Dissonant Heritages
Contestation of Meanings and Uses of Memory in Today’s Europe

27–28 April 2017
Seminar room 2 and 4, Badia Fiesolana
Please register with Laura Borgese at laura.borgese@eui.eu

Organizers:
EUROHERIT: Legitimation of European Cultural Heritage and the Dynamics of Identity Politics in the EU, PI Tuuli Lähdesmäki
BABE: Bodies Across Borders: Oral and Visual Memory in Europe and Beyond, PI Luisa Passerini

The idea of cultural heritage is closely intertwined with the Western conception of identity. The linkage between a durable tangible heritage and the continuity of people across generations is a widespread implicit – and often also explicit – conception in the Western world, especially in Europe. Macdonald’s (2013) study on practices of remembrance in Europe emphasizes how the ambition to materialize remembering is about the materialization of identity. Indeed, the idea of heritage entails a range of intertwined phenomena, such as identity, memory, commemoration, narration of history, and place, just to mention a few.

Heritage is an ongoing process of negotiation and contestation of the meanings of the past considered important for the present. Relations among different actors and communities in the processes and practices of heritage are not always cooperative and harmonious, but contested and competitive. With the concept of dissonant heritage Turnbridge and Ashworth (1996) have referred to heritages that include a discordance of different stories and a lack of agreement and consistency in the way the past is represented and memories used in public spheres.

Recent critical research has sought to explore the dissonant nature of heritage in new ways. In these studies, the exploration of power relations in the construction and meaning-making of heritage has sought to deconstruct several ‘grand narratives’ that have dominated the meaning-making and practices of heritage. Nationalism, imperialism, colonialism, Western triumphalism, social exclusion based on class and ethnicity, cultural elitism, and the fetishizing of expert knowledge have had a crucial impact on how the notion of heritage has been – and commonly still is – understood and managed. This multifaceted understanding, its effects to people,
communities, and societies, and the workings of power within the meaning-making and production of heritage need a further critical analysis.

The aim of the workshop is to show that Europe does not have one heritage, rather a plurality of traditions, within which contradictions and ruptures of social, cultural and political nature have been present in different times and places. The intent is to contribute to an erosion of Europe’s cultural heritages from within, studying the multiform developments of a fractured past (Milton) from the point of view of cultural history. In the workshop, the dissonances between different heritages (as well as the internal ones) will be discussed in relation to a variety of topics central to the two ERC projects conveners of the meeting. Such are: East–West and center–periphery divisions of Europe, internal and external border-making and border-crossing in Europe, Europe’s colonial past and its post-colonial criticism, migrant and post-migrant experiences, narration and re-narration of Europe’s conflictual past, and the production of the idea of a European heritage and identity in ‘authorized heritage discourses’ (Smith 2006). Heritage is approached in the workshop as a ‘memory complex’, an assemblage of practices, affects and physical things (Macdonald 2013), that brings to attention the contestation of identities, feelings of belonging, and remembering the past in today’s Europe. This perspective emphasizes the relevance of forms of embodied memory against the often de-materialized dominant notions of archive, heritage and patrimoine culturel.

The question of dissonance with reference to the ‘memory complex’ will also be discussed in the light of the tension between national and European frameworks, as well as in the context of other formal and informal transnational networks of circulation towards and through Europe. This will offer a ground to compare/confront the EU policies focused by the EUROHERIT project with the Italian and Dutch cases dealt with by BABE.

PROGRAMME

Thursday, 27 April (Seminar Room 2)

11:00-12:30 Luisa Passerini and Tuuli Lähdesmäki: Welcoming words and introducing the keynote speaker

Rob van der Laarse, Keynote speech: Wanting it darker? Conflicted heritage and competing memories in Europe’s age of crisis

12:30-14:00 Working Lunch (Upper Loggia)

14:00-14:30 Luisa Passerini and Tuuli Lähdesmäki: Presentations of the two ERC projects EUROHERIT and BABE

14:30-16:15 Session 1 - Meanings of Heritage, European Identity and Europe on the Move

Chair: Luisa Passerini

Tuuli Lähdesmäki, Opening Speech: Cultural Heritage in Today’s Europe: Challenges and Opportunities

Milica Trakilovic: Bodies Making Spaces: Internal Borders as European Cultural Archives

Commentator: Rob van der Laarse

Discussion

16:15-16:45 Coffee Break (Lower Loggia)
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| 16:45-18:30  | Session 1 - Memory and Mobile Bodies in the Mediterranean | Luisa Passerini                                     | Gabriele Proglio: *Mediterranean Fractured Memories: Dissonances and Silence*  
Liliana Ellena: *Embodied Archives in Artistic Practices across Mediterranean Borders*  
Commentator: Rob van der Laarse  
Discussion |

Friday, 28 April (Seminar Room 4)

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| 09:00-10:45  | Session 3 - Conflict, Peace and Politics of Belonging to Europe | Tuuli Lähdesmäki                                    | Sigrid Kaasik-Krogerus: *Mobility and Stability in European Politics of Belonging*  
Katja Mäkinen: *Interconceptualising Europe and Peace: Identity Building in the European Heritage Label*  
Commentator: Anna Triandafyllidou  
Discussion |
| 10:45-11:00  | Coffee Break (Lower Loggia)                  |                                                      |                                                                          |
| 11:00-12:45  | Session 4: Colonial Past and Post-Colonial Criticism | Tuuli Lähdesmäki                                    | Johanna Turunen: *Narrating Europe through Values – A Postcolonial Interpretation*  
Iris van Huis: *Contesting Cultural Heritage in the Netherlands*  
Commentator: Anna Triandafyllidou  
Discussion |
| 12:45-13:15  | Luisa Passerini: Conclusions                 |                                                      |                                                                          |
| 13:15-13:40  | Final Discussion                             |                                                      |                                                                          |
| 13:45        | Working Lunch (Lower Loggia)                 |                                                      |                                                                          |
ABSTRACTS

Rob van der Laarse

Wanting it darker? Conflicted heritage and competing memories in Europe’s age of crisis

If Europe in the first half of the 20th century was the world’s ‘dark continent’, then Auschwitz was the heart of darkness. Joseph Conrad’s famous metaphor not only draws attention to the historical connection between the colonial and the Nazi’s white man’s burden, but also to the fatal, emotional attraction of darkness and the sublime in past and present. Because of this implicit association I am not convinced that dark heritage would be the best covering concept for the painful and traumatic heritage of Europe’s 20th century violent past, but it is certainly the best metaphor for Europe’s Holocaust heritage tourism.

Thus Auschwitz has acquired an iconic status in Holocaust discourse as the universal symbol of human evil. With a total death rate of 1.1 million Jewish victims and 200,000 others, the three Auschwitz death camps (Auschwitz I, Birkenau, and Buna) overshadowed all the other Holocaust terrorscapes, and with a number of 1.5 million yearly visitors the present-day UNESCO world heritage site has become the sacred shrine of the Holocaust paradigm which after the Fall of the Soviet Union functioned as the unifying Grand Narrative of the western world. The devastating horrors of two World Wars millions of fallen soldiers, the mass slaughter of European civilians, and the destruction of the Jews have determined Europe’s post-war humanist identity, have for the last six decades stimulated a unique process of unification for which the EU even received the 2012 Noble Prize.

Until recently the European Project was held for a success story. Yet, does such a shared heritage really exist? I will argue that the assumption of the Holocaust as a common European experience, and hence as a basic part of Europe’s post-war identity, raises some critical objections. The Holocaust paradigm is currently, in Europe’s age of crisis, challenged by a deep incompatibility of opinions about the impact, interpretation and meaning of the World Wars and the Cold War, throwing a shadow over the European project. In many parts of Europe and beyond populist politics of identity have fostered a massive uncovering of ‘hidden’ genocides and massacres, unearthed initially for the sake of transitional justice out of respect for forgotten victims, though increasingly for that of national politics of memory in honor of silenced heroes. In my contribution I will explore several of these tropes of hidden pasts, in particular those related to the Holocaust and competing postcolonial and post-communist narratives all using the past for current politics of identity. I will explore how museums and heritage institutes re-enact such painful pasts, how history, memory and heritage interact, and dissonances are being (re)produced. From a semiotic perspective these discursive-material paradigms can be traced as mnemonic frames both in novels, movies and social media and in material spaces, mapping as historic-touristic spaces (such as Jewish ghetto’s or quarters) and staged as memorial sites.

Regarding the crucial, indexical role of space and memory, I will focus on a specific category of memorial sites associated with political or state-perpetrated violence, and examine how they are collectively remembered or forgotten. Such ‘terrorscapes’ might be pinpointed as places with a high density of historical traces, indexically linked to past violence and susceptible of being transformed, monumentalized, restored or destroyed, memorialized or consigned to oblivion. Although these are obviously not limited to Europe, the European 20th century experience of mass violence from Verdun to Auschwitz and Srebrenica, has succeeded in a unique transformation of its immense topography of totalitarian terror into an almost comparable topography of memory which, intertwined with a postwar human right discourse, has become of hegemonic, global importance. Because of these far reaching differences in the experience of war and repression, ‘painful’ heritage sites run the risk of ending up in memory wars, though may also generate new mnemonic negotiations between minorities, neighbouring countries, national and European communities.

This asks for new historical interpretations, integrating contested European war experiences, and a fundamental rethinking of post-war politics of memory and related memory complexes. Therefore I will contextualize these terrorscapes (including those silenced and forgotten) within the geopolitical dynamics of European competing memories as highly signified, contested spaces. How are conflicted pasts represented nowadays, and which stories and narratives are included and excluded? These questions address authorised and silenced discourses, and also concern the future role of these terrorscapes moving (sometimes literally such as in the case of Warsaw’s new Katyń museum) from non-spaces to trauma site museums as keystones of Europe’s conflicted and dissonant memory culture. As historical sites still (virtually) bound to their specific space-times, the fluid, overlapping mnemonic narratives and practices of these dynamic spaces are continuously shaped and transformed by competing and intersecting global and local, transnational and ‘re-nationalizing’ appropriations. At the same time, it seems necessary to ontologically reflect and rethink our own biased positions as critical scholars and memory activists if we don’t want to become footloose in the current era of identity politics and
populism. For the era of camps (Zygmunt Bauman) might soon lose its dark and painful symbolic meaning for new generations grown up in a fortressed Europe defending its self-proclaimed ‘natural’ order against the internal threat of divided memories and the external ‘Tsunami effects’ of mass migration, as signified by the reintroduction of camps and barbed wire during the present refugee crisis.

**Luisa Passerini**

**In the Guise of Conclusion: Encounters, Tensions, and Prospects.**

This is the tentative anticipation of a think-piece that will take shape only after the workshop will have deployed itself, and an open discussion will have worked through the conceptual knots proposed by the program. I can see a constellation of themes centered around the encounter between two different research projects, EUROHERIT and BABE, which will confront their reciprocal approaches to some of the crucial problems of today’s Europe. On the one side, the focus is on topics such as legitimation (in both cultural and institutional sense); heritage and its internal dissonances; and the question of identities. On the other, bodies and various forms of embodiment are under scrutiny: human bodies negotiating borders and generating a geography of emotions; embodied subjectivities; and corporeal archives. Yet the two projects, in spite of starting from different premises, share important common concerns, such as: the many tensions between memory and forgetting; between stability and mobility; and between war and peace. Departure, arrival, itinerary, and settlement are recurrent concepts in both research plans.

Paradoxically, light is shed on all this by the references to darkness and shadow in the keynote lecture. The present history and memory of Europe cannot be understood without the heavy heritage of the continent and the single countries, which includes genocides, persecutions, colonialism and violence of all sorts. The many terms recently composed with “post” are appropriate to this situation and reappear in the speakers’ abstracts in various combinations and with different meanings. We expect from this encounter clarifications that might include both convergences and divergences, and at the same time insights towards unexplored and innovative directions of research.

**Tuuli Lähdesmäki**

**Cultural Heritage in Today’s Europe: Challenges and Opportunities**

The postmillennial Europe has faced various political, economic, social, and humanitarian challenges that influence on how we deal with the past, present and future in Europe and how we build our identities. The increasing cultural pluralism and hybridity, global cultural flows, and movement of people within and across borders challenge the previous core functions of heritage as a bedrock of monocultural nation-building projects and elitist cultural canons. As a part of this transformation of contemporary societies, consensual heritage narratives about the nation and national identity have been questioned and contested through various identity claims below and above the national narrative – and within it (Lowenthal 1998; Smith 2006; Ashworth, Graham and Tunbridge 2007). Simultaneously, increasing nationalist and populist movements in Europe have embedded the idea of heritage to their political agenda to promote the exclusive and segregative idea of origins and primordial roots of national or ethnic communities in Europe.

If heritage is a realm of diverse tensions, controversies, and contest in today’s Europe, does this dissonance generate any attempts to tackle it? This question seems to motivate several scholars in Critical Heritage Studies. As Harrison (2014) notes, understanding heritage as a creative engagement with the past in the present focuses the attention on our ability to take an active and informed role in the production of our future. Indeed, several heritage professionals and organizations as well as European political actors, such as the EU and the Council of Europe, have recently emphasized heritage diplomacy and heritage as an opportunity to promote intercultural dialogue, interest not only in ourselves but also in the ‘other’, and mutual understanding and respect between different groups of people.

In my paper, I will discuss the dissonance of heritage in today’s Europe by focusing particularly on the current challenges that the idea of heritage faces in European postmillennial reality and the opportunities that heritage may entail to respond to these challenges. I will discuss these challenges and opportunities by analysing the
current heritage policy discourse of the EU and the Council of Europe and how this discourse has (and has not) reacted to the recent crises in Europe and by exploring a European identity in the making in this discourse.

**Milica Trakilovic**

**Bodies Making Spaces: Internal Borders as European Cultural Archives**

The current European ‘migration crisis’ is a crisis of identity. National borders are becoming ever more fortified in an effort to halt the arrival of ‘unwelcome others,’ but perhaps even more drastically, ideological borders are also drawn around the figure of the European citizen. Sara Ahmed reminds us in Queer Phenomenology that spaces are not external to bodies: out there, waiting to be inhabited, but they are actually actively created through the arrival and movement of subjects that pass through them (2006: 9). If bodies create spaces, then those bodies that are allowed freedom of movement are more active agents in creating a space than bodies whose movement is hampered. How does ‘the migrant’ or ‘the refugee’ figure into the creation of a European space?

In this paper, I will draw on fieldwork conducted in the Netherlands for the Bodies Across Borders in Europe (BABE) project in order to argue that the integration procedure for newly arrived persons in Europe at large is based on ‘a constant state of arrival.’ Denying newcomer entry into certain social, cultural and institutional spaces ultimately safeguards ‘the European identity.’ Taking the Netherlands as a case study, I will draw on interviews with migrants in order to assess how the borders of the Dutch cultural archive (Wekker, 2016) are delineated. As the archive is built on a colonial legacy of racism and white superiority, I will tentatively draw parallels with the larger European cultural archive so as to showcase that the European identity is protected by erecting “a myriad of new invisible borders that are ideological, radicalized and politicized” (Ponzanesi & Blagaard 2011: 3).

**References:**


**Gabriele Proglio**

**Mediterranean Fractured Memories: Dissonances and Silence**

This paper is dedicated to problematize the idea of ‘dissonant memories’ in the Mediterranean basin, in particular in the closed sea area between Sicily, Tunisia and Libya. I will take into consideration several visual products (movies, video installations, documentaries, etc.) and oral interviews with migrants from the Horn of Africa to Europe. Observing and investigating this border’s cultural memories, we can show an articulated set of subjectivities involved in cultural exchanges between the shores of the Mediterranean.

The first part of the paper deals with how the idea of border produces a range of dichotomies (North-South, European-non-European people, Whites/Blacks, etc.). These dichotomies are crucial in assigning various positionalities to ‘non-European migrant people’ into Italy-Europe (citizenships, refugee status, jobs in the market labor, territorial segregation, etc.). At the same time, this narrative discourse reshapes past Italian-European memories on new postcolonial conditions, such as the case of the *Mare Nostrum*. The term was used by Roman to refer to the Mediterranean Sea as space of conquest; it was reused during the Italian colonialism – in the liberal period and during Fascism – to describe the national intention of conquest in North Africa.

Finally, Operation *Mare Nostrum* is a military and humanitarian operation in order to rescue the migrants and arrest the human smugglers after the 2013 Lampedusa migrant shipwreck.
In the second part of the paper, I will analyze some cultural products (movies, documentaries and video installations) about the Mediterranean crossings and oral interviews with people from the Horn of Africa. My goal is to show and problematize other typologies of usage of cultural memories in order to describe the relationship between societies, cultures and subjectivities. In particular, I will analyze **Shores** by Irene Dionisio and **Asmat** by Dagmawi Yimer. I will present some oral interviews with people from the Horn of Africa to Italy-Europe collected during my fieldworks in Italy. Finally, I will take into consideration two different attempts to musealise the boat tragedies in the Mediterranean: Porto M, created by Askavusa Collective, which collected objects lost during the Mediterranean crossings by migrants; and the Museum of the Dialogue and Trust (Museo del dialogo e della fiducia), which was inaugurated by President Mattarella, with some migrants’ objects collected after the October 3 shipwreck by filmmaker Gianfranco Rosi during the shooting of his film, **Fuocammare** (2016).

**Liliana Ellena**

**Embodied Archives in Artistic Practices across Mediterranean Borders**

The paper focuses on artistic practices that use the archival form as a creative and critical stance able to uproot and disrupt previous linear historical intelligibility of European memory and to forge new transformative interventions which look back and forward from our diasporic present. By engaging with the notion of ‘embodied archive’ suggested by Joseph Pugliese (2011) the paper tries to capture the link that binds mobile bodies to memory in a double sense: considering the living bodies as corporeal archives, repositories of dense cultural sedimentations and historical practices, but also as inventories of invisible or lost traces forgotten or deleted by the “violent historical forces of assimilation”. In this exploration, it takes as a starting point two art projects: the performance action **Erster Europäischer Mauerfall** ran by the Berlin based Centrum för Politische Schönheit (2014) in coincidence with the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and Emily Jacir's exhibition **Europa** (2015), exploring histories of migration, resistance and diaspora. Reshaping asynchronous relations between archival and memorial materials, spaces and temporalities, these works chart unexpected or silenced relationalities between the two shores of the Mediterranean connecting the struggles around internal and external European walls as well as different activist networks arising from the Palestinian diaspora and the intra-European migrations. By insisting on strategies of intervention rather than strategies of representation they draw attention to memory acts as performative cultural practices engaging with new affective political geographies which might emerge when practices of remembrance are recognized as implicated with each other.

**Sigrid Kaasik-Krogerus**

**Mobility and Stability in European Politics of Belonging**

European Commission’s European Heritage Label (EHL) initiative is an example of European politics of belonging: an aim to construct belonging to particular communities in particular ways (Yuval-Davis 2006, 197). Namely, the EHL aims at legitimizing European narrative of belonging via Europeanizing cultural heritage. This narrative is supposed to be brought to life by promoting the European dimension of the designated 29 sites all over the EU.

In practice, however, the dynamics of belonging is formed by different agencies intertwined in this process. Therefore, while EHL is ‘officially’ part of cultural Europeanization - politics of belonging to European cultural area - the sites might also use heritage to ‘imagine’ other communities. Apart from that, mobility is crucial in this process: EHL ‘Europeanizes’ heritage whereas the ‘Europeanness’ of heritage is also domesticated in the daily practice of the sites by turning it into part of the national practice (Alasuutari 2009, 67).

The aim of this paper is to analyze politics of belonging in one of the EHL sites, Great Guild Hall that is situated in Tallinn, Estonia. Currently, Estonian History Museum performs at the Hall. As empirical data, substance of two exhibitions of the museum is analyzed (“Spirit of Survival! 11000 years of Estonian History” and “Medieval pleasures. Festivals of the Great Guild in the 15th and 16th centuries”). I claim that the politics of belonging is formed in a struggle between mobility and stability discourses, i.e. systems of meaning and social practices of meaning giving. The study is conducted on the basis of two research questions:

- How are mobility and stability used in the politics of belonging in the exhibitions of Great Guild Hall?
- What are the communities ‘imagined’ in this process?
Katja Mäkinen

Interconceptualising Europe and Peace: Identity Building in the European Heritage Label

The process of EU-integration started after the Second World War with the aim of preventing new wars, and peace is mentioned as a core value of the European Union in the official EU-discourses still today. This presentation investigates how peace is used to characterise the entire EU-Europe in the cultural heritage policy of the European Union. The focus is the European Heritage Label (EHL), the most recent instrument in the EUs cultural heritage policy, and, more particularly on three sites that have received the label: the Peace Palace of the Hague in the Netherlands, an archive and documentation centre Mundaneum in Belgium and the sites of the peace of Westphalia in Germany.

The paper explores the ways of telling the ‘European grand narrative’ of peace in the selected sites. The material consists of the policy documents, panel reports including the justifications for awarding the EHL as well as websites and brochures of the three sites. The material will be analyzed through the conceptual approach focusing on uses, meanings and articulations of the concept of peace, focusing particularly to the links made between peace and Europe.

While peace is often discussed as a general and abstract value, in the context of the EHL, it is pinpointed to concrete places. The paper seeks to analyze the “memory complex” (Macdonald 2013) related to peace: how both the material, concrete, physical and practical aspects and the abstract and imagined aspects of peace are present in the selected sites. The “dissonant heritage” (Turnbridge and Ashworth 1996) of peace will be discussed in the paper by asking how is war present on these cultural heritage sites, whose peace is remembered and how is Europe represented as a place of peace on each site.

Johanna Turunen

Narrating Europe through Values – A Postcolonial Interpretation

The recent years have witnessed an emergence of the idea of using heritage for political purposes in the EU policy. This idea has been promoted through the initiation of several cultural and heritage projects seeking to foster the idea of a common European cultural heritage. In my research, I will focus on one of these initiatives – the European Heritage Label. The EHL seeks to nominate heritage sites that can be seen to have a clear European importance. The EHL website describes, that the “sites celebrate and symbolise European ideals, values, history and integration” and goes on to state that the sites are “carefully selected for their symbolic value”. Within this paper, I seek to analyse the relationship between these “European values” and the construction of Europeanness in the EHL. The analysis is three-fold. Firstly, I will examine what role “European values” play in the preparation and founding documents of the EHL. Secondly, I will analyse, how the nominated and proposed sites reiterate, redefine and/or reconstruct these values in their applications. Finally, through insights from postcolonial theory and coloniality, I will attempt to re-evaluate and reconstruct the meanings of these values in the broader frame of European history.

I argue that through post-colonial theory it is possible to look into the European cultural heritage processes and the production of the discourse and narrative of Europeanness, and dismantle and question some of the key meanings and values embedded in constructing Europeanness. Through this analysis this paper seeks to show, how, especially when analysed from the vantage point of the often silenced and hidden heritage or European imperialism, these central European values can take on ambivalent, even dissonant meanings. Furthermore, when not acknowledged or made visible, this can further result in unintended, exclusionary narratives of Europeanness even beyond the realm of strictly colonial European heritage.
Iris van Huis

Contesting Cultural Heritage in the Netherlands

The construction of heritage, or “memory complexes” (MacDonald 2013) takes place by repetition, contestation and/or adaptation of narratives, images and objects, which can be an emotional process. Heritage, histories and identities are moreover not only constructed by those who originate “exclusively” from a country or region, (post)immigrants contribute to cultural heritage as well. In this paper, I show how activist (post)immigrants to the Netherlands contest, reproduce and/or change “memory complexes”. My central question for this paper is: which memories of the Netherlands (and Europe) are contested and which are reproduced, retold, re-memorized and how? One “memory complex” is currently strongly contested in Dutch debates: the issue of colonial history in relation to discrimination and diversity. I will show the way colonial history is debated in student protests, the way colonial history is portrayed in the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam and the way activists protest against the annual celebration of Saint Nicholas with Black-faced helpers. I will also show the way protesters and activists contribute to new ways of remembering and celebrating. The comparison of these topics shows how (in)visibility and intersectional positionings contribute to the level of emotionality and polarization in these debates. As data, I use observations, written, oral and visual material that are accessible on activist internet pages, as well as interviews with respondents from the BABE research project.

Reference:


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