I
Introduction: Why 'Memory'?

I.1 Why 'memory'?

Why indeed 'memory' – some people might ask themselves, wondering about the popularity of the term in current discourse. Why and how would one do research on memory in culture, as a literary scholar, historian, or sociologist? And what can we gain when we add to the existing repertoire of terms for the study of culture – mentalities, identities, ideology, symbols, texts, performance – yet another word in order to examine social formations, historical processes, literature, art, and media from this new perspective of memory?

'Memory' is a topic that integrates disparate elements like no other. An impressively diverse array of public discourses, media, and academic fields are currently examining the question of memory *together*. Both the practice of remembering and reflection on that practice have become an all-encompassing sociocultural, interdisciplinary, and international phenomenon.

As an all-encompassing sociocultural phenomenon, memory plays an important role in various areas of social practice. The calendar of commemorations – national, religious, ethnic – seems to be ever-increasing. Remembering and forgetting are major themes in contemporary literature and art. Memory enjoys practically top billing in daily and weekly newspapers. It has become a controversial topic in politics and the public sphere (in the context of phrases such as 'national tradition', 'Holocaust memory', or 'truth and reconciliation'). And memory even occupies us in our free time, in the form of a thriving heritage industry.

Over the course of the last two decades, memory as an interdisciplinary phenomenon has become a key concept of academic discourse across established fields. However, 'memory' is not owned by any one

single discipline. Instead, sociology, philosophy and history, archaeology and religious studies, literary and art history, media studies, psychology and the neurosciences are all involved in exploring the connection between culture and memory.

This preoccupation with memory is by no means restricted to any one country, but is an international phenomenon. Pierre Nora's influential concept of sites of memory (*Les Lieux de Mémoire*, 1984–92) came into being in France and was soon emulated in other countries. A 'memory boom' (Huyssen 1995) in society and academia is evident in the United States as well as in Israel, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Great Britain, and elsewhere. Transnational sites of memory such as '9/11' demonstrate that we can no longer think solely in terms of national memory. Instead, religion, ideology, ethnicity, and gender are increasingly the central coordinates of cultural remembering. As a theoretical notion and in practice, 'memory' touches upon many different areas.

The connection between culture and memory cannot be approached solely within the purview of one single discipline. On the contrary, memory is a transdisciplinary problem. What is nowadays called 'memory studies', or 'cultural memory studies', has therefore emerged as a multidisciplinary field. And it is essentially an interdisciplinary project: 'memory' both renders possible and requires dialogue. This project may still be in its infancy – but what is clear even at this point is that the burgeoning field of memory studies has made possible, in a virtually unprecedented way, collaboration among the otherwise widely divergent areas of social science, humanities, and natural sciences.

Organs of this interdisciplinary and international dialogue include the journals *History and Theory* (since 1960), *Memory & History* (founded in 1989 and edited by Saul Friedländer), and *Rethinking History* (since 1997); the series *Studies in Memory and Narrative*, established in 1998 with Routledge and now moved to Transaction Press; the Stanford University Press series *Cultural Memory in the Present*, which started in 1998; the series *Media and Cultural Memory*, established at de Gruyter in 2004; the journal *Memory Studies*, begun in 2008; and the book series of the same name, appearing with Palgrave Macmillan (since 2009). An ever-increasing number of centers for memory studies have been established virtually all across the globe. Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes in memory studies have been founded. Edited volumes represent the diverse strands of memory research (see Fara and Patterson 1998; Radstone 2000; Agazzi and Fortunati 2007; Erll and Nünning 2008; Radstone and Schwarz 2010), and anthologies collect the fundamental theoretical texts of the field (see Rossington et al. 2007; Olick et al. 2010).

For students and scholars, the emergence of memory studies has been in many ways a windfall, 'a rare combination of social relevance and intellectual challenge' (Kansteiner 2002, 180). Part of the intellectual challenge is that in working on the topic of memory, individual disciplinary approaches flow together with general theories of human cognition, culture, and media as well as with findings of neighboring disciplines. In addition, concepts of cultural remembering also make possible a preoccupation with constellations and artifacts that are historically and spatially as far apart as the pyramids of Egypt and the AIDS epidemic in the United States (on the former, see J. Assmann 1992; on the latter, Sturken 1997). At the same time, the social relevance of memory has propelled scholarly work from the ivory tower into the public sphere. Consider, for example, the host of controversies about remembrance in recent years. Discussions such as those surrounding the 'Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe' in Berlin, 'District Six' in Cape Town, or 'Ground Zero' in New York City illustrate how the topic of memory provokes a close interplay among politics, public media, art, and academic research.

I.2 Why now?

What is the reason for this extraordinary fascination with memory? The abundance of explanations for the current omnipresence of 'memory' is surpassed only by the flood of commemorative ceremonies, memory controversies, and writings on memory. Michael Kammen (1995, 247–51), for example, has identified no fewer than nine reasons for the widespread interest in the memory discourse in the USA, including the many anniversaries celebrated in the country since the 1980s, multiculturalism, Holocaust denial, memory of the Vietnam War, the emergence of a 'memory industry', and the end of the Cold War. His list makes clear that memory's ubiquity can hardly be explained monocausally. Kammen himself advocates an 'explanatory pluralism' (ibid., 251). However, it is striking that of the reasons Kammen put forward in the mid-1990s to explain the causes of what seemed a singular proliferation of memory discourses, only about one-third were, for example, relevant to the German context (where 'memory work' showed an even greater diffusion in society and elaboration in academia) – and less than half are still applicable to the situation of present-day America (where memory is ever-present). Obviously, every era and every society can list its own specific reasons for a perceived 'memory boom'.

What seems qualitatively new today is perhaps not so much a heightened frequency and depth of cultural remembering (which may be

claimed for other historical periods, too), but the fact that memory discourses and practices are increasingly linked across the globe. 'Memory' has become a truly transnational phenomenon. And this appears to be by and large attributable to a convergence of three factors over the past twenty years:

1. *Historical transformations*: Of international importance is the loss of the generation that had first-hand experience of the Holocaust and the Second World War. For the cultural memory of the Shoah, this represents a significant turning point, since death puts an end to the oral passing on of lived experience within the framework of what Jan and Aleida Assmann have called 'communicative memory'. Without eyewitnesses to history, societies are dependent on media-supported forms of remembrance (such as historiography, monuments, or movies). This marks the transition to 'Cultural Memory', in the Assmanns' terminology (see chapter II.4). In addition, with the end of the Cold War, the binary structure of eastern and western memory cultures has collapsed. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a multitude of national and ethnic memories came to the fore. With the transition from authoritarianism to democratization in many societies (such as South Africa, Argentina or Chile) truth and reconciliation has emerged as a major form of societies' memory work. Moreover, as a result of decolonization and migration, the increasingly multi(-memory-)cultural nature of modern societies comes into focus. A diversity of ethnic groups and religious affiliations in a society brings with it a diversity of traditions and views of history; recognizing minorities includes giving voice to their versions of the past. And finally, 9/11 and the War on Terror have also had a deep memorial impact. In all these areas, memory proves to be a fundamentally political phenomenon with strong ethical implications. (For more on these topics, see chapter III.1.)
2. *Changes in media technology and the role of popular media*: Another oft-cited reason for the strong presence of 'memory' in current discourse is changing media technology. Today's computers offer possibilities for data storage that were unimaginable in the recent past. The Internet has rapidly become a kind of global mega-archive. Yet at the same time the digital revolution confronts us with the paradoxical connection of unprecedented medial storage capabilities and the looming danger of cultural amnesia, since information that merely rests on hard drives is 'dead knowledge'. Choosing and appropriating that which is worth remembering, however, becomes ever more difficult in the face of the sheer mass of digital information.

Second, global media cultures and popular representations of the past play an important role as both expression and driving force of the current 'memory boom'. Semi-fictional feature films about the Shoah (most famously, perhaps, Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, 1994), period pictures, war movies and cinematic retellings of ancient myths, television documentaries and interviews with witnesses of recent history as well as, lastly – as an example of that time-tested medium of memory, the book – the 'Wilkomirski case', a worldwide scandal about an alleged Holocaust autobiography (*Fragments*, 1995), can be considered typical instances of the contemporary landscape of media and memory. What these examples share is that they raise questions about the role the arts and other media play in shaping the way people around the world think about the past. (For more on this topic, see chapters V and VI.)

3. *Developments within academia*: The impact of the notion of memory appears to belong to the somewhat unexpected results of poststructuralism in the 1980s and postmodern philosophies of history (see also Klein 2000). Insights into the constructed nature and narrativity of historiography and talk of the 'end of history' (Francis Fukuyama), or at least of the 'end of the grand narratives' (Jean-François Lyotard), have undermined concepts of history as a monolithic 'collective singular' (Reinhart Koselleck), as a given fact, or as a process of teleological progression. It is under the memory paradigm that the study of the past can be combined with these insights of postmodern theory, because the focus of memory studies rests, precisely, not on the 'past as it really was', but on the 'past as a human construct'.

At the same time, the memory paradigm has endowed the humanities, written off by many as irrelevant, with a new legitimacy within society. The humanities have always functioned as institutions which administer cultural heritage. Their methods, such as historical source criticism or textual analysis, make a scholarly preoccupation with tradition possible in the first place. More recently, it has become obvious that the humanities can also apply their theoretical and terminological instruments to reflect critically on practices of cultural remembering (be they scholarly, political, or aesthetic), compare different memory cultures, and contribute to current public debates. To quote Aleida Assmann (2002, 45): 'The academic memory discourse is increasingly important in its role of reflexive observation and therapeutic accompaniment of social and political processes.'

I.3 What is meant by 'memory'?

Terminology is one of the most intricate issues in memory studies. The proliferation of memory discourses has resulted in a multitude of terms and concepts, whose commonalities and differences are by no means clear. In roughly chronological order from the 1920s to today, the most influential of these terms are: *mémoire collective*, Mnemosyne, *storia e memoria*, *lieux de mémoire*/sites, or realms, of memory, Cultural Memory vs communicative memory, social memory, memory cultures, cultural remembrance, social forgetting, the cultural brain, memory in the global age, and transcultural memory. (For more on these concepts, see chapter II and III.) As Jeffrey Olick and Joyce Robbins (1998, 106) have observed, memory research is a 'nonparadigmatic, transdisciplinary, centerless enterprise'. It is also an 'outstanding example of how far apart methods and research interests in the individual disciplines can be despite the close relationship of the objects of study' (Pethes and Ruchatz 2001, 5).

The heterogeneity of the concepts and disciplinary approaches to possibly identical objects of research represents one of the most important challenges of contemporary memory studies. Another provocation the field must face is the widespread criticism of the very idea that it is occupied with identical phenomena. For many skeptics, the term 'memory' in fact refers to the opposite: an unacceptable homogenization of vastly different objects. Can we really take individual mental processes, myths, memorials, debates about the past, autobiographies, and families looking at snapshots and bring them all together under the umbrella of 'memory'? Or is this an unacceptable over-extension of the term? Is 'memory' in danger of becoming a 'catch-all category' (see Zelizer 1995, 235)?

Of course, the very existence of this book is itself proof that the reader will here encounter a more optimistic view. Despite the centrifugal forces of the field and the danger of blurring boundaries, considering the intersections between culture and memory is a worthwhile undertaking. It is an excellent strategy to 'make visible new connections where previously only disparate elements could be seen' (A. Assmann 2002, 40). First and foremost, however, we need to see memory as a 'discursive construct' (Pethes and Ruchatz 2001, 13). 'Memory' is constituted differently in different contexts – be they linguistic (Amberber 2007), historical, social, national or disciplinary. Thus, one important goal of this book is to point out the development, differences, and connections between various concepts of memory and to bring them together in a theoretical model of memory in culture (see chapters II–IV).

The underlying idea of this book is to promote a broad understanding of memory, one which unites under one roof such heterogeneous phenomena as neuronal connections, everyday conversations, and tradition. Seen in this way, 'memory' (to give a preliminary definition) is an umbrella term for all those processes of a biological, medial, or social nature which relate past and present (and future) in sociocultural contexts.

This expansive understanding of the term can, in fact, be traced back to the founding father of cultural memory studies, Maurice Halbwachs; and it is also justified by the field's desire for precision. It is namely only by locating them in the overarching complex of 'memory' that the connections between many single, seemingly disparate cultural phenomena become evident. To take as an example the present constellation of memory in Germany: Phenomena such as grandparents' autobiographical memories of the Nazi period and images of Nazism circulating among today's grandchildren, academic historiography of the years 1933–45 and the shape of curricula for German history classes, commemorative ceremonies and heated discussions about how to address the history of genocide (*Historikerstreit*), architectural memorials such as Peter Eisenman's field of pillars near the Berlin Reichstag and the impact of literary works such as Imre Kertész's *Fateless* (1992/1975) or popular movies about Hitler like *Downfall* (2004) – all these cannot be considered each in a vacuum, independently of one another. Attempts to separate 'individual memory', 'tradition', 'history' or 'fiction' from 'memory' (in favour of other terms, out of dislike for any universal 'super theory', or out of fear for the legitimacy of one's own discipline) prevent us from seeing the threads that connect such phenomena.

There has been considerable confusion about the nature of the relationship between 'memory' and 'history'. Cultural memory is not the Other of history. Nor is it the opposite of individual remembering. Rather, it is the totality of the context within which such varied cultural phenomena originate. Precisely in order to guard against misunderstandings, confusions, and the tendency of critics to shadowbox, the concept of memory must be very broad to begin with. In a second step, once the expanse of the field is acknowledged, terminological and conceptual differentiation is of course necessary. But this project is – particularly when we consider the international dialogue – still in a fledgling state. This book aims to contribute to this undertaking by distinguishing among uses of the term 'memory', demarcating various systems and modes of collective remembering, as well as drawing attention to different cultural dimensions and symbolic forms of memory (see chapter IV).

I.4 Memory, remembering or forgetting?

This, of course, is the wrong question to pose: The study of memory cannot do without any one of these three terms. There are, however, academic contexts in which one of the terms is privileged over the others. Some researchers write predominantly about cultural *memory* and the archive (see A. Assmann 2008), others accentuate amnesia, oblivion and social *forgetting* (see Huyssen 1995; Esposito 2008); and still others highlight dynamic, performative acts of cultural *remembering* (see Irwin-Zarecka 1994; Bal, Crewe, and Spitzer 1999; Rigney 2005).

Memory, remembering and forgetting are closely intertwined on both an individual and a collective level (for more on the possible pitfalls of the metaphorical application of these terms to the collective level, see chapter IV.1). Across the disciplines there is a general agreement that 'remembering' is a process, of which 'memories' are the result, and that 'memory' should be conceived of as an ability. Memory itself is, however, not observable. Only through the observation of concrete acts of remembering situated in specific sociocultural contexts can we hypothesize about memory's nature and functioning.

Despite the unavoidable heterogeneity of the terminology, there are two generally agreed-upon central characteristics of (conscious) remembering: its relationship to the present and its constructed nature. Memories are not objective images of past perceptions, even less of a past reality. They are subjective, highly selective reconstructions, dependent on the situation in which they are recalled. *Re*-membering is an act of assembling available data that takes place in the present. Versions of the past change with every recall, in accordance with the changed present situation. Individual and collective memories are never a mirror image of the past, but rather an expressive indication of the needs and interests of the person or group doing the remembering in the present. As a result, memory studies directs its interest not toward the shape of the remembered pasts, but rather toward the particular presents of the remembering.

Remembering and forgetting are two sides – or different processes – of the same coin, that is, memory. Forgetting is the very condition for remembering. Total recall, after all, the complete memory of every single event in the past, would amount to total forgetting, for the individual as well as for the group or society. Friedrich Nietzsche had emphasized this as long ago as his 1874 critique of historicism, *On the Use and Abuse of History*. Forgetting is necessary for memory to operate economically, for it to be able to recognize patterns. In this sense, scholars of systems theory postulate the 'priority of forgetting' and maintain that 'the main function of memory lies in forgetting, which prevents the system from blocking itself with the accumulation of the results of former operations, and frees processing capabilities' (Esposito 2008, 182). Even in ancient discussions of *ars memoriae* (see chapter III.2.1), the relevance of forgetting was highlighted. Themistocles called for a 'lethotechnics' instead of 'mnemotechnics'. However, in a playful reflection upon this idea, the semiotician Umberto Eco (1988) showed that an *ars oblivionalis*, willful forgetting, would be paradoxical, in fact both an adynaton and oxymoron.

It is true that memories are small islands in a sea of forgetting. In processing our experience of reality, forgetting is the rule and remembering the exception. Indeed, the functions of forgetting within cognitive and social systems are at least as important as those of remembering. Memory studies has reconstructed the intellectual history of forgetting – for Harald Weinrich, in his rich study *Lethe: The Art and Critique of Forgetting* (2004), it has its origin in Greco-Roman mythology with the image of the underworld river Lethe – and emphasized the social, historical, and ethical significance of forgetting and related aspects, such as amnesia, oblivion, silence, and forgiving (see Augé 2004; Ricoeur 2004; Passerini 2005; Connerton 2009; Ben-Ze'ev et al. 2010). However, in the end, the phenomenon of forgetting is every bit as unobservable as is memory. As an object of research it only comes into view via the observation of remembering – by considering its peculiarities, mistakes and changes, by focussing, for instance, on what Sigmund Freud described as condensation, displacement and screen memories.

I.5 Goals and structure of this book

The subject of this book is the connection between culture and memory. This connection has an impact on both an individual and a collective level: The individual person always remembers within sociocultural contexts. And cultural formations are based on a 'collective memory', to apply Maurice Halbwachs's concept (see chapter II.1); in other words, on symbols, media, institutions, and social practice which convey versions of a shared past. The following chapters will deal with both levels and their multiple overlappings, and guide interested students and researchers through what has become a veritable labyrinth.

This book does not attempt either to be a history of cultural remembering or to recapitulate a history of the general, and until 1900

predominantly philosophical, reflection on memory – although both of these elements are present to a degree. The history of cultural remembering is over 5,000 years old, as has been shown by Jan Assmann (1992). The history of the reflection on memory is also far-reaching, going back in western culture as far as Plato and Aristotle (Yates 1966; Gross 2000). The long list of memory philosophers and proto-psychological thinkers who have made key contributions to the question of the location and functioning of memory include Aurelius Augustinus, Giordano Bruno, Michel de Montaigne, John Locke, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, G.W.F. Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Bergson, Sigmund Freud and Edmund Husserl. Highly recommended collections of texts and histories of thinking about memory have already been published (see Harth 1991; Draaisma 2000; Byatt and Wood 2008; Whitehead 2009).

This book addresses the question of how to theorize and work with 'cultural memory'. It presents concepts and methods for the study of memory in culture. Since the field has long since overcome disciplinary and territorial borders, the book necessarily also focuses on the transdisciplinary and international dimension of memory research. It introduces, among others, German, American, British, French, Italian, and Dutch concepts of memory. Research done in history and the social sciences is considered alongside literary, media and art studies, as well as psychology and the neurosciences.

The present heterogeneity of the field of memory studies has historical and disciplinary, but also linguistic and cultural causes. Taken together, these factors have impeded the exchange of concepts, led to simultaneous but unrelated academic activity, and to a tendency to 'reinvent the wheel' in different places. To the barriers posed by language belongs the fact that much of Halbwachs's fundamental work on *mémoire collective* has not yet been fully translated into English. But there are also very different ways of doing memory studies, which are the result of distinct national academic cultures and traditions. This can be shown by a quick look at the different national histories of memory studies: In France, Maurice Halbwachs's homeland, the discourse about cultural memory has been dominated, since the 1980s, by Pierre Nora's concept of the *lieux de mémoire* (see chapter II.2). The problematic distinction between 'history' and 'memory' (see chapter III.1.1) is discussed heatedly in public, and historians engage in debates about who may or should represent the past, which have turned into veritable *guerres de mémoires* (Blanchard and Veyrat-Masson 2008). This notion of 'memory wars' is then, significantly, also used by French scholars to describe cultural memory in *other* countries (Blanchard, Ferro and Veyrat-Masson 2008).

In the United States, on the other hand, a significant strand of academic memory research has its origin in Holocaust studies, trauma studies, and in poststructuralist critiques of representation (see chapter III.1.2). Looking at memory with Derrida will, of course, shape the field differently than looking at memory with Halbwachs. In Great Britain we encounter yet another scene: Memory studies there has developed from Gramscian cultural studies, as practiced at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (Raphael Samuel being the major founding protagonist). It is informed by radical Marxism and characterized by its decided interest in ideology. Much of its methodology is based on a politically informed psychoanalysis. It is against this backdrop that Susannah Radstone (2008, 36) argues for a nuanced and critical view of memory studies and emphasizes 'the attempt to understand culture – including ... memory culture – as ambiguous, as struggle, as a grey area'. British memory studies is moreover closely bound up with the work of oral historians, as it is best represented in the journal *History Workshop* (see also Thompson and Samuel 1990, which also includes fundamental work from Italian oral history). In Germany, to give one last example, the difficult task of remembering the Holocaust, national guilt and the public discussions connected with these issues were of great importance for the emergence of a widespread memory discourse in the 1980s; a more general turn in German humanities towards social and cultural anthropology (in the framework of *Kulturwissenschaften*) taking place at roughly the same time has lent the field its specific conceptual shape (see chapter II.3).

Coming from the German research context, perhaps, makes me therefore want to emphasize that memory studies, as I see it, has at its basis a general anthropological question: How do people refer to temporal processes? How do they construct images and narratives of the past in different social, cultural and historical contexts? Such a view of memory studies is justified when we look at the fundamental theories of collective memory that have been developed since the 1920s. Maurice Halbwachs and Aby Warburg (see ch II.1 and 2) proposed concepts which recognize and problematize the constructed and collective nature of memory and which focus on the influence of signs, media and social contexts on remembering. The development of a modern understanding of culture as a shared sign system with a social, a material and a mental dimension (see chapter IV.2) and the formation of theories of collective memory were in fact closely related. Both culture and memory can be understood as 'webs of significance spun by human beings' (Clifford Geertz), as the products of man, the 'animal symbolicum'

(Ernst Cassirer). Remembering is a constitutive component of what the Tartu–Moscow group of semioticians around Jurij Lotman and Boris Uspenskij have called the 'semiotic mechanism of culture'. Thus, what the various approaches of cultural memory studies all have in common is that they analyse memory as prerequisite for, component and product of culture.

This book addresses first the historical and then the systematic dimension of memory studies. In a further step, attention is directed to the medial construction of memory. A final, yet central concern is to shed light on literature as a powerful medium of cultural memory.

- Chapter II introduces the fundamental and most sophisticated concepts of cultural memory developed in the twentieth century – from Maurice Halbwachs's *mémoire collective* and Aby Warburg's Mnemosyne project to Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire* and to Aleida and Jan Assmann's theory of the Cultural Memory (*das kulturelle Gedächtnis*), thereby outlining the intellectual history of memory studies.
- Chapter III offers, in light of the highly specialized research landscape, an overview of discipline-specific concepts of memory (from history, social sciences, literature and art studies, and psychology). Even with the chapter's disciplinary focus, possibilities for interdisciplinary cross-fertilization are kept in mind.
- Chapter IV outlines a semiotic model of memory in culture, in an attempt to build a framework for transdisciplinary research. It clarifies the distinction between literal and metaphorical uses of the term 'memory'; and then differentiates between remembering on the individual and the collective level ('*collected* and *collective* memory'); between social, material and mental dimensions; and between explicit and implicit systems of cultural memory.
- Chapter V takes into account the important role of the media in cultural remembering. It shows how memory is constructed through media, what components constitute a medium of memory, and what different functions media may fulfil in memory culture.
- Chapter VI sketches the foundation for literary studies as part of memory studies and introduces concepts and methods for the study of literature as a medium of cultural memory.
- Chapter VII offers some concluding remarks.

II
The Invention of Cultural Memory: A Short History of Memory Studies

Titling this chapter the 'invention' of cultural memory is intended to emphasize that this is not a history of the phenomenon of memory itself, but rather a history of memory studies. Acts of cultural remembering seem to be an element of humans' fundamental anthropological make-up, and the history of creating a shared heritage and thinking about memory can be traced all the way back to antiquity, for example to Homer, Plato, and Aristotle. However, it was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that there developed a scientific interest in the phenomenon. Forms of collective reference to the past were observed methodically and made the focus of research in the humanities and the social sciences. The field's fundamental assumption about the constructedness of cultural memory, however, is also valid for the level of theory: Every theoretical idea about the contents or functions of cultural memory is itself a construct and more of an academic 'invention' than a discovery of cultural givens.

Today's research on cultural memory takes its origin from two strands of tradition in particular, both of which have their roots in the 1920s: Maurice Halbwachs's sociological studies on *mémoire collective* and Aby Warburg's art-historical interest in a European memory of images (*Bildgedächtnis*). Halbwachs and Warburg were the first to give the phenomenon of cultural memory a name ('collective' and 'social' memory, respectively), and to study it systematically within the framework of a modern theory of culture.

Yet it was not until the 1980s that the topic of memory again elicited interest in the humanities and social sciences, in the context of what may be called the 'new cultural memory studies'. Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire* have proven to be the most influential notion internationally. Roughly at the same time, Aleida and Jan Assmann, with their idea of a 'Cultural Memory', advanced a theory which is the most authoritative