



Witnessing, Memory, and Crisis. AHM Annual Conference 2022

Edited by Ihab Saloul, Anna Schjøtt Hansen,
Réka Deim, Dawid Grabowski, Mehmet Sülek, and
Jante van der Naaten (assistant editor)

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Witnessing, Memory, and Crisis

AHM Annual Conference 2022

June 30-July 2, 2022,
Amsterdam, the Netherlands

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Foreword

Witnessing, Memory, and Crisis – AHM Annual Conference 2022

Located at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Amsterdam, the Amsterdam School for Heritage, Memory and Material Culture (AHM) is a research institute and doctoral school committed to the analysis of the remnants and narratives of the past in the present, as well as of the remaking of pasts into heritage, memory and material culture. AHM fosters dynamic, interdisciplinary and transnational research of heritage and memory, and brings together researchers working in diverse areas and fields heritage and memory studies, cultural studies, museum studies, archaeology, and material culture, art history, media, conservation and restoration, archival studies, digital humanities, postcolonial and performative studies, religious studies, music and theatre studies, conflict and identity studies, Slavonic languages and cultures, Holocaust and genocide studies, European memory studies, Middle Eastern studies, and cultural, public and oral history.

The AHM Annual Conference 2022 has a special focus on the ways in which our societies today are characterised by ‘epistemic instability’, where previously shared truths are increasingly scrutinised and contested (Harambam, Gramsci). In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, our responsibilities for one another’s safety and security became a particularly contentious area for public debate. Global lockdowns attempted to protect societies at large but at the same time produced an unprecedented sense of disconnection. Screen-based media became central to our experiences of other coeval crises from mass-migrations to national and armed conflicts, human rights violations, racial oppression, and sexual violence. Although the concept of ‘witnessing’ has been widely theorised regarding memories and heritages of conflicts and events of mass-suffering (e.g., Agamben, Hartmann), it remains a significant concept, which can help readdress present-day socio-cultural discourses. This conference sets out to explore the crisis of witnessing as well as the individual and collective positions and responsibilities of the witness in times of crisis: How can various aspects of witnessing across disciplines and contexts enrich our understanding of our realities? And how do current changes to mediums of witnessing (both physical and digital) impact the way we receive, experience and share information? This interdisciplinary conference invites proposals for papers and panels which explore the potential roles and responsibilities of witnesses and the uses of different mediums of witnessing such as life-writing, memoirs, photographs, epistolary exchanges, newspapers, testimonies, legal hearings, art, video, or social media, which reflect upon memory and heritage in today’s societies.

The AHM Annual Conference Proceedings is doubtlessly a mere excerpt of the richness and diversity of the advancements in the field of Heritage, Memory Studies and Material Culture and depict the AHM’s ongoing research which seeks to integrate all branches of research focusing on the material and intangible remains of the past, the reciprocal relations between objects and meanings, and the dynamics of memory, from diverse theoretical and methodological perspectives, concept-oriented, object-oriented and user-oriented approaches. The integrative, interdisciplinary and critical approach of problematising, conceptualising and analysing heritage and memory acts, and material culture practices, policies and politics on all levels in Europe and beyond is unique to AHM.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Organisational Board	iii
Foreword	v
Witnessing Social Catastrophe	
“I believe the world out there will hear it and the suffering will end soon”: Witnessing refugee suffering <i>Michal Pavlásek</i> (Brno, Czech Republic)	1
Who are the witnesses of the Covid-19 lockdown? The case of France <i>Louis Gabrysiak, Sarah Gensburger</i> (Paris, France).....	11
Ruins of Utopia: Trauma in post-Soviet Cuban culture and literature <i>Delia M. García</i> (Miami, USA)	20
Witness Accounts: Testimony and Diary	
Telling the memories of a massacre: Testimonies from Dersim’s 38 <i>Berfin Çiçek</i> (Istanbul, Turkey).....	26
Echoes of Nazi propaganda in a collaborator diary: The case of Dutch police investigator Douwe Bakker <i>Nina Siegal</i> (Amsterdam, the Netherlands).....	34
‘Novels of witness’: Palestinian novels as acts of witnessing the everyday <i>Eleri Connick</i> (Amsterdam, the Netherlands)	41
Dynamics of Images, Dynamics of Witnessing	
In the presence of absence: Curating the unseen, ignored and forgotten <i>Britte Sloothaak</i> (Amsterdam, Eindhoven, the Netherlands).....	47
Archival tendencies, living memory and witnessing in the contemporary artscene in Istanbul <i>S. Nesli Gül Durukan</i> (Amsterdam, the Netherlands).....	57
Witnessing through Art and Writing	
“Tell me whom you haunt and I’ll tell you who you are”: Aby Warburg, memory and artistic practices in the 21st century <i>Mehmet Sülek</i> (Amsterdam, the Netherlands)	65
Becoming a secondary witness: Art, trauma, and (non-) memory of the Kazakh famine, 1930–1933 <i>Assel Kadyrkhanova</i> (Almaty, Kazakhstan).....	73
Fallow land: An (inter)medial approach to biography <i>Marina Morello</i> (Amsterdam, the Netherlands).....	80
Re-Mediation of Traumatic Memories	
El Testigo: Witnessing the Colombian internal armed conflict through journalistic photography <i>María Paula Suárez</i> (Groningen, the Netherlands).....	87

Gazes from Syria: Media witnessing in times of crisis <i>Florian Göttke</i> (Arnhem, Amsterdam, the Netherlands)	94
Lives worth grieving for: Representation of lesbian suicides in print and cinema in India <i>Priyam Ghosh</i> (New Delhi, India).....	105

Forms of Memory Activism

Home is where the government isn't: Lygia Pape's depictions of favelas in Chácara do Cabeça and Maré <i>Julia Kershaw</i> (Miami, USA)	112
Witnessing occupation: Memory activism in Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370 <i>Diviani Chaudhuri</i> (Delhi-NCR, India)	120
Pedagogical witnesses who matter: "The new knights in the fight against the green dragon" <i>Dawid Grabowski</i> (Amsterdam, the Netherlands)	129

Memorialization and Museums

Witnessing absent pasts: The urgency and difficulty of memorializing wartime sexual violence <i>Réka Deim</i> (Amsterdam, the Netherlands)	137
Witnesses, memories, and places of after catastrophe: The Vajont Dam case <i>Chiara Calzana</i> (Milan, Italy).....	144
Towards an aesthetic of ephemerality: Curating documentation footage at the EYE Film museum 2021 exhibition 'All about Theatre about Film' <i>Haitian Ma</i> (Amsterdam, the Netherlands).....	152