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Introduction

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Our culture is preoccupied with memory. Various forms of memory—anniversaries, museums, monuments, and memoirs—clamour for our attention in both physical and virtual spaces and receive a lion's share of publicity in mainstream media and academic discourse. From George Santayana's admonition, "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" to Milan Kundera's pronouncement, "the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting", we are encouraged to think of remembering as our civic and moral responsibility.

Forgetting, on the other hand, is almost always seen as memory's dark 'other', as an unfortunate withering away of memory or a deliberate erasure of past traces. However, the valourisation of memory blinds us to the affinity between memory and forgetting and compels us to put our faith into comforting forms and formulas of remembrance. As a result, we often develop habitual ways of relating to the past and lose sight of the past as a resource for acting in the present.

The essays and artists' statements collected in this special issue explore what it is like to break away from ready-made templates for remembering and to examine the intimate link between memory and forgetting. In a provocative critique of 'a culture of memory', Gary Peters draws on Nietzsche, Bergson, Deleuze, and Heidegger to argue that "we need to remember how to forget in order to create new habits of remembering". A necessary step in this direction, suggests Peters, is to realize that we have been habituated into certain (socially sanctioned) ways of remembrance, that "we've been had". If we appreciate how our habits constitute us, we would be in a better position to ponder "what can we *do* with our memories"?

While Peters offers philosophical reflection on a culture of memory and its discontents, the other essays illustrate how artistic interventions and performances can question and shake up habits and clichés of remembrance. In his contribution, Kendall Phillips observes "a kind of existential violence" conventional monuments and museums perpetrate on what he calls "excesses of memory" or "the surplus of memory that cannot be entirely contained or controlled by the disciplines of recollection or the public forms of remembrance". Phillips turns to the works of three contemporary artists—Carrie Mae Weems, Anna Schuleit and Shimon Attie—as "exemplars and provocations for thinking about the forms by which memory is made public and the simultaneous preservations / loss and

permanence / transience these forms enact". Phillips's case studies showcase how artistic interventions can provide an "experience of memory that gestures toward its excess – that which lies beyond discursive facticity and within the realm of the visceral and affective".

Essays by Kingsley Baird and Sally Morgan describe their respective works, both temporary war memorials that interrogate the process of memorialisation and highlight the relationship between the artist, the memorial, and the audience. Baird built his temporary memorial in 2014 in the German Armed Forces' Military History Museum in Dresden. Titled *Stela*, it was a stainless steel 'cenotaph' surrounded by 18,000 biscuits in the shape of soldiers of different nationalities who fought in the First World War. Inspired by the artist's experience of military cemeteries, personal memories of his grandfather, and Kurt Vonnegut's depiction of the bombing of Dresden in World War II, *Stela* was a rather unique war memorial, especially in the way it deliberately juxtaposed the sacred and the profane. Baird certainly unsettled visitors' expectations by inviting them to take a biscuit from the memorial. His hope was that "the 'Eucharistic' ritual would be interpreted as revealing society's responsibility in sacrificing others in war, as well as being an act of commemoration. Simultaneously a gesture of forgetting *and* remembering". The artist's essay vividly documents how different visitors encountered the memorial and in so doing provides a rare glimpse into eventfulness and ethical challenges of memory and forgetting for both the artist and the audience.

Sally Morgan's account of *The Travails of the Bomb-Aimer's Daughter* similarly highlights the evolving and interactive character of the installation. The performance unfolded over time through discrete 'chapters'. It commenced in November 2012 when Morgan fashioned 500 small planes in the shape of the WWII Liberator Bomber out of a stone compound mix. In mid-February 2013, she "took the planes to war" by parading them on a movable rack through the streets of Wellington and pausing, in an ironic display of 'martial optimism', in front of the National War Memorial. The following several chapters of the performance took place near the city's waterfront, where Morgan was allocated a freight container to show her work under the aegis of Wellington's International Live Art festival. There, Morgan transferred the planes into a wheelbarrow and proceeded to throw them, one by one, onto the floor of the container. She had planned to smash the planes herself in front of passers-by, but a surprising number of onlookers wanted to join in the destruction. Realising that her work could serve as an exploration of social complicity, she began to offer planes to all passers-by. Morgan witnessed a range of responses – from reluctance and sadness to exhilaration followed by a sense of guilt. Next, the artist turned the container into an "archaeological site" by sorting the debris into bins. The container then became a museum where the finds were arranged by typology and accompanied by a notice that dispassionately documented the 'deployment' of Liberator Bomber planes and the participation of passers-by in their destruction. Morgan observed that the audience of this display "came and went easily, did not feel complicit, felt able to judge the process as though it were finished". In the following chapter, the

artist placed the sorted debris along with a tube of glue in front of the container "to indicate the impossibility and futility of trying to mend the outcomes of war". She was surprised by the outcome of this gesture when a group of students set about the task of repairing the planes, changing the bleakness of the artist's conception. The final chapters, the disposal of the debris and the peregrination of a few disfigured Liberator Bombers through the back streets of Wellington, enacted "the deliberate forgetting and obscuring of inconvenient truths of war". In its entirety, then, *Travails* raised uncomfortable questions about conventional modes of memorialisation and demonstrated that interactive temporary installations can stimulate public reflection about war, patriotism, and responsibility. Such reflection can on occasion result in a salutary kind of forgetting, in a desire to restore the shattered past and move on, as can be seen in the young students' determination to mend the broken planes.

The remaining contributions dramatise the psychological and ethical aspects of remembering and forgetting in regard to personal and familial past. Emily Rowan's piece, *Witness*, is an autobiographical performance in which the artist is restaging her appearance as a witness in a court case. The author's singing and music are juxtaposed with the power point slides displayed in a Pecha Kucha format (20 slides, each shown for 20 seconds.) While the slides represent the voice of authority and recorded 'facts', the artist's voice and music convey "how it feels to have your private memories of a traumatic event interrogated and the truthfulness of your words brought into question". In contrast with the steady mechanical progression of the slides, the lyrics and music are repeated in a continuous loop, conveying the witness's struggle to take charge of her traumatic memories and to defend herself against the court's questioning. This haunting performance constitutes the art's capacity to transform shapeless memory fragments into a story that the witness can call her own and share with an audience. As Rowan puts it in her statement, "art is retelling—not reliving—and reduces that which is formless and overwhelming in the mind into a solid reality, communicated to and accessible by a community that listens". The publicity of this artistic gesture implicates audience members as *witnesses* who must come to terms with the narrated past by sifting through their own archive of experience and its potentially unsettling fragmentary contents.

What if the past you are trying to stitch together exists mainly in the form of archival bits and pieces? This is the theme of Matthew Reason's essay in which he depicts his attempted "resurrection" of his great aunt Joyce Reason (whom the author describes as "a writer, an idealist, an evangelist, a bluestocking, a spinster, a crank, and a missionary".) Two interlocking questions guide Reason's inquiry: "What is the articulacy, or otherwise, of the archival trace? And how can we know the life of another, without subsuming it into our own preoccupations and perspectives"? In a series of evocative vignettes, the author documents his 'pilgrimage' in search of his great aunt's traces. In the course of his travels and research, he realises that the relationship between the archive and its interpreter flows both ways—that "the archivist is not effaced, but rather becomes a player within an overt performance of cultural memory". As distinct from much academic

writing, Reason's essay models this sort of self-reflective (and highly engaging) performance by shuttling between the narration about Joyce Reason and the author's rumination on the nature of archival traces and the ethics of archival research.

Jules Dorey Richmond and David Richmond are also concerned with archival traces as aides to memory. However, their installation and artists' pages shine the light on their own archive as a married couple of 28 years and showcase the dangers and rewards of recollection without a safety net. Their installation (represented by a selection of five boards containing images and parallel texts) is a product of what may be seen as an exercise in radical trust. The artists took turns picking objects, each emblematic of a shared memory, and independently composed a narrative about memories they evoked. By agreeing not to interfere in each other's composition process, the authors accomplished the most daring act of memory / forgetting – they decided to rely on their own imperfect recollection and to trust each other as partners by not policing the other's account. To use Kendall Phillips' phrase, they gave themselves and each other permission to unleash the "excess of memory" without any guarantee of a safe outcome. Not until the narratives were combined did they realise "how each of us had truly felt about events in our lives whose memories were manifested by these objects and the stories attached to them". This, they admit, "had an unexpected destabilising effect on our sense of selfhood and coupledom". At the same time, they understood that "the very gaps, inconsistencies, and contradictions — which the parallel texts exposed — held a promise of 'truth' that no unified and / or refined account of our past, 'the past', could possibly deliver".

Together, the artists and scholars featured in this issue present an eloquent dissertation on the virtues of personal and collective remembrance without the crutches of conventional formulas, of embracing excesses of memory, of trusting one's own and the other's ability and desire to remember, to forget, and to make something new.

Biographical Note

Ekaterina Haskins is Professor of Rhetoric in the Department of Communication and Media at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (Troy, NY, USA). Her research contributes to three distinct yet related areas of scholarship: the history of rhetoric, public memory, and rhetorics of display. She is the author of two books, Logos and Power in Isocrates and Aristotle (2004; paperback 2009) and Popular Memories: Commemoration, Participatory Culture, and Democratic Citizenship (2015), both published by the University of South Carolina Press in its Studies in Rhetoric / Communication series. She has published numerous articles and book chapters on the history of rhetoric, public memory, and visual culture. Her current projects include studies of immersion and visuality in Greek rhetoric and philosophy, a book-in-progress on the rhetoric and politics of public memory in post-Communist Russia, and an investigation of the role of place and sensation in public life.

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