Sense of Place and <u>Lieu de Mémoire</u>: A Cultural Memory Approach to Environmental Texts

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It is striking how often literary representations of nature appear within recollections of childhood, or more broadly in the context of acts of remembering. At the same time, memories of the past, in literature as in life, are commonly anchored in places, landscapes or buildings. As approaches to the study of culture, ecocriticism and cultural memory studies differ in their principal concerns: while the former relates to nature and space, and examines cultural constructions of the natural environment, the latter is oriented towards history and time, and principally preoccupied with representations and understandings of the social, in formulations relating the present and future to the past. However, both are concerned with how writers critique contemporary western socio-political structures and cultural values, how they envision alternatives, and how their work facilitates cultural renewal. They share interests in the interaction between personal experience and imagining on the one hand and collective values and identity on the other, and in textual mechanisms and techniques involving the adaptation and reinterpretation of received narratives and images. And their interests converge in place. In this essay, I argue that a cultural memory approach affords insights into the cultural and textual construction of places from which ecocritics can profit.

Among the foremost convictions of the environmental movement since the nineteen-sixties has been that in order to reduce environmental damage, we need to strengthen individuals' ties to the local area, which have been increasingly eroded in modern society. Aldo Leopold's land ethic, E.F. Schumacher's 'small is beautiful' economic programme, bioregionalism and food miles are all variants of the philosophy of localism. The Kentucky farmer, poet and essayist Wendell Berry, the Native American writer Leslie Marmon Silko and the author, naturalist and environmental activist Terry Tempest Williams are among the most frequently cited literary proponents of sense of place. In his essay 'The Regional Motive,' Berry writes: "Without a complex knowledge of one's place, and without the faithfulness to

one's place on which such knowledge depends, it is inevitable that the place will be used carelessly, and eventually destroyed."[1] At the same time, philosophers as different as Hans Jonas, Arne Naess and Zygmunt Bauman have developed an ethics of spatial proximity, and argued for physical immersion as a way for individuals to reintegrate in the biotic community. Since the emergence of literary ecocriticism in the early nineteen-nineties, advocates including Lawrence Buell, Glen Love and Scott Slovic have therefore been centrally concerned with the role of literature in fostering a sense of locality and place.

However, the assumption underlying much ecocriticism that environmental consciousness is necessarily grounded in sense of place, and that sustainable behaviour can be fostered by reconnecting individuals with place, has recently been challenged by Ursula Heise (Sense of Place and Sense of Planet). Not all premodern societies were rooted in place, Heise reminds us, and those that were have by no means always been models of ecologically sensitive inhabitation. In the mobile world of the twenty-first century, moreover, there can be no simple return to local belonging and the caring which allegedly follows from it: sense of place must be complemented by 'sense of planet,' and local belonging subordinated to global identification.

Heise attributes the "persistent utopian reinvestment in the local"[2] which she identifies to a fundamental ambivalence in public attitudes towards the notion of global connectedness dating back to the nineteen-sixties, and to the weakening of utopian impulses over the last four decades. There are, she suggests, also particular reasons why American environmentalists and ecocritics have committed themselves to localism and the ethics of proximity: rootedness in place has acquired a special value as counterweight to the restless mobility perceived as paradigmatic of American society and American character.[3] However, Heise argues, 'eco-cosmopolitanism' is a more appropriate goal today, when identity is more commonly defined by relations to a multiplicity of places than a singular place. Traditional place-attachment has become an anachronism. Restoring individuals' sense of place may remain a useful tool in environmentalist practice, but it is a "dead end if it is understood as a founding ideological principle or a principal didactic means of guiding individuals and communities back to nature."[4]

However desirable, even necessary, it is to develop the sense of planet outlined by Heise, this does not mean ecocritics can afford to ignore place as a cultural phenomenon. The main target of Heise's critique is the conviction that an

ethic of responsibility and care for the natural environment are rooted in either sensual experience gained through physical proximity or cognitive knowledge of the surrounding ecosystems.[5] Quite rightly, she challenges this assumption and points out that environmental consciousness is also grounded in other ways which have nothing to do with place, or which derive from awareness of the connections between places rather than attachment to a particular place. However, Heise underestimates the affective ties with place which arise out of identification, as part of processes of individual and collective identity-construction. The cultural memory approach developed by Maurice Halbwachs, Pierre Nora and Jan and Aleida Assmann which I examine in the following is concerned with places less as geographical realities than as symbolic entities, remembered and imagined, which play a central role in subject constitution, and serve crucial political, social and cultural functions. Places in this sense are under constant reconstruction, as the founding myths of communities are adapted to changing political circumstances. Providing a more precise understanding of the imaginative strategies and devices, cultural practices and institutions that allow individuals and communities to form attachments to places and to maintain them over time as an integral part of their identities, cultural memory studies draws attention to dimensions of the affective investment in place and of place-belonging whose implications have hitherto been largely ignored by ecocritics.[6]

Cultural memory studies

Memory studies began to gain wider recognition as a theoretical approach in the nineteen-eighties, with the 'memory turn' in the study of history inaugurated by the French historian Pierre Nora. In Germany, where the collapse of the Soviet Union, political reunification and the emergence of Holocaust memory into new prominence triggered a surge of new interest in the nation's past, Jan and Aleida Assmann gave memory studies a distinctive direction through their elaboration of the concept of 'cultural memory.' (See especially Jan Assmann, Das kulturelle Gedächtnis, and Aleida Assmann, Erinnerungsräume.)[7] Both Nora and the Assmanns drew on the ideas of the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. Writing between the nineteen-twenties and the forties, Halbwachs sought to provide a corrective to Henri Bergson's and Sigmund Freud's understanding of memory as a purely subjective and individual

phenomenon.[8] He shifted his focus from the individual realm to the domain of the "social frames" of collective experience, and saw acts of remembering as always related to the repository of images and ideals that constitute our socio-cultural relations. Halbwachs introduced the term 'collective memory' for articulations of the relationship with the past of social groups and cultural communities in rituals and customs, verbal communication, the media and institutions. He saw the construction of identity as a central function of relating to the past: we recall those events which are relevant to the self-understanding and present interests of the group.

The Assmanns' conception of 'cultural memory' corresponds to this broad understanding of culture, subsuming media practices and myth, monuments and ritual rememberings alongside written texts including letters, diaries and autobiographies as well as prose fiction, drama and poetry. However, they distinguish cultural memory from 'communicative/ social memory', the product of everyday interaction of living people, comprising events going back a maximum of about 80 years. Social memory is the subject of oral history and research into family and generation memory, and its contents are open to constantly shifting interpretation. Cultural memory by contrast possesses greater stability and longevity due to its inscription in collective practices and physical objects. The common denominator of its configurations of cultural knowledge lies in patterns of thought, narratives and images giving meaning to the past, and converting past experiences into a basis for individual and collective identity in the present.

In the human brain, remembering depends on invention as much as retrieval. Though there is as yet no universally agreed model for how memory works, it is generally held that memories are not stores of complete sets of sense data, but consist rather of fragments of experience encoded in engrams, or patterns of neuronal excitement, which must be reactivated in processes linking them up into coherent patterns of information. This process of 're-membering' the raw experiential data explains why memories are subjective and context-dependent, and why they often tell us as much about the present needs and desires of the remembering subject as they do about the past. The reliving of memory can be compared with theatrical or musical rehearsal, which entail making reality of something which only exists in abstract notation, and creating as much as repeating. (For a detailed account of the functioning of memory, see Daniel Schacter, Searching for Memory.)

Literary remembering, which has attracted increasing attention in the last fifteen years, can also be understood as a <u>performance</u> of the past, an active production of 'lived reality,' through the selection and arrangement, synthesis and dramatic intensification of past events. The free embrace of imaginary elements is one of the distinguishing features of literature and feature films. The 'depragmatisation' which alleviates them from the burden of telling the historical truth enables them to try out interpretations of the past. Historical facts can be readily invested with new meanings. This linking of the real with the imagined facilitates the generation of new structures of cultural perception. Literary works typically seek to respond to a crisis or problem in the existing memory culture, by focusing on forgotten aspects of the past, articulating as yet unformed memories, and making stories out of them.

While authors participate in the omnipresent competition between different rememberings, they also frequently reflect on the process, either by commenting explicitly on the shortcomings of a specific memory culture, or by directing attention to their own authorial strategies of representation and construction. In these and other ways, writers prompt critical reflection on the functioning and problems of collective memory, and help their communities adapt to changing circumstances.[9] Literary texts also possess distinctive formal properties: the process of condensation present in all remembering is intensified. Uniting and overlaying different semantic spheres in allegory and metaphor, works of literature are characteristically structured by symbolic figurations of memory. The term 'figurations of memory' was introduced by the Assmanns to denote a constantly evolving archive of narratives and images deriving from the Bible, Greek myth, fairy tales, history, world literature, etc. These structures, which crystallise meaning around events, people and places, blend factual and textual recall with imagination. They evoke established memory patterns and interpretations of the past, and actualise them. This process of intertextual revisiting and reconfiguring of tropes, narratives and images plays a central role in the constant reshaping of public perceptions of nature and environment. Figurations of memory focusing on places serve as particularly important vehicles for the communication and redefinition of understandings of our relationship with the natural environment.

Places of memory

Places of memory and the relationship between place and memory have been key areas of memory research. Jan Assmann has written of the role played by sacred places in premodern cultures, originally as physical habitations of the divine, later as locations embodying the memory of the experience of divine presence, and finally as the sites of past events leading to the founding of the nation. Visiting such places of memory was a refreshing of these memories, and was practised ritually as a rededication to the nation and the values it stood for. Places associated with the ruling family thus served to confirm the stability and continuity of the community. Aleida Assmann and others have since shown how places associated with traumatic events such as military defeat and the holocaust have played an equally important role in fixing and mediating individuals' identification with the nation in recent times.

     In Erinnerungsräume, Assmann identifies texts, images, the body and places as the four principal media through which memories and identity are anchored in cultural memory. The lingering material traces which constitute physical links mediating between present and past make places of memory auratic sites of immediate encounter with a forgotten past. Places are special symbols of events and associated values, because they possess an indexical relationship with their meaning. Not only do they bridge the gap between mental constructs and reality with a unique degree of physical validity and longevity, they are also typically sites where individual and collective memories reinforce each other. Ecological configuration of the symbolic meaning of places does not necessarily entail a restoration of spiritual significance or reenchantment. However, Aleida Assmann notes a basic human need for 'holy places,' from which miracles, reconciliation, healing or spiritual renewal can be derived. She writes of the combination of philological learning/ historical knowledge and intuition/ imagination in place-based encounters with the past since the Renaissance, and shows how poetic imagination gained in importance in the Romantic period. The Romantic cult of ruins, historical places and picturesque or sublime landscapes was a gesture of resistance to Enlightenment modernity's rational exploitation of space, which at the same time facilitated the new interest in autobiographical self-reflection. Places came to be associated with forgetting and eruptive return of the repressed.

However, the importance of place for memory goes beyond such 'real' places of memory, which are typically defined by their collective investment with overlapping, often conflicting significances, and open to constant reinterpretation and reappropriation. Spatialising ideas and events is an inherent feature of human memory, as illustrated by the ancient mnemonic technique ars memoriae, which linked arguments with places in order to recall them. Cicero recommended that orators attach loci et imagines (places and images) to the things to be remembered in their speeches (De Oratore). The images helped recall the facts and ideas, while the places helped order them. The speaker could then walk round in his imagination and collect them. Frances Yates showed how this once widely practised technique is not merely one of the main origins of the system of conventional symbols whose iconographic presence may be found in art and literature down to the end of the eighteenth century, but also exercised a powerful influence over the cultural organisation of knowledge in Europe. (Yates, The Art of Memory)

It was Yates's book from which Pierre Nora took the notion of 'lieu de mémoire' in his monumental, seven-volume Les Lieux de mémoire (1984–1992). Besides signifying 'places of memory,' lieux de mémoire refers more broadly to 'realms' or 'sites' "where [cultural] memory crystallizes and secretes itself".[10] The lieux de mémoire discussed by Nora and his colleagues include places such as Reims, Paris and the prehistoric caves of Lascaux, buildings and museums; rituals, festivals and calendars; objects such as monuments, flags and texts (Marcel Proust's Remembrance of Things Past); real people (René Descartes and Joan of Arc); mythical ones (the Good Soldier, Nicolas Chauvin); events (the battle of Verdun, the Tour de France); and concepts, mottos and symbols. Whether they constitute physical locations of memory, or just its place in the social imagination, these are all approached as the result of an imaginary process that codifies and represents the historical consciousness of France.

Nora's distinction of memory (the totality of forms through which cultural communities imagine themselves in diverse representational modes), from history (an intellectual practice rooted in the evidence derived from the study of empirical reality), and his work in general have been major influences on younger researchers. However, international interest in places of memory has been frequently associated with Holocaust scholarship, and keen to embrace localized, diffuse, polysemic memories, rather than reconstructing hegemonic national identities. It has sought to

preserve or salvage the memories of individuals and small communities as antidotes to the narrative of dominant groups and oppressive States. Nora's pessimistic conception of the replacement of the unitary framework of French collective memory by smaller configurations or identities, resulting in a regrettable fragmentation and politicization of memory, and of memory functioning in our era of commemoration as a mere simulation of the past,[11] has also been discarded. Vagueness over the definition of lieux de mémoire led the Assmanns to distinguish between figurations of memory (lieux in the broader sense) and the actual physical spaces which memory focuses upon, real places in which vestiges evoke the past in a particularly intense way.

In Landscape and Memory (1996), Simon Schama has written eloquently about the interplay between individual imaginings of place and cultural templates, and about the political functions which individuals' nostalgic responses have served over the centuries. However, Schama's interest in ecological issues is only marginal, and the same has been true for most other studies of place and memory. In the final part of this essay, I wish to show how places of memory form the focus of two works from the nineteen-eighties which combine collective identity construction with interrogation of our interaction with nature: an autobiographical novel by the Austrian Peter Handke and a short work of poetic prose by the East German Volker Braun. Handke's novel, Repetition, published in 1986, is a fictionalised account of the author's discovery of his ancestral homeland in Slovenia, written at a time when Western Europeans had largely 'forgotten' their Eastern and South-Eastern neighbours. Volker Braun's Bodenloser Satz (Groundless Sentence) was written in 1988, and published in the autumn of 1989. It presented a critical review of 40 years of socialism in the German Democratic Republic on the eve of the State's collapse and absorption into the Federal Republic of Germany.

The weakening of the economies of countries in Eastern Europe, the decline of Soviet power, and growing disillusionment with socialist ideology prompted major changes in cultures of memory in both Austria and the German Democratic Republic in the years leading up to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. Handke and Braun contributed to processes whereby national and personal identities were being reconfigured, by revisiting and reinterpreting their own past and that of the collective. At the same time, Repetition and Groundless Sentence sought to promote ecological principles. The utopian and dystopian places they present

respectively mobilised individual and collective memories in order to construct new collective identities in which ecological sustainability played a central role.

Peter Handke's Repetition

Handke's mother belonged to a discriminated Slovenian-speaking minority in Carinthia, the South-Eastern province of Austria where he grew up. From the late nineteen-seventies on, his writing reflects growing interest in this Slovenian heritage. Looking back from the time of writing in the mid nineteen-eighties, Filip Kobal, the fictional protagonist of Repetition, remembers the summer of 1960, when he left school aged eighteen and set off, alone and on foot, on a journey to discover the home of his ancestors. Getting to know Slovenia, its people and language is described as reestablishing contact with the family's past and with a dimension of the nation whose memory had been suppressed. This past is linked with emancipatory political activism through the story of a Kobal who was executed for leading a failed Peasants' Rising in 1713. Filip's itinerary is determined by the search for traces of a lost older brother. Twenty-one years his elder, Gregor Kobal had studied horticulture in Maribor before the Second World War. When he was drafted into the Wehrmacht and sent to fight former classmates, he deserted. It is rumoured that he joined a group of partisans who declared a 'Free Republic of Kobarid.'

Filip's journey ends where his brother disappeared, on the barren Karst plateau in the hinterland of the city of Trieste. The rural community he finds there, living in utopian harmony with the environment in fertile dolinas (sinkholes, or large circular depressions in the limestone pavement),[12] contrasts with contemporary Austrian materialism, affluence and distrust of foreigners. The same holds true for a second place of memory in Repetition, an orchard which Filip's older brother had planted back home in Austria after his return from Maribor.[13] Both are presented as models of productive human interaction with the natural environment. A rich diversity of crops is grown by patient grafting and selective cultivation. Gregor Kobal's and the Slovenian small farmers' methodical stewardship serves as a model, not only for Filip's life, but also for his writing, in which he seeks to erect a permanent memorial to his brother's values.

Slovenia is for Handke less a political or geographical entity than a bucolic dream land, a mythical ancestral nation, and the projection of a longing for a better world. His descriptions of the sinkholes in the Slovenian Karst contain biblical echoes of the Garden of Eden and Noah's Ark, and he refers to them as the 'Ninth Country', a term derived from a Slovenian folktale, which alludes to an Arcadian land of plenty which will one day return. A passage describing Filip Kobal reading his older brother's hand-written manual of fruit-growing reflects Handke's own reading of Virgil's Georgics. Other passages echo Ernst Bloch's conception of Heimat in The Principle of Hope, and the Heideggerian concepts of dwelling and belonging resonate in allusions to homelessness, home, and Filip's attachment to the farming community towards the end of the novel. Alongside these intertextual references, which are confirmed by entries in his diaries, Handke constructs new figurations of memory of his own, which recur throughout the novel as enigmatic leitmotifs. The titles of the first two sections of the three into which the book is divided, 'Blind Windows' and 'Empty Cowpaths', are complex symbols of loss and the degradation of the present, hinting at the possible return of a better life which is fleetingly associated with the old Austro-Hungarian empire.

Volker Braun's Groundless Sentence

In Groundless Sentence, Braun asks what has become of the ideals and principles on which the GDR was founded. The narrative, in which a first person protagonist revisits a village standing in the path of an open-cast mining project where he had worked 30 years before, incorporates elements of the author's own experience as a civil engineering labourer in the late nineteen-fifties. The narrator recalls the actions of his work brigade, clearing the ground of vegetation so that the topsoil could be removed and the underlying coal extracted. As the houses are evacuated, ancient trees are felled and orchards bulldozed, he becomes painfully aware of the losses incurred.

By evoking a 'bottomless' pit, the title alludes literally to the brown coal mining which was a central plank in the GDR economy, providing the main source of energy for its heavy industry, but also a major source of atmospheric and water pollution, because of the high sulphur content of the extracted coal. Taken metaphorically, as

'groundless sentence,' it also reflects the author's sense of the ideological ground disappearing under his feet, and anxieties about losing the territory, community and home for which he had written over the last three decades. Thirdly, understood as a 'monstrous' sentence, it expresses his fear that human invention and striving may ultimately be indistinguishable from the impulse to destroy, and that an instrumental relationship with nature may yet be our undoing. And finally, it refers to the form of the piece, whose 32 pages are written in one continuous sentence, albeit a highly complex one, juxtaposing heterogeneous elements in a stream of consciousness, and involving alternation between fact and fiction, narrated events and dreams, and different time frames.

The narrative of Groundless Sentence is one of self-incurred expropriation. Since the nineteen-seventies, Braun had expressed doubts about the practical realisation of Marx's vision of humanity's self-realisation through 'metabolic' interaction with the natural environment. These come to a head in the text, which rejects the idea of man's Promethean struggle with the elements, culminating in the subjugation of nature to rational exploitation. The bleakness of Braun's perception of socialism, and of modernity in general, by the late nineteen-eighties is partially alleviated by a utopian vision at the end of the piece, in which the slender trees struggling to re-establish themselves on a recultivated part of the site offer encouragement to confused bystanders, as if remembering men as friends and carers.

The text provides a historical explanation for the corruption of the original ideals of socialism. Disinterring human remains from the village cemetery, the workers come upon a mass grave of wartime Russian slave labourers. We learn that the villagers failed to intervene while these unfortunate people were kept in cattle trucks in a siding, without food or water, or to protest when the SS shot the survivors after forcing them to bury their dead.[14] The founding myth of the GDR, the assumption that East Germans had been anti-fascists, is exposed as a lie which has condemned them to self-alienation. This has led in turn to the suppression of legitimate individual aspirations and needs in the name of the collective, and ruthless exploitation of the natural environment.

Ecological belonging as part of a wider redefinition of the relationship with place

Groundless Sentence redefined East German collective identity by reinterpreting the people's relationship with the coal mine as a lieu de mémoire. Stripping it of its significance as a site of collective self-realisation and the construction of a socialist society, Braun endowed it with new meaning as one of self-deception and quasi-military destruction. The GDR's self-image as a nation of coal miners heroically battling with the land is rejected, and the villagers' loss of their homes is presented as just punishment for their suppression of the past and estrangement from nature and the Heimat. Like Handke's places of memory, the open cast coal mine in which Braun sets his narrative is as much an ideological, literary and mythical place as a real one: its name, Hardt, is an ironic echo of a classical poem ('Der Winkel von Hardt') by Friedrich Hölderlin which celebrated a natural shelter of rock in the Black Forest as the epitome of Heimat.

Braun met with harsh criticism after 1990 for his illusory hopes of retaining an independent reform communist state in East Germany. However, what Groundless Sentence actually pleaded for was a form of society to supersede both real existing socialism and Western capitalism, in which mechanisms of domination in relations between men, between the sexes, and between nature and culture are radically restructured. Handke's text exemplifies by contrast the ambivalence of the ethical and political consequences of attachment to place. Traces of nostalgia for the old Austro-Hungarian Empire, as an enlightened, multi-ethnic democracy maintaining peace, justice and religious tolerance, are present in Repetition,[15] and the book resonates with the idea of 'Mitteleuropa.' (This conception of a loose confederation of independent states in Central Europe experienced a revival in the mid nineteen-eighties as a way of overcoming East-West divisions, military confrontation and the economic stagnation of the Communist bloc.) Handke's Karst sinkhole was partly inspired by Vilenica, a limestone cave which has served as a spiritual home for the Slovenians and stood at the same time for political opening to other Central European countries and the memory of a shared transnational cultural heritage. The personal myth of Slovenia and the old Yugoslavia as places of freedom and the good life which Handke wove into his writing was to lead him into problematic territory in the nineteen-nineties, when he spoke out against the Slovenians' wish for independence and accession to the European Union, and later, when he defended the Serbs and their president Milosovic during the Bosnian and Kosovo wars.

Handke's alternative to mindless mainstream consumerism is also impracticable as a model for thinking and living in an environmental way, because of the poverty and hardship whose acceptance it presupposed. He can thus be said to have fallen victim to his own attachment to place, by losing sight of the essentially fictional, symbolic and mythical nature of the Karst dolina in Repetition and confusing it with the Slovenian (and Yugoslavian) State.

With this cautionary proviso, though, literary lieux de mémoire can clearly serve an important function as localisations for a utopian vision of human reconciliation with nature which would otherwise lack concrete embodiment. When Ursula Heise writes that the increasing connectedness of societies today demands the emergence of new forms of culture which are no longer anchored in place, and calls for us to "envision how ecologically based advocacy on behalf of the non-human world as well as on behalf of greater socio-environmental justice might be formulated in terms that are premised no longer on ties to local places",[16] this ignores quasi-universal mechanisms of collective memory as well as individual psychology. In Germany, sense of place has not enjoyed the same prominence in recent literary criticism as in the United States, conceptions of local belonging having been discredited through association with Blood and Soil in the Third Reich. However, there has been a gradual revival of interest in the concept of Heimat as a marker of affective ties with towns and cities, landscapes and regions as places of habitation (if not necessarily of origin), in sociological and cultural debates since the nineteen-seventies. (See Gebhard, Geisler and Schröter.) It may be unwise to dismiss place-identity, and even the nostalgic idealisation of places, as factors contributing to a caring attitude towards the environment.

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[1] Berry, "The Regional Motive," 69.

[2] Heise, <u>Sense of Place</u>, 28.

[3] Ibid., 48-49.

[4] Ibid., 21.

[5] Ibid., 33.

[6] Heise acknowledges this when she writes that: "developing a 'sense of place' cannot mean a return to the natural in and of itself, but at best an approach to the natural from within a different cultural framework," and cites with approval the view that "the assumption that place possesses inherent physical as well as spiritual qualities to which human beings respond when they inhabit them must be replaced by an analysis of how such qualities are either 'socially produced' or 'culturally constructed'" (p. 45). Yet the broad thrust of her argument is to deny place-attachment as a significant environmental factor, rather than to call for a more nuanced understanding of it: "The challenge for environmentalist thinking, then, is to shift the core of its cultural imagination from a sense of place to a less territorial and more systemic sense of planet" (p. 56).

[7] Works by the distinguished Egyptologist and cultural theorist Jan Assmann published in English translation include a selection of essays under the title <u>Religion and Cultural Memory</u> (Stanford University Press, 2006). Aleida Assmann is principally known for her work on theories of memory and the history of memory in Germany since the Second World War. To date, her more important writings have not appeared in English, though individual books have been published in French and Swedish, and her principal work, <u>Erinnerungsräume</u>, has appeared in Italian and Japanese editions. An English translation is currently in preparation. Drawing on Egyptian culture and Greek, Roman and Medieval and Renaissance thinkers, on philosophers from Plato to Locke and Nietzsche, and on examples from English literature ranging from Shakespeare, Spencer and Wordsworth to Hawthorne and Kurt Vonnegut, as well as on contemporary painting and sculpture, <u>Erinnerungsräume</u> presents a panorama of western cultural memory and has stimulated much subsequent research with its categorisation of types, functions and media of memory.

[8] Halbwachs, <u>On Collective Memory</u> contains extracts from three foundational texts.

[9] Astrid Erll's <u>Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen</u> [Collective Memory and Memory Cultures] provides a helpful overview of research into memory studies in the disciplines of history, sociology, literature and psychology, discusses the media of social memory and presents an integrative semiotic model of collective memory. I am indebted here to the last two chapters, which survey recent research on literature as a medium of cultural memory. Publications accessible to English readers include Erll and Nünning, "Where Literature and Memory Meet," Rigney, "Plenitude, scarcity," and the collection of essays edited by Erll and Nünning, <u>Cultural Memory Studies</u>.

[10] Nora, "Between Memory and History," 7. See also Nora, "From <u>Lieux de mémoire</u> to <u>Realms of Memory</u>," xvii: "If the expression <u>lieu de mémoire</u> must have an official definition, it should be this: a <u>lieu de mémoire</u> is any significant entity, whether material or nonmaterial in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community."

[11] "There are <u>lieux de mémoire</u>, sites of memory, because there are no longer <u>milieux de mémoire</u>, real environments of memory" – Nora, "Between Memory and History," 7.

[12] See Handke, <u>Repetition</u>, 196-215.

[13] The orchard is described ibid., 120-127.

[14] Braun's coal mine possesses characteristics of the traumatic places described by Aleida Assmann (<u>Erinnerungsräume</u>, 328-39), whose history is felt to be untellable for reasons of guilt or shame. His depiction of the place's association with past crimes against humanity may have been inspired by one of a number of historical incidents in late 1944 and early 1945, when many prisoners evacuated from

concentration camps because of the advancing Allied armies died in transport, as well as on the notorious death marches. There is also a parallel with the exposure of the 'Topography of Terror' in 1985, when West German archaeologists and historians discovered a surviving basement section of the Gestapo headquarters in Berlin, whose memory had been suppressed for decades.

[15] Filip is prompted, for instance, by the sight of an ornamental footscraper in an old station building to sense "the breath of a gentle spirit, the spirit of those who long ago, in the days of the Empire, had designed it and made use of it" (p. 171).

[16] Sense of Place, 10. My emphasis.