

**Memory, Movement, Mobility:  
Affect-full Encounters with  
Memory in Singapore**

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**Abstract**

Memory, movement and mobility characterise our everyday being. Our bodies are in constant processes of motion: our body remembers movement. Memory of movement, of and in the body, is key to our capacity to move, even if we are not aware that we are remembering movement. Mobility with, from, and in the body is (re)produced and performed by a repertoire of movements, orchestrated (for the most part) synchronously. While studies of mobility have received much recent scholarly attention, the interlinkages between memory, movement and mobility have received far less attention (see Anderson, 2004 and Casey, 2000 for notable exceptions). In redressing this omission, this paper delves into the relationship between memory, movement and mobility by directing its lens on two themes: body memory, that is memory of and in the body felt through movement, *and* movement and mobility, that is how mobility influences our capacities to remember, what we remember while mobile, and how specific sites of memory are designed with mobility in mind.

I consider intersections of mobility and memory in the context of empirical work undertaken at sites of Singaporean World War II commemoration. I used my body as a tool for this research; I felt and read memory at the memorial sites. I also used movement through the sites. Being mobile prompted consideration of how movement, spontaneous and along designed pathways, at/through/with these memory sites, influenced memory, its (re)production, transmission and/or performance.

**Keywords**

Affect, Body memory, Mobility, Singaporean commemoration

## **Introduction**

Memory, movement and mobility characterise our everyday being. Our bodies are in constant processes of motion. Macro scale movements such as walking, running and dancing propel us through spaces and places; even without these macro level mobilities, or in instances of physical constraint, we move. Our body remembers movement. Our chests rise and fall, our eyes flicker, our mouths pucker and grimace. Mobility with, from, and in the body is (re)produced and performed by a repertoire of movements, orchestrated synchronously (for the most part) often without our conscious thinking of the operation of those movements. Connerton (1989: 72) has reasoned that such bodily practices are “sedimented in the body.” The composite attunement of movements that enabled our mobility out of bed this morning, to drink our morning cup of coffee, or to type on our computers are possible because our body remembers how to perform them. Memory of movement, of and in the body, is key to our capacity to move, even if we are not aware that we are remembering. While studies of mobility have received much recent scholarly attention, the interlinkages between memory, movement and mobility have received far less attention (see Anderson, 2004, and Casey, 2000 for notable exceptions). In redressing this omission, this paper delves into the relationship between memory, movement and mobility by focusing on two themes: body memory, that is, memory of and in the body felt through movement; and movement and mobility, that is, how mobility influences our capacities to remember, what we remember while mobile, and how specific sites of memory are designed with mobility in mind.

To take this direction, I focus first on movement and body memory as the base elements for understanding how we move in and through space. This discussion also lays the foundations for connecting how those movements are conditioned by socio-cultural contexts and come to be characterised by mobility. Cresswell (2006: 2) defines mobility as being made up of movements between locations; these locations can be geographically disparate or intimately neighbouring each other; mobility is “socially produced motion” (Cresswell, 2006: 3). Further, he reasoned that “movement can be thought of as abstracted mobility (mobility abstracted from contexts of power),” so that movement is “contentless, apparently natural” in contrast with mobility that is conceptualised as having deeper (social) meaning

(Cresswell, 2006: 2-3). Yet, Koch *et al* (2014: 273) have argued that movement within the body, something they consider as body memory, “is anatomically tied to the shape and possibilities of our bodies, and to their embeddedness in the environment.” While the movement of our fingers on the keyboard, may, for example, be implicit and indeed abstracted from contexts of power, it can also be “culturally mediated” and reflective of our positions in a “natural cultural and inter-subjective life-world” (Koch *et al*, 2014: 273). Think, for example, how we learnt to type, what opportunities we were afforded to learn how to make these movements between keys, how our positions require us to perform these movements at a pace where we no longer consciously think about them. Further, Casey has described body memory as “intrinsic to the body, to its own ways of remembering: how we remember in and by and through the body” (2000: 147). Casey distinguishes between body memory and memory of the body; he asserted that body memory is “being in the situation itself again and *feeling* it through *our* body” while memory of the body is characterised by “recollecting our body as in a given situation” (2000: 147, original emphasis). Returning to the example of typing on the keyboard, our body also remembers the action required and how it is required in/through different media. We know how to type on a keyboard but typing on a keyboard that is not our own can mean we lose our familiarity with that action and are “unable to perform [as] efficiently” (Casey, 2000: 146). That is because we sense and feel the surface of the keyboard, the quality of movement linked to the intensity of pressure needed for each keystroke. In, and between those movements, there is affect; Massumi (2002: 1) posits that in this “simple conceptual displacement” the body performs both movement and feeling, sensing the “qualitative difference” of movement. Drawing from Deleuze, Bissell *et al* (2017: 798) have reasoned that “quantifiable understanding[s] of intensity miss the *qualitative* nature of an intensity in terms of how it produces difference in relation to itself.” Our perception of changes between different states of movement, of displacement that movement can provoke, or between movement and relative stillness are as important as our *feeling* of that movement. Thus, when we move, our body not only senses changes in location – which is how we normatively consider the outcome of mobility – but it can also feel the intensity of those movements in terms of sensation in the body, including a sense of where the movements might take us. Ingold (2011: 154) has argued that we “know as we go,” meaning that our perceptions and understandings of our surroundings are

made in movement, and by way of the decisions we make, conscious or not, as we trace our way through those surroundings.

By thinking through movement within and of the body as socially and culturally mediated by the body, I move towards seeing the potential for body memory to be “affect-full.” Sensations, feelings, and perceptual memories of our routine movements position our bodies in place and space. Moreover, they affect our encounters and experiences of being in those places and spaces. Thus, we may feel a place, or react/enact movement in/within our bodies without any external propulsion of our body. Think, for example, about sensing fear and being frozen, or how we feel repulsion as a creep up our esophageal passages. Waterton (2014: 823) articulates these inner bodily movements at Auschwitz, as being “frozen on the outside, that is, on the inside ... being pummelled by a thickening wave of sensations is feeling.” Furthermore, Massumi (in his conversation with Loctev) explains that “there is no fright, or any affect for that matter, without an accompanying movement in or of the body” (2009: 5). Attunement to the minutiae of movements, to our embodied affect, is critical to this article’s consideration of memory, movement and mobility because it shapes our encounters with material representations of memory *and* places/spaces characterised by commemorative atmospheres (cf. Sumartojo, 2016) and ghosts of place (Pinder, 2001). Yet, accounts of encounter with memory sites and spaces often have a normative narrative focus where explanation of the textual representation of the memory reproduction takes centre stage; in such readings the dominant discourse is often free of/from movement and mobility (Sheller and Urry, 2006). In what follows, I attend to the specific qualitative detail of movement and mobility, and how they intersect through body memory and mobility at sites of memory. I acknowledge that much of my positional work in this paper draws from non-representational thinking, especially in work in human geography that situates the “non-or precognitive practices as primary” (Cadman 2009: 459). Like Waterton, I seek to foreground “explorations of feeling, emotion and affect and place emphasis on how these are negotiated and experienced through a re-centred imagining of the body” (2014: 824). By harnessing an attentiveness to movement and mobility in and through the body, I hope to show how our encounters with/at sites, spaces and places of memory can explore the intricacies of that qualitative difference.

## Methodological Considerations

Thus far I have drawn attention to the conceptual threads that underlie the paper's framework. In this section, I consider the methods enlisted to attune to the affective and the mobile. As the body is central to considerations of memory and movement, the (researcher's) body is frequently used as an "instrument of research" (Longhurst *et al.*, 2008: 208; Sumartojo, 2016). In conducting research concerning memory, mobility and affect, I have used a combination of methods to attend to the "sensoriality of my own experience" (Sumartojo, 2016: 543). In this sensory ethnography, I explored the way my body felt, how human and non-human agents in/at the site of memory facilitated my body memory and its movement. Within a sensory ethnography, positionality and situated knowledge have bearing on how the researcher uses their body and interprets the sites around them. I filter my experiences and encounters through my positionality as an Australian with migrant heritage, with linkages to post-war landscapes through the migration of grandparents post-WWII, but also through more than a decade of research focusing on memory, place and identity in post-war and post-conflict landscapes. The experiences of being in place during fieldwork, the stories of family and research participants, the artefacts and material commemorations amass as knowledge. They are part of body memory: "body memory is in turn the natural center of any sensitive account of remembering" (Casey, 2000: 148).

I attuned my own senses to how I felt in these memory sites. I used my body "for thinking the relationship between bodies and spaces in ways that attend[ed] to the often-taken-for-granted and implicit effects that encounters between human and non-human bodies can generate" (Anderson and Ash, 2015: 34). I have combined other methods in this ethnography, including: participant observation, making visual materials (still photographs and video recording), sound walking and mobile methods. The combination of methods was chosen to suit different case study locations and contexts because fieldwork at sites of memory requires sensitivity, discretion, and an understanding of multiple, competing and contested contexts of the site(s) – together these facets lend themselves to an appreciation and orchestration of/to the senses. In exploring what Thrift (2007: 2) has called the "geography of what happens" in/at sites of memory, sometimes I have sat, observed, walked, listened, photographed and/or videoed, sometimes as sole practices,

sometimes in combination. An overriding methodological consideration has been a focus on encounter, observing how people, including myself, interact (or not) with memory and how the non/more-than-human actants in the space create affect. Similarly, in their process of sensory attunement, Sumartojo *et al* (2017:95) “worked, observed, listened, adjusted and slowly got to know the space with our bodies and through our movements.”

Often, sites of memory deploy multiple media, which are visual, aural, textural and narrative, sometimes simultaneously. Marshall has also contended that “embedded in the material form of most memorials are implicit assumptions about the onlooker’s level of historical knowledge” (2004: 39). Further, when visiting sites of memory, text-based inscriptions may be in languages other than the researcher’s own, thus one cannot rely on reading text at such sites. To circumvent a reliance on text and in alignment with the affective turn, my choices of ethnographic methods attempt to harness insight into how the body is affected in/at sites of memory, and the how movement characterises encounters with memory, in place. At memory sites designed with mobility in mind, my own mobility through sites of memory and an attentiveness to participants’ mobilities has drawn attention to movement “place-making practice” (de Certeau, 1984: 97). Indeed, walking is “itself a way of thinking and of feeling, through which, in the practice of pedestrian movement...cultural forms [and understandings] are continually generated” (Ingold and Vergunst, 2016: 2). For example, Waterton focused on feeling for the “affective and emotive values that shape the possibilities for our bodily movements and capacities” (2014: 824) while conducting a museum ethnography. While my attentiveness hones in on the non-representational, the representational intersects especially in terms of written material on memory installations. Depending on the type of memory site, I also read information provided. Dittmer and Waterton have contended that while trying to sense how a site *feels*, “sometimes, there is a power to *move* and we are drawn into a display, connected” (2016: 176, original emphasis). Thus “data” usually includes field notes, visual images (photos and videos), sound recordings, narrative material from museums, and observation notes. In the section that follows, I discuss the application of these conceptual and methodological threads about memory,

movement and mobility, through worked examples from fieldwork undertaken in Singapore.

### **Affect-full Experiences at Sites of Memory in Singapore**

In Singapore, I undertook a sensory ethnography at several sites on the Singapore National Heritage Board's WWII Trail (hereafter referred to as the trail). The trail is organised into six regions that broadly align with different wartime themes (National Heritage Board, 2013). For example, in the "East" region, I visited three sites of memory including: The Changi Museum, Changi Beach Massacre Site and Johore Battery. The Eastern region contains sites of memory that accord with the "The Guns of Singapore and Captivity" theme. In the "City" (theme: Remembering the Occupation Years), I visited the Civilian War Memorial and the Fort Canning Command Centre (the Battlebox). And, in the South (theme: Final Battles and the Consequences), I visited Reflections at Bukit Chandu, and, the Fort Siloso Battery. The trail was launched to commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of Singapore; it includes 50 sites over the island but the official brochure notes that "the information, while interesting, has been kept succinct. It is intended purely as an introductory guide highlighting significant war sites" (National Heritage Board, 2013: 1). Using this entry point, I chose seven sites of memory based on their representations of different aspects of the war, such as actual sites of battle and or imprisonment, sites of commemoration, remnants (material or immaterial) of war and official museum spaces. Muzaini and Yeoh (2005a; 2005b; 2005c; 2007; 2016), as well as Yeoh and Kong (1996), have a significant corpus of scholarship on the (re)production and politics of memory in postwar Singapore and detailed historical analysis of WWII there; I choose not to replay this scholarship here but only provide significant temporal time frames. WWII started in Singapore on 8 December 1941, Singapore fell to the Japanese on 15 February 1942, and from that time until 12 September 1945, Singapore was under Japanese occupation (for three years and seven months). As Anderson noted in his research on practices of remembering recorded music, the focus of this paper is not "the content of the 'thing' remembered or on a remembering 'subject'" (2004: 5). Rather, drawing from de Certeau, the focus here is the "modes of operation or schemata of action" (1984: xi) of the sites of memory. In what follows, then, I assemble data generated from different stops on the trail towards two worked examples focused on "body memory" and "designed

movement and mobility.” In writing with these examples, I weave my analytical narrative around empirical material I have drawn from field notes, recorded video, and photographs.

### **Body Memory**

I arrived at Changi Beach direct from The Changi Museum. The cool air of the climate-controlled taxi scurried back into the vehicle as I exited towards the foreshore. At Changi Beach my fieldwork involved initial mobility around the site, then longer periods of sitting, sensing, observing, followed again by mobility. When sitting, I placed my GoPro camera on the ground next to me, it recorded sound and image. Prior to my trip to Singapore I had spent six weeks in mainland Europe and the first record in my field diary related to the sandy beach: “The first thing I notice is the sand, that familiar feeling of sand rustling between toes and the soles of my feet and the shoes” (Field notes, 30 May, 2014). The Australian in me relished the contact with the beach; that I am Australian provided me with a contact point to this location. Changi is a toponym sacred in Australian WWII memory<sup>1</sup> (Muziani and Yeoh, 2005b). Yet, as I have argued elsewhere, my migrant heritage leaves me feeling unconnected to the overtly nationalistic narratives of Australian war memory that form much of its official Anglo and White commemorative discourse – Changi included (Drozdowski, 2016). I visited to explore that official discourse, but the discourse does not personally draw me to place, because these battles and memories of them are not in my body’s memory. Yet the slightly scratching feeling of the sand between my toes did resonate in a sensorial capacity, as did other aspects of the landscape that connected to my senses. I heard the lapping of the waves onto shore, a rhythmic beat of water intruding and receding from the water’s edge. The constancy of this sound was familiar, it settled my anticipation in that place; I sat and watched the water. My “habitual body memories serve[d] as [my] *familiaris* in dealing with [my] surroundings” (Casey, 200: 149). Occasionally, bird song pierced a louder frequency. Much louder still was the steady progression of planes approaching the peninsula to land at the nearby Changi Airport. The dark tropical storm clouds threw shadows over the water. I noted that: “I feel flies and bugs landing on my skin, walking around on my skin, sensing my legs as I sense them” (Field notes, 30 May, 2014). I was sitting still but the moist, thick tropical air enveloped me. Things were



moving on me; my body moved ever so slightly to recoil from the latest insect attack. I moved away from the sand (and sand flies) and recorded that “it is much hotter now off the beach and on the concrete path. Moist heavy air, tropical heaviness, the breeze when it comes is soothing” (Field notes, 30 May, 2014). These movements, feelings, senses are the “geography of what happens” (Thrift, 2007: 2); cumulatively, the waves, sand and the humidity provide important connection points to place – they all also involve sensing place. Without sighting the monument to the Changi Beach massacre, these felt experiences place me in familiar beachside setting, they spur consideration of “how that same environment was encountered in the past” (Degen and Rose, 2012: 3279). “They are continuously at work in our experience and are constitutive of its very fabric” (Casey, 2000: 149). They configure into atmosphere.



Figure 1: Memorial plinth for Changi Beach massacre. Photography by the author.

At Changi Beach, I needed to walk to find the material marker of memory. It is a small stone plinth, knee height, with an inscription about the massacre at Changi Beach (Figure 1). On first pass, I walked past its discreet positioning in the landscape. The text on the plinth provides the historical narrative but also an overlay to the experience of my being in that place, of sitting and feeling the site, of experiencing the same landscape. As Edensor and Sumartojo have pointed out, both the representational and non-representational elements of memorial spaces intersect to “reiterate, affects, sensations, materialities, emotions and meanings...enrolled within the force-field of an atmosphere” (2015: 251). The narrative description of the massacre on the plinth is what Anderson termed an “identificatory practice of thinking/talk,” the text worked “to amplify or heighten the intensity” of the sensory affect (2004: 12). It cements the “already felt state” (Massumi, 2002: 25) of “recollecting an absent place or recognising a past emotion” (Anderson, 2004: 12). Being in place is a way of knowing the landscape and forging spatial connections that traverse temporal impossibilities. I sat, walked and stood in the place(s) of the Changi Beach massacre. There was an absent presence there. Maddrell eloquently expresses that:

Absence is not merely a “presence” in and of itself, but rather the absent is evoked, made present, in and through enfolded blendings of the visual, material, haptic, aural, olfactory, emotional-affective and spiritual plans, prompting memories and invoking a literal sense of continued “presence,” despite bodily and cognitive absence (Maddrell, 2013: 505).

On arriving at Changi Beach, I felt a familiar anticipation of being in a place of absent presence. As a cultural geographer researching memory, identity and post-war landscapes, my body had a heightened sense of expectation; thoughts of grief for other’s trauma, of senseless violence, of national pride and identity circled my mind. My situated knowledge from multiple visits to postwar memory sites amassed such that this “bodily anticipation [wa]s almost too habitual” (Bissell et al, 2017: 801). “Habitual body memories are also deeply *orienting*” (Casey, 2000: 151, original emphasis) – the beach placed me, the sensation of absent presence placed me. Kobayashi et have contended that affective experiences are “a cumulative, and

therefore historical, process of interaction between human beings and place” (2011: 873). Thus, the politics of anticipation are “temporal and affective”; they have the capacity to draw from our histories of place (our situated knowledges) *and* what may be there (investigating into the future), *to* what was there in the past (what happened) *and* how I am feeling in the present (the affect-fullness of encounter) (Adams et al, 2009: 247). Such temporal linking of past, present and future is foundational to understanding a nexus of memory and identity in place (Drozdzewski *et al*, 2016). Being in sites of memory, sites that have grave and traumatic pasts, creates movement in the form of anticipation in my body. “As an affective state, anticipation is not just a reaction, but a way of actively orienting oneself temporally” (Adams et al, 2009: 247). This “mute attunement to place” (Edensor, 2012: 1103) was perceptible only to me, as movement in my body. Sumartojo has argued that individual anticipation and “sensory perception mix with memorial landscapes...to co-constitute atmospheres” (2016: 1). Building on her argument, I argue that anticipation at sites of memory constitutes a form of body memory, which in itself entails movement(s) in the body. Whether this movement is characterised by a tightness of breath, a moist brow and/or the tingling trickle of pinpricks through our arms, this movement, through anticipation, is that qualitative difference (cf. Massumi, 2002) that carries an affective charge. At Changi Beach, anticipation – through a familiarity of movement cues in my body – disrupted the integrity of what might otherwise be a visit to a beach or a guided tour of Singapore’s wartime memory. “The memory trace acts as a displacement or movement” (Anderson, 2004: 11); the capacity for my body to recall this memory of anticipatory movement set the course for my encounters in that space. It showed as Connerton (1996: 72) has stated, the sedimentation of habitual memory in the body. Body memory shows “just *how* we are in the world – much as place memory determines *where* we are in it” (Casey, 2000: 149). An attentiveness to the sensory capacity of place and to how we feel a place – and not just what we think or know about it – reveals the capacity for movement as anticipation to be remembered in the body. At sites of memory, my body memory has an orientating function activated by the collision of sensory and textual cues therein. At Changi Beach, the paucity of material reminders of memory, corporeal intersections with the beach setting and the anticipatory recognition of the absent present heightened that activation. But in/at different sites of memory purposeful design can be a forceful constituent of the memory narrative. Building on

this discussion of body memory, I now turn to discussing memory encountered while mobile, and memory designed for mobility.

### ***Designed Movement and Mobility***

Upon entering the taxi, I asked to go to the Civilian War Memorial. The taxi driver was unsure where I actually wanted to go, which memorial he asked? He asked whether this was the memorial about the Japanese, I nodded and replied that it is the large memorial commemorating the loss of civilian life during the Japanese occupation. Finally, he knew where to go, but his sense of puzzlement at my chosen destination lingered. I explained that I was a researcher looking at war memory; when comfortable with that explanation he proceeded to tell me stories about Japanese occupation and that the skulls of some of the Singaporean victims are buried at that memorial. I made a note to fact check that piece of information. En route, I received a mobile history lesson, framing my initial considerations of that place before my encounter, and adding layers of information. These layers extended an anticipatory mode of remembrance beyond the site itself.



Figure 2: Civilian War Memorial, Singapore. Photograph by the author.



**Figure 3: Civilian War Memorial as viewed from one of the site's entry points. Photography by the author.**

My post-fieldtrip fact check confirmed my taxi driver's assertion – buried in a chamber below the memorial are the ashes from civilian victims exhumed from mass graves in Singapore. While the site itself was not the location of one of these mass graves, as a repository for the remains of civilians it marks that central city space as sacred. The memorial comprises four 65 metre pillars; each pillar represents four

major ethnicities in Singaporean culture – Malay, Chinese, Indian and Eurasian (Figures 2 and 3). The pillars are positioned on a raised central platform accessible by steps through the middle of the square. The pillars are joined by a square support frame approximately halfway up the structure and again by a beam that connects the summit points of each pillar. The pillars taper towards each other as their elevation increases. The inscriptions on each pillar are provided in Malay, Mandarin, English and Tamil. The central pillar structure is surrounded by foliage, four pools, light beams and a paved area around the perimeter with seating facing inwards towards the pillars. Behind those seats another row of hedges demarcates the memorial space from the rest of the park. Access into the memorial space is at the four corner points of the square. In the account of the Civilian War Memorial that follows, I draw attention to movement and mobility in and around the site (mine and others), *and* to how the purposeful design of the monument encourages certain types of mobility that facilitate selected readings of the politics of war memory and identity commemorated therein. To begin, I draw from my field notes:

*I walk around and through the memorial reading the signs in English first and then walk around to the left and notice two people asleep under the trees on the bank. A couple, tourists, walk through the memorial from the Swissotel side, they too read the inscriptions on the plinths and the urn and then walk through to the side...[they] sit, embrace, kiss, and walk on out of the park.*

Certain public memorial spaces are purposefully designed to encourage certain choreographies; these choreographies are “characterised by purposive, directed movements which follow a limited number of strongly demarcated paths” (Edensor, 1998: 50). Reeves parallels Edensor’s assertion, stating that choreographies are scripted, pre-defined and “externally imposed combinations of movement that a performer then repeats one or several times” (2017: 3). While Jenson has suggested that the embodied acts of self-choreography – for example, the way I chose to walk around and then through the middle of the memorial – “create mobilities *in-situ*” (2013: 7, original emphasis). I walked the perimeter of the space, then entered and walked up the steps to the central space between the pillars. I read the material and passed through the central passageway to the other side before finding a place to sit

and continue my ethnography. In thinking through my movements through the memorial, I watched others move through this space while contemplating why the memorial's design compels us to move in certain ways. While seated, I observed the following mobilities:

*One man walks around the memorial reading the main inscriptions. A young couple using an iPad take a panoramic of the memorial and walk out of the area without going through the centre of it. Another man comes from my right-hand side, straight through to the other side;*

*Two more visitors stare up at the height of the memorial, one is carrying an umbrella to block out the sun. Four people on bikes arrive as part of an English-speaking tour, the guide is explaining that this is the memorial for the civilians killed during the war...The people from the bikes are taking pictures in the centre of the memorial and reading the inscriptions. One woman who has passed me already appears to be doing exercise, she is making laps around the monument; and,*

*Another man comes up and reads the larger inscriptions...the man walks slowly up to the stairs of the memorial...the man does not go in the centre of the columns to read the plaques, but he exits via the same set of stairs and walks towards one of the four park exit points but stops and sits on the bench two benches to my left and looks at the pool of water directly opposite him.*

The pathways around the memorial space are design features, they encourage visitors to walk the perimeter of the memorial. Each base plinth, adjoining the pools, has the text "Memorial to the civilian victims of the Japanese Occupation, 1942-1945," inscribed in one of the four aforementioned languages. The use of the different language provokes the visitor to discover each text by walking around the memorial but it also imparts a message of inclusivity; that the four quarters of the square form a whole, which can also be read as the four major ethnicities combining under one Singaporean identity. In my field notes I wrote: "there are four columns here each with a plaque in another language they rise up and are joined by a supportive cross at the top as if they are being held together here" (Field notes, 31 May, 2014). This message of togetherness is reinforced with the use of the same text-based strategy on

the four pillars in the central part of the memorial. The steps up to the bronze urn beckon visitors into the centre of the memorial. The urn is symbolic of the 606 urns of ashes buried beneath the structure. Moreover, the urn as a vessel commonly associated with death distinguishes the area as sacred space. The fact that there is one urn represents the common suffering of Singaporeans, regardless of ethnicity. Being positioned in the centre of this space means that the visitor can walk around it, they can encircle it as they look at the four inscriptions on each pillar. This circularity strengthens the theme of common suffering, under a common enemy – placing it as the central purpose of the memorial.

This central purpose is at its *most affective* when a visitor is mobile around and through the memorial. Memory is enacted here in and through movement, it is inextricable from both the representation and the act of remembering. That the memorial design compels certain movement patterns speaks to how mobility is co-opted as a design feature to invoke constructed remembrance. Miceli-Voutsinas calls this the affective heritage of the memorial space, and she has questioned the “mobilization of affective heritage at sites of collective trauma, particularly when the procurement of public feeling is a design priority” (2017: 94). While loss and suffering are key themes of the memorial, a wider political message of commonality of grief and suffering is present. Perhaps stronger still are the assertions of collective memory and (national) identity. This collectivity has been an important feature of a post-war politics of identity in Singapore, which as Muzaini and Yeoh (2005a; 2005b; 2005c) have explicated, involves a contested politics of memory where “the different races in Singapore may remember and interpret the war differently” (2005c: 474). The memorial’s narrative, then, represents an attempt to fuse “the otherwise divergent and unsynchronised life trajectories of individual participants into a unified tale of belonging to this place” (Ingold and Vergunst, 2008: 9). Of course, my reading of the built-in political intent of Civilian War Memorial’s design is but one reading of the affective heritage of the site. My reading is unavoidably subjective and filtered through my positionality. While I did not have a preconceived plan of how I would move through the memorial, the route I walked was my body’s way of feeling and knowing the memorial site. The fact that our encounters with memorial spaces are highly personalised means that knowing a memorial site is contingent on different visitor



subjectivities. For example, whether we are visiting on specific days of remembrance when certain mobility pathways are restricted, whether visitors have genealogical links to victims, or perhaps whether the space itself is being used to an end to traverse the wider site itself. Moreover, non-human constituents of the memorial space can influence and inflect upon our mobilities. For instance, in my field notes I recorded finding a shaded bench to escape the direct sunlight and how enticing the pools surrounding the memorial were – I noted that “I want[ed] to dip my feet in and cool them off” (Field notes, 31 May, 2014). What I am keen to stress here is how my mobility around and through the memorial narrates a certain – and chosen – story about memory. It provided a frame for how I thought about the memory of this site, which while narrated through the text-based inscriptions, is intensified by the pathways and directions of mobility laid out for the visitor to move around the memorial. “The movement of walking is itself a way of knowing” the memorial site (Ingold and Vergunst, 2008: 5).

### **Affect-full Encounters**

This paper reveals two very different encounters with memory, movement and mobility, characterised by how my body remembered, moved *and* felt in these spaces. An alertness to movement – experienced as internal and external to the body – shaped how I understood and felt memory at both sites. Exploring body memory at Changi Beach, I felt movement as anticipation of being in a place of absent presence. The small scale of material commemoration at the beach, which could easily have gone unremarked, meant that I felt for other qualities of movement and memory. I connected with the site through familiar sounds of waves breaking, the touch of the sandy beach and the anticipation of the absent presence there – combined, these movements and feelings were “culturally mediated” memory within my body (Koch *et al*, 2014: 273). Degen and Rose have contended that “sensory engagements with place are often mediated by memories of that environment as it used to be” (2012: 3280). At Changi Beach, such mediation drew from that absent presence of what had happened there, something that I could not see, but that I knew happened in that same place – but also the memory of similar environments – beaches, memorials, tropical places that I had been in. At the Civilian War Memorial, pathways for mobility were built into the memorial design. I, like other visitors, moved between different locations through the space. In moving through such designed memorial

spaces, we often do not think about how our movements have been mapped by designers to encourage certain readings of memory. In this example, movement linked with memory through the purposeful orientation and selection of text-based information that provoked rumination on the memory of the event of occupation, but also provided the socio-cultural framework for this memory's recollection. Cumulatively, these brief insights show how movement and mobility facilitate different experiential encounters with sites of memory – 'there are potentially as many forms of remembrance as there are rememberers' (Marshall, 2004: 38). Furthermore, they show in researching memory we must adopt flexible methods that are open to sensory engagement and diverse forms of movement.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> In the surrender of Singapore to the Japanese, 15,000 Australians, in Singapore as part of the Commonwealth military strategy, became prisoners-of-war.

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