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> EDITORIAL

Think tactically, act regionally: A cultural memory introduction



Everywhere you go
Always take the weather with you
Crowded House

Transformations has, through its short but determined history, placed much analytical attention on the many meanings of regionality. This special issue continues this spirit, but with a twist. My original idea was to explore the visuality of memory, and how it resonates through contemporary places. Such a debate is sadly an underplayed card in the deck of cultural studies. While we may teach tourism, we rarely think touristically – as an academic traveler through time and space. It is no surprise that my original ideas about visual memory broadened and flowered into the current topic of this issue.

Cultural Memory became the trope and approach of this edition. It was obvious that the contributors were drawn to the taste, smell and touch of the past, as much as the surfaces of the landscape. As expected, the articles submitted to this special issue of Transformations were varied in their cultural emphasis and approach. Obviously, Cultural Memory became a resonate phrase that encompassed magazines, music, television, food and tourism. There were surprises, triggering a renewed consideration of Transformations and its regional motif.

Many of the articles were drawn to London's night time economy: of nightclubs, the Underground, of rhythms and surfaces. The referees were troubled: how did these pieces access regionality? Surely there should be some mention of globalization? Not recognized by these reviewers is that

there is a political imperative in reclaiming sites of (former) colonial powers. These pieces move through the plurality, inequalities and flaws of economic and stylistic empires.

Therefore, the first part of this special edition focuses on London, a London of decay, excess and conflict. Steven Quinn's "Rumble in the Jungle," explores a racialised capital, where sounds change the pathways through a landscape. The history of drum 'n' bass, which Quinn describes as "invisible," pounds the contradictions out of recent British history. Remarkably, Quinn constructs a new underground map, with more black, and less blue.

Amanda Evans' "Keeping it (Hyper)real" shows how a fashionable London of the 1980s punctuates the memory of other times and places. Using *The Face* magazine as her focus and metaphor, Evans explores the role of fashion in marking both bodies and years. She also demonstrates how magazines actually – and actively – build a readership and a community. What makes her piece important is that she shows how the 1980s *Face* still traces over each new edition of the magazine, over a decade later.

The third paper in this London-based *Star Wars* trilogy is my own. I investigated the popular memories that wash over the wall encircling Abbey Road studios in London. I became fascinated with how fans conducted conversations through their graffiti. While visiting the wall at different times, the shared space created shared meanings. Particularly, I focused on the way in which women's memories are frequently washed from the landscape.

None of these papers mention the word globalization. None present London as a core of colonial power. Instead they become sites of racialised, feminised, temporal critique and questioning. Cultural memory allows the reclamation of unknown stories, truths and sounds.

The second branch of articles in this special edition capture the memories sparkling from film and television. Tiziana Ferrero-Regis is drawn to a highly under-theorised sphere: Italian cinema of the 1990s. She explores how the past is presented through cinema, in a way that appears both more authentic and important than the present. This is best embodied by one her carefully chosen case studies: *The Icicle Thief*. She shows how baby-boomer generations have used cinema to create continuity with the past.

The filmic focus is continued by Jeannette Delamoir, but with a detour. A fine paper, Delamoir tracks Australian women's magazines, and how they covered the marital breakup of Nicole Kidman and Tom Cruise. The celebrity industry requires such trauma, and remains the fodder of a publicist's work day. But Delamoir demands something more of her celebrities, exploring the construction of a star persona, and its role for women and the visual memory of women's magazines.

Moving from one decaying couple to another, Leanne McRae summons the great cultural archive of Mulder and Scully that is *The X-Files*. McRae remains interested in how play and inversion operate in the programme, perhaps offering a way to re-focus and re-theorise the political terrain of contemporary cultural studies. Working through the "Postmodern Prometheus," she shows how *The X-Files* mobilises both popular and dominant renderings of the past. In this re-writing of the

Frankenstein narrative, Cher makes a guest appearance. In the terrain of Cultural Memory, such a trajectory is not unexpected.

The final paper in this collection – not surprisingly – stands alone. It is a profoundly appropriate conclusion to this special collection of papers. Felicity Newman, summoning the first of the Four Questions on Passover night, asks “Why is this night different from all other nights?” Not working with the rhythms or surfaces of London, not drawn to the visual history of the media, Newman’s words taste food memory. Evocatively written, the paper shadows the rituals of food, and the celebration of a meal. Food tells stories – of loss, and belonging. Our concluding piece allows food to convey the tales of memory.

Cultural Memory has proved an evocative topic for our contributors. I hope you enjoy your passage through the underground maps, magazine pages, streets, films and meals. May you smell, taste and touch the texts of the past that continue to bubble in our present.

Tara Brabazon

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