RECONSTRUCTING

Memory, Recollecting, Forgetting, Remembrance, Storage Capacity and so on

by Peter Plener (Wien, Budapest)

Being from Vienna, one obviously would like to introduce oneself within an accepted pattern, to bow to a franchised context, if possible to become at least a *Note upon the Mystic Writing Pad*. I, however, will not begin with Freud, but with a reference to music.

The much-cited Viennese love for waltz and operetta is nowadays largely felt by tourists on their desperate search for Mozart, the Lippizaners and the *Vienna Boys' Choir*. They usually end up watching the musical *Amadeus*. Then again, the operetta carries within it a key to the past, which few have dared to try to decode, and which has faithfully been supressed[1]. I would like to draw your attention to a brief passage, which most of you will know. I am talking about the finale of the first act of Johann Strauß' *Fledermaus*, which premiered on April 5, 1874 in the *Theater an der Wien* – just one year after the big crash and the ensuing long-lasting economic crisis.

1 Cf. particularly the admirable work by Csáky, Moritz: Ideologie der Operette und Wiener Moderne. Böhlau: Wien, Köln, Weimar 1996.

ALFRED

Trinke, Liebchen, trinke schnell,	Drink, darling, drink quickly,
Trinken macht die Augen hell.	Drinking makes the eyes bright.
Sind die schönen Äuglein klar,	If your pretty little eyes are clear,
Siehst du alles licht und wahr.	You'll see everything in its true light.
Siehst, wie heisse Lieb' ein Traum,	You'll see how passionate love is a dream
Der uns äffet sehr,	Which mocks us greatly,
Siehst wie ew'ge Treue Schaum,	You'll see how eternal fidelity is but fluff,
So was gibt's nicht mehr!	There is no such thing anymore!
Flieht auch manche Illusion,	Should you lose some illusions,
Die dir einst dein Herz erfreut,	Which once delighted your heart,
Gibt der Wein dir Tröstung schon	Wine will soon give you consolation
Durch Vergessenheit!	By forgetting!
Glücklich ist, wer vergisst,	Happy is the person who forgets,
Was doch nicht zu ändern ist.	What can't be altered anyway.
Kling, kling, sing, sing, sing	Ting-a-ling, sing, sing, sing,
Trink mit mir, sing mit mir,	Drink with me, sing with me,
Lalala, lalala, etc.	la la la, etc.

ROSALINDE

Ach was tut man hier?	Oh, what is going on here?

BEIDE

Glücklich ist, wer vergisst,	Happy is the person who forgets
Was doch nicht zu ändern ist.	What can't be altered anyway.

Before we turn to wine as a means of consolation, I would like to ask how theatre and stage codes can allow us to appropriately think about memory and remembering, which problems emerge, which differentiations become necessary. From there on, I will try to sketch out some problems, like those of symbolic structures, socially effective formats of remembering and medial instances of communication as well as ›stores‹, which have been so apostrophised. In other words, I will offer you a potpourri, which should bring out at least one or two ideas somewhat more clearly.

Remembering, Memory, Forgetting

The paradigmatic opposition of ›remembering‹ and ›memory‹ has taken on a central role in literary and cultural studies in the German-speaking realm, which I will largely restrict myself to (with the occassional digression mainly to Pierre Nora)[2]. The methodic discussions in this context are complicated among other things by the fact that they belong to very different categories, the differentiation of which is a basic condition for any further steps. Via different routes, communication and its conditions are also attracting increasing interest.[3] Over the last few years, another, central challenge was added: The materiality of media of rememberance and their quality with respect to the reconstruction of the past.[4]

2 Cf. amongst many others Böhme, Hartmut / Matussek, Peter / Müller, Lothar: Orientierung Kulturwissenschaft. Was sie kann, was sie will. Reinbek: Rowohlt 2000, pp. 147ff.; Assmann, Aleida / Harth, Dietrich (Eds.): Kultur als Lebenswelt und Monument. Frankfurt/M.: Fischer 1991; Assmann, A. / Harth, D. (Eds.): Mnemosyne. Formen und Funktionen der kulturellen Erinnerung. Frankfurt/M.: Fischer 1991; Harth, D. (Ed.): Die Erfindung des Gedächtnisses. Frankfurt/M.: Fischer 199; Pethes, Nicolas / Ruchatz, Jens (Eds.):

Gedächtnis und Erinnerung. Ein interdisziplinäres Lexikon. Reinbek: Rowohlt 2001.

3 Cf. a.o. Schmidt, Siegfried J. (Ed.): Gedächtnis. Probleme und Perspektiven der interdisziplinären Gedächtnisforschung. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 1991, p. 9-55; Assmann, Aleida: Zur Metaphorik der Erinnerung. Ein Rundgang durchs historische Museum der Imagination. In: Fischer, Ernst Peter (ed.): Neue Horizonte 97/98: Gedächtnis und Erinnerung. München: Piper 1998, pp.111-164; Esposito, Elena: Soziales Vergessen. Formen und Medien des Gedächtnisses der Gesellschaft. With an afterword by Jan Assmann. Trans. by Alessandra Corti. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 2002.

4 Cf. esp. Borsò, Vittoria / Krumeich, Gerd / Witte, Bernd (Eds.): Medialität und Gedächtnis. Interdisziplinäre Beiträge zur kulturellen Verarbeitung europäischer Krisen. Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler 2001

5 Cf. Weinrich, Harald: Lethe. Kunst und Kritik des Vergessens. München: Beck 1997.

6 Nora, Pierre: Zwischen Geschichte und Gedächtnis. Die Gedächtnisorte. In: Nora, P.: Zwischen Geschichte und Gedächtnis. Trans. by Wolfgang Kaiser. Berlin: Wagenbach 1990 (Kleine kulturwissens. Bibl. 16), p. 12f.

7 Cf. Nora 1990, p. 13:»History is the legitimation of the lived past.«

8 Cf. Hobsbawm, Eric J. / Ranger, Terence (ed.): The Invention of Tradition. Cambridge: Cambridge UP 1983.

9 Nora 1990, p. 18.

10 ibid., p. 23.

11 ibid., p. 24.

12 ibid.

Remembering is – roughly defined – a primarily cognitive category, a ›shaping‹ of the past on the template of the present. ›Remembrance Work‹, which is also a form of interpretation, can thus be characterised as a contribution to the establishment of identities. Any kind of *forgetting*[5] would present the other side of that coin. The material we are dealing with here in the current context is *memory* as a (not neccessarily Freudian) »subconscious« task – meaning that it cannot be immediately steered by the subject. It is vital for this approach to constantly keep in mind the question of mediating parties, the mediality of remembering, the inconsistency or faultiness of ›storage‹ and the unpredictable nature of reconstruction as interpretation. Because – a first thesis – the possibility of a concrete, progressive work on these phenomena arises only out of the disturbances, the noise, the overstraining of ›storage capacities‹, the background noise. *Ex negativo*, so to speak.

The Difference between Individual and Collective

Pierre Nora developed an approach that aims to differentiate individual from collective memory work:

> Memory, History: these are by no means synonyms, but, as we now know, complete opposites of each other. Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name and hence always in a state of flux, open to the dialectics of remembering and forgetting. It does not know of the sequence of its deformation, is open to all imaginable uses and manipulations, capable of long periods of slumber and sudden revival. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what no longer exists. Memory is always a current phenomenon, a bond lived in the continuous presence, history on the other hand the representation of the past.[6]

For Pierre Nora, collectives have a history, while individuals have a memory. Such a differentiation has one vital advantage and one serious drawback.

On the one hand, it is certainly sensible to grant collectives a structured memory surface – from whomever or however it may originate –, like an identity-giving matrix. On the basis of this surface, it is easily possible to arrange and depict stores of symbolism. This can be followed and argued particularly well with Nora's primary example, France and its republican claims.[7]

On the other hand, the differentiation of collective and individual stores of symbolism as structural conditions largely ignores the irrefutable problem of mediality, hence alterity. In opposition to Nora, I claim that a collective's usable version of history can only arise out of the average of correspondingly formatted associations approbated by individuals within the system. (Eric J. Hobsbawm developed similar ideas in a largely similar context with his research on *Invented Traditions*.[8]) Nora's approach doesn't entirely disregard this interplay, but cannot in its framework allow for commonalities of both individual memory construction and collective history writing: Collective *and* individuals, caught in communicative processes, aim to constitute their own history, to work on their own contents, to design each their own matrix and to keep this possession readable, meaning memorable and finally productive.

I remain with Nora for now: I suggest, for simplicity's sake, to differentiate between a macro- and a micro-continuum (especially as far as this intended micro-continuum has to give way to constant recurrence, experience set-backs, pause or halt altogether):

> All that is called memory today, is thus not memory, but already history. Everything that is understood as the glow of memory, is in fact its final disappearance in the fire of history. The need for memory is a need for history.[9]

When Pierre Nora says that »retrospective continuity no longer exists, only the emphasis on discontinuity«[10], he means by the term ›discontinuity‹ the »loss of a single and consistent principle of explanation«[11]. However, Nora has to base the resulting fragmentation of history in the sense of a collective. In order to avoid this dilemma, he speaks of a »memory that projects itself into the discontinuity of a history«[12], meaning that he alludes – psychologising somewhat – to the disturbance caused by the loss of memory and the emergence of its surrogate, history.

My objection here is that such a view does not go far enough, but rather exhausts itself in the psychologising procedure despite all its socio-critical potential.

13 Cf. Borsò / Krumeich / Witte 2001.

14 Cf. a.o. Assman 1998; Esposito 2002.

15 Cf. a.o. Bachelard, Gaston: Poetik des Raumes. Trans. by Kurt Leonhard. Frankfurt/M.: Fischer 1987; Yates, Frances A.: Gedächtnis und Erinnern. Mnemonik von Aristoteles bis Shakespeare. Weinheim: VCH ²1991 (Acta humaniora); Haverkamp, Anselm / Lachmann, Renate (Eds.): Gedächtniskunst. Raum – Bild – Schrift. Studien zur Mnemotechnik. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 1991; Haverkamp, A. / Lachmann, R. (Eds.): Memoria. Vergessen und Erinnern. München: Fink 1993.

16 For the French historiography, cf. e.g., Nora 1990; for aspects of Jewish memory and its roots, cf. Yerushalmi, Yosef Hayim: Zachor: Erinnere Dich! Jüdische Geschichte und jüdisches Gedächtnis. Trans. by Wolfgang Heuss. Berlin: Wagenbach 1996.

17 Ginzburg, Carlo: Spurensicherung. Die Wissenschaft auf der Suche nach sich selbst. Trans. by Gisela Bonz a. Karl F. Hauber. Berlin: Wagenbach 1995 (Kleine kulturwiss. Bibl. 50), pp. 7-44, here p. 20.

Is Pierre Nora (in whose work, incidentally, picture-media like the cinema are awarded no role) a historian of the surface? That would certainly be too simple. His definition of the *Lieux des mémoires* nevertheless, for all its merit, gives rise to several problems – for example the question, which conditions have to be given for the »participation« in the *Lieux de mémoires* as listed by Pierre Nora. Beyond the national and the coincident of birth, psychoanalysis sees the moments of access as decisive, by means of the inclusion of the given individual into a collective according to a kind of socio-cultural predisposition. So, the significant moments of the *lieux* depend on memory traces, which project themselves onto the entirety of a general cultural pattern. The global power of persuasion of the thus emerging historical images depend on the economic-symbolic power of the generating culture.

At this point – however lucid the observation may be – another set of problems emerges, or rather: the problems' complexity emerges in a new, maybe sharper, light.

This is so, because now not only the question after power and rulership has to be reiterated, but – on another level – also the already mentioned question after the materiality of media[13], i.e. after the conditions for communication and their constructions.[14] Accordingly, criteria of space and time, as well as related questions as to the judging, selective and finally categorizing perception (the »gaze«) play a fundamental role.[15] We are dealing with aspects of separation, order and selection, further also the construction of identity or authentication.[16] Their relation to factual events and experiences is complex. The event is culturally, socially and situationally contextualised as well as being emotionally evaluated both in the moment of encoding and in the moment of being called up.

Mediality, Collective Remembering, Culturally Formatted Memory

Only when one questions the medialty – meaning the materialty and alterity of the channels of communication – of such collectively franchised »histories«, does one come upon the connection between history and memory. One can only at this point determine that history is not a finished narrative (until this point, this has remained a mere assumption). Such forms of discourse are open and cannot even be closed off through patronising interpretations. They are a part of the societal confrontations over cultural hegemony. The given perceptions of the »past« are constructed in discourse, and hence they are also alterable and dynamic, they present social processes.

> Even if the historian is sometimes obliged to refer back, explicitly or implicitly, to a sequence of comparable phenomena, the cognitive strategy, as well as the codes by which he expresses himself, remain intrinsically individualizing (although the individual case may be a social group or an entire society). In this respect the historian is like the physician who uses nosographical tables to analyze the specific sickness in a patient. As with the physician's, the historian's knowledge is indirect, presumptive, conjectural.[17]

Maybe we can clarify this at this point with a further differentiation: that between *collective remembering* and *culturally formatted memory*.

In my opinion, the constitution and the functioning of (national) ideologies and mythologies rest on these two structural models. Their possible forms overlap and stretch from public celebrations with »national« character and exhibitions of state achievements (such as the world exhibition), via commissions in architecture, painting and sculpture, the media, public entertainment and the personal incentive to publicly remember up to the apparently private realm of autobiographical writings. I suggest, therefore, to examine the official and non-official ›storage spaces‹ of so-called »collectives«. Which of these are open to the public, how are they ›established‹? Which are created by individuals? This question is also tied into the problem of how subversive remembrance work can be continued in the background or »underground« – and which metamorphoses it undergoes there. It seems certain that the safeguarding of the space of rememberance – even if sometimes it is only one of appearance – is understood vis-à-vis an uncertain presence as a long-term provision of the empirically experiencable or imaginable possibilities of a time-span.

18 On the confrontation of past and present views from Hegel's point of view cf. also Hegel, G.W.F.: Werke. Bd. 10: Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse (1830). Teil 3: Die Wissenschaft der Logik. Mit den mündlichen Zusätzen. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 1986, pp. 258-262 (§§ 452-454); Hegel talks of a »nightly«, an »unconscious«, the »duct of intelligence«. Only when the images are drawn from here, does there emerge a »real possession«.

19 »When philosophy paints its grey in grey, then has a shape of life grown old. By philosophy's grey in grey, it cannot be rejuvenated but only understood. The owl of Minerve spreads its wings only with the falling of dusk.« In: Hegel, G.W.F.: Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts oder Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse. Ed. by Bernhard Lakebrink. Stuttgart: Reclam 1970, p. 59f.)

20 Adorno, Theodor W.: Zu Proust. In: Adorno, T.W.: Noten zur Literatur. Ed. by Rolf Tiedemann. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, p.669-675, here p. 671.

The Other and the Epiphany

Begining with Walter Benjamin's thoughts on materiality, Roland Barthes' concept of ›écriture‹ and Niklas Luhmann's identification of systems and environmental referrals, we can arrive at a fruitful concept (which stands in opposition to the one following Aleida and Jan Assman, placed on a very straightforward search for identity). A fundamental question that moves to the foreground here is that of alterity and the conditions of medial contingency processing. The problem of mediality, the processes of transformation embedded therein and the functions emerging thereof for the construction of memory has to be met to a large extent with a reference to materialty: The »remembered« can never be called up under the conditions under which it was constructed, rather environments and contexts (including social ones) of the moment of consumption play a decisive role. On the other hand, the idea of media as storage spaces, is an idea that is well-nigh exclusively shaped by thoughts emerging from older rhetoric, with no consideration of the given specific phenomena, their filters and forms of reception.

Not only ruling ideologies and discourses are »engraved« in media and stores, but also traces of an »Other«, of differences and alterities, of confrontation with the alien and of traumata that have not successfully been dealt with. The reason for this is a heterogenity of cultures, which are already each for themselves proving to be complex processes of forgetting, suppressing and recalling of alien as well as own elements, even more so in their interlocking ties and storage activites. Finally, it would be important to recognise the contradiction of the »Other« in the medial substrata of writing or the diversified forms of »culture« – meaning:

I would like to show how far categories and structures of an artificial »memory« appear in diverse sources and media and which forms of reception play a role therein. Connected to that is the opportunity of a comparison of the different productions of »memory«, the different (competing) appearances of traditions that are relevant for the acceptance and continuation of themes of an own and alien history – very much also from the desire for contrast and for generating an individual picture of society.

Altogether, the named terms (such as ›storage space‹, ›network‹, ›selection‹, ›perception‹, ›networking‹ and ›processing‹) and the problems they pose need to constantly be examined and categorised anew on the basis of research results. Even Hegel's owls need a little armament to emerge from their »duct of intelligence«[18] into the »grey in grey«[19]...

Of course, there are also the triggers both for memory and for the task of remembering, for forgetting and for reconstruction: Theodor W. Adorno used the image of a complete fragmentation of the spiritual for the *Á la recherche á la temps perdu* to tell of Proust's use of this precision in the small scale, the epiphany of the only apparently ephemeral and peripheral, as the energetic source of his »force fields«:

> If one could, without fear, use similes from the natural sciences, one might say that Proust aims for a mental splitting of the atom, wants to open up the smallest elements of life as force fields, within which all the might of life comes together.[20]

The triggers for the process of remembrance in the framework of the *mémoire involontaire* are practically black holes of epiphany. Here we have the inversion of Freudian psychoanalysis and its memory theorems insofar as its final goal is steered memory, while with Proust it has to be or is supposed to be to be arbitrary (beginning with an arbitrary or steered memory, bringing us back to the opposition of remembering and memory). That this is linked into the *fin-de-siècle* »genius« discussion ought to be mentioned only for completeness' sake.

However, maybe one ought not to begin with epiphany at all, important as it may be in the literature, when looking for the triggers for remembering. Maybe there is also a path in cultural studies that can be called upon. It was at first drawn by Aby Warburg and Ernst Cassirer, by Sigmund Freud, too, to be sure, and altogether was decisively influenced by a medical point of view and stretches through the media-theory debates like a red thread: The question after *symbolic forms*, their instances of mediation – the above-mentioned apperception and decoding of surface symptoms.

Expansion, Tools, Storage

According to Niklas Luhmann, media theory and media engineering are not entirely at one. Technical equipment is »excluded from the operation of communication, because they are not

21 Luhmann, Niklas: Die Realität der Massenmedien. 2nd ext. ed. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag 1996, p.13.

22 Sloterdijk, Peter: Die konstitutive Leugnung: Über Lügenmannschaften und Streßkollektive. Keynote Speech for »Literatur im März«, Wiener Messepalast, 26 March 1998.

23 Kapp, Ernst: Grundlinien einer Philosophie der Technik. Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Cultur aus neuen Gesichtspunkten. Braunschweig: Westermann 1877.

24 Freud, Sigmund: Notiz über den »Wunderblock« (1925 [1924]). In: Freud, S.: Ges. Werke. Vol. 14: Werke aus den Jahren 1925-1931. Frankfurt/M.: Fischer 1999, pp.3-8, here p. 4

25 Freud, Sigmund: Das Unbehagen in der Kultur. In: Freud, S.: Ges. Werke. Vol. 14: Werke aus den Jahren 1925-1931. Frankfurt/M.: Fischer 1999, pp.419-506, here p. 450f. Cf. for the context of this book the many contributions on the relation of interfaces and (also medial) protheses in Keck, Annette / Pethes, Nicolas (Eds.): Mediale Anatomien. Menschenbilder als Medienprojektionen. Bielefeld: Transcript 2001. Cf. also Kapp 1877.

26 McLuhan, Marshall: Die magischen Kanäle. Underständig Media. Düsseldorf: ECON 1992. [Orig.: Understanding Media. The Extensions of Man. Toronto 1968], p. 109.

27 Cf. on this Weinrich, Harald: Über Sprache, Leib und Gedächtnis. In: Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich / Pfeiffer, K. Ludwig (Eds.): Materialität der Kommunikation. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, pp. 80-93. Esp. though Keck / Pethers 1991.

28 Cf. Havelock, Eric A.: Schriftlichkeit. Das griechische Alphabet als kulturelle Revolution. With an intro. by Aleida a. Jan Assmann. Trans. by Sabine Herbst. Weinheim: VCH 1991 (Acta humaniora).

29 The end of its era was predicted in a large-scale design by McLuhan, Marshall: Die Gutenberg-Galaxis. Das Ende des Buchzeitalters. Düsseldorf, Wien: ECON 1968. [Orig.: The Gutenberg-Galaxy. Toronto 1962.]The division into »global trial« and »global village« however, undoes any differentiation.

30 Cf. Wenzel, Horst: Hören und Sehen, Schrift und Bild. Kultur und Gedächtnis im Mittelalter. München: Beck 1995. Cf. also Giesecke, Michael: Der Buchdruck in der frühen Neuzeit. Eine historische Fallstudie über die Durchsetzung neuer Informations- und Kommunikationstechno-

told of«.[21] Peter Sloterdijk pointedly named this and spoke in a similar context of an »unavoidable lie«.[22]

However, in ontological terms, the nature, the mode of being of this army of machines cannot at all be comprehended, since machines are incompatible with ontological status. The signification process and the semantic production of »meaning« as well as referenciality is in such a way directed by simulation, that any attempt to differentiate distinctively between signifier and any original *Onto*-reference has to fail *a priori*. Embedded in this conflict between signifiers and significata we find the traditional opposites of nature and technology. Machines, simulacra and the *chain of signifiers* appear neither to have an eidetic origin, nor to originate *eidos* themselves.

This discussion is not new, it has merely become more pointed. Ernst Kapp presented the *Entstehungsgeschichte der Cultur aus neuen Gesichtspunkten (History of Culture from new Viewpoints)*[23] in his *Grundlinien einer Philosophie der Technik (Fundamentals of a Philosophy of Technology)* in 1877. With his thesis of »organ projection« (the comparison of a railway network with the nervous system, etc) he sketched the until the *Toronto School* probably most important early reference point for these kinds of questions in the German-speaking realm. Ever since, equipment and organs have been thought together. The equipment mentioned by Sigmund Freud in his famous *A Note upon the Mystic Writing Pad* (glasses, photographic camera, ear trumpet, etc), according to him, often act as a condition for evocation, and hence support the tasks of memory and remembering. He does not, however, deem them sufficient for the task of memory and its support:

> [S]ince our mental apparatus accomplishes precisely what they cannot: it has an unlimited receptive capacity for new perceptions and nevertheless lays down permanent, though not unalterable, memory traces of them.[24]

The description of the *Mystic Writing Pad* – and his fascination for this »toy«, emerging from the theory of the wax tablets, with the analogy of the palimpsest playing a central role – is still a prelude to his thoughts on the functions of perception in 1925.

In *Civilization and its Discontents*, published five years later, Freud returns to this question, this time pushing the potential of the equipment more clearly into the foreground: Having named motors, ships, airplanes, as well as glasses, telescopes, microscopes, cameras, »grammophone records«, the telephone and script, he also states (not without mentioning its problems) that the human has become »a kind of god of protheses«[25]. It is about the extension of the body, about its expansion with the aid of the artificial, so to speak, but now it is also (grammophone record and script!) about the achievement of further possibilities, the externilisation of storage functions. That has consequences: Even in 1964, Marshall McLuhan postulated in *Understanding Media*, that media were *Extensions of Man*:

> The primary idea of this book is the thought all technology are extensions of our bodily organs and our nervous system, which serve to increase power and speed.[26]

So to conclude, I return to the concept of ›storage‹: Among many others, the scholar of ancient German linguistics Horst Wenzel pointed out that »brain memory« (raising the question whether body- and brain-memory mean the same thing[27]) was followed by a »script memory«[28], which in turn was followed by a »print memory«[29] and finally an »electronic memory«[30]. He suggested using ›Memoria‹ as central concept for these anthropological questions (such a model of stadiums is not clearly divisible), since one can find an additional form of memory arriving with each new medium. Umberto Eco recently made a similar differentiation during a lecture for the new Library of Alexandria. He differentiated between »organic memory«, »vegetal memory« and »mineral memory« (including, obviously, the computer). Although Eco is striving here - in line with the given occassion - primarily towards a *laudatio* of book culture, he nevertheless employed such anthropological (being applicable) categories.[31]

However that may be: Biological designs continue on in technology; media and their storage capacities allow us to see an option of freedom from the pressure of construction and reconstruction of memory. Script, printing, micro-electronics, computer technology as well as networks each offer new possibilities to externalise contents. That this means that these contents become over-formed and formatted specific to the medium, ought to be remembered, though.

Talk of ›storage‹ has always terminologically been taken hostage and currently it refers in

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31 Eco, Umberto: Vegetal and mineral memory: The future of books. In: Al-Ahram Weekly On-line, Iss. No. 665 (20 - 26 November 2003).

32 Cf. Yates 1991 for the hiterto best work on this complex.

33 Cf. Halbwachs, Maurice: Das kollektive Gedächtnis. With an intro. for the German ed. by Heinz Maus. Trans. by Holde Lhoest-Offermann. Frankfurt/M.: Fischer 1985.

34 With regard to a new network theory, meaning a paradigmatic change going beyond the purely rhetorical use of the term ›network‹ with reference to question of rememberance or memoery funciotns. Cf. Barabási, Albert-László: Linked. The New Science of Networks. Cambridge/Mass.: Perseus 2002 and Manovich, Lev: The Language of New Media. Cambridge/Mass. et al.: MIT Pr. 2001.

the first instance to machines, the most current source of association in new research and theory (especially of cultural and media studies). However, when we talk of remembering and forgetting, we also deal quite fundamentally with a concept that goes back to antique views of rhetoric and is hence still very much caught up in spatial notions.[32]

One cannot deny that there is such a thing as »storage«. However, it is to be understood as part of the process of remembering, as reconstruction or interpretation and hence as a ›process‹ – and a semantic problem. Apparently, it is about the recognition of what is going on in terms of politics, aesthetics and society. But the formatting (and its trigger) cannot be entirely understood if one fails to differentiate sufficiently between the (unexaminable, hence assumed, moreover in its structure hardly comprehensible) material and the process of its conditioning. In this context, one would have to question again such valuable terminology as Maurice Halbwachs' ›collective memory‹[33] pointedly as to its functionality (since from the point of view of the rulership, the idea is the goal-oriented connection of individual ways of dealing with the past). Collective identities and their apparent »memories« are social constructs and are given out in the form of communicated attributions.

We can only gain a limited insight from both the *loci memoriae* and the *imagines agentes* of ancient rhetoric and Nora's *Lieux de mémoires*. However, – next to the debate on material – another issue has in recent times come into play, the discussion of which has only tentatively begun: The question of the applicability and the concept of the »network« (for linguistic-terminological arrangements as well as for methodological approaches). Memory work then means the conscious, preferably concise building of a new network, not necessarily smaller, but maybe more comprehensible.[34]

English by Nadežda Kinsky

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