

Foreword

Memory is life.
Saul Bellow

The Bellarosa Connection is an artful novella that can be called the anthroposophy of memory written by the American writer and intellectual, Nobel and Pulitzer Prize winner Saul Bellow, who has born into a Litvak's family. The narrator of this novella is the founder of The Mnemosyne Institute in Philadelphia, whom nature has endowed with the innate gift of memory. He has become a millionaire by training politicians and executives in the art of remembering that inhibit self-consciousness thus helping to memorize a large number of facts and events. The process of aging reduces his ability to remember things, but revives deep memories that makes him rethink his whole life and encourages write memoirs. Once the recollection starts, he begins to remember his father introducing him – frivolous American young man – to Harry Founstein, who got away from the Nazis and escaped from Mussolini's Italy.

However, he shows the life history of Eastern European Jew through the prism of his own experience, telling the story in the Hollywood spirit like an adventure escape from Hitler, dividing it into episodes as it is done in the television series. Thus, he reveals that the man who saved Founstein, Billy Rose or Bellarosa is Jewish-American Hollywood producer, the Broadway impresario who organized Jewish rescue company during World War II, but actually is interested in showbiz and belongs to the celebrity world. Harry feels that he owes Billy his life and therefore wants to thank him. However, Billy rejects meeting with him and do not want to hear anything about the past, lived experience, memories and gratitude. He only cares of his public image, business transactions and the spectacular project of Jerusalem Sculpture Park as the crowning work of his life.

At first sight it might seem that the story reflects the complexities of Jewish history, but indeed it examines the existential condition of memory in this present world. The writer, who has studied anthropology and sociology, unfolds different registers of memory and shows two poles indistinguishably intertwined: emotional and rational, authenticity and representation, felt by heart and formed by policy. He also discloses that the oblivion is rooted in the contemporary world poisoned by theatricality, rationality and nihilism, where memory somehow becomes the form of rhetorical strategy, the type of meaningless information or a cold monument to the past. Historical, cultural and authentic memory is searching out ways to express itself in the world of Hollywood production, spectacle and advertising, which is superficial and banal. In the culture of memory and commemoration intersect the fields of politics, ideology,

business and entertainment, hiding ambitious goals, self-promotion or target market, indifferent to human experience and cultural heritage.

Having reviewed these aspects of memory, however, the author of the novella insistently repeats that “memory is life.”¹ It provides an emotional support, gives meaning to individual and collective life, and strengthens historical consciousness and identity. Of course he has in mind not just a profit-making memory, deconstructed by current needs, or computer’s memory for storing information, but the memory that embraces authentic human experiences, imagination, feelings and reflections, that has a transcendent dimension, and that in the process of intellectual and creative work turns into a cultural memory (which unites community, generating meaningful relationships and vertical value axis).

Collective amnesia is the spiritual disease of our time. Mass media and communication technology fill up the social atmosphere with new sources of pleasure and illusion, which increase the value-vacuum. However, the perceived threat of memory loss encourages new intellectual, cultural and artistic movements. It’s not therefore surprising that the themes of memory and identity now more than ever are discussed and stimulate examination of our attitudes to the past, highlighting the historical continuity of memory as well as the duels of memory and oblivion.

A definite society in every period remakes rules, values and symbols that ground perception of the past weaving the threads of memories and omissions. Thus, our present-day relationship to the past and the complexity of memory unfolded by Saul Bellow constitute the major axis of this volume around which rotate other important questions about the expediency of cultural memory, the concept of place identity, the fate of memory in a mediated world and visual culture, the expression of memory in cinema, television, photography, literature, historical narratives, art projects and new theoretical perspectives. The edited collection deals with the memory and identity, live testimonies, emotions, feelings and reflections as well as ideological pressures, deconstructing and rebuilding memory – the opposite (often paradoxically cross-cutting) trajectories, some of which strengthen our sense of community, highlighting the importance of traditions and cultural rootedness, whereas *others* orient toward representation, prevailing ideologemes and world memory (*toute la mémoire du monde* as Alainas Renais described it).

Discussing the theme of *The Identity of Memory* Vytautas Rubavičius draws attention to the fact that in the contexts of European integration and rapidly globalizing world there is a need to discuss the nationhood, national and ethnic identity. He stresses that cultural memory might be seen as a field of coexistence and cohabitation. The identity of memory and the divide of we–others crystalize itself in the native land. The peaceful coexistence with the Other, shared historic past and cultural heri-

¹ Saul Bellow. *The Bellarosa Connection*. New York: Penguin, 1989, p. 2.

tage form the national identity, which is constantly changing, but place attachment, a strong sense of self and emotional identification with a particular community remain the essential components that support “a vibrant expediency of cultural memory – to foster, maintain and protect a rooted community identity.” In the chapter of *The Problem of Memory in Visual Culture* has been analysed the ambivalent and controversial role of cinema and television in the processes of memory. Odeta Žukauskienė attempts to show that the films exploring the theme of memory give new meaning to the past, creating new practices of cultural memory. She also observes that the cinematic language, which dominates our visual culture, puts on memory a new clothing of illusion, destroying the historicity and drowning it within the infinite ocean of images. Rita Repšienė, discussing new challenges for the film industry caused by television production, focuses on the suggestive and creative interpretations of memory themes in popular culture.

The importance of photography in the memory work has been highlighted by Eda Kalmre. In the chapter dedicated to *Europe and Heritage*, Estonian scientist explores historical photos of Tartu, kept in the homes and photo albums by many local residents, which reflect genuine pre-war and post-war picture of the town, while the Soviet public menu of photographs leaves distorted images, influenced by ideology and power relations in the society. Thus, photography’s relationship to reality and truth is ambiguous and complex.

The memory theme continues to be explored in the works by Vytautas Berenis and Gintaras Beresnevičius – long-time researchers of the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute, unfortunately, passed away prematurely – that are included here to honour their memory. The speech given by Vilnius University professor emeritus Viktorija Daujotytė in the cemetery to writer Romualdas Granauskas distinctively extends the dilemmas of memory, addressing the issues of commemoration and meaningfulness.

In the section *Talking about Values* art critic Kęstutis Šapoka interviews Artūras Raila about his creative projects that explore memory category. Speaking about his aspirations to reconstruct personal memories Raila notes that not all subjective experiences and memories can be visualized or materialized. Besides, not all forms of memories are acceptable to the world of art, legitimizing certain narratives. The artist who wanted reconstruct a specific collective memory suggests that historical documentaries (photo and film archives) are not reliable visual material. The text by artist Marija G. Repšytė about Walid Sadek’s exhibition “Inside Mourning in the Presence of the Corpse” (2014) reminds that speaking louder about memory and commemoration, we renounce prudent oblivion and self-reflective silence, leading to the endless *maze of thoughts and consciousness*.

The chapter *Contemporary Searching* discusses theoretical approaches and new fields of research, focusing on mediated memory. Žilvinė Gaižutytė-Filipavičienė delves into the political and communicational aspects of cultural memory. She analyses the

process of externalisation and objectivation of collective memory, emphasizing that investigations of transnational and global memory supplement studies of national memory. Lina Vidauskytė examines the thinking of the French philosopher Bernard Stiegler about the development of technics and audiovisual technology, analysing the idea of tertiary memory, which is closely related to the logic of late capitalism and the culture industry, and which influence the formation of individual and collective consciousness, our imagination, emotions and communication.

In the section of reviews Kęstutis Šapoka discusses the photography album *Eastern Prussia* (2012) of Raimundas Urbonas, who left this world far too early. And finally three international conferences have been reviewed: “Changes of Cultural Memory at the End of the 20th and the Beginning of 21st Century: Reflecting on National Priorities” (Rita Repšienė) and “Shadowing the Scene: Negativity in Affects, Politics, Aesthetics” (Mantas Kvedaravičius), organized by the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute, as well as “Crisis in Film and Visual Media” (Renata Stonytė) hosted by Vilnius University (Faculty of Communication, Institute of Creative Media).

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*Memory is a stopgap for humans, for whom time
flies and what is passed is passed.*
Umberto Eco

In the endless labyrinth of memory Umberto Eco was searching for answers to the great questions of time and memory, invoking the Foucault pendulum as an existential matrix. Magic Middle Ages hide many secrets. As well as one of the most mysterious characters of Eco’s novel *The Name of the Rose*, whose prototype was a close friend of Algirdas Julius Greimas. Is it possible to visualize memory through the most incredible and mysterious stories? How to keep a secret and to create visions? Eco’s works provide extraordinary responses. Once asked, why the Medieval times, that seemingly so-distant world, seduces him, the writer said: “It’s hard to say. Why do we fall in love? In fact, the Middle Ages are completely different from what we imagined. To me, they were not the Dark Ages. They were a luminous time...”, giving us another memory code².

² Umberto Eco, The Art of Fiction No. 197. Interviewed by Lila Azam Zanganeh. In: *The Paris Review*, Summer 2008, No. 185. Prieiga per internetą: <http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/5856/the-art-of-fiction-no-197-umberto-eco> [žiūrėta 2014 12 27]