COLLAPSE OF MEMORY – MEMORY OF COLLAPSE

Narrating Past, Presence and Future about Periods of Crisis

Alexander Drost
Olga Sasunkevich
Joachim Schiedermair
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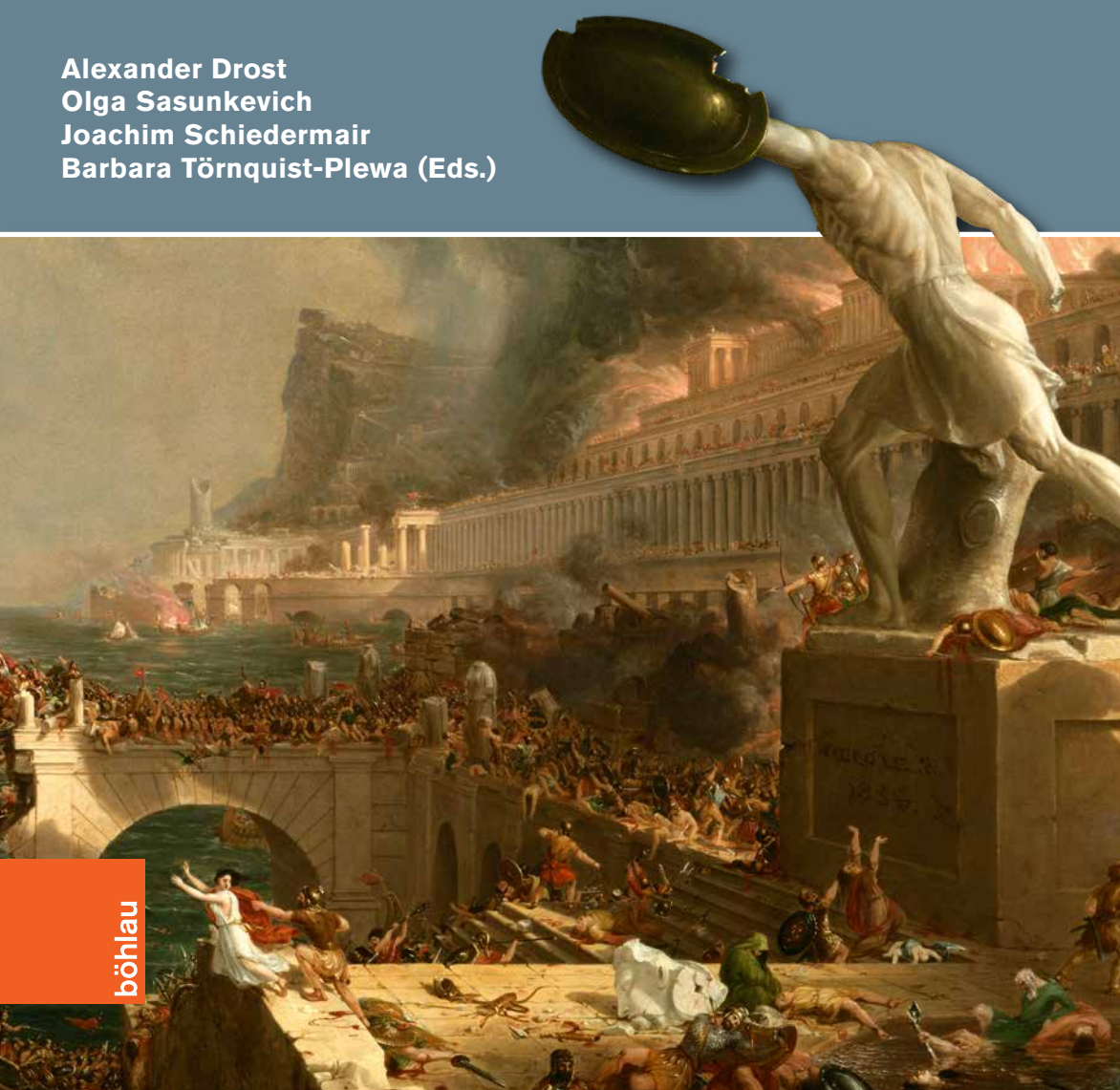

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ISBN Print: 9783412225377 — ISBN E-Book: 9783412513719

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BÖHLAU VERLAG WIEN KÖLN WEIMAR

ISBN Print: 9783412225377 — ISBN E-Book: 9783412513719

Gedruckt mit Unterstützung der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft aus Mitteln des Internationalen Graduiertenkollegs 1540 „Baltic Borderlands: Shifting Boundaries of Mind and Culture in the Borderlands of the Baltic Sea Region“

Published with assistance of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft by funding of the International Research Training Group “Baltic Borderlands: Shifting Boundaries of Mind and Culture in the Borderlands of the Baltic Sea Region”

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek:
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über http://dnb.d-nb.de abrufbar.

Umschlagabbildung:
The Course of Empire. Destruction, 1836. Found in the collection of New York Historical Society. © Heritage Images / Fine Art Images / akg-images

Einbandgestaltung: Satz + Layout Werkstatt Kluth
Satz: büro mn, Bielefeld

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlage | www.vandenhoeck-ruprecht-verlage.com

ISBN 978-3-412-51371-9

ISBN Print: 9783412225377 — ISBN E-Book: 9783412513719

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ISBN Print: 9783412225377 — ISBN E-Book: 9783412513719

ISBN Print: 9783412225377 — ISBN E-Book: 9783412513719

Foreword

This book emerged from the conference "The Collapse of Memory – Memory of Collapse: Remembering the Past, Re-Constructing the Future in Periods of Crisis" in Lund 2016. The conference aimed to explore, how the management of crises is affected by previous experiences and memories and how crisis, disaster or collapse affect cultural memory and political agency. The topic, moreover, represents yet another turn in the research agenda and methodology of the interdisciplinary International Research Training Group (IRTG) "Baltic Borderlands: Shifting Boundaries of Mind and Culture in the Borderlands of the Baltic Sea Region".

The starting point of investigation and theorization laid out in 2010 had been the application of "borderland" as an analytical category to various strata of spatial organization. As a result, the core question focused on the cultural implications of border change within the entire Baltic Sea Region from the 15th century until today. In "Die Neuerfindung des Raumes. Grenzüberschreitungen und Neuordnungen" (The Rediscovery of Space. Crossing borders and new orderings, 2013) researchers of the IRTG challenged conventional understandings of region and space, and instead proposed alternative (disciplinary) perspectives on social, cultural, cognitive, etc. spatial orders. Many of these orders had been located along established border lines defined by political orders like monarchy or nation and, as earlier studies argued, the topography. In the following volume "Beyond the Sea. Reviewing the Manifold Dimensions of Water as a Barrier and Bridge" (2015) international experts both from within and outside the IRTG challenged the peripheral treatment of the sea that characterized conventional accounts and instead discussed the cultural impact of agents, their practices and narratives in crossing the seas and also living along their shores. The sea hereby emerged as "a borderland of communication, a space to govern and to invest with symbolic meaning". Comparative approaches nurtured another paradigmatic shift in researching borderlands. In "Globalizing Borderlands Studies in Europe and North America" (2016) doctoral students and professors of the IRTG and of the Ancient Borderlands Research Focus Group at the University of California, Santa Barbara, juxtaposed for the first time the roots and developments of border and borderlands concepts. This was achieved by introducing individual case studies and approaches to borderlands research that featured a twin focus on the Baltic Sea region and also the contested US-Mexican border. The interdisciplinary discussion associated with the global perspective on borders opened up new directions and topics for the

ISBN Print: 9783412225377 — ISBN E-Book: 9783412513719

researchers at the IRTG. Trauma, crisis, memory, media, narration, institutions are just a few terms and categories that condition the appearance, conceptualization and changes within borderlands. Two of them, crisis and memory, showed considerable promise and appeal for scholars within and outside the IRTG. Combined with a narratological perspective, crisis and memory introduced yet another turn in our research field of Baltic Sea region and borderlands studies. "The Collapse of Memory – Memory of Collapse. Narrating Past, Presence and Future about Periods of Crisis" presents the first results of this emerging field and challenges both disciplinary boundaries as well as research approaches by assuming a narratological perspective and introducing a flexible concept that takes into consideration not only agents, but also those affected.

The conference and book represent a collective undertaking, which could not have been realised without the active assistance of a number of people. For all organizational efforts, I like to thank especially Niklas Bernsand and Barbara Törnquist-Plewa at Lund University. Also, each chapter of this volume has been peer reviewed. I sincerely thank all referees for their valuable comments, which greatly enhanced both the readability and academic quality of the contributions.

A special word of gratitude is also extended to Böhlau, and particularly to Dorothee Rheker-Wunsch, for their interest in this topic. Our greatest debts are to Charlotte Haugg, Jan Richard Reinicke, Gero von Roedern, Jörn Sander, Friederike Schmidt and Sarah Thiele who took on most of the heavy lifting in preparing the manuscript for publication, and to Doreen Wollbrecht and Hielke van Nieuwenhuize for seeing the book through the final stages of production.

Michael North, Greifswald, summer 2018

ISBN Print: 9783412225377 — ISBN E-Book: 9783412513719

Alexander Drost

Collapse Makes Memory: An Introduction

The fascination of failure and destruction sustains an entire sector of the media industry, for compelling stories can be drawn from catastrophes, crises and collapse. The decline of empires and kingdoms as much as earthquakes and infectious diseases have fired the imagination of authors, film makers and painters. They become motivated to present their vision of catastrophes as a key turning point for individuals, nay, even for entire societies. Taken this way, catastrophe emerges as a multi-faceted construct of experience, interpretation and emotion. The resulting narrative combines analyses of facts about the collapse with a retrospect evaluation, update and confirmation of these facts in the cultural memory of a given society. When the incisive event enters into the collective consciousness, the narrative frames the event in time and also permits a view into the future. The objective is not only to overcome collapse but also to prevent similar catastrophes from (re-)occurring in future. In this process, the narrative is key in understanding collapse and its impact on society as well as societies' interpretation of collapse through cultural memory.

For these reasons, the contributors of this volume have taken a narratological approach in examining collapse, disaster, catastrophe and how these in turn manifest themselves across different types of media. In this way narrating collapse is understood as an active process of forging meaning by selecting certain occurrences to construct a story. This process transforms the random occurrence into a memorable event. Considering how such events are constructed from a narratological perspective, the contributors have broadened their approach to include: mechanisms of construction, such as the use of particular media, narration strategies as well as the impact of cultural memory in narrating and thereby coping with collapse.

Two observations guide their analyses of how past experiences and knowledge are re-interpreted and employed in order to overcome situations of crisis and collapse. First, the narrative of collapse is the key element of how and why we perceive certain events and developments as collapse or crisis. Second: The diversities of collapse narratives derive from the selection of facts, their combination and interpretations. Therefore, we introduce this edition about collapse and disaster with an overview of discourses that define our understanding of collapse in recent years. These discourses have appeared in novels and movies that illustrate the "cultural memory of disaster" in the 20th and 21st centuries.

ISBN Print: 9783412225377 — ISBN E-Book: 9783412513719

They will be presented in the following six paragraphs on war, systemic failure, terror, financial and refugee crisis, and natural disasters.

War

In the recent history of narrating collapse since 1945, post-world-war narratives about the Second World War, Nazi rule and the Holocaust dominated the content, extent and form of descriptions of collapse. The unprecedented military trials in Nuremberg in the immediate aftermath of the war established questions of guilt and responsibility as central motifs in post-war narratives. This topic had emerged in media in the aftermath of pre-WWII violent conflicts. However, the exceptional scale of murder and terror beyond military combat in WWII, in particular the Holocaust, added an unexampled severity. The first serious literary attempts to cope with post-war-collapse of German society included Wolfgang Borchert's *Draußen vor der Tür* and Heinrich Böll's *Wo warst du, Adam?* These narratives presented the heaviness of guilt and moral failing of the individual before a canvas of many unanswered questions, hereby added to the incomprehensibility of the "Weltkrieg".[1]

Loss of people and virtue determined post WWII poetry.[2] Movies like *Die Brücke*[3] ignited the question of a lost moral thinking at war in the 1950s, when suppression of war experiences and entertainment overshadowed post-war narratives. False justification, denial and forgetting characterised early "distortions"[4] in narratives of the cultural, social and ethical collapse of German society. In contrast, professional historians took a more critical and facts-based direction in the systematic reappraisal that began in the 1960s and 1970s. Backed by state institutions in Germany, historians provided the groundwork for a critical controversy about Nazi crimes and criminals in Western Germany and beyond.[5]

1 Wolfgang Borchert, *Draußen vor der Tür* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1947) (In English, *The Man Outside*, performed on stage in New York 1949); Heinrich Böll, *Wo warst du, Adam?* (Opladen: Friedrich Middelhauve, 1951).

2 Manfred Durzak, "Zwei Deutsche Literaturen nach 1945," in *Propyläen Geschichte der Literatur,* Vol. 6: *Die moderne Welt: 1914 bis heute*, ed. Erika Wischer (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1982), 297–298.

3 *Die Brücke* (DE 1959), director Bernhard Wicki.

4 Manfred Gerstenfeld, "The Multiple Distortions of Holocaust Memory," *Jewish Political Studies Review* 19, no. 3–4 (2007): 36, 38–39.

5 Katrin Hammerstein, *Gemeinsame Vergangenheit – getrennte Erinnerung? Der Nationalsozialismus in Gedächtnisdiskursen und Identitätskonstruktionen von Bundesrepublik*

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This controversy had its roots in detailed analyses of the structures and organisation of the Nazi regime[6] that sought to answer the question of "how could this happen?", culminating in an academic dispute about the exceptionalism of the German state formation process.[7] While historiography focused on the Nazi regime, the grand novels in post-war literature like Günter Grass's *Die Blechtrommel* and Heinrich Böll's *Gruppenbild mit Dame* addressed society and culture.[8] *Die Blechtrommel* stimulated a controversy about the roots of fascist thought in the petty bourgeois life of the 1920s, 30s and beyond.[9] Böll's novel focused on themes of social exclusion and the emotional as well as ethical hell of war.[10] Both topics had been continuously connected with pictures of combat, destruction and suffering in artistic narratives. Considering the lasting effects of war on the collective and cultural memory of societies, war provides one of the most important images of collapse.

Systemic Failure

The collapse of the Eastern bloc, of the Soviet Union and of communism radically changed the (negative) image of collapse. The falling of walls, of authoritarian regimes, their economy and of an entire ideology nurtured images of openness, freedom and new opportunities. In Thomas Brussig's *Helden Wie*

Deutschland, DDR und Österreich (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2017); Michael Beleites, "Isolierte Aufarbeitung? Zur zweigleisigen Erinnerungskultur in Deutschland und ihren Folgen," in *Aufarbeitung der Diktatur – Diktat der Aufarbeitung? Normierungsprozesse beim Umgang mit diktatorischer Vergangenheit*, ed. Katrin Hammerstein, Ulrich Mählert, Julia Trappe, and Edgar Wolfrum (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2009), 48–58.

6 Martin Broszat, *Der Staat Hitlers: Grundlegung und Entwicklung seiner inneren Verfassung* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1969).

7 Ulrich von Hehl, *Nationalsozialistische Herrschaft*, 2nd edition (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2001), 110–116.

8 Günter Grass, *Die Blechtrommel* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1959); Heinrich Böll, *Gruppenbild mit Dame* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1971).

9 Silke Jendrowiak, *Günter Grass und die "Hybris" des Kleinbürgers. "Die Blechtrommel", Bruch mit der Tradition einer irrationalistischen Kunst- und Wirklichkeitsinterpretation* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1979); Irmela Schneider, *Kritische Rezeption. Die Blechtrommel als Modell* (Bern: Lang, 1975).

10 Hans Joachim Bernhard, *Die Romane Heinrich Bölls. Gesellschaftskritik und Gemeinschaftsutopie*, 2nd revised and extended edition (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1973), 335–381; Werner Bellmann, "Die Akten der Nürnberger Kriegsverbrecherprozesse als Quelle für Heinrich Bölls Roman *Gruppenbild mit Dame*," *Euphorion* 97, no. 1 (2003): 85–97.

ISBN Print: 9783412225377 — ISBN E-Book: 9783412513719

Wir, the collapse of the socialist system in the German Democratic Republic led to healing of the country's moribund society. Similar pictures of relief and re-emergence of historical connections after the collapse were communicated in Ericht Loest's *Nikolaikirche* or Günther Grass's *Ein Weites Feld*. *Ein Weites Feld*, however, introduces the inertia of a formerly disconnected cultural memory, with considerable impact on the perception of present developments and the prediction of the future.

Polish authors like Andrzej Stasiuk in *Dziewięć* or Jerzy Pilch in *Rozpacz z powodu utraty furmanki* felt the heaviness of history in the immediate aftermath of the collapse more keenly than their German colleagues. The Polish approach to collapse simultaneously was one of mental persistence and departure to a different life, which seem to have inspired Pilch to make use of the allegory of the "European in Slavic Underpants".[11] The collapse of communism initiated a search for identity in re-emerged nations like Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. While Tõnu Õnnepalu (alias Emil Tode) in *Piiririik* situated this search in the borderland of the senseless survival of the west and the romantic idyll of the east, Jaan Kross in *Väljakaevamised* and *Paigallend* explored the traumatic past of banishment and the remediation of the first Estonian national collapse in the Soviet bombings of 1944.

For the Baltic societies, the perception of the collapse of the Soviet Union was – and remains today – irrevocably connected with collective as well as individual trauma and trauma management. Several of these traumata were suppressed for decades by official, ideologically framed narratives. The cultural memories of many societies preserve similar traumatic collapse narratives, including the post-Apartheid narratives in South Africa and the post-Khmer narratives in Cambodia.[12] Further, the collapse of ideologies has a prominent place in political and historical disaster narratives, for example, after the fall of the military dictatorship in Argentina (1976–1983), of Pinochet (1973–1990) in Chile and of Suharto (1967–1998) in Indonesia.[13]

Throughout history, the collapse of ideology and the re-emergence of historical consciousness beyond the artificial caesura of political dogma and conviction have stimulated manifold re-connections of collapse experiences. The

11 Maria Janion, "Farewell to Poland? The Uprising of a Nation," *Baltic Worlds* IV, no. 4 (2011): 4–13.

12 Martine Gosselink, Maria Holtrop, and Robert Ross, eds., *Good Hope: South Africa and the Netherlands from 1600* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij Vantilt, 2017).

13 Mary S. Zurbuchen, "Historical Memory in Contemporary Indonesia," in *Beginning to Remember. The Past in the Indonesian Present,* ed. Mary S. Zurbuchen (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2005), 332.

ISBN Print: 9783412225377 — ISBN E-Book: 9783412513719

examples above show that cultural memory and foundational principles of society determine intellectual approaches to explain war and ideological collapse, including moral legitimisations and ethical thinking.

Terror

"The moment that changed your life": Post 9/11 narratives evoke this incisive and sudden observation by millions of people in response to the collapse of the World Trade Centre in New York on 11 September 2001. In *Saturday*, Ian McEwan reinforced this image, describing how disasters like 9/11 alter people's entire lives in one day. Collapse is inescapable and inhumane, according to McEwan's narrative of planes whose passengers knew their kidnappers' intended destination.[14] People were scared, shocked, traumatised, and concrete fear of terror became a definable threat in daily life. This new dimension of collapse through terror has no place, no specific country, maybe is a distorted culture of religious extremism. However, it can happen everywhere, at any time.

Other narratives explore the very nature of terror through their characters' responses to terrorist attacks. Claire Massud's *The Emperor's Children* leads up to and concludes with the collapse of the World Trade towers. Don DeLillo in *Falling Man* uses the collapse of the southern World Trade tower as the starting point of his narrative. Novels like *Saturday* and Heidi Julavits' *The Effect of Living Backwards* transfer the quality of 9/11 into comparable events in London and Morocco. The authors reflect on the mental effects of terrorism, including its ability to evoke fear everywhere and anytime it happens – for example, in the Charlie Hebdo attacks (Paris 2015), Bataclan (Paris 2015), Krudttønden (Copenhagen 2015), Charleston (2015), Erawan-Shrine (Bangkok 2015), Brussels Bombings (2016), Nice (2016), Berlin (2016), St. Petersburg (2017), Drottningsgatan (Stockholm 2017), or Manchester (2017).

Financial Crisis

Collapse became crash when, on 15 September 2008, Lehman Brothers went bankrupt and an entire line of business, the banking sector, was accused of jeopardising the finances of states and institutions around the globe. However, narratives drawing comparisons to the 1929 global world economy crisis were

14 Ian McEwan, *Saturday* (London: Vintage Books, 2006).

ISBN Print: 9783412225377 — ISBN E-Book: 9783412513719

sparse. Rather, as shown in *The Big Short* by Michael Lewis and Vicky Ward's *The Devil's Casino*, an insular culture of greed, self-indulgence, corruption and hedonism was seen as responsible for the financial collapse.[15] The crisis continued in different facets and dimensions in Portugal, Greece, Spain, Ireland, Iceland and across the European Union. The temporal overlap of the financial crisis with terrorist attacks contributed to the idea of a crisis-ridden (global) society. Pictures of states collapsing amid wars in Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq underpinned this perception, including through images and stories of millions of refugees.

Refugee Crises

Irishness is not the first concept that comes to mind these days with respect to state, economic and social collapse. However, Ireland has one of the longest experiences of any European country with mass migration. Mass migration contributed to strong networks of Irish diasporas around the globe. Frank McCourt introduced the Irish experience of mass migration in *Angela's Ashes*.[16] Other examples of diaspora communities are the Chinese diaspora, which has existed since the 14th century,[17] and the Vietnamese diaspora in the aftermath of the Vietnam War.

"[…] we had no belongings except our stories", says the protagonist of Viet Thanh Nguyen's short story *Black-Eyed Women* in *The Refugees*.[18] Narratives about refugees are built on threatening memories that reflect the cruelty and awkwardness of the refugee experience. Knowledge of this experience separates refugees from the host society and marks them as displaced persons who do not "belong", as the mother in Nguyen's narrative points out. Flight and expulsion cause widespread individual collapses of life, which often amount to a vivid part of the cultural memory of entire societies with experience of forced migration through violence, crises and catastrophe. Several events since 1945 have forced large numbers of people to leave behind not only their home

15 Michael Lewis, *The Big Short: Inside the Doomsday Machine* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010); Vicky Ward, *The Devil's Casino: Friendship, Betrayal, and the High Stakes Games inside Lehman Brothers* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley, 2010).

16 Frank McCourt, *Angela's Ashes: A Memoir* (New York: Scribner, 1996).

17 Geoffrey C. Gunn, *History without Borders. The Making of an Asian World Region. 1000–1800* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), 111–130.

18 Viet Thanh Nguyen, *The Refugees* (London: Corsair, 2017), 7.

ISBN Print: 9783412225377 — ISBN E-Book: 9783412513719

but their way of life. These include the Second World War, the Soviet terror in the newly established Soviet Republics, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Yugoslav Wars, and the Syrian War.

Displacement involves collapse, first of an individual's life, then of identity and belonging to a collective and lastly, of the existence of an entire society. In *Võõras kodu* (1945), *Keegi ei kuule meid* (1948), and *Neli tuld* (1951) Valev Uibopuu dealt with the flight of Estonians from their country due to Soviet occupation in 1944. Uibopuu uses motifs such as shipwreck, collaborators and opponents to embed the transformation of Estonia in a narrative of decay and disappointment. Bernard Kangro, Valev Uibopuu and others understood the danger of flight and exile to their national culture, which had less than two decades to grow independently before displacement. The authors grasp the severity of this experience in narratives that attempt to establish a virtual place of Estonianness between the Estonian archetype Balthasar Rüssow[19] and their lost home towns.[20] These virtual places emerge from individual and collective memories of places, experiences, cultural patterns and practices combined in narratives, which serve also as markers of the refugee's belonging. These practices and narratives include refugees' efforts to cope with their fate through music.

The perspective of refugees is just one side of the story of refugee crises. The observers' perspective of the "audience" is another. The more immediate encounter with the "other" evokes as many perceptions as the refugee story told by someone else. Turning the attention to the audience of narratives, we examine a key element in the construction of disaster narratives. As mentioned before, narratives require interpretation and offer to the audience a certain liberty in applying meanings to the presented facts. In this context, the vivid images of ship wreck, of dead bodies in the sea, or the stories of virtual places of belonging depend on aesthetics, the audience and its reference points.

Natural Disasters

Collapse is destruction. Often, we view war and systemic decline as man-made and therefore distinct from natural destruction through storms, floods, earthquakes, volcano eruptions, forest fires, ice, tsunamis and hurricanes. However, in dealing with the impact of natural disasters, people seem to frame

19 Jaan Kross, *Kolme Katku Vahel* (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1970, 1972, 1977, 1980).
20 Bernard Kangro, *Tartu* (Lund: Eesti Kirjanike Kooperatiiv, 1962).

ISBN Print: 9783412225377 — ISBN E-Book: 9783412513719

and integrate catastrophic events to make sense of the collapse they caused.[21] "Naming" or "labelling" an occurrence is widely used to cope with the uncontrollable. Longstanding narratives in the disaster tradition include "Etna" for Sicily's still-active volcano, or "Eyjafjallajökull" in Iceland. Earthquakes are named after the next settlement, which they often destroyed, while hurricanes are named with female and male first names, like wind storms in Europe or typhoons in Asia.

Storms appear figuratively in our stories about grief, suffering and disruption. Narratives about storms take the perpetrators' perspective – storms appear in media before they reach communities of people in their forecasted path, which are presented along with intrinsic hopes for salvation. Through their names, storms become "actors" in a plot of destruction. In accordance with the scale of their impact, their names become part of the collective consciousness. Hurricane Katrina in the United States, or the storm Kyrill in Germany, are recent examples of natural disasters that reappear in our collective consciousness when we are faced with the threat of similar storms. Through this process, we use our experiences to understand the current impacts of storms and flooding, while updating our collective memory of Katrina and Kyrill.

Similar processes of updating the collective memory of disasters take place in our response to earthquakes, volcano eruptions and storm tides. We compare numbers of people endangered, injured, displaced and dead, as well as accounting for financial damage. Narratives of natural disasters turn quickly to the topic of recovery. Taking this kind of disaster, fixed in time and place, as a starting point of the story, its occurrence is transformed into an event with strong repercussions on social and economic structures. The threat for life demands immediate action. However, we also must deal with "developing natural disasters", often embedded in the meta-narrative of changing climate and environmental pollution. These include stories about contingency, insurance and prevention in particular.

Weather forecasts and eye-catching meteorological phenomena tell these stories in miniature. The negotiations of climate agreements like the *Paris Agreement* narrate the bigger picture. However, both employ risk analyses, and both are framed by political negotiations that produce and use these stories for economic, political and sustainability aims. In Frank Schätzing's *Der*

21 For the theory of "framing" see: Robert Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 51–59.

ISBN Print: 9783412225377 — ISBN E-Book: 9783412513719

Schwarm,[22] the macrocosm of maritime pollution develops in a disastrous apocalyptic picture. This imagery is used in real life, too, when politicians and academics describe maritime areas in seas and oceans as "dead zones". Natural disasters as much as manmade crisis nurture fear and preventive action in society, which repeatedly becomes aware of its vulnerability through stories of collapse.

Narratives of collapse are an important part of making sense of disaster and catastrophe by selecting occurrences, embedding them into a story, and making them part of the cultural memory of society. As we have seen, interpretation and updating in narrating disasters has different dimensions depending on timing. Historical distance to the occurrence allows the incorporation of a more complex interpretation history communicated through cultural memory, rather than presenting immediate or recent incidents. Reporting on current or recent collapses, therefore, tends to focus more on impacts for the future. However, distance cannot only be applied backwards. Projections of future developments – often subsumed under the umbrella of science fiction narratives – offer the same distance of decades and centuries to optimistic or semi-apocalyptic imagined futures of mankind. Both ways of constructing disaster narratives are rooted in the presence of narrator and audience, reflecting their experiences, interpretations, and collective memories, retro- and prospectively. The interrelation of narrative and cultural memory is part of the next paragraphs to illustrate that the process of making sense of collapse is rooted in narratological and cognitive processes.

The Narratological Approach: Narrative and Cultural Memory

The recognition of natural hazards as decisive events depends on the perception of such an occurrence as disaster, collapse, or crisis. While a heavy earthquake in Los Angeles like would cause enormous damage and loss of life, the same earthquake in an unpopulated desert would only excite researchers at their seismographs far away. Man-made disasters, on the other hand, usually grow out of social structures but have comparable destructive effects like geophysical hazards. Both natural and man-made collapses of social, administrative, economic and political structures show societies' vulnerability. In this way, they affect our collective approach to managing crises, shaping our strategies as well as patterns of resilience or disaster risk reduction. In reflecting disas-

22 Frank Schätzing, *Der Schwarm* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2004).

ISBN Print: 9783412225377 — ISBN E-Book: 9783412513719

ters and disaster management strategies, recent research has highlighted geophysical hazards and man-made disasters as part of our mental representation, and storytelling as part of our way to make sense of the world.[23] Earthquakes, tsunamis and wars, financial crises, recessions or state collapses invoke our collective strategies to manage the situation. In this process, they become part of our cultural memory through the stories told, the news spread and the remediation in cases of repeated disaster experiments.

This collection of interdisciplinary essays discusses how the management of crisis is affected by previous experiences and memories and how crisis, disaster or collapse affects cultural memory and political agency. Astrid Erll suggests an ample "provisional" definition of "cultural memory", outlining "the interplay of present and past in socio-cultural contexts".[24] Event and representation, disaster and story merge in the phenomenon of "cultural memory". For the narratives analysed in this volume, this definition of cultural memory highlights the connectedness of past experience, future (precautionary) projections and acting in the immediate moment of a collapse within a specific cultural context. Cultural memory in the context of disaster management includes a process of making sense of the past, using past experiences to generate knowledge and ability to manage a crisis, and projecting an imagined future.

The narrative is the key element of these sense-making processes. Jürgen Straub states that "memory processes and recollection achievements follow in an equally important way the narrative structure".[25] From a psychological point of view, personal recollections or remembering takes place in telling a story. Any representation, including mediatisations of collapse and disaster, is not "a natural reproduction of […] events but a result of productive epistemic actions that are both cognitively *and* emotionally, or motivationally"[26] loaded.

Narration theory exemplifies how narratives are constructed through "framing" the "narrative material" and how this material is exposed to a "narrative drive", which allows textual and extra-textual stimulations to recognise a

23 See for example Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyeman, Bernard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka, eds., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

24 Astrid Erll, "Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction," in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2010), 2.

25 Jürgen Straub, "Psychology, Narrative, and Cultural Memory: Past and Present," in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2010), 216.

26 Ibid, 220.

ISBN Print: 9783412225377 — ISBN E-Book: 9783412513719

narrative.[27] Rick Altman supports our approach of researching the interrelation between collapse and cultural memory through the lens of narratives by expanding traditional narrative theory beyond classical plot-based definitions, which often even neglect characters, forget about the reader and ignore cultural contexts. Altman's approach encompasses contexts, including characters (not only actors) and narrative activity, which again implicates some motion of the reader with the character through the narrative and the framing of a story.[28]

The processes of remembering, using and shaping cultural memory function depending on the way we tell and use stories. The selection of material in performing cultural memory, which includes protagonists, their actions and their particular context, is comparable to the "narrative material" that provides the basis for storytelling. Mediatisations and actualisations of disaster and collapse through "creative" channels like news, movies, and research are analogous to the "narrative drive", which is "to make sense of social customs, ancient stones, and physical symptoms".[29] According to Altman, this is what everyone does, from researchers to doctors, and even car mechanics at a particular place and time. Erll's idea of an "interplay of present and past in cultural contexts" resembles these creative processes in storytelling and perception.

A closer look at the material used in storytelling and performing cultural memory reveals more similarities in both processes. For cultural memory, Aleida Assmann noticed a certain dynamic in the "tension between the pastness of the past and its presence".[30] Her starting point to grasp the essence of this tension is the division between canon as the "working memory" and archive as "reference memory" or store house. In her most recent study, she also applies the term "stored forgettness"[31] to the latter. However, both are still accessible, even though an archive is less in use than, for instance, a library, which Assmann says belongs to the canon. Here, information and materials are used and re-used, "re-read, appreciated, staged, performed, and commented".[32] The past events, in this way, get selected and applied to present situations and develop a different "pastness", or rather "presence".

The performance of cultural memory in this context is comparable to narration, which resembles a similar construction process and at the same time

27 Rick Altman, *A Theory of Narrative* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 10.
28 Ibid., 9 f., 12, 15, 17 ff., 21.
29 Ibid., 19.
30 Aleida Assmann, "Canon and Archive," in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies,* ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2010), 98.
31 Aleida Assmann, *Formen des Vergessens* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2016), 36.
32 Assmann, "Canon and Archive," 99.

ISBN Print: 9783412225377 — ISBN E-Book: 9783412513719

is the main medium for performing cultural memory. While the actualisation process is akin to Altman's idea of narrational activity, with its focus on perceiving and recognising a story as story, his concept of "narrative drive" resembles the actualisation process in cultural memory theory. The material is as important as the narrational activity and narrative drive, which focus on the perception of the reader and the actualisation of material. Examining the dynamics of cultural remembrance and inspired by Hayden White, Ann Rigney emphasises the importance of narrative structures in the formation process of cultural memory and the assigning of meaning to memory sites and events. Additionally, she underlines the aesthetic dimension of narratives, which support mnemonic processes and cast literary texts as "monuments" or "sites" of cultural memory.[33]

How does disaster connect to these theorisations of narrative and cultural memory? Individuals and societies make sense of the impact of disaster and manage the disaster through the stories they tell. Beginning with "news" in the immediate aftermath of the event, this "making-sense-process" continues in numerous actualisations and re-mediatisations. These serve different purposes. First, both provide a basis for survivors to work through their experiences, survive and continue life. Second, such processes help re-establish structures and re-connect lost strands of social, cultural and economic life. Third, narrating collapse helps societies work through the trauma of the unspeakable, thus creating new (cognitive) protected areas.[34]

Why did disaster cultures become such a prominent research field? In particular, the precautionary principle seems to have shifted social perceptions of collapse and its management. Kenneth Hewitt stated in his 2015 publication on the cultural framing of disaster that, "less often mentioned is the great expansion in resources and organizations devoted to disaster concerns. Of late, profitable industries have developed around disaster response in reinsurance, security technologies, relief and reconstruction".[35] Collapse and disaster seem to have

33 Ann Rigney, "The Dynamics of Remembrance: Texts Between Monumentality and Morphing," in *Cultural Memory Studies; An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2008), 347, 349.

34 Cathy Caruth, ed., *Trauma. Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Cathy Carruth, *Unclaimed Experience. Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

35 Kenneth Hewitt, "Framing Disaster in the 'Global Village'. Cultures of Rationality in Risk, Security and News," in *Cultures and Disasters. Understanding Cultural Framings*

ISBN Print: 9783412225377 — ISBN E-Book: 9783412513719

moved more into the centre of society's consciousness and thus into the cultural memory. The singular event of geophysical hazard or financial crisis has developed into a permanent condition of risk and danger. In this context, Isak Winkel Holm pays considerable attention to the "man-made disasters" and their circumstances, claiming that "as climate change has replaced the atomic war in the cultural imagination of disaster, it has become more and more meaningless to think of disasters as sudden concentrated events".[36]

This shift in society's perception has influenced disaster research, which "has shifted its focus from the event impacting on human society towards human society contributing to the disaster".[37] This contribution is three-fold and includes precautions, experiences and mediatisations. On the one hand, society's contribution results from the way societies proceed to build structures. This includes the establishment of emergency structures, command structures, and the implementation of safety rules and laws. In other words, the character of future disaster is connected to the prediction of disaster and the structures we have developed to prevent disaster. However, neither prediction nor structures can be observed disconnected from the actual experience of a disaster and the immediate actions taken in case of emergency.

Additionally, the continuous actualisation of experiences through (re-) mediatisations of the disaster shape our perception of disasters. Hereby, remediation through print, audio-visual and internet media, but also through academic research and for educational purposes, connects precaution measures and experience. Both refer to the cultural memory of disaster, which has been – as part of the process of overcoming a disaster – continuously updated in the immediate aftermath and later on. Often, these remediation processes of cultural memory[38] are accompanied by strategic discussion of precautions to be taken to protect society, its values, or its foundations of wealth and security.

in Disaster Risk Reduction, ed. Fred Krüger, Greg Bankoff, Terry Cannon, Benedikt Orlowski, and Lisa F. Schipper (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2015), 21.

36 Isak Winkel Holm, "The Cultural Analysis of Disaster," in *The Cultural Life of Catastrophes and Crises,* ed. Carsten Meiner and Kristin Veel (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2012), 16.

37 Ibid., 16.

38 Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, ed., *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2009).

ISBN Print: 9783412225377 — ISBN E-Book: 9783412513719

Contributions to this Volume

The analyses of disaster and collapse narratives in this volume feature an overlap and entanglement of events, re-mediatisations, re-mediations and collective memories. First and foremost, these phenomena have been arranged by the object of enquiry, the event and the stories about it. However, our recognition of this overlap and entanglement is an epistemic question, comprising society's growing awareness of living under a permanent condition of risk and the collective desire for physical and moral protection. It is not sufficient to have a protective rampart against the imagined threats of society – measurements must be approved of by a majority of society and legitimised by social values and cultural traditions.

Elisabeth Oxfeldt's object of enquiry in this volume presents a convincing example of the complexity of contemporary collapse. Approaching the interpretation of Margareth Olin's *De andre* through the lens of guilt and morality, Oxfeldt discovers the interwoven experiences and memories of juvenile disasters presented in the Oslo massacre and refugee children. In addition, she highlights resemblance of guilt and moral standards of Norwegian society in the stories told by Margareth Olin. These stories about the endangered "other" threaten the "observer" through an emotional process of narration. Further, this approach touches on the question of the hidden guilt of a saturated and confined society, mentally distanced from certain events and yet, not immune to re-mediated entangled human disasters.

The dynamics and entanglements of memories in the narration of flight and expulsion after the collapse of state structures in the aftermath of the Second World War are the focus of the analysis of Uta Bretschneider, who highlights the frictions between official and individual narratives of flight experiences. She encounters the strategic and restrictive mode of the "narrative drive" behind flight stories through changing political settings from the Soviet Occupational Zone, the German Democratic Republic, and the reunited Federal Republic of Germany. While the content of these narratives refers to flight and expulsion in the context of the Second World War, the analysis focuses on the conditions of storytelling and its impact on the formation of cultural memory of collapse.

The motif of shipwreck evokes images of collapse and disaster. It has appeared in collapse narratives in literature and beyond. Its application and meanings are the focus of Philipp Wagner's analysis in this volume. Wagner focuses on authors' construction of the shipwreck motif, and its effects on readers' interpretation of events. Focusing on Lars Sund's novel *En lycklig liten ö*, Wagner encounters narrative strategies in employing a disaster motif that has been updated con-

ISBN Print: 9783412225377 — ISBN E-Book: 9783412513719

tinuously in the cultural memory of maritime societies, and recently returned to the collective consciousness with refugee deaths in the Mediterranean. He also touches on the question of what we perceive as a disaster and what is understood as merely an accident.

Legacies, in particular political ones, are contested. Competing interpretations of events and thus competing narratives draw on different and often conflicting framings of events. Florian Peters embeds his analysis of the cultural memory of the 1980/81 movement *Solidarność* in the contemporary conflict over liberal and right-wing populist interpretations of the end of communism in Poland. His descriptions of representations of victims and masters in competing cultural memories within Polish society shed new light on the use of rupture and collapse events in shaping national consciousness and identity. In this regard, the events of 1980/81 and 1989 had been employed to different effect in master narratives of Polish history. In addition, they mark a period of transition from rebellious social activism to political movement forced to adapt narratives according to their changing political setting.

Observing an event through the lens of another comparable event influences our perception of both events. Mariëlle Wijermars examines the phenomenon of pre-mediation by comparing the narrative structures, strategies and motifs in Sergei Loznitsa's *Maidan* and *The Event*. Her analysis highlights the interconnectedness of interpretations of state collapse in the Soviet Union in 1991 and Ukraine in 2014. The social and political implications of these "revolutions" have been studied in recent decades. However, Wijermars's approach takes another turn, exploring the narrative structures and strategies in which these events were placed by Lotznitsa, and how this contributed to the formation of cultural memories of these events. In this way, Wijermars discovers interventions of established narratives, for instance from Lotznitsa's artistic arrangement of pre-existing documentary footage in the case of *The Event*.

The "narrative drive" of collapse narratives has been nurtured by the financial crises of the last decade. Beyond public responses of outrage in countries like Iceland, where the collapse of the financial sector hit the entire economy and thus the entire society, the crises also stimulated debate around the values and structures of politics, economy, society and hereby, in the case of Ireland, led to social transformations. Valur Ingimundarson approaches this collapse management process in his analysis of the politics of memory through the lens of transitional justice mechanisms. Collapses of dictatorships and post-war settings contribute to historical narratives in which the evaluation of past crimes supports the introduction of new orders and structures in society. Research on the crimes of the Stasi by the Stasi Records Agency in the aftermath of

ISBN Print: 9783412225377 — ISBN E-Book: 9783412513719

the collapse of the German Democratic Republic in 1990, or by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa on crimes under Apartheid are examples of transitional justice mechanisms. Ingimundarson focuses on Icelandic society's search for the "truth" about the collapse of the banking sector. He shows the differences in applying transitional justice mechanisms in Iceland, which is stuck, he argues, between competing metanarratives of left-wing damnation of neo-liberal politics and right-wing white washing through oversimplified memory politics.

Two politically motivated metanarratives proposed by left and right-wing factions dominate the cultural memory of the financial crisis of 2008 in Iceland. Even more contested narratives were added to these complex structures through narratives of systemic and personal failing, betrayal by the new government, and an averted revolution. Gunnþórunn Guðmundsdóttir examines monuments and cultural memories of the Icelandic financial crisis in this contested environment of narrations. She explores the aesthetics and role of memorials in coping with the financial crisis in Iceland, focusing on Santiago Sierra's memorial *The Black Cone: Memorial to Civil Disobedience* at Austurvöllur Square in Reykjavik. Guðmundsdóttir identifies the practices and location that impart meaning to this memorial and its role in fixing the cultural memory of Icelandic crisis in society.

It is consensus in memory studies that individual memory is shaped collectively. People and media condition certain patterns of individual remembrance and premediate meanings of outstanding events like collapse and crisis. Collective memory overshadows individual life stories even more if one traumatised generation passes on fewer individual narratives due to early death or suppression. Franziska Sajdak seeks to understand these generational and trauma mechanisms in descendants of Holocaust survivors. In an approach that is novel in Scandinavian literature, Sajdak applies concepts like "telescoping" to the novel *Ett kort uppehåll på vägen från Auschwitz* (2012) by Göran Rosenberg. In the process, Sajdak describes the mechanisms of trauma transfer and narration in the context of cultural memory formation.

ISBN Print: 9783412225377 — ISBN E-Book: 9783412513719

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ISBN Print: 9783412225377 — ISBN E-Book: 9783412513719