any story of world history in the late twentieth century. They layer a common, if superficial and media-saturated, history with the specificities of a migration story that unfolds between Turkey and Germany and in an overdetermined

spatiotemporal context where responsibility for the past has become a building block of national identity. In this context, Hitler is both a simulacrum available to a globalized class of tourists and a specter that, as Ha would insist, stands behind racially marked immigrants in the Federal Republic.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Brandt is both the subject of a media event and an example of an ethical embrace of historical responsibility by someone not himself a perpetrator. The negative example of Hitler and the positive example of Brandt inhabit the migrant family album both because they are common currency in the global cultural economy and because they have been *adopted* by the family as part of their album, as part of their heritage. The novelty and significance of the Öztürks' work lies here: they challenge us to rethink memory, solidarity, and responsibility beyond ethnic and "organic" relations to the past and outside the binary of victims and perpetrators.

### Conclusion: Between Paris and Warsaw II: Berlin, divided city

The Öztürks' installation adds some new stops to the itinerary of traveling Warsaw memory. It takes us from one divided city to another: from Istanbul to Frankfurt to London and, finally, to a temporary home in Berlin, where their commissioned work first appeared in the Jewish Museum's 2011 "Heimatkunde/How German Is It?" exhibition. That exhibition marked the museum's tenth anniversary and expressed its growing sense of the importance of migration to its charge of representing Jewish cultures in Germany. Over 90 percent of the Jews in today's Germany have a so-called migration background, and the museum is dedicated to expanding its engagement with this issue.<sup>32</sup> The Öztürks' work of memory gives us a sense of what recent national and global histories might look like from a migrant perspective: such a perspective cannot be accommodated by the founding texts of Memory Studies, but fares better in relation to certain postcolonial motifs, such as hybridity and cultural difference. Yet, although migration has been a central problematic of Postcolonial Studies, the history of labor migration that lies behind the Öztürks' work does not derive from a history of colonialism and its legacies. While postcolonial theory can still help us illuminate the postmigrant German context, that context should also draw our attention to the limits of the postcolonial lens and to the need for a varied theoretical toolbox.

Here, a postsocialist perspective can play an important role, for Germany's guest worker program—in particular, its extension to Turkey—emerged in the context of the post-National Socialist division of the two Germanys into socialist and capitalist halves and it picked up speed after East Germany sealed its border with the West in 1961. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the unification of Germany have had discrepant effects on racially marked immigrants, as migrant intellectuals have demonstrated in scholarly studies, films, and literary and theatrical works.<sup>33</sup> In addition, migration (including labor migration) has, of course, been a central phenomenon in postsocialist Eastern Europe and it is the postsocialist political transformation that accounts for most of the Jewish presence in Germany today.

Theories of memory in the expanded European frame will require, then, a diverse repertoire open to multidirectional currents: postcolonial approaches to postsocialism, to be sure, but also postsocialist and post-National Socialist approaches to the postcolonial, together with postmigrant approaches to both—and vice versa. The result, however, should not be eclecticism for its own sake or a flattening out and relativization of different approaches and different histories. Rather, a mapping of memory attuned to multidirectional movements, overlaps, and conflicts should factor in the vectors and forces of different pasts as they bear on the present. Juxtaposing an Istanbul domestic scene, a public event in Warsaw, and a museum in London, the Öztürks' migrant artwork doesn't just move us across Europe; it encourages us to reconfigure European space and, even more importantly, to recalibrate who counts as a subject of memory and redefine what we mean by taking responsibility for the past.

### Notes

This chapter was first presented as a keynote lecture at the conference "Postcolonial Approaches to Postsocialist Experiences" at Cambridge University's Memory at War project in February 2012, and subsequently as a keynote lecture at "From Bio-Hereditary Memory to Postmemory," the Second Transdisciplinary Summer Workshop in Morawa, Poland in July 2012. I am grateful to the organizers of both events for the invitations and to the audiences for constructive questions and comments. The final section of the chapter derives from a joint project on immigrant and the confrontation with the German past that I am undertaking with Yasemin Yildiz and that is funded by an ACLS Collaborative Research Fellowship.

1. Jay Winter, "Reflections on Silence," lecture given at the inaugural workshop of *Memory at War*, Cambridge University, June 2010. Partial video

- available at <http://www.memoryatwar.org/resources> (accessed January 22, 2012). All quotations from this lecture are based on my transcription. My emphasis of the key sentence.
2. I am quoting here from *Memory at War's* homepage: <http://www.memoryatwar.org/projects> (accessed January 22, 2012).
  3. Winter's talk, "Human Rights and European Remembrance" is available on the *Memory at War* website and is dated July 4, 2011. There he writes: "The future of the European experiment is how well it handles the shift in its center of gravity to the east, towards Warsaw, and some day, inevitably, towards Istanbul."
  4. See Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," *Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), pp. 263–64 (p. 262); and Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 78.
  5. *Noeuds de Mémoire: Multidirectional Memory in Postwar French and Francophone Culture*. Special double issue of *Yale French Studies*, 118–19 (2010), ed. by Michael Rothberg, Debarati Sanyal, and Max Silverman.
  6. See *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. by Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
  7. For a more extensive version of this argument, see Michael Rothberg, "Remembering Back: Cultural Memory, Colonial Legacies, and Postcolonial Studies," *The Oxford Handbook of Postcolonial Studies*, ed. by Graham Huggan (Oxford University Press, Forthcoming).
  8. Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. by Lewis Cosner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
  9. See *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, ed. by Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1984–92).
  10. Aleida Assmann, "Canon and Archive," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), pp. 97–107 (p. 106). See also Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und Politische Identität in Frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1992). In recent work, Aleida Assmann has, however, begun to turn to the question of colonialism; see "How History Takes Place," in *Memory, History, and Colonialism: Engaging with Pierre Nora in Colonial and Postcolonial Contexts*, ed. by Indra Sengupta (London: German Historical Institute, 2009), pp. 151–65.
  11. The proximate field of trauma studies has, unlike the dominant tradition of Memory Studies, foregrounded dislocation in the relation between past and present. But it too has had more difficulty thinking structural (or systemic) forms of violence, as scholars engaged with Postcolonial Studies have argued in attempting to broaden the scope of trauma studies; see, especially, Stef Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
  12. See Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).
  13. Addressing this problem means reflecting on how acts of public memory encode different imaginaries of political subjectivity and justice. Building on work by Judith Butler, Nancy Fraser, and Iris Marion Young, I suggest that at stake in articulations of multidirectional memory are conceptions of solidarity and justice that turn on matters of framing, commensurability, and affect—that is, on questions of political representation and jurisdiction as well as the epistemological grounds and emotional tonalities of recognition. See Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (New York: Verso, 2009); Nancy Fraser, *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); and Iris Marion Young, *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Public Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). I develop the argument in this section further in "From Gaza to Warsaw: Mapping Multidirectional Memory," *Criticism*, 53.4 (2011), 523–48.
  14. Marguerite Duras, "Les deux ghettos," *France-Observateur*, November 9, 1961, pp. 8–10.
  15. Scholars are rapidly and definitively changing our understanding of the early years of Holocaust memory. This is one of the stakes of *Multidirectional Memory*, but for a full account of the US context, see Hasia Diner, *We Remember With Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence After the Holocaust, 1945–1962* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).
  16. W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Negro and the Warsaw Ghetto," *Jewish Life* (May 1952), pp. 14–5 (p. 15). Emphasis added.
  17. *Ibid.*, p. 14, emphasis added.
  18. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa: An Inquiry into the Part which Africa Has Played in World History* (New York: Viking, 1947), p. 23. This passage is often used as evidence for the argument that the Nazi genocide simply repeated colonial violence on a new set of European victims, but Du Bois came to a more nuanced view in "The Negro and the Warsaw Ghetto."
  19. For an extended discussion of the case of the American sociology professor, see my "From Gaza to Warsaw."
  20. Although the photo essay is not signed by Finkelstein, it can be found on his website: <http://www.normanfinkelstein.com/deutschland-uber-alles/> (accessed December 10, 2012).
  21. On the Warsaw Ghetto boy, see Richard Raskin, *A Child at Gunpoint: A Case Study in the Life of Photo* (Aarhus University Press, 2004); Frédéric Rousseau, *L'enfant juif de Varsovie: Histoire d'une photographie* (Paris: Seuil, 2009); and Marianne Hirsch, "Nazi Photographs in Post-Holocaust Art" and "Projected Memory: Holocaust Photographs in Personal and Public Fantasy," in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, ed. by Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999), pp. 3–23.
  22. The Solidarity protests are mentioned in the important "biography" of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Monument in James Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 156.
  23. Alexander Etkind, "Post-Soviet Hauntology: Cultural Memory of the Soviet Terror," *Constellations*, 16.1 (2009), 182–200 (p. 195).



24. Valentin Rauer, "Symbols in Action: Willy Brandt's Kneefall at the Warsaw Memorial," in *Social Performance: Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics, and Ritual*, ed. by Jeffrey Alexander, Bernhard Giesen, and Jason Mast (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 257–82 (pp. 257–58).
  25. In an interesting twist, Brandt's gesture in front of the monument has itself been turned into a monument, a nice illustration of the circular relationship between memory's hardware and software.
  26. See <http://www.jmberlin.de/heimatkunde/kuenstler/en/oeztuerk.php> (accessed December 10, 2012).
  27. The focus on childhood memories mediated by popular culture is a persistent theme in the Öztürks' work; for instance, *Rear Window (Story No. 6)*, a 2005 piece for the "Projekt Migration" exhibit in Cologne, reconstructs the living room of their great aunt in Istanbul where they used to spend a week each summer when visiting Turkey. With a title that references Hitchcock, the installation—according to the exhibition website—"does not reconstruct a room, but a childhood memory of Turkey, mediated by an American film"; see <http://www.projektmigration.de/english/content/kuenstlerliste/oeztuerk.html> (accessed December 10, 2012) as well as the artists' MySpace page: [http://www.myspace.com/anny\\_und\\_sibel/blog](http://www.myspace.com/anny_und_sibel/blog) (accessed December 10, 2012).
  28. See Harald Welzer, Sabine Möller, and Karoline Tschuggnall, "Opa war kein Nazi": *Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2002).
  29. Kien Nghi Ha, *Ethnizität und Migration* (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 1999), p. 20. Cited from Astrid Messerschmidt, *Weltbilder und Selbstbilder: Bildungsprozesse im Umgang mit Globalisierung, Migration und Zeitgeschichte* (Frankfurt: Brandes & Apsel, 2009), p. 188. The key phrase reads: "Mit dieser geschichtlichen Singularität im Rücken zu leben."
  30. The Hitler figures in the various Madame Tussaud's have been the source of ongoing controversy. In 2011, the London Madame Tussaud's attracted negative publicity for allowing visitors to pose with the Hitler statue while making the Nazi salute; see Vanessa Allen and Kirsty Walker, "Madame Tussaud's in Hitler Row as it Refuses to Stop Customers Doing Nazi Salute," *Daily Mail Online*, August 19, 2011, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2028015/Madame-Tussauds-Hitler-row-refuses-stop-customers-doing-Nazi-salute.html> (accessed October 24, 2011).
  31. This is also an example of what Etkind would call "ghostware."
  32. A museum press release explains: "In addition to the research and communication of the history and culture of German speaking Jewry, the museum is planning a new area of focus—migration, integration, and cultural diversity in a multiethnic society"; available on the homepage of Studio Daniel Libeskind: <http://daniel-libeskind.com/news/jewish-museum-berlin-celebrates-its-10th-anniversary> (accessed May 8, 2012). In fact, the museum sought to address such themes even before the tenth-anniversary commemoration, as, for instance, with the recruiting of Turkish-German tour guides who, among other things, lead visits especially designed for groups of students with predominantly "Muslim" backgrounds. See also the interview with the museum's Program Director,
- "Deutsche Geschichte aus der Minderheiten perspective: das Jüdische Museum in Berlin: Cilly Kugelmann im Gespräch mit Katja Sussner," *Multikultur 2.0: Willkommen in Einwanderungsland Deutschland*, ed. Susanne Stemmler (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2011), 285–91.
33. See, for instance, Nevim Çil's study *Topographie des Außenseiters: Türkische Generationen und der deutsch-deutsche Wiedervereinigungsprozess* (Berlin and Tübingen: Verlag Hans Schiler, 2007); Can Candan's film *Duvarlar-Mauern-Walls* (2000); Yadé Kara's novel *Selam Berlin* (Zurich: Diogenes, 2003); and Hakan Savaş Mican's play *Die Schwäne vom Schlachthof* (2009).