ESF Exploratory Workshop on

Medieval Memories: Case Studies, Definitions, Contexts

SCIENTIFIC REPORT

Prague, Czech Republic, 2 - 6 September 2007

Convened by:
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Center for Theoretical Study, Charles University
Executive Summary

The ESF exploratory workshop took place as planned in September 3-6, 2007 at Vila Lanna in Prague. As envisaged, the event was interdisciplinary, collecting researchers from various areas of medieval studies who address the topic of memory in their individual researches. The participants were from a greater part early-stage researchers, they were very enthusiastic and did not skip any sessions. It proved very efficient that each participant had submitted a detailed (2-3 page) abstract of his or her paper in advance. With all the abstracts distributed two weeks before the workshop, everyone had time to prepare reactions.

The most important part of the event were vivid discussions among the participants, both during the assigned time following the individual papers and during coffee breaks, lunch breaks and in the evenings. During the final discussion, the participants decided not to try to create a common project at the moment. For the time being, we would like to concentrate on producing a quality proceedings. (The deadline for submitting the revised articles is January 31, 2008 – the participants all agreed they need time for including the critical remarks of their colleagues.) And, clearly, we will do our best to keep the network created thanks to the workshop.

The workshop organisation was smooth – all the equipment worked, the Vila Lanna accommodation and food was good, the staff was helpful. The excursions to the Jewish museum and to the medieval collection of the National Gallegy in St. Agnes’ convent were also greatly appreciated by the participants. It was a pleasure to meet the ESF representative, Przemyslaw Urbanczyk. The publication of the proceedings of the workshop is planned by the Brill Publishers.

Scientific content

The subject matter of memory proved to be interesting, inspiring, and by far not exhausted by contemporary scholarship. During the workshop, a great number of approaches and understandings of the concept emerged which were not always easy to harmonize. This was expected, and it was also expected that the workshop will not offer a final word on this problem.

The first day of the workshop concentrated on memory as practice of recuperating knowledge, that is, the contexts of memorizing (Morley, Birgisson, Lorenz), artes memoriae (Kiss, Wójcik), mnemonic verses (Dinkova-Bruun, Doležalová) and mnemonic images (Iseppi). From the second day on, wider contexts of memory were opened. These could be divided into two groups, one dealing with memory primarily as remembering the past both “real” and imagined (Ranković, Falvay, Whitman, Smirnova, Raspe, Purakis, and Mundal), the second concerning memory as an ethical and social act that involves problems of self-fashioning (remembering oneself), problems of ethical behavior (remembering norms and taboos) and problems of social and political actions (Morley, Koycheva, Giraud, Bueno, Stella, Tóth, Livini, Nemerkényi, Florea,
Laszlovszky, and Bartlová). The two contributions stressing the role of forgetting as part of remembering (Challet and Visi) were much appreciated by the participants.

There are several points which were discussed in more detail:

1. Mary Carruthers’ two monographs (The Book of Memory; The Craft of Thought) still play a fundamental role in our understanding the manifold functions of memory in medieval civilization and we are all indebted to her contribution in one way or another. Nonetheless, Mary Carruthers is far from being an infallible authority on medieval cultures of memory. Discussions held throughout the workshop revealed several relevant objections to some of Carruthers’ ideas. Her interpretation of the Latin phrase “imagines agentes” appearing in the *Rethorica ad Herennium* (iii. 37 – originally not “imagines agentes” but “aliquid agentes imagines”) attributed to Cicero, which was very influential in the Middle Ages, was hotly debated at several sessions of the workshop. Many of the participants agreed that the meaning was something like “bizarre images” or “images capable of making an effect” rather than “active images” or “images representing actions.”

2. Many participants pointed out new problematics of medieval memories that can hardly be assimilated to Carruthers’ categories or described and interpreted in the framework of her research, such as the medieval administration of memory (in forms of charters, contracts, landmarks, or records of inquisitorial procedures), struggles over memories within the context of various power-games, imposing memories by force, oppressing memories of historical events, such as the peasant-revolts in fourteenth-century Languedoc, or involuntary rediscovery of lost memories of a pagan past. One participant severely criticized Carruthers’ interpretation of medieval arts

3. As far as the medieval mnemonics are concerned, they were placed into a wider context beyond the usual textual analysis – the speakers discussed their origin and use (Dinkova-Bruun), particular use by preachers (Rivers), relationship between the practice and theory of memory (*artes memoriae*) (Kiss, Wójcik) as well as their metrial existence like manuscript transmission (Doležalová) or book as an object (Morley). This approach opened up new possibilities of researching this type of texts.

4. Widely discussed was the shift from personal memory to communal one in hagiography (Falvay), as well as epic poetry (Ranković). Especially the contribution of Slavica Ranković provided a welcome theoretical background for discussing such issues.

5. Two scholars showed in their contributions very well how memory influences the physical world (Laszlovszky) and how the physical world can inspire fake memories (Raspe).

6. The workshop proved very well that the topic of memory can be approached by using various types of sources, that it is well-fitting for an interdisciplinary
research. Papers analysing literary works (Whitman, Stella) were well complemented by those dealing with historical sources (Bueno, Challet and more), images (Bartlová, Iseppi), and architecture (Laszlovszky and Raspe).

**Assessment of results**

A network of mostly early-stage researchers from 15 countries was created. The proceedings are planned to be published in 2008 and will, in our opinion, significantly contribute to researching and approaching the topic of memory in the Middle Ages.

The primary point of the workshop was an exchange of ideas, inspiring each other through a common search for defining, describing and approaching the field of memory in the Middle Ages. This point was fulfilled to the satisfaction of all the participants.
Final programme

Monday, September 3, 2007
8:30-8:40 opening remarks by Lucie Doležalová
8:50-10:10 chair: Lucie Doležalová
Laura Iseppi (University of Verona, Italy)
   “Exibite membra vestra”: Verbal and Visual Enthymeme as Late Medieval Mnemotechnics
Stephanie Morley (University of London, UK)
   Memory and the reading of prayer: the case of The Fifteen Oes

coffee break

11:00-12:20 chair: Kimberly Rivers
Rüdiger Lorenz (Universität Freiburg, Germany)
   The late-medieval 'Summa Iovis' as a case study for the use of poems as mnemonic aids
Bergsvein Birgisson (CMS Bergen, Norway)
   The Old Norse kenning as a mnemonic figure

lunch

13:30-13:45 opening remarks by Prof. Przemyslaw Urbanczyk, the ESF Representative
13:50-15:10 chair: Rüdiger Lorenz
Greti Dinkova-Bruun (Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, Canada)
   The Verse Bible as Aide-mémoire
Lucie Doležalová (CTS, Prague, Czech Republic)
   Mistake and Meaning in Bible Mnemonics: The Case of Summarium Biblie

coffee break

15:40-17:40 chair: Greti Dinkova-Bruun
Kimberly Rivers (University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, the U.S.A.)
   Writing the Memory of the Virtues and Vices in Johannes Sintram’s (d. 1450) Preaching Aids
Farkas Kiss (University of Budapest, Hungary)
   The influence of ars memorativa on late medieval meditational practice
Rafał Wójcik (University Library, Poznań, Poland)
   Staging of Memory. Ars memorativa and the Spectacle of Imagination in the Late Medieval Preaching in Poland

Tuesday, September 4, 2007
8:30-9:50 chair: Francesco Stella
Slavica Rankovic (Centre for Medieval Studies Bergen, Norway)
   Communal Memory of the Distributed Author: testing the applicability of the connectionist model of memory to the study of traditional narratives
Dávid Falvay (University of Budapest, Hungary):
   The Formation of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary's Memory

coffee break
10:20-12:20 chair: Előd Nemerkényi
Jon Whitman (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel)
   Posthumous Messages: Memory, Romance, and the Morte Darthur
Victoria Smirnova (University of Geneva, Switzerland)
   Mechanisms of actualization of the past in Dialogus Miraculorum by Caesarius
   Heisterbachensis
Regina Koycheva (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, Bulgaria):
   Memory as a Vehicle to Construct Meaning in the 9th-century Bulgarian
   Hymnography of Penance

lunch

13:30-15:30 chair: Tamás Visi
Cédric Giraud (Paris, France)
   Anselm of Laon in the Twelfth Century Schools, between fama and memoria
Lucia Raspe (Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main, Germany)
   Props of Memory, Triggers of Narration: Time and Space in Medieval Jewish
   Hagiography
Milan Lyčka (Institute of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Charles University, Prague)
   The Oral Torah and Memory in Rabbinic Judaism

15:30-18:00 (optional)
   Tour through the Prague Jewish quarter

Wednesday, September 5, 2007
9:00-10:20 chair: Dávid Falvay
William Purkis (University of London, UK)
   The Past as a Precedent: Crusade, Reconquest and Twelfth-Century Memories of a
   Christian Iberia
Andrea Livini (University of Salamanca, Spain)
   Construction of the theatre in the Early Middle Ages: Roman spectacula memory in
   the Christian Europe

coffee break

10:50-12:10 chair: Slavica Rankovic
Vincent Challet (Université de Montpellier, France)
   Peasants’ Revolts Memories: Damnatio memoriae or hidden memories?
Tamás Visi (Palacky University, Olomouc, Czech Republic)
   “Erase the memory of Amalech. Do not forget.” Constructing the pagan past to be
   forgotten in medieval Jewish philosophy

lunch

13:50-15:10 chair: Ana Marinkovic
Carmen Florea (Babes- Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania)
   About the Remembering of Christ’s Sacrifice and the Display of Social Bonds: the
   Functioning of the Corpus Christi Fraternity from Sibiu (Hermannstadt,
   Nagyszeben-Romania)
Péter Tóth (University Library, Budapest, Hungary)
Secret Events of Christ's Passion. Pseudo-Apocryphal Dialogue as Tool for Memorization and Popularization of Scholastic Wisdom

coffee break

15:40-17:00 chair: Stephanie Morley
Irene Bueno (European University Institute, Florence, Italy)
"Respondit quod non recordatur..." Memory as proof in inquisitorial records (early 14th c. France)
Előd Nemerkényi (Budapest, Hungary)
The Latin Vocabulary of Memory in Medieval Hungary

Thursday, September 6, 2007
9:00-10:20 chair: Ana Marinkovic
József Laszlovszky (Central European University, Budapest, Hungary)
The memory of the landscape, the landscape of the memory. King Sigismund and the personification of landscapes
Francesco Stella (University of Siena, Italy)
Poetic Landscape as a Memory Construction in the Latin Works of Petrarch

coffee break

10:50-12:10 chair: Farkas Kiss
Else Mundal (Centre for Medieval Studies, Bergen, Norway)
Memory of the past and Old Norse identity
Milena Bartlová (Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic)
In memoriam defunctorum: visual arts as devices of religious memory

lunch

13:30-15:00
Final discussion, common project preparation, closing remarks

15:30-18:00
Tour through the medieval collection in the St. Agnes Convent led by Milena Bartlová
Final List of Participants
(in alphabetical order)

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Lucia Raspe
Statistics:

Participants from 15 different countries (12 ESF member countries plus Canada, the U.S.A. and Israel).

If we take into account also citizenship (besides the country of activity), we can add four more nationalities (Icelandic, Serbian, Finnish and Russian).

14 women out of 30 participants, i.e., 47% female participation average age = 35.5 years