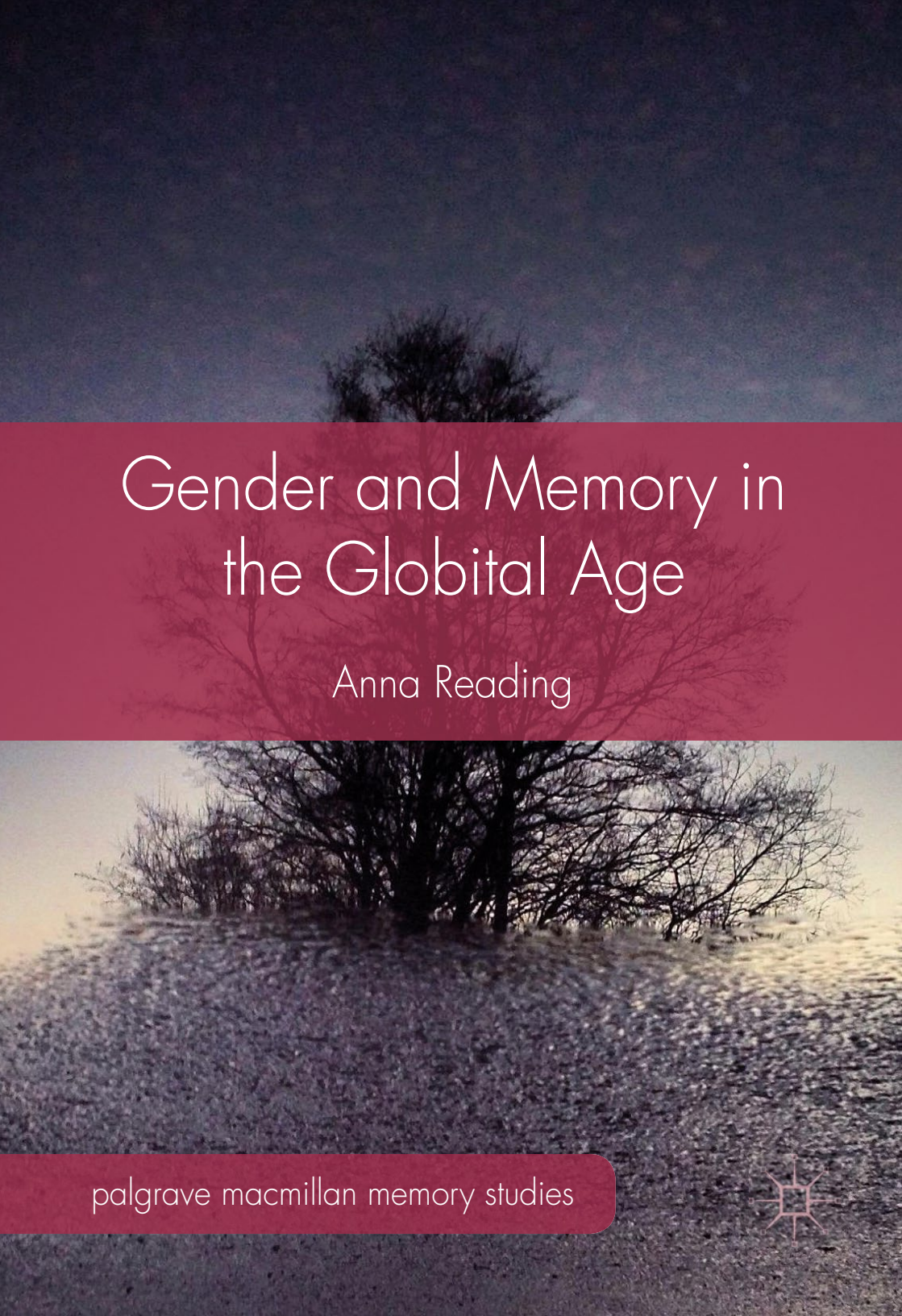

Gender and Memory in the Globital Age

Anna Reading

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For the women, men and children forced to move to escape poverty, violence and war

Preface: The Feminist Mnemologist

I have long struggled with the question of how cultural memories relate to gender. When I was a child in the 1960s and 1970s, I was struck by how absent girls and women were from my own family's memory. I then found at school that women were also absent from historical accounts; I noticed how little I saw women characters in films playing major roles; how rarely women figured in memorials and museums. I knew early on that the word was important and the published word even more important. So, I wrote diaries in secret as many young girls do, and then, as fewer adult women do, I wrote stories in the form of plays and books for the public. On reflection, I realise that I wrote stories in which the memory of women and women's memories were always a priority.

The absence and marginalisation of the memory of women in memory is not that different in 2016. But, in my own lifetime, the way that cultural and mediated memories are made, stored and disseminated has changed radically through the rapid and uneven processes of globalisation and digitisation. The diary is now also the blog; the letter the email; the family album is a networked gallery; the genderless baby snugly hidden in the warm dark of a mother's womb is scanned and made visible to be gendered, named and shared across the globe. The once unrecorded genocide of death camps is witnessed through mobile phones and made public through the internet. A man's recorded voice is sent back to earth from a robot on Mars.

In my work as a playwright, as a journalist and as an academic, the remembered stories have taken on new dimensions through the synergetic transformations of digitisation and globalisation. When I began work in

the 1980s, writing and knowledge production was pre-internet. I wrote on a manual typewriter and then in 1986 I bought a small electronic typewriter which had the capacity to remember 13 characters. Research was conducted by going to libraries and archives, with interviews and focus groups organised through writing letters and making phone calls to people who had no answerphones or voicemail. When I began working at the University of Westminster in 1992 I started to use an early version of email and adapted my working practices so that I could organise research using email and fax. By then I had started using a heavy laptop computer, the size of a bulky briefcase, on which I could save data and writing. I began to adapt not only my working practices, but my mind and body. There was still no WiFi, no internet, no mobile phones and no social media. In contrast, in the course of writing this book I have barely been to a library. I call up documents from my computer desktop; or sometimes from my tablet. I write using multiple screens and software that allows for voice-operated technology, a consequence of the heavy 1990s laptop computer that caused lasting repetitive strain injury. I download journal articles and electronic books as I need them. I order books for purchase that are delivered the next day. I communicate easily with people around the world, working in different time zones, talking via Skype and arranging interviews via mobile phone and email. I organise complex working days around the needs of my young family through an electronic diary that works across multiple devices, to which key administrators at King's and my partner also have access. I keep multiple digital copies of my manuscript as I write; I save it to a memory stick, to several hard drives and to the Cloud. Like many academics my own memory and knowledge-making has adapted through and with technology.

This book also began its life with my becoming a mother after a journey of successive loss, recorded through digital medical technologies, of several of the unborn, followed by the successive birth of two wonderful children. The book developed its life further through a transcontinental move around the world which changed my thinking substantially in terms of my experience of movement, of digitisation and globalisation. We moved to Australia in 2011 with our two children then aged four and six. We shipped everything 11,500 miles from the UK to Sydney including diaries, notebooks and journals, books, maps and photo albums, and backed up all our data to an external hard drive, memory sticks and to other computers via the Cloud (we also shipped the piano). Eighteen months on, we moved back to the UK, so I could take up a professorship at King's

College, London. I brought all my digital memories and a different sense of colonial history with me, along with a deeper sense of ancient memories linked to the landscape and the indigenous people and cultures of Australia which has enriched my work.

As a mnemologist—one who studies, researches and writes about memory—and a feminist—I am motivated to understand how memory is gendered, how women and men over millennia have practised, produced and experienced memory both differently and the same. How do the changing scales of memory, from the micro to macro, through digitised and globalised technologies, implicate gender in terms of access to memories, different uses of them, and the value given to them in different societies? What does this mean for gender equality? How best can feminist memory make a difference?

These are the kinds of questions this book seeks to answer for the 21st century, starting from the memory of the birth of the human being, travelling through the mundane memories of the everyday and finishing with the public witnessing of violent death. Throughout, there is the interrogation of what this means for gender equality and for the mobilisation of feminist memories to make a difference. I hope in some small way the labour of this book and my own passion for thinking about memory in the digital–global—the *Globital* Age, combined with your processes as the reader might lead to trajectories that will make a small difference to the inequalities that women continue to face. It is from creative but intense feminist labour and passion that gendered transformation works.

Anna Reading
London 2016

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Contents

List of Tables

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

For tens of thousands of years human beings have sought to give present and future generations access to the past by making records of events and genealogies. Men and women have made cultural and mediated memories of everyday life as well as major events by using many kinds of media technologies, from the scored and painted marks on the walls of rocks to the creation of trackways between burial sites, from the handing down of orally transmitted songs, stories and poems to the figuring of rituals and dances. Technologies for making and preserving cultural and media memories have transformed, from hand-crafted manuscripts to the printing of books, from the crafted singular image to the mass production of photography and films. The advent of computer technologies has led to media and cultural memories being transformed again with the capturing and sharing of everyday memories through mobile devices and social network sites.

Communication and media technologies are, as Marshall McLuhan (1964) observed, extensions of the body: the car extends the feet, the hammer the hand. Technologies also extend human memory: from the technology of shaped flint for making visual reminders, to the technology of the internet as an extension of the human nervous system.

These technologies are not gender-neutral, and neither is memory: as N. Katherine Hayles in *My Mother Was a Computer* (2005) suggests, gender

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is transformed through the digital text. This book explores this proposition further and seeks to address a lacuna in research through thinking about how digitisation and digital cultures might transform the gendering of memory and memories of gender.

However, rather than a general exploration of gender and memory in 'internet cultures', 'big data', or, 'archives' the chosen focus of this study is how mediated memories are transforming memory and gendered memory through and with mobile and social technologies. It would have been possible to give emphasis to many other media or approaches to digital cultures, such as digital games, virtual memorials or the living archive, but the emphasis here is on the transformation of the gendering of memory through new affordances of mobilisation enabled by the mobile phone and social networks in unevenly globalised internet cultures.

The rationale for this is that mobile and social technologies are at the heart of everyday digital connectivities. The mobile phone has impacted more and had a greater take-up per capita worldwide than the personal computer, especially in developing countries, often leapfrogging legacy technologies or acting as an alternative to other kinds of digital technologies that may be difficult to access in poorer communities (Horst and Miller 2006). There is also very little specific research around mobile technologies and memory, and even less that gives an emphasis to the implications for gender.

Understanding mobilities or 'mediated mobilities' (Keightley and Reading 2014) is key to understanding transformations in the mobilisation of mediated memories in the 21st century. Cultural and mediated memories have, of course, always been circulated and mobilised by individuals and stakeholders. Jan Assman has shown how in ancient Egyptian cultures memories moved and changed (2010). Research on cultural memory in South American cultures has shown how memories were mobilised through walking between grave sites (Abercrombie 1999). Memories, as Astrid Erll, has argued, are always in a sense 'travelling' (2011): memories move, and indeed are moving in both the spatial and affective senses of the word.

The research for this book evidences how mobile and social technologies enable mobilities of mediated memories in new ways with complex implications for gender and the gendering of memory. This needs to be addressed within media and memory studies because, as I shall show in Chap. 3, historically 'new' technologies in previous epochs have changed mediated mnemonic practices. Connective cultures—the ability to mobilise data through mobile phones and via the internet—enable personal memories to become public rapidly; mobile media facilitate in new ways

the capture, storage and sharing of messages, images and sounds that are records of events. Digitisation combined with globalisation enable humans to mobilise memories that cut across the individual and the collective, the institutional and the corporate, the local and the global in ways that disrupt conventional binaries of the public and private, of the body and other. Studies have shown that earlier media and communication technologies consistently implicate memory in ways that are gendered (Yonkers 1995; Weber 2008). Thus, this book asks how digital technologies and digital practices are not only changing memory but changing the relationships between gender and memory. Do digital technologies create new possibilities in terms of cultures of production? Are men and women using mobile and social technologies in different ways to record their autobiographies or share their lives? Is the mobile witnessing and archiving of events reconfiguring how the stories of men and women are told? This book argues that the combined dynamics of digitisation and globalisation are having profound and polylogical implications for the gendering of memory.

The study challenges current thinking in media, memory and gender studies by taking a gendered approach to memory and digital media, developing in more depth and from a feminist perspective memory in the 'Globital Age' through the concepts of 'globital memory' and the 'globital memory field'. The book examines how gendered memory domains and trajectories work within a digitally mediated globalised economy.

Book Rationale

The transdisciplinary academic study of memory over the past 20 years has grown to the extent that it now constitutes its own academic interdisciplinary field, with a number of book series addressing undergraduate and postgraduate modules on the subject in the UK, US, Australia and internationally within a range of disciplines, as well as the successful journal *Memory Studies*, and regular conferences on aspects of memory. Over the course of my own career I have been transformed from a scholar who had no special disciplinary home and who readily moved between and drew on insights from the disciplines of English, theatre, politics, sociology, women's studies, media, culture and communication studies in order to try and understand cultural and media memory. Two decades on, I am a scholar clearly situated within media memory studies. I call myself a mnemologist, just as scholars at the beginning of the 20th century who sought to enquire into society began to call themselves sociologists.

Within this interdisciplinary field, there have been significant developments in the understanding and analysis of cultural memory (Erll 2011) as well as more recently the recognition and growth of work within 'media memory' (Neiger et al. 2011). Over this period research and studies on gender and memory have also grown, although there is still much less research and published material available that focuses on gender and memory transnationally, and virtually no work that considers how the articulations of gender and memory are changing through the combined dynamics of digital media technologies and globalisation.

Earlier work on gender and memory tended to examine memory within specific national and historic periods with an emphasis on literary memory and oral memory, such as Lucy Noakes (1997) *War and the British: Gender, Memory and National Identity, 1939–91*, Lynne Hanley's (1991) *Writing War, Fiction, Gender and Memory*, or Faith Beasley's *Revising Memory: Women's Fiction and Memoirs in Seventeenth-Century France*. There was also in the 1990s a growth in research on women and the memory of the Holocaust, with a particular emphasis on individual memoirs and collections of memoirs by women (see De Silva 1996; Eibeshitz and Eilenberg-Eibeshitz 1994; Gurewitsch 1998; Laska 1983; Rittner and Roth 1993). This was part of a broader epistemological shift that was arising from the foregrounding of oral history and memory within the study of history and with it the oral history of women. Hence, in 1996, a seminal edition of the *International Yearbook of Oral History and Life Stories* devoted an issue edited by Selma Leydesdorff, Luisa Passerini and Paul Thompson to oral history research that considered gender differences.

The past ten years has witnessed a discernible increase in published materials that focus on gender and memory. These have extended out of disciplines other than history and literature to include psychology, such as Janice Haaken's *Pillar of Salt* (1998), as well as cultural studies and sociology. However, studies are largely configured around ideas of the nation, as well as situated within a particular historic period. Thus Sylvia Paletschek's (2008) edited collection, *The Gender of Memory: Cultures of Remembrance in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Europe* examines women's cultures of memory in the context of the development of nation states.

There are also several studies that bring into the public realm lesser-known memories of women in non-Western contexts of repression. These include, Fatma Kassem's *Palestinian Women: Narrative Histories and Gendered Memory* (2011) Nefissa Neguib's beautifully written and researched *Women, Water and Memory: Recasting Lives in Palestine* (2009)

as well as C. Sarah Soh's (2008) *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Post-colonial Memory in Korea and Japan* and Susana Rotka's *Captive Women: Oblivion and Memory in Argentina*. We have also seen the development of new work on gender and memory in other national contexts such as 'Gendered Memories, the Heroine's Journey in Time' in *Dialogics of the Self: The Mahabarata and Culture* (2010) by Lakshmi Bandlmudi, and *Uneasy Warriors: Gender, Memory and Popular Culture in Japan (2007)* by Sabine Fruhstuck, as well as Jill Didur's *Unsettling Partition: Literature, Gender and Memory* (2006) and *Mammy: A Century of Gender, Race and Southern Memory* (2007) by Kimberley Wallace-Sanders.

At the same time, there was a continuation of work from the 1990s on gender and memory in relation to the Holocaust with books such as Birgit Maier-Katkin's (2007) *Silence and Acts of Memory: A Post-war Discourse on Literature, Anna Seghers, and Women in the Third Reich,* and Vera Apfelthaler's (2007) *Gendered Memories: Transgressions in German and Israeli Film*, which moves the analysis of gender into mediated memory.

What is missing, however, is significant critical engagement with digital communication and media technologies and the ways in which these rearticulate relationships between gender and memory through reconfiguring mediated and cultural memory in new ways. This lacuna is noticeable given that communication and technology studies have evidenced how new media technologies in earlier epochs reconfigured gender and memory, as with Harold Weber's *Memory, Print and Gender in England* (2008). Significantly, Weber examines the ways in which print technology in the 17th and 18th centuries made the distinction of gender central to processes of literary memorialisation, marginalising through the advent of the mass printed book the work of women authors and writers. His research, as I explore in more detail in Chap. 3, 'The Globital: Concept and Method', signals the need for a study such as this, specifically addressing gender and memory within the similar but different technological mnemonic revolution taking place through globalisation in combination with digitisation and digitality.

At the same time, although there is little work in this area, there is clearly recognition of the perspective that gender brings to the study of memory and media memory in particular. Michael Rothberg's (2009) *Multidirectional Memory* includes recognition of the significance of gender as well as 'race' as part of its main argument. Several studies have also suggested the importance of rethinking time in relation to questions of sexual politics and gender. Kath Weston's (2002) *Gender in Real Time: Power and*