

# CALL FOR PAPERS

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## German Studies Association of Australia Conference

Jointly hosted by the University of Melbourne and Monash University

### ERINNERUNGSKRISEN / MEMORY CRISES

26th – 29th September 2007

Venue: The University of Melbourne, Australia

Recent years have seen an explosion of interest in the concept of memory (Erinnerung and Gedächtnis). Across the humanities memory studies are now very much a transdisciplinary enterprise particularly with the growing number of disciplines such as information technology, communications theory, medicine, neuroscience and neuropsychology entering the field. The plurality of approaches has in turn led to a proliferation of new concepts, such as cultural memory, collective memory, communicative memory, experiential memory, emotional memory, family memory, bodily memory, traumatic memory, the archive, places/spaces of memory, and, more recently, theories of the social basis of individual memory.

A common theme in all the literature is the idea of crisis. Aleida Assmann speaks of a current “crisis of cultural memory,” Pierre Nora of the disappearance of memory and Doris Laub and Shoshana Felman see the Holocaust as representing a “radical historical crisis of witnessing.” Similarly, discussions of the decline of traditional forms of knowledge such as Bildungsgedächtnis and rote learning and the impact of the shift from analogue to digital technologies also draw on this rhetoric of crisis.

But do moments of crisis necessarily mean loss and forgetting? What are the possibilities for remembering in “moments of danger,” as Benjamin once remarked? Can crises be prompts for new practices of remembering, new inscriptions and transformations of the past? How do “memory communities” and individuals enable the constant “actualization of the past in the present” (Vergegenwärtigung) in their interests? Can crises in memory mark the beginnings of new media or genres of remembrance and alternative communities of remembering?

The focus of this conference is on memory crises. These may deal with crises of media and techniques of archiving, crises in canon formation and traditions, national moments of crises in remembrance, crises in cultural memory caused by historical ruptures (e.g. by catastrophes such as war, revolution, epidemics) or personal moments of crisis in individuals’ lives (such as adolescence, sickness, death), the problem of false memory and post-memory etc.

Papers are invited from all areas of German Studies, especially from literary studies, cultural studies and linguistics that address the theme of the conference. The following is a list of possible areas for discussion:

#### **Literary Studies:**

- Memory and canon formation
- Crises in literary movements
- Transformations in genres of memory
- Literary forms of memorialisation and commemoration
- Poetics of memory
- Memory and historical crises (such as 1789, 1848, 1945, 1989)
- Testimonial literature and post-memory

#### **Cultural Studies:**

- Sites and places/spaces of memory
- Memorial politics
- Medial transformations in remembrance practices

#### **Linguistics:**

- language contact and memory
- memory, the archive and language variations
- language, memory and identity

Papers will be accepted in either English or German. The language of the conference will be English and German. Papers from members of the GSAA that do not address the theme may be included in a general section of the conference.

**Abstracts of 200-300 words should be sent to: [lewisa@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:lewisa@unimelb.edu.au) by 15th April 2007.**

For more information visit: [www.grs.unimelb.edu.au/gsaa\\_conf](http://www.grs.unimelb.edu.au/gsaa_conf)