

“Decolonizing the Study of Memory”

Special Issue

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The field of memory studies, like many academic disciplines and fields, is facing calls to decolonize, deimperialize, and provincialize European-imposed and inspired knowledges. Scholars and critics such as Audre Lorde, Frantz Fanon, Gloria Anzaldúa, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, Steve Biko, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith emphasize the importance of acknowledging, repairing, and transcending the lasting impact of European slavery, genocidal settler colonialism, and imperial nostalgia that have ravaged human societies and the Earth, our ground of Being. Numerous postcolonial, decolonial, and indigenous scholars as well as critics continue to shine a bright light on the enduring legacy of white supremacy in academia and beyond, calling for reparatory justice.

Ongoing debates concerning provincializing, de-Westernizing, decolonizing, and other interventions, highlight the reality that Western knowledge regimes’ dominance has yet to be fully recognized, overcome, and dismantled (Quijano 1992; Chakrabarty 2000; Maldonado-Torres 2006; Chen 2010; Kimmerer 2014). Accordingly, we would like to ask whether ethnic, national, cosmopolitan, multidirectional, transcultural, and planetary memories or the ‘floating gap’ are indeed as transhistorical, universal or natural as sometimes suggested? These questions highlight the reality that the field of memory studies is, in many ways, still dominated by approaches, concepts, and methods designed in the Global North creating an undeniable “Euro/Anglo centrism” (Olick et al 2017). Furthermore, we would like to question: Do cultural memories confirm or contradict seemingly hard and fast distinctions between history and memory, male and female, modern and traditional, culture and nature, sacred and profane or life and death? How do cultural memories in specific local, regional, and transnational constellations force us to rethink seemingly universal concepts? How do we think and do history and memory?

For Memory Studies, therefore, the present moment bears at least three crucial challenges: First, to highlight the limitations of currently dominant approaches, concepts, and methods; second, to introduce to memory studies the plethora of memory concepts hitherto ignored but debated in other fields, such as postcolonial studies, decolonial thought, indigenous studies, and the natural sciences; and lastly, to encourage the practice of “epistemological disobedience” (Mignolo 2011) in order to move beyond the current cultural memory frameworks that undergird the field. This, in turn, expands and creates new intellectual spaces such as those pioneered by feminist, decolonial, and queer critics including M. Jacqui Alexander, Hilary Beckles, Saidiya Hartman, bell hooks, and Sylvia Wynter, to name a few. To the foregoing end, this special issue invites the rich, dynamic, and diverse cultural memories and scholarship currently outside the framework of Memory Studies to think through decolonial and indigenous lenses, and thus fundamentally challenge the field. Our aim is to substantially extend interdisciplinary debates to look beyond European, Western, and White memory cultures and scholarship that substantially define knowledge production on the study of history and memory to date.

This special issue responds to the urgent calls to both decolonize and reconceptualize the study of memory and Memory Studies in three ways:

1. We invite current memory studies scholars to investigate the role of decolonization and provincialization to existing approaches, theories and methods.
2. We explicitly invite scholars from disciplines less represented in Memory Studies to contribute to the decolonization of socio-cultural memory studies.
3. We also invite reviews of existing work, with a particular interest in those not in the English language, on the subject of decolonizing and provincializing memory studies or indigenous ways of knowing that have hitherto been marginalized.

In a word, the collected essays seek to open the doors beyond the field's institutional framework, taking seriously the fundamental challenge and rich potential of not only decolonizing and provincializing the study of memory and Memory Studies, but re-envisioning the field.

Some questions that may be addressed in this special issue include, but are not limited to:

- What is the role of language in creating memory and memory practices and how does multilingualism or translation intervene in creation or dissemination?
- How do oral, visual, and/or sound cultures contribute to memory practices?
- How can non-written based epistemologies enrich our knowledge base in memory studies?
- How does an analysis of Anthropocene memory complicate our understanding of global systems?
- What memory practices interrupt or reject the binaries of male/female, modern/traditional, life/death, sacred/profane, etc.?
- What theoretical or methodological innovations or interventions are needed to recognize and integrate non-Western memory cultures and their study into memory studies?

We invite abstracts of 300-500 words to be sent by January 10 as an email attachment to: decolonizingmemory@gmail.com. Informal inquiries can also be sent to that same email address prior to the deadline. Articles should be approximately 6,000 words in length and must be submitted by May 1, 2023 for double-blind peer review.

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Ruramisai Charumbira is a historian of Africa with a specialization in Southern Africa, indigenous ways of knowing, and the history and memory of European imperialism. She is an Associate Professor of History at Western University (Canada). She is an Advisory Board Member of the Memory Studies Association (MSA), within which she founded and co-leads the Memory and Nature Working Group (M&NWG) as well as the initiative on “Transformative Inclusivity.” She earned her PhD from Yale University (2006), and is affiliated with the Walter Benjamin Kolleg, Universität Bern. A scholar-teacher, she is the author of *Imagining a Nation: History and Memory in Making Zimbabwe*, peer-reviewed articles, and chapters, as well as public humanities essays. She is also on the editorial advisory board of the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History* and recently joined the editorial team of the journal *Safundi*.

Jocelyn “Joyce” Martin is Associate Professor in the Department of English at the Ateneo de Manila University and, since September 2022, also teaches at the Université Catholique de l'Ouest in Angers. Advisory Board Member of the Memory Studies Association, Managing Editor of *Kritika Kultura*, and former University of Ohio Zumkehr Lecturer, she initiated courses on “Literature and Memory Studies” in the Philippines since 2012. She has published with Bloomsbury, Routledge, the *Memory Studies Journal*, and *Philippine Studies*, among others. Her forthcoming publications include pieces on comfort women statues, the environmental humanities and photography, Malaysian war memory, the vernacular as method, and a volume on Memory Studies and the Philippines. A holder of a PhD in languages and literatures from the Université Libre de Bruxelles, Jocelyn speaks five languages.

Mary M. McCarthy is professor of politics and international relations at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. She specializes in Japan’s domestic and foreign policies, with a focus on the legacies of the Asia-Pacific War on Japan’s foreign relations. Her publications include “The Enduring Challenges of History Issues” in Takeo Hoshi and Phillip Lipsky, eds. *The Political Economy of the Abe Government and Abenomics Reforms* (Cambridge University Press, 2021) and “Political and Social Contestation in the Memorialization of Comfort Women in the United States” in Sabine Marschall, ed. *Public Memory in the Context of Transnational Migration and Displacement: Migrants and Monuments* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2020). She is editor of the *Routledge Handbook of Japanese Foreign Policy* (2018). Dr. McCarthy received her B.A. in East Asian studies and her Ph.D. in political science from Columbia University. She is a member of the Memory Studies Association’s Ethics Committee and the “Transformative Inclusivity” initiative.

Jarula M. I. Wegner is a Hundred Talents Young Professor at the School of International Studies of Zhejiang University, China. He is Associate Editor of the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*. He co-founded and leads the Global Memories Working Group at the Memory Studies Association (MSA), he is member of the “Transformative Inclusivity” initiative at the MSA as well as co-founder of the Interdisciplinary Memory Studies Group at the Frankfurt Humanities Research Centre. He holds degrees in Chinese (BA), German (MA) and English (MA and PhD) from the University of Frankfurt, Germany, with a doctoral thesis on “Transcultural Memory Constellations in Caribbean Carnivals: Literature and Performance as Critique.” His work has been published in international, peer-reviewed journals, such as, *ARIEL*, *Caribbean Quarterly*, *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture*, *Journal of West Indian Literature*, *Memory Studies* and *Wasafiri*.