

Book review of Passerini, Luisa; Trakilović, Milica and Progljo, Gabriele (eds.) (2020) *The Mobility of Memory Migrations and Diasporas across European Borders*. New York: Berghahn Books. 240 pp.



BOOK REVIEW

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The book *The Mobility of Memory Migrations and Diasporas across European Borders* examines the relationship between contemporary cross-border mobility and memory in postcolonial Europe, specifically in Italy and the Netherlands. The book focuses on a case project entitled 'Bodies across Borders: Oral and Visual Memory in Europe and Beyond (BABE)'. The collaborative book was edited by Luisa Passerini, a historian and principal investigator for the case project, Milica Trakilović, a cultural studies scholar, and Gabriele Progljo, a historian.

The book comprises four parts, each part consisting of two chapters. Within this structure, the book weaves a common thread through individual chapters that spotlight the need to create new ways to engage with the memory in the threshold between past and present in the socio-political context. The authors' contributions represent a wide spectrum of research interests within the themes of migration and memory. The book builds upon previous research of Passerini (2007) and then positions the research discussions in relation to the central question of the BABE project, which focuses on contemporary migration, by connecting the duality of an autobiographical approach to narrative construction with a social-historical approach. Furthermore, the discussion extends to how these are reflected, for example, within education and culture.

The data is based on group interviews and workshops in which also visual materials were gathered. The objective is to clarify how shared memory can be created together with contributors of the research project, including researchers and scholars in collaboration with cultural mediators, as well as teachers from participating in the project schools and universities. Materials are analysed through qualitative data analysis methods.

Central terms, such as 'mobility of memory', 'refugee', 'other' and 'arriving', are defined prior to the discussion sections. These terms navigate between the past and present within the socio-cultural landscape in Italy and the Netherlands, and the research

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participants' personal experiences. The term postcolonial in the book builds upon discussion by de Leeuw and van Wicheler on resistance to the violence of the past by integration, as a tool to foreclose cultural diversity (p. 40). The book could be read alongside other contributions, such as Marc Augé (2004) and Enni Mikkonen (2020), who are discussing the interflow of cultural heritage, geographical context and memory.

The central theme of the book is the impact of border crossings on individuals and communities. The book's main research questions centre around how the historical load of the concrete geographical location adds another layer to the narrative of the individual's memory; how memory can be narrated visually or vocally; and how memory can be transformed into a new shared memory if all the involved stakeholders have the capacity and willingness to expand their understanding of the present as a metaphorical palimpsest of lived and embodied or narrated experiences. Palimpsest here is understood as historical layers, containing recent and distant historical events in Italy and the Netherlands, which affect the ways in which societal norms are shaped, even on the level of the individual performance.

The analysis developed in the book resonates with the concept of postcolonial memory and the site of the case project as a palimpsest, consisting of layers of narratives and hi(stories) (Griņiuk, 2021). The term hi(stories) signifies multiplicity of the individual narratives, as within the approach to data collection and analysis in the project BABE. Remembrance of the individual is within the framework of the collective memory, which is present within the socio-cultural context of the site. The research addresses the most recent migration issues in Europe, such as the events in 2015, where more than million migrants and refugees arrived in Europe, and the impact of those issues on ever changing normatives.

In the two parts of the book entitled 'Mobility Framed by Language: Constraints and Possibilities' and 'Diasporic Memories and Archival Trajectories' postcolonial memory and individual memory are discussed. Thereby, the book makes a valuable contribution to the field by locating the concept of memory as a practice attuned to live and continually negotiated memory. The authors present memory as oral, visual, textual or archival, emphasising mobile memory, which challenges the singular narrative of Europe and the monolithic approach to language or culture.

The chapter 4 'Transcultural Itineraries and New Literacies: How Memories Could Reshape School Systems' by Emmanuelle Le Pichon-Vorstman, Sergio Baauw, Debbie Cole, Suzanne Dekker and Marie Steff is extraordinary as it addresses multilingualism and the rooted tradition of the monolithic approach to language within schools. Contemporary normatives of the educational system do not go hand-in-hand with the challenges and new horizons related to migration. Today's teachers and pedagogues face the need to be part of the co-creation of new shared memories; simply put, they must be open to multilingual and multicultural learning milieus. From this perspective, the text provides crucial suggestions for individuals working or planning to work in the education field. Another interesting remark of the chapter is that students' oral language proficiency is connected to their reading and writing skills (pp. 115–116). Moreover, proficiency in the school language does not degrade proficiency in the other languages and vice versa.

Chapter 2, 'Languages of Mobility/Mobility of Languages: Between Words and Imagery' by Giada Giustetto, presents an important case within the educational context. It is an example of involving visual means through which the students develop their

autobiographical portrait in words and images. By collecting processes of expression and narratives along with drawings, this qualitative approach could offer novel methodological perspectives to migration studies.

All the chapters of the book build upon the research data from the BABE project. This project draws on the perspective of visual intersubjectivity, which explores the construction of visual memory through art with a focus on migration to and across Europe, and visual memory collected through interviews. The visual data includes video art, photography and drawings. These visual materials, as provided in the case description, were presented in 2016 in Palermo as an exhibition by the participants of the BABE project (p. 87). This method presents similarities to the methods used in Arts-Based Research (ABR) (Leavy 2017), although the authors do not refer to it in the text. Researchers using such methods do not need art training; however, the data collection or analysis is implemented through artistic means.

The book uses the interconnections between mobility and memory as the prism through which to view contemporary postcolonial Europe. It contributes to the contemporary discussion on human rights and equality and spotlights the need for reconceptualising the national identity and its components, such as language. For those new to the field of research, the book provides clear explanations of terminology and concepts. The book represents a necessary contribution to the interdisciplinary field and would be of particular interest to teachers and pedagogues involved in intercultural teaching practices, as well as to historians and experts in the intercultural field.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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