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THE MSA FORWARD PHD EVENT

The MSA Forward PhD Event, co-organised by Hanna Teichler and Rebekah Vince was intense and worthwhile. It held in rooms 27.0.47 and 27.1.47, Faculty of Humanities, University of Copenhagen on the 13th of December, 2017. The one-day event began by 9.am with Hanna and Rebekah's welcome speeches. The presentations, based on the themes, were grouped into six panels which centred on transcultural memories, conflicting memories/memories of conflict, memories in and of America, Hispanic memories, memory and storytelling as well as mediatized memories. Each panel had between three and four presenters. For time management and thorough discussions, the participants were divided into two groups with Rebekah and Hanna co-ordinating each group. These groups ran three parallel sessions with short breaks in between. I was in the second group co-ordinated by Hanna and had the privilege of listening to stimulating presentations on panels 1, 3, and 5 (I was on panel 5). Jakob Schneider started the presentation with his interesting perspectives on the cultural memories of Ancient Egypt while Madeleine Scherer followed with a thought-provoking presentation on the classical underworld as a travelling mnemonic schema. Catalina Vallejo, the third presenter on the first panel, gave a very fascinating analysis of the compensations for human rights violations in Colombia and Peru. The first panel ended with Holly Brown's presentation on the mnemonic disorders of global capitalism in contemporary American fiction and performance art.

After a short break, the second session began with a panel on memories in and of America. Shona Thompson gave a refreshing presentation on the representations of black body in pain in the American memorial culture. Naomi Ostwald Kawamura followed with an unforgettable presentation on North America's Japanese diasporic community. Ali Kareem Tobick Al-Jayikh, the third presenter on the panel, presented Al-Andalus as a type of cultural memory in post 9/11 Arab-American women's narratives. The presentations in this panel ended with Yulia Gordina's 'Cultural Memory and the Construction of Russian Jewish North American Identities'.

The next session commenced after lunch break with a panel on memory, history and storytelling. Rafael Perez Baquero presented his proposal on history and memory in relation to the Spanish Civil War. This was followed by Adebayo Sakiru's presentation on the dynamics of trauma, memory and mourning in postcolonial African narratives. Dagmara Moskwa gave an enlightening presentation on the depiction of the Great Patriotic War in Russian history textbooks for secondary schools. Finally, Victoria-Luise Kampfmann offered very interesting perspectives on the representations of digital dying and remembering in modern literature

Following the presentations on each panel, the respondents gave their comments before the audience could make contributions or ask questions. Each presenter had a respondent who had read the paper beforehand. The most interesting and, perhaps, sensitive part of the event was when the respondents gave their feedbacks on the papers and presentations. The respondents which included Antje Gunsenheimer, Jan Rupp, Wulf Kansteiner, Jeffrey Ollick, Pavan

Malreddy, Emilie Pine, Rebecca Dolgoy, Sarah Gensburger and Stef Craps showed remarkable enthusiasm and commitment in their constructive criticisms and suggestions. They also asked for clarifications and made recommendations on the individual papers assigned to them.

The sessions turned out to be very productive as many of the presenters had better understanding of critical questions and interventions they might have been struggling to articulate. I particularly became aware of several memory theories and methodologies that would be extremely useful for my research. The MSA Forward event achieved its aim of serving as a platform for budding memory scholars to exchange ideas and explore the connections between their works and memory studies.

An inspiring career café immediately followed the presentations. This relaxed setting gave participants the chance to converse with at least two leading memory scholars. The one-hour career café had two rounds with thirty minutes allocated for a round. In each round, two participants met with a memory scholar at the same time. The café was not an avenue to discuss individual PhD projects but a platform for consultations on professional and personal development, publications and career steps. I, along with Madeleine Scherer, had the pleasure of interacting with Ann Rigney in the first round of the café. Rigney, who was very cordial, gave us hints on how to apply for funding and fellowships. She shared her personal journey as a memory scholar with us. She further emphasised the need to build a strong network of memory studies scholars and to ensure that our research has social relevance. In the second round, Madeleine and I met with Jeffrey Olick who lectured us on how and where to publish as (budding) memory scholars. We also discussed general issues regarding the Memory Studies Association. The MSA Forward PhD event ended with a dinner at _____.

The MSA Forward event was an immensely stimulating and eye-opening experience. The excellent planning and organisation clearly manifested in the event's overall arrangement. Everyone kept to time and the respondents were friendly and supportive. The strength of the MSA Forward lies in its successful assembling of doctoral students from five different continents in order to engage in productive discussions on several aspects of cultural memory studies. Kudos to Hanna and Rebekah!