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Picking Up the Pieces
History and Memory in European Digital Literature

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> "[W]hat is no longer archived in the same way is no longer lived in the same way."
> Jacques Derrida, "Archive Fever" (18)

Two of the major functions of literature are the representation of history and the production of memory. These functions have not diminished in postmodern or late-postmodern narratives. On the contrary: the beginning of the 21st century has been marked by a surge of novels and poems testifying, documenting, and narrating the past. W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*, Aleksandar Hemon's *The Lazarus Project*, and Orhan Pamuk's *Istanbul* are examples that spring to mind.

The result is not straightforward historical non-fiction, though; many of these works are a hybrid of the historical and the subjective, the documentary and the imaginary. Rather than any kind of truth or closure, we see a fragmentary and personal representation of historical material. This "memory boom" may be seen as a reaction to the ephemerality and a-historicity of popular culture, and a desire to "reclaim the past as an indispensable part of the present" (Assmann 38). In that perspective, literature and art struggle to engage with tradition and to show resistance against a sense of growing amnesia. A further explanation is found in the possibilities offered by the digitalization of culture, as Andreas Huyssen ("Present Pasts"), amongst others, has argued. The nearly unlimited capacity for storage of visual, aural and discursive material has created a preoccupation with the production of memory. This is not only true for literature, but for the other arts and theory alike. So much so, that "media and memory" may now be called a discipline in its own right.

It is from the perspective of this discipline that I will consider the ways in which memory is reflected in contemporary digital literature. I argue that documentary digital literature problematizes the relationship between the producer and consumer of digital memories (see also Garde-Hansen, Hoskins, and Reading). While Bernard Stiegler is optimistic about the fusion of these two positions in new media, and sees "a new age of memory in which memory once again becomes transindividual" (84), in digital literature we find a different view.

The new "associated hypomnesis" (i.e., "the technical exteriorization of memory") that Stiegler identifies (64) is a situation in which the consumer and the producer of memory are the same person, whereas these roles are dissociated in mass-media. Consumers are "cooperative and participative," according to Stiegler (84). But digital literature presents the relation between activity and passivity in the construction of digital memory as more complex and troubled. The crossover genre between writing, visual and acoustic arts and digital technology has a hybrid quality which allows it to bring new questions on the production of memory to the fore. As we shall see, digital literature reflects implicitly and explicitly on three crucial aspects of the production of memory: narrativity, interactivity and mediatedness.

Firstly, like all literature, the works in question may confront the relationship between narrative and actual events in history. The interactive involvement of the reader/ spectator serves as a reminder that each narrative is only one possible route we can take through past events, as we

shall see in *88 Constellations for Wittgenstein* by David Clark (par. 5), which deals with a canonized part of the history. By using film fragments, photographs and fragments of philosophical text in an interactive interface, the linearity of the temporal narrative is deconstructed, as is the authority of a single master narrative. By providing the reader with the tools to navigate through the events of history and make new connections, the producer of memory may seem to merge with the consumer here. We will see whether that is really the case. Another strategy of digital literature is to replace the canonical history with an infinite number of personal narrations of experiences. The impossibility of attaining closure in our view of the past is thus reflected in a fragmentary and interactive form. The history of the Parisian subway, for example, is not *a* history, but a myriad of fragmented personal memories, such as those represented in *Sous-terre* by Grégory Chatonsky (par. 3).

Such user-generated works bring us to the second characteristic of this digital history-writing: the interactive and *collective* construction of memory. Being embedded in and dependent on the web, these works have a networked quality. Kate Pullinger and Chris Joseph's *Flight Paths* (par. 4) is such a work, constructed partly from material uploaded by users. The main story is not only connected to the stories of users, but the dashboard software links to other social media sites like Flickr and Facebook; it is networked both on the level of the medium and on the level of the community.

Finally, digital literature allows for a meta-reflection on the role of media technology and its power to store and endlessly reproduce optical, visual and acoustic data. The tension between the fleeting and fragile character of our memories, on the one hand, and the "immobility" of data in the machine, on the other, is often played out in such digital works, for example in *Screen* (see under Wardrip-Fruin et al.), an interactive work in which memories disappear as the reader/ player attempts to make them last longer. As the text contributed by Robert Coover reads, memories "have a way of coming apart on us, losing their certainty." The remediation of memories or historical material in art may be interpreted as a discussion of the mediatedness of all memory. When home-movies are remediated, as is the case in Tonnus Oosterhoff's video-poem *Fanfares* (see par. 2 of this article), questions on presence and intimacy, reproduction and the media-archive are being raised.

It is thus not so much for their different historical *themes* or cultural backgrounds (Dutch, French and British) that the works will be analyzed here, but rather for the different aesthetic strategies the artists who create them employ in their investigations of the ways in which a "transindividual" memory may be constructed. Before looking at these strategies — which obviously reach much further than the textual alone — an interpretive framework needs to be sketched (par. 1), allowing for an analysis of the aesthetic, historical, social, and medial aspects of the four multi-media works.

1.   Literature, Media and the Archive

After a period in which digital literature was rather self-reflectively investigating its new medium and its consequences for the transformation of literary texts, it recently seems to have taken a more affective, social and historical turn. Many projects aim to get people to upload and

retell their own memories or experiences, placing the artwork into a contemporary and online archive. *Megafone.net* is an example of such a digital archive, in which persons "overlooked by society" are given mobile phones to record and upload their experiences. The idea is to "amplify" the voice of the subaltern, which usually remains unheard in mainstream media (see <http://www.megafone.net/INFO/>).

The project is an attempt to overcome the patriarchal nature of the archive. It was Derrida who stressed in "Archive Fever" the political power of archives (1–19). Many scholars have since then pointed to the altered quality of archives after the arrival of the World Wide Web, where there is resistance to the "secret" order of archives as sketched by Derrida, and where alternative archives are presented in which information is distributed freely. More importantly, the content of public archives has become more democratic, a trend most obviously visible in social media (for example *Flickr* and *Facebook*). Every experience may be documented, and no hierarchical order is installed, as it was in the more classic archive. This is obviously not to say that censorship and social and political exclusion does not occur on the Internet or in the large social media cooperations (cf. par. 3).

Apart from the patriarchal structure of the archive, Derrida also stressed the *spatial* structure of it. It is this spatiality, the locatedness of an archive, that is most challenged by new media artworks. The whole point of a project like *megafone.net* is that it resides everywhere, and that voices of refugees in the Sahara are juxtaposed with those of, for example, motorcycle couriers from São Paolo. In new media the spatiality of the archive has become temporal. This is, according to Wolfgang Ernst, the challenge of the digital archive to the traditional archive. The logic of storage becomes the logic of transfer: "Residential, static memories are being replaced by dynamic, temporal forms of storage in streaming media" (47).

Derrida, too, pointed to an "entirely different logic" ("Archive Fever" 17) as he described a toy, the "Wunderblock" or "Mystic Writing Pad," a wax slab stretched with cellophane. Text written on the slab may be erased at any time, so the writing can begin again. It is a powerful metaphor for the impermanence and instability of memory. Derrida wondered whether computers would not go much further than this toy: "[I]t would no longer be a question of simple continuous progress in representation, in the representative value of the model, but rather of an entirely different logic" (17). Arnold Dreyblatt made a digital version of the toy, *Wunderblock* (Berlin, 2000), in which the agency lies with the machine and the writing and erasure occurs randomly. This work demonstrates the intermingled quality of writing, the archive, memory and the machine in the representation of European history. Texts were used from both Freud's original essay on the "Wunderblock" and from a *Glossary for Archivists*.

As much as the work is a comment on Freud, it is also an illustration of what Derrida called *Mal d'archive*, as *Archive Fever* was originally named. In the installation, text continuously appears and disappears, underlining the destructive quality that the archive may have (the *fever* in Derrida's title): "There would indeed be no archive desire without the radical finitude, without the possibility of a forgetfulness which does not limit itself to repression" (19).

To what extent, then, can we use the logic of the archive for works that appropriate and remediate previously archived material (photographs, film, sound-recordings, texts) or that aim to create an archive? We will make use of the concept of the archive, and Derrida's discussion of it, for three reasons. First of all, we need to remain critical of the alleged democratic character of Internet archives; new political, institutional and economic structures are underneath.

Secondly, and even more importantly, we need to take into account Derrida's emphasis on the way the archive structures its content. An archive does not only preserve historical objects, but "the technical structure of the *archivable* archive also determines the structure of the *archivable* content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future" (16). An archive "produces as much as it records the event" (17). It is crucial to be aware of this agency of the archive, even if its structure seems to be that there is no structure.

The same may be said for the digital medium, which is not only the transmitter of information but also the organizer of information. With the advent of this new medium for literature, the way events are represented, archived or produced in these texts has fundamentally altered. There is an obvious bias for medial representations of history: photographs or films are often more important than objects in the representation of history. In print literature, memory may be triggered and represented by, for example, descriptions of objects or of smells. We need to account for such effects in a media-specific analysis. One of the recurring aesthetic strategies of new digital media is "remediation": the representation of one medium in another. Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin distinguish an immediate, transparent use of the medium from a hypermediate, self-reflexive one, in which attention is drawn to the medium itself. In the first case, the intention is to "to deny the mediated character of digital technology altogether" (Bolter and Grusin 24), in the second signs of mediality are purposefully multiplied. This hypermediacy is a mechanism we see occurring in all four works under discussion in this essay. What is the cultural value of the conspicuous "old media" in these new media works, and how is their materiality represented? What is the signification of this strategy of hypermediacy? Wolfgang Ernst, for example, points to the "archival retro-effect" of material artifacts and the authority derived from that materiality (48). The question is whether we see this authority in digital literature, too; if so, is it a question of nostalgia?

A third corner of this frame we are building in order to fully understand the logic of production and consumption of memory in digital literature consists of cultural memory theory. Apart from the cultural frame that produces memories, there is the specific quality of the memories that are produced on the internet. This memory "on the fly" (Hoskins 93) is created online and often in a context of a (online or physical) community. Hoskins contends that *Facebook* and *Twitter* create "an emergent digital network memory." As he writes, "the very use of these systems contributes to a new memory — an emergent digital network memory — in that communications in themselves dynamically add to, alter and erase, a kind of living archival memory" (92). With Derrida, we may even take that argument further and say that the archive produces the remembered event. This sounds more far-fetched than it is. An example could be the work of Georges Perec, the French writer who lost both his parents at the hands of the Nazis. Writing for Perec was a recuperation, not of his parents, but of his lost and even nonexistent memories of childhood. This can be seen most specifically in his novel *W, or the Memory of Childhood* (1988). The text becomes an archive which creates memories and through the process of writing the events themselves.

Individual and private experiences may be used to produce collective memory and be presented as an alternative to national or more canonical monuments. In the case of the digital work *Hidden like Anne Frank* for example (a project by Marcel Prins and Marcel van der Drift, 2010), the well-known story of Anne Frank is supplemented with the memories of

twenty-two Jewish persons who survived the Shoah by hiding in the Netherlands — their stories are illustrated with animated films. Digital projects of this kind go against what François Hartog dubbed the "presentism" of new media, in which the present itself has become the horizon, in a "splitting of the present between a lost past and a future which appears to be more and more uncertain" (125–26). All over Europe memorial digital works are being made, resisting and protesting against the amnesia of contemporary culture, representing not the canonical past of historians, but the past as remembered and performed, for example in works for mobile media.

Another impressive digital archive is the online "Jewish monument," an archive of all the deported Jews in the Netherlands (see <http://www.joodsmonument.nl/?lang=en>). One can search this website by family name, address, or just zoom into the visual representation of the data to enter the archive randomly. The digital medium has various effects on the meaning and function of this archive. To begin with, one experiences a certain tension between the impermanence and immateriality of the digital medium, on the one hand, and the "monumental" quality of the archive on the other. The information that is inscribed here is both volatile and unforgettable. Secondly, the accessibility of the website works to enhance the memorial function; even more so than a physical monument that we pass by on the street, this is a work that one physically, emotionally, and personally interacts with. As the daughter of a victim confessed, she opened up the webpage with her father's name on it every Saturday, as a digital form of saying Kaddish (Duindam, 2012). Here we actually see Stiegler's description of "how *hypomnesis* articulates with anamnesis," anamnesis being the embodied act of remembering (64). Finally, the medium implies that metonymic strategies, where a single victim represents the group, are not necessary. Every family that was deported gets its own page, and personal and intimate interaction with the past is thus possible, even more so since additional information on the victims may be sent in by users. In such a project, one sees a combination of the roles of producer and consumer of memory.

A final and fourth corner of the interpretive frame is literary theory. Works like Georges Perec's novel remind us how writing is always entangled with both the medium and memory. Simultaneously, it shows us that documentation and erasure always go hand in hand. When the author introduces his only two memories of early childhood, he admits: "the many variations and imaginary details I have added in the telling of them — in speech or in writing — have altered them greatly, if not completely distorted them" (Perec 13). This is where written, narrated history is, indeed, a reflection of the way memory works. Literature, like Perec's novel, reflects not only on the double sidedness of the archive as an agent of both conservation and destruction, but also on the fragmentary and subjective nature of any representation of history: "made up of scattered oddments, gaps, lapses, doubts, guesses and meager anecdotes" (Perec, Foreword). This view of history subverts the idea of a grand narrative: "to challenge the impulse to totalize is to contest the entire notion of *continuity* in history and its writing" (Hutcheon, *Politics of Postmodernism* 66). In many digital works, one sees this challenge to totality and continuity, for example in the absence of a central authorial view on history. Instead, a single voice is often substituted by a plural authorial structure. The central question in the following analysis of four works is who produces and consumes memory in the triangle of author, audience, and machine.

2. Tonnus Oosterhoff, *Fanfares* (2010)

The Boissevain family is well dressed, in summer clothes, gay and proud. We witness them in their home-movies, made on the occasion of a wedding or "mother's birthday." This material from the 1920s is remediated in the videopoem *Fanfares* (2010). It shows the Boissevain children playing Indian in the garden while the poet's voice comments on their sound characters and vitality.

Only when the text of *Fanfares* continues and narrates how these boys would be shot fifteen years later by the Nazi occupiers of the Netherlands, do we become aware of the historical irony: we know more than the happy people in this film. The irony is stressed by the medium. A home movie has the function "to shape a family's future past" (van Dijck 122). That is, it is created to allow for a look back at the past from the future — a future that in this case, as we rapidly become aware, is tragically absent. The text further contributes to this irony by the repetition of the family's credo: "ni regret du passé, ni peur de l'avenir" (neither regrets of the past, nor fear for the future) and through the voice-over commenting on the family members, "[c]onfidently marching towards the confinement of the future" (*all translations from Oosterhoff are mine*).

The ironic effect is applied more implicitly by Péter Forgács in *The Maelstrom: A Family Chronicle* (1997), where home movies from the Jewish Peereboom family are juxtaposed with home movies from the Nazi Seyss-Inquart family (see Roth 62–72). Like Forgács, Oosterhoff represents the movies of the Boissevain family comparatively, but he chooses a more contemporary medium to frame the found footage historically. The damaged home movies, which demand a great deal of attention for their materiality, are followed by digital photographs. In the last three minutes the video moves to a slide show of full-color digital photographs of the house "Corellistraat 6." They show the present of what was in the past the residence of the Boissevain family, from which their resistance group operated during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands (1940–1945). The radical members of the group murdered famous collaborators and organized Jewish hide-outs, until the arrest, torture, and murder of many of them, including Janka and Gi Boissevain, aged 22 and 23. These facts are given by the voiceover, accompanied by still more footage of the young boys playing Indian with their sister Denise. Obviously, we see irony again in the opposition between the game and the deadly serious partisan actions the boys undertook later in their lives. The visual information is a comment on the narrative presented by the talking voice of the poet.

Juxtaposing the contemporary pictures of the house with the historical material brings the past into the present by spatializing time in the form of the house, Corellistraat 6. This house still exists and at the time of the publication of the video was up for sale; the remediated pictures of the house were made and distributed on the internet to lure potential buyers. Slick decoration is complemented by glossy hyper-realistic photography. In the absence of a temporal passage, the use of these photos seem to critique the "presentism" that Hartog describes as "increasingly inflated, hypertrophied" (126).

The contrast between the extremely realistic digital photography and the black and white, damaged home movie could not be greater. In terms of Bolter and Grusin's distinction between an immediate, transparent use of the medium and a hypermediate, self-reflexive one, hypermediacy is followed by immediacy. If we remember that hypermediacy is a way to draw attention

to the history of the material, whereas immediacy is a technique used in commercial mass-media, we can conclude that the materiality of Oosterhoff's video-poem iconically represents its political content.

It is contemporary presentism and forgetfulness that is at stake in the text of Oosterhoff's poem. The contrast between a self-congratulatory present, oblivious to the past, and the fate of the two blond boys is played out not only by the difference in transparency of the media, but on the level of the text as well. Angrily, the poet asks: "Is this the freedom for which they were tortured and murdered?" The transparency and apparent realism of the digital photographs point to the absence of memory, whereas the home movie has its history inscribed in its very material. The fissure between past and present is complete, and "prevents memory from settling in, more or less comfortably, in the past" (Ross, "The Suspension of History" 134).

Apart from the material differences, the shift from home-movies to photography has other effects of signification. The passing of time is quite suddenly suspended and makes way for a representation of space: the space of the perfect interior, juxtaposed with the space of the cemetery and the graves of the boys. In its temporality, the home-movie may seem to come closer to "real presence," at least in the way Jean-Luc Nancy understands it in *The Birth to Presence*. Nancy stresses the temporality of artwork that enhances the reality-effect as well as the effect of immanence. This is what defines the idea of presence for the French philosopher: "Not form and fundament, but the pace, the passage, the coming in which nothing is distinguished, and everything is unbound" (2).

However, the passage of time in this video is not quite unproblematic. Even before the abrupt stop, time is problematized by the way the home-movies are remediated. Through a palimpsestic operation, by fusing two of the films and making them run simultaneously, two distinct episodes in the Boissevain family history appear to coalesce: condensing the passing of time into one "extended instant" (Ross, "The Suspension of History" 128). By this fusion of two moments into one, the work already suspends historical time, a suspension that is even stronger when we abruptly move from movies to photographs that only capture a moment of stillness, as do the photographs of the boys' tombs. Oosterhoff seems to point to a very concrete absence rather than presence.

Thus the video is like the painting described in Nancy's essay: the reproduction of "the reproduction of the unique presence" (*The Birth to Presence* 350). It is the "unique presence" of these "vital" children that is being foregrounded in the poem, simultaneously pointing to their absence in the future, and to the distance in time and space which makes it so that we can only see their past presence through, indeed, *reproductions of reproductions*. Nancy describes the exposure to presence as an "intimacy": "[T]he intimacy, the exposition, the coming into presence of the thing, its reality. The real, what bears, what demands, what arrests all meaning" (351).

In trying to create intimacy, and making the absence of the children present, the visual poem (the silences, repetitions and language do make it a poem) becomes a monument. Oosterhoff's work produces memory by documenting and narrating the events, the names of the boys and their fellows in the resistance, their early deaths. The text points to the quality of the house itself as an archive: "This is a house with a memory." These words are spoken by the "fresh-sweet smelling real-estate dealer" with the sole intention to raise the price of the real estate, the past as a commodity. Therefore the house is not only an archive, it is a space of oblivion

as well. What is needed is the artwork, in this case the literary work, to produce and continuously reproduce cultural memory. This allows the author to occupy a central position as a producer of cultural memory, while the audience functions as the "consumer." What Oosterhoff does is not Stiegler's fusing of these two positions, but a critique of the easy and superficial "consumption" of our national history as a commodity.

Although *Fanfare* is explicit in its meaning, it is highly subjective and an authorial voice is openly manipulating our affective reactions to the crimes we witness. Contrary to the Forgács film, here a voice-over is present that comments, identifies with the family-members ("we were rich, happy and rich"), takes the place of an empathetic witness, and finally demands our responsibility and engagement. The found material, however fragmented it may have been in the archive, is solidly framed in a narrative of heroism in the face of evil.

The text, the medium and the montage take the movies out of their private and intimate context and frame them in this new narrative. Originally they were only recordings of private memorable events, but the frame of Oosterhoff's work assigns a new historical meaning to them. Michael Roth reminds us that the taking away of the "particularity" of home movies is a necessary consequence of understanding an event historically (69).

This does not mean that the poem is a successful historical narrative. It emphasizes that the disaster at the center of the story is unrepresentable by the silences that are dropped, and by the text; "no image no image no image no image," the text repeats, "no images of the evening on which Janka and Gi were tortured, the morning they were shot."

The position of the narrator, who presents himself (again deferring the passage of time) both as speaker in the present and a witness in the past, is crucial here. Christine Ross, who researches the relationship between new media's alleged "presentism" and history, contends that it is not the testimony of the witness "but the act of witnessing itself" that matters, a witnessing whose mourning is productive only inasmuch as it lets death […] be not a *bygone* event but a *non-erasable* event, an event that can be recalled, re-observed, reinterpreted and made significant because of this relay" ("New Media's Presentness" 52). If we, as the audience of *Fanfare*, temporarily become witnesses too, we might contribute to the non-erasure of the event. *Fanfare* should not be interpreted too optimistically, though; the work seems to be more about forgetfulness than about remembrance. Where media-theorist Friedrich Kittler cherished hopeful ideas about reproductive media ("Once memories and dreams, the dead and ghosts, become technically reproducible, readers and writers no longer need the powers of hallucination" (*Gramophone* 11), Oosterhoff questions this optimism with considerations of the destructiveness and selection of the archive and the absence of the dead by rewriting the name of the "Office for Image and Sound" as "Office No Image No Sound."

3. Grégory Chatonsky, *Sous-terre: The Subnetwork*[1]

"As a child, whenever I rode on the subway, I used to perform small spectacles to make the other passengers laugh." The white letters that form this phrase appear and reappear against an unclear black picture with flashing light, while the spectator hears the heavy sound of breathing. This is the first screen of the HTML work *Sous-terre*, created in 1999.

In the same restless style, a narrative about a subject and a "you" begins. Every phrase that appears is hyperlinked to the next page, creating a network, not unlike the tunnels of the subway itself. Chatonsky's work was commissioned by the RATP, the Parisian transport service, for the centenary of the "*metropolitain*." After a few more phrases about the memories of the speaking subject, the audience is addressed with a question: "What is your first subway memory?" (*all translations from Chatonsky are mine*), one reads under a repeating fragment of video, of a woman walking through a carriage. The linked phrase opens your e-mail software to an empty page on which to write your own message in order to send it in. One's personal memories thus become incorporated into the database, from which the work randomly picks and displays fragments. The computer-generated voice in which comments and translations are given contrasts with the seemingly intimate memories of the narrating I and the readers. Other voices, occurring later in the work, are human, though, and narrate poetic memories of houses and people.

On the left of the screen, we see a flashing row of dates and times. In the next screen two temporalities and two spaces are presented: underground and "up ground," both with film running forwards. The "film" seems to be photonegatives. If we move the mouse over the band of the film, it starts running backwards. "Up ground" brings us to photographs of a full platform above the ground. Soon one gets lost in the maze of this hypertext, notwithstanding the "map" that one can open at any time. Apart from the structure of the metro-tunnels, the structure of the work echoes the "spatialization of history which propels its verticality into a horizontal deployment" (Ross, "The Suspension of History" 127). Temporality is no longer a linear process, but rather simultaneous memories floating in space. There is no hierarchical difference in the text between pictures made ten or a hundred years ago. Different episodes seem to fuse, as the remediations of century-old photographs are accompanied by contemporary texts. The principle of simultaneity is explored in this work. As Ross argues about new media and history, experiments are undertaken with "alternative forms of temporality" (128).

By shifting from the individual to the collective, from portraits to photos of a crowd on a subway platform, Grégory Chatonsky highlights the public space of the subway as a liminal space where individuals become a crowd and then disperse again. The work iconically confirms this by absorbing individual memories into a collective narrative.

Again, the past is brought into the present, by juxtaposing historical pictures with contemporary ones. Thus, different strands of history come together here: personal experiences of the narrating I and of the reader/ player of the work; and institutional history through the archived photographs of historical subway-travelers or carriages. The different levels between the personal and the impersonal, contact and lack of it, are addressed in the words and the images;

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1.   On the issue of underground and memory, see also Rosalind Williams, *Notes on the Underground* (1190, 2008).

many blurry faces in black and white seem to suggest the presence and distance of the "others" within the network.

Choosing the "underground" part of the network, for example, causes the user to end up at a blurred photograph from at least a century ago of men waiting on the platform in one of the above ground stations. Text is waving through the screen, and again it seems to be a love poem: "When my hand touches your hand, is there a difference with my own two hands that touch each other?" The poem later speaks of the "unknown faces in the crowd," which the lyrical I tries to remember. The reference is to Baudelaire's 1863 "Le flâneur," a popular text with new media artists.

The Parisian poet Baudelaire emphasized the ambivalence of the city-dweller as a spectator who is involved and distanced at the same time, just as the spectator/ reader of this work is, and the traveler in the subway is to some extent (see Baudelaire, "Le flâneur"). The same theme occurs in "À une passante" (To a Passer-By; 1857), a poem in which the "Rue assourdissante" (the deafening street) is associated with the mysterious figure of a woman whose path crosses the speaker's: "Car j'ignore où tu fuis, tu ne sais où je vais" ("For I know not where you fled, you know not where I go"; <http://fleursdumal.org/poem/224>). *Sous-terre* not only has a similar content, but also a similar construction, with a description suddenly changing into apostrophe, past tense into present. As in Baudelaire, the new dialectic between collective and individual and the changed position of the spectator is closely connected to new technologies. The frame "memory connection" has an image of a computer keyboard behind it: a self-reflexive gesture pointing at the medium and the machine. This hypomnesis, however, is counterbalanced by a presentation of anamnesis, or embodied memory. Or that is at least what the heavy breathing that accompanies our wanderings seems to suggest. "Flâner" through the text is close to physical wandering in the subway tunnels.

Along the way, we encounter more questions addressed to the reader (Which machines did you see in the subway? Did you ever speak to someone in the subway?). Users can again upload their own memories, and words from their stories will be incorporated in the algorithm-driven display of single words.

These texts form a database from which the work recites, words in blue floating over the pictures, coming towards you if you click on them, the letters becoming so big that they are illegible. This is one example in which the work stresses the fluidity of digital data. Apart from these questions, and fragments of other people's memory, we encounter more photo- and film material of the underground tunnels and platforms in which we get lost. The work would not be like the subway if there was no map, though, and in it you can find the structure and all the frames you have seen (or missed).

The hypertextual structure of the work emphasizes its spatial qualities; it is, just like the original archive, constructed as a space. As Jacques Derrida stressed, the archive is a liminal zone between the public and the private: "The dwelling, this place where they dwell permanently, marks this institutional passage from the private to the public, which does not always mean from the secret to the non-secret" (*Archive Fever* 3). This space where both the private and the collective find a place is emphasized by the very intimate words directed at a "you," floating through the public space of platforms and trains. What seems to be foregrounded is the attempt to highlight the individual within the network of the crowd. The intention behind the direct questions ("Did you ever speak to someone in the subway?") is to trigger memories that were

not even conscious before in the reader. Literature thus has a "catalyst function" for cultural memory and work on topics that were neglected before in cultural remembrance. Literature, Ann Rigney contends, "may be actually instrumental in establishing a topic *as* a socially relevant topic and in setting off multiple acts of recollection relating to it" (351).

As in many other digital works that deal with memory, the documented fragments are hardly "framed" by a structure, and function as a collage. The photographs of people waiting for the metro especially seem to represent the past directly and nondiscursively, as Roland Barthes argued for photography: "neither Art nor Communication, it is Reference" (*Camera Lucida* 73). With these words, Barthes pointed to the immediacy of photography, and it is this direct reference to historical reality that the remediation of material seems to suggest, "the Occasion, the Encounter, the Real, in its indefatigable expression" (4). However, the contact with "the occasion" is hardly that immediate in Chatonsky's work; the photos are remediated and reframed in this digital and interactive collage, they are purposefully anonymized or blurred, as if to stress the impossibility of representing the past. The blurred photographs (which thus become hypermediated rather than transparent) could be even interpreted as a metaphor for memories; they do not guarantee a successful and transparent link to events in the past, and are just as vague, fragmented and manipulated as the visual material.

Does this work show a new media-logic, where production and consumption of memories intermingle? Even though users may send in their own memories, which thus become part of larger production of collective memory, there is no real equality here between production and consumption. Uploaded memories are incorporated in a larger frame, controlled, manipulated and redistributed by an algorithm created by the author and consumed by the reader, who has no access to the code and thus has little agency over form and content of the memories presented. The same may be said about the next example, which highlights the way the subaltern "other" from the global realm literally falls out of the sky onto the British soil.

Kate Pullinger and Chris Joseph's *Flight Paths*

In the case of *Flight Paths* (launched in 2001), the potential of the work as an archive has a strong political function. The "networked novel' (HTML) tells a fictional story in five parts about the Pakistan refugee Yacub. As in Pullinger and Joseph's other successful work of interactive fiction, *Inanimate Alice* (2011), the story is built up of images accompanied by written texts, lines that function as sub- or supertitles. The balance of image and text seems to borrow somewhat from the tradition of the graphic novel, as do the split screens that occur every now and then in the work. Another tradition that we are reminded of is that of (radio) drama: the five acts, for example, or the uploaded sounds of airplanes or glass shattering.

The first two parts are written from the perspective of Yacub, who moves to Dubai to work on building sites, "but it turned out that getting paid for the work I did was not as simple as I thought it would be" (<http://flightpaths.net/>). In the second story Yacub narrates how he climbs onto the landing gear of a plane. His testimony is written down in handwriting (electronically produced), onto photographs and drawings of a building site in Dubai. In the third part the music changes, becomes more western and jazzy. The perspective switches to that of a

British woman, Harriet, who takes her car to go grocery shopping. Her voice is represented by typescript this time, which enhances the more "western" feel of this part. We see video material of London streets flashing by, as if we are in the car with Harriet, driving to the supermarket. Harriet is thinking about the lack of a real necessity to go shopping while the house is still full of food, and about the wars that are going on in other places in the world.

In the fourth part the stories of Yacub and Harriet are told in a split screen; his screen is black with white letters, Harriet's screen has the tacky colors of a Sainsbury store. The medium allows for a presentation of "the simultaneity of events and vantage points rather than their succession" (Ross, "The Suspension of History" 127).

"There is no room for me on this shelf. There is no secret door into the cargo hold," we read, just before Yacub falls from the airplane. In the fifth act of this drama the stories of Yacub and Harriet finally merge. Yacub has landed on the roof of the car, and Harriet remains speechless. Is it in her imagination that Yacub gets up and invites himself to lunch at her house? In any case the meeting of this European woman and her Asian "Other" seems to manage to take place only after his death, or in death.

The political punch is not so much in the story, however, but in the paratext, the "flight path universe." On the dashboard publishing platform "netvibes," linked to the work itself, we find testimonies of such accidents, which happen quite frequently near Heathrow, with a less utopian or fantastic ending. Routing around the official archive about these events (police documents, etc.) creates an alternative archive, concentrating on the testimonies of bystanders. This alternative archive is less factual, more empathetic, reminding us of Hal Foster's description of "the nature of all archival materials as found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private" (5).

Flight Paths is a hybrid collection, with both pictures and text. The photographs, drawings, and sounds are uploaded by "pro-sumers" of the work. Here we may see Stiegler's new logic at work, where the production and consumption of memories are connected again in an "associated technical milieu" (83); sending and receiving have become "symmetrical activities." Apart from the deconstruction and supplementing of the official archive, it thus contests the "official" control of memory by dispersing the producing side of this externalized memory.

The story becomes a supplement to the archive, not in the sense that it is any less functional as a production of collective memory of these airplane accidents, which we know only too well from the newspapers. "Those who 'stick to the facts' may paradoxically end up with a more historical and authentic story, but also a less memorable one, than the producers of fiction" (Rigney 347). The originality of *Flight Path* is found in the fact that it is both fiction and fact. The effect of employing user generated footage, both visual and aural, is a suggestion of presence and reality. The actual historical and political foundation of the fictional story is thus activated by this material.

Authors of the images and additional sounds are credited at the end of each part, often with no more than their internet aliases. In this paratext, the authors also ask for more "stories, texts, fragments, anecdotes, memories or musings." What this produces is, for example, a hyperlink to other stories of stowaways clinging to the undercarriage of a jet.

The process of remembrance and appropriation of historical events is acted out by allowing the "pro-sumers" to upload additions to the work and share their own testimonies about being refugees or encountering refugees. The paratext, usually a supplement, has become an

integral and maybe even central part of the work, which is not a finished product but a continuous process. The dynamics of the effect of the story, the comments, the adaptations and retellings, become just as important as the original story. As Rigney points out: "The cultural power of an artistic work [is] located in the cultural activity it gives rise to, rather than what it is in itself" (349).

Being positioned between fact and fiction, the medial form of the work takes this double angle as well. Realistic "found footage" from Dubai or London is accompanied by the obviously fictional text, which is again based on real testimonies. Fact and imagination thus become fluid and interchangeable. The documentary material is very realistic, but its remediation emphasizes the mediatedness of the work. No "direct" relation to the events is possible, that much is clear. What we get to witness is not a mimetic rendering of reality, but representations of reality produced and selected by the collaborating audience.

The text is, after all, structured as a story, which is the main difference between *Flight Paths* and many other user generated works. Compare it to, for example, the "speakerscorner," a British installation by the Dutch artist, Jaap de Jonge (http://www.jaapdejonge.nl/portfolio/opdrachten/speak.html>) which takes the form of an archive without a structure. The work has an interactive street interface, too, where messages added to the website or sent through the phone are displayed around the clock. Although an attempt has been made to order the posts into themes, the website ends up being an example of what David Weinberger dubbed the "miscellaneous" archive, as opposed to the archives of the second order. According to Weinberger (22), this miscellaneous archive acquires a new potential, liberated from institutional, spatial or material constraints. This potential is not hard to find in *Flight Paths*, where people interact and externalize individual experiences to produce collective, or more specifically "social memory" (Assmann 39) about refugees in Great-Britain.

The relationship between the European citizen and the global "other" is iconically present in the way the work talks about local, urban memory while being at the same time globally distributed. Individual and localized experience is, through the medium and the literary work, transported to an international level. The "network" has a double meaning here: being both the "network" of agents contributing to the work, but also the network of the WWW in which the work functions, linking to pictures of Dubai on Flickr, a newspaper article, or a Facebook page.

The seemingly interconnected quality of information and interaction in the digital realm is slightly ironic if we consider the lack of interaction in the real world, where immigrants have to risk their lives to be allowed into Europe. And even within *Flight Paths* we see a lack of participative opportunities for subaltern groups. Contributions are not made by Pakistani or by refugees but by European "bystanders." This somewhat diminishes the critical potential of the work, in which the global encounter with the "Other" that the fiction suggests is not happening in the paratext, since not all groups have equal access to the technology to contribute.

This privileging of the digitally literate is a more general problem of participatory digital projects, as Roberto Simanowski points out in *Digital Art and Meaning* (149). Even when the data used are found in exchanges in an underrepresented community or in the crowd, as in the *Listening Post* project for example, the agency lies with the authors who create the frame or the collage. Simanowski thus quite rightly warns against the prevailing, unfounded optimism about participatory art: "interactivity is cultural industry in camouflage" (157). Making public

the private data of a community may even be seen as a type of surveillance (197). In the case of *Flight Paths*, this risk seems to be diminished by the fact that the data used were not intended as private, but as a public protest against the inhuman conditions in which refugees live.

4.   David Clark: *88 Constellations for Wittgenstein*

We have seen how distributed, fragmented and imaginary history and the production of memory may be brought out in digital literary works. But what happens when the history that is presented is more collective and canonized, and closer to the official historical narrative? Such is the case in the next work discussed, *88 Constellations for Wittgenstein (to be played with the Left Hand)*, by the Canadian artist David Clark. Again the narrating figure is explicitly present, speaking throughout the work in the same voice and thus framing the work. There is no attempt at distributed authorship like we find in *Flight Paths*. We may note that traditional forms of authorship are largely intact in literature on the internet. True multiplied distribution of authorship of an artwork is sparser than one would think.

David Clark has produced a work that consists of, indeed, 88 constellations, from Aries to Gemini and from Perseus to Capricorn, connected and interconnected by dots. Each dot has a name and a hyperlink to a small frame of the work: "Join the dots," the e-voice-over tells us, "Join the dots together. Draw pictures in the sky. Connect the muddle of our thinking to these drawings in the sky. […] Our story is a series of constellations" (<http://88constellations.net>).

Although the work has Wittgenstein as a central figure, many other historical figures appear, showing that history is always contextual. The philosopher's life and work is closely connected to other events which occurred in Europe at the beginning of the last century. These are not only political events, like the rise of Hitler, but also cultural developments like psychoanalysis. Notably, with the figure of Charlie Chaplin in *The Great Dictator* (1940; see under title in Works Cited), the birth of the era of mass-media is foregrounded. The recent digital revolution reenacts the audio-visual revolution from the beginning of the 20th century. Thus, film is remediated not only as a carrier of cultural memory, but also as an intertextual reference to "other media" connected to the work at hand: it points towards a family member, as it were.

Clark's work seems to respond to what Hal Foster dubbed "the archival impulse," leading to archival art. Foster explicitly claims that his article is about material art only and not about work on the internet. I doubt whether the strict distinction he makes between "tactile and face to face" works and internet art is very fruitful. Many of the characteristics Foster associates with archival art apply to digital art too: "recalcitrantly material, fragmentary rather than fungible, and as such they call out for human interpretation and not machinic reprocessing" (5). Even when remediated, the material quality of documents and found footage is foregrounded in much digital work. The structure of the works is similar to archival art, too: "Further, it often arranges those materials according to a quasi-archival logic, a matrix of citation and juxtaposition, and presents them in a quasi-archival architecture, a complex of texts and objects" (Foster 5). If we agree that photographs are "objects," *88 Constellations* has this same quasi-archival architecture. Finally, digital archival art is not always deconstructive but may be often "more institutive than 'destructive,' more 'legislative' than 'transgressive,'" as Foster says about archival

art (5). *88 Constellations* may, indeed, be compared to a visual museum, a receptacle for cultural heritage with the implicit intention to preserve, exhibit and pass it on to the next generation. The work foregrounds those events in the cultural and political history that are part of the "canon," with the narrative voice thus relating to the authoritative voice of the historian. This creates a productive tension between this canonical quality, on the one hand, and the archival content of *88 Constellations*, in which film-fragments, photographs, and pieces of writing are stored; the borderline between canon and archive is demonstrated to be permeable (Assmann 43).

What is being created here is the subcategory of collective memory that Aleida Assmann calls cultural memory, differentiating it from personal memory, political memory, and the social memory that was at stake, for example, in *Flight Paths*. Cultural memory and political memory are characterized by the fact that they are mediated and re-embodied: "founded on durable carriers of symbols and material representations" (Assmann 41), aiming for trans-generational communication through institutions. However, Clark's work shows that new media alter these categories, too. Where Assmann states that cultural memory is not fragmented but embedded in a narrative and aiming for "self-contained closure," we may see in *88 Constellations* a challenge to these characteristics. Both narrative and closure are absent in this network, which may nevertheless be called "a carrier of material representations." Even though a narrative *stricto sensu* is absent, I would argue that *88 Constellations* is a mediation of cultural memory. The linear and synthesizing narrative of the historian has made space for an associative structure in which 9/11 can be linked to modernism through the architecture of the World Trade Center, showing how the past is always connected to the present. Thus the work is self-reflective; it demonstrates the mediatedness of history by showcasing material media like painting, photography or film, more than a written history could or would do. Additionally, the networked structure demonstrates in its possibilities of linking, what history is: the choice of one route amongst many. One may, for example, tell the story of Silence, Cage, Modernism and Wittgenstein. But just as valid is the story of Wittgenstein, Vienna, Kraus, and psychoanalysis; or, for that matter, Hitler, Chaplin, the Great Dictator, and mass-media.

The reader has some agency, too, and actively engages with the work by choosing routes through the work. Connections are made for us, though, a fact that implies that participation is very limited; the consumer and producer of memory remain firmly divided.

5. Conclusion

Comparing four different ways of remediating archival material and producing memory, we notice first that nostalgia for the material archive seems to be absent. Hypermediacy draws attention to the former materiality of the documents or visual material, but the function of this is to point towards the mediatedness of memory, rather than as a referent of the real, as Barthes called photographs. We may call this body of work "archival," but it is a palimpsestic archive; it brings a past medium into the present and then archives this operation. It is an archive over-writing an archive.

Many works reflect on the social and political significance of the relationship between material, media, text and memories. The medium serves, for example, to demonstrate the fact that

social memory is constructed from externalized and shared personal memories; the participative structure of *Flight Paths* is a case in point. This does not imply, however, that we always see Stiegler's fusion of the producing and consuming sides of cultural memory. These positions remain largely divided in the works by Oosterhoff and by Clark.

Tonnus Oosterhoff's video-poem demonstrates that remembrance is tied to media but that forgetting is medial, too. The perfection of digital photography as opposed to the damaged home-movie, iconically underlines the forgetfulness of our present day and of our present media. The simultaneity of both presence and absence of the past may be specifically and successfully explored and represented in the digital medium.

Thus, digital literature on history foregrounds a tension between the immediacy of the historical reality as represented, on the one hand, and the distance of that historical reality, on the other. Through remediation of material, the historical *real* is closer than ever, whereas history as a master-narrative is forever out of reach. It seems that Assmann's definitions of cultural and political memory need to be revised in the light of digital culture. May we not now envision representations of cultural memory that are fragmented and *not* embedded in one narrative, but which still aim for trans-generational communication (Assmann 41)?

What has changed quite radically in these works of digital literature is the relationship between the production of memory and the material archive. Wolfgang Ernst holds that European cultural memory is more material than trans-Atlantic memory:

> There are different media memory cultures. European cultural memory is traditionally archive-centered, with resident material values (libraries, museums, 2500-year-old architecture), whereas the trans-Atlantic media culture is transfer-based. (52)

If this is true, digitalized memory and archives are a hybrid or a negotiation of a European tradition with an American media culture. If the effect of globalization of culture is visible anywhere, it is here, in this hybrid between continental history and archives, and American transfer.