Introduction to the dossier on transnational cultural memory

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This section of the *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture* is dedicated to the theme of transnational cultural memory. The papers of the dossier are written for the second meeting of the Summer School of the Nordic Research Network of memory studies, funded by NordForsk, hosted this year by Karlstad University on 20–21 June 2011.

The dossier displays various approaches to the emerging topic of transnational memory studies, encompassing topical themes such as the remediation of transcultural memory, the ethics of memory in the age of globalization, the dynamics of cultural memory in the (re)-making of the national and the transnational, visions of transnational memory, the transnational archive, and socio-spatial aspects of the experience of displacement. The introductory papers are written by scholars from various backgrounds: history of ideas, philosophy, cultural geography, film studies, and literary studies, thus adhering to the principle of constituting memory studies as a truly interdisciplinary field.

In the opening paper Astrid Erll offers a brief introduction to cultural and transcultural memory from the vantage point of literary and media studies. One of her suggestive points is that memory travels; hence, transcultural memory has in fact a long genealogy and is, therefore, not merely a question of contemporary changes due to globalization. Steffi Hobuss poses the question of what an ethics of memory could be about in a global context. Inspired by Wittgenstein, Austin, and Butler she suggests that the only way to answer the question is to shift focus from memory cases to memory acts. Thus, when different aspects of memory acts are analysed, not only the ethical dimensions become revealed but also dichotomies and binaries of memory studies have been overcome. Adrian Velicu highlights some of the chief aspects of cultural memory and proceeds to explore the dynamics of the concept against a transnational background. The convergence of Latin and Eastern Orthodox strands of cultural memory in his chosen example of Romania’s cultural identity indicates that making sense of these defining components can only occur by defying strictly drawn borders. John Sundholm introduces in his paper some of the current discussions of the concept of the transnational and illustrates how both normative and cultural aspects as well as questions of an ethics and morality of memory overlap in transnational memory studies. Julia Creet deals with one of the most essential apparatuses of memory, the archive, and poses the question of how to conceptualize the transnational archive, at once part of the flow of globalization and a place of fixity? In order to answer the question Creet takes Canada as her case study, a country whose national archive was built from transnational origins and that has persistently been forced to re-negotiate its foundations due to demographic fluctuations. In the last paper Anna-Kaisa Kuusisto-Arponen analyses a way of spatial sense making in a transnational context. As her material, she uses a film depicting the story of a war child’s experience of displacement thus displaying that transnational memory is also a question of agency in a changing world.