

Dora Osborne

Meyer, Christine und Anna Gvelesiani (Hg).
***Postmemory und die Transformation der deutschen
Erinnerungskultur***

Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2024. 287 S. \$114.99 (E-book/Hardcover).

Nearly thirty years since its introduction, Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory remains hugely influential and of particular relevance to German memory culture. This edited volume, on the one hand, probes the significance of Hirsch's work in this context, and, on the other shows postmemory as driving various transformations in *Erinnerungskultur* itself. This duality reflects how postmemory functions both as concept and practice, "Begrifflichkeit und Methode" (17), and, moreover, as positionality. In their attentiveness to postmemory's various modes, the combined essays provide a rich understanding of a range of literary and other works as constitutive of, and in dialogue with, German memory culture. Their engagement with Hirsch's work also shows how postmemory maps onto broader understandings of history and memory, tracing connections to Walter Benjamin's concept of "Eingedenken" as well as to Michael Rothberg's "multidirectional memory" and "implicated subject," interventions in Memory Studies and wider public discourse that could be said to have overshadowed Hirsch's were it not for Rothberg's own indebtedness to postmemory.

Following the editors' introduction, which provides an excellent overview of the shifting discourses – public and academic – that have shaped the landscape of *Erinnerungskultur*, the volume is divided into four sections reflecting how the framework of German memory culture has expanded to include different perspectives – on the violence of National Socialism, on other violent histories and on their intersections: "Begriffliche und theoretische Grundlagen"; "Neuverhandlungen des NS-Erbes"; "Fluchtlinien der Shoah"; "Postimperiale und postkoloniale Zusammenhänge". The contributions that appear under these headings focus on a range of topics and primary material, including the documentary film project *Diese Tage in Terezín*; there are two essays on Ursula Krechel as well as discussions of work by Ulrike Draesner, Marion Welsch, Esther Dischereit, Eleonora Hummel, and the Hungarian writer Alexander Lenard. The scholarly essays that make up most of the volume are prefaced by a conversation between Hirsch and the Berlin artist Silvina Der Meguerditchian, which as well as being extremely informative, has a programmatic function. It shows precisely how postmemory of-

Dora Osborne, *University of St Andrews*, do38@st-andrews.ac.uk

fers a framework of understanding, functions as a mode of (here, artistic) practice, while also describing the position from which subsequent generations – to which both Hirsch and Der Meguerditchian belong – attempt to remember past traumas. The essays that follow consider how postmemory operates along multiple lines: for example, Axel Dunker traces Draesner's self-reflexive use of the term in *Sieben Sprünge vom Rand der Welt*, while Katja Schubert, in her moving discussion of two of Dischereit's texts, considers the effect of "die literarische postmemory" in public space (163). The embeddedness of postmemory both as concept and mode also allows for the reappraisal of authors and their works, or of earlier works in the light of more recent ones, where the "memory of the first postmemory" (161), as Schubert terms it, has inscribed itself. Postmemory emerges here, then, as a mode of re-reading.

The contributions embrace postmemory's broad definition and applicability, while recognizing that this wide-ranging use has itself been subject to criticism (see Brigitte E. Jirku, 137). In particular, its 'affiliative' form allows for empathetic connection to past traumas and traumatic histories to which one has no personal or familial connection. Crucially expanding the scope of the term from its original focus (reflecting Hirsch's personal situation) on descendants of Holocaust survivors allows for discussion of under-represented victims of the Nazi regime (chapters on Roma and Sinti, including an excellent contribution by historian Eve Rosenhaft, and on victims of 'euthanasia'), of generational negotiations of identity in the context of *Erinnerungskultur* (chapters on postmigrants, Olga Grjasnowa, Nino Haratischwili) and the emergence of transnational connections between histories of violence that emerge from a postmemorial perspective.

The interview between Hirsch and Der Meguerditchian also highlights an important shift in the discourse of postmemory – something set out already by Christine Meyer in her introduction – namely a move away from trauma's gaps, absences, silences and disconnections to gestures that would overcome these aspects: repair, healing, sharing and collaboration. The subsequent essays trace these gestures, but they are also alert to the limits of postmemory and to what Myriam Geiser terms "das postmemoriale Unbehagen" (261) that affects those responsible for remembering something they did not experience. Several of the contributions engage in nuanced ways with key elements of Hirsch's work, such as questions of belatedness and its concern for other 'post'-concepts, allowing for sensitive readings of works that are themselves sensitive to postmemory and its discontents.

This is a very timely contribution to Memory Studies and German Studies that demonstrates the complexity of cultural responses to violent histories. It will be an invaluable resource to scholars and students in setting out the continuing shifts in *Erinnerungskultur* and the roles that artists and authors have in both driving and critically reflecting these changes.